

University of Essex

Summary of Academic Policy Decisions – Spring 2014/15

This information note refers to key decisions, advice and areas of clarification made at the following meetings:

[Senate \(S\)](#): 22/4/15

[Education Committee \(EC\)](#): 11/2/15, 25/3/15

[Academic Quality and Standards Committee \(AQSC\)](#): 28/1/15, 11/3/15

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

Links are provided to relevant committee minutes and papers, where available. If a link does not exist for the documentation that you require, please contact the relevant committee secretary for further information: <http://www.essex.ac.uk/committees/CommitteeSearch.asp>

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1. POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH MILESTONES

Senate Agreed “That the proposed Postgraduate Research Milestone be approved as set out in appendix A of paper S/15/23, for adoption in all departments with effect from the 2015-16 academic year.”
([Paper S/15/23](#), Appendix A, [S. M. 93/15](#))
ACTION 2015-16

2. ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR LEARNING FOR POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH PROVISION

Senate Agreed “That the Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning Policy be revised as set out in appendix B of paper S/15/23”.
([Paper S/15/23](#), Appendix B, [S. M. 95/15](#))
ACTION 2015-16

3. EXTENSION OF THE MODERATION OF THE X9 MODULE MARKS POLICY TO POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT STUDENTS AND TO LEVEL 4 UNDERGRADUATE MODULES

Senate Agreed "That the x9 module marks policy be extended to postgraduate taught students and to level 4 undergraduate modules with effect from 2015-16 onwards, as set out in paper S/15/23".
([Paper S/15/23](#), S. M. 96/15)
ACTION 2015-16

4. PROPOSED CHANGES TO RULES OF ASSESSMENT

Senate Agreed "That the Rules of Assessment be amended, as set out in Appendix D of paper S/15/23"

- **LLB English and French Law – ACTION 2015-16**
Amendments to "reduce the credit load in the first and second years of the degree from 150 credits to 120 credits, and split the two existing core modules (LW107 and LW207) into four 15 credit modules."
Further information is available via [paper S/15/23](#), Appendix D, Annex A
- **Kaplan Singapore – ACTION 2014-15**
The following principles will apply to all current and future courses delivered by Kaplan Singapore
"a. The Rules of Assessment in place at the time the Exam Board meets are applied for all students, regardless of when they started their course, as long as any revisions would not negatively impact students;
b. Students whose preliminary module marks (after Kaplan Singapore marking and moderating) indicate they need to undertake reassessment in that module should be able to undertake reassessment before an Exam Board where their studies would otherwise be delayed unnecessarily.
c. Students whose preliminary Stage Two marks (before going to an Exam Board) indicate they have passed all credits should be able to progress to the final Stage before the Exam Board meets.
d. Students who have failed a maximum of 30 Stage Two credits (from modules of any status) should be allowed to progress into the final Stage and allowed to undertake at reassessment at the same time."
Further information is available via [paper S/15/23](#), Appendix D, Annex B.
- **Kaplan Open Learning (University of Essex Online) – ACTION 2014-15**
 - a. That students be permitted to undertake reassessment for the *Fundamentals of Effective Learning (FEL)* before an Exam Board has considered their previous marks "where waiting for an Exam Board would otherwise delay their studies".
 - b. That the threshold that dictates when a module is considered by an Exam Board should be decreased from six weeks to "usually no more than 4 weeks. Requirements restricting the resubmission of work previously submitted remain unchanged."
 - c. That the LLB (Hons) Law has been confirmed as a Qualifying Law Degree by the Solicitors Regulation Authority and "wording relating to requirements for achieving a QLD will be added to the KOL Rules of Assessment."
 - d. Students are currently required to complete 30 credits in a 12-month period but this can disadvantage a student who is completing reassessment. "It is therefore recommended that this Rule is amended to a requirement to 'attempt' rather than 'complete' 30 credits."
Further information is available via [paper S/15/23](#), Appendix D, Annexes C and D.
- **Variation to the Postgraduate Rules of Assessment – ACTION 2014-15**
The following principles should be applied to all current and future University of Essex Online courses:
 1. The Rules of Assessment in place at the time the Exam Board meets are applied for all students, regardless of when they started their course,

as long as any revisions would not negatively impact students.

