“Sunset policy” on courses

A number of “dormant” courses are noted to have been listed in the Academic Calendar for several years but never been offered. Senate discussed this issue on 14 October 1997 and resolved to adopt a “sunset policy” for these courses. The policy stipulates that:

“For courses listed in the Academic Calendar which have not been offered for three consecutive years, an early warning will be sent to the departments concerned suggesting a voluntary deletion of such courses. If no action is taken in the fourth year, a mandatory deletion of such courses will apply.”

Lists of UG and PG courses identified as ‘dormant’ have been forwarded to departments on 3 November 1997. Departments are requested to review whether these courses should be deleted or whether there is any plan to offer them in this academic year.

Transferring course grades on re-admission

Students who have withdrawn from this University may, after a period of time, be re-admitted again to study for a program. For these re-admitted students, both the course grades and credits they earned previously may be transferred to the program they are re-admitted to. Such transfer of course grades and credits are restricted to courses which have been completed within five years prior to the students’ re-admission, and that these credits must not have been used to earn any academic qualifications either at this University or at other tertiary education institutions. For undergraduates, in order to prevent students from wiping out poor academic records by means of withdrawal, such transfer of course grades and credits is mandatory upon re-admission.

(Approved by Senate on 11 October 1995 and 9 October 1996)

From OAPA.....

The primary objective of this newsletter is to disseminate to faculty and staff on a regular basis decisions made by the Senate, the Committee on Postgraduate Studies (CPS) and the Committee on Undergraduate Studies (CUS) in regard to academic policies, guidelines and procedures concerning postgraduate and undergraduate studies. In addition, this can be a venue to clarify issues related to these policies or procedures, to share with schools and departments issues that we deal with in our day-to-day work, and to draw your attention to some small but important issues that can easily be overlooked or forgotten. Of course, we are not restricting ourselves to just these. We welcome your ideas, comments or suggestions to improve this newsletter. Kindly forward them to OAPA (attention: Mrs Yvonne Leung) or email “apyvonne”. We hope you will share ownership of this newsletter with us.

Office of Academic Programme Administration
December 1997
A new form of undergraduate programs: the minor program
(Approved by Senate on 14 October 1997)

A new terminology “minor program” has recently been approved. In the official definition, it calls for a minimum of 15 credits of course work for a minor program, and such requirements must be proposed by the department(s) or division(s) offering the courses and approved by the Senate. Successful completion of a minor shall be noted on the transcript.

The first two minor programs, to be offered by the School of Humanities and Social Science, have also been approved by the Senate. They are the Humanities Minor Program and the Social Science Minor Program. Students enrolling in either program will be required to take a total of at least 18 credits of courses from the respective Division to fulfill the minor requirements. Including 3 credits from the other Division to comply with the university general education requirement, students enrolling in the Humanities or the Social Science Minor Program will be exposed to a total of at least 21 credits of H&SS courses.

In each minor program, several areas of concentration are available for students’ choices. They are:

**Humanities Minor**
- Literature
- History and Anthropology
- Philosophy and Religion

**Social Science Minor**
- Economic and Political Development
- Social Relations
- Science, Technology and Society
- China Studies

To provide a coherent body of knowledge for the students, at least 12 credits of the minor requirements have to be taken from one of the chosen areas of concentration.

The new H&SS minor programs will be on offer in Spring 1997-98.

Policy on granting of dual programme designations on a single degree
(Approved by Senate on 15 April 1997)

A student may now be considered for the award of dual program designations on a single degree (for example, the BBA in Economics and Marketing) upon completion of the program requirements of both program designations and subject to approval by both departments offering the programs. In the case of a joint designation involving two Schools, school level approval will be required. The number of program designations to be awarded is limited to two and the programs that make up the dual designations must all lead to the same undergraduate degree (i.e. BBA or BEng or BSc). A student must complete the program requirements of both program designations within the normal period of study, i.e. three years for students admitted without advanced standing. If approval has been granted to extend the period of study for reasons unrelated to pursuit of the dual program designation, this restriction will apply to the extended period.

In determining the class of honours of a degree with dual program designations, the requirements of both programs will be given full weight, for example, by including in the calculation of GGA the grades in all courses required by either program. Surplus courses may be excluded from the GGA only by agreement of both programs, and the class of honours to be awarded must be jointly recommended.

