EXTRACT FROM TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMITTEE MINUTES: 1.12.10

10.194 SEMESTER 1 EXAMINATIONS

The Committee, at its October meeting, had discussed the potential impact of the proximity of the Christmas and New Year holiday to the first week of examinations on student performance and retention, and agreed that student members comment on a proposal to delay the start of Semester 1 examinations for first year students. Student Administration had also been asked to comment on its feasibility (min 10.140 refers). It was noted that Senate, at its November meeting, had been supportive of the proposal.

The Committee considered paper TLC/10/51 which set out the Students’ Union response based on consultation with class representatives and a *vox populi* poll, and the Director of Student Administration’s comments on operational implications.

Ms Honan commented that while around two-thirds of student responses had initially favoured a delay, further discussions revealed concerns that the extra time might not be used constructively and could possibly increase stress levels with less time available for preparation and revision between examinations. There was, however, support for the suggestion of the provision of revision classes in the first week.

The Committee noted the principles (set out in order of priority) previously approved for the construction of the examination timetable and the convention to avoid using the final week of the three-week period. A number of options were explored in the report from Student Administration and the Committee noted various constraints and implications. It was suggested that, as an increasing number of two-hour examinations were being used, the Examinations Office could consider scheduling three sessions on some days.

Committee members expressed concerns about the practicality of mandatory revision classes and also the implications of the proposal for the time available for staff to mark Semester 1 work and to prepare for Semester 2 teaching.

The Students’ Union representatives concluded that the timing of the start of Semester 1 examinations was not a major issue for students in general, and indicated their willingness to work with the University in other initiatives to support retention such as peer mentoring.

AGREED: that no change be made to current examination arrangements.