

**Executive Summary of Business
for Senate**



Title	Mid-Year Assessment and the Structure of the Academic Year
Author	Prof Clare Mackie, PVC (Teaching and Learning)
Type	Proposals, for discussion and decision
Date	2 nd December 2010
Strategic context	University Strategic Plan 'Making the Future'; University Teaching and Learning Strategy; preparing the institution for the competitive HE landscape post-Browne review.
Summary	<p>Mid-year assessment and the structure of the academic year have been on the University strategic agenda for a significant period (since prior to March 2008).</p> <p>Following research and consultation, a number of decisions were taken at Senate in December 2009, mainly related to credit simplification, but including the introduction of mid-year assessment.</p> <p>Further intensive work over the past three months, together with consultation with staff and students, has led to the attached proposals.</p>
Essential reading	No additional reading is required other than the appendices provided.
Risk analysis	<p>Whilst there are risks associated with change, the current structure of the academic year and credit framework will severely inhibit our ability to deliver our agenda for growth and continues to be administratively complex and resource-intensive.</p> <p>Subject to curriculum redesign during 2011, and 2012 implementation, the risk of impact on REF is felt to be low.</p>
Resource implications	Investment in curriculum management software will be required. TESS funding is available during 2011 to support curriculum redesign (through the Portfolio Review process).
Consultation	Proposals have been developed in consultation with staff, students, and via formal committee structures, throughout the Autumn Term 2010

Future actions	Further consultation on reading weeks and enabling MPS to deliver its curriculum over the period.
Effective date of introduction	2012/13
Recommendation	<p>Senate is asked to approve:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That a standardised and simplified credit structures of 15 and 30 credits should be introduced for all year 1 and 2 courses (this is consistent with previous decision of Senate for year 3 and Masters courses). 2. That this simplification is best achieved by delivery through two symmetrical 12 week teaching blocks 3. That a 2 week teaching free period be set aside for assessment and marking and that this is best located at the start of the spring term. 4. Courses entirely taught in the first teaching block should normally, but not necessarily, be assessed by the end of the first assessment period. 5. The academic year should be started one week earlier than at present to enable delivery of a 12 week uninterrupted teaching block before Christmas. 6. A five week 'teaching free period' should be allowed over Christmas to incorporate a 3 week vacation and a 2 week mid-year 'teaching free' period immediately prior to the start of the second teaching block. 7. The second twelve week teaching block should be taught uninterrupted other than by a week to cover public and University holidays. 8. An additional three- week 'teaching free period' should be allowed in Spring immediately after the second teaching block 9. These changes should be implemented from 2012/13.

Structure of the Academic Year including the introduction of Mid-Year Assessment

Introduction: Background to the Autumn 2010 consultation

1. Discussions on the structure of the Academic Year began formally in March 2008 with the establishment of a Senate working group which initiated a consultation with staff and students and reported to Senate in December 2009. An extract of this paper is included in **Appendix 1**.
2. In March 2010 Senate proposed that a working group be established to progress research and consultation on mid-year assessment. This group met on two occasions: 9th July and 25th August 2010. There was uncertainty as to how far the group should progress revisiting the structure of the academic year and credit simplification. The matter was referred to TLC in September 2010 and following discussions within TLC and subsequent discussions with the Vice-Chancellor as Chair of Senate a decision was taken to extend the consultation on Mid Year Assessment to include the structure of the Academic Year. The September 2010 TLC paper is reproduced in **Appendix 2**.
3. The staff response to the consultation is detailed in the November 2010 TLC paper which is reproduced in **Appendix 3**. The proposed structure was amended following the staff consultation and the revised structure discussed at TLC following which it was agreed to recommend the revised academic year structure to Senate in December 2010 subject to no major issues arising following the student consultation which was due to conclude on 3rd December 2010.
4. The results of the student consultation are provided in **Appendix 4**.
5. A synthesis of the staff and student consultations is provided as **Appendix 5**.

Key drivers for a change to the academic year structure

6. Mid-Year Assessment

Although more mid-year assessment has been introduced in recent years, there has been increasing pressure, from staff and students, to better manage these processes. Introduction of a mid-year teaching-free assessment period will: facilitate the introduction of a wider range of assessment methods; allow for more robust and equalities-compliant management of in-person assessment; secure marking time for faculty and ultimately result in positive effects on turnaround times for feedback to students, and an improved student assessment experience.

7. Credit Simplification

Although some credit simplification has previously been agreed (for final year and postgraduate courses), further simplification would allow for the introduction of a more flexible and, looking ahead to the post-2012 environment, responsive curriculum. It would also reduce significantly the volume of courses to be delivered and the administrative workload associated with this volume, at both School-level and within Central Professional Services. Credit simplification will also have a positive impact on timetabling, with benefits for students and staff, and allow us to review our overly-complex assessment regulations.

Recommendations to Senate

These recommendations are illustrated in revised model 1 below.

10. That a standardised and simplified credit structures of 15 and 30 credits should be introduced for all year 1 and 2 courses (this is consistent with previous decision of Senate for year 3 and Masters courses).
11. That this simplification is best achieved by delivery through two symmetrical 12 week teaching blocks
12. That a 2 week teaching free period be set aside for assessment and marking and that this is best located at the start of the spring term.
13. Courses entirely taught in the first teaching block should normally, but not necessarily, be assessed by the end of the first assessment period.
14. The academic year should be started one week earlier than at present to enable delivery of a 12 week uninterrupted teaching block before Christmas.
15. A five week 'teaching free period' should be allowed over Christmas to incorporate a 3 week vacation and a 2 week mid-year 'teaching free' period immediately prior to the start of the second teaching block.
16. The second twelve week teaching block should be taught uninterrupted other than by a week to cover public and University holidays.
17. An additional three- week 'teaching free period' should be allowed in Spring immediately after the second teaching block
18. These changes should be implemented from 2012/13.