Revised policy on calculating the GGA
(Approved by Senate on 14 October 1997)

The University has approved a revised policy on calculating the graduation grade average (GGA), which is intended to take off some pressure of first-year study by reducing the weighting of 100-level courses.

Beginning with the class entering in Fall 1997, the class of honours will be based on a GGA computed by giving a weight of 1 to courses numbered below 200, and a weight of 2 to courses numbered 200 and above. This is approximately equivalent to reducing the weight of first-year courses to 20% of the total, while increasing the weight of second-and third-year courses to 40% each of the total.

Under the revised policy, the flexibility for Schools to recommend upgrading of honours for individual students whose GGA falls within the 0.1 margin below the GGA threshold for the next higher class will be retained. Such recommendation, however, would be approved by CUS only in rare and exceptional cases and when adequate documentation is provided. On the other hand, the existing policy permitting discretionary exclusion of surplus courses from the GGA calculation will also remain unchanged.

(to be continued on p. 3)
Retaining student status while waiting to take thesis examination

(Approved by Senate on 11 October 1995)

In order to allow research students who are waiting to sit for their thesis examinations to maintain their student status until the thesis examination is over, Senate approved that they be allowed to retain their student status for a period not longer than four weeks into the following semester.

Conditions for retaining the student status:

1) The thesis must be submitted at least four weeks before the beginning of the following semester. Those whose date of submission of thesis copies falls short of the 4-week period are not entitled to apply.

2) The student is unable to sit for the thesis examination before the start of the following semester through no fault of his/her own.

3) The application to retain the student status must be submitted within two weeks after the student has submitted the thesis copies to the department for examination purpose.

Application and approval:

All requests for retaining the student status, accompanied by an application to defer the deadline for submitting thesis examination result, should be submitted by the students to ARRO for approval.

Arrangements during the four-week period:

1. Students are not required to pay tuition nor to undergo the normal registration process for that semester. They are still regarded as students of the University.

2. They are not entitled to receive PG studentship.

3. The thesis examination for these students should be held within the first three weeks of the 4-week period, leaving one week for the students to submit the final version of their thesis.

4. If a student fails to submit his/her final thesis by the end of the 4-week period, he/she is required to pay full tuition for the semester and complete the normal registration process.

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Undergraduate Policies

continued from p. 2

New policy on course withdrawal

(Approved by Senate on 14 October 1997)

Currently, students who wish to withdraw from a course after the add/drop period may do so up to six weeks before the commencement of the examination period. An amendment to this rule has recently been approved by the Senate. Under the new policy, the add/drop period shall be extended to two weeks after the semester starts, but with the final day being reserved for adding courses only. Withdrawal from courses after the end of the add/drop period shall be permitted only in exceptional circumstances, such as medical emergencies or withdrawal from the university, upon approval of the Dean and instructor concerned. In such cases, the withdrawal will be noted on the transcript as a “W” (Withdrawal without Penalty) grade. The new policy will be implemented in Fall 1998-99.
Question 1: Issues relating to LANG 100

Effective Fall 1997, all entering students are required to take a year long one-credit course in English for Academic Purposes (LANG 100), in replacement of LANG 001-003 Language Skills Enhancement. A number of issues in connection with the implementation of this course have been resolved, which are described below.

Do re-admitted students need to take LANG 100?

For students admitted with 2nd or 3rd year standing, they may be exempted from LANG 100 if they have completed the equivalent of a year or more of study at another English-medium university, and/or have taken an English course with similar objectives at tertiary level. If a student has taken a course elsewhere that has similar objectives to LANG 100, exemption will be granted on that basis rather than attempting to determine whether he/she has attained the same level of skills that LANG 100 is designed to provide.

For a re-admitted student who had previously been exempted from LANG 001 based on the attainment of a grade of C or above in AS Use of English, departments will be allowed to waive the LANG 100 requirement even though the student would have had to take it if it were offered at the time.

Will LANG 100 be included in the calculation of grade averages?

Yes, like any other LANG course that grants credit and a letter grade, LANG 100 will be included in the SGA, CGA and GGA calculations.

Are students required to repeat LANG 100 if they fail the course?

