

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 14 November 2014

Recommendations from Senate Appeals Committee

Ms H Butcher, Senate Office

Following a recent academic appeal, the Senate Appeals Committee has suggested further guidance of the way manifest prejudice is considered in good cause claims. The appeal was from a second year student on the MA (SocSci) who had missed the minimum requirements for entering the desired Honours subject by one secondary band in one course (the appellant achieved a D1 when a C3 was required). While the adverse circumstances cited in the good cause claim were fully accepted as legitimate circumstances that may have affected performance, there was no finding that performance had been manifestly prejudiced. This judgement was made on the basis of a review of the appellant's grade profile, plus consideration of the appellant's performance in the affected course against the standard deviation of the full cohort results. The Senate Appeals Committee was concerned that a) even a slight dip in performance had, in this case, a severe impact on the student's progress, and b) that it was unfair to consider a student's performance against other students when making a judgement on good cause.

Accordingly, the Senate Appeals Committee recommended that further guidance should be provided on the application of 16.48 (d) of the Code of Assessment:

1. that once good cause had been established, the judgment on whether this had led to manifest prejudice of assessed performance should take into account the potential impact of even small grade reductions on the student's academic career (e.g. progression or final award), and when these appear to be significant, Exam Boards should be encouraged to exercise discretion in the student's best interest;
2. to clarify that decisions regarding manifest prejudice should not normally involve any comparison with the performance of other students in the assessment cohort.

Academic Standards Committee is invited to consider these recommendations and to determine whether there should be any revision to the Guide to the Code of Assessment and/or the Code of Assessment.

An extract of the Code of Assessment is attached for ease of reference.

Code of Assessment Extract

Incomplete Assessment resulting from Good Cause

Procedure

16.46 Where an incomplete assessment may be the result of good cause, it shall be the responsibility of the candidate concerned to make the circumstances known to the Head of the School responsible for the assessment, and to provide appropriate evidence.¹ Notification later than one week after the examination, or after the date at which submission of the work for assessment was due, shall not be taken into account unless circumstances have prevented the candidate from notifying the Head of School within this time. A candidate may not retract a claim of good cause more than one week after the examination or the date at which submission of work for assessment was due, nor after the date of publication of the results of the assessment, whichever date was earlier.

16.47 The primary responsibility for determining such claims of good cause shall lie with the appropriate Board of Examiners. However, in the event of a meeting of the Board of Examiners not being anticipated until some significant time after the examination or submission date missed by the candidate claiming good cause, the Head of School shall determine the outcome of a claim of good cause in consultation with the relevant Assessment Officer. Any such decisions shall be reported to the Board of Examiners at the next available meeting. Although the Board of Examiners may pass comment on such decisions, it may not overturn a decision where this would cause detriment to the candidate.

16.48 In considering claims of good cause:

- a) the evidence provided by the candidate claiming good cause, and any relevant and available material submitted by him or her for assessment shall be scrutinised;
- b) fairness to the individual candidate claiming good cause must be balanced with fairness to other candidates and the integrity of the assessment as a whole;
- c) in the event of the candidate having failed to attend an examination or examinations, or having failed to submit course material or other work for assessment at or by the due time, it shall be determined whether the failure to attend or submit has been justified by good cause;
- d) in the event of the candidate having submitted work for assessment by examination or otherwise, it shall be determined whether such work has been manifestly prejudiced by good cause. If such prejudice is established the work affected shall normally be deemed not to have been submitted.

Outcomes

16.49 Where it is determined that the evidence presented does not support the candidate's claim that he or she was prevented by good cause from attending an examination or submitting work for assessment on or by the due time, the assessment or assessments in question shall be treated as non-submissions. Where it is determined that the evidence presented does not support the candidate's claim that his or her performance in assessment was manifestly prejudiced by good cause, his or her work shall be assessed as though no claim of good cause had been received. The candidate's grade for the course as a whole shall, subject to §16.40 - §16.44, be calculated accordingly.

16.50 In the event of incomplete assessment arising from good cause being established the candidate shall, subject to §16.52 below, normally be expected to complete his or her assessment by attending the examination at a subsequent diet, or submitting outstanding work for assessment, if an opportunity to do so occurs within his or her period of study. In considering whether this requirement should apply, the desirability of the candidate's assessment being conducted in full should be balanced with the practical considerations and financial costs to the candidate and the University of providing a later completion date. Consideration should also be given to the candidate's other assessment commitments to ensure that he or she is not unreasonably burdened. In order to permit such completion:

¹ The mechanism for notifying the Head of School is *MyCampus*. In the event that this facility is not available, the candidate should contact the Head of School or his or her nominee directly.

In cases where students present sensitive personal information which they are reluctant to discuss with more than one or two members of staff, a member of staff should be given responsibility by the Head of School for ensuring that relevant information is passed to appropriate colleagues in order that their circumstances may be taken into account.

- a) a special sitting of an examination may be arranged, or the candidate shall be required to attend for examination at a scheduled diet; and/or,
- b) a date for completion of non-examination assessment shall be set;

as appropriate in the circumstances. In any such event, that sitting or submission shall be regarded as the candidate's first attempt if the examination or assessment missed would itself have been his or her first attempt.

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 assessment in the senior honours year;
 - ii) for the purposes of the award of an unclassified honours degree the requirement for the achievement of a D3 or above in a dissertation or other independent work worth at least 20 credits shall not constitute a requirement for the award of the degree in terms of §16.51 above;
 - iii) 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;
 - iv) in respect of courses where good cause is established in relation to no more than 25% of the assessment, a course grade shall be returned on the basis of the completed assessment; in respect of courses where good cause is established in relation to more than 25% of the assessment, the course grade shall be returned as MV; notwithstanding the return of an MV course grade, all components of assessment unaffected by good cause shall be included in the determination of the candidate's award in accordance with §16.52(c)
- e) In respect of 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 assessment in the senior honours year.