

**For the Academic Policy &
Regulations Committee**

University of Birmingham

**Request for exemption from specified regulations for the following
programmes: BSc Business Management (with Industrial Placement)
(Singapore); BSc International Business (Singapore) and BSc International
Business with Language (Singapore)**

Topic and purpose of the paper

1. To request exemption from Regulations Programmes of Study Chapter 1.2.16 (a) and (c) and Progression and Award 3.1.1 (c) for the BSc Business Management (with Industrial Placement) (Singapore); BSc International Business (Singapore) and BSc International Business with Language (Singapore), to be delivered in Singapore by the Business School. This will require revocation and replacement of an earlier exemption, APRC.07.12.02.

Consultation

2. Request received in relation to this new suite of programmes originally submitted to PARG on 5th December 2007.
3. The programmes have been discussed in a number of different arenas, including the Schools' Strategic Management Committee, with Professor Geoff Petts, the Portfolio Development Committee with extended membership and USMC. The proposal has been approved and is currently under consideration by PARG.

Background

4. The new suite of programmes proposed is part of a group of programmes that the Business School intend to deliver in Singapore in collaboration with the Singapore Institute of Management (SIM). The programmes will be managed from Birmingham, with Birmingham staff going to SIM to deliver the programmes, on a "flying faculty" basis, whilst local staff will provide administrative, pastoral and teaching support in Mandarin and some other areas.

Proposal(s) / recommendation(s)

5. That the earlier exemption, APRC.07.12.02, be repealed in order that the proposed exemptions be applied as a group.
6. That exemptions from the following regulations be applied:

Programmes of Study 1.2.16 (a):

Each programme comprises a number of stages, at the completion of which a formal decision is taken as appropriate on progress to the next stage or on the award of the qualification. Each stage normally consists of modules amounting to 120 credits (taken, in the case of full-time students, within a

single University session) except stage 3 of undergraduate master's programmes, which consists of 240 credits (taken, in the case of full-time students, over two University sessions).

Programmes of Study 1.2.16 (c):

Where an additional year of study abroad/in industry is included in the programme to which a student has been admitted, the year abroad shall be regarded, for purposes of credit and progression, as an additional stage between stages 2 and 3. This element of the programme will normally be assessed and contribute to the final degree classification. Where exceptions are necessary (e.g. for years leading to separate qualifications) they must be specifically approved by the Senate or delegated authority. The additional year abroad/in industry shall comprise 120 credits in order to denote the notional learning hours undertaken.

Assessment, Progression and Award 3.1.1 (c):

To be eligible for progression to any year abroad/in industry required by the programme, the preceding credit requirements (stated above) must have been satisfied. For eligibility to progress to the stage of the programme following the year abroad/in industry, that year must be passed satisfactorily (i.e. at least 100 credits attained).

7. That the Business School be allowed to run the programmes listed in 1 above with a year abroad/in industry stage split between the two summers following stages II and III, with the stage being divided into two 60 credit modules, one taken after each stage.
8. That a pre-requisite for taking the year abroad stage on these programmes shall be successful completion of stage II (i.e. at least 100 credits attained).
9. That successful completion of stage II (i.e. at least 100 credits attained) shall be necessary before a student shall start stage III.
10. That pre-requisites for the second 60 credit module of the split year abroad/in industry shall be attainment of the first 60 credit module and successful completion of stage III.
11. That the determination of the final award shall take place after the completion of the second 60 credit module of the split year abroad/in industry. Determination shall be made on the basis of the 360 credits of stages II and III and the year abroad/in industry following normal regulations.
12. That failure to attain 100 credits in the split year abroad/in industry will lead to transfer to the programmes of BSc Business Management (Singapore), calculated on the basis of the 240 credits undertaken at stages II and III following normal regulations.

Argument to support proposal / recommendation (s)

13. In Asia, international exposure and work experience are both highly valued by employers, students and their parents. It is not only the quality of education that spurs Asian students to study abroad: the experience of living, working and studying in other national and business cultures is important in the development of outlook and maturity and for that reason is a major differentiator in the job market. For those who can afford it, a degree overseas

involving placements is the ideal route. However, this programme is aimed at those who cannot: and at those, or their parents, who prefer a halfway house in the acculturation process. The BSc (Singapore) programmes are designed to satisfy the objectives of these market segments. Most, if not all, of the undergraduate business degrees offered by overseas universities in Singapore offer only a basic study programme. Our unique selling point is the option to gain work experience and/or international exposure from the study base in Singapore. This is the rationale for the particular suite of programmes proposed.

14. However, it has to be borne in mind that the market segment we are addressing is both cost and time conscious. The Asian work ethic, particularly across East Asia, and the desire to complete the formal education process as early as possible, particularly in South Asia, serve to underline the customary UK "long vacation" as largely redundant in the Asian context (even in the USA Summer Schools are popular and are commonly offered to shorten the period of study). Many of our competitors in Asia offer "top-up" degrees, enabling a degree to be gained after only one year's registration. Birmingham, quite rightly as a high quality institution deploying a differentiation strategy, maintains the stance that two years should be the minimum period of registration. However, a risk associated with differentiation strategies is that they can lose "cost proximity". This simply means that the quality and expense can exceed the market's willingness to pay. SIM's Diploma in Management Studies, which, we propose, should give exemption from our first year (Stage 1), is of 15 months duration (continuous). To use the current Birmingham model of a further three years after stage 1 to include the Industrial Placement Stage (actually of 33 weeks minimum according to regulations) would indeed lose us almost all of our proposed market because it would raise the total duration to about 4½ years. Therefore, we propose that the Industrial Placement Stage should, for the proposed BSc programmes in Singapore, be split into two 15-week periods, one after stage 2, the other after stage 3, each representing a separate 60 credit module. Further flexibility is allowed in that the BSc (International Business/International Business with Language) programmes allow for the international work/study abroad to be wholly work, wholly study or a combination. This not only has educational benefits but allows students to complete the programme if, for example, they work abroad at the end of stage 2, but cannot find suitable employment after stage 3.
15. The period of 15 weeks to gain 60 credits allows the 600 hours of student effort to be accumulated at the rate 40 hours per week. This is consistent with the time frame allocated for the accumulation of credits within undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes at the University of Birmingham.
16. The Business School are confident that they can undertake all necessary assessment within the time allowed, including providing external examiners for boards of examiners. The costs incurred by the extra assessment necessitated by the split year abroad/in industry will be recouped from the fees.