

University of Glasgow**Academic Standards Committee – Friday 17 February 2012****Report from Meeting of Academic Regulations Sub-Committee held
on Thursday 2 February 2012****Professor Tom Guthrie, Convener****1. Assessment of visiting students**

ASC had asked ARSC to review the current principles applying to assessment of visiting students. ARSC invited Deans of Learning and Teaching to comment on proposed amendments to the principles, and the responses broadly indicated agreement with the proposals, though raised a small number of issues which are noted below.

ASC is invited to consider the following proposed amendments to the principles applying to the assessment of visiting students:**1.1 Requirement to complete a minimum of two pieces of assessed work.**

This requirement was in the current principles but ARSC's view was that it was not always necessary to assess two pieces of work and that the requirement should be removed. It was more important to assess achievement of the relevant ILOs rather than that a particular number of assessments be undertaken.

1.2 Requirement for assessment under examination conditions.

The current principles required at least one piece of assessed work to be completed under exam conditions. ARSC considered that where a course's normal scheme of assessment involved a component taken under examination conditions, the assessment of visiting students should also include a component to be undertaken under examination conditions.

The College of Social Sciences had responded to this by noting that requiring assessments to be completed under exam conditions could be unduly burdensome to arrange; current practice permitted the setting of an essay in lieu of an examination if the student was leaving Glasgow before the scheduled exam.

ARSC noted the importance of observing fairness to other students on such courses. It was suggested that there may be some flexibility within the requirement, e.g. that, instead of completing an alternative exam paper, visiting students might be required to write on an essay topic under exam conditions, though this would still inevitably create an administrative burden. It was reasonable that students should normally be expected to stay in Glasgow until the relevant exam diet for their courses, and this should be stated prominently in course documentation.

On occasion a visiting student's home institution imposed a requirement, such as the completion of a project while at the host institution. In such cases, the principle that some assessment should be carried out under exam conditions might need to be set aside.

1.3 Visiting students being permitted to sit final Honours papers.

ARSC saw no reason to change this.

1.4 Assessment arrangements for visiting students not required to appear in the Course Catalogue.

Given the need for flexibility it would not be possible to reflect all assessment options in the course catalogue. Clarification was required on how the need for such flexibility could be supported in MyCampus.

1.5 Ad hoc arrangements for assessment to permit students to leave Glasgow early.

The existing principles indicated that ad hoc arrangements should not be made. ARSC's view was that this approach was unreasonable. Since restructuring of the academic year, there was less of a problem in relation to the assessment period at the end of semester 1, as students no longer needed to return to Glasgow to sit exams after the Christmas vacation. There was the possibility that students might not return after Easter but this was thought to be a smaller problem. In some cases courses running in semester 1 were not examined until semester 2.

It was recognised that there were sometimes good reasons for students leaving Glasgow, such as having to return to their home university for a scheduled period of examinations. ARSC's view was that two options should be considered for students who had to leave Glasgow ahead of the April/May diet: they could sit examinations at home at the correct time or they could undertake an alternative form of assessment before leaving Glasgow (as discussed above – 'Requirement for assessment under examination conditions').

1.6 Credit to be awarded.

ARSC's view was that where a student was not present for the full duration of a course (e.g. attending semester 1 of a course running across semester 1 and semester 2) the amount of credit awarded should reflect the proportion of teaching time attended. Again this required appropriate set-up in MyCampus.

1.7 Results for visiting students to be processed through a Board of Examiners.

ARSC's view was that the existing principle of results for visiting students needing to be considered by a Board of Examiners should be affirmed. There was a question as to what should happen where students left Glasgow before the Board of Examiners had taken place. One option was to inform them of their provisional results. In some cases, though, the home institution would require confirmed results. The response from the College of Science and Engineering had indicated that it was not in favour of having to convene special exam boards for such cases. ARSC's view was that there should be a means of confirming students' results without creating an excessive additional burden on staff, e.g. by convening a 'virtual' board.

Regulations for inclusion in the University Calendar would be drafted following approval by ASC of the revised principles.

2. Operation of Discretion by Honours / PGT Boards of Examiners

ARSC considered the responses that had been received to the University-wide consultation on the exercise of discretion by Honours and PGT Examination Boards.

Zones of discretion for Honours classifications

A narrowing of the zones of discretion had been proposed. When the Code of Assessment had first been introduced it had always been the intention to narrow the zones in time, once confidence in the operation of the Code had been established. It had been thought that the narrowing could be effected without significant impact on the number of different degree classifications being awarded. However, the data and the written responses received from a

number of Schools indicated that this was not in fact the case: Schools had been asked for data relating to promotions from 2.1 to 1st, and from 2.2 to 2.1, for Honours degrees awarded in 2011. For each decimal point of GPA within the two discretionary zones, Schools had stated what proportion of students was promoted to the higher classification. There were significant numbers from the .1 - .4 ranges who were promoted. It was noted that if narrower discretionary zones were introduced, extending from .5 to .9, there would inevitably be some reluctance at Exam Boards to promote from the lowest part of the zones. Members agreed that a score of .5 was often associated with a performance that clearly merited promotion.

