Guidance to Staff
Mode of Attendance and Intensity of Study Changes

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1. INTRODUCTION

It is relatively common that a student may request or be advised to switch their mode of attendance. A switch of mode can have significant impact on a student’s fees, student tuition fee loan, student maintenance loan, benefits and the time required to complete their degree.

In many cases it will be more beneficial for students to increase or decrease their intensity of study for an academic year. This would not necessitate actually changing mode of attendance.

Where this is requested by a student or perceived as an advisable option for a student, staff are advised to;

a) talk to the student to understand why they wish to switch mode as it may be able to enable what they need without doing so.
b) consider if an increase or decrease in intensity of study for one academic year would be an option.
c) seek advice from studentadministration@bbk.ac.uk and fundingadmin@bbk.ac.uk

2. DEFINITION OF MODE OF ATTENDANCE AND INTENSITY OF STUDY

- ‘Mode of Attendance’ (MoA) describes a student’s pattern of attendance on a programme e.g. Full-time, Part-time, Distance Learning etc.
- ‘Intensity of Study’ refers to the amount of credits a student is studying in any academic year.

A full-time undergraduate degree (3 years) has a normal intensity of study of 100%/120 credits a year. A part time undergraduate degree intensity of study depends on the length of the degree, a normal 4 year part time degree has an intensity of study of 75%/90 credits a year. Other part-time intensities of study are also possible including a 6 year ‘decelerated’ degree of 50%/60 credits a year.

Birkbeck assigns programmes by Mode of Attendance through a combination of credit load (intensity of study) and delivery of content as below:

**Undergraduate programmes**
- Full-time = 120 credits in a year with primarily face to face teaching
- Part-time = up to 90 credits in a year with primarily face to face teaching

**Postgraduate programmes**
- Full-time = 180 credits in a year with primarily face to face teaching
- Part-time = up to 120 credits in a year with primarily face to face teaching
- Distance Learning = up to 120 credits in a year with primarily online teaching

MoA is used to describe the default pattern of attendance for a particular version of a programme e.g. BSc Psychology **Full-time** or MA Journalism **Part-time**. The different mode of attendance version of the programme will usually have a different programme structure, a different overall length and different annual fees.
3. TEMPORARY CHANGE OF INTENSITY

Students are able to change their intensity of study without changing their mode of attendance. In many situations for a period of time, students on a programme of study are able to take fewer or more credits than normally expected on the mode of attendance programme that they are studying. The most common example of this is a student on a full-time undergraduate programme who is repeating a year and retaking some but not all of the previous year’s modules. In this case the student might only be taking 60 credits as opposed to the normal 120. Whilst the student studies a lower intensity pattern this does not normally mean that they have transferred to a part-time version of the programme. Once the student has completed their repeat year they can return to the standard pattern of attendance for a full-time programme. In addition a student on a part time programme of study may exceptionally be required in one year of study to take additional credits on top of their standard study load, to accommodate retake modules.

Example: BA/BSc - Full-time

2015/16 = taking 120 credits in Year 1 of a full-time programme (fails 60 credits)
2016/17 = taking 60 repeated credits in Year 1 of a full-time programme
2017/18 = taking 120 credits in Year 2 of a full-time programme

Example: BA/BSc – Part time

2015/16 = taking 90 credits in Year 1 of a part-time programme
2016/17 = taking 90 credits in Year 2 of a part-time programme (fails 15 credits)
2017/18 = taking 105 credits – 15 repeated credits from year 2 and 90 credits in Year 3 of a part-time programme

4. TRANSFERS BETWEEN MODE OF ATTENDANCE (UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS)

Transfer of mode can be a complex area, students and staff should seek advice from their academic department or Registry to discuss any impact there might be on their financial arrangements before going ahead with any transfer. A change to mode can have the following impacts and restrictions:

- **UCAS**
  - An undergraduate student **may not** enrol on a Full Time degree without applying through UCAS (except if they have already completed at least 90 credits on a part time programme).

- **Tuition Fees**
  - Students are normally charged a fee in relation to their programme year and mode of attendance. Where a student is studying at an intensity different to the default for the mode an alternative fee may be calculated based on the credits studied; however there are some constraints to this. Undergraduate students on a part time mode of attendance who study more than 90 credits cannot be charged more than the UG PT fee cap which is a prorate amount in relation to 90 credits of full-time study. If a full time UG student studies more than 120 credits in an academic year, the fee is also capped at the standard full-time fee for that year.
Fees are charged on an annual basis. However, students who change their mode of attendance mid-year will have their fee re-calculated on a termly basis. This means a student will be charged at different rates for different terms e.g. Term 1 at full-time rate and Terms 2 and 3 at the part-time rate, for a mode change at the end of Term 1.

- **Student Loan Application**
  - For undergraduate degrees students must apply for either a PT loan or a FT loan. If a student changes mode of attendance they must submit a new loan application. This process can take time to process.
  - Full time students are normally limited to a total of 4 years of student funding, part time students have up to 16 years of student funding. A year of funding is counted regardless of number of credits studied. Changing mode of attendance from **part time to full time** can mean that a student may ‘run out’ of available years of funding.

- **Student Maintenance Loans**
  - Maintenance loans available to all students on a full time mode of attendance programme and new PT students in 2018/19 who will now also have access to maintenance loans for the first time. Availability of maintenance loans are a significant incentive for students to want to switch from part time to a full time mode of attendance.
  - Students currently studying Full time can transfer to Part time and become eligible as **new part time students** for the Part time maintenance loan. This is a good option for students struggling with Full Time intensity who may wish to slow down their studies. They will not lose access to maintenance loans if they choose to do this.
  - Mode changes can affect the student funding cohort of the student which determines the funding package a student can apply for. For example students on a pre-2016 funding cohort are eligible for maintenance grants, a change of mode will remove this eligibility as it is not part of the post 2016 funding cohort.

