

# Temporary arrangements for managing the introduction of summative examinations

## Background

A policy to manage the introduction of additional summative examinations was introduced in Summer term 2017 as a means for securing the viability of the exam timetable from 2017-18 onwards, further to consideration by the Academic Board on 3 May 2017. It was developed in response to a high-level operational risk. The Academic Registrar's Division advised the School that the ST exam period was essentially full. Adding new examinations would risk a) the viability of the timetable, in terms of devising a clash-free timetable for all students, and b) the School's ability to meet its legal obligations under the Equality Act 2010, in terms of implementing reasonable exam adjustments.

The aim of the policy is therefore to stabilise the current volume of exams, for the purpose of securing the future viability of the ST exam period.

## How the policy works

1. New course proposals featuring an examination (of any duration/weighting and in either exam period, i.e. January or ST) must be accompanied by a 'like for like' amendment to remove an existing examination from the timetable. Changes to assessment for existing courses are also considered under this policy. This policy covers centrally timetabled and administered examinations and does not therefore apply to take home or in-class assessments.
2. A 'like for like' amendment to remove an existing examination from the timetable can be facilitated via the permanent withdrawal of an existing course currently assessed by exam, or by the modification of an existing course to change its mode of assessment from exam to an alternative form of assessment.
  - a. Departments will not be able to use the temporary suspension of a course for one or more academic years to facilitate a 'like for like' amendment to introduce a new exam. However, exams on courses suspended for one year would be maintained and would not be considered under this policy when the course was re-offered after suspension.
  - b. Courses which change ownership from one department to another will not be considered as having been withdrawn by the first department (see 4 below).
3. An exam proposed for a new course can replace the exam from a course being withdrawn in the same academic year as the new course is being introduced. It cannot replace an exam for a course that has already been withdrawn in a past academic year (up to and including 2016-17).
4. Departments will be able to 'bank' withdrawn examinations for a period of one academic year if they are not in a position to make a 'like for like' amendment to replace it with a comparable examination within the same academic year. After one year, if the banked examination slot has not been filled it will be withdrawn. For example, if an exam is removed from the exam timetable by withdrawing a course in 2017-18, the department would need to make the 'like for like' replacement in 2017-18 or in 2018-19 at the latest, or lose the exam slot.
  - a. 'Banked' examinations will be limited to a maximum of 5 courses or 10% of the total number of courses per department, whichever is the smaller number, for any given academic year.
5. The policy is intended for application within departments and the norm would be for a new exam to replace an exam on a course from the same department; this will probably be necessary to meet the 'like for like' requirements for comparable availability. However, where these requirements can be met, there is nothing in the policy that would prevent agreement between departments to replace an exam from one department, with a new exam from another. This would

help facilitate 'like for like' replacements on jointly delivered programmes.

6. The comparability of 'like for like' examinations will be assessed by staff in TQARO and the SSC in order to make a recommendation to the subcommittee on the suitability of the proposed replacement exam (according to the criteria below in 7.a-f.). All proposals will then be considered by the relevant subcommittee (or the subcommittee Chair in the case of modifications to existing courses).
7. **'Like for like'** replacements will be considered with reference to the following criteria at course level for both the new examination and the examination being replaced. The criteria are as follows:
  - a. Whether the courses are **compulsory or optional** on particular programmes of study – courses should have the same status.
  - b. The **availability** of the courses, both in terms of the number of programmes on which the courses are available and the comparability of course choices available on those programmes. **Why is availability important?** An exam taken on a course available on programmes within the same department and including courses predominantly from the same or similar departments will have a smaller impact on exam timetabling, compared to changes to courses available on a large number of programmes which include course options from a wide range of departments. Increased availability of a course results in greater variation in course choices across all students taking the associated exam. More varied course combinations results in a more complex mix of exam timetabling requirements and in turn a greater propensity for unresolvable exam timetable clashes.<sup>1</sup>
  - c. The **number of students** on both courses (either actual or predicted numbers for new courses). For the actual number of students who have previously taken the exam being replaced, numbers will be considered over 3 sittings (if available) using SMO records in SITS.
  - d. **Unit value.** This is relevant for classification purposes and at PGT level can have a big impact on the overall % of courses on an individual student's programme of study that are assessed by examination (one full-unit being one quarter of a four unit masters). 'Like for like' would be considered as two courses having the same unit value. Replacing one full-unit course assessed by exam with two half-units both assessed by exam would not be considered as 'like for like', as it would duplicate the number of exam slots required.
  - e. **Exam duration** – 'like for like' would be considered as of equal or shorter exam duration.
  - f. **Level** – 'like for like' replacements would be made at the same level of study (UG and UG, or PGT and PGT).
8. As of ST 2017 proposals for new or modified courses including assessment by examination will only be considered with the accompanying 'like for like' proposal to remove an examination from the timetable. Details must be included in the new course proposal (section 3.3.5 of the proposal form in CAPIS), or in the rationale section when proposing modifications to an existing course via the Annual Course Guide review process in CAPIS.
9. Exceptions to 8 above will be considered by sub-Committee Chair's action in consultation with the Pro-Director Education and the Academic Registrar and will only be considered in cases of the most pressing pedagogic need.

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<sup>1</sup> This is the most complex factor to consider and holds the highest risk. For new courses that are not replacing an existing course on which course choices might be considered comparable, the decision on what is 'like for like' availability (when an exact match is not evident) will be based on a range of factors. The use of set rules such as 'courses must be available on the same number of programmes (+/- 1), including 75% of the same programmes' may be applied. Due to the complexity of the range of factors involved, proposals will be considered on a case by case basis.

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Please direct any questions about this policy or about specific course proposals affected by it to [ard.capis@lse.ac.uk](mailto:ard.capis@lse.ac.uk).

Colleagues in the **Teaching and Learning Centre** are on hand to advise at an early stage about new course proposals and modifications to existing courses, including on teaching approaches and alternative assessment formats. Please do contact the [departmental adviser](#) assigned to your department for further guidance. The **Assessment Toolkit** can be used to support developments in local assessment strategies and is a highly recommended resource when considering any aspect of assessment design.

Improved **management information** reports on course choice combinations and assessment are under development to aid departments conducting reviews of programme regulations and assessment mix. Information on current module assessment mix and student course choice combinations will be available from late Michaelmas Term 2017 (and will coincide with the ASC consideration of 'programme review' guidance).

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