Further consultation

1. The possibility of introducing of a reading week in the first teaching block which may be accommodated by all students returning at the start of Fresher's Week. Further consultation is being proposed in order to address student concerns about the length of the first teaching block.
2. In those years where Easter does not provide a natural break, the possibility of including a reading week in the second teaching block.
3. The School of Mathematics and Physics has difficulty with fitting its curriculum into 24 weeks. If this remains the case after detailed portfolio review during 2011 then consideration should be given to letting MPS use, exceptionally, the mid-year assessment period to deliver their teaching.

UG Academic Year Structure: Revised Model Version 1 projected from 2012-13 to 2016-17

2012-13				2013-14		2014-15		2015-16		2016-17	
week begins	Existing Pattern	Model- as consulted on	revised model- following staff feedback	week begins	revised model- following staff feedback	week begins	revised model- following staff feedback	week begins	revised model- following staff feedback	week begins	revised model- following staff feedback
03/09/2012				02/09/2013		01/09/2014		31/08/2015		29/08/2016	
10/09/2012				09/09/2013		08/09/2014		07/09/2015		05/09/2016	
17/09/2012		T1	T1	16/09/2013	T1	15/09/2014	T1	14/09/2015	T1	12/09/2016	T1
24/09/2012	T1	T2	T2	23/09/2013	T2	22/09/2014	T2	21/09/2015	T2	19/09/2016	T2
01/10/2012	T2	T3	T3	30/09/2013	T3	29/09/2014	T3	28/09/2015	T3	26/09/2016	T3
08/10/2012	T3	T4	T4	07/10/2013	T4	06/10/2014	T4	05/10/2015	T4	03/10/2016	T4
15/10/2012	T4	T5	T5	14/10/2013	T5	13/10/2014	T5	12/10/2015	T5	10/10/2016	T5
22/10/2012	T5	T6	T6	21/10/2013	T6	20/10/2014	T6	19/10/2015	T6	17/10/2016	T6
29/10/2012	T6	T7	T7	28/10/2013	T7	27/10/2014	T7	26/10/2015	T7	24/10/2016	T7
05/11/2012	T7	T8	T8	04/11/2013	T8	03/11/2014	T8	02/11/2015	T8	31/10/2016	T8
12/11/2012	T8	T9	T9	11/11/2013	T9	10/11/2014	T9	09/11/2015	T9	07/11/2016	T9
19/11/2012	T9	T10	T10	18/11/2013	T10	17/11/2014	T10	16/11/2015	T10	14/11/2016	T10
26/11/2012	T10	T11	T11	25/11/2013	T11	24/11/2014	T11	23/11/2015	T11	21/11/2016	T11
03/12/2012	T11	T12	T12	02/12/2013	T12	01/12/2014	T12	30/11/2015	T12	28/11/2016	T12
10/12/2012				09/12/2013		08/12/2014		07/12/2015		05/12/2016	
17/12/2012				16/12/2013		15/12/2014		14/12/2015		12/12/2016	
24/12/2012				23/12/2013		22/12/2014		21/12/2015		19/12/2016	
31/12/2012				30/12/2013		29/12/2014		28/12/2015		26/12/2016	
07/01/2013	T11	A1 & Marking	A1 (mid-week Marking)	06/01/2014	A1 (mid-week Marking)	05/01/2015	A1 (mid-week Marking)	04/01/2016	A1 (mid-week Marking)	02/01/2017	A1 (mid-week Marking)
14/01/2013	T12			13/01/2014		12/01/2015		11/01/2016		09/01/2017	
21/01/2013	T13			20/01/2014		19/01/2015		18/01/2016		16/01/2017	
28/01/2013	T14			27/01/2014		26/01/2015		25/01/2016		23/01/2017	
04/02/2013	T15			03/02/2014		02/02/2015		01/02/2016		30/01/2017	
11/02/2013	T16			10/02/2014		09/02/2015		08/02/2016		06/02/2017	
18/02/2013	T17			17/02/2014		16/02/2015		15/02/2016		13/02/2017	
25/02/2013	T18			24/02/2014		23/02/2015		22/02/2016		20/02/2017	
04/03/2013	T19			03/03/2014		02/03/2015		29/02/2016		27/02/2017	
11/03/2013	T20			10/03/2014		09/03/2015		07/03/2016		06/03/2017	
18/03/2013				17/03/2014		16/03/2015		14/03/2016		13/03/2017	
25/03/2013				24/03/2014		23/03/2015		21/03/2016		20/03/2017	
01/04/2013				31/03/2014		30/03/2015		28/03/2016		27/03/2017	
08/04/2013				07/04/2014		06/04/2015		04/04/2016		03/04/2017	
15/04/2013	T21			14/04/2014	Holiday	13/04/2015	T12	11/04/2016	T12	10/04/2017	Holiday
22/04/2013	T22			21/04/2014		20/04/2015		18/04/2016		17/04/2017	
29/04/2013	T23			28/04/2014		27/04/2015		25/04/2016		24/04/2017	
06/05/2013	T24			05/05/2014		04/05/2015		02/05/2016		01/05/2017	
13/05/2013	A1			12/05/2014	A2	11/05/2015	A2	09/05/2016	A2	08/05/2017	A2
20/05/2013	A2	A2	A2	19/05/2014	A3	18/05/2015	A3	16/05/2016	A3	15/05/2017	A3
27/05/2013	A3	A3	A3	26/05/2014	A4	25/05/2015	A4	23/05/2016	A4	22/05/2017	A4
03/06/2013	A4	A4	A4	02/06/2014	A5	01/06/2015	A5	30/05/2016	A5	29/05/2017	A5
10/06/2013	A5	A5	A5	09/06/2014	A6	08/06/2015	A6	06/06/2016	A6	05/06/2017	A6
17/06/2013	A6	A6	A6	16/06/2014		15/06/2015		13/06/2016		12/06/2017	
24/06/2013				23/06/2014		22/06/2015		20/06/2016		19/06/2017	