While not all responses from across the University had yet been received, **the Committee was persuaded that it should propose to ASC that there be no narrowing of the discretionary zones.**

What was clear from the data was that there was inconsistency in the proportion of students being promoted across the range of GPAs in different Schools. This highlighted the importance of establishing clear guidelines to be followed by Exam Boards, and suggested that a further review of data on discretionary promotions across the University should be undertaken after the new guidelines had been in operation for a couple of years.

Zones of discretion for merit and distinction in PGT degrees

There was no discretion in relation to the actual award of a Masters degree. Discretion only existed in relation to the taught element of the programmes when considering promotion to merit or distinction. Fewer responses had been received regarding the proposed narrowing of the discretionary zones. Returns from Schools again indicated that there were a number of promotions from the lower half of the current discretionary zones. **ARSC therefore agreed to propose to ASC that there should be no narrowing of the discretionary zones in relation to the award of merit and distinction for PGT degrees.**

Guidelines on the exercise of discretion

A number of comments had been received in relation to the proposed guidelines to be followed in the exercise of discretion. However, in the absence of full responses from all Schools, ARSC agreed to return to the consideration of guidelines at its meeting in March and report to ASC thereafter.

3. Incomplete Assessment and Good Cause: Procedure for submitting claims of good cause

The rules on incomplete assessment and good cause set out how students should bring their claims of good cause to the attention of the relevant Board of Examiners. In the case of claims associated with periods of absence, the student was required to submit relevant evidence to MyCampus, in accordance with the Student Absence Policy. Any such submissions should automatically be brought to the attention of the relevant Board of Examiners. However, where the claim was not associated with a period of absence (e.g. a student who attended an examination but claimed that their performance was manifestly prejudiced), they were required to bring the circumstances and supporting evidence to the attention of the Head of School, who then notified the Board of Examiners.

ARSC was asked to consider whether the regulations should be changed to require that all claims of good cause, whether or not they involved absence, be submitted to Mycampus. It had been suggested that the current arrangements were confusing for staff and students and created uncertainty (e.g. in situations where claims of good cause involved periods of absence and other circumstances/evidence).

It was noted that in the College of Social Sciences, all students making a claim of good cause, even where absence was involved, were required to submit a good cause form. This form included the requirement that students indicate their understanding of the possible outcomes from their claim.

In principle ARSC agreed that it would be helpful to have one procedure for students submitting absence/good cause information, and that Mycampus should be able to provide the functionality for this. However, it was clear that students could not be required to use Mycampus until there was absolute confidence in the process. Some members noted that absence information was not currently being reported to Exam Boards, and concern was also expressed at the ease with which system users could delete information/documentation that students had entered onto Mycampus. It was essential that any change in process should be publicised widely and noted clearly within the main regulations (rather than in a footnote).

ARSC agreed to **propose to ASC:**

- **that all good cause claims should be required to be submitted to Mycampus,**
- **that SLP be invited to consider how such a change to procedure could be implemented, and**
- **that the necessary change be made to regulations only once there was confidence that Mycampus would be able to support such a change.**

4. Review of the Operation of the Code of Assessment for professional degrees

Following the meeting of ASC in November 2011, the clerk of ASC had written to the Heads of Schools of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine requesting that they report to ARSC their School's plans for taking forward credit rating of their programmes.

The School of Veterinary Medicine had responded that a credit rating structure for the BVMS programme would be developed during the process of curricular review that was underway with a completion date related to submission to the PAG process in the 1st semester of the 2012-13 academic session.

The School was developing a picture of credit rating of veterinary professional programmes (part completed). They would estimate the learning and teaching hours associated with the revised programme and model the potential credit rating using the SCQF model. The emerging credit rating model would be used as a basis for discussion with the College of MVLS, Senate Office and ASC as to the most appropriate approach to credit rating the BVMS programme.

The School of Medicine had not yet responded.

ARSC noted ASC's request that ARSC should look further into the issue of combining results from work assessed under Schedule A and Schedule B to produce overall course grades. ARSC agreed to ask Professor Evans to produce a paper for its next meeting, exploring the issues and suggesting ways in which this might be taken forward.

Two remaining issues (the clarification of regulations relating to the award of commendation and honours, and incomplete assessment) would be taken forward by the clerk to ARSC with the relevant programme teams.

5. Proposed PGT/MRes regulations

ARSC had considered comments received from the Deans of Graduate Studies Group concerning the proposed combined PGT/MRes regulations. There remained two areas where agreement had yet to be reached: criteria for award of the degree; and criteria for award of merit and distinction. ARSC members agreed that in view of the significance of these issues, it would be helpful for the Convener of ARSC to meet with DoGS to explore possible ways of making progress. The DoGS group was scheduled to meet next on 28 February and the Convener had indicated his availability to attend.