Learning & Teaching Bulletin – July 2014

As the academic year ends it is timely to reflect upon initiatives launched during 2013-14 and to introduce changes being introduced in 2014-15. Once again it has been another busy year and we thank you all for your constructive comments and engagement in policy discussions and in particular when unintended consequences of new policies have materialised.

This bulletin contains a digest of the policy work undertaken this year with a summary of regulatory changes which will come into effect on 1 August 2014 and an update on a number of on-going projects. Please read through the contents and come along to one of our two briefing sessions in which we will summarise the changes and look forward to receiving questions or providing clarification.

Monday 21 July	9.00-10.00am	Elizabeth Fry Building 01.02
Tuesday 9 September	1.00-3.00pm	Elizabeth Fry Building 01.02

We look forward to seeing you at one or other of the meetings.

Dr Andrea Blanchflower
Director of Learning & Teaching Services

Dr Adam Longcroft
Academic Director of Taught Programmes

8 July 2014

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Section A – Reflections on 2013-14

PAL

PAL is a group mentoring system in which experienced students (in their 2nd, 3rd and sometimes 4th year) act as Mentors to support first years through their transition into University. The number of Schools involved in the PAL pilot increased from five in phase 1 (January –June 2013) to eleven Schools in phase 2 (2013-14) and will increase to thirteen in phase 3 (2014-15). Mentors are recruited from the same School as their first year mentees. In each school PAL Officers (PGT or PGR students) are also employed to liaise with academic staff and support and supervise the Mentors. In 2014-15 there will be approximately 150 Mentors and Officers delivering PAL. PAL Mentors and Officers are supported throughout the process by the PAL Champion (Anne Guyon) and the PAL Administrator (Vicky Hawkes). Mentors and Officers receive detailed training and attend feedback meetings, where experiences are shared and discussed. The feedback gained from the Officers, Mentors and those receiving the mentoring has been invaluable in helping to shape the finer details of the project.

The key aims of PAL are:
- To enhance the student experience and improve performance by providing access to pastoral and academic support in the early stages of a student's career
- To reduce student attrition
- To enhance the employability skills of Mentors and Officers.

Attendance at PAL sessions is voluntary so great emphasis is placed on making the meetings as engaging and relevant as possible. A key factor in encouraging first year students to attend the hour long mentoring sessions is to include them on the student timetable.

Further information about the project, including the phase 1 report, is available at www.uea.ac.uk/PAL. The phase 2 report will be available shortly.

HER Preparations and Internal QA

As staff will be aware, the University will be audited in 2015-16 when the Quality Assurance Agency visit to conduct the Higher Education Review (HER). The HER Preparation Group established in 2012-13, has been working on the preparations for the HER, which will focus on the University's compliance with the Expectations of the UK Quality Code Chapters. Our success criterion will be a satisfactory QAA sign off with 'no limitations in confidence'.

The HER Group has produced a project plan and resourcing model, which outlines the required tasks, responsibilities and deadlines in order to ensure that the University is in a position to achieve a satisfactory outcome from the HER. The project plan identifies the following activities:

- Mapping University regulations, policies and procedures for compliance against the Quality Code Chapters
- Collation of evidence
- Action plans to address areas of non-compliance
- Production of the Self-Evaluation Document (SED)
- Preparation of UEA staff
- Preparations for the visit of the QAA
- Provision of evidence to Auditors

The HER has a core element which focuses on academic standards, quality of learning opportunities, information and enhancement, and a thematic element focussing on an area worthy of further analysis or enhancement among HEIs. The themes for 2015-16 will be announced in the Spring of 2015.

In order to ensure that colleagues are appropriately briefed about the Quality Code, the HER and the implications for staff teams, a series of Briefing Workshops have been arranged to commence in the Autumn Semester of 2014, aimed at Senior Managers from across the Schools of Study and Services, and briefings are planned via Faculty Executives.

Information for University colleagues will be made available via a dedicated Blackboard site and further detail about the site will follow in due course. In addition, information about the UK Quality Code and the HER can be found on the QAA website at the link below:
www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/default.aspx

Learning & Teaching Strategy 2014-19

The University's Learning and Teaching Strategy, approved by LTC in January 2014, has been constructed within the context of the Corporate Plan and the vision of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic). It provides the policy impetus through which the learning and teaching objectives enshrined in the Corporate Plan will be rolled out in the medium term.

10 Strategic Aims are outlined in the plan, each of which has measurable outcomes. The Strategy is accompanied by a separate Implementation Plan. It also articulates key attributes that both graduates and postgraduates will have developed during their studies at UEA.