No student can graduate without passing LANG 100, except for those who are exempted from the requirement. Students who fail LANG 100 during their first year have to retake the whole course in the following year. If they pass the course on the second attempt, their grade will replace the former “F” grade.

There may be a situation where a student completes the first semester of the first year (hence completes the first half of the LANG 100 course) and then takes leave from study in the spring semester. When he/she resumes study, should the entire LANG 100 course be taken?

It is possible to preserve the record of work done, such that the student could simply complete the second half of the course and be graded on the year’s works. However, the second half of the course would have to be completed in the year after the year in which the leave was taken, or else the whole course would have to be repeated.

For students who leave the course mid-way in order to participate in exchange schemes, the Language Centre may accept completion of courses similar in nature to LANG 100 as equivalent in nature to LANG 100.

Question 2: Student visa for non-local students

Can non-local students holding a visitor’s visa register with the University as students?

In compliance with immigration regulations of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, non-local students must hold a valid student visa in order to be a student in Hong Kong. (see para. 5 of the section on Students from Overseas, p. 12 of the 1997/98 Academic Calendar.) Upon arrival, non-local students must present a valid student visa to ARRO at the time of programme registration. Non-local students without a valid student visa will not be allowed to register as students of the University.
Question 3: About examination.....

Fall examinations will begin on 10 December. Below are some questions frequently asked about examinations. See if the answers below help.

How to deal with students who were absent from a final?

Each year, there are students who fail to turn up for the final examination for one reason or the other. Beginning with the Spring 1996-97 examinations, a new policy, approved by Senate on 10 December 1997 and applicable to both undergraduates and postgraduates, is in place to handle these students. Details of the new policy can be found on p.29 or p.40 of the 1997-98 Academic Calendar. Some of its main features are highlighted below:

- Only make-up examination may be arranged for students who were absent from a final. Other courses of actions, such as supplementary examination, course repeating or granting a pass standing, are not allowed.
- Students have to submit an application to ARRO, not to individual faculty, to apply for a make-up examination. The application has to be made within one week from the missed examination.
- Approval or disapproval of the application is given by ARRO in consultation with OAPA and the department/course instructor concerned, not by individual faculty.
- Students who failed to turn up for the make-up examination will be given zero mark for the missed examination, but will not necessarily lead to a failure in the whole course.

What is the difference between make-up examination and supplementary examination?

Supplementary examinations are applicable to undergraduates only and will only be arranged for those who receive the Conditional Failure (E) grade. The grade for a supplementary examination can only be D or F.

Make-up examinations are for students (undergraduates or postgraduates) who were absent from a final. They have to apply for a make-up examination and be approved the application before they can take the make-up. There is no restriction to the grade given for a make-up. It can be a grade from A+ to F or P to F, depending on the grading scheme specified for the course and, of course, on how well the student answers the questions.

What should faculty/invigilators do if a student is found cheating at the examination?

A student who cheats on an examination or test may be charged with academic dishonesty and sanctions may be imposed that will be noted in the student’s permanent record. To do so, this requires initiating a set of formal procedures (see p.20-22 of the 1997-98 Academic Calendar). To many faculty, these procedures seem so cumbersome that they make a swift and effective response to the problem difficult. Hence in March 1996, the Vice-President for Academic Affairs suggested to all faculty a procedure that makes use of the current policy in a way that can avoid most of the formality while still preserving a student’s right to a fair hearing. Some faculty may prefer to initiate formal proceedings, but for those who do not, this suggestion is an alternative.

In brief, the procedure as suggested by VP-AA is as follows. When a student is found to be cheating at an examination, the invigilator should inform the student that he proposes to assign zero mark for that examination. The student should also be informed that if he does not agree with this proposal, the invigilator will file formal charges and if these charges are upheld, the action will be noted on the student’s permanent record. If the student agrees to accept the penalty as an informal resolution of the incident, no permanent record will be made. The student should be expelled from the examination room immediately and not be permitted to continue writing the examination. If the student does not accept the informal resolution, the student should be permitted to continue writing the examination. After the examination the invigilator should file a report to the department head and initiate the formal procedures to charge the student with academic dishonesty.
Inter-institutional WWW homepage on postgraduate studies in Hong Kong