Key
Induction
Teaching
Assessment(with unseen exam)
Easter Public Holidays

Good Friday 29/3/13
Easter Monday 1/4/13

Good Friday 18/4/14
Easter Monday 21/4/14

Good Friday 3/4/15
Easter Monday 6/4/15

Good Friday 25/3/16
Easter Monday 28/3/16

Good Friday 14/4/17
Easter Monday 17/4/17

Appendix 1:

Extract from Senate Paper S/223/3 (December 2009): The Structure of the Academic Year

1. In March 2008 Senate established a working group to assess the evidence of the advantages and disadvantages of restructuring the academic year at Sussex. Work on this topic was subsequently highlighted by the creation of the new schools, in that it was important to have a clear resolution on this issue, in good time to allow the new schools to begin planning how they wished to develop their curricula in order to meet the University's strategic objectives. This resulted in a consultation paper including two models reproduced in **Annex A**.
2. The original Senate Working Group paper concluded that there was no clear quantitative or qualitative evidence linking the performance of a sample of UK universities (largely focused on Russell and 94 group institutions) and the structure of their academic years – semesters, terms or hybrid structures - and that further evidential work was highly unlikely to prove such a relationship. However, it became clear in undertaking this work that there were potential relationships between the structure of the academic year, credit structures, and assessment patterns. In terms of credit structures, semesterised academic year structures, with the symmetry of two teaching periods, seemed more likely to lead to simpler credit structures. For assessment patterns, semesters offered a clearer basis to strengthen formal mid-year assessment arrangements, including for most semester institutions in the sample (but not all), a mid-year assessment diet.
3. A position emerged therefore where although there was no simple evidence for a change in the structure of the academic year (most obviously semesterisation), there were related issues which were clearly of central importance to the University; and on which there was already some internal pressure for change. For these reasons it was decided to put these issues to the academic units, and to the student body, for discussion.
4. The paper was issued to Heads of Schools and Directors of Taught Programmes on 26 October for discussion at School Teaching and Learning Committees in weeks 5 and 6. The responses from schools were sought on a questionnaire of 29 questions. The responses from School TLC's, a summary of the student consultation, and a report on the discussion at Academic Programmes and Regulations Committee informed further discussion by Teaching and Learning Committee at its meeting on 25th November.

Consultation with Schools

5. The following main points emerged from the consultation with Schools:
 - a. Although 4/12 Schools expressed support for a restructuring of the academic year, a majority of the schools were opposed to any change or felt that the evidence base was still inconclusive. Opposition was based on a number of factors, but the most prominent were:
 - i. The perceived cost of change at a time when the institution was engaged in bedding in the new school structures, and when proposals for re-focusing and cost savings were also in development.
 - ii. The perception in some schools that any reduction in the number of teaching weeks would not allow the delivery of the full curriculum.
 - b. That there was a clear majority of schools who saw a strong argument for a simplification of credit structures. A table providing an overview of existing credit values is attached as **Annex D** to the consultation paper (noting that this is a re-presentation of the data included in the original circulation).

- c. That if **major** change were to be made there was a clear majority arguing that 2011-12 academic year was too soon, particularly given the current change agenda and the REF.
- d. That there was some support for accommodating a more formal mid-year assessment period.

Consultation with Students

- 6. Alongside the consultation with academic units, a separate consultation exercise was conducted with students. This consultation exercise, working with USSU, made use of focus groups, and an on-line survey.
- 7. Emerging from the focus groups was a general view that the structure of the academic year should remain essentially unchanged, particularly when compared to the other two proposed options. However, this was only the preferred option for many if certain minor changes were to be implemented. The main issue concerned mid-year assessment. Students were quite keen to have a mid-year assessment period for a variety of reasons (e.g., reduces work load exam preparation during the summer), however, there was no real consensus about *when* to have this period of assessment: before or after the Christmas break. This was certainly borne out by the quantitative results from the BOS (on-line survey) which indicated an equal opinion about the advantages and disadvantages to having an assessment period both before and after Christmas.
- 8. On other issues there was more of a discernable opinion: students were particularly adamant that there should not be a shortening of either the Christmas or Easter holidays - 71% (which could conceivably be needed to accommodate the mid-year assessment period).
- 9. The alternative to shortening breaks is to lengthen the academic year by starting 1 week early. 36% were in agreement that this would be an advantage compared to 24% who thought it would be a disadvantage. However, the majority [40%] of students were neutral or undecided on this issue.
- 10. Whilst students were slightly more inclined towards having two equal teaching periods (semesters 44% vs. 36% - 20% undecided), there were 50% who thought retaining the current structured summer teaching period was advantageous compared with 35% who thought it disadvantageous (13% undecided).

