



Academic Standards Framework

Updates from the Deputy President (Education)

Key Terminology

- **Academic Standards Framework** – A far-reaching initiative which is standardizing regulations and harmonizing academic practices throughout the University
- **Modules** – Blocks of teaching based on a common theme, that are of varying sizes as measured by ECTS credits
- **ECTS Credits** – Numbers which determines the size of a module; highly technical with calculations that lead to a certain ECTS number dictating how much “work” should be in a module, i.e. the amount of teaching, assessment and ‘whitespace’ for independent learning
- **NSS Performance Group** – An executive group that reports to Provost’s Board, which was formed as a commitment from the College to improve student experience by realizing the recommendations in the ICU NSS Response 2015; composes of the ICU President, ICU Deputy President (Education), IC Vice-Provost (Education) and IC Vice/Associate-Deans of Faculties

Modularization

College Senate has approved the modularization of Taught programmes in the College. This means that, starting in 2017/18, all Taught programmes will start to become modular with common base credit sizes:

- **Imperial College Business School/Faculty of Medicine/Faculty of Natural Sciences** – Base size 5 (i.e. modules will be size 5, 7.5, 10, 15 etc.)
- **Faculty of Engineering** – Base size 6 (i.e. modules will be size 6, 9, 12, 18 etc.)

It is unclear which system Imperial Horizons and BPES courses will follow at this time.

Observations

- There are still many outstanding technical concerns that needs to be addressed as part of the Assessment Task & Finish group before modularization is ‘full-go’
- I have been involved in this process throughout, championing the Board’s position on modularization as outlined in the ASF Response
- I have secured a commitment from the NSS Performance Group to give Departments a ‘strategic steer’, making sure that Departments will make the most of this opportunity to refresh their curriculums in-line with our NSS Response recommendations

Discussion

- Given the sheer amount of programmes that this will affect across the College over the course of 1-2 years, there needs to be a robust consultation process/framework that can be easily deployed across the College – what should this look like?

Assessment Regulations

I am pleased to inform the Board that the Assessment Task & Finish Group, which is responsible for drafting the new assessment regulations, has endorsed several recommendations in our NSS and ASF Responses.

The recommendations that have been formally endorsed are:

- **Timeliness for feedback** – The regulations will now state that feedback should be “returned within 14 [calendar] days”
- **Format of feedback** – A basic, common feedback that “highlight parts done well alongside parts that need improvement” will now be a requirement

The recommendations that have not yet been formally endorsed, but for all intents and purposes have been accepted, are:

- **Issuing of provisional grades** – “A granular breakdown of provisional marks should be provided”; providing grades in the form of “U-2.1, M-2.1, L-2.1” is all but agreed, but the Business School is currently pushing for *even greater* granularity in the form of actual percentages being released
- **Access to exam scripts** – The principle for this is all but agreed; the only contention is in how this will be done practically but the Faculty with the most contentions – the Faculty of Natural Sciences – has now identified a framework which I’m happy with
- **Infinite resubmission of coursework** – This is all but a done deal since the Business School switched their stance from Against to In Favor; it hasn’t been formally endorsed as the Task & Finish Group hasn’t went back to finishing the conversation

Repealing of zero-tolerance remains an outstanding item though I remain cautiously optimistic following very frank and long conversations with the Faculties’ leadership.

The regulation changes will still need to be formally ratified by College Senate and will not be implemented until at least 2017/18. However, once ratified it is unlikely that the regulations will change for some time, making these landmark changes which I strongly believe will have a massive benefit to future Imperial students. It also marks the completion of 5 of 6 NSS Response recommendations to do with assessments.

Appeals & Complaints Regulations

I am supporting Jennie Watson, Deputy President (Welfare), to produce recommendations and responses to Appeals & Complaints regulations, which the Appeals & Complaints Task & Finish Group is drafting. Our proposals in this area will be presented in a separate paper.

Reflections

I think it’s safe to say that our robust engagement with the Academic Standards Framework project over the past few months has been a massive, runaway success. We have transformed attitudes and conversations across the College: reducing unnecessary assessment load, promoting teaching excellence and innovation, and stretching students in a way that feeds their appreciation for their chosen subject is now the top priority for the College. And, on top of all this, we have changed not one, but *five* fundamental regulations to do with assessments – a feat that would have been unimaginable even just last year.