

LTC15D049

Title: Maximising the Value of the 2 Weeks gained from Reducing the Exam Period to 4 Weeks from 2016/17 Onwards
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Issue

Proposals from the Academic Director for Taught Programmes (ADTP) on maximising the value of the 2 weeks gained from reducing the Assessment Period from 5 weeks in 2015/16 to 4 weeks in 2016/17.

Recommendation

LTC members are asked to consider and approve the recommendation set-out in the report.

Resource Implications

If approved, the development of a Week 7 as an Enrichment Week, and Week 14 as Study-Plus' Week will require significant allocation of resource and considerable levels of advance planning – not dissimilar to the level of coordination and forward-planning required for Open Days.

Risk Implications

There are risks that stem from students failing to derive satisfactory 'value' from the Enrichment Week and 'Study-Plus' Week. This is why a highly coordinated approach to planning both will be absolutely essential. It is proposed that both are led by a Planning Group that brings academic staff and staff from professional services together to build both the admin support required and the communications that will be fundamental to effective delivery.

Equality and Diversity

There are no equality or diversity implications associated with the update.

Timing of decisions

LTC needs to consider the proposals set out in the report. It may wish to amend or enhance these. Some level of agreement is important as soon as possible so that planning can begin after Xmas (Jan 2016). This will be important in ensuring that the required levels of cross-University input and collaboration can be facilitated in time for Feb 2017 (Enrichment Week), and April 2017 ('Study Plus' Week).

Further Information

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Background

The proposals set-out ideas for discussion at LTC. They focus on how to make the most from the 12 + 14 + 4 academic year which has been approved by Senate.

At LTC on 24 June the committee resolved to approve the following recommendations:

- i) that the Autumn semester be of 12 weeks duration, including induction activities (Recommendation 1);
- ii) that Congregation be scheduled for the third week in July (Recommendation 5).
- iii) that for 2015/16 – introduce Week 14 activities as detailed below into Week 13 immediately prior to the interim 5 week assessment period (Recommendation 6);

iv) that for 2016/17 - introduce the pattern 12 - 14 – 4 and, in order to create a useable teaching period after the Easter break in 2017, move this break from the previously agreed four weeks commencing 10th April to the four weeks commencing 27th March in order to give 10 weeks before and 4 weeks after the Easter break (Recommendation 7);

v) that for 2017/18 – introduce the 12-14- 4 pattern leaving the Easter break as previously approved so giving 9 weeks before and 5 weeks after the Easter break (Recommendation 8);

vi) dates for 2018/19 through to 2021/22, as set out in the proposed schedule of dates.

For 2020/21 option B was approved (Recommendation 9).

Further consideration was required on the use of Week 7 and 14 (Recommendation 2) and on the proposal that courses with no examinations extend their timetabled contact delivery into the assessment period (Recommendation 3).

The current document proposes two key concepts:

- 1) Week 7 as 'Enrichment Week'
- 2) Week 14 as 'Study-Plus' Week

Introduction

Over the past 6 months, extensive consultations and discussions have been facilitated with regard to the future shape of the academic year from 2016/17 onwards.

At its meeting on 4 November 2015, Senate approved the following:

- 1) That the Autumn semester be of 12 weeks duration, including induction activities.
- 2) That the Spring semester should be of 14 weeks duration immediately followed by the 4 week assessment (Exam) period.
- 3) That Congregation should be scheduled for the third week of July.
- 4) For 2015/16 – introduce a Week 13 immediately prior to the interim 5 week assessment (Exam) period which can be used for a range of activities, for example: transitions, employability, course and module consolidation, revision, and examination preparation.
- 5) For 2016/17 – introduce the pattern 12-14-4 and in order to create a usable teaching period after Easter in 2017 move this break from the previously agreed four weeks commencing 10 April to the four weeks commencing 27 March in order to give 10 weeks before and 4 weeks after the Easter break.
- 6) For 2017/18 – introduce the 12–14- 4 pattern leaving the Easter break as previously approved so giving 9 weeks before and 5 weeks after the Easter break.
- 7) For 2018/19 through to 2021/22, dates which have not been previously considered to be as set out in Senate document SEN15D009.
- 8) The further consideration be given to the use of the two additional weeks in the Spring semester noting that the original proposal had been as follows:
 - a) **Spring Week 7** to be used for transition, employability, and course and module consolidation activities with Advisees having meetings with advisers to review progress.
 - b) **Spring Week 14** to be used for a similar set of activities plus revision and examination preparation activities
- 9) That further consideration be given to the use of the 4 week assessment period on courses where there are no exams in any given year of study.