The Learning and Teaching Strategy may be read here:
www.uea.ac.uk/learningandteaching/documents/learningteaching/UEA+Learning+Teaching+Strategy+2014-19

Student Charter

A substantially revised Student Charter will be introduced for 2014-15, which highlights the partnership between the University and its students. It focuses on four areas:
- Diversity, Respect and Community
- Teaching, Learning, Research and Assessment
- Personal Development and Employment
- Support for Students

The Charter will be made available on the University's website before the start of the new academic year, and will be brought to the attention of new students in particular.

Assessment and Feedback – E-Marking

A further pilot of e-marking took place in weeks 11 and 12 of Semester One. Since the previous pilot, the system had been developed with the intention to streamline the electronic marking process, to make it easier to get quality feedback to students in a timely manner by making the process more efficient and convenient for academics to mark work.

A web interface was designed, accessed through e:Vision, which enables markers and moderators to easily access and download files for marking and then re-upload the marked work for return to students.

Module Organisers were asked if they would like to participate in the pilot, the numbers involved were:
- 806 students were involved in the pilot, across 25 modules.
- 27 academics were set up as markers for these assessment items and 16 moderators

The evaluation of the pilot showed that overall, academic participants and administrative colleagues would be happy for the functionality to be rolled out more widely (albeit with some system enhancements). The small sample of students evaluated suggested that they were relatively ambivalent about the improvements. Work is already underway to further enhance the system ready for rolling out to Module Organisers who may wish to participate in the new academic year.

Plagiarism

The following amendments to the University Policy on Plagiarism and Collusion were approved and introduced for 2013-14:
- Removal of Faculty meetings
- Cases to be considered by a Panel consisting of two P&C Officers
- Student to be provided with returned work and provisional mark at the time that they are notified of the suspicion
- Students to receive details of allegedly plagiarised passages and copy of Turnitin report, where relevant.

The Annual Meeting of the P&C Officers was held on 9 June 2014. Helpful feedback was received regarding the experience of implementing the revisions to the Policy over the last 12 months and points were noted for action or further consideration, as outlined below.

Amendments to P&C processes and practices for 2014-15 include:
- HOS asked to identify Deputy P&C Officer to share responsibility for P&C in School
- Standard approach to be agreed for the allocation of the second P&C Officer, to address variations in process within LTS
- LTS to develop suite of standard letters to cover all stages of the process
- Where agreement cannot be reached by Panel (two P&C Officers), decision that is in the best interests of the student should prevail
- Guidance re simultaneous submissions to be amended to reflect that the nature of plagiarism is also a criterion in determining the level. Therefore, plagiarism in simultaneous submissions can be classified differently at the discretion of the P&C Officer.

Future Considerations:
- The ADTP is considering how to raise P&C awareness with academic staff and to ensure that effective training is provided
- The principles produced by the Text Matching Software Working Group were agreed by LTC. The arrangements for extending the use of TMS are under consideration but it is acknowledged that whatever is adopted needs to link with future developments around online marking and feedback. The intention is to introduce a new policy for 2015-16.

Annual Module and Course Review

As a result of a number of difficulties in providing adequate support to academic staff to complete the 2012-13 Annual Module and Course Reviews, the deadline for completion was extended and agreement reached that Schools should review modules according to their own plans, and all courses as required by the Procedure approved by LTC in 2011.

Analysis of the 2012-13 review data revealed significant areas of non-compliance which must not be repeated in 2013-14.

LTS has designed and introduced robust administrative processes to support the reviews for 2013-14 and subsequent years. LTS staff have been briefed appropriately and will work closely with academic colleagues to ensure that the module and course reviews are completed and documented by the published deadlines. Clear guidance has been written and a dedicated Blackboard site established to provide the needed data to support the reviews and to host the forms and guidance. Academic staff will be advised of any required action and deadlines through a series of standard emails.

In addition, LTS is piloting an online system in the following areas:

NSC (September 2013 UG intake)
RSC UG
CMP UG and PGT

The online system provides a web-based environment for academic and administrative staff to access the documentation and data and will accommodate the completed forms. The system will provide automated reminders at all stages of the process, robust record-keeping and tracking and is intended to deliver significant efficiencies. The results of the pilot will be considered following completion of the 2013-14 Annual Reviews and, if successful, the aim will be to roll out the web-based system to all curriculum areas for 2014-15.

LTS is confident that the above arrangements will enable academic and support staff to work together to demonstrate to the QAA 100% compliance for 2013-14 and subsequent years.