TLC Recommendations to Senate

- 11. TLC **recommends** that the University should adopt a revised, and simplified, credit framework with effect from 2011/12, as follows:
 - (a) For Years 1 and 2 (level 4 and 5, FHEQ) credit should continue to be organized on the basis of multiples of 6, as per the current framework, subject to a credit maximum of 30 (and thus consistent with our general credit compensation threshold of 30 credit).
 - (b) For Years 3/4 and M (level 6 and 7, FHEQ) credit should be organized on the basis of multiples of 15, normally subject to a credit maximum of 30 for taught courses, but with extended projects and dissertations set at an appropriate credit volume (generally 45 or 60). This model has been approved for the University-wide Post-Graduate Credit Framework, agreed for implementation across 2009 and 2010 academic years, and has already been widely adopted by many disciplines for Years 3/4 and M (level 6 & 7).
 - (c) The above approach accommodates both the continued asymmetry associated with the current term-based structure in Years 1 and 2 of the undergraduate curriculum and the relative symmetry of teaching periods for Year 3/4 of the undergraduate

curriculum and at postgraduate level. It will consolidate existing practice and a move towards greater standardization, thus offering the benefits of simplification and coherence.

- (d) In implementing revisions to the credit framework, Schools should ensure a direct relationship between the timing of teaching and the timing of assessment, and between credit weighting and assessment load.
- (e) For Year 1 and 2 courses, a mid-year assessment period should be formally introduced, to include examinations where this is pedagogically desirable. The exact duration and timing of this assessment diet, and how it may affect the timing of teaching, should be given further detailed consideration and specific proposals brought back to academic committees and Senate in Spring 2010. In developing these proposals the following principles should be adopted:
- That a period which facilitates unseen examinations must be free of teaching;
 - That mid-year assessment results should normally be confirmed by a marks scrutiny and ratification process, but this would not necessitate full-scale examination boards as no progress decisions would be taken; and
 - That a single model should be adopted across the University

Whilst the above falls short of a more radical restructuring of the Academic Year, favoured by some, it addresses many of the primary concerns of the academic and student community and provides a basis on which any future restructuring of the academic framework and the academic year might be made.

TLC recognises that one of the most consistent objections to a more radical restructuring of the academic year is the cost of change, but wishes to alert the community to the potentially high cost of not changing. Taking a longer-term view, the University will be operating in an increasingly competitive, de-regulated and international environment, and a fully-semesterised and modularized structure (ie an academic year comprising two symmetrical teaching periods with associated assessment periods) would greatly enhance the development of more flexible methods and modes of study, and credit transfer opportunities, key objectives in the University's Teaching and Learning Strategy.

ANNEXE D: OVERVIEW OF CURRENT CREDIT PATTERNS BY LEVEL OF STUDY																													
	Level	3	6	7	7.5	10	12	15	18	20	22.5	24	25	30	36	40	45	48	54	60	70	72	75	80	90	100	108	120	Total
BMEC	1		3			7	1																						11
	2		3			8	4																						15
	3		1			8	1	16						1	1														28
	M	1		1		1			17					10							7								37
Total		1	7	1	0	1	23	1	21	17	0	0	0	11	1	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	91
ENGDES	0					1																							1
	1		11			5																							16
	2		7			12																					1	20	
	3					1	11										1			1								14	
M				1			18									1			7									27	
Total		0	18	0	1	0	19	29	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	78
ENGLISH	1					10	11				1																	1	23
	2					14	9				1			3															27
	3					5					14			1	19														39
	M													77						11									88
Total		0	0	0	0	29	0	20	0	0	16	0	4	78	22	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	177
ESW	1				1			4						6															11
	2							1						5						1									7
	3					8	1				3	7					1				1								21
	M					1	12	1		5		1	21	1			9			2	1		1	1	11				67
D															2		2									2		7	
Total		0	0	0	1	1	20	1	6	5	0	4	41	1	2	9	1	0	4	1	1	1	1	1	11	2	0	0	113
GLOBAL	1					12	7				1		1																21
	2		1			7	9				4																		21
	3					2	5				4			36	19														66
	M							21						86			6			9									122
Total		0	1	0	0	21	21	0	0	9	0	123	19	0	6	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	230
HAHP	1					12	12																						24
	2					13	18																						31
	3		1								16			30													1	48	
	M													68						11									79
Total		0	1	0	0	25	0	30	0	0	16	0	68	30	0	0	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	182
cs	0																												1
	1		1			3	2																						6
	2		5			7	2																						14
	3		2			1	16	1									5												25
M	1					28							3						7									39	
Total		1	8	0	0	11	44	5	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	5	0	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	85
LIFESCI	1		13			23	4				1																		41
	2		23			33	1				2		1														1	61	
	3					35					1		7				1				1			1			1	47	
	M				2	9		3			1	9		2	2		2			4		3							35
Total		0	36	0	2	56	44	5	3	0	4	1	17	0	2	3	0	0	4	0	4	0	4	0	1	0	1	1	184
LPS	1					6	7																						13
	2		1			12	18							6															37
	3					2			7		16		21	17	0														63
	M					2		3					62				1			11									79
Total		0	1	0	0	20	2	25	10	0	16	0	89	17	0	1	0	0	11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	192
MFM	1					15	15				2																		32
	2					9	22				2																		33
	3					1	1				14			10															26
	M					2							46							12									60
Total		0	0	0	0	25	2	38	0	0	18	46	10	0	0	0	0	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	151
MPS	0		4			1					1			1					1	1									9
	1		6			10	5																						21
	2		7			12	1				1		1																22
	3					1	18																						19
M				5		28							1						1					4				39	
Total		0	17	0	5	0	24	46	6	0	2	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	110
OGY	1					6	2																						8
	2		1			7	1							1															10
	3						20	1			1						1										1	24	
	M						23							2			1			5									31
Total		0	1	0	0	13	43	4	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	2	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	73	
SLI	0		6			15					3																		24
	1		18			31		24			17			2															92
	2					19		21																					40
	3					3		8						6															18
M					</																								

