

## University of Glasgow

## Academic Standards Committee – Friday 8 October 2010

Report from Meeting of Academic Regulations Sub-Committee - 3  
September 2010

Professor Tom Guthrie, Convener

**1. Joint Honours***Definition of Joint Honours*

ARSC was advised that a case in the summer had highlighted an ambiguity in the definition of Joint Honours.

The Sub-Committee noted the following:

The Glossary of Terms for taught courses used the following definition:

Joint Honours degree (or Combined Honours degree): An Honours degree awarded following successful completion of a 480-credit programme in which two subjects are studied in depth. The subjects are normally equally weighted in the programme's scheme of assessment.

The following provision was taken from the Generic Undergraduate Regulations:

§16.2 A scheme of assessment may permit a candidate for Honours in a single subject to be assessed in not more than 25% of the total assessment for Honours from the scheme of assessment in one other subject.

This raised the question of the extent to which a curriculum could depart from a 50:50 balance between the two subjects and still constitute Joint Honours. In Social Sciences, Law with Language was recognised as a Principal/Subsidiary degree, in which the balance between the two subjects was 2/3:1/3. But this arrangement appeared not to be in use in other parts of the University.

The Committee recognised that some departure from a 50:50 balance in Joint Honours was inevitable because of the different credit ratings used in different subjects, but the variance from 50:50 tended to be small and be kept to a minimum.

There was discussion regarding the meaning of a Combined Degree. The Glossary of Terms indicated that this was the same as a Joint Degree. Consultation following the meeting of the Sub-Committee confirmed that in the Sciences the term essentially meant the same as Joint Honours, and that the term 'Joint Honours' had traditionally meant something slightly different, so replacing the term 'Combined' with 'Joint' in the Sciences would be likely to cause confusion.

The Committee agreed **to propose to ASC the following definition** to be included in the Calendar (generic undergraduate regulation) as well as in the Glossary of Terms.

Joint Honours degree: An Honours degree awarded following successful completion of a 480-credit programme in which two subjects are studied in depth, with at least 120 credits

but no more than 140 credits in each subject, and the subjects being normally equally weighted in the calculation of the final classification.<sup>1</sup>

The Committee's view was that it was important to give equal weight to both subjects in the calculation of the final Honours classification. Where the total of credits contributing to the Honours award exceeded 240, requiring all credits to be counted in the calculation would be consistent with the spirit of §16.3 of the GUR (counting of courses), but each subject would be weighted as 50% of the overall classification. **The Sub-Committee seeks ASC's endorsement of this approach.**

The definition would permit up to 280 credits to contribute to the overall classification. It was noted that currently the BSc/MSci regulations stated that the maximum number of credits permitted to be studied in one session was 150, but other degree regulations did not include such a stipulation.

**ASC's view is also sought on whether a definition of 'Principal and Subsidiary' programmes should be included in the generic undergraduate regulation and Glossary of Terms.**

### *Operation of Joint Honours Examination Boards*

It was noted that the University Calendar currently offered no direction in relation to the operation of Joint Examination Boards. The common understanding was that two Boards met separately, with the later scheduled of the two taking the final decision on classification, and that representatives from the first Board would attend. It was accepted that it was impossible for an External Examiner from the first Board to attend the second meeting, so it was incumbent on the first Board's representatives to represent the views of their External Examiner.

## **2. Eligibility for reassessment**

Eligibility for reassessment on taught courses was defined in §16.6 of the Code of Assessment. The principle was that when the relevant 'threshold grade' had been achieved, there was no right to reassessment. However, it had come to light that in some areas of the University students had been offered reassessment with reference to the achievement of other criteria, e.g. the requirements for entry to Honours.

It was noted that §15.3 of the generic undergraduate regulation offered a discretion to the Head of School to offer admission to Honours where the stipulated requirements had not all been met. However, this was a discretion to permit entry to Honours, not a discretion to permit additional assessment attempts.

