ULSTER UNIVERSITY

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS FORUM

23 January 2019

Paper No: CPF/19/04 Agenda Item: 7

TITLE: APPLICATION OF THE NEW DEGREE ALGORITHM TO FOUNDATION DEGREES

SUMMARY:

To consider a paper investigating the potential to apply the new degree algorithm to Foundation degrees.

ACTION REQUIRED:

For Consideration.

**Variations to the method for calculating the final mark in Foundation degrees**

The recent focus on benchmarks for attrition and progression has served to highlight the very large numbers of students on validated courses who are not successful at the first attempt in May. On many Foundation degree courses in 17/18, over half of the students had resits in August. No institution met the benchmarks following the June Boards of Examiners (see Annex).

The Self Evaluation Report asked course teams to reflect on first sit success for the first time this year, with a view to improving student outcomes, and reducing the administrative overhead of very substantial and lengthy supplementary Boards of Examiners. It is hoped that the curriculum design reforms coupled with the workload equivalence guidelines may lead to better student outcomes, but another area under consideration was the potential for level 4 modules to contribute to the final Foundation degree classification, in the same way as level 5 modules contribute to the Honours degree classification under the new degree algorithm.

If students knew that level 4 modules contributed to their final award, they might be less content to accept a capped mark in the August resits, and might strive to succeed at the first attempt, thereby reducing the volume of resits. The Forum identified final year students on courses in partner colleges for investigation, covering different subject areas and modes of delivery.

A total of 193 sets of student marks were modelled using the degree algorithm of 30% level 4 modules, 70% level 5 modules, to assess the impact of any change to current arrangements.

82 students, or 42%, saw their mark go down, while 111 students, or 58%, saw their marks stay the same or go up.

In terms of moving across bands for classification, 27 students (14%) dropped one classification while 12 students (6%) rose by one classification.

In conclusion, the adjustment to the current method for calculating final marks for Foundation degrees would certainly have had an impact of students, which would be mainly positive for consistently performing students. The Forum is asked to consider whether the potentially negative impact it would have on 42% of students would be one factor in motivating students to attempt to succeed first time round.

ANNEX

**HE Provision Success 2 Rates 2017/18: Full-Time (benchmark)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Institution** | **Yr 1 June (75%)** | **Yr 2 June (80%)** |
| BMC | 59.5 | 61.8 |
| CAFRE | 67.2 | 66.7 |
| NRC | 63.0 | 64.4 |
| NWRC | 46.3 | 58.6 |
| SERC | 55.5 | 63.2 |
| SRC | 56.1 | 72.7 |
| SWC | 68.0 | 71.6 |

**HE Provision Success 2 Rates 2017/18: Part-time**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Institution** | **Year 1 June (75%)** | **Year 2 June**  **(75%)** | **Year 3 June**  **(80%)** |
| BMC | 71.2 | 55.7 | 78.3 |
| CAFRE | 36.7 | 56.7 | 57.1 |
| NRC | 71.9 | 44.1 | 69.6 |
| NWRC | 72.0 | 55.4 | 73.4 |
| SERC | 56.9 | 59.2 | 61.1 |
| SRC | 70.2 | 59.8 | 66.7 |
| SWC | 74.5 | 62.5 | 58.3 |