

**LTC09D047**

**Title:** Director of Taught Programmes - Report from Chair of CCS Review Group  
**Circulation:** Learning and Teaching Committee – 9 December 2009  
**Agenda:** LTC09A003  
**Status:** Open  
**Version:** Final

---

## **1. Background to report**

The CCS Review Group met several times in 2008/9 and once in semester 1 of 2009/10 to discuss the major principles that should underpin revisions to CCS. Progress was made, confirmed by LTC who supported the recommendations from the Review Group (section 3). To speed up development of the new CCS regulations the most recent discussions of the CCS Review Group have been by e-mail. Where there is a majority view of the Group on a particular issue (section 4) LTC is now asked to give its support to the recommendation. Where there is not a majority view (section 5) it is intended that the Review Group considers these issues further unless LTC decides on them. LTC is also asked to approve the revised work plan for the CCS review set out in section 2.

## **2. Revised work plan for development of new regulations**

- i) CCS Review Group to consider any outstanding issues from its discussions to date.
- ii) LTQO staff to start drawing up draft regulations for new CCS combining the Instructions to Examiners within the regulations.
- iii) LTQO staff and the Chair of the CCS Review Group to start consultation with relevant staff in Schools in semester 2 2009/10 [ADs for Learning & Teaching will be consulted on the best way to proceed in their Faculty. e.g. whether course directors or School Directors of Teaching should be consulted]. The aims of this consultation exercise are to start informing Schools of the likely shape of new CCS and to unearth any major problems with some of the changes proposed for CCS.
- iv) Issues arising from the School consultation will be considered by the CCS Review Group.
- v) If the consultation exercise can be completed in semester 2, draft regulations will be finalised in semester 1 2010/11 with the aim of getting LTC/Senate approval for them in semester 2 2010/11. With a start date of September 2012 this will provide more than 12 months for essential work to be done for implementing the new regulations including SITS programming.
- vi) Consideration of implications of new CCS for Integrated Masters Degrees should be completed by end of semester 1 2010/11. It is envisaged that the consultation process with relevant Schools concerning CCS regulations will also touch on IMDs. Changes to IMD regulations should be presented to LTC/Senate in semester 2 2010/11.
- vii) Commencing in semester 1 2010/11 consideration of the implications of new CCS for the Common Masters Framework should commence with any changes to CMF regulations being presented to LTC/Senate in semester 2 2010/11. [Unlike the IMD regulations there are likely to be relatively minor changes only to the CMF regulations]

### **3. The CCS Review group and LTC have agreed that the principles listed in this section should form the basis of the revision of the CCS regulations.**

It is worth re-emphasising some of the background material relevant to adopting these principles. There is renewed political debate about HE, the nature and role of QAA, student tuition fees and other relevant matters that will not be concluded before the general election in 2010. It would be best for UEA if any major developments in the HE landscape were clear before completion of the development of new regulations and it may be that LTC will have to consider alterations to the timetable set out above if the political debates are not resolved by mid 2011. What is clear already, however, is that there is considerable pressure on the degree classification system. Politicians, QAA and HEFCE have all expressed negative views on the Honours degree classification system and HEFCE established the Burgess committee to consider alternatives. Their recommended scheme is to allow the Honours degree classification to remain [but to 'whither on the vine' in the words of Burgess] and for all students to have a HE Achievement Report (HEAR). They rejected alternatives, including a Grade Point Average (GPA). There is opposition to HEAR within the HE sector and though it is being piloted the scheme may not be adopted, though for now UEA is assuming that it will be required to adopt the scheme. With both HEAR and GPA UEA graduates may be disadvantaged in comparison with graduates from HEIs requiring students to pass all modules but this would be addressed by revised CCS regulations which would require this.

