

H/02/27/02

**Exceptional Meeting of the Senatus Academic Policy and Regulations Committee
(APRC)**

to be held online on Tuesday 17 May, 11:30am

A G E N D A

1.	Industrial action: concessions to regulations and policies	APRC 21/22 5 A
2.	Any Other Business Urgent matters only, standard APRC business to be held over to formal meeting on 26 May	

Senate Academic Policy and Regulations Committee

17 May 2022

Industrial action: concessions to regulations and policies

Description of paper

1. The Committee is asked to consider whether to activate regulations relating to significant disruption to assessment practices in response to planned industrial action. It is also asked to consider where temporary concessions may be required to regulations and policies. The aim of any steps taken by APRC would be to mitigate the academic impact on students of the industrial action, which has been announced by The University & College Union (UCU) while maintaining academic standards and the value of the University's awards.

Action requested / recommendation

2. APRC is asked to consider the activation of regulations relating to significant disruption to assessment practices, and consider where potential temporary concessions to regulations and policies may be warranted.

Background and context

3. UCU has announced a marking and assessment boycott, which is due to start on 23 May 2022. UCU has also announced a further 10 days of strike action, which may take place from early June. This follows 15 days of strike action, which took place in February and March 2022, and three days of strike action in December 2021. In addition to this, UCU members have been asked to take part in ongoing action short of a strike, consisting of action such as: working to contract, not covering for absent colleagues, etc.
4. The University's position is that we have a moral obligation to seek to minimise the disruption to our students' studies while maintaining academic standards. To this end, guidance must be issued to Schools and Colleges who should take all reasonable steps available to them to ensure that their students' ability to learn, progress and graduate has not been compromised by the industrial action.

Discussion

5. Taught Assessment Regulations 70 and 71 include provisions for situations where there is significant disruption to the University's assessment practices. **APRC is asked to consider whether the marking and assessment boycott and prospective strike action represents a situation where significant disruption is anticipated.**
6. The marking and assessment boycott presents a situation where it is likely that there will be delays in finalising some students' results for some components of

assessment. TAR 71 sets out an approach for Boards of Examiners to use when they are presented with partial results. **APRC is asked to consider whether the guidance set out in TAR 71 is appropriate for Boards of Examiners to use, in the event that this is needed as a result of the industrial action.**

7. The marking and assessment boycott, and prospective strike action, also present a likelihood that participation by University staff in Boards of Examiners processes may be adversely affected. Where industrial action has taken place previously, the University has applied a small number of temporary concessions to the Assessment and Degree Regulations to provide a greater degree of flexibility for Schools to manage teaching, learning and assessment while the impact of the industrial action on students is addressed. These temporary concessions took account of the particular ways that the industrial action will affect learning, teaching and assessment at the University. For information, Appendix 1 includes information about concessions which have been applied under previous industrial action, and which relate to the following areas:
 - Progression requirements;
 - Feedback deadlines;
 - Quorum at Board of Examiners meetings;
 - Changes to the weighting of components of assessment on courses;
 - Award of Ordinary degrees;
 - Timing of progression reviews for postgraduate research students.

APRC is invited to consider whether it may be appropriate to apply concessions to any of these- or other- areas of regulation and policy.

8. Any concessions approved by APRC should only be activated in situations where they are necessitated by the impact of the industrial action. The use of any concessions should be recorded as appropriate in minutes of Board of Examiners meetings. The University's Assessment and Degree Regulations for Taught and Research programmes, and all other University academic policies, regulations and guidelines, continue to apply.
9. A small number of subject areas have experienced resignations by External Examiners. APRC is invited to discuss options regarding the operation of Board of Examiners, in the event that External Examiners resign and cannot be replaced.
10. FAQs for students regarding the industrial action and its implications for their studies are being published at:
<https://www.ed.ac.uk/student-administration/heaction>

Resource implications

11. Where any concessions are approved, Academic Services will require to draft guidance on their application for use by Schools. The application of concessions, where they are needed, will have workload implications for staff in Schools and Colleges who are involved in supporting Boards of Examiners in particular. These activities would be temporary and this paper does not attempt to quantify them given the uncertainty regarding the extent to which it would be necessary for

Schools to operate them.

Risk management

12. APCR is being asked to consider whether it is necessary to make concessions to regulations and policies in order to manage the risks associated with maintaining academic standards while minimising the academic impact of the industrial action on students.

Equality & diversity

13. The purpose of any concessions would be to mitigate any adverse academic impact of the industrial action on students. Since any concessions would only be used by Boards when this would be in a student's interests, it is very unlikely that the application of concessions will actively disadvantage students from any particular groups or backgrounds.

Communication, implementation and evaluation of the impact of any action agreed

14. If any concessions are approved, Academic Services will produce guidance to support Schools in the application of these. Assistant Principal, Professor Tina Harrison convenes an Academic Contingency Group, which will run throughout the period of industrial action. This group will evaluate the impact of the agreed action and can report to APCR as required.

Author

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9 May 2022

Presenter

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Freedom of Information

15. Open

Previous concessions to regulations and policies in response to industrial action

May 2022

Text to be waived is highlighted and underlined.

Additional text is marked in red and underlined.

