

LTC11D108

Title: Progression rules relating to UG programmes with a Year Abroad, Integrated Masters (IM) with a Year Abroad and Year in Industry Programmes
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Issue

Recommendations from the Academic Director of Taught Programmes regarding Progression rules relating to UG programmes with a Year Abroad, Integrated Masters (IM) with a Year Abroad and Year in Industry Programmes

Recommendation

LTC members are asked to consider the recommendations contained in the report.

Resource Implications

N/A

Risk Implications

The recommendations contained will have a 'risk' element for the University in the sense that decisions about thresholds will have an impact on student progression on the programmes concerned where the recommendations constitute a change from existing Regulations.

Equality and Diversity

At present there are very different progression rules in place in different programmes and often within programmes in the same Faculty. These have emerged over the years in an organic, piecemeal fashion – there has been little or no coordination in the past between schools or Faculties regarding the introduction of use of thresholds. As a result there are clear inequalities of opportunity for students wishing to study abroad both on UG Year Abroad and Integrated Masters programmes, with much higher thresholds in some schools than in others, yet on similar programmes where difference of treatment is difficult to justify. The recommendations from the ADTP address the issues of equality of opportunity by proposing the introduction of consistent thresholds tailored to the programmes concerned.

Timing of decisions

The report from the Director of Taught Programmes contains recommendations for changes to regulations in 2013/14.

Further Information

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Background

The Academic Director for Taught Programmes reports to LTC key developments around policy relating to teaching and learning. The report attached contains a number of recommendations associated with progression thresholds in UG and IM courses. The ADTP and Julia Jones have consulted widely with colleagues involved in running the programmes concerned.

Discussion

The report from the Academic Director for Taught Programmes draws attention to a number of policy recommendations that LTC is asked to consider/approve.

Progression rules relating to UG programmes with a Year Abroad, Integrated Masters (IM) with a Year Abroad and Year in Industry Programmes

At the last meeting of LTC on Wednesday 27 June, the ADTP shared with LTC colleagues information relating to the progression rules that govern the University's UG degrees and Integrated Masters programmes with a Year Abroad, and its UG degrees with a Year in Industry.

The ADTP included a spreadsheet which showed the variance that exists between different Faculties and also within Faculties with regard to the % mark thresholds in place in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd years.

The ADTP circulated a 'context-setting' paper in which some of the reasons and historical background to these variable progression thresholds was explained and outlined in some detail.

The ADTP reported that he had met with the academics involved in running these programmes in three separate meetings (each attended by Julia Jones) as a means of establishing the rationale and purpose of the thresholds and to explore whether colleagues would welcome a greater degree of consistency across programmes.

During discussion at LTC in June members seemed to take a very clear view which might be summed-up as follows:

- 1) That integrated Masters programmes are seen as 'flagship', high quality premium programmes which attract students with higher grades than normal UG programmes. Given their flagship status, this should be reflected in progression thresholds which set high expectations for students. The bar should be high and the minimum level acceptable would be **60%** since this was the threshold for a 2(i) grade, and students would normally require 2(i) grades if progressing to a standalone Masters degree. A lower threshold than 60% would be inappropriate since outcomes below 60% (e.g. 55%) were effectively 'value-subtracting' given the high entry grades of students. Given the high demands placed on students studying subjects like Maths in foreign universities, a grade of less than 60% would mean that they would simply not be able to 'cope' with the intellectual level and academic demands placed on them during their period abroad. The common IM 'threshold' of 60% was endorsed by LTC.
- 2) The same conditions/circumstances do not apply to UG degree programmes with a Year Abroad. Therefore there is a legitimate basis on which to set a lower threshold. However, this should not be too low since, again we should be setting high expectations for our UG students early-on in their studies. Whilst abroad, students are effectively ambassadors for the University, which means that the Institution has an interest in ensuring that students studying in other Universities or organisations are performing well and fully engaged. It was recognised, however, that this needed to be balanced with the need to ensure that opportunities to study abroad were available to a wider group of students. To this end, a threshold of 55% was felt to be a reasonable expectation. This principle was endorsed by LTC.
- 3) In discussion with colleagues involved in running UG degree programmes with a Year in Industry, it became apparent that the rationale for a percentage threshold was less easy to justify since the students would have to undergo an interview process anyway to win their placement with a provider (a company). There was little point in the University setting hurdles if the students then failed to negotiate their interviews successfully. Colleagues felt, therefore, that the only progression threshold should be the placement interview with the provider. If the provider offers a student a place in their company for a year, then the University should not stand in the way of the student taking up the opportunity. This principle was endorsed by LTC.

In the recommendations that follow, the ADTP is proposing that a new set of consistent 'thresholds' are built into the regulations for the relevant programmes, not for 2012/13, but, instead, for 2013/14 so that they coincide with the New Academic Model and can be integrated into the development of the NAM Regs.

Changes

With regard to the thresholds proposed, the key **changes** are as follows:

Integrated Masters

- The proposed **60%** threshold is already employed by ENV, MTH, CMP, ART, BIO and Natural Sciences in their IM courses.
- The 60% threshold would represent a change for CHE (currently 55%).

Year Abroad UG Degrees

- The proposed **55%** threshold is already employed in Stages 1 & 2 by AMS, FTV, Natural Sciences, therefore no change.
- The following schools would be affected by change:
 - LAW Year Abroad/Erasmus currently only requires 40% in Stage 1 and 55% in Stage 2
 - ENV Year in America/Australia/Erasmus currently require 60% in Stage 1 and 55% in Stage 2.

Year in Industry Degrees

The proposal to simply have 'Pass all modules' in Stage 1, and 'pass interview' with placement provider in Stage 2 is a significant change, since Schools currently require following:

- BIO currently require 60% in Stages 1 & 2
- CMP and ENV currently require 55% in Stages 1 & 2

However the proposals set out below re Year in Industry are supported by the Assoc Dean for SCI who believes that the key threshold should be whether the placement provider is impressed enough at interview to provide a place for a student in their organisation for a year.

Recommendations from the ADTP:

That LTC approve the following progression rules for incorporation into the Regulations for the Year Abroad, Year in Industry and Integrated Masters programmes. The following rules will not apply for 2012/13, but instead will apply in the following year **2013/14** and will operate alongside the New Academic Model. Schools therefore have a year operating under current Regulations to ensure they are compliant with the new Regulations for 2013/14.

Progression thresholds:

Course	Stage 1	Stage 2	Year Out	Stage 3	Stage 4
Integrated Masters	60% aggregate + pass all modules	60% aggregate + pass all modules	N/A	60% aggregate + pass all modules	IM Regs
UG Year Abroad	55% aggregate + pass all modules	55% aggregate + pass all modules	N/A	Pass all modules	N/A
UG Year in Industry	Pass all modules	Pass all modules + Pass interview with placement provider	N/A	Pass all modules	N/A

Concessions:

Schools who feel that the progression rules may inhibit or undermine the viability of their programmes should be able to apply to the ADTP for a concession to operate alternative agreed thresholds. However they will need to present a convincing case and it is not guaranteed that concession requests will be approved. Schools wishing to apply for a concession should forward their request to the ADTP by 30 October 2012.

Schools who believe that a student who has narrowly missed (by up to 2%) the threshold aggregate mark for automatic progression to the Year Abroad or Year in Industry may apply to the ADTP for a concession to allow the student to progress. However they will need to present a convincing case and it is not guaranteed that concession requests will be approved.