Five-Yearly Course Review

The established processes for managing the Five-Yearly Course Reviews are working satisfactorily and arrangements for the 2013-14 Reviews are proceeding, as planned in the rolling programme. The Reviews required for completion in 2013-14 were reported to LTC early in the academic year and, with the exception of a small number of concessions approved in order to bring the reviews for cognate groups of course into line, are proceeding as planned.

A review of the processes to support Five-Yearly Course Review is included on the future LTS Programme of Work and it is intended that revisions to the processes will introduce further efficiencies across the Service.

Extenuating Circumstances Update

New regulations relating to Extenuating Circumstances were introduced for the 2013-14 academic year that provided for the creation of Extenuating Circumstances Panels; clarified the procedures relating to delayed assessments and amended the process relating to coursework extension requests. The detail of the new regulations can be viewed
here: www.uea.ac.uk/learningandteaching/documents/assessment/Extenuating+Circumstances+for+Taught+Programmes

One benefit of this new approach was to simplify a series of regulations and guidelines that had previously been located within a number of different procedures. In addition, the combination of these features into a single set of regulations allowed the University to ensure that the treatment of extenuating circumstances is consistent across the different uses for which a submission of extenuating circumstances may be used.

The new regulations clarify the way in which extenuating circumstances should be applied in relation to different types of academic decision where their consideration may be appropriate and the possible adjustments that are available. In addition, the new regulations and guidance provide a clear route for students to submit any extenuating circumstances along with a provision for deadlines for the submission of those circumstances, which in turn aids both students and staff in ensuring the timely consideration of submitted circumstances and that an appropriate burden of responsibility for reporting is placed upon students. The guidance for staff and students can be viewed here:
www.uea.ac.uk/learningandteaching/documents/assessment/Extenuating+Circumstances+-+guidance+for+staff+and+students

The main change relating to coursework extension requests was the introduction of limited self-certification for extenuating circumstances. The use of self-certification was limited to requests for coursework extensions and could only be used on one occasion per semester. The approach proved popular with students, but also generated some logistical difficulties. The University's response to the emerging issues around self-certification is detailed in Section B of this bulletin.

E:Vision Updates

<u>Marks displayed on e:Vision</u>
In 2013-14 we introduced the facility whereby all postgraduate taught students have access to view all of their provisional marks via e:Vision. The impact of this on stakeholders will be reviewed following Final PGT Boards (likely to take place in first semester of 2014-15).
Follow-up discussions on (i) and (ii) below will form part of the review:
  i) Turnaround time for the marking of dissertations to provide consistency across courses.
  ii) Whether a single release date of provisional examination marks would be of benefit, for standard PGT courses.

The possibility of students being able to access e:Vision once their courses have ended so that they can view mark statements following Final Boards is currently being investigated with the Alumni, Conferences and Events Office.

Notational Student Effort (Study) Hours

The expectation that Universities should require a minimum of **10 hours notional study time per credit** was set out in the QAA's Higher education credit framework for England: guidance on academic credit arrangements in higher education in England, which was published in 2008.

See:
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/documents/creditframework.pdf

This equates to:
  - **200** hours per 20 credit module
  - **300** hours per 30 credit module
  - **400** hours per 40 credit module
  - **600** hours per 60 credit module

LTC has endorsed the recommendations from TPPG which aim to ensure that students are clear as to how much effort they are expected to put into each element of a module, including self-managed study,

Schools are encouraged to give consideration to the proposals in their annual Review of Moderation and Assessment meetings and to publish the information in their module outlines in 2014-5.

Module Outlines – A Standardised Approach

Module Outlines are the University documents used for publishing information about the contents and delivery of modules. They are used mainly by students, in particular those choosing modules and those taking the modules, but are also referenced by external examiners. Historically, the information is put together in a Word document and published on the module's Blackboard site (and is therefore restricted only to those students taking the module). In addition, some Schools publish booklets of all their module outlines as part of the annual Module Enrolment exercise.

A typical Outline would include:
- Module title
- Module credit
- Related modules (pre/co requisites)
- Learning Outcomes
- Effort Hours
- Assessments and assessment weighting
- Teaching sessions/lecture titles
- Teaching staff
- Assignment deadlines
- Employability

SSF have standardised their outlines, and these include the total effort hours, and FTM are doing some work on making them more 'student friendly'. In addition, LTS and Local Support (specifically Michele Pavey and Sarah Lucas) are working together to ensure there is join-up in the information collected, that nothing is overlooked and there is no duplication.

Currently most of the standard information on the MOs is a manual copy of what is on SITS (or in some cases, a different version of what is on SITS), such as assessment requirements and deadlines. This is an unnecessary duplication of effort, and in the longer term we want to automate the update of the MOs with a direct link to/from SITS to a web-based form. This will ensure there are no transcription errors and one single source for information.