Executive Summary of Business for Teaching and Learning Committee



Title	Mid-Year Assessment and the structure of the Academic Year
Author	Prof Clare Mackie, PVC (Teaching and Learning)
Type	Discussion paper
Date	September 2010
Strategic context	Making the Future plans; preparing the institution for the competitive HE landscape post-Browne review.
Summary	<p>An update from PVC Teaching & Learning on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress made in discussions with the Working Group on Mid-Year Assessment; • Noting of important changes to context and drivers since last institutional consultation on this topic in 2009; • Noting of further arguments in favour of revisiting the issues in full; leading to.... • Recommendation to TLC that there should be a further formal pass of consultation with staff and students during Autumn 2010.
Essential reading	None
Consultation	<p>Senate Working Group on Mid-Year Assessment (including Students Union officers).</p> <p>Discussions between PVC T&L and Heads of Schools.</p>
Future actions	Further discussion and consultation during Autumn Term 2010.
Effective date of introduction	To be discussed
Recommendation	As set out in para 17

University of Sussex

Teaching and Learning Committee

Mid-Year Assessment and the Structure of the Academic Year - Progress Report

1. In March 2010 Senate proposed that a working group be established to progress research and consultation on mid-year assessment. This group met on two occasions: 9th July and 25th August 2010. There was an early general consensus that a two week teaching free period could be accommodated to facilitate a mid-year assessment and marking period and that the best time for this was in January after the Christmas break.
2. There was uncertainty as to how far the group should progress revisiting the structure of the academic year and credit simplification. However as incoming PVC (T&L) my sense is that it would be worth revisiting the bigger picture, given that: (a) some key drivers and context have changed and (b) the working group discussions seem to have come up with a model that addressed most of the key concerns raised during the Autumn 2009 consultation exercise.
3. Several critical external factors that have changed, creating additional impetus for change, namely:
 - a. The REF timescale has shifted to December 2013.
 - b. The external environment has deteriorated further in that the Comprehensive Spending Review is to be published next month and is expected to impose HEI cuts of 10-35% over the next 4 years.
4. These external factors have resulted in several Schools deciding that the time is right for major portfolio review to weather the storm by looking for greater efficiencies and to reduce reliance on public funding by increasing overseas recruitment.
5. As PVC Teaching and Learning I have been approached and am sympathetic to providing central support for these Schools for this portfolio review process, but it is also clear that for this process to be effective and successful it will be necessary to revisit the structure of the academic year and credit simplification.
6. For these reasons, the purpose of this paper is to consult TLC in relation to my recommendation that the University should undertake a further pass of formal consultation on these issues, as envisaged by Senate.
7. **Appendix 1** outlines the key principles discussed by the working group and **Figure 1 Model 1** the revised academic year structure emerging from the outcome of these discussions. (The only difference between model 1 & 2 is the duration of the Easter break- with a 4 week option still in discussion.)
8. This new model addresses most of the key objections raised in the previous proposal, namely:
 - a. The perception in some schools that any reduction in the number of teaching weeks would not allow delivery of the full curriculum.
 - b. A view from a clear majority of schools that although they saw strong arguments for a simplification of credit structures, the combination of the significant change agenda in 2009/10, and the previous REF deadline in 2012, meant that there was not enough time for major changes to be made for the 2011-12 academic year.
 - c. Students were quite keen to have a mid-year assessment period, however there was no consensus as to whether this was before or after the Christmas break.
 - d. Students were against any shortening of the Christmas and Easter vacation period- although it should be noted that the questions were not asked separately.

9. The 2009 Sussex review of the shape of the academic year found “little appetite for a major change and concluded that there was no correlation between semesterisation and performance”. However, this does not mean that change to the academic year has not benefited institutions. The SUMS consulting group undertook research on semesterisation and noted that the University of Bath semesterised in 1997/98 with two teaching blocks laid over 3 terms (as Model 1 proposes) stating that “the key drivers ... were greater efficiency, programme modularisation, greater flexibility of their student offering and a need for more research time.” The achievement of these aims is not easily detected and linked to broad institutional performance indicators.
10. We have also currently left unresolved the problem that allowing 36 credit course size at stages 1 and 2 continues to be incompatible with our own regulations for condonement at both progression and classification. Our regulations cannot be adjusted as they are compliant with latest National Framework expectations of achieving 90 credits at each level.
11. Further thought has also indicated more clearly how the potential efficiencies of credit simplification can be quantified. If the credit structure of 15 and 30 credits for stage 3 and Masters Courses is rolled out to stages 0, 1 and 2 then the number of courses will reduce by 100 or 15% as illustrated in **Table 1**. The assumptions include: all courses ≤ 20 credits will be modelled to new 15 credit size and those >20 and ≤ 40 credits will be aligned to 30 credits. This is 100 less courses that require convening and administering including: 100 less course handbooks; 100 fewer timetabling submissions; 100 fewer course evaluation questionnaires; significantly reduced course-related assessment and marks processing;

Table 1: Remodelling of all stage 0,1 and 2 courses ≤ 40 credits into 15 and 30 credit structure

Level (UG)	No of courses with ≤ 20 credits	Total credits	No of courses if standardised on 15 credits	No of courses with $>20 \leq 40$ credits	Total credits	No of courses if standardised on 30 credits
0	27	264	17.6	5	126	4.2
1	287	3,702	246.8	31	621	20.7
2	308	4052	270.1	27	768	25.6
	622	8018	534.5	63	1,215	50.5

⇒ 685 total current courses could be streamlined to 585 courses.

