Presentation by: Lisa Jones (Philosophy)

1. Opportunities

- **Quality of work**: students feel that they are better able to demonstrate their understanding and their ability to express complex ideas, and staff who have marked this work agree that it can be assessed using higher attainment criteria.
- **Presentation**: work is presented to a more professional standard and is produced in a way that reflects normal working practice (i.e. word processed rather than handwritten).
- **Disabilities**: the University does not need to provide different facilities for students with (most) exam-related disabilities, as students can complete the take-home exam in a venue and time of their own choice. Compared with standard public examinations, the take-home exam is therefore relatively disability-neutral.
- **Venue scheduling**: Staff with experience of setting class tests for a large number of students can find it difficult to find suitable rooms; replacing the class test with a take-home exam could solve this problem.
- **Increasing the range of summative assessment approaches**: Current exam protocols and venue arrangements struggle with open-book exams (issues include: desk size in exam venues; possible disturbance caused to other candidates by book handling; whether or not invigilators are expected to inspect brought-in material). Some disciplines (e.g. Music, Film Studies) would find it beneficial to examine students on their ability to analyse media other than texts: normal exam venues make assessments based on listening/viewing impossible. Take-home exams might solve these issues.

2. Challenges

- Take home exams are more suitable for extended exams than short answers as collusion is easier to spot through Turnitin text matching, but some concerns may remain in some subjects about independent working.
- If take-home exams become much more common, and involve large (e.g. subhonours) classes, issues of timetabling parity within the exam period would become much more difficult to address.
- The definition of ‘exam’ was not altogether clear in our group discussion – i.e. when does a final, summative take-home assignment completed under tight time parameters become an ‘exam’, and when is it simply a final piece of continuous assessment. (Logically, if within the teaching period, it is continuous assessment, and if within the exam diet period, it is an exam... but is this the definition the University wants to use?) Clear guidelines are needed to define the difference, and these should be drawn up with reference to any external data definitions e.g. the KIS data set to ensure that St Andrews working definitions are consistent with student expectations. Who can help with this?
- Some subjects may still have particular infrastructure needs that might still need some central support. In particular, take-home exams using media downloads might need some kind of self-access venues/screening facilities, in case students did not have their own suitable equipment. Can central support help address these needs?
• **Reproduction of multi-media material used for exams**: subjects streaming film or music media need to check legality of this with regard to copyright, licensing, etc. Who will help verify the material is being used appropriately?

• **University Guidelines and Procedures**: do these need to be modified? Several issues were raised by email exchange after the group had met, which suggested some careful thinking needed to be done (by whom?) to establish clear protocols. Points raised included: a) setting appropriate maximum periods for actually completing the task e.g. would a ‘4-hour paper’ to be done over several days (how many days?) be acceptable? b) whether take-home exam papers should be referred to external examiners using the same protocols as other exams, and if they were prepared closer to the exam diet, at what point would the externals become involved? c) whether selected students might be given vivas to provide an additional check against collusion.

3. **Follow-up actions from working group members.**

• **Juan Coderch (Classics)** – I already use take-home continuous assessment (i.e. released and returned to a short deadline) in Beginners Greek (GK1001 and GK002), and will be using it for Beginners Latin (LT1001 and LT1002). The possibility remains to extend this for use in end of module exams.

• **Emily Finer (Comparative Literature)** - We have introduced 100% Coursework/Continuous Assessment for Honours modules. The possibility of take-home exams for sub-honours was discussed at the SSCC where it had unanimous support from students who felt their exam work does not adequately reflect their abilities; we will discuss this further among staff who contribute to Comparative Literature. Support from the exams office in scheduling this type of exam in large sub-honours modules will be of utmost importance.

• **Jane Pettegree (Music)** – I will investigate with the library how to stay within the law and stream music and/or opera excerpts for take-home tests, and will review with colleagues whether this might replace some exams. I have similar concerns as Film Studies about the infrastructure provision for accessing this material.

• **Geethanjali Selvaretnam (Economics)** – I am considering a take home exam at Honours level, and will be recommending this to some of my other colleagues who also might be interested in take-home exams at this level. I will also explore the possibility of having a four-hour exam compared to the 2 hour one that we have at the moment.

• **Ann Smith (Biology)** – I will consider using a take-home exam for my 4th year module. Take-home exams may be relevant to other 4th year modules in Biology (or other years, although that is less likely); I will raise the potential at a Teaching Committee to spread awareness.

• **Leshu Torchin (Film Studies)** – This Department has moved to 100% Coursework/Continuous Assessment for all Honours modules, so at this level, take-home exams/tests for coursework will not actually replace exams. However, the topic of Sub-Honours take-home exams will be discussed at a department meeting as we are interested in using media/film clips in assessment.

• **Michael White (German)** - Our honours modules continue to balance traditional exams and coursework, and we are likely to stick to this pattern in most cases. I will bring up take home exams at the next departmental meeting. In particular, we will consider their use for translation methodology exams, which are longer in any case, and where practical considerations such as the provision of dictionaries makes this option potentially advantageous.

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