This briefing note outlines in broad terms the nature of changes to policies and procedures which fall within the remit of University Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee (ULTSEC) carried out during the 2015/16 academic year. The Learning and Teaching Development Service (LTDS) manages the majority of these on behalf of the University. For queries regarding the changes, or for assistance with their implementation, please e-mail ltds@ncl.ac.uk or contact #88491 or #83978. Please click on a policy title to take you to the relevant documentation. NB. For items where no link is provided the revised documentation will be available by 30 September at the latest.

### Annual Monitoring and Review
- Amendment of the AMR form and Academic Governance Principles for TNE and Partnerships to reflect ULTSEC’s agreement of a revised approach to new partnership one year-on review and annual site visit reports on partnerships to boards of studies, removing the need for separate reporting to Educational Partnerships Sub-Committee. Site visit reports must now be submitted to the Board of Studies (BoS) and the outcomes of the BoS consideration incorporated into the AMR report. Questions concerning the first year of a partnership have been incorporated into the AMR report form.
- The AMR report form has also been amended to include a requirement to report the date(s) of the Student-Staff Committee meeting(s) where external examiner reports are considered.

### Changes to Programmes
- Reminder: a revised process for programme changes was approved by ULTSEC to come into effect immediately in January 2016. This includes a risk-based approach to whether major changes need approval from Faculty, Taught Programmes Sub-Committee or ULTSEC.

### Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework for Research Degree Programmes (QAEF)
- There will be no QAEF audit visits in 2016/17 to allow a full review of the process to be undertaken. Annual reports are still required: details of the annual update to the report form will be circulated in the Autumn term.

### External Examiners of Taught Programmes
- Minor revision to the policy to clarify the remit of external examiners being involved in the assessment of clinical practice. ‘Assessment’ refers to the evaluation of the operation of the assessment process as opposed to direct involvement in conducting examinations.

### Degree Programme Handbook Guidelines
- Annual update including revised sections on: the use of ePortfolio to support personal tutoring; PEC procedure; online plagiarism checking; student surveys; student representation; and health and safety.

### Qualifications and Credit Framework
- Routine changes to take into account new awards introduced by the University; no changes of principle.

### English Language Policy
- Changes which permit the University to accept GCSE, IGCSE or O level English Language and A/AS level English Language and/or Literature from a UK Examination board for Tier 4 purposes for applicants to degree programmes, provided that applicants have continued to be taught and assessed in the medium of English in their pre-university qualifications.

### University Regulations 2016/17
- Annual updates to the regulations, which on this occasion raised no issues of principle. A summary of the main changes will be circulated by the Student Progress Service.

### Framework for Personal Tutoring
- Changes to the requirements for personal tutor/tuttee meetings in Semester 1 of a taught students first year. The requirement now is that in Stage 1: Semester 1:
The personal tutor will hold the first meeting with their tutee no later than four weeks after the student’s arrival at the University. This first meeting will be arranged by the academic unit and recorded in ePortfolio. This is the same as the current requirement.

In addition to this initial meeting, the personal tutor will offer a second meeting which should also be arranged by the academic unit. This is different to the current requirement (currently the expectation is that the second meeting must be held and recorded in ePortfolio).

- Changes agreed to permit a more flexible approach for taught postgraduate and non-standard provision
- The section on the role of the Senior Tutor has also been amended to incorporate the role description for this position (approved by ULTSEC in January 2016), and the document has also been re-ordered with the intention of making it clearer and more readable.

### Personal Extenuating Circumstances Procedure

Revisions had been developed following the consideration of the Internal Audit report on PEC, as well as consultation with Deans of Undergraduate Studies, a working group with faculty and student representation, and FLTSECS. The revisions include the following specific changes:

- Clarification that the PEC procedure is only to be used for short-term unavoidable and significant personal circumstances.
- Request for Long-term Disabilities and Specific Learning difficulties to be reported via the Student Wellbeing Service and reported back to the Academic Unit via SSRs rather than continual use of the PEC process.
- Clarification that short-term requests for examination adjustments to be reported to the SPS Exams Office rather than via the PEC process.
- Re-iteration that where-ever possible PEC requests should be received in advance of the assessment deadline or by the school published deadline for consideration by the Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committee (PECC).
- List issues that are not normally accepted for PEC adjustments.
- Allowance for a nominated member of staff (not necessarily the PEC Committee) to make decisions to reject PECs, approve extensions and deferrals of examinations where appropriate.

