

**For the Academic Policy &  
Regulations Committee  
19 May 2011**

**Request for Exemption from Regulations Governing the Classification of  
Degrees for the Intercalated BMedSc Programmes in Clinical Science and  
Population Sciences and Humanities**

**Topic and Purpose of the Paper**

1. To request the continuation of the time limited Exemption from Regulations previously granted to the intercalated BMedSc in Clinical Science and the Intercalated BMedSc programmes grouped under the heading of Population Sciences and Humanities (previously Medicine in Society) under which Exemption from Regulations, the final degree classification of students on the relevant intercalated BMedSc programmes shall be assessed only on results obtained in the intercalating year (that is equivalent to the third year) and not on results obtained in the second year of the MBChB.

**Consultation**

2. The original exemption was requested by the Medical School and approved within Academic and Student Administration.

**Proposals/Recommendations**

3. That, for the intercalated BMedSc in Clinical Science, and the intercalated BMedSc programmes grouped under the heading of Population Sciences and Humanities, exemption be allowed from Regulation 7.3.1 (d) (i), which requires that a three-year undergraduate degree classification be determined in the proportion 25% from stage 2 marks and 75% from stage 3 marks, and that the said programmes be allowed to determine final degree classifications solely on the basis of marks awarded in the third stage.
4. That the Exemption from Regulations be allowed to stand so long as the programmes are offered.

**Background**

5. Intercalated BMedSc programmes provide an opportunity for students on the MBChB to undertake a year of focused academic work beyond the scope of their standard medical studies, providing 120 credits at level H. Students intercalate into the programme for one year, between the second and third, third and fourth or fourth and fifth years of the MBChB. The first two years of the MBChB provide the necessary 240 credits at levels C & I to enable the award of a degree.
6. It is normal for a number of students undertaking an intercalated degree, particularly in non-biological science subjects) to choose to do so at a different medical school. This means that 20% to 25% of the students on these intercalated BMedSc programmes are studying medicine at another institution. Under regulations (7.3.1 (d) (iv)) their performance in the MBChB at their home institution cannot contribute to the calculation of the final degree classification and their classification is automatically based on their intercalated year marks. This creates a disparity with our own students and, since students may be expected to perform better in their selected

intercalation subject than across the whole range of MBChB modules this is likely to be to the disadvantage of our own students.

### **Arguments to Support Proposals/Recommendations**

7. It is the sector norm for intercalated degrees to be assessed purely on the basis of the marks attained in the intercalated year: here the BMedSc.
8. Without the continuation of this exemption, students on the Birmingham MBChB considering intercalation, may feel with some justification that there is an advantage in enrolling on an intercalated degree in another medical school where their degree classification would more accurately reflect their performance in their chosen intercalation subject.

### **An important note regarding the BMedSc Biological Sciences**

9. Unlike the BMedSc in Clinical Science and the BMedSc programmes grouped under the heading of Population Sciences and Humanities, which are solely available as intercalated programmes for medical and dental students, the BMedSc Biological Sciences exists as a stand alone, three year programme to which students are admitted in the normal manner. These students are joined for their third year by a number of intercalating medical students, almost all of whom come from the Birmingham MBChB programme.
10. A similar wish to that outlined above: i.e. to be as fair as possible to all students undertaking a programme, leads in an entirely different direction. Since the three year BMedSc students will have their degree classification calculated as per regulations, on the basis of second and third year marks, it is considered only appropriate that the intercalating students joining them in their programme should have their marks calculated in the same way.
11. We recognise that this leaves a disparity in the way that medical students intercalating in Biological Sciences and those intercalating in Clinical Science / Population Sciences and Humanities have their degree classification calculated. The situation is bound to lead to disparity somewhere and we consider this to be the least damaging of the possible outcomes.