

University of Glasgow**Academic Standards Committee - Friday 9 October 2009****Report from Academic Regulations Sub-Committee Meeting 1
October 2009 - Proposed Harmonisation of Supplementary
Regulations****Professor T Guthrie, Convener****Introduction**

In April a first consultation document was sent to faculties giving the background to the work on harmonising academic regulations and requesting initial views on:

- Progression regulations
- Requirements for Honours entry and entry to a specific Honours degree programme
- Progress within Honours and integrated Masters programmes
- Weighting of assessment for final award.

Following ARSC's discussion of responses in June, a further document was circulated to faculties in August. This set out refined proposals and options, reflecting the feedback that had been received.

The Convener's view was that the responses represented some further progress towards harmonisation, but that on several of the issues a point was approaching where no further progress would be possible. It had always been anticipated that this was the likely outcome and where there had to be different models for different programmes, the reasons for this should be drawn out and articulated.

A further final re-formulation of the proposals would now be sent to faculties, with the aim of reporting to ASC in November, and EdPSC in December.

1. Progression regulations for five year professional degrees and Honours degrees which recruit to Honours from Year 1

Two models had been proposed in the consultation document:

A. Minimum requirement for progression from year to year is that students achieve a grade D3 or better in all courses.

B. Minimum requirement for progression from year to year is that students achieve a GPA of at least 10 across all courses.

[It was noted that, following the decision to delete Schedule C from the University Calendar, in the future the requirements would not refer to GPAs but to grades and secondary bands. A GPA of 10 would be replaced with an average aggregation score of 9.]

The responses indicated that it would not be possible to narrow down from the two options. Veterinary Medicine, Medicine, Dentistry, BAcc and BEd had indicated a requirement to follow model A, driven largely by professional accreditation. The requirements of model A were not appropriate for other

programmes. Engineering had proposed the inclusion in B. of a minimum grade of E3 in all courses, in recognition of accreditation requirements.

2. Progression regulations for degree programmes that select for Honours at the end of Year 2.

The consultation had invited responses in relation to both general requirements for entry to Honours and requirements for entry to a specific Honours programme.

A. General requirements for Honours entry

The proposed requirements for entry to Honours were:

A1. 240 credits from courses at level 1 and 2 (or higher);

A2. Normally at least 200 of these credits at Grade D3 or better, of which 60 credits at level 2;

A3. At least XX of the 240 credits to be from the Faculty course list [XX proposed to be somewhere in the range 120-160].

There were varying views in relation to requirement A2. Arts wished to stipulate that at least 80 credits were to be at level 2 (the 'normally' providing the chance to carry credit if necessary). This reflected the fact that Arts students took two subjects at level 2 in second year and this was the minimum number required for entry to a Joint Honours programme.

As discussed at the June meeting, the Science faculties had concerns in relation to A2: in first year, students often took courses for interest in subjects that they were not intending to pursue as their main focus for study, and this was to be encouraged. However, if they achieved a grade E or lower in 40 credits, they would be left needing to achieve D3 in all 120 credits in second year. Representatives from the Sciences felt that a common position might be arrived at across the three faculties at a slightly lower level than the proposed 200 credits, possibly 180.

A divergence of provisions here was felt to be justified in view of the different spreads of assessment grades used in Science as opposed to non-Science subjects, and the different assessment patterns (e.g. with Sciences typically having a greater number of smaller courses).

The Sub-Committee concluded that it would be necessary to have four different models:

- Science faculties
- Arts/Social Sciences
- Professional e.g. MA Teaching qualification
- Bachelor of Nursing

One of the drivers for harmonisation was the apparent anomaly that students could come from three different faculties to take the same Honours courses, with different entry requirements. However, it needed to be acknowledged that coming from different faculties, their experiences at levels 1 and 2 would have been different and ultimately they would receive a different award.

The Sub-Committee's view was that progress had been made towards harmonisation in this area and that it might be possible to move further in this direction after a period of reflection once the new regulations were implemented.

Other factors, such as the effects of changing entry tariff requirements, would also have to be taken into account.