12. Reducing numbers of courses requiring timetabling would also allow us to address the problem that we are currently in breach of an agreement with our SU to keep Wednesday afternoons free of teaching in line with National NUS policy. For example timetablers are currently forced to schedule 60 classes on Wednesday afternoon in Autumn 2010 with Spring 2011 looking even worse. Although the credit volume will be retained within the 15 and 30 credit courses the credit will be packaged more efficiently, reducing gridlock caused by sheer volume and irregular shaped courses.
13. Another connected issue is that the periodic review system is under severe strain with all programmes requiring re-validation by this route every 5 years. The scheduling of these reviews has been delayed in order to allow the new School structures to settle so as to obtain maximum benefit from the review, but resumption of this process is now urgent. As PVC Teaching & Learning I suggest that a move to a new academic year structure would, in addition to the potential benefits outlined above, let us combine portfolio review with periodic review in one effective exercise.
14. The School of Life Sciences could be a pilot for such an exercise as portfolio review for this School is necessary for the current transitional teaching arrangements to be time limited. This review is urgent and is planned for the Autumn term 2010/11.
15. If there was support for rolling this pilot out University-wide then TESS funding could be directed to ensure that workload on Schools remains manageable and so that the whole process can be properly project-managed to deliver efficiencies.

16. Finally and most strategically, this exercise has the potential to strengthen both HEU and Overseas recruitment, and to position Schools to be in the best competitive position for the situation that emerges post the Browne Review.

Recommendations to Teaching & Learning Committee

17. TLC is requested to:

- (1) Respond to the principles set out in Appendix 1;
- (2) Consider the proposal that we should revisit the structure of the academic year via a consultation with staff and students during the autumn 2010 term;
- (3) This to be on the understanding that the consultation will be similar to the exercise undertaken in late 2009 but would involve only one model with a briefer more focussed set of questions. The process would, as before, involve two parallel consultations with both staff and students. The staff consultation being focussed on the School teaching and learning committees scheduled for week 5 and the student consultation focussed on the student experience forum scheduled for week 7.
- (4) The aim of this second round of consultation is to feed back to the November 2010 meeting of TLC and December 2010 Senate.

Key Principles Discussed by Senate Working Group on Introducing Mid Year Assessment

1. To introduce a 2 week teaching free period to facilitate a mid-year assessment & marking period in January

It was proposed that essay deadlines should be set either for the Thursday of week 12 of teaching block 1 or for mid-week in first week back after Christmas to maximise time that Faculty had to mark and return essays before the next teaching block commenced. This period would also facilitate unseen exams for 15 & 30 credit courses that had been taught entirely in the first teaching block, although it was anticipated that the majority of 30 credit courses would be delivered over the two teaching blocks with exams held at the end of the academic year (assessment weeks 2-6).

2. Two teaching blocks may be accommodated across current 3 term structure.

To create two equal teaching blocks of 60 credits with year 1 & 2 Courses modelled on 15 and 30 credits as for year 3 and Masters Courses.

3. To create a flexible framework to allow the number of teaching weeks to range up to 24 weeks to accommodate different discipline requirements for contact time.

The previous proposal reduced the number of teaching weeks to 22. Faculty wanted to maintain the 24 week teaching period.

4. To start one week earlier and preserve the 4 week break over Christmas.

Starting one week earlier allows a 12 week teaching block to be delivered before Christmas. Students wished to maintain the 4 week Christmas break as this was thought to facilitate students who wished to travel home (at off peak rates) or alternatively it was thought to be a good time to obtain service industry jobs over the vacation period.

5. The duration of the Easter break was less certain.

The majority wanted to reduce the Easter break to 3 weeks but vary timing (if necessary) to ensure this break overlaps with Easter public holidays and local school holidays. It was felt by some that a 2 week break was sufficient as a longer break resulted in breaking up the second 12 week teaching block such that student attendance may drop off after the vacation period. However, it was also suggested to keep the break at 4 weeks to facilitate field trips during this period. The original consultation with students asked about reducing the Christmas and Easter vacation- it did not separate out the two periods so further consultation with students is needed. In terms of faculty does a 4 week period facilitate attendance at research conferences? Further consultation with Faculty is required.

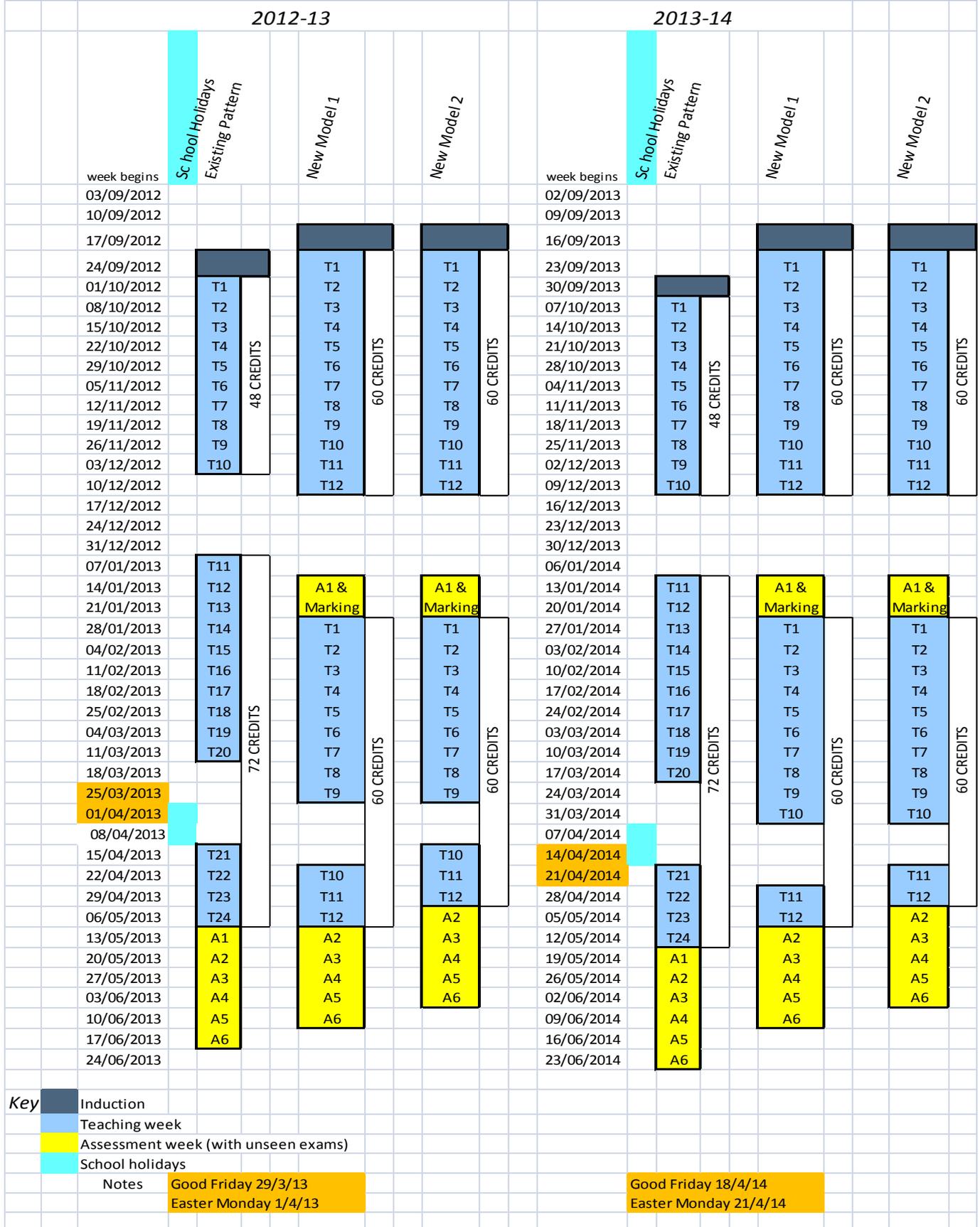
6. This would be implemented for the 2012/13 academic session

