

University of Glasgow**Academic Standards Committee - Friday 20 November 2009****Progress Report from Academic Regulations Sub-Committee:
Proposed Harmonisation of Supplementary Regulations****Professor T Guthrie, Convener****Introduction**

Academic Regulations Sub-Committee reported to ASC in October. Since then the Group has not met again, but this paper presents the current picture in terms of points that have been established, issues yet to be resolved and the plan for further progress.

Progress Rules*1. Non-honours programmes*

The reference here is to programmes which are not honours programmes in the traditional sense, though degrees with honours may be awarded these are not calculated in the normal way set out in the Code of Assessment. The degrees involved all have requirements which are dictated by external accreditation/professional requirements and comprise: BDS, BVMS, MBChB, BEd, BACP, BACD. These programmes operate a rule which either requires a grade D or better in order to progress from one year to the next or, in the case of programmes in the Faculty of Education, the possibility of carrying forward a limited number of credits from one year to the next.

2. Programmes admitting to honours at entry

There are two programmes involved here, the BAcc and the BEng. In the case of the latter a progress rule which requires a Weighted Average Aggregation score (WAA) of 9 with no grade below E3 would be workable. Further discussion is required with the Department of Accounting and Finance in respect of the BAcc.

3. Programmes which select for honours

There are two principal models here. The first involves programmes which have external requirements imposed by accreditation. These are the BTechEd, MARPE, and BN. These all essentially involve a requirement that everything is passed at D3 or better to progress, though the programmes run within the Faculty of Education permit carry forward of a limited number of credits. There may also be additional requirements derived from placements or achievement of practice outcomes. One issue which arises in this context is whether, if the basic threshold requirements set out below are accepted, these programmes should, to be consistent, require that at least 40 credits from level 2 courses are at grade C or better. This is, in fact, the position in the BN.

The other models do not (in many cases) attract professional recognition in the same way. These are the two MA degrees, the BSc and the LLB. Following the two rounds of consultation it appears that it may be possible to agree certain basic rules which would apply across the board. These are:

- (a) Students entering honours must have 240 credits at levels 1 and 2, and

- (b) At least 140 of these credits are from the course list appropriate to the programme, defined as subjects which can be taken to honours level within that programme.

A third requirement would relate to the number of credits at grade D required for entry to honours. The consultation suggested that it might be possible to have two variants of this:

- i. For the BSc the requirement would possibly be 180 credits, though further discussion would be needed within the Science Faculties on this number. One reason for this requirement being lower in the BSc as compared to the Arts and Social Science requirement is the greater spread of marks in Science subjects and the possibility that students may struggle to achieve a higher number. It is recognised that once there is experience of this figure in practice it may be possible to achieve further harmonisation.
- ii. Further discussion will be necessary involving the Faculties of Arts and LBSS around the possibility of achieving agreement on a requirement for 200 credits at grade D or better, including 80 credits at level 2. Separate provision may be required for the LLB because a number of courses are prescribed for the degree.

In these further discussions it maybe relevant to consider the fact that students can take the same honours subject across three degree programmes as well as the desirability of ensuring that entrants to honours are in a position to graduate with an Ordinary degree if junior honours does not work out.

In addition to these rules, there would also be two additional rules which would be minimum requirements which could be added to in relation to particular subjects. One of these deals with the pre-requisites for entry to honours in a particular subject. The minimum requirements would be specification of achievement of a grade C or better in 40 credits of that subject at level 2. In addition, departments would be able to specify other requirements, either in terms of a particular grade in a course in a cognate subject or completion of non-credit bearing or non-graded activities, for example field work. It is not intended that these requirement would be able to add further stringency to the requirements set out at (a), (b), (i) and (ii) above. The requirements are minimum requirements as it is considered that establishing a single universal rule would place excessive pressure on particular departments.

Different views were expressed as to whether the standard should normally be achieved at first attempt. The overwhelming view, however, was that this should be the requirement.

4. Progress within honours

The different structures of honours programmes make it difficult to prescribe a single rule. For example, some programmes involve third year students studying at level 3, in others third year students are studying at level H. There is clearly a large number of possibilities. Some of these are:

- (a) 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. A variant of this would require that no grades were below E3.
- (b) To progress within honours a D3 or better is required in all courses, this might be appropriate in cases where it was dictated by professional accreditation requirement.
- (c) To progress within honours a grade C average is required.
- (d) 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. A variant of this would require that no grades were below E3.

The final possibility is based on the progress rules set out in the Generic taught Masters regulation. It might be suggested that there is a difference between the programmes which that regulation deals with and integrated Masters degrees in that in the latter a student is moving through levels rather than studying primarily at level M. It is, of course possible, to have rules for progress with integrated Masters programmes which mirror those for progress from third to fourth year in an honours degree.

Weighting in calculation of honours classification

Initial responses to the consultation 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 second 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; each programme would have its own view of how the different skills and knowledge were built up over the different years of the programme. The view of the sub-committee is that this is an area where programme proposals need to set out carefully the rationale for the weighting between different years and this should be included on the programme specifications and supporting documentation that went to Programme Approval Groups. Despite the existence of differences between different programmes there have been significant moves towards harmonisation in individual Faculties.

Conclusion

Views and/or information are being sought on the following matters (some matters will be discussed directly with the relevant Faculty/Department):

- (a) Are there any further variants of the rules for progress either within an Honours degree or within an Integrated Masters degree?
- (b) What rationale might there be for treating Integrated Masters differently from Postgraduate Masters degrees aside from that noted above?
- (c) What further reasons might there be for different weightings at honours level?
- (d) Any further comments on any matter.