Title:	**NAM Discussion Paper and Recommendations: Feedback from Faculty LTQCs**
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Issue

A report from the Director of Taught Programmes on a NAM Discussion Paper considered at 30 Jan meeting of LTC. The NAM paper was presented to LTC to indicate the direction of travel re refinements to the NAM. Now we have feedback from the Faculties LTC can formally approve the recommendations it contains. There are three areas where Faculty views differ from the Recommendations in the NAM Paper – these are flagged at the beginning of the attached document. LTC is asked to take a view on these so that NAM planning can progress.

Recommendation

LTC members are asked to consider and formally approve the recommendations contained in the NAM Discussion Paper.

Resource Implications

Many of the recommendations contained in the report will have resource implications for the University. LTS is aware of the contents of the NAM Discussion Paper and is confident that the recommendations, if approved, can be effectively implemented.

Risk Implications

Many of the recommendations contained 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.

Equality and Diversity

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

Timing of decisions

The NAM Discussion Paper went to LTC for information purposes, as part of the report from the ADTP. The Discussion Paper is now presented to 20 March LTC for formal approval, hence it status as a separate agenda item.

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

The NAM Discussion Paper draws attention to a number of important policy recommendation, that LTC is asked to consider/approve. They relate to the implementation of the New Academic Model for UG taught programmes.

Feedback from Faculty LTQCs on the
NAM Discussion Paper presented to LTC on 30 January 2013

The ADTP asked Associate Deans for L & T to share with their Faculty LTQCs the NAM Discussion paper presented to University LTC on 30 January. They have provided feedback as set out below. The feedback is overwhelmingly positive on all 5 key sections of the Discussion Paper. I believe that a level of consensus has now been achieved that allows for all the recommendations, as set out in the paper, to be formally approved by LTC.

Feedback

There were a few areas where LTQCs had reservations about the recommendations contained in the discussion paper, and LTC may wish to take a view on these issues:

- The SCI LTQC is firmly of the view that attendance requirement should be dropped from the NAM permanently. *This is an isolated view. The discussion paper has already recommended that the University should <u>not</u> implement attendance monitoring data as a criterion for establishing whether students have earned the right to a reassessment opportunity. Deciding to abandon this notion completely and permanently is possibly premature.*
- The SSF LTQC feels that future resources should not be focused on monitoring attendance in large groups. *This has implications for the roll-out of attendance monitoring technology/infrastructure. The discussion paper proposes that the roll-out of this technology should continue.*
- The HUM LTQC has raised the issue of whether exam boards should consider and then have the power to decide whether a concession should be granted to progress (rather than the ADTP) in cases where students have not passed all modules. *The ADTP has no objections to this in principle – though it would be necessary to ensure that EC Pre Boards (and subsequently Exam Boards) exercised their responsibilities/discretion as consistently as possible across the University.*

Feedback from HUM LTQC:

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1. **Attendance monitoring**
   Members agreed that this particular regulation should be postponed. SU representatives stressed that they do support attendance monitoring, provided it is not used punitively.
2. **Engagement**
   Several schools assess and reward engagement, but there was agreement that it is difficult to do and that we need to have a thorough discussion of what we mean by engagement and how we can assess it. Similar to attendance monitoring, with regards to engagement a concern was raised over the reliability of evidence academic staff and/or LTS record.
3. **20% and reassessment**
   Members thought that it would be a good thing if there was no hurdle of 20% in the first attempt at reassessment and liked the idea (which 2ii seems to suggest) that exam boards will not have to apply a blanket rule for all cases of students who fall below the 20% threshold.

4. **Pass all modules**

It was suggested by one colleague that the exam board should consider and then have the power to decide whether a concession should be granted, but otherwise everyone was happy with the recommendation.

5. **Evaluation**

Everyone was happy with the suggestion that the impact of the NAM will be monitored.

Feedback from SCI LTQC:

The set of recommendations from LTC were discussed at SCI LTQC and the responses are below. All DLTs were present and also the SU representative.

1. Attendance monitoring.

We were in agreement with the recommendation to postpone implementation of the NAM regulation relating to attendance monitoring. The committee went further than that and was firmly of the view that this should be dropped from NAM. The reasons for this were twofold. The first related to the reliability (or unreliability) of being able to do this robustly, particularly when so much is potentially at stake for a student. The second reason was that Regulation 13 should be employed to deal with lack of attendance and not the right to reassessment. More thought should be given as to how participation in formative and summative assessments could be used to identify lack of engagement.