The Group's view was that the exception offered in §16.13 of the Code of Assessment (the opportunity to complete a graduating curriculum for an ordinary/designated degree) should be the only exception to the general rule on eligibility as expressed in §16.6, and agreed that **ASC should be invited to endorse this interpretation of the regulations.**

## **3. Incomplete assessment on PGT programmes**

A query had been raised as to how the provisions in the Code of Assessment on incomplete assessment should be applied to postgraduate taught programmes. The particular query concerned a student who by the end of the session was 20 credits short of the required 180. Good cause had been established for the second of the two available diets.

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<sup>1</sup> The definition will require a footnote in relation to Joint Honours involving the LLB where the overall total of credits will be lower.

The provisions on incomplete assessment distinguished between Honours and non-Honours programmes. The approach at Honours was to consider how much of the programme as a whole had been completed, reflecting the fact that in Senior Honours there was no opportunity to repeat work that had been missed. On other programmes, credit would only be awarded for courses if 75% or more of the assessment for that course had been completed. The view of the group was that this latter approach was appropriate for PGT programmes. An element of ambiguity had been introduced into the regulations by the reference to 'sub-Honours' programmes at §16.52(a). The Group's view was that this was a mistake and it had been intended for this provision to apply to all non-Honours programmes, including PGT.

It was agreed that the provisions on Incomplete Assessment resulting from Good Cause should be amended to refer specifically to postgraduate taught programmes and **ASC's approval is now sought for the changes (Appendix 1).**

#### 4. Review of non-generic Masters

A review of non-generic Masters regulations had revealed the following:

MLitt: Schedule B – study by prescribed programmes – no programmes currently approved.

MPhil: Schedule A – study by prescribed programmes – no programmes currently approved

MSc – Schedule B – study by prescribed programmes – no programmes currently approved

In each case the regulations were antiquated. It was agreed to **propose to ASC that regulations for study by prescribed programmes for the three above awards be deleted from the Calendar.**

MSc – Schedule C – work-based learning. It was not known if this schedule was still being used. **ASC's approval for the deletion of this schedule from the Calendar is now sought, if it can be established that it is no longer in use.**

The awards MLitt, MPhil and MSc all had schedules for award by research. In each case the regulations could benefit from updating. **It is therefore proposed that ARSC take this forward seeking RPSC's input as appropriate, with formal reporting to RPSC to be undertaken ultimately by ASC.**

MRes: The award was currently in use in three Colleges (with Arts having introduced the award for the first time for 2010-11) and was used for programmes with a combination of taught courses and independent research which fell outwith the framework of the generic PGT. The regulations needed updating in relation to: permitted balance of credits between taught and dissertation; exit awards; criteria for merit and distinction; compensation. It was agreed that the sub-committee should seek views in relation to these issues and gather information on the structures of programmes currently on offer.

Non-generic awards: There were a number of non-generic programmes where there did not appear to be any scope for rationalising or updating the regulations. These were programmes which awarded jointly with other institutions, or programmes where the requirements were unusual (such as a total of 260 credits for the award). (A list of these awards is given at Appendix 2.)

#### 5. Exercise of discretion in Honours classification

The Sub-Committee noted that the recent ELIR report referred to the exercise by exam boards of discretion in recommending Honours classifications. It was noted that the task of balancing discretion with the need for transparency and consistency was a difficult one.

One initial view was that consideration could be given to reducing the size of the discretionary bands; the impression was that a large number of students currently came within these zones. **It was agreed to seek direction from ASC on how this issue should be addressed.**

## **6. Application of Code of Assessment**

The Faculty Quality Assurance and Enhancement Officers Group's annual report 2009-10 had referred to 'a need for evaluation as to whether the new Code of Assessment is being applied effectively'. ASC had requested that the Sub-Committee investigate what lay behind the comment and any possible action that should be taken. The comment had come initially from the former Faculty of Law, Business & Social Sciences, but it had not yet been possible to identify the particular issue or issues that had prompted the comment. There had been an indication from Senate Office that some External Examiners had raised the issue of inconsistency in the application of the Code of Assessment. Further information would be sought both on external examiner feedback and the background to the comments supplied by the former LBSS.

## **7. Timing and Duration of Examinations**

At its meeting in May, ASC had asked ARSC to consider the current regulations in relation to the timing and duration of examinations, as laid out in §§16.14-16.21 and Schedule D of the Code of Assessment. The sub-committee gave an initial consideration of the issues and will report to ASC on the outcomes in due course.

