Issues with APT

Executive Summary

The Director of Student Systems is invited to discuss observations by the School of Chemistry with regards to APT progression software which is used to record and communicate progression and awards decisions and its use in the May examination diet.

How does this align with the University / Committee’s strategic plans and priorities?

Aligns with the strategic objective of ‘Leadership in Learning’

Action requested

For discussion

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

TBC

Resource / Risk / Compliance

1. Resource implications (including staffing)

TBC

2. Risk assessment

N/A

3. Equality and Diversity

N/A

4. Freedom of information

Paper is closed

Key words

Originator of the paper
Linda Burns, Academic Administrator, School of Chemistry

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School of Chemistry

Issues with EUCLID APT (updated September 2017)

Please note that most of these issues applied to the May diet too. This list may also not be exhaustive.

- No pilot scheme and system not fully developed or properly tested before the exams.
- Software was being developed as we were using the system in May.
- No proper training or user guide.
- Yammer was used to discuss problems and post updates, but it very quickly became unmanageable. With the volume of errors/changes being reported, we really needed a daily or weekly summary of issues being looked at and resolved. This was requested but never materialised. We gave up reporting issues in August due to time pressures and just worked out ways of resolving issues ourselves – possibly incorrectly!
- Length of time to move between pages in APT is far too long. No quick way of going back and forwards between screens.
- No way to identify withdrawn or interrupted students on results sheets, meaning lots of time wasted in having to check individual records.
- Having to deal with “resits” and 1st sits” separately in August is time consuming and confusing and leads to errors and omissions.
- Removal of previous marks – it’s confusing to only have to remove marks for 1st sits, and using the “remove marks” button actually removes the marks for all students on course.
- Having to remove the marks manually for all the students showing on the 1st sit list is time consuming and, until we realised this, caused confusion as to which marks were new and which were old resulting, on occasion, in marks being a mixture of old and new.
- Once marks have been removed you can’t just leave the record blank, you have to put a 0 in, which for students who didn’t attempt questions that they did first time round, it looks like they attempted it and got 0. This is not correct.
- Marks often disappeared that had already been entered.
- APT does not always pull through practical marks for students who failed labs and exams. These had to be manually re-entered, then recalculated, which sometimes led to further student’s marks not pulling through in the second calculation.
- Progression sheets (run from BI Suite) did not show the up-to-date programme information. For example, students who had left during the year still showed up on these and prevented recording of progression for other students.

What the above does not cover is the stress that both the May and August diets have caused to staff. We were dealing with critical problems against the clock, trying to make everything correct for exam boards (and I know from colleagues that this strain was being felt in other Schools). The software developers were doing their best to help us, but they were under-staffed in May and even more so in August. The consequences of what I consider to be poor software planning have a serious short-term and long-term impact on morale at School level and should not be underestimated.

Linda Burns, Susan Maitland