2. Defining and rewarding engagement

We were in general agreement with the recommendation but were not keen on the use of the word 'engagement'. Several schools award marks for how students participate in group activities such as presentations and this was felt, in part, to be engagement. In recommendation 1 could 'engagement' be replaced with something like 'attendance' - although this is probably not ideal. We are probably arguing over the details of how the words are interpreted.

3. 20% first attempt reassessment hurdle

There was agreement on the first recommendation regarding using regulation 13. Regarding the second recommendation, it was felt that this was too complicated and should be left to the discretion of the Exam Board, who can look at participation in formative and summative assessments.

4. Pass all modules

Agreed that HOS should become involved in cases where students are under-performing.

5. Evaluation of NAM

All agreed with recommendations.

Feedback from SSF LTQC:

1. **Attendance monitoring.**

There is little appetite for pursuing student attendance monitoring punitively. The group are supportive of measures which enable us to carry our responsibilities in terms of the welfare of students but they did not feel that spending resources and effort monitoring large group teaching was useful in this regard. They are keen to monitor small group teaching and the hand in and collection of formative and summative assessment. There was some debate about whether or not advisor visits/email/phone contact might also be useful in this – there

is a concern that the advising system might not be good enough in places to mean that this process makes a genuine contribution to student's learning experience.

2. **Defining and rewarding engagement**

There was general, if in some places reluctant, agreement that awarding credit for 'engagement' is problematic and so it should not be allowed. It is not in place on any SSF modules as far as the group was aware.

3. **20% first attempt reassessment hurdle**

We agreed that poor attendance/engagement is not really a 'behavioural' issue in a negative sense (slightly perplexed as to the use of the word here?) The NEW General Regulation 13 should make it clear that students are expected to engage in their studies but there was a range of views about whether not turning up to teaching events, especially large group ones, might constitute a shortcoming in student 'behaviour'. There is some significant and useful work going on in SSF around student empowerment and engagement and we would not want these efforts compromised by an unduly punitive system.

4. **Pass all modules**

There was agreement that the right to reassessment ought to be dealt with by exam boards on a case by case basis as set out in the paper. There was agreement that EC's should be considered in terms of the 'pass everything' rule and the HEAR makes it very important to monitor students' performance from the very start of the module.

5. **Evaluation of NAM**

Plans for reviewing the NAM look sensible.

Feedback from FMH LTQC:

Oral feedback from Rosie Doy has been positive. The proposals are endorsed in FMH.

Dr Adam Longcroft
ADTP
7 March 2013

Attendance Monitoring, Engagement and the New Academic Model:

A Discussion Paper for University LTC, 30 January 2013

Attendance Monitoring & Technological Solutions

Christina Chan (Hub Manager, E Fry) and Helena Gillespie (Assoc Dean for L & T, SSF) have undertaken important work leading a working group on the use of technology to monitor attendance and also how best to implement attendance monitoring. Helena and Christina have shared their findings with the Heads of LTS, the ADTP, the PVC Academic and the other Faculty Assoc Deans. They have concluded that the University will <u>not</u> be in a position to implement robust attendance monitoring solutions in time for the start of the NAM in Sep 2013. Given the current levels of resource and technical challenges entailed they have recommended that the University should <u>not</u> implement attendance monitoring data as a criteria for establishing whether students have earned the right to a reassessment opportunity (as currently expressed in the NAM). Whilst the necessary technological infrastructure for attendance monitoring will not be sufficiently developed by Sept 2013, the working group have suggested that is worthwhile to continue to progress with technological developments like Cardax systems so that the University is in a stronger position to monitor attendance in future.

There are two key advantages associated with the continued development and extension of attendance monitoring technology. These are:

1) Close (yet automated) monitoring of attendance will enable Schools to implement/apply General Reg 13 in a robust manner. As experience has shown, close monitoring of attendance enables Schools to make early and supportive interventions when students are struggling due to previously unreported extenuating circumstances.

2) Very poor levels of attendance at scheduled taught sessions may be indicative of quality issues with regard to module delivery and the standard of teaching. It is important that Heads of Schools are able to identify modules/courses where student attendance is much lower than the 'norm' since modules with low levels of engagement often have poor outcomes – which impact on NSS/SES scores.

Recommendations

During the remainder of the 2012/13 academic year, LTC should:

1) The University should <u>not</u> implement attendance monitoring data as a criteria for establishing whether students have earned the right to a reassessment opportunity.

2) Consult staff and students on the issue of attendance monitoring, and how data collected is used within the University.

