University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Monday 22 November 2010

Joint and Double/Multiple Degrees: Minimum Period of Study to be Required for the Award of a University of Glasgow Degree

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Discussion paper

The following short paper sets out issues and raises questions on the matter of the amount of study we should require a student to complete at the University in the context of joint or double/multiple degrees involving partner institutions.

1. Definitions

A **double/multiple[1] degree** is where two or more degrees are awarded to a student by two or more universities for the same programme of study. They therefore differ from the more common and long-established **joint degrees** which involve two or more universities developing a single award conferred jointly on a student.

2. Current University of Glasgow position

The University has offered joint degrees with partner institutions for many years.

The Senate position is that the University will consider entering into agreements that result in students receiving double/multiple degrees on the same basis as it would consider comparable academic collaborations such as joint degrees: ie, on the basis of a recommendation from the Research Planning & Strategy Committee (RPSC) or Education Policy & Strategy Committee (EdPSC). To date, the University has approved six double degree schemes. Details on these are provided at the end of this paper[2].

3. Outstanding Issue: Minimum amount of study at the University of Glasgow

There is an issue that has not yet been decided in respect of joint and double/multiple degrees: the minimum amount of study we would require a student to undertake at the University of Glasgow to permit them to receive a Glasgow degree.
The normal minimum amount of study to allow the awarding of a Glasgow degree is 50% of the total, usually reckoned in terms of credits. This applies typically where a student joins a

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[1] Sometimes referred to as 'dual' degrees.

[2] In adopting the current position, Senate noted that double/multiple degrees are becoming more common and many of the most senior UK peer universities maintain such programmes. In this context, it would potentially place the University at a competitive disadvantage not to consider double degree schemes. Also, any sense of 'cheapening' degrees by making awards on a 'two-for-one' basis was diminishing, and many of the existing double/multiple degrees involving UK universities are in connection with prestigious academic collaborations and institutions, where the double degree adds cachet to the programme. It was also noted that, generally, it is likely to be easier to establish a double degree programme than joint degrees, and that, in some countries, awarding joint degrees with international partners is not permitted, but double degree arrangements are possible. In considering the matter, RPSC decided that it would only wish to consider approving a double/multiple scheme for PGR degrees where there were compelling and strategic reasons for not developing a joint degree.

UoG programme following a period of study elsewhere. This is formally known as recognition of prior learning. However this minimum might be challenged in entering into joint or double/multiple degree arrangements. This could arise in situations where the collaboration involves several or more insititutions and where more than 50% of students' studying on the programme is spent at institutions other than Glasgow.

There is a further possibility in double/multiple schemes involving a number of universities. In practical terms, it is not likely that a student will study at more than three universities during the programme. It is likely to be the case that each university where a student has studied will award their separate degree. However (and while we are not aware of any such cases existing at the present), it is conceivable that other universities participating in the scheme might wish to consider awarding a degree also, although the individual student has not studied there. This raises the question whether we might want to award degrees where students have not studied at UoG at all.

Question 1: Definition of UoG involvement in degree

There are perhaps three main ways of calculating a student's engagement with UoG for the purposes of this paper:

- The amount of credit gained at Glasgow as a proportion of the total for the award (taught degrees only)
- time studying here (where applicable, credit is normally geared to this)
- supervision (ie, there is a UoG supervisor appointed either as co-supervisor with colleague(s) from other institutions or first supervisor)

This allows us to consider the issue for taught and research degrees. ***However, are there other ways of viewing University engagement with students that are relevant?***

Question 2: Would we award degrees where students have no engagement with the University?

Do we wish to consider providing awards to students studying within a programme involving a consortium of universities that includes the University but where they do not spend time at Glasgow or receive supervision at Glasgow?

Of relevance here in the context of multiple degrees is the idea of providing graduating students with a 'Parchment Supplement'. This is not an academic award in itself. It is a formal document which is given to graduates and explains that the degree was obtained under the terms of a prestigious collaboration. Our Senate has approved the idea in principle and one is being compiled at present. The idea is gaining currency in European collaborations. This may be preferable generally to awarding a degree in such circumstances.

Question 3: If students must have engaged with the University, what is the minimum requirement?

As noted above, the normal minimum requirement the University specifies is that 50% of the total programme is undertaken at Glasgow. (Some Scottish peer universities allow more. Comparable English universities tend to allow a maximum of 1/3 recognised prior learning, especially for first degrees, though this is likely a consequence of the three-year honours degree structure. Many allow up to 50% or, rarely, even more, for PGT programmes.) Our existing joint degrees involve minimum 50% study at Glasgow. It is possible there will be programme structures proposed that challenge the 50% minimum in future. Some more likely models are set out below (not an exhaustive list):-

	% studied at UoG
PGR	
3-year programme with one year at UoG	33
PGT	
3 semester programme with one semester at UoG	33
4 semester programme with one semester at UoG	25
UG	
4-year Honours degree with one year at UoG	25

If we do not wish to make awards where students do not engage with this University, ***what minimum level of engagement with UoG should we prescribe?***

It should be remembered that the University will only enter into collaborations with highly trusted and reputable institutions where it is satisfied that the quality of the student experience at every partner institution is equivalent to that provided at Glasgow.

Re PGR, one alternative would be to accept a less than 50% position, but with a UoG supervisor throughout the duration of the degree.

University of Glasgow current Double Degree arrangement details

PGR
PhD University of Lausanne (individual student)
PhD University of Geneva (individual student)
TPG
International Masters in Russian and East European Studies with five other partner institutions
MAcc & MFin with St Petersburg State University
MAcc & MFin with Finance Academy, Moscow
UG
BSc Statistics with University of Bologna
Further information In the double degrees we have approved to date, there is one instance where the students have a less than 50% engagement at UoG, that is the collaboration with Bologna, where students originating from Bologna spend 33% of their time in Glasgow (third year of a three-year degree programme). Students originating from UoG spend 75% of their study in Glasgow (with the third of their four-year Honours programme in Bologna). In the cases of the double PhDs we have awarded, there has been a UoG first or co-supervisor. The 240-credit International Masters programme lasts two academic years; all students spend their first year in Glasgow (120 credits) and the second at another university, although the dissertation element (60 credits), completed in Year 2, is always co-supervised by Glasgow staff. The links with St Petersburg and the Finance Academy, Moscow are not strictly double degree arrangements. In both cases students spend three semesters at the Russian

institution, followed by two semesters in UoG. In effect, from a UoG point of view these are essentially articulations. Study completed in the Russian institutions is assessed as contributing 60 credits; they then complete a further 120 credits in Glasgow. In addition to the MAcc or MFin from Glasgow, students also obtain a Masters from either St Petersburg or the Finance Academy.