This document sets out proposals that address item **(8a)** and **(8b)** in the Senate-approved paper.

It proposes two key concepts:

- 3) Week 7 as 'Enrichment' Week
- 4) Week 14 as 'Study Plus' Week

In the remainder of this paper the ADTP has attempted to provide some indication of the range of activities that might feature within both the 'Enrichment Week' and the 'Study Plus Week' – but these are merely suggested or 'indicative' activities and are **not intended to be prescriptive**. In reality, it is envisaged that the range of enrichment activities will vary considerably between schools, each of which is likely to have a clear sense of those it wishes to prioritise. Some schools already use the mid-semester week 6/7 as an opportunity to explore alternative modes of learning and teaching, or to provide an 'employability' focus with the curriculum.

Week 7 – 'Enrichment Week'

It is proposed that Week 7 of the spring semester in 2016/17 and beyond will function as an 'Enrichment Week'. The use of the term 'enrichment' is quite deliberate and is intended to place the emphasis on the function of this week as a means of 'adding value' to the student experience and building in learning activities that complement and enrich the learning that students engage with on their academic programmes.

The Enrichment Week is not intended to be solely a means of addressing 'employability' – Careers managers and academic staff are quite clear that the personal and professional development of students is poorly served by taking existing Careers-related activities and cramming them all into a single week. It is envisaged that the Enrichment Week will include some Careers-focused events and activities, but this will form only a small component of the Week, with other activities and initiatives scheduled across the University delivered and led by Central Services (e.g. the Library, DOS), by Faculties, Schools and by the UUEAS.

Enrichment Week will bring together students, university administrative and academic staff and the UUEAS in a partnership focused on building and delivering a coherently planned, choreographed and multi-faceted programme which will require coordination similar in scale and forward-planning to our Open Days and Visit Days.

Purpose of Enrichment Week

The purpose of Enrichment Week is provide a 'change' in the normal pattern of delivery of academic programmes for UG and PGT students that creates space for the delivery of a sophisticated and diverse programme of coordinated events and activities that enriches the student experience at UEA and provides students with opportunities to:

- meet with their adviser;
- develop new insights into their own disciplines - e.g. via research 'showcase' events led by PGR students and UEA staff.
- gain new insights into different disciplines – e.g. via research 'showcase' events led by PGR students and UEA staff.
- engage in course consolidation activities – reflection on and review of key concepts, ideas, debates etc.
- apply their learning in an inter-disciplinary context with students from other disciplines.
- engage with academic fieldwork and lab-based projects being led by UEA staff;
- visit key regional sites and learn more about the region in which they are studying;
- engage in academic, cross-disciplinary competitions and quizzes, treasure hunts etc.
- contribute to outreach work by working with groups of children from local schools in campus-based exercises, mini-projects etc.
- showcase their work in a high profile setting – with UG and PGT students doing something similar to the PGR showcase in the Forum.

- develop their study and translatable skills – e.g. skills of team leadership, negotiation, conflict resolution;
- learn about mentoring and coaching as life skills;
- use coursework ‘exemplars’ (e.g. accessed via LET Exemplar project) to explore how assessment criteria (e.g. in Senate Scales) can be addressed.
- address plagiarism & collusion - awareness-raising and training on citation methods, paraphrasing etc – use of concrete exemplars to explore boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable academic practice.
- learn about the challenges of management and being a ‘change agent’;
- gain new insights into future study opportunities;
- learn about equality and diversity, and cultural awareness, and engage with dedicated E & D online training;
- engage with sustainability-focused events and projects on campus;
- volunteer on conservation projects on campus;
- gain new insights into graduate career opportunities;
- the challenges of being in a profession and being a ‘professional’;
- understand enterprise and entrepreneurialism.

