

University of Birmingham

Title	Report of the Academic Policy and Regulations Committee
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Senate "sponsor"	Professor J S Bale, Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning and Quality)

Purpose	Senate is invited to receive the attached Report and to note the Committee's action.
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Executive Summary	<p>The Academic Policy and Regulations Committee reports a number of amendments/revisions to academic and student related legislation to come into effect in 2010/11:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inclusion in the Regulations of the opportunity for an aegrotat to be awarded to doctoral research students. 2. Creation of Student Maternity Guidelines. 3. Amendments to the Student Complaints Procedure. 4. Creation of a new Code of Practice for the Admission of Students to replace the existing Code of Practice on Admission of Students to the University of Birmingham and Code of Practice on the Admission of Postgraduate Research Students. 5. Amendment to the Code of Practice on Taught Programme and Module Assessment in respect of the profiling system. 6. Amendments to the Code of Practice on Misconduct and Fitness to Practise Committees and the Code of Practice on Discipline in Residences. 7. Amendments to the Primary Appeals process and the Code of Practice on Primary Appeals. 8. Creation of models of collaborative doctoral researcher provision and associated procedures. 9. Revisions to regulation with regard to Research Masters Degree Provision. 10. Revisions to Regulations with regard to Coursework Deadline and Extensions. 11. Inclusion of some principles regarding feedback on examinations in the Code of Practice on Taught Programme and Module Assessment.
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	12. Inclusion of a number of proposals relating to feedback on assessment in the Code of Practice on Student Development and Support.
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Timing	To come into effect from 2010/11
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University of Birmingham

**Report from the meeting of the Academic Policy and Regulations Committee
held on 20 and 26 May 2010**

ITEMS FOR REPORT

The Committee's Terms of Reference state:

To consider and, if thought appropriate, approve on behalf of the Senate proposals for amendments to, exemptions from and creation of new academic and student-related Regulations and guidance / policies / Codes of Practice below the level of Regulation.

1. Accordingly, under delegated authority, the Committee **reports** that it has approved revisions to academic and student-related legislation, to come into effect in 2010/11:

(a) Aegrotat Awards

The Committee approved the inclusion in Regulations of the opportunity for an aegrotat to be awarded, in certain circumstances, to doctoral research students. Although Regulations contained provision for taught students, there was no equivalent provision for doctoral research students.

(b) Student Maternity Guidelines

The Committee approved new Student Maternity Guidelines. The Guidelines supplement advice already in place for students wishing to take a leave of absence, as well as highlighting support mechanisms for students who are pregnant or have recently given birth. Student parents were consulted on the draft guidelines.

(c) Student Complaints Procedure

The Committee approved amendments to the Procedure, following annual review, including changes to the current 'informal' (School-level) stage and clarification of the role of the Complaints Officer.

(d) Code of Practice on the Admission of Students

There have been several developments in the higher education sector as a whole in recent years which affect the conduct of admissions, most notably the introduction of the Points Based System for overseas students. This necessitated a review of the admissions procedure and separate Codes of Practice. The Committee approved a new Code of Practice for the Admission of Students that would replace the existing Code of Practice on Admission of Students to the University of Birmingham and Code of Practice on the Admission of Postgraduate Research Students. An initial draft and a final draft of the proposed Code were circulated to all admissions tutors for comment, with all comments considered and addressed.

(e) Profiling

A number of comments had been received from External Examiners on the profiling system. The main issue raised was that the threshold mark (66%), at which profiling was applied for students to be considered for a first class degrees, was lower than that in comparative institutions. The Committee therefore approved an amendment to the Code so that the boundary for consideration of a first class degree changes from ≥ 66.0 and ≤ 69.5 to ≥ 67.0 and ≤ 69.5 .

(f) Misconduct and Fitness to Practise Processes

Following annual review of Student Conduct regulations, the Code of Practice on Misconduct and Fitness to Practise Committees and the Code of Practice on Discipline in Residences, the Committee approved amendments to these provisions. The amendments include

- clarification of representation on College and University panels;
- a widening of sanctions to include remedial tuition or appropriate support to be required;
- clarification that only one sanction can be applied for each offence that has been found proven but that conditions can be attached
- the replacement of the terms *punishment* and *penalty* with *sanction*
- clarification that the admissibility of evidence shall be at the sole discretion of the Chair whose decision shall be final.

The Directors of Education and Directors of Quality Assurance and Enhancement in Colleges together with colleagues involved in the process, e.g. Committee Chairs, Secretaries and Investigating Officers, as well as members of the Guild, were consulted on amendments.

