

LTC11D109

Title: New Academic Model: Capping of Reassessment Marks
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Issue

To consider the different options available for capping reassessment marks in the standard undergraduate marking scheme under the New Academic Model.

Recommendation

LTC members are asked to consider the questions and recommendation contained in the report.

Resource Implications

None

Risk Implications

The different options will have a 'risk' element for the University in the sense that decisions about policy issues will have an impact on processes and outcomes for students, and the student experience. The recommended option has, in the view of the author, the least risk to retention rates, but may have an adverse effect on good honours.

Equality and Diversity

It is not envisaged that the recommendation contained in the report will impact on groups with protected characteristics.

Timing of decisions

The report reflects discussions at the TPPG meeting on 10 July 2012.

Further Information

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Background

TPPG is an advisory group which provides guidance and advice to the Academic Director of Taught Programmes on issues relating to UEA policy and teaching/pedagogy in general. TPPG is not a decision-making body and has no executive powers – it is a body with cross-University membership which puts forward recommendation to LTC for the latter to consider and/or approve.

Discussion

As indicated in the report

Capping of reassessment mark – recommendation to LTC from TPPG

Scope

There are currently two major mark schemes in use for undergraduate modules within the CCS regulations. In some professional Schools, a 'pass all components' (PC) marking scheme is used. This works by capping at the component level, and will not change with the introduction of the New Academic Model; it is not within the scope of this paper. The other major marking scheme is the 'pass on aggregate' (PA) marking scheme, used for the majority of undergraduate modules. It is this marking scheme that, with the introduction of NAM, gives us the opportunity to review how the capping at reassessment will operate.

Background

At its meeting of 14/3/12, TPPG considered a discussion paper on capping reassessment marks for undergraduate modules in NAM¹. At that meeting the following points were noted:

- That, under NAM, the need to pass all modules might be considered enough of a barrier, and that achievement at reassessment might be recognised ie not capped. However that those who pass narrowly might be disadvantaged by comparison.
- That a cap at component level might mean a student sent to reassessment in more than one item could pass a reassessment element and still (with the assessment capped) fail the module. With the requirement to pass all modules, such a student would not progress.
- That the University had previously taken the view those students should not be able to gain any advantage by going to reassessment; the potential for students to aim for a strategic fail had to be considered.
- Also that students going to reassessment would have had the benefit of feedback from all elements of assessment before attempting the reassessment item.
- That a principle of equality of opportunity, not treatment, may seem unfair to students.

The consensus from the March TPPG meeting was that capping should continue. The question put to TPPG members at its meeting of 10 July 2012 was whether capping would be at component item level or module level, with the introduction of the NAM, when reassessment will be at the level of the failed item(s), rather than one synoptic reassessment for the module, as under the current regulations.

It should be noted that the current practice is to cap at module level; students passing what is currently synoptic reassessment receive a module mark capped at the pass mark for classification purposes. (The uncapped mark is used for progression purposes, when calculating whether a student has achieved a high enough year average to progress; this will no longer be relevant when students have to pass all modules to progress).

Discussion and recommendation from the TPPG meeting held on 10 July

The question posed was:

If a student fails more than one item of assessment in a module, s/he will be required to go to reassessment in all the failed assessments. Would we expect the student to have to pass each of these individually (this would be the outcome if capping was at the component level)² or would we wish that marks be compensated within the module, so that not all items necessarily need to be passed (module capping)?

Component/ item level capping outcome

Under this scheme, students will progress, when they have failed only failed one item of assessment for the module. It has the advantage that the good marks achieved for other items will feed in to the overall module mark, and on to classification, unlike capping at module level. However, where students have failed more than one item (my estimation is that

¹ This is for 'pass aggregate' marking schemes. 'Pass all component' marking schemes would not change from current practice of capping at item level.

² This would be the case when there were at least two failed components in one module. This is estimated to be about one third of all reassessments.

this happens currently in at least one third of reassessments), go to reassessment in both, and only pass one of the items, they may fail the module. Unfortunately we cannot test this from current data, as students are only reassessed in one synoptic item. We can predict, however, that some students who have to be reassessed in more than one failed item in a module will not pass both of them. If capped at component level, in this scenario, students may not achieve the required pass mark in order to progress.

It really comes down to a decision on what is being asked of a student going to reassessment. We have previously agreed that a student will be sent to reassessment in all failed items. What we are considering here is whether the student needs to pass all failed items or, alternatively, compensation between items is educationally acceptable. As we allow compensation at first sit assessments, I believe we would want to permit this at reassessment ie we cap at the module level.

Module level capping outcome

This is the method of capping under current CCS regulations, where the reassessment mark is capped at the pass mark. Currently the whole of the module first sit component marks are replaced by one 'synoptic' reassessment mark. This is capped for classification purposes. With the introduction of the NAM we have the opportunity to review this, to ensure it is what we want to continue with. If we continued to cap at the module level for the 'pass aggregate' undergraduate marking schemes in NAM, the result would be the same as in the current regulations ie the student would receive a module mark capped at the pass mark for classification purposes. (It should be noted that currently in CCS we use the uncapped mark for progression purposes, when calculating whether a student has achieved a high enough year average to progress; this will no longer be relevant when students have to pass all modules to progress).

For capping at the module level, all achieved marks at the item level, whether obtained at first sit or at reassessment, will contribute to the overall module mark; this mark will be capped at 40, and be recorded as such on the system and it is the capped mark that will be used for classification, and progression, purposes.

<p>Recommendation: Capping of reassessment marks in the 'pass aggregate' undergraduate module marking scheme to be at the level of the module with the introduction of the New Academic Model.</p>