The first step is to agree what should be included in the Outlines and agree a standard format across the University. We can then look at automating the Outlines to a web-based form, and we are looking to schedule this on the SAS Project team's programme of work (it is already on their 'long list').

Main benefits:
1. Ensures a more consistent 'student experience' particularly in relation to study hours per module, and students taking modules across Schools and Faculties
2. Ensures that key information is conveyed to all students, with additional helpful links to support services
3. Provides details on the integration of formative and summative assessment, including how the feedback and feed forward cycles work.

4. Can be used to 'close the loop' on module evaluations and feedback to students.
5. Provides details on the learning outcomes including transferable employability skills that can be gained through engagement with the module.

Initial discussions have taken place at TPPG, reported to LTC, and further proposals will be brought to LTC in the Autumn.

BIM Implementation

This year saw the introduction of the new regulations for Bachelors and Integrated Masters awards and the implementation project is now complete. The new regulations affected stage 0 (foundation year) and stage 1 (first year) students this year. The implementation project included a programme of training for LTS staff, SITS setup and testing, guidance for advisers regarding progression and reassessment queries from students. There is an FAQ document on the LTS Website which students can be referred to for questions they might have around assessment/reassessment:
www.uea.ac.uk/calendar/section3/regs(awards)/Regulations+for+Bachelors+and+Integrated+Masters+Awards+2013/Regulations+for+Bachelors+and+Integrated+Masters+Awards+2013

The regulations are available here:
www.uea.ac.uk/calendar/section3/regs(awards)/Regulations+for+Bachelors+and+Integrated+Masters+Awards+2013/Regulations+for+Bachelors+and+Integrated+Masters+Awards+2013

Faculty Appeals and Complaints Panels

We are now in the second full year of the new regulations and procedures relating to academic appeals and complaints. The new panel based approach is working well and most importantly is providing a good service to students. Since the introduction of the new regulations we have seen a reduction in the proportion of Stage One appeals that proceed to Stage Two. While it is not possible to claim a definitive causal link between the change in procedures and the reduction in the total volume of appeals it seems reasonable to conclude that the new approach has contributed to this improving position. Most importantly, the reduction in the proportion of Stage One appeals that proceed to Stage Two indicates that our students are achieving a satisfactory outcome in a more timely manner than was previously the case.

Across the sector the total number of appeals and complaints being submitted by students has been increasing, students are now more likely to pursue a case to the OIA and to seek legal representation. This means that we cannot presume the

proportional reduction of Stage Two appeals will continue and also that we must ensure that our consideration of cases at Stage One continues to be demonstrably fair and consistent. To that end, we have held a number of workshop events with both professional services and academic staff to review decision making processes with regard to general principles and also in relation to particularly complex cases.

The continuing dialogue between different FACPs and the presence of a cross-Faculty member on all FACPs will help develop the understanding of all those involved and promote a consistent approach for all students.

Appeals, academic complaints and OIA cases	2012/13	2013/14 to date
Total stage 1 appeals	231	135
Total Stage 2 appeals	46	24
Academic Complaints		
Stage 1	0	6
Stage 2	0	0
OIA cases finalised	16	13
Found justified	2	0
Found partly justified	5	1
Found not justified	7	9
Settled	1	2
Not eligible for OIA review	1	1

Section B – Looking ahead to 2014-15

Attendance Monitoring

The University's Learning and Teaching Committee considered and approved a new procedure for monitoring students' attendance, engagement and/or progress, with guidance on appropriate action to be taken up to and including where necessary and appropriate, referral of cases to SSDC under General Regulation 13. The main changes:

(i)   All Schools shall monitor the attendance of their undergraduate and postgraduate taught students on award bearing courses, including Visiting students spending a year/semester at the University;

(ii)   Module Organisers have an obligation to ensure that at least one register is completed per week for all students registered for each of their modules, where teaching patterns permit. This is a minimum requirement. Schools offering courses with PSRB requirements/wishing to take more registers may continue with their current practices.

(iii)   A review of students' attendance records must be carried out by a nominated academic colleague (e.g. Senior Adviser, Year Lead etc.) no less than twice per semester. These attendance record reports will be provided by the Learning and Teaching Service. Advisers have access to their advisees' attendance records and may review them whenever they wish on e:Vision and are encouraged to do so on a regular basis.

(iv)   Initial meeting: a nominated colleague (e.g. the student's Adviser) shall meet with the student.