This would require University wide portfolio review to be undertaken and new course structures to be available in outline by November 2011 in time for prospectus printing.

Membership of Working Group:

Clare Mackie (Chair), Stephen Shute (HoS) Owen Richards (Academic registrar), Peter Clements, Claudia Eberlein (DTP Science), Jo Goodman (Welfare, SU), Gill Johnston (TLDU), Geert de Nerve (DTP Social Sciences), Sam Riordan (Head of Academic Registry), Martin Ryle (DTP Arts & Humanities), and Lita Wallis (Education, SU).

Figure 1: New Model projected for 2012/13 and 2013/14 sessions against published calendar



Executive Summary of Business for Teaching and Learning Committee



Title	Mid-Year Assessment and the Structure of the Academic Year
Author	Prof Clare Mackie, PVC (Teaching and Learning)
Type	Discussion paper on responses to consultation with Schools
Date	November 2010
Strategic context	Making the Future plans; preparing the institution for the competitive HE landscape post-Browne review.
Summary	An update from PVC (Teaching & Learning) on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of responses received from School consultation with staff during October/November 2010. • Progress on consultation with students
Essential reading	TLC Paper 13/9 (September 2010)
Consultation	Results of consultation with School staff
Future actions	Final meeting of Senate working group on 'mid-year assessment' to agree paper for Senate meeting scheduled for December 2010.
Effective date of introduction	Academic year 2012/13
Recommendation	To agree TLC recommendations in paragraph 7. Subject to feedback following consultation with students, TLC agreed recommendations will be made to Senate Working Group on 'mid-year assessment' for reporting to Senate.

University of Sussex

Teaching and Learning Committee

Mid-Year Assessment and the Structure of the Academic Year – Summary of Responses to Consultation with Schools

1. All 12 Sussex Schools were provided with consultation documents (**Appendix 1**) in October 2010 and were asked to discuss these at both Teaching and Learning and School Management Committees with a request that responses be co-ordinated by Heads of School and returned within one month.
2. Overall, 11 forms were completed and returned with one School refusing to answer certain questions and instead submitting a written response to the questions it felt were unbiased and which the school felt able to answer. These answers were accepted and a form completed on the Schools behalf.
3. **Table 1** provides a summary of responses received from all 12 Schools. **Table 2, 3 and 4** provide a summary of responses for each of the three clusters. Although Sciences were less satisfied with the new model it should be noted that for all 14 questions the score against never exceeded the score in support of the changes.
4. **In terms of overall responses there appears to be strong agreement on a number of key issues including:**
 - a) **Standardisation and simplification of credit structures at 15 and 30 credits for year 1 and 2 courses** (Q1: 75% agreement with only 17% against).
 - b) **Simplification is best achieved by delivery through two symmetrical 12 week teaching blocks** (Q2: 82% agreement with only 18% against).
 - c) **Courses entirely taught in first teaching block should be assessed by end of first assessment period** (Q4: 64% agreement with only 18% against).
 - d) **Starting the academic year one week earlier was supported for different reasons:** to enable delivery of 12 week uninterrupted teaching block before Christmas (Q5: 73% agreement with only 18% against); to accommodate PGT students (Q6: 64% agreement with only 9% against).
 - e) **A 2 week mid-year teaching free period** was supported (Q8: 67% agreement with 25% against) **with strong support for location at the start of term 2** (Q9: 75% agreement with 25% against).
 - f) There was strong support that **15/30 credit structure offers significant gains in terms of reducing convening and administrative work at School level** (Q13: 64% agreement with 27% against). Whilst this was supported by **improved timetabling** (Q12: 58% agreement with only 8% against) there was less support in response to expectation of a significant reduction in administration linked to small credit rated courses (Q11: 45% agreement with 18% against).
 - g) **Changes should be implemented from 2012/13** (Q14: 75% agreement with 25% against).

