

ACADEMIC-RELATED PROFESSIONAL SERVICES REVIEW: Student Support and Academic Registry, March 2017**ACTION PLAN**

AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT		Action
4.1	The Review Team noted that there was a comparative lack of benchmarking undertaken by the University to ensure that best practice from across the sector was understood and incorporated into policy, process and practice. Future developments should be informed by detailed benchmarking activity across the sector and on a global basis.	These development areas are being addressed through the Professional Services Review.
4.3	It was suggested that staff in Malaysia are encouraging process change based on their experience derived at other HEIs, including foreign HEIs in Malaysia. The Review Team concluded that this constitutes a resource which could be used by the University as a whole and which would also benefit the 'one Heriot-Watt' approach.	
4.13	For reasons of consistency and standardisation, authority for the processes relating to assessment has to reside with a single point of authority. It is, therefore, recommended that the University adopts a standard institution-wide procedure for setting, marking and moderation, supported by technology.	
4.2	Some assessment and examination support policies appear to have grown organically rather than through regular, structured review and comparison to other institutions. Institutional organisation and structures reflected the specific characteristics of Heriot-Watt and its historical development (e.g. the reliance on the International Centre for Examinations located in the Edinburgh Business School rather than managed by an Academic Registry for servicing off-campus examinations). The Review Team recommends that the University undertakes a detailed benchmarking exercise in this area to learn from best practice in the sector, and notably around how technology can be used to enhance and simplify processes.	<p>These areas of development are being addressed through a review that is being led by the Director of Administration in the School of Textiles and Design. The review is being led in three phases:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exam setting to sitting (<i>+student support</i>) 2. Sitting to Boards (<i>main issue, firstly being addressed</i>) 3. Global release of results <p>A review of timetabling starts in full in September 2018 with a view to delivering personalised timetabling by September 2019. This will incorporate the Student Information Desk and Syllabus Plus.</p>
4.4	The Review Team noted that there were examples of collaboration across campuses in the setting and moderation of assessment and examinations. However, there is inconsistency of practice. It is recommended that the University adopts a procedure that requires the managing course leader to collaborate with all members of the course teaching team in the formulation of assessment instruments and examination papers. This would include sight by all teaching team members of the final examination papers. The use of a technology-supported procedure is likely to ensure consistency.	
4.11	The Review Team recognises that workable timetables are produced, however, it is recommended that the student experience of examinations could be enhanced with reference to: the timeliness of timetable publications; methods for communicating the publication of timetables; the personalisation of timetables; the increased spread of students' examinations across the examination diet; examination venues. The University should take advantage of the full potential of Syllabus Plus (including software upgrades) and associated products from Scientia to further enhance and simplify the examination processes.	
4.15	The Review Team recommends that the University adopts a more robust technology to support global examination boards which allow for consistency of decision-making in the interests of students.	
4.5	The Review Team noted that examinations are largely based on the traditional model which entails setting an examination question paper with answers to be handwritten in an examination book. This approach is resource-intensive and might well be out of step with the learning habits of technologically advanced students. It is, therefore, recommended that the University considers introducing assessment instruments which continue to test the appropriate learning outcomes, but which consume fewer resources and meet the expectations of the student population.	
4.6	The Review Team supports the development of a student portal, allowing a single point of access to all student procedures relating to assessment and variations in their programmes of study (eg applying for re-assessment).	This has now been delivered.

4.7	The student experience of assessment across all campuses would be enhanced by more timely and targeted, proactive information and advice. The Review Team heard that staff would support a more longitudinal approach to student induction. It is recommended that the University considers, possibly as part of the Student Administration Revitalisation Programme, developing a University-wide framework of proactive communications, mapped on to the student journey, to receive consistent and timely information at key points using one method of communication at institutional level. The face-to-face examination briefing session for students (held in week 9) operated by the Foundation Programme in Malaysia should be commended and used as a model of good practice.	These areas of development are being managed by the Student Learning Experience Committee and the Student Systems Team, through the Student Information Desk and enhanced student portal (scheduled for completion by September 2018).
4.8	The Review Team recommends that institutional, step-by-step guidelines be produced on mitigating circumstances. The guidelines should be transparent, written in plain English and provide timelines for decision-making.	
4.9	The Review Team observed that students were sometimes confused by terminology related to examination and student support procedures, such as 'provisional marks', 'mitigating circumstances', 'temporary suspension of studies', 'first attempt', 'second attempt', etc. The terminology used to communicate with students on these procedures should avoid institutional jargon and seek to adopt the use of 'plain English' throughout.	
4.14	It is recommended that the use of corporate technology solutions be adopted to support the effective operation of policies and practices, for example timetabling, mitigating circumstances and systems used to disseminate examination papers/scripts.	
4.10	The Review Team recommends that compulsory training be introduced across all campuses on procedures relating to students with particular assessment needs.	Compulsory training is in place for invigilators and relevant support staff on all special needs. RECOMMENDATION Personal Tutor training does not specifically cover assessment procedures related to disability, although participants will be made aware of available resources that they can refer their students to, via the campus specific Quick Referral Guide. This is an issue for staff in general and it is therefore recommended that compulsory training be introduced.
4.12	There are constraints for examinations scheduling as a result of the global nature of learning and teaching delivery and of the number of examinations which require to be timetabled. The Review Team considered that some of these constraints could be overcome by extending the examinations day/week. The Review Team would, therefore, recommend the consideration of scheduling examinations during evenings and over weekends (including Fridays). Best practice can be developed by mirroring similar arrangements followed by the Edinburgh Business School.	The Academic Registrar will be leading a review of the Time-Zones Policy during 2018/19, with the intention that Dubai will be able to operate within the UK or Malaysia Time-Zones. This will also address the issue that Ramadan will fall within the May 2019 examination period.