(v)   In the event that the student's attendance, engagement and/or progress continues to fall below the level determined by the School, the Head of School or nominated deputy may have a formal meeting with the student, supported by the Learning and Teaching Service. The options available to the Head of School are set out in the flow-chart accompanying the procedure, and include the issue of a formal Head of School's warning. Under new procedure, however, the Head of School has the option to refer the student to SSDC if the student's attendance/engagement/progress does not improve after one warning, instead of the lengthy process of accumulating multiple warnings.

Briefing sessions for all interested colleagues will be offered at 10.00-12.00pm on Tuesday 9 September in EFB 01.08, and the same session will be repeated at 1.00-3.00pm on Monday 15 September in QUEENS 2.22.

A review of the procedure will be carried out in March 2015.

Student Self-Certification for Coursework Extensions

While the introduction of self-certification was popular with students and in line with developing best-practice across the sector, it came with a number of unintended consequences which needed to be addressed by the University: the volume of self-certifications exceeded expectations; in some Schools the number of extension requests tripled. The volume factor was exacerbated by the bunching of coursework deadlines such that rather than being spread across the semester a significant proportion of the extension requests were submitted in a single week. The consequential impact proved problematic for both academic and administrative staff and it was agreed that while the principle of self-certification was sound there was a need for some amendment. Following discussions at LTC the following amendments to the regulations relating to self-certification were approved:

- Students shall only be able to self-certify once per academic year
- Self-certification can only be used to support the first extension request in an academic year
- Where the first extension request has been supported by evidence rather than by self-certification (for example where the required extension length exceeds that permitted through self-certification) any subsequent extension requests must also be supported by evidence

It is intended that these amendments will enable the University to continue to offer self-certification to students, while ameliorating the additional workload associated with the submission marking and return of work outside of planed timeframes. The details of the amendments can be viewed here:
intranet.uea.ac.uk/committeeoffice/ueacombds/ltc/ltc1314/190314/LTC13D048

Appeals and Related Regulations – Minor Changes

The University is keen to ensure that our procedures, particularly those which relate to student experience, are kept up to date with best practice guidance and developments within the sector. In any given academic year it is likely that some improvements will require a small change to the associated regulations.
The following minor changes have been approved for introduction in the 2014-15 academic year:

www.uea.ac.uk/committeeoffice/ueacombds/ltc/ltc1314/290114/LTC13D032 details an amendment allowing for an upheld Stage Two appeal to be referred directly back to the Board of Examiners, where appropriate, rather than being routed through the FACP

www.uea.ac.uk/committeeoffice/ueacombds/ltc/ltc1314/250614/ltc13d093 details two amendments to the regulations: The first amendment is presentational in nature and moves the explanatory text regarding the definition of, 'procedural irregularity' to the main body of the regulation.
The second amendment states that once a Stage Two appeal has been upheld and referred back for further consideration by the FACP and/ or the Board of Examiners

this shall constitute the conclusion of the University's procedures and thereafter the student would pursue the matter through the OIA

Course Closure

The University's internal auditors carried out a review of course withdrawals in 2013-14, one aspect of which was to examine our approach to course closure. The subsequent audit report contained a recommendation that the University carry out appropriate impact assessments when considering the closure of a course, both in terms of the business impact of closure and the impact on potential students from an Equality and Diversity perspective. The University has approved a new approach to course closure, which meets both the Equality and Diversity and the business impact aspect, while being framed in a way to ensure that we only engage in such assessments where there is the potential to add value. Thus, there is no requirement to engage in an Impact Assessment when the following apply:

- The course is being replaced by a new course that will recruit from the same market segment and has the same or highly similar content and learning outcomes
- The course recruited less than 10fte student numbers on the last occasion that it admitted new students
- The continuation of the course would generate a net financial loss to the School
- The course has not recruited students in the two preceding admissions cycles

The full detail of the new procedures can be viewed here:
www.uea.ac.uk/committeeoffice/ueacombds/ltc/ltc1314/250614/ltc13d094

New role of Academic Director of Learning and Teaching Enhancement

On 1 August 2014 Helena Gillespie will take up the new role of Academic Director of Learning and Teaching Enhancement. This post has a focus on the continuous professional development of academic staff in learning enhancement and learning technologies. The post holder will promote the optimal use of Blackboard and ensure that the technological and pedagogical lessons from new initiatives, such as on-line learning and MOOCs, are effectively disseminated and embedded in our on-campus provision. They will develop and use educational analytics to support and enhance teaching and learning across the University. In addition the post holder leads and co-ordinates the University's development of MOOCs and has oversight of all other on-line courses.