Social Sciences Board

Approved by Teaching Audit Committee 31 May 2013 and Education Committee on 23 July 2013

Title of programme
MSc in Learning and Teaching

Brief note about nature of change:
Changes to the requirements for the award of a distinction overall, removal of science and maths options, changes to permissions for resubmission, changes to the deadlines for submission of assignments 1 and 2

Effective date
With immediate effect

Location of change
Examination Regulations 2012

Detail of change
1. P.722, l.14-17, delete “The deadline for submission of assignment 1 will be no later than noon on Monday of Week 1 of Trinity Full Term. The deadline for the submission of assignments 1 and 2 will be no later than noon on the first Monday of May.” and insert “The deadline for submission of assignments 1 and 2 will take place before week 5 of Trinity Term of the candidate’s first year of study, and will be no later than noon on a date specified by the examiners and published in the course handbook.”.

2. P.722, l.30-32, delete “The deadline for submission of the assignments will be noon on the first Friday of May of the candidate’s second year (or the first year if the
candidate is exempted from Part I) as a part-time student on the course.” and insert “The deadline for submission of assignments will take place before week 5 of Trinity Term of the candidate’s second year of study (or the first year if the candidate is exempted from part I), and will be no later than noon on a date specified by the examiners and published in the course handbook.”.

3. P.723, l.17, after “Candidates who fail” insert “outright”.

4. P.723, l.20, after “assignment.” insert “Candidates who are awarded a marginal fail will normally be permitted to embark on the next year’s programme of study within the MSc in Learning and Teaching, but will be required to resubmit the assignment.”.

5. P.723, l.24, after “report.” insert “The examiners may also award a distinction on occasion to a candidate who has achieved a high pass for Part II of the examination, and an appropriately high distinction in Part III of the examination.”.

6. Delete from P.723 l.32 – P.725 l.17, and insert

“Options:
Learners and learning
Responsive teaching
Learners, diversity and inclusion
Professional communities and networks”.

Explanatory Notes

Clauses 1 and 2 relate to the timings of submissions. The current text for submission is (a) for Part 1, confusing, (b) out of alignment between submissions for Parts 1 & 2, (c) at times awkward for students because of differences in the timings of Easter/Spring holidays – we want to ensure that, as our students are working teachers they have the Easter/Spring Holidays to complete their work, but these dates vary both because of Easter, and because some school holidays (e.g. in Oxfordshire) are fixed on the calendar and do not follow Easter, (d) technically problematic, as the first Monday in May is usually a bank holiday, and thus OU staff are unavailable if there is a problem with on-line submission. This wording means that we can adjust responsively to the different school holidays and university terms.

Clauses 3 and 4 reflect the fact that it is unfair on students with only a marginal fail to have to suspend completely for a year before resubmission, especially as this also disrupts their learning on the course. Marginal fail is identified in the assessment criteria as marks in their 40s (40-49).

Clause 5 relates to the criteria for the award of distinction. The current wording requires a simple distinction on both Parts II and III; thus a student could achieve a distinction with 70 in both. However, a student who achieved 69 in Part II would have no incentive for striving in Part III, yet Part III is the more demanding stage of the course (up to 20,000 words as
opposed to 10,000). The assessment bands distinguish between high and low passes and distinctions; the new wording would allow a student who had a high pass (in 60s) to achieve a distinction if they were awarded a high distinction (80 or over) in Part III. The goal is now attainable, but requires effort.

Clause 6 both eliminates the detail in the schedule, since we need to be responsive to policy changes in schooling, and also reflects the decision by the Course Committee not to continue with subject-specific options in Mathematics and Science. Specifically related to this removal, these two 'subject specific' options are now like the other subjects. Our course structure involves generic core lectures (Friday evenings and Saturday mornings), on e.g. theories of learning or inclusion, and small subject groups (Saturday afternoons) on the implications of these topics in subject areas, i.e. how theories of learning/inclusion do or don't apply in History, English, Maths, Science etc. One of the strengths of the course, and indeed the department's research, is in understanding this interplay, and we wanted to consolidate this, as students valued it in feedback.