

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

Paper No ASQEC/20/30

ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE

3 December 2020

Agenda Item 6

COVER SHEET

DEPARTURES AND VARIATIONS FROM THE UNIVERSITY'S REGULATORY  
FRAMEWORK:

10A1 Engineering Undergraduate

*Presenter: Professor M Keenan*

Action is required of the Committee to approve the four variations.

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3 December 2020

## **Faculty of Computing and Engineering**

### **10A1 Engineering Undergraduate Revalidation**

#### **Background**

During the revalidation process for the School of Engineering (Unit 10A1), the Academic Office, in consultation with the School of Engineering highlighted four areas where regulations departed from the standard regulatory framework. These were:

1. The threshold pass rate of 60% at level 5 to transfer from BEng Hons programmes to the appropriate linked MEng Hons Programme, and the associated requirement for student on the MEng Hons programme to maintain this same 60% level 5 threshold to remain on the MEng Hons programme.
2. The exit award of BEng Hons from the MEng Hons programme requires a contribution to the final award from an individual project, and thus requires that the exit award include a contribution from the level 7 MEng dissertation module.
3. For the exit award of BEng Hons from the MEng Hons programme, that a mark of at least 40% be required to meet the equivalent threshold of a project at BEng Hons level.
4. That the threshold for failure at level 7 of the MEng programmes be increased to 45 credits, due to the use of 15 credit modules, and to allow students to resit the dissertation module.

These four proposed changes are outlined below:

#### **Proposed Variations**

##### **1. Threshold mark for transfer between the BEng and the MEng programmes**

As is normal in the sector, students are eligible to transfer between the BEng and the linked MEng programmes. As approved by the Teaching and Learning Committee in 2011 (TLC/11/27b). The 60% threshold for transfer is maintained.

Students on the BEng Hons programme who have an average of at least 60% at level 5 are eligible to transfer to the linked MEng Hons programme. Students on the MEng Hons programme who do not achieve an average of at least 60% at level 5 are required to transfer to the linked BEng Hons programme.

Details from previously approved departure (TLC/11/27b)

The revalidation panel in 2010 made the following recommendation:

‘That the Course Team reviews the mechanism for transfer from BEng to MEng. The Panel expressed concern that students enrolled on the BEng programmes were required to achieve an overall average mark of 60% at Level 5 before they could be considered for transfer to MEng. Students who enrolled initially for MEng awards were only required to maintain the 40% pass rate to progress to Level 7. This gives rise to a potential inequality in respect of transfer and as such the procedure appears to be out of line with other similar courses across the sector;’

The faculty response was to propose the current regulation, in place since 2011, that includes an equitable arrangement for transfer between the BEng Hons and MEng Hons programmes. This was also an expectation of the appropriate PSRBs (IET and IMechE). The rationale remains the same as was proposed in 2011 and approved by the Teaching and Learning Committee at that time:

“It is considered that the challenging nature of integrated masters engineering programmes, requires that students progressing to levels 6 and 7 have clearly demonstrated potential to achieve at least a 2.1 honours on a BEng, demonstrated by strong performance across the level 5 modules. This strong performance also demonstrates the potential for such students to contribute meaningfully to group project work, which is an important feature within the latter stages of such programmes. Students who are found to perform less well at level 5 are generally found to struggle with later MEng progression, risking failure and the need for exit award based outcomes. Cohort dynamics and group project work also tend to be adversely affected where MEng candidates are found to be out of their depth. The arrangements set out in this paper are aimed at ensuring that respective candidates can complete with appropriate awards, matched to their abilities. All proposed transfer pathways remain consistent with the subsequent achievement of Chartered Engineer (CEng) at later points of career. The proposed arrangements are consistent with sector norms for UK-SPEC compliant MEng programmes having linked BEng Honours pathways. Harmonized transfer arrangements are proposed for each of the MEng/BEng courses where:

- a. The proposed threshold for transfer up or down is 60% in the weighted module average.
- b. The threshold will be consistently applied to both BEng Honours and MEng students for promotion/demotion at the end 2<sup>nd</sup> year (level 5 modules).”

The proposals in TLC/11/27b as relevant were:

1. It is further proposed that the respective MEng regulations should include a common requirement for the achievement of a 60% module average, at the end of the level 5 modules, to ensure further progression on the respective MEng and that failure to achieve this would require students to transfer to the linked BEng Honours programme, to complete their studies for a classified honours degree. This 60% hurdle would be clearly communicated to students from the outset, including the rationale for such a hurdle, in the context of UK-SPEC

professionally accredited engineering courses and the expectations of accrediting institutions (notably IET and IMechE).

2. Students entering directly to respective linked BEng Honours programmes would have the opportunity to transfer to the linked MEng and this would also be based on the achievement of a 60% module average, at the end of level 5. In this way, BEng candidates, completing common level 4 and level 5 module diets, would have equitable treatment in terms of opportunity to complete an MEng.

