**School of Biological Sciences**

**A Leaning Objectives based assessment strategy for pre-honours core courses in Biology Science.**

**Background**
Students on biological sciences programmes in pre-Honours years take a number of core courses. However, engagement is often poor, with a sizeable number of students requiring to undertake resits in order to pass the course, particularly for the theory components. We propose to encourage greater engagement with the major elements of the course, throughout the course, and to focus clearly on achieving the course learning objectives.

**Proposed changes**
Currently students are required to pass both the ICA and degree exam components of our core courses in years 1 and 2. For some of our courses, we propose to align the learning objectives of the ICA with those examined in the degree exam. This provides for a scenario where students can be considered to have met the course learning objectives solely by demonstrating strong engagement throughout the course and a high level of ICA.

Alternatively, they may meet the learning objectives with a lesser, but satisfactory, engagement with the in course material, whilst also satisfactorily meeting the learning objectives in the degree exam. Where the learning objectives have been met via the ICA alone, such students can opt also to take the degree exam. The course mark recorded on Euclid will be that achieved from the ICA component. There will be a requirement to pass the ICA component and where taken, the degree exam. Euclid will record overall course failure. Failed components can be retaken as currently allowed for under the DRPS.

We proposed to change our rules for passing such core courses to the following:

In order to pass this course, you will require to achieve the following:

1) An overall mark of 60% for ICA
   - Obtain at least 40% in each of the in-course assessments
   - Demonstrate (validated) attendance in at least 80% of the practical and tutorial sessions.

   or

2) A minimum of 40% in the ICA and a minimum of 40% in the degree exam.

The following will also apply:

a) If any of the conditions in option (1) are unmet, option (2) will apply.
b) Only option (2) will be eligible for special circumstances consideration.
c) The final course mark will be derived from the in-course assessments but the pass/fail situation will also be recorded on Euclid.
d) Students who meet the requirements for option (1) may choose to take the degree exam, in which case option (2) will apply.
e) Students eligible for option (1) who wish to take the degree exam must inform the course secretary by e-mail/LEARN at least 21 days before the date of the degree.
f) Each degree exam opportunity will be considered as an exam attempt.
Advantages of the proposal
The proposal has the following benefits:

(i) It will positively encourage greater engagement with course activities
(ii) It will give all students a transparent mechanism and opportunity to demonstrate that they have met each of the learning objectives.
(iii) It does not disadvantage students who choose to demonstrate their full potential.
(iv) It will reduce exam stress for a number of students, allowing them to better adapt to our educational processes in early years.

Associated general guidance for Course Organisers
Both ICA and exam components should map to the same learning objectives (although the assessment items need not be identical).
ICA components should be of equivalent challenge to the corresponding components of the degree exam.
COs should endeavour to validate that at least one substantial section/ item of each ICA component is the work of the student.

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School of Biological Sciences May 2015