

**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>Minimum period</u>	<u>Maximum period</u>
<i>Postgraduate Certificate</i>	<i>4 months</i>	<i>2 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 their 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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