EXTRACT FROM SENATE MINUTES

**17 April 2019**

19.35 Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee (Paper S/19/30)

Senate received the minutes of the Academic Standards and Enhancement Committee meeting held on 13 March 2019.

Senate AGREED to revise the requirement for a compulsory dissertation/project in Honours degrees to permit exceptional departures from the rule to be approved by ASQEC on a case-by-case basis (ASQEC minute 19.10 refers).

EXTRACT FROM ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY ENHANCEMENT MINUTES

**13 March 2019**

19.10 Final Year Dissertations/Projects

Professor Bartholomew informed the Committee that an Associate Dean had proposed that an Honours degree dissertation be replaced by a different module such as an employment-facing one. As Senate had made it a requirement in 2014 that all undergraduate degrees include a final year dissertation/project, he proposed to ask Senate to give this Committee the authority to permit exceptional departures from this rule on a case-by-case basis. The Committee noted that it would need to give consideration to a number of factors including whether the degree in question prepared students adequately for postgraduate study/research, the UK HE Quality Code’s Honours Degree Qualification Descriptor and the relevant Subject Benchmark Statement.

EXTRACT FROM LEARNING AND TEACHING COMMITTEE MINUTES

**9 December 2014**

14.101 Final Year Dissertation/Project and Compulsory Placement in Undergraduate and Integrated Master’s Degrees (Mins 14.84 and 14.41)

Professor McAlister reported that Senate at its November meeting had approved the recommendation for a compulsory dissertation/project module which should be considered during this academic year with early implementation where possible in those courses which did not already have such a module.

**15 October 2014**

14.84 COMPULSORY PLACEMENT AND FINAL YEAR DISSERTATION/PROJECT IN UNDERGRADUATE AND INTEGRATED MASTER’S DEGREES

The Committee considered the Faculty responses (Paper No LTC/14/24) and acknowledged that the policy would present challenges for a minority of courses. A number of general issues had been identified and it was thought that clarification and guidance would be needed, particularly in relation to placement. The University would not dictate arrangements to achieve these outcomes but would expect Faculties to explore options and adopt appropriate solutions.

Dissertation/Project in Final Year Honours Degrees

With regard to the dissertation/project, it was noted that the University’s previous expectation was that in an Honours degree programme one or more modules were normally assessed by dissertation. A special case had to be made at validation or by CA3 to the Faculty to depart from this principle. In line with the new principle, a special case would no longer be allowed and such dissertation/project modules would require to be clearly identified within the course. The Chair acknowledged that the need for ethical approval of projects could present an impediment in some subject areas, but advised that in such instances students might be directed to undertake projects which analysed secondary data available, for example through NISRA.

The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that those courses which currently did not make provision for placement and/or a final year dissertation/project now needed to bring forward proposals to do so. Subject to Senate approval of the recommendation, he indicated that failure to do so would put at risk the future continuation of the course.

AGREED:

1. that it be further recommended to Senate that Faculties make provision for a period of placement and a dissertation/project module (in final year) as a compulsory component in all undergraduate and Integrated Masters’ degree programmes **from the September 2015** **intake** and that Faculties aim to introduce as soon as possible optional periods of placement and dissertation/project modules for existing students on programmes where these were not currently provided;
2. subject to Senate approval of i) above, Faculties consider these matters and ensure that course/subject teams, which do not already meet these objectives, take appropriate steps to achieve them and to present proposals through the submission of CA3 forms or in documentation for forthcoming validation events;
3. that the Sub-Committee on Employability develop further guidance on the options for introducing periods of placement within undergraduate Honours and Integrated Master’s degrees.

**18 June 2014**

14.41 Monitoring of Placement

It was further recognised that the placement experience contributed to future graduate-level employment, which was an important factor affecting an institution’s position in various league tables. Another factor, further study, was influenced by students’ experience of research-led enquiry through their own final year dissertation or project. While this was an expectation of the University’s degrees, course teams were currently permitted not to include one if they could demonstrate to validation panels how its outcomes were met elsewhere in the curriculum.

AGREED that:

1. it be recommended to Senate that, in principle, a period of placement and a final year dissertation/research project be integral parts of the curriculum for all undergraduate and integrated Master’s degrees.