(g) Primary Appeals

Following annual review of the Primary Appeals process, the Committee approved amendments including:

- allowing a wider range of options to be available to the Committee when deciding outcomes for research degree appeals without having to refer the case back to the College for reconsideration;
- clarification of when a student may not be allowed to continue in 'temporary' attendance on a programme when they have been required to withdraw but have submitted an appeal;
- allowing the School's Representative to be accompanied by another person acting as an Advisor to answer detailed questions on specific issues relating to collaborative programmes or student placement requirements or issues relating to other University Regulations, procedures or practices.

(h) Collaborative Doctoral Researcher Provision

The University has been involved in collaborative doctoral researcher provision of varying types for a number of years. Potential applications have usually been from individuals, and handled through the admissions process without recourse to other procedures and/or fit with School, College and University strategies. This was no longer deemed satisfactory, in the light of a growing number of enquiries about the possibility of collaborative doctoral research provision, including joint PhD degrees from outside continental Europe. The Committee approved models of collaborative doctoral researcher provision and associated procedures, which had been endorsed

by the University Learning & Teaching Committee and University Graduate School Management Board.

(i) Research Masters Degree Provision

A working group was convened in Autumn 2009 to consider a number of concerns raised by external examiners with regard to the University's MPhil provision. The working group carried out a consultative review across the University on the provision of postgraduate research degrees at Master's level. The findings, principles and recommendations resulting from the review have been approved by the Committee and, from 2011/12, the *One Year Master of Philosophy (MPhil Mode A and Mode B)* will be replaced by a *One Year Masters of Arts/Jurisprudence/Law/Science by Research (MA/MJur/LLM/MSc)*.

(j) Coursework Deadline and Extensions

The need to review coursework deadline extensions had been identified during the 2009 institutional audit, when some students raised the issue with the auditors of the variance between Colleges in the manner in which extensions were granted. This issue was highlighted by the University's Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC.09.10.05 refers), which determined that a small working group should be established to review current legislation, guidance and practice with a view to their being greater consistency of the procedures and processes for granting extensions. University Learning & Teaching Committee endorsed proposals put forward by the working group and the Committee approved minor amendments to regulations for clarification.

In addition, the Guild of Students proposed that provision should be made within regulations so that candidates in the Guild Officer Elections be granted extensions to coursework due during the election period. University Learning & Teaching Committee approved recommendations from the Guild of Students for granting coursework extensions to those seeking election to Guild Officer positions to ensure equity for all candidates (LTC.10.05.03) and the Committee approved detailed changes to regulations, including

- notification by the Guild to Heads of School of Officer Election candidates;
- exclusion of students acting as campaigners for candidates from the provision;
- an explanation that the extension period will relate to the deadline and not to the size of the piece of coursework.

(k) Feedback on Examinations

A working group was convened in Autumn 2009 to consider feedback on examinations. University Learning & Teaching Committee considered the group's report at a meeting in May and endorsed the principles that:

- (a) there were sound educational benefits in permitting feedback on exam scripts since the practice may enhance students' future academic performance;
- (b) feedback on exam scripts should be timely and relevant;
- (c) feedback on exam scripts must not allow any challenge to academic judgment.

At a second meeting in May, U-L&TC approved that the principles and that the following minima be put in place for 2010/11:

- registered students, who are not in their final year of study, should be offered generic feedback on each examination question within an assessment, where appropriate (e.g. essay style or numerical problems), or for the assessment as a whole (e.g. MCQ-based examinations);
- registered students who have failed modules in the main examination period should be offered constructive feedback as soon as practicable after the publication of the examination results.

The Committee, acting under Chair's authority, approved the inclusion of these minima in the Code of Practice on Taught Programme and Module Assessment.

(I) Feedback on Assessment

In addition to the outcomes of the working group on feedback on examinations, a group chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning & Quality) met to consider University initiatives in feedback on assessment following the National Student Satisfaction results and Internal Student Satisfaction Results (2009). The group endorsed a number of proposals which the Committee, acting under Chair's authority, approved for inclusion in the Code of Practice on Student Development and Support. These were:

- Colleges/ Schools, as appropriate ensure that programmes publish prospectively the types of assessment and feedback on assessment that students should receive in each year of study;
- instances of non-compliance with the four-week deadline for the provision of feedback on assessment be referred by College Directors of Quality Assurance and Enhancement to College Directors of Education for action, and reported to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning and Quality);
- requests for exemptions to the four-week deadline for the provision of feedback on assessment be submitted for approval, following consideration at College-level, to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning and Quality).

All papers are available from the Committee web site

<http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/APRC.shtml> and are available on request.

University Legislation including academic and student regulations and Codes of Practice are available at <http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/codesofpractice.shtml> and will be updated for the 2010/11 session by Dr Kieran McGovern.

A memo detailing changes to academic policy and regulations will be circulated to Heads of School, Directors of Educations and Directors of Quality Assurance & Enhancement in conjunction with the website update.

Elisa Parry

Secretary to the Academic Policy and Regulations Committee

May 2010