Regulations can affect the culture of how students study and staff teach though they remain secondary to the many other aspects of the learning and teaching environment experienced by students. Subsequent to implementation of the current CCS regulations it appeared to many UEA staff, including members of the CCS Review Group, that there were students not engaging fully in their studies in part because the regulations allowed students to succeed in getting an award without fully engaging. Doubtless there are other factors affecting student engagement but the CCS Review Group believe it is desirable to ensure as far as possible that the revised regulation should encourage engagement rather than allow disengagement.

Additional drivers for ensuring students engage fully with their studies are:

- a. The HEFCE funding model which is currently based on a judgement that students have completed all modules. Failure to satisfy the HEFCE definition of completion of any module in a year of study will result in HEFCE categorising the student as "non-fundable" and therefore excluding them entirely from the calculation of HEFCE teaching grant due to the institution for the relevant year. Completion currently requires students to attempt the final items of assessment in each module including the first sit of any examination. Under current CCS regulations it is possible for students not to attempt all items of assessment and still to progress. Somewhat bizarrely, in the HEFCE definition of completion some students who fail their year at UEA may have "completed" and some students who pass the year may not have "completed"!
- b. Students fully engaged with their studies may encounter academic difficulties, which UEA is well equipped to deal with via its student support activities in Schools and central units (DOS office, Library, ITCS) but are likely to face fewer problems than disengaged students in connection with issues such as drop-out and reassessment.

The CCS Review Group have not been charged with determining a policy on reassessment fees – an issue which lies with the University Planning & Resources Committee rather than with LTC – but reassessment fees have been discussed by the Group. The main issue considered by the Group was raised with the UEA Fees Officer: do the tuition fees paid to UEA by students and HEFCE cover one assessment attempt or both a first sit and reassessment attempt? The Fees Officer's view is that these tuition fees pay for a first

attempt only and not reassessments.

#### **A) Academic requirements for progression should be increased.**

Currently, standard CCS progression requirements state that students can progress to the next stage if they pass 80 credits with an overall average for the stage of at least 40% and if they pass all core modules with at least 40%. Condoned failure provides discretion to allow some students who narrowly fall below these targets to progress. Failing that, students are referred to reassessment, normally on one occasion only. The progression requirement should be tightened up in principle for students to pass every module with at least the pass mark of 40%. The distinction between core, compulsory and optional modules will disappear, though the possibility of allowing discretion in limited circumstances within the CCS regulations to condone progression in certain modules where the pass mark of 40% has not been achieved (section 5B) may re-introduce a core/non-core distinction.

#### **B) Compensation**

Currently, CCS regulations allow compensation within modules and compensation between modules provided the modules are not core within the course profile. Compensation within modules will continue to be allowed but not compensation between modules. The regulations need to be written to allow the same set to describe cases where all assessment items need to be passed as well as those where compensation between assessment items is allowed.

#### **C) Free Choice modules**

The notion of free choice should be abolished from course profiles as free choice has been problematic in many areas, does not really mean free choice in the way some students understand it, and there are numerous factors already in place that limit free choice for students. Course profiles should contain the titles of all modules allowed for that course. This will mean that tightly-defined courses and courses with a wide sweep of modules can both be accommodated in the same set of simple regulations. Where a School wishes to limit particular types of modules within a course, option ranges can be used.

#### **D) Incentive to promote student engagement**

Incentives should be built into the new CCS regulations to promote student engagement with their studies and encourage them to take all items of assessment. These incentives should not be the kind of approaches that are better placed in disciplinary regulations (e.g. not of the kind – you haven't attended seminars/lab classes therefore you cannot sit the exam) unless there are PSRB requirements that place such an obligation on UEA.

### **4. The majority view of those on the CCS Review Group responding to the latest discussion paper is to recommend the following.**

#### **LTC is asked to endorse these recommendations**

##### **A) Reassessment**

Reassessment should not be an automatic right for all students and reassessment will only apply in certain circumstances.

Currently all students who do not meet the progression requirement have an automatic right to attempt all failed modules again and are given a reassessment opportunity, but there is no HEFCE requirement to do this. Some PSRBs do have a requirement for there to be reassessments and if new CCS says reassessment is not automatic we need to ensure we can

meet the PSRB requirements.

