

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

Paper No ASQEC/19/4

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

13 March 2019

Agenda Item 7

CLASSIFICATION OF INTEGRATED MASTER'S DEGREES

COVER SHEET

To consider a paper on the possible introduction of third class Honours in light of the Level 5 and 6 contributions to the award classification.

CLASSIFICATION OF INTEGRATED MASTER'S DEGREES

Background

In 2012, the University adopted Honours classification for Integrated Master's degrees, to replace the Pass and Distinction grading scheme.

At that time the 'exit velocity' principle for the grading/classification of final awards applied and, as these qualifications included Level 7 modules for which the pass mark is 50%, three classification bands were introduced: 1st, 2i and 2ii.

In 2015, the Faculty of Life and Health Sciences proposed the inclusion of contributions from Level 5 and 6 in the final calculation of the overall result and class of degree. This variation was approved. The Faculty's paper on this topic (TLC/15/18b) mentioned a third class, but not in the proposed new clause of the regulation. Consequently, there was no specific discussion of the introduction of a third class band and no recommendation was made to amend University award regulations in this regard.

Regulations template

This matter has now come to light as the template for the regulations for Integrated Master's has been revised to reflect the new classification algorithm (from 2018/19) with contributions from Levels 5 and 6, where the pass mark is 40%.

The Faculty of Life and Health Sciences has noted that students of the MPharm (Hons) who have achieved between 40 and 49% are eligible to proceed to final level of this integrated Master's degree but that the weighting would result in final summary mark below 50%.

Proposal

While the above scenario has not yet arisen, in order to ensure that University award regulations allow a Master's award for such students, the Faculty proposes the addition of the third class band at clause 27 of the Regulations, as follows:

Classification of final Integrated Master's Degree result

27. The results of candidates who have successfully completed a course of study leading to the award of an Integrated Master's Degree shall be graded by order of merit as first class honours, second class honours upper division, second class honours lower division, **and third class honours.**

The assessment results from Levels 3 or 4 shall not contribute to the final Integrated Master's Degree result. The final classification shall normally be based on the assessment results from all modules at Levels 5, 6 and 7, with Levels 5 and 6 contributing 20% and 30% respectively. The weighting of each

module's contribution to the final result shall be determined by the module's credit value.

The following shall be the minimum overall percentages used to determine the final gradings of candidates in courses leading to the Integrated Master's Degree:

Class I
At least 70%

Class II (division i) (Iii)
At least 60% and less than 70%

Class II (division ii) (Iiii)
At least 50% and less than 60%

Class III
At least 40% and less than 50%

Discussion

Two Faculties have integrated Master's degrees: Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment, and Life and Health Sciences. To 2018/19, only the MPharm (Hons) has included Level 5 and 6 contributions. From 2018/19, all integrated Master's degrees have 20 and 30% contributions from these Levels (except where a PSRB requires a different algorithm).

Two options are available:

- to set a progression threshold for entry to the final Level which obviates the need for a third class.

Some courses, which manage linked degrees (e.g. BEng/MEng Engineering), set a threshold for transfer to MEng and vice versa. A paper from the Faculty of Computing and Engineering, on promotion/demotion, was considered in 2011 when the threshold for progression/transfer to Level 6 of the MEng was set at 60% in line with professional body expectations of potential to achieve at least a 2i in BEng to support transfer. This would not work so readily in courses for which students are admitted directly to the integrated Master's and where a Bachelor's award only serves as an exit award, such as the MPharm.

- to introduce the Third class band.

The Associate Deans (Education) for Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment, and Life and Health Sciences have been invited to comment.