At the revalidation of Unit 10A1 in May 2020, the same variation from the standard regulations was proposed and the panel were content that this remains an appropriate way to regulate the transfer between linked BEng Hons and MEng Hons programmes.

The faculty therefore wish to continue the reapproval of the same transfer arrangements as described.

## **2. Contribution of the MEng Dissertation to the BEng (Hons) exit award**

The principles of this variation were previously approved at LTC in 2015 (LTC/15/30). The specific calculations approved in 2015 have changed as necessitated by the introduction of the University's degree algorithm change and the change in the module size of the BEng project, but otherwise the principle of this variation is the same as approved in 2015.

In order to meet the University's requirements for Honours degrees, students leaving with a BEng Hons exit award (from an MEng Hons programme) must have completed an individual project or dissertation. A requirement of the accrediting bodies (IMechE and IET) is also that this individual project must be part of the overall classification.

In order to satisfy University requirements, align with the ethos of the Integrated Master's Degree and meet professional body expectations, the Faculty (in consultation with the Academic Office) proposes the following method to determine the award and classification for the BEng Hons exit award:

*The overall grading of the exit award of a BEng Hons shall be based on the assessment results from all Level 5 and Level 6 modules, combined with the MEng dissertation. Level 5 modules shall contribute 30%. Level 6 modules shall contribute 58.3% and the MEng dissertation shall contribute 11.7%. The weighting of each module's contribution to the overall mark for the level 5 and 6 modules shall be determined by the module's credit value.*

The new BEng (Hons) degree algorithm requires 30% to be awarded from level 5 and 70% from level 6. The project is a 20 credit module, and thus represents 1/6<sup>th</sup> of the level 6 mark. In order to preserve the overall contribution of the project, the project element retains its weighting of 1/6<sup>th</sup> of the final year, which means it is worth 11.7% (70% / 6). The remaining level 6 modules (six 20 credit modules) will thus contribute

the remaining 58.3% of the overall award. This ensures that all candidates who receive an award of BEng Hons will do so on a comparable basis.

At the revalidation of Unit 10A1 in May 2020, the same variation from the standard regulations was proposed and the panel were content that this remains an appropriate way to determine the classification of the BEng Hons exit award from the associated MEng Hons programme.

The faculty therefore wish to continue the same principle of classification, but seek approval for this and the updating the specific calculation based on the new classification algorithm and revised module credit ratings as described above.

### **3. BEng (Hons) exit award to require a mark of at least 40% in the MEng dissertation**

Where a student is to be awarded a BEng Hons exit award from an MEng programme, the threshold achievement for this award should, as far as is possible, be the same as for a student who is registered on the BEng Hons programme, to ensure fairness and the equivalence of the awards. In order to maintain this equivalence, a student should not be required to achieve the normal 50% pass mark in the level 7 MEng dissertation. A student who has achieved 40% in a level 7 module should not be considered as having a lower level of achievement than a student who has achieved 40% in a level 6 module.

As such, in order to be awarded the BEng (Hons) exit award, the Faculty are proposing a variation in regulations that students should achieve a mark of at least 40% in the MEng dissertation. Based on discussions with the Academic Office in relation to the fairest way to assess students in this situation over the last few years, this has been the presumed way that this will be considered at the Board of Examiners should this circumstance occur. Students in this circumstance will have passed all modules at level 6 and have achieved at least 40% in the individual project module taken at level 7 (with links also to point 2 above).

At the revalidation of Unit 10A1 in May 2020, the panel were content that this is an equitable way to make awards to students on both the MEng Hons and BEng Hons programmes when considering the final award of BEng Hons.

The faculty therefore seek approval for this departure and therefore confirm this within the regulations for the MEng (Hons) programmes.

### **4. Threshold of Failure at level 7 to be increased to allow 45 credits of failure in the final year of MEng Hons programmes.**

With the use of 15 credit modules and the reduction of the dissertation from 60 credits to 45 credits, the 40 credit threshold of failure in final year makes a subtle but significant difference between the MEng programme than for the BEng or BSc

programmes. Increasing the threshold of failure to 45 credits still maintains a significant distinction from the threshold of failure in the earlier years of the programme, but would mean that no single module (the dissertation in this case) cannot be repeated without extenuating circumstances.

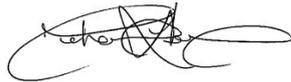
Within the standard regulations a student studying for a postgraduate Masters degree can fail and subsequently resit a 60 credit dissertation module at level 7. The Faculty would like to ensure that students undertaking an integrated Masters degree are not disadvantaged by the inability to fail and resit the 45 credit level 7 dissertation.

The Faculty are therefore proposing that students in the final year of the MEng programmes are permitted to resit up to 45 credits on one occasion. Otherwise the consequences of failure remain the same.

This proposed variation was part of the documentation reviewed by the revalidation panel in May 2020, and the Faculty now seeks approval for this variation to be included within the programme regulations for MEng Hons programmes.

Alan Brown, Revalidation Unit Coordinator

Faculty Approved: Professor Michaela Keenan, (Associate Dean, Education)



24<sup>th</sup> November 2020