There appears to be three general categories of students referred to reassessment under CCS:

- Students fully engaged with their subjects but struggling academically
- Able students with extenuating personal circumstances
- Students who have not been fully engaged in their studies

Because of the way marks and other information are recorded at UEA it has not been possible to get detailed statistical information regarding the relative sizes of these groups but the view of many dealing with reassessment is that the last group is a big one, and perhaps forms the majority of those taking reassessment in the August examination period. By removing an automatic right to reassessment under all circumstances we may provide students in the last group with an incentive to engage with their studies and failing that a procedure to make them (and UEA) recognise that they should not continue on their course.

**B) Reassessment will be an automatic right for those students who have:**

- Attained the pass mark in 50% or more of their modules in their current stage, and
- Attempted every item of assessment required by their choice of modules

This regulation will ensure students who are engaged fully with their course but are struggling will have reassessment opportunities and it provides an incentive for students to engage with their studies.

**C) Concessions**

The Review Group agreed that the concessionary route will remain for students who fall outside revised regulations concerning reassessments, particularly those with extenuating circumstances to account for poor performance. A School may wish to support a student who has not completed coursework or achieved the pass mark in 50% or more of their modules and provided there is a good case the concessions should be approved. Similarly, School requests for 2<sup>nd</sup> reassessment attempts should continue to be considered by the concessionary route.

**D) Reassessment should change from synoptic reassessment to reassessment at the item level of the piece of work which has failed.**

We will need to explore how this would operate in practice. It may be problematic in cases where the majority of failed items are coursework (e.g. requiring a student to pass 50% of all modules for the right to reassessment suggests that reassessment comes after all first sit assessments but it will be more sensible in many cases of coursework assignments for reassessments to be done as soon as possible after the failed first sit)

It may also be problematic where a student has failed a module due to a low mark in laboratory practical work, field trips or other types of activities which may be difficult for a School to repeat in the same academic year.

**E) Capping of reassessment marks at the item level**

If reassessment at the item level is adopted, the Review Group agreed that the reassessment mark should be capped at the item level at 40% which would allow the overall module mark to be higher than 40%.

**F) Levels and progression.**

QAA has asked UEA to look at linking progression with the level of modules in a course profile. Current degree regulations distinguish between UEA level 1, level 2/3 and M-level modules. The key decision to make is whether to formally distinguish between level 2 and 3 modules. In reality the majority of courses do already distinguish between levels 2 and 3, often with 3 being more difficult than 2. The majority view of the Review Group was to explicitly link academic levels in a hierarchical manner to allow progression to be more easily recognised. In this context "hierarchical" needs to be defined: It may be the approach is that a module is level 3 rather than 2 because:

- a) module B is more difficult than module A, or
- b) module B presupposes the competences of module

**G) Course profiles.**

The minimum amount of Honours level credit that students must take in order to obtain an Honours degree should be consistent with HEFCE/QAA statements. The HEFCE-commissioned Burgess review of credit in HE and the QAA Framework on HE Qualifications indicates that a minimum of 360 credits should be acquired for an Honours degree with at least 100 credits at level 6; for UEA this would mean at least 100 credits at level 3.

**5. Outstanding issues raised within the CCS Review Group that require clarification before consultations with Schools commences.**

**A) Making part of the first year count towards classification**

There has been some discussion in HUM about making part of the first year count towards degree classification, something favoured by some members of HERIG. Discussions at ET in the past 18 months have touched on whether this can be implemented in the current CCS regulations.

As far as I am aware the reason for wanting to make part of the first year count in this way is to provide an incentive to students to engage with their studies, particularly in semester 2. If this is the sole reason then the move to require students to pass all modules coupled with rules about reassessment may provide sufficient incentive that making part of the first year count is unnecessary.

