

**For the Academic Policy &
Regulations Committee**

University of Birmingham

**Request for renewal of an Exemption to Regulations for the Postgraduate
Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education delivered by
Academic Practice and Organisational Development**

Topic and Purpose of the Paper

1. APRC is asked to **approve** the renewal of an Exemption to Regulations for the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education in order to allow the programme to last for five years and individual modules to be assessed more than a year after students are enrolled on those modules.

Consultation

2. The Board of Studies for the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education has considered and approved the renewal of the exemption.

Proposals/Recommendations

3. That APRC.08.07.03 (attached as Appendix A), a request for an Exemption to Regulation 6.2.2 (a) for the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education be renewed for the duration of the programme.

Background

4. APRC.08.07.03 was approved by the then Chair of APRC in 2007/08, when it became clear that the maximum duration of the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education was in excess of the maximum of two years permitted in Regulations. The Exemption was granted initially for a period of one year in order to allow the Board of Studies of the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education to make essential decisions about the future of the programme.
5. During 2008/09, the Board of Studies approved the idea of replacing the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education with a new award, to start from the 2010/11 session. Students enrolled upon the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education in 2009/10 or earlier will be given the option of transferring to the new programme or continuing on the existing one.

Arguments to Support Proposals/Recommendations

6. The Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education is intended to be replaced by a new programme. However, students will have the option of remaining upon the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, and have enrolled upon this programme having been told they have five years to complete their study. As long as

these students remain on the programme, the existing Exemption to Regulations allowing them five years to complete the programme should therefore stand.

7. The request to renew the Exemption from Regulations was only approved by the Board of Studies two days prior to the 21st May meeting of APRC in 2008-09, and was consequently received too late to bring to that meeting. Chair's action is required to ensure that the Exemption to Regulations applies in 2009-10.
8. As the maximum duration of studies will be five years, the Exemption to Regulations will effectively expire with the programme in 2013/14.

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**For the Academic Policy &
Regulations Committee**

University of Birmingham

**Request for Exemption from Regulations Governing Maximum Periods of
Study for the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in HE**

Topic and Purpose of the Paper

1. To seek an exemption from the regulations governing the maximum period of study for a Postgraduate Certificate for the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in HE.

Consultation

2. This request is the result of deliberations of the Board of Study governing the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in HE upon receiving the external examiner's report for 2006/07.
3. The proposed exemption to regulations has been further discussed between Academic Practice and Organisational Development, who handle the delivery of the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in HE, and Academic and Student Administration.

Proposals/Recommendations

4. That an exemption be granted to Regulation 6.2.2 (a), the relevant sections of which follow:

The minimum and maximum periods of study permitted for prescribed for postgraduate and graduate Award shall be:

<u>Award</u>	<u>um period</u>	<u>um period</u>
<i>Postgraduate Certificate</i>	<i>months</i>	<i>years</i>

5. That the maximum period of study for the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in HE shall be five years, which is current practice on this programme.
6. That this exemption shall stand for one year in the first instance, to give Academic Practice and Organisational Development and the Board of Study of the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in HE time to evaluate and further debate the issue of the maximum period of registration appropriate to the programme and to bring further proposals to APRC.

Background

7. The Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in HE is the internal teaching qualification that it is expected all new staff without an appropriate formal qualification in teaching will undertake. As part of this, it is expected that in the first two years of teaching at the University, when new staff have a reduced workload, that staff will undertake this programme to aid their personal development and ensure high standards of teaching.
8. Although a normal accredited postgraduate certificate in every other respect, the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in HE currently allows up to five years for the completion of the programme. There is no extant

exemption to regulations, so this appears to be an anomaly which this exemption to regulations seeks to rectify.

9. Due to recommendations from previous external examiners, Academic Practice and Organisational Development have focussed on improving the content and delivery of the programme to ensure high standards. External examiner reports now show that the programme is meeting its objectives of developing the teaching skills of those staff who undertake it.
10. The programme, in its current form, has received recognition and accreditation from the Higher Education Academy (HEA), which allows candidates to apply for HEA fellowship status on successful completion of the programme.
11. The last external examiner report (for 2006/07) identified the extremely long duration of the programme as a problem leading to wildly varying standards of work and allowing students to prolong or, in the worst cases, not complete the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in HE. A recommendation was made to reduce the programme's maximum duration to two or three years.
12. The Board of Study were unwilling to accept this recommendation without further consideration, and requested that this exemption to regulations be considered by APRC in order to cover the anomaly whilst this issue is under review.

Arguments to Support Proposals/Recommendations

13. Although new staff are expected to register for the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in HE, and there is time nominally set aside for them to undertake this work, the Board of Studies deems that the competing pressures to establish a research profile and to develop and run successful programmes, modules and options weigh heavily on new staff. In these situations they judge it difficult for new staff to effectively prioritise completion of the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in HE over other demands, and it is often necessary for these staff to continue the programme beyond two years.
14. By not pressuring those staff registered as students on the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in HE to complete within two years, Academic Practice and Organisational Development do not add to the burden that many new staff may feel.
15. As a staff development course, rather than a course seeking to attract students, the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in HE is a requirement for those students on the programme as a condition of employment with the University. It therefore seems fairer to give students more time in which to complete the programme and to come to terms with the other pressures incumbent on their posts.
16. The delivery of this programme has received good comments from the external examiner. The Board of Studies considers that rushing into decisions about an issue as important as maximum duration of the course is ill advised without considering the situation further. This will be addressed over the year of grace applied for in this document.

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