

SUMMARY OF ACADEMIC POLICY DECISIONS – SPRING 2006

This information note refers to decisions made at the following meetings:

ASC – 25 January 2006 and 1 March 2006

Senate – 22 March 2006

Minute numbers are given to indicate the source of the information set out below. Where extracts of minutes are included verbatim, this is indicated by speech marks.

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SECTION A – FOR ACTION BY HEADS OF DEPARTMENT AND CENTRES

1. Optional Coursework (S.M.46/06)

‘Resolved

that, with effect from 2006/07, where coursework counts toward the final assessment of a course it may not be voluntary.’

2. Monitoring Progress on In-Sessional English Courses (S.MM.48/06) (see also item B.1 below)

‘Resolved

- ii. that departments (as well as the English Language Teaching Centre) should have responsibility for monitoring student engagement with required in-sessional English Language courses, so that they are able to ensure that their students’ academic achievement is not compromised by inadequate English language skills.

3. Accessibility of Academic Staff (S.MM.51-54/06)

‘Resolved

- i. that departments should make clear to students the type and level of contact they can reasonably expect from academic staff (e.g. email, advertised office hours, appointments) and that departments should offer students a range of communication options as appropriate;

- ii. that departments should ensure that Graduate Teaching Assistants have contact/office hours commensurate with the number of students and classes they teach;
- iii. that all information provided to students should be comprehensively reviewed and updated where necessary. In particular the range of departmental support available to individual students should be made clear. (e.g. Departmental Handbook, Departmental websites and notice boards);
- iv. that, from 2007/08, every first year student should have an individual meeting with the Director of Undergraduate Studies or his/her nominee before the end of the Autumn term. This would become integral to the personal development planning process and would help to identify any additional support required by individual students at an early stage. Departments should be encouraged to adopt this practice from 2006/07.'

4. Assessment and Feedback (S.MM.55-57/06)

'Resolved

- i. that departments should review the current format of assignment coversheets/formative feedback mechanisms in consultation with their Staff Student Liaison Committees, with a view to incorporating good practice from within the University and beyond;
- ii. that, from 2007/08, every full year and Autumn term course should include an early assessment opportunity to provide feedback before the end of the Autumn term on individual student performance to allow any additional support to be targeted at an early stage.'

'Noted The requirement to include an early assessment opportunity to provide feedback before the Autumn term applied equally to English language support classes. Arrangements were being made to record English language support courses on the Student Records Database from October 2006, in order to facilitate the monitoring of students' attendance and progress on these.'

5. Amendments to Extenuating Lateness Guidelines for Undergraduate Students (ASC.M.79/06 S.M.05/06)

'Recommended to Senate

- a) that, with immediate effect, where a piece of work constituted 100% of the assessment for a course and has the status of an examination (eg a project or dissertation), students should be permitted to submit late work with an extenuating performance form beyond five working days after the submission deadline. The Board of Examiners would then decide whether the extenuating circumstances claim should be upheld, in the same way they would in relation to a missed examination.'

'Reported

Vice-Chancellor's action on behalf of the Senate in approving the following amendment to the Guidelines for Undergraduate Students making a request to the Extenuating Lateness Committee for marks instatement (2005-2006) with immediate effect (new wording underlined, deleted text struck through):

'F How do I inform the Department?

- (i) Coursework

It is your responsibility to inform the department which offers the module/course with which the coursework is associated, at the earliest opportunity, of any circumstance or event which may affect your ability to meet a coursework deadline. If you miss your coursework deadline and believe that you have extenuating circumstances,

then you should hand your work into that department as soon as possible after the deadline together with an Extenuating Lateness Form detailing those circumstances. Late coursework will be accepted up to **five** working days (Monday to Friday, during both term time and vacations) after the relevant deadline for consideration by the relevant Extenuating Lateness Committee, unless the department had decided that it would be is-inappropriate to accept work after the deadline due to the nature of the assessment. It is at the discretion of the department to comment on work submitted later than this for formative feedback only (that is, no formal marks will be awarded).

When a piece of work constitutes 100% of assessment for the course and has the status of an examination (e.g. a project or dissertation), and you feel you have extenuating circumstances, submissions beyond five days after the deadline will be accepted. You will need to submit an Extenuating Performance Form and any relevant documentation along with the piece of work.

Students who have experienced severe extenuating circumstances, leading to their inability to submit their coursework by the deadline’

SECTION B – FOR INFORMATION

1. Working Party on Academic Support (S.M. 47.06) (see also item A.2 above)

‘Resolved

- i. that enrolment and attendance on in-session English Language courses should be obligatory for all new students who have C or B- scores in the English Language test at the start of the year. All students with a B score who request support should also be accommodated on a first-come first-served basis, subject to sufficient resource being available.’
that students should be assessed at the end of the course (20 weeks) in four skill areas with the emphasis placed on writing skills;
- i. that where the English Language course is not integral to a degree scheme then consideration should be given to introducing an element of progression. For example, those students whose profile demonstrates a need for further support should be required to attend a Pre-Sessional course. Returning students who were unable to provide evidence of having attended a language course during the vacation would be assessed and required to join a language class the following year as necessary.’

2. Extenuating Circumstances Advisory Group (S.M.58/06)

‘Resolved

that, with effect from the academic year 2006/07, the current extenuating circumstances guidelines be amended so that students who experience extenuating circumstances that prevent them from completing and submitting their coursework before the deadline, and are therefore considered to be ‘Extenuating Performance’ claims, should be permitted to submit their completed work after the deadline with an Extenuating Performance Form and appropriate evidence. However, a caveat should remain which stipulates that late submission of this nature would not be accepted after marked assignment/model answers had been released to students.’

3. Academic Offences Procedure (S.M.61/06)

‘Resolved

that, for first year repeating students only, and with immediate effect, academic offences penalties should not be carried forward. Details of the penalties would however remain on student files and further offences would still be treated as second offences.’

4. Anonymous Marking (ASC.M.62, ASC.MM.69-70/06)

‘Received

The paper from the Students’ Union in support of anonymous marking of coursework and responses to the paper from University departments.’

‘Noted

In the light of clearly articulated arguments on both sides presented to it by the Students’ Union and departments and its own deliberations, the Committee was not minded to recommend to Senate that anonymous marking of coursework be adopted by all University departments. However, the Committee did feel that a clearer University policy position was needed and that departments should provide, in a consistent form, information to students about their approach to marking and their pedagogic rationale for this approach. The Committee also felt that the University needed to take pro-active steps to support the adoption of anonymity for those departments who wished to adopt it.’

‘Resolved

1. that the Academic Section should investigate mechanisms for the efficient operation of anonymous marking of coursework and produce guidance for departments for consideration at the next meeting of ASC;
2. that the Academic Section should produce a template for providing information about a department’s approach to marking, for inclusion in student handbooks, for consideration by the next meeting of ASC.’

Joanne Tallentire
Senior Assistant Registrar
10 May 2006

CIRCULATION

FOR ACTION:

Heads of Department
Directors of
 Areas and Study Abroad Office
 Centre for Psychoanalytic Studies
 Centre for Theoretical Studies
 English Language Teaching Centre
 Human Rights Centre

Departmental Administrators (including Centres listed above)

FOR INFORMATION:

Vice-Chancellor
Pro-Vice-Chancellors
Deans
Academic Registrar
Academic Section Administrators