

SEN09D014

Title: Report of major principles of proposed new CCS regulations as endorsed by the Learning and Teaching Committee at its meeting on 9 December, 2009

Author: Assistant Registrar, Undergraduate (LTQO)

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1. Background

The CCS Review Group was established by the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) with the intention of completely rewriting the Common Course Structure (CCS) degree regulations. The CCS Review Group has met on a number of occasions and has proposed a number of significant changes, starting with a series of principles that will underpin the redrafting of the regulations. The Review Group comprises a range of academic and administrative staff and students' representatives. The constitution is set out in **Appendix A**.

The Review Group will also revise regulations for Integrated Masters awards in line with the revisions to the CCS regulations and will inform a review of the Common Masters Framework governing taught master's awards that will commence in the 2010/11 academic year.

The key principles underlying the new regulations were presented to LTC at its meeting on 9 December, 2009.

2. Principles of new CCS Regulations

LTC has endorsed the following principles of the proposed new CCS regulations and commends these to Senate:

Principle 1: Academic requirements for progression should require that compensation between modules not be permitted

Currently, standard CCS progression rules state that students can progress to the next Stage if they achieve at least the pass mark of 40% in a total of at least 80 credits with an overall average for the Stage of at least 40% and with a minimum of 40% in all modules designated core for the course. Failing that, students are referred for reassessment on one occasion only. It is proposed to tighten up the progression requirements in principle such that students be expected to pass every module with at least the pass mark of 40%. Currently, CCS regulations allow compensation between modules, provided the modules are not designated as core for the course, and compensation within modules. There are exceptions to this in respect of health-related provision where Professional, Statutory and/or Regulatory Bodies require all modules and all components of modules be passed. It is proposed to extend this principle to all courses, viz. that compensation *between* modules be

abolished. However, it is proposed that compensation *within* modules be retained at the discretion of Schools. Adoption of these two principles will mean that the current distinction between core, compulsory and optional modules will disappear.

One of the drivers behind these proposals concerns student engagement in their studies. By making it a requirement that students reach at least the pass mark in all modules, we hope to avoid a situation where some students maybe selective about their efforts.

[See point 4: Condoned Progression. Condoned Progression is where a student is allowed to progress carrying a fail mark in a module. LTC has asked the Review Group to consider whether this should be included in the regulations as a permissive feature at the discretion of Schools, noting that it will undermine the principle that all modules must be passed.]

Principle 2: Free Choice modules will be abolished

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 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 programme. This will mean that tightly-defined programmes and programmes 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 programme, option ranges can be used.

Principle 3: No automatic right to reassessment

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, although there is no requirement by the Higher Education Funding Council for England to do this. Students who are referred to reassessment seem to fall into three groups: students who fully engage with their subject, able students with extenuating circumstances and students who do not fully engage with their subject. The view of many dealing with reassessment is that the last group is substantial 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, if they still fail to achieve the required standard, a procedure to make them (and UEA) recognise that they should not continue on their course. Therefore the CCS Review Group has agreed that:

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

- 1) attained the pass mark of 40% in 50% or more of their modules in their current Stage, **and**
- 2) have attempted every item of assessment required by their choice of modules
[the Review Group is considering whether this should include wholly formative work or just work with a summative element]

This regulation will ensure that students who are fully engaged with their programme but are struggling will have reassessment opportunities. It also provides an additional incentive for students to engage with their studies.

b) Failed module items will be reassessed

The Review Group proposed that reassessment should change from synoptic reassessment at the module level to reassessment of failed module items. This principle requires further exploration as to how it would operate in practice.

c) Reassessment marks will be capped at the item level

If reassessment at the item level is adopted, the Review Group has agreed that reassessment marks should be capped at the item level at 40% which would allow the final module mark to be higher than 40%. This will provide an additional incentive to students to put more energy into reassessment.

Principle 4: Concessions

Members of the Review Group have agreed that a concessionary route will remain for students who fall outside these regulations, particularly those with extenuating circumstances to account for poor performance.

Principle 5: Levels and progression

The Quality Assurance Agency (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 0, undergraduate levels 1/2/3 and master's (M-level) modules. The key decision to make is whether formally to distinguish between level 2 and 3 modules. In reality, the majority of programmes already distinguish between levels 2 and 3 with 3 being at a higher level than 2 in terms of the relative academic demands of the modules.

The Review Group has agreed that progression should be linked to the level of modules in a course profile in a hierarchical manner, as long as the hierarchy is defined clearly as either being on a higher level or as a module which should be a pre-requisite for a higher- level module.