3) Explore student 'outputs' rather than 'inputs' (attendance at teaching events) as a measure of engagement. Whilst the Student's Union is supportive of attendance monitoring in principle, and a clear link has been established in the research literature between attendance and performance, alternatives to teaching 'event' monitoring should be explored. These might include:
   ➢ Monitoring submission of formative assessments
   ➢ Attendance at adviser meetings (where these have been requested)

       ➢ Attendance at supervision sessions

4) Work with LTS to continue the development and refinement of attendance monitoring infrastructure. The University should work towards a position where all teaching spaces have this technology in place a s a p.

5) Focus on 'engagement' as the crucial issue in determining student progress rather than attendance at teaching events per se.

6) Continue to explore efficient and user-friendly systems that enable students to report their absence from teaching sessions. Regardless of developments of attendance monitoring infrastructure, students should be expected to report and provide evidence to explain their absence from teaching events.

Defining and Rewarding Engagement

There is a real danger in dealing with engagement and attendance in a disciplinary manner rather than a supportive manner since failure to engage/attend may be an indicator of the fact that the student is experiencing problems (extenuating circumstances). Failure to attend teaching events may, in some cases, require supportive interventions by staff, rather than being seen as a catalyst or 'trigger' for punitive measures.

Inclusion of engagement marks within the NAM will be problematic in terms of reassessment opportunities and the capacity to effectively assess engagement. If we do allow a proportion of marks for engagement, which would need to be explicitly defined, the impact of doing so will need to be carefully monitored.

There are some advantages of rewarding engagement with marks:

- It ensures that students engaging in a robust manner are rewarded for doing so, which would promote future pro-active engagement in subsequent modules.
- It could help to develop a 'work hard, play hard' culture within the student body – an objective which has been emphasised by the Vice-Chancellor on a number of occasions.
- Staff would feel 'empowered' to reward students who prepare thoroughly for seminars/lab sessions/practicals.
- It places the emphasis on 'awarding' marks, rather than deducting them – it is therefore a 'positive' means of reward.

There are, however, also some disadvantages of rewarding engagement with marks:

- Staff perceptions of students' engagement may be subjective and inaccurate – e.g. a student may have prepared thoroughly by reading seminar papers etc. but choose to say little in the seminar discussion itself.
- Attendance isn't, of itself, evidence of engagement – e.g. a student may be present in a class but not 'engaged' in the content of the session: the 'really here in name only' scenario.
- Giving marks for engagement is unnecessary since a student's level of 'engagement' is reflected in the work which they do submit and which is assessed/marked. An 'engaged' student will therefore normally gain a better mark anyway than one who is un-engaged. Non-engagement will normally be reflected in lower marks on coursework/exams, and should be dealt with as a behavioural issue and using <u>disciplinary</u> means (Gen Reg 13) rather than having marks allocated to it specifically (or deducted).
- Defining engagement is extremely problematic and good engagement is not always 'visible' to academic staff. In a 20 credit module there are often only c.36-44 'contact hours'. The other 160 hours are often allocated to 'independent study'. Staff are not

in a position to determine how the student applies themselves or engages with the content of the module during these independent study hours. Awarding or deducting marks for engage on the basis of a very small minority of the study hours associated with a module is inherently problematic.

- Choosing not to award marks for engagement to students who fail to prepare, for example, by reading set seminar readings in advance of a seminar requires the staff member to determine whether a student has or has not read said papers. Establishing this can be problematic – a student may have read but not understood the paper, and a failure to engage in the seminar discussion may reflect a lack of understanding, not a lack of engagement.

The advantages of rewarding engagement explicitly by allocating marks are outweighed, in our view, by the disadvantages it would bring and the very real difficulties involved in defining and monitoring it. Using the perceived lack of engagement as a means of penalising students by removing their right to reassessment is thus fraught with risks to the Institution and could produce unfair/unsafe outcomes/treatment of students.

Our view is that the NAM should <u>not</u> associate the denial of reassessment with attendance as an automatic punitive measure. Non-engagement is a behavioural issue, and one that can and should legitimately be dealt with under disciplinary regulations and procedures. Our view is that the only safe and consistent means of removing the right to reassessment would be for this decision to be located within SSDC. In order for issues of poor engagement (poor study-related behaviour) to be addressed and dealt with efficiently, we would also recommend that General Regulation be amended within the NAM such the number of HoS warnings is reduced to <u>two</u> before automatic referral by the HoS to SSDC. The School may refer to SSDC a student with unauthorised absence in excess of 20% of the required attendance at any point during their studies when this absence 'threshold' is reached.
As part of the changes it will be necessary to adjust the punitive measures and punishments available to the SSDC. The SSDC should, in future, have the option to deny a reassessment as part of their disciplinary processes. If we adopt this approach we would need to ensure that this is applied consistently and ensure that any approach we introduce to act on attendance and engagement is fair, consistent, legal and appropriate to the behaviour being addressed.