Some of the issues that will have to be worked out if the new regulations make some of the first year count are:

- How much will count? Possibilities are the best 20 Cr module mark from semester 2 and the aggregate semester 2 mark contributing a fixed % of the final degree aggregate. [Note that if it is a relatively small % it may not provide much incentive]
- Whatever counts will need to go through the normal quality assurance processes for work counting to degree classification (scrutiny by externals, double marking/internal verification), which might have consequences for management of exam boards.
- Will what counts be at level 1 or level 2 (i.e. will Honours level teaching start in year 1?). Note whatever arrangements are made will need to be consistent with the QAA Framework on HE Qualifications.
- Can a School or Faculty have part of the first year counting without the rest of UEA following? There is such a diversity of UG courses across UEA already that the answer may be yes, but there are issues that need to be explored. For example. if a 3-year HUM course has S2 year 1 counting and it is at Honours level this suggests

that this Honours HUM course will comprise 60 Cr level 1 and 300 Cr level 2/3. A comparable SSF or SCI course where the first year does not count will have 120 Cr level 1 and 240 Cr level 2/3 (in this example I have ignored the situation where a student may take a level 1 module from their profile in years 2/3). Does it matter that there will be such a difference in the courses?

***The majority of members of the CCS Review Group who have responded to this point are against making the first year count. Does LTC have a view?***

**B) **Condoned progression – allowing a student to progress to the next stage of their course or to leave with an award without having attained the pass mark in their modules.****

At the LTC discussion of the Review Group recommendation on compensation of marks the issue of 'condoned failure', which had not to that date been discussed by the Review Group, was raised and LTC asked the group to incorporate this into the new regulations. Subsequently both the Review Group and LTC preferred 'condoned progression' in place of 'condoned failure'. Implementation of this is being considered by the Review Group.

One scheme is the following. The Programme Specification for a course will set out its key learning outcomes, influenced by whatever external reference points there are (QAA Benchmark statements, PSB requirements etc). Module learning outcomes will be mapped against the key learning outcomes for the award to demonstrate which components of the course are contributing to the key award outcomes. Condoned progression is not allowed in such modules as a mark of less than 40% for the module will mean the student has not demonstrated they have attained the learning outcomes of the award.

For many courses there will be modules that do not contribute to the key learning outcomes of the award (e.g. a HUM module taken by a chemist) and for these, condoned progression could be allowed.

An alternative scheme to allow condoned progression in any module would have to be compatible with an assessment strategy that allowed a student to demonstrate that despite not passing a module any learning outcomes of the module leading to the key learning outcomes of the award have been met. This could come about because the award learning outcome has been met through a different module or because it stemmed from an assessment on the failed module that had been passed.

***Of those members of the Review Group that have expressed a view on condoned progression, some are not in favour of condoned progression being incorporated into the regulations, and those that are have mixed views on whether the scheme outlined above is appropriate. It may be that this is one of the issues that can only be worked out more clearly during the School consultation phase. If condoned progression is included in the new regulations it will have to be discretionary to allow Health Schools not to adopt it.***

**C) **Further refinements to condoned progression****

- i) The majority of the Review Group believe that if condoned progression is allowed there should be limits on it such as:
  - Progression can only be condoned in 40/360 credits.
  - Progression can only be condoned for a narrow fail – which is 35-39.9%
- ii) We should consider whether condoned progression is not an automatic right. For example, it could be where the learning outcomes rule is met, plus any limits are satisfied but it could also requires that students have attempted

every item of assessment (at least in the module where progression is being condoned).

**D) Module nomenclature.**

Current UEA nomenclature has levels 0, 1, 2 etc and M-level modules. This is very different from the module nomenclature used by HEFCE, QAA, UEA Partner colleges and PSRBs. Should UEA retain its existing system for the new regulations or move to the alternative?

**E) Formative coursework.**

A view expressed by many academic staff and some students is that formative coursework will not be done by many students because it 'doesn't count' despite the strong evidence that such coursework is beneficial for student learning. Where the new regulations require students to complete items of assessments to be eligible for reassessment (and perhaps condoned progression) should this requirement cover both summative and wholly formative coursework?