The following could be broken-down into a set of ‘Themes’ which would provide the overarching structure for the Enrichment Week. The themes could be articulated as follows:

Strand 1 – Academic Enrichment

Strand 2 – Future Careers

Strand 3 – Skills Development

Strand 4 – Making a Difference (via Volunteering, e.g. on Sustainability, Conservation & Outreach Projects)

Strand 1 – Academic Enrichment	Strand 2 – Future Careers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adviser/Advisee Progress Review meetings. • Course & Module consolidation activities – reviewing learning/key concepts etc. • Research showcase events run via Schools for own students. • Research showcase events run via Schools for students outside the School – focus on ‘show-casing the work of the school’. • Cross-disciplinary informal ‘projects’ bringing students together from different disciplines – e.g. real world business problems. • Contributing to field-based and lab-based projects by assisting in data collection and analysis etc. • Site visits and fieldwork – e.g. an interdisciplinary day at Foxley Woods or Blickling Hall. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adviser/Advisee Progress Review meetings. • Learning from Alumni – major opportunity to bring back 40-50 recent alumni and get them to lead workshops on ‘preparing for work at UEA’. • Networking/breakfast events with employers and alumni. • Workshops on professions, professionalism and being a professional. • CV builder masterclasses and active sharing/groupwork sessions with employers. • Graduate careers briefings and surgeries. • Enterprise and entrepreneurialism – workshops led by employers/alumni focusing on how students can create their own businesses or be ‘enterprising’ in the workplace.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic, cross-disciplinary quizzes, treasure hunts, orienteering etc. • Academic Showcase events – UG & PGT students showcase their work at high profile venue (Forum?). • Placement insights – students sharing insights gained from their placements. • Academic ‘Question Time’ – each faculty to host a separate ‘Question Time’ format event with external and internal panel members. • Showcase events on Sustainable Development (ESD) and Future Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being a ‘change agent’ – initiating, leading and managing change. • Understanding strategic planning – case studies from UEA senior team. • Understanding the modern workplace and employment-related legislation – led by HRD colleagues. • ‘Shadow your adviser for a day’ – learn what being an academic is like! • Reviewing progress on PDPs. • Skills Ward workshops – students and employers, UEA staff reflecting on value of the award.
Strand 3 – Skills Development	Strand 4 – Making a Difference via Volunteering
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adviser/Advisee Progress Review meetings. • Library-focused workshops led jointly by academics, PGRs and Library staff. • Study and translatable skills workshops led by academics – e.g. skills of team leadership, negotiation, conflict resolution etc. • Workshops on mentoring and coaching skills – with input from PAL Officers and Mentors. • Equality and diversity online training. • Workshops on cultural awareness – engage international student body in showcasing and promoting understanding of cultural difference. • LET-style workshops –e.g. building a project, understanding research methods, analysing quantitative and qualitative data – jointly run by LET and academic staff. • Being an advocate – workshops led by UEA student reps and UUEAS officers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adviser/Advisee Progress Review meetings. • Volunteering on short, intensive <u>conservation</u> projects on campus. • Volunteering on <u>outreach</u> events focused on widening participation (WP), raising aspirations etc. • Volunteering on short, intensive campus-based <u>sustainability</u> projects. • Short-term 1 week <u>internships</u> (non-paid) in Library, LTS, PGR Service, Careers, Estates etc. • Short-term <u>placement</u> in external organisation/setting – with associated project – 20 credit placement module ‘modelled’ on EDU Year 2 example. • Assisting in the delivery, organisation etc of the Enrichment Week.

