College of Science and Engineering

Assessment of VUG students

At its meeting on 19 February 2004 the CSMC considered the issue of assessment of courses for visiting undergraduate students. It agreed that all courses should generate a mark (either through examination or continuous assessment) at the end of semester 1. Thus, any course that is delivered in Semester 1 but examined at the end of Semester 2, is required to have a “VS” version with assessment at the end of Semester 1 so that a mark can be generated.

It was further considered at the time by the Dean of Undergraduate Studies that the mode of assessment of a Visiting Student on a VS course should be identical to that of a UoE student on the parent course. Thus, where the parent course has a written examination in May, an equivalent examination should be set for the VS course in December. This principle also applies to resit examinations, where they are permitted (i.e. for level 7 and 8 courses for Visiting Students). The rationale of this policy is to enhance the external perception that a course offered to a Visiting Student is of an equivalently high academic standard as the parent course offered to UoE students.

This policy does have resource implications for Schools, particularly for the School of Informatics where a high proportion of courses have the delivery in Semester 1 and examination in Semester 2 mode. A suggestion from the School for resolving this issue (as part of a more general review of examination policy) is that the University should relax its policy of not permitting examinations away from Edinburgh. This would allow Visiting Students to take the same examination at the same (or similar) time as UoE students. This proposal was supported by the CL&TC and recommended to the Senatus Undergraduate Studies Committee (SUGSC). However, SUGSC did not support the proposal, considering that there were too many practical difficulties for this to be implemented in the near future.

An alternative proposal is to relax the requirement for a VS course to have the same examination format as the parent course. Thus, the VS course could have an alternative form of assessment which may comprise written work or exercises. This is the policy that has been adopted by the College of Humanities and Social Science, and which is the practice in some cases of special circumstances. A key factor in implementing such a policy will be the method of assurance that the high academic standards will be maintained, and the role of the External Examiner in such assurance.

The Committee is invited to consider whether a VS course may have a different assessment regime to the parent course, and hence permit coursework assessment in place of a written examination.