Sub-board Guidance 2017/18
Mitigating Impact on Students of Strike Action

In advance of sub-boards taking place this term please note below the following guidance on how to manage sub-boards in order to mitigate any negative impact of strike action on student assessment performance. Please note that we advised students in the FAQs during the strike period that:

“
You will not be assessed on topics that have not been covered in class or in course material. Attendance requirements will not apply to cancelled classes. The forthcoming examination period will continue as planned. Examination Boards will consider the impact of the UCU strike and operate in line with our policies and regulations. Birkbeck has well-established Academic Regulations for managing complex assessment scenarios and the College is confident our academic standards will continue to be maintained.”

As a College we have recommended a number of mitigating actions to be put in place by departments to minimise any negative impact of the strike. This has included the following:

- Running revision sessions
- Providing access to learning materials
- Adjusting coursework and examinations to not assess topics that have not been taught due to cancelled teaching sessions
- Boards to consider the impact of the UCU strike in line with our policies and regulations.

Guidance from UCEA/UUK/GuildHE on minimising impact on students of the strike stated that the key principles included; ensuring that students are treated fairly and consistently and ensuring that academic standards and quality are not compromised.

On this basis the following advice is provided in relation to assessments and the operation of sub-boards on how to consider the impact of the strike and minimise impact on our students:

1. All marking should be carried out as normal and in line with usual marking criteria.
2. Sub-boards should be aware of modules in their remit that have experienced teaching cancellations.
3. Mitigating circumstances for cancelled teaching sessions should not be required from students, due to actions taken by the College to mitigate the impact of this (i.e. revision classes, amendments to exam papers, sub-board decision making).
4. Chairs of sub-boards should ensure sub-board members are aware of planned sub-board practice and which, if any, assessments were altered to remove questions relating to topics affected by cancelled classes.
5. Sub-boards should take account of the student profile – i.e. is the performance unrepresentatively poor in the student profile for affected modules.
6. Sub-boards should pay particular attention to finalists and students in borderline classifications.
7. Sub-boards should be aware of regulation 43.4 which in cases where students study more than 240 credits at levels 5 and 6 will now automatically only count the highest scoring 240 credits.

8. Sub-boards should compare average module results to average module results of previous years. (i.e. is it abnormally lower? If so is this due to a negative impact of cancelled teaching on assessment performance). If this is the case action could be considered to raise module cohort marks (in line with College policy), but must be in only exceptional cases and where the external is in agreement. (note para 20 of the external examiner policy)

9. Be aware that the sub-board meetings may take longer than usual to ensure cases are discussed. Boards may want to schedule additional time.

10. Take thorough minutes to capture all decisions. Students have the right to appeal their results, explaining decision making will be better if there are good records. Sub-boards should feel confident in decision making and maintaining academic standards.