2. Thresholds will apply that dictate when an attempt at a module will be considered by an Exam Board.

This would apply to the following awards (and any awards validated in the future): Taught Masters degrees 2014-15; Postgraduate Diplomas; Postgraduate Certificates.

Further information is available via [paper S/15/23](#), Appendix D, Annex E.

- **Change to the University's Credit Framework for Taught Postgraduate Courses – ACTION 2015-16**

With respect to the MSc in Human Resource Management, Essex Business School is permitted to operate a 15/30 credit model in addition to the 20/40 model already used on the Colchester campus.

Further information is available via [paper S/15/23](#), Appendix D, Annex F.

- **Introduction of a New Type of Award and Change to the University's Credit Framework for Undergraduate Courses – ACTION FOR OCT 15**

With respect to the Certificate in Teaching English as a Foreign Language to be added to the Framework for University of Essex Undergraduate Awards from October 2015. This 60 credit award would be a stand-alone award but also embedded into appropriate specified BA courses in the Department of Language and Linguistics.

Further information is available via [paper S/15/23](#), Appendix D, Annex G.

- **Change to the Rules of Assessment for Pre-sessional Pathway Courses – ACTION FROM JULY 2015**

Minor amendments to be made to the 2+2 EBS Bespoke Pre-sessional Programme bringing the reassessment regulations in line with those for other subject specific pre-sessional programmes.

Further information is available via [paper S/15/23](#), Appendix D, Annex H.

- **Assessment Methods – ACTION 2016/17**

Clarification of the designation of take-home examinations as coursework in the assessment of modules.

"It is recommended that the following policy should be introduced with effect from 2016/17:

- i. That only an examination which is invigilated should be classed as an examination and displayed as such on the transcript. This definition would also cover open-book examinations and Stage 1 MCQ tests in Biological Sciences.

- ii. Take-home examinations should be classed as coursework and departments would need to make this clear in the module information. Invigilated in-class tests and progress tests could continue to be counted as coursework."

Further information is available via [paper S/15/23](#), Appendix D, Annex I.

5. PROPOSED VARIATION TO THE RULES OF ASSESSMENT – HEALTH AND HUMAN SCIENCES – ACTION 2014-15

Senate Noted "Vice-Chancellor's action on behalf of Senate to approve amendments to the Rules of Assessment for 2014-15, specifically to apply the already approved variations to Rules of Assessment for BSc Nursing courses to the work-based learning (WBL) variants of these courses."

The relevant variations are already in place for the Nursing degrees BSc B740 and BSc B760 and "[t]hey are necessary to ensure the courses meet the requirement of the regulatory body, the Nursing and Midwifery Council."

Further information can be found via [paper S/15/17](#), [S. M. 60/15](#)

ACTION 2014-15

6. AMENDMENT TO THE REGULATIONS RELATING TO ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Senate Agreed "That Regulation 6.3 be amended as below with immediate effect:

10.3 ~~The main examination period shall take place in May/June. Examinations for specific groups of students may take place at other times. Resit examinations shall normally take place in the first full week of September.~~

Examinations shall take place at times determined by the relevant Programme of Study. Publication of examination dates and times will be published by the Academic Registrar in a timely manner and in such a way that gives adequate notice to staff and students.

Further information can be found via [paper S/15/17](#), [S. M. 60/15](#)

ACTION 2014-15

7. TALENT DEVELOPMENT CENTRE: PLANS FOR EXTENDING ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND ACADEMIC SKILLS PROVISION

Senate Agreed That the following proposals be approved as set out in paper S/15/23:

1. "That academic skills provision to departments should take the form of five, free one hour sessions on core academic skills for first-year students, delivered in small groups in line with appropriate first year modules and assessments". This would be piloted in 2015-16 and will be extended to all departments in 2016-17.
2. "The threshold requirement for international students in relation to the on-arrival English Language test should be raised to include all students holding language grades up to and including IELTS 7.0 or equivalent."
3. Each department should appoint an appropriate member (or members) of staff to liaise with the Talent Development Centre. This member of staff should be appointed in consultation with the Head of Department and Director of Education and should "raise awareness among international students of the need to continue with additional English language study".

Further information can be found via [paper S/15/23](#), [S. M. 97/15](#), [paper EC/15/21](#) and [EC. M. 67-71/15](#)

ACTION 2015-16

8. PLACEMENT MODULE SK701

AQSC Resolved That "a new 120-credit placement year module (SK701) which could be adopted by all departments if they wished to, and would allow students to undertake a placement year where a placement year version did not already exist."