It was agreed that there would be further consultation on the following specific points:

- Whether Arts and Social Sciences could adopt a common position of requiring 80 of the 200 credits in A2 to be at level 2.
- Whether the three Science faculties could adopt a common position on the number of credits required to be at D3.

The Convener would also give further consideration to the inclusion of 'normally' at A2.

In relation to A3, the August consultation document had proposed that the number of credits specified to come from the Faculty list should be in the range 120-160. Responses had indicated that 140 was broadly acceptable. Arts had specified that this depended on an 'Arts Faculty' subject being defined as one that could be taken to Honours in the Arts Faculty.

B. Requirements for Entry to a specific Honours degree programme

In addition to the requirements proposed under A1–A3, the following were suggested:

B1. Achievement of at least 40 credits of pre-requisites at level 2, with a minimum average of Grade C3.

B2. Programmes to specify achievement of a specified grade on other courses or activities not forming part of the pre-requisites. [B1 and B2 together were designed to capture existing practice where a grade was specified for the course(s) at level 2 from which the Honours programme followed on and a lower grade was specified for some additional course(s) or activities.]

B1. This was to be a minimum requirement, in recognition of concerns about more students becoming eligible to progress to Honours with no guarantee of additional teaching resources. Faculties and programmes would be permitted to specify additional requirements, the achievement of which would guarantee entry to Honours if not to specific courses. Where students failed to achieve the advertised standard, a discretion would still exist for them to be admitted to Honours. While there was broad agreement on the principle, some further formulation of the wording was required.

Education had advised that for BTechEd and BTech Studies all previous courses were prerequisites and the minimum average was C2. Also, the BN had a fixed curriculum so this was not applicable.

B2. (Other specific requirements) While there was broad agreement with this proposal, the wording did not capture everything that might fall into this category (e.g. non-graded activities such as the year abroad for language students). These were typically activities that would have a code on Websurf and would appear on a transcript. The wording 'other activities related to the Honours programme' was suggested.

C. First attempt

Views were sought on whether the requirement for grades to be achieved at the first attempt should be included or whether the wording 'normally at the first attempt' was more appropriate. There was broad agreement with the latter. Nursing had indicated a strong view that grades should be achieved at the first attempt. It was suggested that Nursing might be content with the incorporation of

'normally' into this regulation, given that the discretion that it offered did not have to be exercised.

There was some discussion as to the meaning of 'first attempt'. There appeared to be different interpretations of this term and it would be important that the intended meaning was clear in the regulation. For example, the Sciences would accept the first attempt within a repeated year as a 'first attempt' whereas Arts would not.

ASC is therefore invited to advise on definition of the term 'first attempt' in this context.

3. Progress within Honours

The proposals within the August consultation were:

1. To progress from third year to fourth year within Honours students must achieve an average of D3 in courses taken in third year as part of the Honours programme with at least two thirds of credits at D3 or better.
2. To progress within an integrated Masters programme an average of C3 is required, with at least 75% of credits at D3 or better and all credits at F3 or better.

There had been a variety of responses, with Education (BEd and MA RPE with TQ) and Nursing highlighting professional requirements. Engineering also required a floor of E3 (credit at E3 or above) for accreditation. It was noted that harmonisation was not appropriate on this issue where some third year courses were assessed at level 3 rather than Honours level. The Convener agreed to draw out the different possible options on this issue. Consultation on these would follow.

4. Weighting of Assessment for Honours and Weighting of Assessment for Integrated Masters

Responses to the April consultation had revealed a great variation in practice (the weighting for Junior and Senior Honours varying between 5:95 and 50:50; and the weighting for integrated Masters varying from 10:20:70 to 0:50:50). The August consultation had invited faculties to consider again whether there could be moves towards a single model being used in each faculty (e.g. 50:50 or 40:60 for Honours).

Responses indicated that harmonisation on these two points was very problematic. Various issues were raised, such as year three of an Honours course being assessed at either level 3 or H; in some programmes courses were offered in alternate years; and for each programme there would be a particular view of how the different skills and knowledge were built up over the different years of the programme. It was agreed that this was an area where programme proposals needed to set out carefully the rationale for the weighting between different years and that this should be included on the programme specifications and supporting documentation that went to Programme Approval Groups.