

Industrial Action Quality and Standards Working Group Update

Summary

Senate has received reports at previous meetings on activities of the Industrial Action Quality and Standards Working Group, which was established by ExCo to oversee the response to addressing quality and standards matters arising from the industrial action that took place in spring 2018.

This report provides a further update to Senate on actions overseen by the Working Group, in particular those relating to Assessment Board consideration of students' results. It also provides an update on student complaints and appeals cases.

One action required.

Recommended Action

Senate is asked to **consider** the report.

Publication: Open

Industrial Action Quality and Standards Working Group Update

In March 2018, ExCo established a Working Group to oversee implementation of actions relating to quality and standards arising from the industrial action that took place in spring 2018. Senate has received details of the Working Group's terms of reference and updates on activities of the Working Group at its meetings in May and July 2018.

This report provides a further update to Senate on actions overseen by the Industrial Action Quality and Standards Group, in particular those relating to consideration of students' results by Assessment Boards. It also provides an update on the current position (as at xx Sept 2018) on student complaints and appeals cases.

Assessment Board guidance and templates

The Working Group approved guidance for Assessment Boards on considering results potentially impacted by industrial action. This was circulated to Schools via Deans to be noted at School ExCos, and via Heads of Academic Services for implementation at Assessment Boards. The guidance was accompanied by a strike impact report template to be completed and considered at each Assessment Board. Updated agenda and minutes templates were also provided, which included an additional item for consideration of strike impact.

Assessment Board attendance by Student and Academic Services

A senior member of Student and Academic Services (S&AS) approved by the Director of S&AS attended Assessment Boards as a voting member for any programmes where teaching was significantly impacted by the industrial action to ensure consistency of practice across Boards.

Identification of Assessment Boards to be attended by S&AS was determined through consideration of previous reports from Schools on the scale of missed teaching. In addition, further Boards were identified for attendance in consultation with Schools, where it was considered that S&AS representation would be useful even where the volume of missed teaching and impact was relatively low. Schools were advised that all Assessment Boards should consider and record strike impact, including those where there was no impact.

Attendance at Boards by a senior member of S&AS has been in addition to the normal sampling exercise undertaken on behalf of Senate on the operation of Assessment Boards. All S&AS and School staff involved in Senate sampling activity attended a briefing session in which they were advised to refer any significant issues relating to the industrial action to S&AS, a senior S&AS representative was not present.

Postgraduate assessment boards will be attended by a representative from S&AS where required during the autumn term.

Consideration of Student Results by Assessment Boards

Completed strike impact reports have been collated by S&AS along with minutes of Assessment Boards. Key points arising from Boards attended by a senior member of S&AS were:

- The revised agenda template ensured that there was explicit consideration of the impact of the strike. The relevant item was positioned early in the agenda prior to consideration of student results and statistics, so that these could be subsequently considered in the context of the strike impact report.
- The vast majority of Boards identified no residual impact following the mitigating action that was put in place whilst the strike was ongoing, e.g. adjusting assessment content, rescheduling teaching, adjusting coursework deadlines.
- Boards paid particular attention to the marks statistics including comparing, where possible, to statistics in previous years or term 1 to identify possible impact, taking into account possible differences in cohort sizes and relative overall cohort performance.
- Scaling of marks was used in one case for a first year module with full agreement of the External Examiners where a significant difference in mean marks compared to previous years was identified. There was considered to be no impact on the standard of the degree, as all students received the same treatment and as this related to a first year module.
- There were no proposals for a suspension of regulations to address potential impact on student results from the strike following mitigation.
- Some Boards identified inaccuracies in the strike impact reports under consideration. Where this occurred, it was requested that corrections were made prior to the reports being submitted to S&AS.
- Verbal reports from External Examiners at Boards suggested that City's approach to considering strike impact at Assessment Boards had been more systematic than the approach at other institutions. This is supported by comments from a small number of External Examiners in their formal annual written reports.

Schools were reminded in July to ensure that Resit Boards also considered strike impact for students undertaking assessments as a first attempt during the resit period due to extenuating circumstances.

Complaints and appeals (as at 3 October 2018)

The vast majority of complaints arising from the industrial action were resolved at Stage 1 (Early Resolution) of the complaints procedure. Three complaints have been considered through Stage 2 (Local Level Resolution) of the complaints procedure. One of these complaints was made on behalf of a group of students on a particular programme. No Stage 2 complaints have been upheld.

Schools were asked to report any appeals cases relating to the strike to Student and Academic Services so that the scale and nature of appeals can be monitored, and to enable a consistent approach to be taken. There have been no reports from Schools of any strike-related appeals to date.

Future work

The guidance and templates developed during the industrial action will be used as the basis for a framework for managing significant disruption to teaching and assessment activity in the future. It is intended that this framework would also cover disruption arising from other exceptional circumstances as well as industrial action. Documentation will be published in the Quality Manual in due course.

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