SSD/2/2/4

Social Sciences Board

Approved by TAC 1 June 2012

Title of programme
MSc in Migration Studies

Brief note about nature of change: An amendment to the assessment of the course in order to reduce student workload.

Effective date
From 1 October 2012

Location of change
In Examination Regulations 2011 (for first examination in 2013)

Detail of change

1. P.737, l.43, delete ‘four pieces of coursework’ and substitute ‘three pieces of coursework’.

Explanatory Notes

Methods in Social Research is currently examined by submission of a portfolio of 4 assessments in Week 2, Hilary Term. This portfolio accounts for 14% of the final grade, which is the same percentage of the overall mark as:

Paper 1: International Migration in the Social Sciences (a 5,000 word assessed essay)

Paper 2: Key Themes in International Migration (a 3-hour exam in which students answer 3 questions)

Paper 3: Thematic and Regional Electives (a 3-hour exam in which students answer 3 questions)

Currently the portfolio consists of 4 elements:
1. Critical review of a qualitative and a quantitative paper – 2,500 words
2. Research proposal – 2,500 words
3. Comparison of Human Development Index data for 5 countries – 2,500 words
4. Mini quantitative analysis: students need to develop a research question, select a dataset and perform and interpret an appropriate statistical test in Stata or SPSS – 3,000 words

The four assessments are written over Michaelmas and Hilary terms and submitted to the lecturer for group feedback. No individual feedback is given.

The external examiner was very positive about the Methods in Social Research assessment in the first year of the course, but the students have found the workload for this element extremely demanding. In its current form the portfolio is 10,500 words in length. This makes the assessment overly heavy in comparison to the share in the final mark (14%) – and only 4,500 words short of the dissertation, which carries 44% of the final mark.

Assessment 3 is the most suitable element to remove from the portfolio. It is time-consuming and has limited learning outcomes. The three remaining assessments will still test the students on all the elements covered in the course, but the effort required to write a portfolio with 3 assessments will be a better reflection of the share in the final grade.