

**For the Academic Policy &
Regulations Committee**

University of Birmingham

**Request for temporary Exemption from Regulation concerning frequency of
assessment for the MSc in Clinical Biochemistry**

Topic and Purpose of the Paper

1. To seek an exemption for the cohort of students registered in 2007/08 on the MSc in Clinical Biochemistry from current regulation 4.3.5 (10), allowing the students to be assessed more than twelve months after commencing modules.

Consultation

2. This exemption arises as a result of the Medical School becoming aware that the MSc in Clinical Biochemistry, having been redesigned, was in breach of regulation 4.3.5 (10), and that students had been recruited with an understanding that they would be assessed other than as specified in that regulation. Consultation was undertaken with Academic and Student Administration about how to resolve this problem.

Proposals/Recommendations

3. That the 2007/08 entry cohort on the MSc in Clinical Biochemistry be granted an exemption from regulation 4.3.5 (10), which follows:

A student shall be assessed for a module within 12 months of commencing study on it, unless otherwise specified in the appropriate module description and agreed by the Senate or delegated authority.

4. That the 2007/08 entry cohort on the MSc in Clinical Biochemistry shall be assessed in the modules that were taken in 2007/08 in 2008/09, alongside those modules that shall be taken in 2008/09, in line with the information provided to the 2007/08 entry cohort about assessment.

Background

5. The MSc in Clinical Biochemistry is a two-year, part-time course catering for trainee Clinical Scientists and Registrars in appropriate training placements. To maximise use of teaching resources, the course runs a rolling programme, with all years attending the same training days and sitting the same examinations. To bring the course into line with developments in NHS training, it has been condensed from a three year to a two-year programme and 2007/8 was the first year of the new format.
6. Concerns have existed amongst both staff and students about the notable improvement in performance in assessment over the course of the three year programme. In order to address these concerns, it was decided to undertake final assessment of all modules on the two year course at the end of the two-year period of study. At the time, the Medical School were unaware this was in breach of regulation 4.3.5 (10).
7. Upon discovering this breach of regulations in May 2008, the MSc in Clinical Biochemistry was re-designed, with assessment taking place at the end of the year in which the module was attempted. However, those students in the cohort entering onto the course in 2007/08 had been informed upon enrolling that they would be assessed on these modules in 2008/09.

Arguments to Support Proposals/Recommendations

8. It would be disadvantageous to the students of the 2007/08 cohort to be assessed in 2007/08 when they were expecting to be assessed in 2008/09, purely because of a failure within the Medical School to be aware of a particular regulation.
9. Any advantages students in the 2007/08 cohort might expect to achieve over students in subsequent cohorts (who will be assessed for modules in the academic year in which they attempt the module) through being more practiced in clinical biochemistry are expected to be countered by being less immediately familiar with the material on which they are being assessed.

Allan McKinley
Policy Officer
Academic and Student Administration