AQSC noted minor amendments and clarifications:

- the placement year would be classed as a level six module, and available as stage three of a four year course
- to pass, students needed to pass the overall module aggregate and did not need to pass each unit of assessment
- Rules of Assessment would align with the standard Rules for courses with placement years, including for reassessment
- the required length of the placement should give an indication of the minimum number of hours as well as the number of weeks
- weighting of units of assessment to be consistent across all documentation

Further information can be found via paper AQSC/15/18, [AQSC. M. 15/115-15-122](#), [paper EC/15/10](#) and [EC. M. 44-45/15](#)

ACTION: To be introduced from October 2015-16

9. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORTS AND ANNUAL REVIEW OF COURSES REPORTS

AQSC Resolved / Noted The following items had arisen as a result of External Examiners reports and the Annual Review of Courses:

- **Departmental prizes**
“Information about the process for introducing new prizes had been circulated by the Registry.”
- **Revised guidance for Exam Boards, Chairs and Secretaries**
“Revised guidance for Exam Boards, Chairs and Secretaries on extenuating circumstances would be included in the training provided by the Registry in advance of 2014-15 Exam Boards.”
- **Information given to External Examiners**
“External Examiners would be asked at the Exam Boards about the information they would find useful to support them in their role.”
- **Extracting module level data**
“Information on how to extract module-level data was included in guidance provided by the Registry each year in advance of Exam Boards.”
- **Institutional level responses to External Examiner reports**
“That the PVC (Education), in liaison with the relevant Deputy Dean (Education), should respond to External Examiners where institution-wide issues were raised.” Further information can be found via [paper EC/15/07](#), [EC. M. 35/15](#)
- **Attendance at Exam Boards by External Examiners**
A number of external examiners had commented on whether their attendance at Exam Boards in person was the most effective way for them to carry out their roles. One examiner referred to the Boards as being scrupulously fair and efficient, meaning that an Examiner may only be required to comment in relation to a very short part of the meeting. The possibility of virtual attendance had therefore been raised.

AQSC confirmed that although a visit to the University could be extremely beneficial, there was no requirement for externals to attend only in person, and that attendance could be in person or virtually. Where attendance was to be virtual, arrangements should be made in advance, to ensure the external had gained access to the complete range of documentation and guidance needed to carry out their roles, and that the room was equipped to support virtual attendance at meetings. Virtual attendance should not be the only means of attendance, however, and an external examiner should always be given the opportunity to attend if they wished to.

The Academic Standards and Partnerships Office had started work, in consultation with the Deputy Deans, to establish how each department worked with their external examiners, to identify any variations in practice, and to ensure each was operating in line with the University’s policy. The Academic Standards and Partnerships Office would review guidance, and would circulate to departments and the Registry.
- **Deadlines and late receipt of External Examiner reports**
It was acknowledged that the timelines for consideration of the reports to inform ARCs were challenging. However, these were designed to ensure all reports had been received and incorporated into action plans for improvements to be implemented the following academic year, or sooner if appropriate.

AQSC agreed that it did not wish to recommend that the timing of submission of reports and their consideration changed. Instead, guidance and the timing of reminders to external examiners and departments would continue to highlight the importance of the reports, and of receiving them on time. Departments would also continue to be reminded of the need to respond to their external examiners in a timely way.

Additional areas which emerged from the reports have been included elsewhere in this report.

Further information can be found via AQSC M. 15/131-134

10. COURSE APPROVAL

AQSC Noted “A number of conditions of approval had been set by the Faculty Education Committees (FEC). Members of AQSC felt that some of these conditions could have been satisfied before submission to the FEC. The Committee stressed the importance of ensuring that courses were sufficiently developed, and that input had been sought in advance, particularly from the external academic, to inform course developments in advance of consideration by committees.”

Further information can be found via [paper S/15/23](#), AQSC M. 15/153-154

ACTION: 2015-16

SECTION B – FOR INFORMATION

1. Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Higher Education Review Action Plan.
2. Progress Report on Recording and Monitoring Student Attendance
3. Centre for Research in Language Development Throughout the Lifespan
4. Technology Enhanced Learning Project Update
5. Good Practice Framework for Handling Complaints and Academic Appeals
6. Postgraduate Student Mentoring
7. Academic Infrastructure: Academic Year and Credit Framework
8. Tier 4 and Immigration Regulatory Frameworks

1. QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY HIGHER EDUCATION REVIEW ACTION PLAN

Senate Agreed “That the proposed action plan be approved for submission to the QAA.”