Week 14 - Exam Revision Week/'Study Plus' Week

Week 14 will serve two key purposes:

- 1) **Exam Revision Week** - On programmes where there are scheduled Exams run via AQO, week 14 will serve as a ‘Revision Week’ for students on UG awards. No scheduled teaching will be timetabled in Week 14 for students whose degrees include an Examined element. A series of dedicated exam preparation LET workshops to be scheduled to coincide with Mon/Tues of Week 14 in order to ensure that all students have an opportunity to develop both their revision skills and their exam room strategies.
- 2) **‘Study Plus’ Week** – On programmes where there are no scheduled Exams run by AQO, week 14 will serve as ‘Study Plus’ Week. Additional teaching may be timetabled into this week as required by the School, but the week should also focus on facilitating successful ‘Transitions’ for students – e.g. from Year 1 to Year 2, from Year 2 to Year 3 etc. The timing of week 14 (late spring) means that the weather is likely to be more conducive to running ‘value-added’ outdoor learning activities (e.g. field trips, group visits). It is therefore envisaged that ‘Study Plus’ Week will be used in different ways by different

Schools of Study. Schools in which a real concern exists in relation to the protection of ATR staff time for research purposes, may prefer to deploy either ATS and/or AT staff to lead formal, scheduled taught sessions during 'Study Plus' Week. In some Schools there may be a preference for independent or online (blended) learning activities during week 14. Some schools may wish to combine academic with career-focused activities. The emphasis is on Schools choosing the approach they believe is best aligned with the needs of their students, and what they believe is the most effective means of building additional learning.

To summarise, focus of 'Study Plus' (for 1st and 2nd year students) should be on:

- Adviser/Advisee progress review meetings
- End of Year reflective overviews – key concepts/ideas/debates/controversies covered and looking forward to those in following academic year.
- Transitions support – preparing students for the challenges to come in the 2nd/3rd years of study, or transition to post-graduate study (in case of 3rd years).
- Additional subject-related teaching/content delivery
- Value-added activities (e.g. outdoor visits, fieldwork, etc)
- Short-term placements/internships – a 1 week intensive placement can have just as much value as one lasting several weeks if planned well.
- Additional employability-related activities
- Volunteering opportunities
- Blended learning activities – e.g. using VLE
- Online delivery of training (e.g. E & D).

Challenges and Problems

These proposals are provided as a means of focusing discussion at LTC, and 'clarifying' the kinds of coordination that will be necessary to ensure that students derive maximum value from the 2 weeks termed here 'Enrichment Week' and 'Study Plus' Week. When considering them, LTC may wish to also take into account some constraints, problems and challenges:

1) **Problem:** Some Schools would prefer to have a more 'flexible' approach to the timing of the 2nd week gained – rather than using Week 7, they see some value (for example) in having it in Week 1 of the spring semester following the Xmas vacation.

Solution: Having a 'flexible feast' would negate much of the value to be gained from a more coordinated, university-wide approach. It is the latter, in the ADTP's view, which is likely to add most value and ensure that Enrichment Week incorporates the kind richness and variety of activities that can be achieved when the University focuses its energies on a single 'big event' like Open Days.

2) **Problem:** Some Schools already utilise a Reading Week or break of some other kind/name in Spring Week 6. This would result in a 2 week hiatus in module delivery if Week 7 was used for Enrichment Week.

Solution: Wherever possible Schools would be encouraged to align their Reading Week with Week 7, and Enrichment week would simply replace Reading Week.

3) **Problem:** Some Schools already utilise a Reading Week in Spring Week 7.

Solution: Enrichment week would simply replace Reading Week.

4) **Problem:** In some Schools (e.g. BIO) there is considerable anxiety about having an 'imposed' break in the delivery of module content in Week 7 of the spring semester due to the impact this would have on Project modules where continued engagement on a week-by-week basis is crucial to the successful completion of the module.

Solution: Where there is a compelling academic rationale, that some routine module delivery should be allowed (though on a strictly limited basis) during Week 7 Enrichment Week.

5) **Problem:** It is acknowledged that in some Schools there is great concern that having an 'extra' week of student-focused activities (even if not module teaching as such) would be an unwelcome distraction from research for ATR staff.

Solution: Whilst some schools may wish for ATR staff to be involved in either the planning or delivery of Enrichment Week or Study Plus Week activities, there is also scope for a

significant contribution by ATS and AT staff in delivery of both weeks. Each Schools will be free to consider the appropriate 'balance' in terms of input by ATR/ATS staff.

- 6) **Problem:** Planning of both Enrichment Week and Study Plus Week will require high levels of cross-University planning and coordination involving schools of study and professional services, students and the UUEAS.

