UNIVERSITY COURT
ACADEMIC BOARD

Contingency arrangements for potential disruption to Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Purpose

1. Given the current and unpredictable situation regarding the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) infection, the University preparing contingencies for the possibility, however unlikely, of disruption to learning, teaching and assessment. This paper provides an outline of contingency arrangements that may be employed in the event of a worsening situation.

Background

2. Over the last few months, the University’s business has been impacted with a range of disruptions, beginning with the civil unrest in Hong Kong. This has restricted the ability to deliver face-to-face teaching on TNE programmes, and has required the alteration of assessment elements in some modules. The current situation with the spread of Covid-19 is resulting in travel restrictions and localised controls including self-quarantine of individuals, and school and business closures. If this situation escalates it will impact on our capacity to operate both locally and internationally.

3. This paper sets out arrangements that may be implemented in the event of any emergency situation that impacts significantly on our ability to deliver learning, teaching and assessment.

Alignment to Strategic Objectives/External Policy Driver

4. This paper aligns with our academic strategy. Contingency arrangements must continue to meet our academic standards and enable students to complete their studies without detriment and with no risk to the health of students or staff.

Summary of Key Issues and Options

5. Currently the University Regulations include guidance for when assessment results are unavailable as a result of an unexpected crisis. However, there is less defined guidance around how the University might make temporary and urgent adjustments to its learning, teaching and assessment to mitigate disruption to the student experience in the event of an emergency.

6. In-session changes to programmes are also currently permitted under the current University Terms and Conditions (Appendix 1). However, in the
current situation, and where an emergency requires urgent actions to be taken, it is not practicable to undertake all of the steps taken in Appendix 1 section 9.4, particularly the final bullet point which relates to lead-in time for the changes.

7. The following principles have been developed to provide University-wide guidance to support consistency in approach for managing the student experience in the event of emergency situations that would impact on our normal business operation.

**Principles of making in-session changes to Learning, Teaching and Assessment**

a) The Vice Principal (Learning & Teaching), informed by discussion with other appropriate staff, will decide when the LTA Emergency Contingency arrangements shall be invoked.

b) A University LTA and Quality Emergency Approvals Group (EAG) will be established, consisting of the Vice Principal (Learning & Teaching) (Convenor), Head of DLTE, Academic Registrar (Vice-convenor), Head of Quality and Enhancement and the Head of Learning & Teaching of the relevant School(s) (or their nominee). Quorate will require 3 members to participate, including the convenor or vice-convenor.

c) In the event of emergency situations, any in-session changes made to a LTA approach which deviate from the approved module descriptor must be considered and approved by the LTA and Quality Emergency Approvals Group.

d) In considering and approving these changes the Vice Principal Learning and Teaching (as Convenor of the University Quality and Standards Committee) must be confident that the quality of the student experience is not being detrimentally impacted, and that students continue to be provided with sufficient content to support them in achieving the learning outcomes.

e) Where assessment approaches need to be changed, consideration must be given to the impact this has on the assessment criteria and the validity and reliability of the revised assessment tool in assessing the learning outcomes.

f) Consideration must be given to the extent to which the change, and reason for the change will be communicated to students impacted. Any changes to assessment, including assessment criteria must be clearly communicated to students.

g) Out of courtesy, relevant external examiners should be notified of changes made to LTA approaches as they support the University in safeguarding academic standards through assessment and marking processes.
h) A record of all in-session changes will be made by the LTA and Quality Emergency Approvals Group and reported to the School Learning, Teaching & Assessment Committee (or appropriate sub-committee). A summary will also be brought to the University Quality & Standards Committee.

i) All in-session changes to LTA approach should be considered as temporary. Permanent changes should be made in accordance with normal Quality processes.

j) All students retain their right to academic appeal.

**Contingency arrangements for LTA delivery and processes**

8. To continue to deliver LTA under conditions where staff and students may have limited access to the campus, we need to plan for a worse-case scenario. A working group is being established, chaired by the Vice Principal (Learning and Teaching), to plan for the following challenges:

a) Limited or no access to our campuses- e.g. consider online (Moodle) content to cover module material. Identify resources for increased lecture recording and remote access (WebEx and Skype)

b) Examinations constraints – e.g. staff and invigilator shortage, closure of campuses, external examiner unavailability- consider alternative assessments, deferred assessments, deferred reporting and ensuing consequences.

c) PSRB requirements- e.g. liaison with professional bodies to ensure that any contingencies continue to meet the PSRB requirements

d) Placements- e.g. inability to complete placements may result in failure to qualify. Advice to be sought from PSRB especially with respect to NHS, Teacher Education programmes. If possible, plan for alternative form of assessment to replace placement.

e) Students presenting extenuating circumstances- e.g. need to increase capacity to deal with requests and to allow self-certification rather than Doctors’ Certificates which may be unavailable.

f) Results reporting, progression, awards and graduation- e.g. prepare further guidance on how to meet requirements for progression or deferrals, postponement or cancellation.

**Recommendation**

9. Academic Board is invited to **approve** the establishment of University LTA and Quality Emergency Approvals Group that will operate in the event that an emergency situation is declared.
10. Academic Board is invited to note that a short-life working group will prepare more detailed contingency arrangements for LTA delivery and related support

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Dr Steven Logie
Academic Registrar

Katrina Swanton
Head of Quality & Enhancement

4 March 2020
In relation changes to provision:

9.1 The University makes every effort to deliver programmes of study in accordance with the description set out on the website and in our prospectus.

9.2 Although reasonable steps are taken to provide the programmes and services described, the University cannot guarantee the provision of any programme or facility, and the University may make variations to the contents or methods of delivery of programmes, discontinue, merge or combine programmes and introduce new programmes, if such action is reasonably considered to be necessary by the University. Such circumstances include (but are not limited to) industrial action, lack of demand, departure of key staff, changes in legislation or Government policy, withdrawal or reduction of funding or other circumstances beyond the University’s reasonable control.

[...]  

9.4 Similarly, if for any reason the University takes the decision to amend or make any changes to a module or a taught programme once you have matriculated we will:

- Explain why this decision is being taken
- Communicate this change through Student Staff Liaison Committees, Boards of Studies and the programme pages on Moodle
- Ensure where there are any proposed changes to compulsory modules, that you are informed at least one trimester before you are due to start the module

In the current emergency situation, it is not practicable to undertake all of the steps taken in 9.4, particularly the final bullet point which relates to lead-in time for the changes.