

## SEN15D006

**Title:** Update on the number of modules delivered with low student enrolment  
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### Issue

In June 2014 Senate endorsed a strategy for reducing the number of modules running with low student enrolment. This paper provides an update on the progress being made with the strategy.

### Recommendation

To report

that the Learning and Teaching Committee

- (1) considered a review of the progress being made in reducing the number of modules with low student enrolments at the meeting on 21 October 2015 (LTC15 D006). During discussions the Committee noted that high numbers of such modules remained in HUM UG and in the PGT provision in a number of Schools. There was to be further discussion of the University's PGT provision which would encompass consideration of course and module sizes. In HUM there were specific issues that needed to be addressed with regard to undergraduate modules and the Chair and the HUM Associate Dean (L&T) were working on those.
- (2) resolved to retain the policy of requiring Faculty approval for the continuation of modules with patterns of low enrolment based on the six categories outlined in the paper.

To consider

- (3) whether the actions being taken will meet the aims and objectives of Senate to improve the University's performance in assessment and feedback.
- (4) whether any additional action by Senate is required.

### Resource Implications

There are resource implications for Schools in running modules which attract only low number of student enrolments.

### Risk Implications

The risk of not taking action is to continue with course delivery being less efficient than it could be with consequences for staff workloads.

### Equality and Diversity

It is not envisaged that the recommendations contained in the report will impact on groups with protected characteristics.

### **Timing of decisions**

The decision by the Learning and Teaching Committee and any additional recommendations from Senate will feed into the annual course and module update process.

### **Further Information**

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### **Background**

Work started in 2013/4 to identify those modules with low student enrolment. This was first raised as part of the Timetabling Group, where teaching of modules with a small number of students enrolled on them was considered to be adding to the complexities of timetabling and demands on rooms.

Senate discussed this in June 2014 and approved:

- “a strategy for reducing the number of modules running with small student numbers by:
- reviewing all modules due to run in 2014/5 with 5 or fewer students enrolled with a view to wherever possible not running them and promoting alternative choices to students.
  - commencing the 2014/5 course and module update exercise immediately working on the presumption that any module which ran in 2013/14, or runs in 2014/15 with 10 or fewer students should not be offered in 2015/16 and re-designing courses accordingly.”

In the Autumn of 2014, 2013/4 data was circulated to Schools via Associate Deans (LTQ) with a remit that only those small modules which were approved by the Associate Deans would continue. Six reasons as to why modules attracting low student enrolments were permitted to continue were identified and Associate Deans were asked to note their rationale for permitting modules to continue. The six reasons are as follows:

- a) A new course has been established and is in the first three years of running and there is a credible business plan which will ensure that enrolments will have reached at least 11 students on all modules by its third year.
- b) A particular, but time-limited, issue affected recruitment to a course which has meant a dip below 11 enrolments on some modules, but there is a clear and convincing explanation of how the numbers will be returned to above the threshold within two years.
- c) The module is part of a specialist research training Masters programme that is currently part of doctoral training provision accredited by a research council
- d) The module is a compulsory part of a course that is currently accredited by a professional body (and there are more than 20 students enrolled overall on the course)
- e) A robust business case can be made for the viability of the module. For example a specialist course that shares 80% of their teaching in well-populated modules and where there are two less well attended course-specific modules that create the specialist course. Ceasing those two modules would thus cause the loss of the course, the students and entire course fee.
- f) The module is commissioned and has been priced accordingly.

### **Discussion**

The tracking of ‘small’ modules across years is not straightforward, as modules dip in and out of the low-enrolment banding, and new modules come on stream with the introduction of new courses. In order to get an overview of the situation, the attached document shows modules which are

recorded on SITS as having timetabled events and have between 1 and 10 students enrolled on them.

The data for 2013/4 and 2014/5 are actual enrolments, whereas the data for 2015/6 consist of current enrolments *to date*. There may be further enrolments for Semester 2 to come, particularly for PG modules, which may decrease the number of small modules. However, those modules with no students currently enrolled on them are excluded, but some of these may enrol a small number of students for Semester 2, thereby adding to the number of small modules. Therefore the enrolments for this year should be considered as provisional and are still subject to a small amount of fluctuation.

The reduction in the number of small modules across the University has not been as high as envisaged.

The Learning and Teaching Committee considered whether a continuation of the current strategy was likely to yield further reductions, or whether some refinements were necessary, for example, the small module banding could be raised to 15 students and below, rather than the current 10.

The Committee concluded

- a) that it was sensible to maintain the current definition of low enrolment at  $\leq 10$  students
- b) to continue with current practice of requiring additional Faculty level approval for these modules to continue to be offered
- c) with a view to the longer term, to consider the issue of PGT modules as part of a bigger project which will consider the development of a new academic model for PGT courses
- d) to continue to work with HUM on their UG module offer.

### **Attachments**

A table showing the number of modules with 10 or less students, by School, level and year, is attached.

**TABLE: Summary of modules with a student enrolment of 10 or less.**

SSF	2013/4			2014/5			2015/6		
							Provisional		
School	UG	PGT	Total	UG	PGT	Total	UG	PGT	Total
DEV	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
ECO	0	3	3	0	4	4		6	6
EDU	4	9	13	1	11	11	3	11	14
LAW	4	11	15	4	13	17	3	10	13
NBS	0	3	3	0	6	6			0
PSY	1	0	1	0	3	3		4	4
SWK	0	2	2	0	6	6		7	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>46</b>

HUM	2013/4			2014/5			2015/6		
							Provisional		
School	UG	PGT	Total	UG	PGT	Total	UG	PGT	Total
AMA	12	21	33	18	21	39	9	15	24
HIS	9	12	21	11	13	24	7	15	22
HUM	1	1	2	1	2	3	2	1	3
LDC	4	15	19	9	22	31	8	21	29
PPL	23	21	44	24	18	42	24	20	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>122</b>

SCI	2013/4			2014/5			2015/6		
							Provisional		
School	UG	PGT	Total	UG	PGT	Total	UG	PGT	Total
BIO	2	6	8	0	5	5	0	8	8
CHE	3	2	5	0	2	2	0	2	2
CMP	3	6	9	2	3	5	0	5	5
ENG		0	0	0	2	2	2	1	3
ENV	3	5	8	1	3	4	0	2	2
MTH		4	4	0	1	1	0	0	0
NAT			0	2	1	3	3	0	3
PHA			0	1	0	1	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>24</b>

FMH	2013/4			2014/5			2015/6		
							Provisional		
School	UG	PGT	Total	UG	PGT	Total	UG	PGT	Total
HSC	18	23	41	15	13	28	13	12	25
MED		6	6		5	5		4	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>29</b>

**NOTES**

1. Excludes Modules with no timetabled teaching events  
Small modules which are co-taught and in combination are greater than 10  
Modules with 0 students enrolled on them
2. For 2015/6, some enrolments for Sem 2 may not yet be recorded.
3. Current School structures used for each year.
4. NBS London ( 3 modules) removed from 2013/4 data