An inter-institutional homepage has been set up on the Worldwide Web to provide information on postgraduate studies at six universities in Hong Kong, namely, the Chinese University of Hong Kong, the City University of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Baptist University, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, and the University of Hong Kong. The address of the homepage is: http://grad.edu.hk/

PG application forms available on Web

The application form for admission to HKUST PG programs is now placed on the Web. Program supplementary data forms and instruction sheet are also available in both PDF and Postscript formats. The application form can be viewed and downloaded for use from ARRO’s homepage at http://www.ab.ust.hk/arr/pghom.htm

Criteria for designating general education courses for 1998-99

In January 1997, CUS adopted a set of interim guidelines that can be used by departments for submitting courses for listing as general education courses for the 1997-98 academic year. In response to concerns raised in the TLQPR Report, the University may consider to establish a committee on general education to oversee the delivery of the general education program. Pending formal establishment of this committee, which will be a more appropriate body to consider the detailed criteria for general education course proposals, the CUS considered that it is more appropriate to continue to adopt the interim guidelines for designating general education courses for the 1998-99 academic year. Invitation for submitting general education course proposals will be sent to departments in the coming Spring Semester.

Revised procedures for undergraduate program and course administration

In response to the recommendation made in the TLQPR Report that “more effective curricular design and review processes needs to be established at the departmental and school level, and more effective oversight is needed at the university level”, a set of more rigorous procedures for undergraduate program and course administration have been worked out. These procedures are documented in the booklet “Undergraduate Program and Course Administration - Policies and Procedures”, a copy of which has been sent to each Dean, Associate Dean, Department Head and UG Coordinator. With immediate effect, departments and schools are requested to follow these new procedures should they wish to submit proposals for curricular changes.

Deadlines for undergraduate curricular changes

For new programs:

Deadline for submitting initial plans:

- 15 December 1997 or 15 February 1998

Deadline for submitting detailed program proposals:

- 15 December 1997
  (only if its initial plan has been considered by CUS in Nov 1997 or before)
- 15 February 1998
  (only if its initial plan has been considered by CUS in January 1998 or before)
- 15 April 1998
  (only if its initial plan has been considered by CUS in March 1998 or before)

Other curricular changes

Deadline for submitting proposals:

- 15 January 1998 or
- 15 April 1998

Note: Proposals submitted after 15 April may not be approved in time to take effect in the 1998-99 academic year.
Membership of CUS and CPS

The Committee on Undergraduate Studies (CUS) and the Committee on Postgraduate Studies (CPS) are committees established by the Senate to advise and make recommendations to the Senate on policies and regulations, and to monitor and review procedures, quality and performance relating to undergraduate and postgraduate studies respectively. Members on these committees include representatives from the four schools and the Students’ Union. The terms of reference and membership of CUS and CPS can be found on p. 501 and p. 495 of the 1997-98 Academic Calendar. Currently the members of CUS and CPS are as follows:

**Committee on Undergraduate Studies**

Chairman:  
Dr Yue-Kuen Kwok (MATH)

Member and Secretary:  
Prof Peter Dobson, Jr. (AVP-AA)

Members:
- Science - Prof Shiu-Yuen Cheng (Asso Dean)
- Dr Albert C H Yu (BIOL)

- Engineering -
  - Dr Helen Shen (Asso Dean)
  - Dr Chun-Man Chan (CIVL)

- Business & Management -
  - Dr Chun Hui (MGT0)
  - Dr Patrick Chau (Asso Dean)

- Humanities & Social Science -
  - Dr David Lawrence (HUMA)

- Students’ Union -
  - Mr Jason Ka-Tak Chu (MATH - year 3)
  - Miss Mays Mok (CENG - year 2)
  - Mr Henry Chun-Wai Hui (ACCT - year 3)
  - DARR, ex-officio - Mr Robert Brashear

Co-opted member:  
Dr Gregory James (Language Centre)

**Committee on Postgraduate Studies**

Chairman:  
Dr Maria Lung (BIOL)

Member and Secretary:  
Prof Joe Mize (Acting AVP-AA)

Members:
- Science -
  - Prof Michael Loy (Asso Dean)
  - Dr Yung Hou Wong (BIOL)