- **Bursaries**
  - Bursaries are paid based on the number of credits a student is studying, and will be adjusted termly to reflect any changes in study intensity. The method of means testing for FT and PT is different and may require a new bursary application where mode is being switched.

- **Benefits**
  - **Full-time** students are entitled to a limited number of benefits whilst studying depending on their circumstances, including Council Tax exemption.
  - **Part-time** students will not normally have their benefit entitlement affected by being a student, but may need to ask the Student Advice Service for a letter to prove

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1 Based on 1 year of funding for each normal study year and 1 additional year to allow for retakes. Please note that funding is awarded on a ‘yearly’ basis, this is regardless of the number of credits taken in each year.
that they are on a part-time programme for this purpose. Part time students are not eligible for Council Tax exemption.

Other Key Points to note:

- A significant number of requests are not carried through once the implications are fully understood and in several cases students have switched back mode of attendance once the financial implications have been understood. In most cases it is better to agree a short period of study intensity change than a change to the mode of attendance.

- If a transfer of mode is to be made it is encouraged to effect a change of mode between academic years only and not during an academic year. A change of mode mid-year will only be approved if it is absolutely necessary and does not adversely affect the student.

- The College does not have prescribed maximum numbers of credits a student can study in any one year but consideration should be made of a reasonable study load in any recommendations for change of mode. Students should not be encouraged to take more credits than they are judged to be able to manage successfully in one academic year. It is not normal for an agreement to be made for a student to study more than 120 credits in any one academic year, for pedagogical and financial reasons.

- Students on a part time programme may in principle take on additional credits in an academic year without changing their programme mode of attendance and students on a full time programme may take fewer credits than the standard study load in an academic year without changing their programme mode of attendance.

- Transfer from part time to full time – Often a reason given for transferring to full time or taking full time equivalent study is to speed up the completion of a degree. In most cases studying at the full time intensity would not enable this. Study will take the same amount of years to complete, unless a student has accredited prior learning (APL) to be considered or it is agreed for the student to study more than 120 credits in order to catch up.

Example – BA/BSc

Year 1 part time: 90 credits (switch mode)
Year 2 full time: 120 credits
Year 3 full time: 120 credits
Year 4 full time: 30 credits

The student is required to take their final module in year 4 to complete the 360 credits required for an Honours degree and the student still takes 4 years to complete their degree.

‘TRAILING’ MODULES

- Trailing modules is the term used to refer to a student’s profile where they have been progressed into the next year of their studies, whilst not having passed all of the modules of the preceding year(s)

- If students are required to retake modules with attendance, it may be possible to take these alongside the normal study pattern (‘trail’), dependent on number of credits required / programme specific progression rules.
• It is not recommended that PT students study more than 90 credits in one year, and FT students study more than 120 credits in one year. Exceptionally PT students may take a maximum of 105 credits in one year and FT students a maximum of 135 credits in one year.

• Students who are required to retake a module or number of modules with attendance will normally need to take at least 1 year of additional study at some point in their studies.

• Dependent on their stage of their studies and progression requirements; students may be offered the opportunity to take retakes early and ‘catch up’ before continuing with their studies or may be offered the opportunity to progress with their studies and ‘catch up’ at the end of their studies. Please note students in their final year of study receive a smaller maintenance loan.

• If a student fails an entire year of study they will need to re-take that year before progressing into the next year.

• Please note that FT students are permitted 1 additional year pf student loan funding in order to retake modules. However this additional year is counted as used up regardless of how many credits are taken in that year, including if exams only.

5. PART TIME MAINTENANCE LOANS

Maintenance loans will be introduced in 2018/19 for new part time students, it is expected that this will lessen a key driver for students to change mode from part time to full time. It may also become a driver for full time students to switch to part time study as they will be considered as new part time students and be eligible for the loan. Part-time students also will continue to be able to access tuition fee and maintenance loans for up to 16 years so are the best option for those students who have used up their limited FT loan eligibility.

The level of intensity of study on a part time programme will affect the amount of maintenance loan a student will be able to borrow. Part time maintenance loans amounts are pro-rata to the full time maintenance loan but allocated according to 6 bands of study intensity. Detailed below with equivalent no of credits, and indicative amount of maintenance loan (for 2018/19)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intensity of Study Band</th>
<th>Number of credits</th>
<th>£ of PT maintenance loan (student studying in London)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25%-33.2%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>£2,839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.3%-49.9%</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>£3,781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50%-66.5%</td>
<td>60 / 75</td>
<td>£5,677</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66.6%-75%, N/A at BBK</td>
<td></td>
<td>£7,562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75.1%-99.9%</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>£8,516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>£11,354</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• When applying for a loan students will need to state what their intensity of study will be and any changes to intensity of study mid-year will affect the maintenance loan amount.

• If students switch mode of attendance they will still be required to submit a new application for student funding on the new mode of study.
• Changing intensity of study during an academic year will impact on the amount of maintenance loan a student is entitled to; a change of 30 credits is equivalent to approximately £2,839 of maintenance loan. Retrospective changes to study intensity may put them into overpayment with Student Finance England. If this happens, they may be required to immediately repay the overpayment, or it may be deducted from their entitlement in the following year.