Further information can be found via [paper S/15/20](#), [S. M. 78-80/15](#).

The action plan is available as a .pdf on the website: [QAA Action Plan](#)

2. PROGRESS REPORT ON RECORDING AND MONITORING STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Senate Noted “The project to deliver the electronic collection of student attendance data and revised and enhanced monitoring of student attendance to support the revised Progress Procedures had been subject to unforeseen complexity and problems, which had led to delays in implementing the roll out of the monitoring software.”

Senate received a paper which provided Senate members with an update on progress.

Further information can be found via [paper S/15/21](#), [S. M. 81-91/15](#).

3. CENTRE FOR RESEARCH IN LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT THROUGHOUT THE LIFESPAN

Senate Agreed That a Centre for Research in Language Development Throughout the Lifespan should be established and housed in Language and Linguistics. This was an agreed outcome of the Review of Language and Linguistics in 2013-14.

Further information can be found via [paper S/15/25](#), [S. M. 105/15](#).

4. TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED LEARNING: PROJECT UPDATE

Education Committee Noted The core themes of the Technology Enhanced Learning project are Listen Again, Moodle and FASER. Education Committee received a paper including the three-year action plan which will be made available to users with a University login.

Further information can be found via [paper EC/15/20](#), [EC. M 63-66/15](#)

5. GOOD PRACTICE FRAMEWORK FOR HANDLING COMPLAINTS AND ACADEMIC APPEALS

Education Committee Noted

"In the spring term of 2013-14 the University of Essex Complaints Procedure for Students was redrafted taking account of the guidance offered by the draft version of the Good Practice Framework. Minor amendments will now be made to the procedure to ensure that it is in keeping with the final draft of the Good Practice Framework, in time for the start of the 2015-16 academic year.

Prior to the start of the 2015-16 academic year, a full review of the University's academic appeals procedures will also be undertaken to ensure that it incorporates the key principles."

Further information can be found via [paper EC/15/12](#), [EC. M. 47/15](#)

6. POSTGRADUATE STUDENT MENTORING

Education Committee Noted

"The 'Ask a Postgraduate Student' pilot scheme will be launched in February 2015. Feedback will be collected during the 2014/15 academic year, with the view to reviewing the scheme and making enhancements to it, ahead of extending it to all students in October 2015."

Further information can be found via [paper EC/15/13](#), [EC. M. 48/15](#)

7. ACADEMIC INFRASTRUCTURE: ACADEMIC YEAR AND CREDIT FRAMEWORK

Education Committee Resolved

Education Committee received a paper which "recommended the establishment of a Task and Finish Group to consider whether the University should move towards the establishment of a single credit framework".

Education Committee resolved that the focus of the Group should include wider issues and solutions, and that there should be greater departmental representation and should include one Head of Department and one Director of Education per Faculty. The Group will provide interim reports to Education Committee and Senate, with the recommendations and action plan submitted in June 2015 (Education Committee) and July 2015 (Senate). The Executive Deans and the Dean of Academic Partnerships would report verbally at Faculty Education Committees and Partnership Education Committee.

Further information can be found via [EC. M. 26-32/15](#)

8. TIER 4 AND IMMIGRATION REGULATORY FRAMEWORKS

Senate Agreed

Education Committee recommended to Senate "recommendations from the Academic Registrar proposing changes to University regulations in relation to compliance with the University's obligations as a Tier 4 sponsor with highly trusted sponsor status."

Senate agreed that the proposed changes should be made to the University's regulations as recommended.

Further information can be found via [paper S/15/23](#), [S. M. 98/15](#).

Academic Standards and Partnerships Office June 2015

FOR ACTION:

Head of Departments/School
Directors of Education
Directors of Centres

Study Abroad Office
Departmental Administrators (including
Centres)

FOR INFORMATION:

Pro-Vice-Chancellor
Executive Deans
Dean of Academic Partnerships
Deputy Deans (Education)
Associate Dean of Academic Partnerships

Academic Registrar
Faculty Managers
Faculty Education Managers