

## Structure of the Academic Year

### Communication to Organisational Heads – June 2012

At its meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2012, Senate considered a revised model for the structure of the academic year and agreed the proposed changes with implementation from 2013-14.

#### The revised structure has the following features:

- Introductory week remains at its current length but will begin one week earlier than currently.
  - This was a change from the proposal to Senate in response to feedback from students and longer term arrangements for introductory week will be considered as part of work that is being led by Education Committee on the support needs of students in the transition between school and undergraduate studies.
  - Postgraduate students who currently begin their period of study during introductory week will still be able to do so.
- The first teaching block (TB1) also begins one week earlier than currently.
- The Christmas vacation is shortened by a week to three weeks.
- There is a dedicated January assessment period of two weeks.
  - There will be no undergraduate teaching during this period unless exceptional approval is given, for example, where professional accreditation requirements have to be met;
  - The TB1 units will normally be assessed in this period.
  - It is assumed that progress boards will be needed after these assessments but that it will not be necessary to hold full examination boards with external examiners. Students would therefore be given unconfirmed marks and related feedback.
  - Where programmes are not formally assessed during this period, Schools will need to identify other activities for their students such as class tests, study skills activities noting that any formal examinations that the students have in this period (e.g. from open units) will take priority.
  - Postgraduate assessments can also be held during this time providing there is no clash with formal examinations.
- The Easter vacation is shortened by a week to three weeks, with flexible dates depending on the calendar year (as happens now).
- Examination sittings run at Easter and other 'non-standard' times will cease unless exceptionally approved.
- There will be a week specifically dedicated to Study Skills and Open Unit examinations prior to the summer examination period.
  - No formal undergraduate teaching will take place during this week, except where exemptions are agreed as already mentioned.
  - Postgraduate teaching may take place during this week.
- The summer examination period will be reduced from four weeks to three meaning that summer examinations will end one week earlier than currently. Thus, the time

between the summer examination period and graduation will be increased by one week to allow more time for marking, feedback and essential administration.

- There will be one week of the academic year remaining after the end of examinations and, although this may be reviewed later, it is currently felt that this is needed.

### **Next steps and implementation**

Faculty Education Directors will begin to discuss the new structure and its implications with colleagues in all Schools to manage the transition from the current structure to the new one.

The paper approved by Senate noted that there were likely to be particular issues for medical, dental, veterinary, some Graduate School of Education programmes and postgraduate programmes, and these will need to be resolved.

The impact on services and divisions including residences, exams and timetabling will also be considered over the coming months.