

For the Academic Policy &
Regulations Committee
9th October 2008

University of Birmingham

Request for Exemption from Regulations Governing the Classification of Degrees for the Intercalated BMedSc Programmes in Clinical Science and Medicine in Society

Topic and Purpose of the Paper

1. APRC is invited to **consider** the following request for an exemption from Regulations for the intercalated BMedSc in Clinical Science and the BMedSc programmes grouped under the heading of Medicine in Society.
2. **Consultation**
3. This exemption from Regulations was requested by the School of Medicine as a result of discussions arising about the relationship between the various undergraduate programmes offered therein.
4. The proposed exemption from Regulations has been discussed and approved within Academic and Student Administration.

Proposals/Recommendations

5. That 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degree classification be determined in the proportion 25% from stage 2 marks and 75% from stage 3 marks, be superseded for the intercalated BMedSc in Clinical Science, and the BMedSc programmes grouped under the heading of Medicine in Society.
6. That the BMedSc in Clinical Science, and the BMedSc programmes grouped under the heading of Medicine in Society be allowed to determine the final degree classifications entirely on the basis of marks awarded in the intercalating year.
7. That the exemption to Regulations be allowed to stand so long as the programmes are offered.

Background

8. The 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 stages of the MBChB provide the necessary 240 credits at levels C and I. Whilst the medical knowledge accrued during the first 2 years of the MBChB (and, more importantly, the academic skills developed) provide an important underpinning for the intercalated degree, student performance across the subjects in the second year of the course is not always an accurate reflection of their ability in the particular subject in which they choose to intercalate.
9. It is normal for a number of students undertaking an intercalated degree to choose to do so at a different medical school. This means that 20% to 25% of the students on the BMedSc within the University are pursuing their medical

studies at another institution. These students are required to enrol on the BMedSc under the Regulations governing APL, and therefore be assessed purely on the marks obtained on the intercalated degree.

Arguments to Support Proposals/Recommendations

10. The first two stages of the MBChB programme are understandably biased towards the study of the basic biological sciences. Although this knowledge is assumed in the teaching of the BMedSc in Clinical Science, and the BMedSc programmes grouped under the heading of Medicine in Society, it is not assessed in these programmes. It therefore seems unreasonable to award 25% of the final degree classification of an award on the basis of marks attained on a programme focussing on acquiring the professional expertise necessary to qualify as a medical doctor.
11. There is a substantial possibility of students perceiving unfairness in assessing a programme where 20%-25% of students are assessed purely on modules undertaken in the intercalated year, whilst the rest carry forward marks from stage 2 of the MBChB, creating an unacceptable disparity between Birmingham and non-Birmingham students.
12. 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.
13. Currently, 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.

Allan McKinley
Policy Officer
Academic and Student Administration