

SEN15D020

Title: Maximising the Value of the 2 Weeks gained from reducing the assessment period to 4 Weeks from 2016/17 Onwards
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Issue

Maximising the value of the 2 weeks gained from reducing the assessment period from six to four weeks from 2016/17.

Recommendation

Senate members are asked to consider the following recommendations from the Learning and Teaching Committee:

- 1) that within the 14 week Spring semester there should be
 - a) a mid-semester Enrichment Week
 - b) an end of semester (Week 14) Study-Plus Weekwith each week having a range of relevant and appropriate activities informed by the suggestions contained in this paper;
- 2) that whilst it might be necessary for some teaching to take place during their Enrichment Week Schools should seek to keep this to a minimum;
- 3) an Enrichment/Study Plus Coordination group should be established with representatives from academic staff, professional services staff, students and staff from UUEAS and with an interface with the Academic Student Induction and Transitions group;
- 4) that there should be a detailed evaluation of the how these weeks are used which goes beyond the percentage of students participating in enrichment activities.

Resource Implications

There will be some staff workload released by running fewer examinations in the assessment period. However, the development of an Enrichment Week and a Study-Plus Week will require significant allocation of staff resource and considerable levels of advance planning. A project manager may be required to develop the weeks for successful delivery in 2016/17. Thereafter, the management of the Enrichment and Study-Plus weeks will require on-going annual management and co-ordination at both the School and Divisional level. This workload combined with that associated with delivery on an annual basis would need to be absorbed as part of normal business.

Risk Implications

There are risks that stem from students failing to derive satisfactory 'value' from the Enrichment Week and Study-Plus Week. This risk can be mitigated by having a highly coordinated project management approach to designing and implementing the planned weeks in 2016/17 and by establishing a Co-ordination Group to manage and oversee delivery.

Equality and Diversity

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

Timing of decisions

A decision is required at this meeting to enable planning to immediately commence for the first Enrichment week(s) which will take place in February 2017 and Study-Plus week in May 2017.

Further Information

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Key documents

2015 LTC paper LTC15D049 - Maximising the value of the 2 weeks gained from reducing the exam period to 4 weeks from 2016/17 onwards

<https://portal.uea.ac.uk/documents/6207125/10945302/ltc15d049divideri.pdf/d083a188-6e7c-40da-82ad-e6f61c681a70>

2015 Senate paper SEN15D009 - Semester dates and the shape of the academic year

<https://portal.uea.ac.uk/documents/6207125/10549168/sen15d009divideri.pdf/937920b7-0623-4599-819e-301594baf616>

2014 LTC paper LTC 14D220 - Semester dates and the shape of the academic year

<https://portal.uea.ac.uk/documents/6207125/9294209/ltc14d220dividerg.pdf/d1277c0a-c041-4757-af42-6ca46dfc512f>

2011 LTC paper LTC11D021 – Taught Programmes Policy Group

<https://portal.uea.ac.uk/documents/6207125/7723558/dividerbltc11d021.pdf/9b2e61ea-5911-4125-a943-844b84ed7537>

Background

The implementation of many aspects of the New Academic Model has generated considerable debate. In particular there has been much discussion of the shape of the academic year caused by the reduction of the assessment period from 6 to 4 weeks. In November 2015, Senate approved a standard undergraduate academic year with a pattern of 12 weeks (Autumn) 14 weeks (Spring) plus 4 weeks assessment period and confirmed the academic year dates for 2015/16 through to 2021/22. (*SEN15D009*).

Recipients can find further additional background information in the LTC paper which gave rise to these recommendations LTC14D220 entitled “Semester dates and the shape of the academic year”.

In confirming the pattern and semester dates Senate noted that further consideration was being given to the use of the two weeks but noted that the latest proposal considered by LTC had been to use them as follows:

- a) Spring Week 7 being used for transition, employability and course and module consolidation activities with Advisees having meetings with their Advisers to review progress.
- b) Spring Week 14 being used for a similar set of activities plus revision and examination preparation activities.

At this meeting Senate noted that 2015/16 was to have a 5 week assessment period and so resolved to offer a Week 13 with the content as set out for Week 14 above.

One of the earliest papers on the possible uses of the two weeks was considered in 2011. In November 2011, the Learning and Teaching Committee considered a range of activities that could be included in the two weeks released from the assessment period (LTC paper LTC11D021). These included a combination of revision time, opportunities for employability related activities, skills training, or activities which prepare students for the transition to study in the following academic year such as:

- Placements/Internships & Employability-related activities, with a different emphasis for 1st/2nd years.
- Skills training /Induction/Transition for students as preparation for following Academic Year.
- Preparation for transition to employment for finalists – intense CV development, interviewing skills, reflection on translatable skills, confidence-boosting activities, communication strategies, team role analysis, mentoring by alumni etc.

- Work-based learning module(s).
- Subject-related fieldwork, field visits etc.

Discussion

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. In November 2015 (LTC15D049), the Learning and Teaching Committee agreed upon two key concepts for the Spring Semester:

- 1) assigning a mid-semester week as an 'Enrichment Week';
- 2) using Week 14 as 'Study-Plus' Week.

The Committee considered the ranges of activities that might feature within both the 'Enrichment Week' and the 'Study Plus Week' noting that these were merely suggestions of 'indicative' activities and were not intended to be prescriptive. In reality, the Committee envisaged that the range of enrichment activities would vary considerably between Schools, each of which is likely to have a clear sense of those it wishes to prioritise. It was noted that 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.

Enrichment Week

It is proposed that a week, in the middle of the semester such as Week 7, functions 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 other Central Services and Divisions (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 together 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 registration / arrivals / induction periods, Open Days and Visit Days.

The Learning and Teaching Committee noted the difficulties in managing a University-wide "Enrichment" Week given the different practices in Schools and were content for each Faculty to discuss and agree when their "Enrichment" week(s) should happen.

Purpose of the Enrichment Week

The purpose of an 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 for example might provide 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 activities could be broken-down into a set of ‘Themes’ which would provide the over-arching 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)

Some suggestions of possible activities that might be included in an Enrichment week	
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. • Academic, cross-disciplinary quizzes, treasure hunts, orienteering etc. • Academic Showcase events – UG & PGT students showcase their work at high profile venue. • Placement insights – students sharing insights gained from their placements. • Academic ‘Question Time’ – each faculty to host a separate ‘Question Time’ format 	<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. • 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.

<p>event with external and internal panel members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Showcase events on Sustainable Development (ESD) and Future Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skills Ward workshops – students and employers, UEA staff reflecting on value of the award.
<p>Strand 3 – Skills Development</p>	<p>Strand 4 – Making a Difference via Volunteering</p>
<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

The Learning and Teaching Committee recommends Week 14 serves two key purposes:

- 1) **Exam Revision Week** - On programmes where there are scheduled exams, 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 will need 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, 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).

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