

University of Birmingham

Registered Students Undertaking Additional Credit-Bearing Modules

Topic and Purpose of Paper

1. For APRC to **consider** confirming that all undergraduate students have the right to take University courses for personal development with a credit value of up to 20 credits per year, these courses not contributing to an award of the University, which is currently apparently contradicted by Regulations unless through the exceptional agreement of Senate or under delegated authority.

Background

2. Regulations currently govern the number of credits that a undergraduate student may take on a programme in a year, as follows:
*5.2.2 (g) (i): For **undergraduate programmes of study**, the standard pattern of attendance, for a full-time Registered Student, is based on a credit load of 120 credits per University Session. Other patterns of attendance, for Registered Students registered on either a full-time or part-time basis, within the overall time limits for the Award concerned (see subsection 6.2.1), may be exceptionally agreed by the Senate or under delegated authority and subject to a maximum registration for 140 credits in any one University Session.*
5.2.2 (g) (iv): Other patterns of attendance, for full-time or part-time Registered Students, within the overall time limits for the Award concerned (see subsection 6.2.2), may be exceptionally agreed by the Senate or under delegated authority.
3. These regulations speak of a maximum number of credits, not a maximum number of credits on the programme the Registered Student is undertaking.
4. This appears to have implications for additional modules undertaken by Registered Students for personal development, such as the components of the Personal Skills Award or courses run by the Centre for Modern Languages. These are treated as modules under Regulations, with a credit value reflecting the amount of work required to complete the module.
5. Credits from personal development modules, such as those on the Personal Skills Award or those run by the Centre for Modern Languages, cannot be counted towards any further award of the University, as they are neither recognised Modules outside the Main Discipline nor listed on the programme requirements of any programme. These personal development modules are taken entirely for the sake of the student's own personal development.
6. Most personal development modules are paid for by the student. In some cases, such as the Personal Skills Award, University funds exist to allow students to take the modules. In no cases are such modules funded by the College or School.
7. The decision on whether or not to take a personal development module at any stage of his or her University career rests with the student. It is assumed

that the student will be doing this in their own time, and that this will not interfere with the 40 hours a week work on the student's programme of study represented by the 120 credits per year (or part-time equivalency thereof). In this respect the only difference between these programmes and those offered by other providers would be that the personal development modules offered by the University of Birmingham have a credit value attached.

Proposals

8. APRC is invited to approve the general principle that all undergraduate students shall be allowed to undertake up to 20 credits of personal development modules (where a personal development module is a module taken for the sake of the student's personal development and which will not count towards any award of the University) up to a total maximum of 140 credits in any one University session, as stated in Regulation 5.2.2 (g) (i) without further recourse to Senate or delegated authority. This will clarify an existing ambiguity within legislation without recourse to further changes to Regulations.

Argument to Support Proposal

9. Currently the interpretation of the Regulations must be that a student requires exceptional agreement from the Senate or delegated authority to undertake more than the standard 120 credits in a University session. This Regulation is clearly designed to ensure new programmes or changes to existing programme receive specific approval for greater than normal credit load. It was clearly not designed to prohibit students from taking additional courses for the purpose of personal development. However, with the practice of ascribing credit values to modules that cannot contribute to programmes of study, the Regulations have seemingly created a prohibition that cannot have been the original intention.
10. A blanket statement that APCR, as Senate's delegated authority, interpret the Regulation to allow students to take a further 20 credits of personal development modules (where a personal development module is a module taken for the sake of the student's personal development and which will not count towards any award of the University) up to a maximum total of 140 credits in a University session would resolve the situation, without the necessity of changing regulations or seeking a specific permission for every personal development course offered within the University.

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