### Student Representation

The Newcastle University Students’ Union and LTDS worked together to clarify the Terms of Reference for Student-Staff Committees (SSC). SSCs are required to meet at least four times per academic year, and must receive external examiners’ reports and Board of Studies responses for information. A schedule of business for SSCs has been introduced, detailing the issues that SSCs are required to consider annually, as well as a model SSC meeting agenda.

### Board of Studies Schedule

Inclusion of requirement for academic units to report the names of the chair and secretary to the relevant FLTSEC and to the Examinations Office, aligning the requirements of Boards of Studies with the University Regulations.

### ReCap

All teaching sessions labelled as a lecture within the timetable system are now recorded by default unless staff choose to opt-out. All academic units were contacted prior to Semester 2 2015-16 and asked to identify any of their modules that should not have lectures automatically recorded. They were also asked to indicate whether or not recordings should be automatically made available for students to view and also whether they wished to record other teaching sessions for their modules (e.g. seminars).
| **Turnitin (online plagiarism checking)** | ▪ All appropriate summatively assessed work should be submitted to online plagiarism checking via Turnitin with effect from the start of the 2016/17 academic year. Institutional principles for use of Turnitin have been agreed with FLTSECs.  
▪ Students’ assessed work should be put through Turnitin where the assessment contains more than 250 words (i.e. a side of A4) and the assessment counts for more than 10% of the module, or where the assessment is designed to help students become proficient in academic writing or to check their proficiency in academic writing.  
▪ All Schools must identify a colleague (usually the DELT) who has the authority to approve assessments which are exempt from the principles. |
| **Peer Dialogue** | ▪ Minor revisions to the policy to clarify that Schools are responsible for ensuring that over time any individual member of staff has the opportunity to be both observer and observe; and that where an academic unit wishes to operate an alternative approach to peer dialogue but which it believes will meet the overarching aims of peer dialogue, they may make a case to the chair of the Faculty Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee (FLTSEC) to adopt this alternative approach. The decision of the FLTSEC Chair is final. |
| **Assessment Irregularities Procedure** | ▪ Wording clarification for cases where the Student Progress Service can impose a sanction from ‘less-serious’ to ‘standard’ to distinguish them from the complex and serious cases taken to a Disciplinary Hearing.  
▪ Clarification that Boards of Examiners cannot ‘set aside’ a disciplinary sanction by use of discretion, and to allow for a Disciplinary Appeal to be considered by paper documents alone when the Disciplinary Convener decides that there is a case to up-hold the appeal and the issues are not disputed, rather than always conducting a full hearing with panel. |
| **Student Disciplinary Procedure** | ▪ The procedure has been clarified with the following changes:  
  o Clarification as to how the University will deal with a disciplinary case when the student fails to attend or engage with the allegation or process.  
  o To allow for a Disciplinary Appeal to be considered by paper documents alone when the Disciplinary Convener decides that there is a case to up-hold the appeal and the issues are not disputed, rather than always conducting a full hearing with panel.  
  o Renaming of the sanction used by University Residences from ‘expulsion’ to ‘eviction’, which is more in line with the wording used in the Accommodation Policy. |
| **Student Exemplar Fines and Charges** | ▪ Disciplinary and Accommodation fines have been amalgamated into one document to avoid confusion with two different websites, especially as on occasion cases come forward from University Residences to the Student Progress Service to be dealt with if particularly serious or when second offences. There has also been an increase to the upper payment limit for particularly serious cases or multiple offences. |
| **Academic Queries and Appeals Procedure** | ▪ The procedure has been clarified with the following changes:  
  o Addition of Dean of Postgraduate Studies to the sections that deal with Degree Programme Director decisions, as the PG Deans make these decisions for Research Degree students.  
  o To add that the Head of Student Progress can also reject a level 2 formal Academic Appeal where the information provided by the Academic Unit during the Level 1 informal process has adequately answered the issue/s raised by the student.  
  o Where there is a claim of procedural irregularity in the handling of a Board of Examiners/ PEC Committee during reconsideration (only), |
where the review of this Final Outcome shall be overseen by the Academic Registrar.

| Student Complaint and Resolution Procedure | - The procedure has been clarified with the following changes:  
- In previous years students could initiate the Student Complaint Procedure up to 6 months after the event. The procedure now allows students to complain at Level 1 up to 3 months after the event and that if they remain unhappy with the outcome they have a further 3 months from the Level 1 outcome to submit a Level 2 formal complaint.  
- Clarification that the new procedure is not to be used for students who wish to report an issue regarding another student. The Student Disciplinary Procedure is followed to carry out an investigation of this type of concern.  
- Additional simplified wording suggestions. |