## **8. Remit and membership**

The remit and membership of the Sub-Committee would be agreed at the next meeting, following ASC's consideration of its own remit and membership at its meeting in October.

**Extract from 'Incomplete Assessment resulting from Good Cause' section of Code of Assessment**

16.51 If the outstanding work in respect of which good cause is established is identified in regulations as a requirement for the award of a degree this work must be submitted for the candidate to qualify for the award of that degree.

16.52 In respect of work for assessment not excluded by §16.51, where it is determined that the evidence presented supports the candidate's claim that he or she was prevented by good cause from completing that work on or by the due time, and where no means of substituting an alternative assessment may be found, the following regulations shall apply:

- (a) The extent to which the candidate's assessment has been completed shall be determined as a percentage, taking into account the relative weights attributed to the components of a complete assessment as published in the relevant assessment scheme approved by the Senate. The extent of such completion at sub-honours levels and on taught postgraduate programmes shall be determined on a course by course basis; at honours, the extent of completion of assessment shall be determined across the whole honours assessment.
- (b) The Board of Examiners shall make an overall judgement of the candidate's work submitted for assessment, using as far as possible the standards and criteria applied in respect of the work of other candidates.
- (c) Where the candidate has completed 75% or more of the work required for assessment, the Board of Examiners shall recommend an award or other outcome on the basis of the work completed.
- (d) In respect of honours assessment,
  - (i) where the candidate has completed at least 30% but less than 75% of the work required for assessment, an unclassified honours degree may be recommended if the completed portion is of honours standard, or, if the completed portion is not of honours standard, no award shall be made and the candidate will be regarded as not having been presented for honours assessment;
  - (ii) where the candidate has completed less than 30% of the work required for assessment he or she will be regarded as not having been presented for honours assessment.
- (e) In respect of ~~non-honours~~ sub-honours and taught postgraduate assessment, where the candidate has completed less than 75% of the work required for assessment he or she will be regarded as not having taken the course.

16.53 Where the Board of Examiners decides to recommend an unclassified honours degree or to make no award, this outcome shall be communicated to the Clerk of Senate together with a reasoned case for the decision. If the candidate has been recommended for the award of an unclassified honours degree, and has not previously refused such an offer, the Clerk of Senate shall invite him or her to accept that award. In the event of the award being declined, the candidate shall be regarded as not having been presented for honours assessment.

List of non-generic Masters awards where no rationalisation of the regulations will be proposed.

### **College of Arts**

*Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing (Applied)*

Min period of study two years; award requires 240 credits

*MLitt Hermeneutics*

Joint with Stirling

*MMus*

Study and research; dissertation to contribute 60% of assessment weight

*MPhil Textile Conservation*

New for this year. Two-year min period of study; 360 credits required for award.

*MTheology*

Schedule A – research

Schedule B – prescribed course of study. Prescribed courses + dissertation equally weighted.

### **College of Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences**

*MSC (Dental Science) Fixed and Removable Prosthodontics/Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery*

Min duration is two years f-t; requirement for the award is 260 credits.

*Master of Veterinary Medicine – research*

### **College of Science & Engineering**

*MSc Environmental Science*

Offered jointly with Strathclyde

*MSc Geotechnics*

Offered jointly with Strathclyde

*MSc in Ship and Offshore Structures*

Offered jointly with Strathclyde

*MSc Marine Technology*

Offered jointly with a number of other institutions

*MSc System Level Integration (and by Distance Learning)*

Offered jointly with a number of other institutions

## **College of Social Sciences**

### *International Master in Russian, Central and East European Studies*

Min period of study 18 months; requires 240 credits for the award

### *Master of Chinese Studies*

No new entrants

### *Master of Community Care*

Offered jointly with Strathclyde

### *Master of Laws by Research*

### *MSc Clinical Leadership*

Two years part-time only; 180 credits required for the award but 60 taught, 120 Action Research Project.

### *MSc Criminal Justice*

No new entrants

### *MSc Strategic Human Resource Management and Organisational Change*

Two years part-time only; 180 credits required for the award but 60 taught, 120 Action Research Project.

### *Master of Social Work*

Offered jointly with Strathclyde