**Degree Algorithm Change**

Following a period of consultation with staff and students and a vote by members of the University Senate conducted in July 2018, the University determined that a new degree classification algorithm should be adopted. This document answers some common questions about the change and the transition period.

What’s changing?

Currently at the University, for the majority of undergraduate degree programmes, the final award mark and consequently degree classification is based solely on level 6 modules delivered in final year. Following considerable discussion, consultation and debate, Senate has determined that the University will move to a new algorithm whereby 70% of the final award mark will be based on level 6 modules and 30% on level 5 modules.

Why are we changing the algorithm?

Staff and External Examiners have for some time expressed concern about the impact on student engagement of basing the degree algorithm solely on the final year. Whilst a number of algorithms exist within the sector, including a contribution from second year is more in line with practice elsewhere.

What courses will be affected?

All undergraduate degree courses, full and part-time, will be affected with the exception of courses where there is currently an **approved** variation of award regulations to permit a different algorithm.

For integrated Masters courses, the degree classification will be based on 50% Level 7, 30% Level 6 and 20% Level 5 modules.

What about courses at partner institutions?

The new algorithm will apply to degree courses delivered in whole or in part at partner institutions unless there is an **approved** variation of award regulations to permit a different algorithm.

Will all students be affected?

Almost all undergraduate students will be affected. The new algorithm (only) will apply to all new students. Continuing students will have both the new and their existing algorithm applied and will receive whichever gives them the best outcome. Students on courses with an **approved** variation of award regulations currently in place will continue to have their current arrangements apply.

If my course has an approved variation of award regulations in place, what should I do?

Course teams with approved variations should review their current arrangements and consider whether it would be appropriate and possible to move to a position of applying the new algorithm. Where Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) are involved, there should be consultation with the relevant PSRB. If possible, courses should move to the new algorithm and requests for changes should be submitted through the normal CA3 process and, where appropriate, the PSRB’s process for making changes.

When does the change take effect?

The new algorithm will apply to all new undergraduate students commencing their degree programme on or after 1 September 2018. Students who commenced their studies prior to this date will receive the benefit of whichever degree algorithm, that has been active during their period of enrolment, gives them the best outcome.

What about students entering with advanced standing?

If a student enters an undergraduate course with advanced standing and completes 60 credit points or more at level 5, the new 70:30 algorithm will apply. If a student completes less than 60 credit points at Level 5 at Ulster University, their degree classification will be based solely on Level 6 modules.

If the student enters at level 6 of an undergraduate course, the award classification will be based solely on level 6 modules (ie those which they have studied at Ulster).

Which algorithm will apply to students progressing from Foundation degrees?

Students with Foundation degrees entering year 2 of an undergraduate degree programme in 2018/19 will have both the new and their existing algorithm applied and will receive whichever gives them the best outcome. Foundation degree students progressing to Ulster from September 2019 onwards will have their degree classification based on the new algorithm.

How will the algorithm be implemented?

Student Administration will apply the relevant algorithm/algorithms and provide outcomes at Examination Boards.

What do I need to do?

An implementation plan has been developed. This outlines responsibilities for a wide range of activities required by Course Directors, Faculty staff and professional services. All relevant documentation provided to students and online materials need to be checked to ensure that the correct information is provided both to new and continuing students.

There is also an impact on how we deliver our courses and an impact on teaching and assessment in years 1 and 2. CHERP will be providing support for course teams who wish to review their teaching and assessment methodology in light of the changes to the algorithm.

Professor Paul Bartholomew

PVC Education

August 2018