

LTC15D187

Title: Use of Grade Point Average (GPA) at UEA
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Date: 28-6-16
Circulation: Recipients of LTC papers
Agenda: Section A
Version: Final
Status: Open

Issue

The Higher Education Academy (HEA) has recommended that HE institutions adopt the Grade Point Average score to be run in tandem with traditional degree classifications. The proposal to adopt GPA was initially considered at the May 2016 meeting of LTC <https://portal.uea.ac.uk/documents/6207125/12569572/ltc15d137+divider+j+Update+on+Grade+Point+Average.pdf/c93e855b-6b32-432d-b768-4b23cd549d66>, with a view to bringing a firm proposal to this July meeting.

Recommendation

Members of LTC are invited to approve:

1. The introduction of GPA scores for all undergraduate students from 2016/7
2. A GPA scale as set out in Table One
3. A methodology for finalists which mirrors their degree classification weighting.
4. The introduction of formative GPA scores for continuing students based on the weighted year average.

Resource Implications

Resources will be required to set up SITS/eVision to accommodate the introduction of GPA as described below. Resources are likely to be in the form of staff time, rather than a budget to pay for, for example, SITS development or SITS software from the supplier. Resources will be required from both the Finance, Planning and Governance office and the SAS team in ITCS in addition to LTS staff time.

Risk Implications

Diverting staff resource to implement the introduction of GPA is likely to mean that other IT developments are delayed.

Equality and Diversity

The introduction of a GPA score will give students an alternative way of representing their degree outcome, and as such it is not expected to have a negative effect on the student experience for any individual or group of students.

Timing of decisions

If approved, subject to technical development, the GPA would be available at the end of 2016/7, on the basis of confirmed marks, for all undergraduate students.

Further Information

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Discussion

The background and rationale for introducing GPA are covered in the May report to LTC; assuming that the University approves the introduction of GPA scores, the recommended scale and methodology of calculation are set out below.

Scale

It is recommended that the HEA scale is extended to differentiate the first class marks, as set out below:

Table One: HEA Recommended GPA scale for UK Higher Education with an extension at the upper end:

| Mark | Grade Point | Classification |
|-------|-------------|----------------|
| >=80 | 4.50 | I |
| 75-79 | 4.25 | I |
| 71-74 | 4.0 | I |
| 67-70 | 3.75 | 2 I (high) |
| 64-66 | 3.50 | 2 I (med) |
| 61-63 | 3.25 | 2 I (low) |
| 57-60 | 3.0 | 2 ii (high) |
| 54-56 | 2.75 | 2 ii (med) |
| 50-53 | 2.50 | 2 ii (low) |
| 48-49 | 2.25 | 3 |
| 43-47 | 2.0 | 3 |
| 40-42 | 1.50 | 3 |
| 38-39 | 1.0 | Fail |
| 35-37 | 0.75 | Fail |
| 30-34 | 0.5 | Fail |
| <=29 | 0.0 | Fail |

Methodology

1. Finalist undergraduate students would receive a GPA score based on their degree classification mark according to the Bachelors and Integrated Masters award regulations. For most undergraduate students this would be the year average marks obtained in Stages 2 and 3 weighted 40:60 respectively. For example, a student who received a classification mark of 63%, giving them a classification of a 2i, would receive a final GPA of 3.25.
2. Continuing undergraduate students would receive an indicative GPA score at the end of each progressing year, based on their weighted year average. So, a student at the end of year 2 who had achieved a year average of 68% would have an indicative GPA of 3.75. The Stage One marks would only contribute to the indicative GPA given to the student at the end of their first year; they would not contribute to subsequent years' GPA scores.

Other considerations

1. Calculation of marks:
 - a. Finalists would have their GPA score recorded on their transcript/HEAR, in addition to their classification and classification mark; there would be no change to the parchment.
 - b. In using the classification mark to calculate the GPA, only the final module mark would contribute, capped appropriately if obtained at reassessment.
2. Recording and publishing to students GPA scores:
 - a. Formative GPA scores would be recorded on annual mark statements available to continuing students.
 - b. Summative GPA scores would only be available to students who completed their studies. Students who withdraw from their course early would not receive a summative GPA score, only an indicative score for each year of completion, based on all attempted modules, and these would be displayed in the annual marks statement. Only transcripts for completed students, who obtain a classification mark, would record a GPA score.
3. As an early adopter, we should review our policy against the developments in the sector, to ensure that we do not disadvantage our students. The GPA would be embedded in the BIM award regulations, and would be reviewed as part of the LTC periodic cycle of reviews.
4. With time, Boards of Examiners and the University may like to track degree outcomes using GPA scores rather than 'good honours', as this would give more granularity to outcomes.
5. Resources required:
 - a. With these recommendations, subject to confirmation of 'proof of concept, we will not need to purchase the GPA component from Tribal, but instead find an in-house way of translating the year average or classification mark to a GPA score using the approved table, and displaying the GPA on transcripts.
 - b. SAS team colleagues will need to be allocated time to implement the translation of year average/classification marks to a GPA score and store it on the student record. They will need to be consulted as to how much resource and associated timescales would be required in order to launch it next year. Initial feedback from Ben Petley 'I think this should be fine, in terms of what is being proposed and timeframes. Depending on the exact details of what is required, the resource required to achieve will vary but I expect it to be relatively modest. Something which is worth thinking about now, as it is likely to have the highest impact on the amount of resource required, is the time and mechanism at which the GPA is calculated for individual students at each stage. As suggested in the paper, we will have to work together to fully scope this work out if this proposal is endorsed by LTC anyway'.
 - c. FPG colleagues will need to be allocated time to work on the transcript/HEAR and marks statements to display the GPA. They will need to be consulted as to how much resource and associated timescales would be required in order to launch it next year. Initial feedback from Andrew Watson 'We think your proposals look achievable'.
 - d. The proposal is for all information to be calculated/held in SITS, but if this does not prove possible the component may need to be purchased.

Appendix A: Outline technical specification:

(These are proposals which require detailed consideration by SAS Development Team, FPG and LTS to ensure they deliver the requirements; if any fundamental changes are required, they will come back to LTC for consideration/ approval if necessary).

| Development | Primary department | Comments |
|--|--------------------|--|
| 1. GPA Table set up in SITS to enable translation of % mark to GPA. | SAS Team, ITCS | Early proof of concept required |
| 2. Formative GPA (FGPA) calculated and stored in SITS, (against the student's SPI Calculation record?) | SAS Team, ITCS | Early proof of concept required |
| 3. Annual Marks Statements amended to include 'formative GPA score' | FPG | |
| 4. Information to students about GPA, to include access to calculation method/ GPA scale. | LTS | To include a range of communications – LTS website, eVision, email, handbooks etc |
| 5. Transcript/HEAR amended to include both classification mark and GPA score | FPG | 1.Consider whether a link to GPA scale table would be possible. 2. Identification and consideration of any students whose award rules are not in SITS, so they do not have a calculated classification mark on the system. How/where would the mark be stored manually? 3. Consider how to exclude students who withdraw – default of 'no classification mark = no summative GPA'? |
| 6. Testing of developments | FPG/LTS | |
| 7. Go live – after Exam Boards in July 2017. | All | |