Solution: LTC endorses the creation of an **Enrichment/Study Plus Coordination Group**, with membership from academic staff, professional services staff, student reps, and representatives from the UUEAS. This Group would be empowered with carrying out the liaison and planning required to ensure that both weeks contain a rich array of exciting opportunities for students.

- 7) **Problem:** Some colleagues may interpret the proposals as suggesting that activities of the kind set-out herein in relation to Enrichment Week or Study Plus Week would only take place during these weeks.

Solution: This is **NOT** the intention. Employability-related activities should be distributed throughout the academic year, and it is not expected or proposed that this should change. Enrichment Week and Study Plus Week would simply provide additional focal points for particular kinds of employability related activities.

Dr Adam Longcroft
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Careers Service response to restructured academic year: proposal of week 7 'enrichment week'

We broadly welcome the concept of enrichment week as an opportunity for students to engage in a wide range of additional activities that can really augment their UEA experience and their personal and professional development.

The points below summarise some of the challenges we think will need to be overcome in order to make the proposal work.

- Why should students attend? The week will need a clear purpose and will need to give very clear incentives for students and clear directions on what they are supposed to engage with. Our experience with 'pick and mix' style events is that many opt-out or do the bare minimum either because of lack of motivation or confusion over what to choose. Careers advisers have suggested School/ Faculty themed days and very clear pathways so students know which activities they should engage with
- How do we encourage/ mandate all students to engage in such a large suite of extra-curricular activities?
- If not all students then how many? Which students will be prioritised? This decision will be essential to successful planning of the week
- Who will be the target audience – UG? UG and PGT? Would PGR students be able to participate? Which UG year groups will the week be aimed at? The messages and the offer will need to be segmented according to year group and level
- Who will actually deliver the activities? There is a feeling this should not just be left to central service and administrative departments and should involve academic staff and others within Schools and Faculties
- Are there specific contact hours or activity-equivalents that we need to maintain for the different initiatives, or are these entirely outside the credit structure of existing degrees?
- If the week is to be piloted in 2016 then need to be very realistic about what is possible. Large scale events such as open days are one year in the planning and so the possibility of attempting something ambitious is much less with only a few months of planning
- The week would need to dovetail with existing careers events, of which there are many in Spring Semester including large alumni events already in the calendar
- The scalability of multiple events for students across UEA needs serious consideration. NBS Employability Week, for example, takes place within a single School and already faces logistical challenges of finding suitable venues and rooms, managing bookings (e.g. avoiding long waiting lists for popular sessions) and creating coherent paths through for students
- For several reasons would therefore advise to remove NBS Employability week schedule from the proposals – Open Day programmes may be more analogous
- Some concerns about strand 4 being too niche and not scalable to numerous students wishing to undertake these opportunities

Some activities that we feel could be useful to incorporate include:

- **Mentoring opportunities** – bringing alumni/ professional mentors onto campus to speak to students, encouraging more PAL mentoring
- **Student-led activities** that play to student interests but that provide ample opportunity for organising events, working in teams and getting involved. However, this will still be resource-intensive to manage
- **Subject cafes and student communication activities**
- Specific activities for **final year students** to help prepare them for life after graduation. Week 7 could be the launch of joint Careers/ Alumni campaign to ensure students are aware of the support available to them when they leave
- **Activities involving SMEs** – smaller organisations who do not run large graduate schemes and may be more interested in recruiting new graduates
- **Specific reference to the UEA Award**: demonstrate to students the value of the Award and which activities can count towards it, encourage students to use their Enrichment Week activities to contribute towards the Award (it is a good time for year 1 and year 2 students to join)
- **Possibly UEA Award related events**, although would need to be coordinated with Schools and involve students who are doing the Award
- **Cross-discipline groups/ teams working to address 'grand problems', perhaps in competition**

We feel that **Careers Service involvement should be relatively light touch** so the week is devoted to up-skilling students and expanding their experience without being too overtly badged as employability.

It should also capitalise and build on all the previous careers events that have happened during the year. Ideally, we are building a 'development pipeline' for students who initially raise their awareness and increase their knowledge which leads to them taking more practical steps such as making applications and gaining experience. The Enrichment Week could act as an important stage as part of this pipeline.