In addressing the issue of consistency we will need to consider possible 'trigger points' under Reg 13. This will need to include a minimum requirement for attendance for all students. One used in other Universities is 50%. If a student's unauthorised recorded absences breach the 50% threshold this should trigger an automatic referral by the HoS to SSDC and SSDC may, at this stage, impose a range of punishments, including withdrawal of the student from their programme of study. It will be important in applying a robust process to support attendance and engagement we should be using telephone checks with students as well as written communication with students to follow up on attendance and other absences.

Recommendations:
1) Marks should not be explicitly awarded for engagement under the NAM.
2) Poor attendance and/or engagement is a behavioural issue and should be dealt with via Gen Reg 13.
3) Number of HoS meetings prior to automatic referral to SSDC should be reduced to two (as opposed to three)

4) The authority to withdraw a student's right to assessment should sit with SSDC – powers available to SSDC should be amended to reflect this.
5) Any student breaching 50% threshold for unauthorised absence(s) should be referred automatically to SSDC.

The 20% First Attempt Reassessment Hurdle in the NAM

The requirement to achieve the hurdle of 20% in the first attempt at assessment in a module in order to earn the right to reassessment (currently a requirement within the NAM) is problematic in terms of impact on students whose mark has been penalised (e.g. via medium or high level plagiarism) rather than being generated wholly on their academic performance. If we exclude the impact of penalties on the mark being considered for possible reassessment this may lead to a sense of unfairness for students who are denied the right of reassessment by virtue of academically underperforming to a level where they achieve less than 20%. Our view, therefore, is that Level One reassessment (in the first year of study) should necessarily be <u>automatic</u>; Level Two and Level 3 reassessment might be <u>discretionary</u> such that very poor performance is referred for consideration by SSDC who will consider the student for denial of reassessment on the grounds of evidence of non-engagement. Consequently the denial of reassessment would not be based on assessment but on issues of engagement. The student would not, therefore, be being punished because they are not able to cope at an intellectual level with the module content, but because they have not applied themselves and engaged with the module in the manner the University would expect.

The 'Pass All Modules' Requirement

It is not in the interests either of the University or its students to see an excessive number of students being forced to withdraw, especially in the first year. The University is keen to reduce 1st year withdrawals and the implementation of the NAM will need to reflect concerns in this area. It is recommended, therefore, that LTC should explore the benefits of extenuating circumstances being allowed to support a concession to progress or to take Delayed Sit without a student having passed all modules. In the interests of fairness and equity of treatment for students, LTC should consider extending this to <u>all</u> stages within the programme of study. Students with under-performance noted at Progress Boards should continue to be referred to HoSs as at present.

Recommendations:
1) Allow extenuating circumstances to support concessions to progress or to take Delayed Sits, in all stages, <u>without</u> students having to pass all modules.
2) Students with under-performance noted at Progress Boards should continue to be referred to HoSs as at present.

Evaluation of the NAM

It will be essential for the University to ensure that the impact of the NAM is closely monitored and evaluated. It is recommended, therefore, that LTC establish an evaluative framework for assessing NAM both ahead of implementation and in first 3 years of application including a qualitative element referencing academic views and experience. This process of evaluation should include and draw-upon feedback from Course Directors, Heads of Schools, Faculty LTQCs, and School SSLCs for early reactions circa 15 months in to the NAM (i.e. in January 2015) by email enquiry and via SSLC student reps. This feedback should be collated by the NAM Project Officer, analysed by the Academic Director of Taught

Programmes and the Heads of LTS, and subsequently presented as an interim evaluative report, to LTC at the end of the spring semester 2015 (April 2015). The report should conform to an explicit framework which includes information on:

- ➢ appeals,
- ➢ complaints,
- ➢ drop-out,
- ➢ reassessment data,
- ➢ NSS scores,
- ➢ classification outcomes,
- ➢ OIA judgements,
- ➢ employability impacts.

This should be followed by a summative evaluation after five years (completed in Sept 2018). Our approach should be intended to capture any unintended consequences as well as the outcomes we would be expecting to assess as part of our evaluation.

Recommendations:
1) Interim evaluative report produced by ADTP/LTS (Jan 2015).
2) Summative evaluation produced after five years (Sep 2018).