[The Review Group has discussed if UEA should adopt the QAA nomenclature defining the module level which would mean that a UEA level 0 would become a level 3 module and, following on from this, level 1 would become level 4, level 2 would become level 5, level 3 would become level 6 finishing with an M-level module becoming a level 7 module. The Academic Registrar has consulted with other Universities to find out what they are planning to do and the majority of replies received indicate that they have switched or are in the process of switching to the QAA nomenclature. It is noted that the majority of replies received were mainly from post-' 92 Universities. Changing to the QAA nomenclature could have wide ranging consequences for UEA as modules would need to be recoded in SITS and all student information and management material containing module information be amended. If this were to be done alongside the introduction of new degree regulations, this could prove to be time-consuming and the whole timetable for implementation (from the 2012-13 session) could slip. Further discussions regarding the costs and benefits of switching to the QAA nomenclature need to take place before a final decision on the adoption of the QAA nomenclature can be made.]

3. Making part of the first year count towards classification

LTC had asked the CCS Review Group to consider, as part of the CCS Review, if UEA should allow part of the first year to count towards degree classification in order to improve student engagement, particularly in semester 2 of the first year. The Review Group recognised that making some of the first year count could improve student engagement if the amount counting was set at a sufficiently high value to be motivational, but remained divided about whether this approach should be adopted. Members were of the view that the first year should also be an opportunity for students to adjust to University life and assessments without any consequences for their degree classification. This was considered to be particularly important as participation in Higher Education widened and the number of international students increased.

ET has recently made a decision not to implement the proposal that the first year should count towards the degree classification for any School. ET was, however, anxious to intensify engagement.

4. Concept of condoned progression

LTC asked the Review Group to look at whether the new CCS regulations should allow a student to progress to the next Stage of their programme or to leave with an appropriate award without having attained the pass mark in all their modules. The Review Group has concluded this may be feasible provided that it can be demonstrated that all key learning outcomes for the relevant award have been attained. The Review Group has proposed that condoned progression will **not** be allowed in modules for which the learning outcomes are key for the award on which the student is registered, as a mark of less than 40% for the module will mean that the student has not demonstrated that they have attained the learning outcomes of the award. For some programmes, there will be modules that do not contribute to the key learning outcomes of the award and for these, it is proposed that condoned progression may be allowed. The Review Group favours a maximum of condoned credits, i.e. up to 40 credits within the 360 credits needed for an Honours degree. Condoned progression is not an automatic right and should be considered on an individual basis. The Review Group will revisit the details of condoned progression at future meetings.

5. Next steps

Following endorsement by LTC of these major principles, the Director of Taught Programmes is holding consultation meetings with each Faculty, Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee. In the spring semester, 2010, draft regulations will be written. Further consultation meetings with Associate Deans (LTQ) in each Faculty will take place to determine how best to pilot these new regulations within a Faculty prior to full implementation. It is envisaged that Senate will be invited to approve the new CCS regulations in December 2010 with a view to implementation them from September, 2012.

Senate is invited to endorse the principles set out in section 2 above.

Members of the Review Group of Common Course Structure and the Academic year 2009/10

NAME	ROLE	TEL	EMAIL
Professor Geoff Moore	Chair - Director of Taught Programmes (CAP)	2697	g.moore@uea.ac.uk
Ms Eva Roberts and Mrs Claudia Gray (shared)	Secretary	3270 3286	eva.roberts@uea.ac.uk Claudia.gray@uea.ac.uk
Mr Rob Evans	The Academic Registrar	2227	r.evans@uea.ac.uk
Ms Alison Rhodes	The Head of LTQO	2210	a.rhodes@uea.ac.uk
Mr Ian Farr	Faculty of Arts and Humanities (HUM) representative	2139	i.farr@uea.a.uk
Dr Nicola Spalding	Faculty of Health (FOH) representative	3075	n.spalding@uea.ack
Dr Nick Watmough	Faculty of Science (SCI) representative	2179	n.watmough@uea.ac.uk
Professor Rhys Jenkins	Faculty of Social Sciences (SSF) representative	2330	r.o.jenkins@uea.ac.uk
Ms Caroline Sauverin, SSF	Faculty Manager	7371	c.sauverin@uea.ac.uk
Ms Claudia Gray	LTQO Assistant Registrar (UG)	3286	Claudia.gray@uea.ac.uk
Ms Eva Roberts	The Project Officer, Review of Assessment	3270	Eva.roberts@uea.ac.uk
Mr David Sheppard	The Academic Officer of the UEA Union of Students	2589	su.academic@uea.ac.uk
Mr Tom Sutton	UG representative (from SSLC's)		Thomas.Sutton@uea.ac.uk
Name to be confirmed	UG representative (from SSLC's)		
Co-opted Members			
Ms Anne Vallins	LTQO Assistant Registrar	2368	Anne.vallins@uea.ac.uk
Mr Karl Phillips	Student Representative by invitation	N/A	Karl.phillips@uea.ac.uk
Mr Andrew Watson	Planning Office, Assistant Registrar	2830	A.M.Watson@uea.ac.uk