For the Academic Policy and Regulations Committee
11 February 2013

APRC.13.02.06

Discussion on the Definition of Joint Honours, Single Honours and Major Minor Programmes

Topic and Purpose of the Paper

1. APRC is asked to ***consider*** and ***approve in principle*** the introduction of flexibility into Joint Honours programmes, and to provide ***comment*** on the discussion points in this paper.

Background

2. The College of Arts and Law are considering a number of proposals which aim to reduce the number of Joint Honours programmes and minimise the administration of those programmes whilst increasing student numbers overall. However, the proposals contained within this document will have relevance to the organisation of Joint Honours programmes in other Colleges.
3. The proposal under consideration is to allow an increased level of flexibility in module choice so that students may vary the proportion of credits they take in each subject.
4. University Regulations currently describe Joint Honours and Major Minor programmes as follows:

   6.1.2 (p)
   …
   (iv) For joint honour degree programmes the credits shall normally be distributed on an equal basis to the two subjects at each level. I.e. Registered Students shall attempt 180 credits in total in both of the two subjects split in equal proportions across the levels.

   (v) For Major/Minor degree programmes the credits shall normally be distributed on the basis of two thirds to the major subject and one third to the minor subject at each level. i.e. Registered Students shall attempt a total of 240 credits in the Major subject and 120 credits in the Minor subject split in equal proportions across the levels

5. Any subject representing less than one third of the overall credit weighting is not, therefore, included in the programme title.
6. The QAA provides the following guidance on programme nomenclature:

   Qualification titles that reflect the subject focus of programmes of study in two disciplines (for example, a joint honours award) should consider nomenclatures based on:
   - *A and B, where there is an approximately equal balance between two components*
   - *A with B, for a major/minor combination where the minor subject accounts for at least a quarter of the programme.*

   Qualification titles should not normally reflect more than three subject components. Where there are more than three significant components, the title Combined Studies would be appropriate.

Discussion Points

<u>Example Pathways</u>

7. Greater flexibility within the Joint Honours model could produce a wide variety of student outcomes. Some potential variations are set out in Table 1, alongside current practice:

Table 1: Current Practice and Potential Variations

	Current Practice			Proposed Options		
	Example 1	Example 2	Example 3	Example 4	Example 5	Example 6
Year 1	60:60	80:40	100:20	60:60	60:60	60:60
Year 2	60:60	80:40	100:20	80:40	80:40	80:40
Year 3	60:60	80:40	100:20	80:40	60:60	40:80
Totals	180:180	240:120	300:60	220:140	200:160	180:180
Programme Type	JH	MM	SH	MM	JH	JH

SH: Single Honours; JH: Joint Honours; MM: Major Minor

8. Example 4 in Table 1 utilises the QAA's guidance in that the minor subject accounts for at least one quarter of the programme.
9. Example 5 in Table One utilises the QAA's guidance in that the subject split is approximately equal. Should the Committee determine that it would be acceptable to classify approximately equal programmes as Joint Honours, it would be advisable to provide guidance in the form of a reduced fraction or decimal in order that additional years can be more easily incorporated.
10. Taking Example 5 as the point of reference for Joint Honours, and incorporating the QAA's guidance on Major Minor would produce the following Regulation:

    Programmes shall be classified as Single Honours, Major Minor or Joint Honours where the quotient of the total credits to be attempted in each subject fall into the following ranges (with the larger programme portion always being the denominator):

    1 ≥ Joint Honours ≥ 0.8
    0.8 > Major Minor ≥ 0.3
    0.3 > Single Honours

11. The Committee will need to consider whether, when determining a student's award, the credits attempted or the credits achieved should be used for the calculations.

<u>Programme Transfers</u>

12. The University's existing Regulations require Joint Honours students to have equal numbers of credits in each subject in each year. This would result in an increased number of programme transfers, should additional flexibility be allowed.
13. The example Regulation given in point 10, which focuses on the proportion of credits attempted over the course of the programme would limit the number of programme transfers. The final-year Board of Examiners considers the totality of credits attempted and under the proposed options 4-6 in Table 1, decisions could be made at this point on the type of award of each student would receive. Students would be aware of their degree 'type' based on the accumulated number of credits in each subject area.

<u>Modules Outside the Main Discipline</u>

14. University Regulations require all students to have the option to take Modules Outside the Main Discipline, except where an exemption has been approved.
15. Those Joint Honours students who do take MOMDs will therefore have credits in at least one additional subject (more if they take MOMDs in different subjects in each year of study). The Committee will need to consider how these credits should be dealt with when calculating the overall subject proportions.
16. Three possible options are:
    16.1. Include the MOMD credits in the most suitable subject half for the purposes of calculating the proportions;

16.2. Discount the MOMD credits for the purposes of calculating the proportions; or
16.3. A combination of the above.

17. Further, detailed discussion might lead to additional options.

Year Abroad

18. Students following Joint Honours programmes with languages usually undertake a year abroad. The structure of this year varies between Departments, with some requiring students to take 50% of the year abroad modules in their non-language subject, and others permitting students to undertake such activities as teaching English or following industrial placements overseas. In all cases a Joint Honours award is made.
19. The Committee should to consider whether these credits are to be counted towards the overall proportions. It may be desirable to include all credits in the overall proportions; however the Committee should be aware that this would prevent the award of a Joint Honours degree to students whose year abroad credits were wholly in the language subject.

Action Required

20. The Committee is asked to take into consideration that the main purpose of this proposal is to increase flexibility so as to increase the number of applications to the 'Joint honours-Major minor' mix. There is some urgency in reaching an 'approval in principle' decision on this proposal, as the information can be communicated to current applicants. The Committee is therefore asked to provide ***approve in principle*** the introduction of flexibility into the Joint Honours programmes. Also to provide ***comment*** on the issues raised in this paper, with a view to, if possible, reaching an agreement on the principles of the proposal as soon as possible. Subject to approval in principle of the concept, the technical issues with regard to MOMDs and the year abroad can be resolved by through further discussion.

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