A. General Undergraduate Degree Programme Regulations 2021/22

38. In order to progress to the next year of programme, a student must attain the following minimum number of credits:

- **80 credit points by the end of Year 1;**
- **200 credit points by the end of Year 2;**
- **360 credit points by the end of Year 3;**
- **480 credit points by the end of Year 4;**
- **600 credit points by the end of Year 5 for Integrated Masters.**

B. General Postgraduate Degree Programme Regulations 2021/22

There are no concessions proposed at present in relation to these regulations.

C. Taught Assessment Regulations 2021/22

1. Feedback deadlines

“Regulation 16 Feedback deadlines

Feedback on formative and summative in-course assessed work will be provided within 15 working days of submission, or in time to be of use in subsequent assessments within the course, whichever is sooner. At the start of each course, Schools will publish their timetable for returning feedback and marks for in-course work.”

2. Board of Examiners: quorum

“Regulation 39 Board of Examiners: quorum

A Board of Examiners meeting is quorate if at least half the internal examiners attend and at least one External Examiner participates in and approves the decisions of the Board. No Board may have fewer than two internal examiners attending. See taught assessment regulation 2.4 for the definition of an internal examiner.

3. Progression, classification and award decisions

a) “Regulation 13 Passing assessment

Passing a course or degree programme requires attainment of the learning outcomes and may require a specified level of performance or attendance in some or all components.

13.3 Boards of Studies and the relevant College Committee approve the assessment and satisfactory performance requirements for courses and degree programmes before their delivery. Individual course elements and options available to students can change and there

are annual changes to degree programme tables and course availability. However, the approval of the relevant College Committee must be obtained if it is exceptionally necessary to change the weighting of assessment of a course after students have entered it; or to change progression, classification or award requirements for a programme after students have entered their honours years or a postgraduate programme.

(a) Before approval can be given, written evidence of the results of consultation with the students must be submitted. Every student affected needs to be informed of the changes and given the opportunity to comment. The expectation is that the College will not approve changes in the face of significant student objections, unless changes are compelled by external factors.

(b) The relevant external examiners must also be informed and consulted.

(c) Students may be given alternative course options, where this is possible. The expectation is that course assessment requirements will not change after students are registered on it.”

b) “Regulation 51 Undergraduate progression: pre-honours and into honours

To progress to the next year of study and into honours, students must meet the requirements for progression which are specified in the Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study and degree programme tables. www.drps.ed.ac.uk/”

c) Regulation 52 Undergraduate honours assessment progression

The Undergraduate Progression Board has the responsibility to decide which students can progress to the next year of honours study. Progressing students must:

(a) pass at least 80 credits at SCQF level 9 or above in junior honours and level 10 or above in senior honours for undergraduate Masters degrees; and

(b) have an overall average of 40% or more for the 120 credits of study taken in the relevant honours year; and

(c) must satisfy any other specific requirements for the degree programme, as published in the programme handbook.

d) Regulation 53 Award of undergraduate Ordinary and General degrees

Students registered for an Ordinary or General (non-Honours) degree may be awarded the degree if they satisfy the requirements in the Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study.

When all the marks for the taught components of the final year of the programme (120 credits) are available, if the student has achieved PASS marks in at least 80 credits and has an overall average of 40% or more over the full 120 credits, then they will be awarded credits on aggregate for the failed courses.

g) “Regulation 56 Postgraduate assessment progression

For programmes where there is an identifiable taught component followed by a project or dissertation component, students must pass the assessment requirements of the taught stage at an appropriate level at the first attempt before progression to the dissertation. In order to progress to the masters dissertation students must:

(a) pass at least 80 credits with a mark of at least 50% in each of the courses which make up these credits; and

(b) attain an average of at least 50% for the 120 credits of study examined at the point of

decision for progression; and
(c) satisfy any other specific requirements for the masters degree programme, that are clearly stated in respective programme handbooks.

When all the marks for the taught components of the programme (120 credits) are available, if the student has achieved PASS marks in at least 80 credits and has an overall average of 40% or more over the full 120 credits, then they will be awarded credits on aggregate for the failed courses.

For programmes where the taught and project or dissertation components are taken in parallel, or where there are not identifiable taught and project or dissertation components, the requirements for progression are determined at programme level, stated in the Programme Handbook.”

“56.1 For programmes where there is an identifiable taught component followed by a project / dissertation component (e.g. 120 credits of taught courses in semesters 1 and 2, followed by a 60 credit project / dissertation component):

- (a) Postgraduate Boards of Examiners are normally convened at least twice during the year for full-time students. The initial meeting to decide matters relating to progression (to masters, or diploma), or failure, is held at the end of the coursework component. A second meeting to consider the dissertation results and the final award of degrees (or diplomas) is held soon after completion of the programme. Both meetings are equally important.

D. Postgraduate Research Assessment Regulations 2021/22

“Regulation 13 Progression review

The first progression review will take place for all students within nine to 12 months of their enrolment. The student must participate in a meeting and may be required to make a written submission and/or prepare an oral presentation. Progress in the subsequent years (at 9 to 12 months) is assessed until the thesis is submitted. The online progression report form must be completed.”

E. Handbook for Boards of Examiners for Taught Courses and Programmes

There are no concessions proposed at present in relation to this policy.

F. External Examiners for Taught Programmes Policy

There are no concessions proposed at present in relation to this policy.

G. Undergraduate Progression Boards Policy

There are no concessions proposed at present in relation to this policy.