

**University of Glasgow**

**Academic Standards Committee – Friday 19 May 2017**

**Report from Meeting of Academic Regulations Sub-Committee held  
on 5 May 2017**

**Professor Marc Alexander, Convener**

**1. PGT Review: Masters Assessment and Threshold Grades [For approval]**

Following ASC's approval of proposals concerning threshold grades and requirements for progress on PGT programmes, members considered how best to clarify the 'Satisfactory' descriptor given in Schedule A. ARSC noted that the current footnote to the descriptor read as follows:

† This gloss is used because it is the lowest grade normally associated with the attainment of an undergraduate award. Postgraduate students should be aware, however, that an average of at least grade C in taught courses is required for progress to the dissertation at Masters level, and students should consult the appropriate degree regulations and course handbooks for the grade they may require to progress to specific awards.

Members agreed that **the following amended footnote should be proposed to ASC:**

† This gloss is used because it is the lowest grade normally associated with the attainment of an undergraduate award. Undergraduate students should be aware that progress to most honours programmes requires a grade above D in certain courses. Postgraduate students should be aware that on most programmes an average above D in taught courses is required for progress to the dissertation at Masters level. Students should consult the appropriate degree regulations and course handbooks for the grades they require to progress to specific awards.

Members considered that 'progress to honours' was now a more commonly used expression than 'entry to honours' and that it was also preferable given the current discussion regarding the use of different grades being required for 'progress' and award. It was noted that the generic undergraduate regulations referred to the requirements for 'entry to' honours. A check would need to be made of where other such usage occurred in regulations and other documentation

**2. Exceeding word length in coursework [For noting]**

ARSC had previously noted comments from an external examiner concerning the University's position on penalties for exceeding word length in coursework submissions. There was currently no regulation or formal policy regarding such 'penalties' and it was recognised that what was appropriate might vary between disciplines/tasks.

ARSC considered that a student who exceeded a stipulated word length had failed to fulfil one of the requirements of the task (i.e. to answer the question(s) in the permitted number of words). It was therefore correct to reflect that in the grade awarded.

ARSC's view was that there were two possible approaches:

1. the complete assignment would be read but the grade awarded would reflect the fact that the student had failed to fulfil one of the requirements of the task, and the greater the additional words used, the greater the significance for the grade.

2. the assignment would be read up to the point that the word limit was reached and no further, and a grade awarded. As was noted in the external examiner's original comment, this would often lead to the conclusion being missed in its entirety or in part.

Members considered that the significance of keeping to a given word length for any particular task was an academic judgment. The first of the options was reasonable for most coursework but there were certain tasks where compliance with the maximum might be critical in which case option 2 might be justified.

If approach 1 was adopted, ARSC's view was that it was not desirable to have a general tariff for reducing grades by a specified amount (a 'penalty') as this was out of keeping with the spirit of the Code of Assessments where academic judgements were not subject to formulaic modification, though it would be helpful to advise on the typical degree to which exceeding the word length might impact on the grade awarded.

It was also agreed that the chosen approach must be implemented consistently for all students in a cohort and it should be made clear whether there was some leeway in the word limit, e.g. +/- 10%. If option 2 was adopted, this should be advertised and explained clearly in advance.

### **3. Incomplete Assessment and Good Cause [For noting]**

ARSC discussed a draft overview of Good Cause which was intended to be made available to students and explained the main principles of the regulations, including some which appeared not to be well understood by students (e.g. the fact that grades would never be inflated as a result of a good cause claim). The SRC would assist in disseminating the guidance.

ARSC had previously noted that the regulations on Incomplete Assessment and Good Cause did not fully cover submission of claims in advance of the relevant assessment date. As a result, the Good Cause process in MyCampus did not offer a specific route for the submission of early claims. Where such early claims were submitted it was clearly important that the student should receive a prompt response.

Members discussed the best way of ensuring that early claims were brought to the attention of the Head of School/RI or nominee as soon as possible. It was agreed that students should submit a full claim to MyCampus in the normal way but that they should also alert a relevant member of staff such as their Advisor to ensure that the claim was brought to the attention of relevant staff promptly. This would be indicated in a footnote in the Code as well as in other guidance documents. ARSC would be reviewing the operation of early claims (and the relevant regulations) during session 2016-17.