- Engineering -
  - Dr Matthew Yuen (Asso Dean)
  - Prof Xiren Cao (ELEC)

- Business & Management -
  - Dr Steven Dekrey (Asso Dean)
  - Dr Ka-Lok Chan (FINA)

- Humanities & Social Science -
  - Dr Chi-Cheung Choi (HUMA)
  - Dr Govindan Parayil (SOSC)

- DARR, ex-officio - Mr Robert Brashear

- Co-opted member:
  - Student representative - (vacant)

Co-opted member:  
Dr Gregory James (Language Centre)

Issues that need discussion and decision at CUS or CPS can be brought to the Committee through the members.

Forthcoming CUS and CPS meetings in 1998

**CUS**

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<tr>
<th>Date and Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, 14 January 1998 (pm)</td>
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<td>Wednesday, 11 March 1998 (pm)*</td>
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<td>Wednesday, 13 May 1998 (pm)*</td>
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<td>Wednesday, 8 July 1998 (pm)*</td>
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(* to be confirmed when members’ Spring class schedule is known)

Items for inclusion on the agenda should be sent to the Committee Secretariat (via OAPA) two weeks before the meeting date.
Procedures for thesis examinations

University regulations require that

“A student wishing to appear before a thesis examination must so indicate to the major department at least six weeks before the examination, and have delivered to the department a sufficient number of examination copies at least four weeks before the examination.” (Section 36 on p.43 of the 1997/98 Academic Calendar)

This measure is intended to provide members of the thesis examination committee sufficient time to read and comment on the thesis, check references, as well as prepare questions for the examination. Departments are requested to strictly adhere to this requirement as this is a part of our quality assurance process.

Notice of intention to sit for thesis examination

All RPg students must use the standard form “Notice of Intention to Take Thesis Examination” to inform the department of their intention to take thesis examinations. The form should be submitted to the thesis supervisor for endorsement, who then sends it to the PG Coordinator. The PG Coordinator completes the form after receiving from the student the thesis copies for distribution. The form is then submitted to OAPA for checking before it is forwarded to ARRO for record purpose.

With the introduction of this form, the PG Coordinator is still expected to distribute thesis copies to the examiners. But it is no longer necessary to send copies of the covering letters to examiners to OAPA.

Appointment of Thesis Examination Committees

When the thesis is ready for examination (i.e. at least six weeks before the thesis examination is held), a thesis examination committee is set up to examine the thesis and conducts an oral thesis examination.

For MPhil theses, the thesis examination committee is appointed by the department head and consists of three faculty members. One is the supervisor and another is appointed as chairman. (see para. 4 of Section 43.1 of the 1997/98 Academic Calendar.) The supervisor must NOT be appointed as the chairman of the MPhil thesis examination committee.

For PhD theses, “the five-member thesis committee is appointed by the Senate Committee on Postgraduate Studies on the recommendation of the department. The committee is chaired by an individual from outside the school, who is appointed by the Committee on Postgraduate Studies upon recommendation by the dean. This person presides over the examination but is not one of the five members who are: the thesis supervisor, two academic staff members from the department, one academic staff member from outside the department, and one member external to the University who has expertise in the field being examined.” (see para. 3 of Section 43.2 of the 1997/98 Academic Calendar.) When the proposed committee composition is approved, OAPA prepares appointment letters for examiners, inviting them to serve on the examination committee. The school/department concerned should then liaise with the examiners regarding the scheduling of the thesis examination and inform OAPA of the examination date and the venue when fixed. An honorarium currently at HK$1,800 is paid to external examiners of doctoral theses for their participation in the thesis examination.

Students who pass their thesis examination but fail to fulfil coursework requirements

CPS noted at a recent meeting that departments had recommended to waive the coursework requirements for a number of research students who had passed their thesis examination but had not completed some fundamental courses required by their program of study, in order for the students to graduate.

To avoid such cases from happening again, students should be reminded of the graduation requirements of the program they have enrolled in. The onus is also on the PG Coordinator and the thesis supervisor to detect at an early stage any deviations from the program requirements so that the students can have sufficient time to make up for such coursework deficiencies. Oversight on the part of the two parties mentioned may result in undesired delays in graduation, which may jeopardise graduates’ career plans.