Changes in Examination Regulations to the University Gazette – Social Sciences Division

Social Sciences Board

Approved by Chairs Action 21/03/13

Title of programme
MSc Refugee and Forced Migration Studies

Brief note about nature of change:
Amendments to the deadlines for the submission of the dissertation, in line with changes made to the deadlines for the submission of work for two other assessment units.

Effective date
1 October 2013

Location of change
In Examination Regulations 2012

Detail of change
1. P.760, l.19, delete “Friday of Week Six of Trinity Term” and Insert “Thursday of Week Eight of Trinity Term”.

Explanatory Notes
Clause 1: Interim changes were made to the assessment structure for 2012-13, aimed at alleviating the high levels of stress suffered by our students at the end of Trinity term in recent years. These were approved by Education Committee in September 2012 for 2012-13.

As detailed in our submission for these changes, both our degree and the MSc in Migration Studies (with whom we share options courses in Hilary Term) wish to bring forward the written examinations to the beginning of Trinity Term to alleviate the pressure on the students at the end of Trinity.
The rationale behind this includes:

- To relieve the stress on students of revising for exams immediately after dissertation submission;
- To reduce the time between the taught element of the course and the exams;
- To enable the students better to assimilate the taught elements of the course into their dissertations; and
- To allow them to focus fully on their dissertations in Trinity.

The proposed change to the timetable will not affect the overall length of the course substantively: by submitting their dissertations on Thursday of Week 8, Trinity, the students will effectively lose only 2-3 days overall (since the exams have until now been held in the first half of Week 9, Trinity).

Assessment of the dissertations will still be feasible in the 2 weeks between submission (on the Thursday of Week 8, Trinity) and the Final Examiners’ Meeting (on the Friday of Week 10, Trinity), since assessors will not simultaneously be marking exam scripts or other submitted elements: all of these will have been marked in Hilary or early Trinity, with agreed marks collated and ready for the Final Examiners’ Meeting before the submission of dissertations.

Revision sessions have traditionally been run in late Trinity (after dissertation submission and the exams). These will not be as necessary under the new system, since the exams will take place far closer to the taught element of the course.

Initial discussions with Exam Schools would indicate that there is some flexibility in their schedules in Week 1 of Trinity, and we plan to request our papers should be sat early that week. This means the students will have over seven clear weeks of term in which to work on their theses, with the support of their supervisors.

The students will have the Easter vacation in which to revise for their two written examination papers. Many of the students will be away from Oxford in this period, which we hope will mitigate the group tensions which have built up in this revision period in previous years. The students already write 8 formative essays of 1,500 words during Michaelmas and Hilary, and we will encourage them to select at least 2 of these essays to write under timed, exam conditions to better prepare them for the written papers in Trinity.

The original change requested was to Friday of week 8 for the dissertation to be submitted – this was changed to Thursday of week 8 at the proofing stage for the 2013 grey book in order to accommodate extra time for the processing and marking of dissertations.