

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 18 February 2011

Report from Meeting of Academic Regulations Sub-Committee held on Monday 8 February 2011

Professor Tom Guthrie, Convener

1. Rounding of Grades

ASC had asked ARSC to consider the operation of rounding in view of concerns expressed by one external examiner. It appeared that the external examiner was concerned that premature rounding may result in unfairness in the award of a candidate's honours classification. One member who had been present at the Exam Board in question suggested that the External may have been unclear on the rules concerning the point at which rounding should take place as opposed to expressing concern that the rules, correctly operated, caused unfairness.

The Committee noted that students were advised of individual course results in terms of alphanumeric grades, and not in terms of unrounded scores. The Committee's view was that rounding would determine whether a candidate fell within one of the clear classification bands or into a discretionary zone. Once a student was within the discretionary zone, there were a number of factors that would be taken into account in determining the ultimate classification awarded. In the College of Arts some Boards kept a note of the unrounded mean as a point of reference. Experience showed that any capricious effect due to rounding was likely to be counter-balanced by careful consideration by Exam Boards of students who were in the discretionary zone.

It was noted that the short life working group on discretion in classification of honours was due to report to ASC. **It was agreed to propose to ASC that reference to an unrounded mean should be added to the criteria that exam boards could use when determining results in the discretionary zones.**

2. Achieving consistency in Good Cause decisions

EdPSC had requested that consideration be given to possible measures for promoting consistency in decisions taken in relation to claims of good cause and requests for waiving of penalties for coursework submitted up to three days late.

Members agreed that it was very difficult to ensure consistency of decision making and that on the whole the experience and good judgment of staff should be trusted. It was noted that the three-day limit in relation to extensions permitted by course conveners ensured that the scope for variation in decisions being taken by a large number of staff was kept to a minimum. It was appropriate that some decisions should be taken at this level, where the decision-maker knew the course and the students.

The Committee considered the guidance currently contained in the Guide to the Code of Assessment and noted that this explicitly acknowledged the risk of being overly prescriptive. It was noted that there were cases that might be considered to merit a three-day extension but would not constitute good cause. (A specialist IT lab having been out of action for some days leading up to a submission deadline might be accepted to merit a three-day extension but would not be accepted as good cause.) **It was agreed that the Guide to the Code of Assessment would benefit from more detailed guidance on this and, in particular, on the relationship between extensions of up**

to three days and good cause cases. The impression held by members was that the number of extensions being sought for more than three days was low.

There was a suggestion that an overview might be sought at School level of decisions taken by course coordinators to permit extensions of up to three days, but it was felt that this could represent a very significant task and it would not be straightforward for someone who did not know the courses to assess the decisions that had been taken.

The Committee endorsed the current position that requests for extensions of more than three days should be handled differently from requests for shorter extensions. The regulations currently identified the Head of School as the appropriate person to take good cause decisions but the view of the Committee was that, particularly in large Schools, this was not practicable, and the appropriate person might be the Head of Subject. At sub-Honours level this meant that there was the possibility that one student would be making a case to three different heads, with the risk of inconsistent responses.

ARSC agreed to refer to ASC the issue of who was the most appropriate person to make decisions in relation to claims of good cause.

3. Assessment Issues Arising from Student Lifecycle Project Board

The Convener of ASC had referred to ARSC a paper considered by EdPSC outlining various proposals from the Student Lifecycle Project which had possible regulatory implications. ARSC considered these, and its feedback is provided in paper ([ASC 10/38](#)) which will be considered as a separate item.

4. Eligibility for reassessment in all components

ARSC noted that ASC had agreed that reassessment regulations should be amended to allow students the opportunity to be reassessed in any or all course components when they failed to attain the overall course threshold at first attempt.

The current position was that students were credited with whichever result was better – the first or second attempt. The Convener of ASC had asked ARSC to consider whether this position should be revised to guard against over-compensation when the new regulations were introduced. A possible alternative was that in the event of a student electing to be re-assessed in a component in which they had already achieved the relevant threshold grade, they would be credited only with the result achieved at the second attempt. The Committee's view was that such an approach could have a significant adverse effect for some students, which could not be justified. The view also was that the number of students who would elect to be re-assessed in components in which they had already achieved the relevant threshold was low.

The Committee agreed that once the new rules had been established there should be a review of how they were being used in practice.

ARSC's view was therefore that following introduction of rules permitting reassessment in any or all components of a course where the overall course threshold has not been achieved, the position should remain that for each component of assessment the student should benefit from the better of the two results achieved.

5. Items to be reported to April meeting of ASC

- Duration of Examinations
- Review of Masters regulations