

University of Glasgow

Academic Standards Committee – Friday 25 November 2016

Guidelines on the Exercise of Exam Board Discretion

Ruth Cole, Clerk to the Committee

ASC is asked to consider two issues concerning the guidelines on operation of discretion:

1. Advance publication of criteria

The guidelines currently include the following:

2.7.3 Applying Discretion

Boards must always record in their minutes which criteria have been applied in the exercise of discretion.

In the interests of transparency, the criteria to be applied by each Exam Board should, if possible, be publicised in advance, e.g. in the programme handbook.

The decision was taken by Senate in June 2012 to harmonise the exercise of Exam Board discretion in the award of classifications for honours degrees and taught masters degrees, and Exam Boards were required to implement the new guidelines from the spring diet in 2013. Given that this has become an established aspect of Exam Board business, ASC is asked to consider whether all Exam Boards should now be required to publish their chosen criteria in advance. The extract above would be amended as follows:

2.7.3 Applying Discretion

Boards must always record in their minutes which criteria have been applied in the exercise of discretion.

In the interests of transparency, the criteria to be applied by each Exam Board ~~should, if possible,~~ must be publicised in advance, e.g. in the programme handbook.

2. Use of different criteria in different discretionary zones

The guidelines set out the list of permitted criteria and an Exam Board may choose which to adopt in determining the outcomes for students in the discretionary zones. While it is expected that students' outcomes should be determined with reference to the same criteria, the guidelines are not currently explicit about whether this means that the criteria adopted for each discretionary zone within a cohort must be equivalent. ASC is asked to consider whether it would be acceptable to have additional criteria applying in one or more zones. E.g.:

1st/2.1 borderline: promote if 50% or more of grade profile graded A or above, with no individual grades below C.

2.1/2.2 borderline: promote if 50% or more of grade profile graded B or above, with no individual grades below D.

2.2/3rd borderline: promote if 50% or more of grade profile graded C or above.

In this example the 2.2/3rd borderline does not refer to the individual grades permitted.