Table 1: Overall Results- Questions 3,7 & 10 require further consultation									
Question	Topic	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	strongly agree	overall disagree	overall agree	number of responses
Q. 1	15/30 credits for all year 1 & 2	2	0	1	5	4	17%	75%	12
Q. 2	2 symmetrical 12 week teaching blocks	1	1	0	3	6	18%	82%	11
Q. 3	30 credits taught across 3 terms examined year end	1	1	4	2	3	18%	45%	11
Q. 4	Teaching completed in block 1 assessment mid-year	1	1	2	4	3	18%	64%	11
Q. 5	One week earlier start-uninterrupted block of teaching	1	2	0	5	3	27%	73%	11
Q. 6	One week earlier start-facilitate overseas PGT	0	1	3	3	4	9%	64%	11
Q. 7	4 week teaching-free period at Christmas	1	1	3	3	4	17%	58%	12
Q. 8	2 week teaching free period in January for assessment feedback	2	1	1	3	5	25%	67%	12
Q. 9	Mid-year assessment best at start of term 2	3	0	0	6	3	25%	75%	12
Q. 10	4 week teaching-free period at Easter	1	1	4	2	4	17%	50%	12
Q. 11	15/30 credits will reduce admin load linked to small credits	1	1	4	1	4	18%	45%	11
Q. 12	15/30 credits will facilitate improved timetabling	1	0	4	3	4	8%	58%	12
Q. 13	15/30 credits offers significant gains in convening & admin work at school level	2	1	1	2	5	27%	64%	11
Q. 14	Changes to be implemented from 2012/13	2	1	0	3	6	25%	75%	12
Average score		1.4	0.9	1.9	3.2	4.1	16%	64%	11.5

Table 2: Social Science Cluster									
Question	Topic	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	strongly agree	overall disagree	overall agree	number of responses
Q. 1	15/30 credits for all year 1 & 2			1	3		0%	75%	4
Q. 2	2 symmetrical 12 week teaching blocks		1		2	1	25%	75%	4
Q. 3	30 credits taught across 3 terms examined year end		1		2	1	25%	75%	4
Q. 4	Teaching completed in block 1 assessment mid-year				3	1	0%	100%	4
Q. 5	One week earlier start-uninterrupted block of teaching		1		2	1	25%	75%	4
Q. 6	One week earlier start-facilitate overseas PGT			2	1	1	0%	50%	4
Q. 7	4 week teaching-free period at Christmas			1	2	1	0%	75%	4
Q. 8	2 week teaching free period in January for assessment feedback				3	1	0%	100%	4
Q. 9	Mid-year assessment best at start of term 2				3	1	0%	100%	4
Q. 10	4 week teaching-free period at Easter			2	1	1	0%	50%	4
Q. 11	15/30 credits will reduce admin load linked to small credits			3	1		0%	25%	4
Q. 12	15/30 credits will facilitate improved timetabling			2	2		0%	50%	4
Q. 13	15/30 credits offers significant gains in convening & admin work at school level		1		2	1	25%	75%	4
Q. 14	Changes to be implemented from 2012/13				2	2	0%	100%	4
Average score		-	0.3	0.8	2.1	0.9	7%	73%	4.0

Table 3: Arts & Humanities Cluster									
Question	Topic	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	strongly agree	overall disagree	overall agree	number of responses
Q. 1	15/30 credits for all year 1 & 2				1	2	0%	100%	3
Q. 2	2 symmetrical 12 week teaching blocks					3	0%	100%	3
Q. 3	30 credits taught across 3 terms examined year end	1		2			33%	0%	3
Q. 4	Teaching completed in block 1 assessment mid-year		1			2	33%	67%	3
Q. 5	One week earlier start-uninterrupted block of teaching				1	2	0%	100%	3
Q. 6	One week earlier start-facilitate overseas PGT					3	0%	100%	3
Q. 7	4 week teaching-free period at Christmas		1	1		1	33%	33%	3
Q. 8	2 week teaching free period in January for assessment feedback	1				2	33%	67%	3
Q. 9	Mid-year assessment best at start of term 2	1			1	1	33%	67%	3
Q. 10	4 week teaching-free period at Easter		1	1		1	33%	33%	3
Q. 11	15/30 credits will reduce admin load linked to small credits			1		2	0%	67%	3
Q. 12	15/30 credits will facilitate improved timetabling			1		2	0%	67%	3
Q. 13	15/30 credits offers significant gains in convening & admin work at school level	1				2	33%	67%	3
Q. 14	Changes to be implemented from 2012/13					3	0%	100%	3
Average score		0.3	0.2	0.4	0.2	1.9	17%	69%	3.0

Table 4: Science Cluster									
Question	Topic	strongly disagree	disagree	neither agree or disagree	agree	strongly agree	overall disagree	overall agree	number of responses
Q. 1	15/30 credits for all year 1 & 2	2			1	2	40%	60%	5
Q. 2	2 symmetrical 12 week teaching blocks	1			1	2	25%	75%	4
Q. 3	30 credits taught across 3 terms examined year end			2		2	0%	50%	4
Q. 4	Teaching completed in block 1 assessment mid-year	1		2	1		25%	25%	4
Q. 5	One week earlier start-uninterrupted block of teaching	1	1		2		50%	50%	4
Q. 6	One week earlier start-facilitate overseas PGT		1	1	2		25%	50%	4
Q. 7	4 week teaching-free period at Christmas	1		1	1	2	20%	60%	5
Q. 8	2 week teaching free period in January for assessment feedback	1	1	1		2	40%	40%	5
Q. 9	Mid-year assessment best at start of term 2	1		1	2	1	20%	60%	5
Q. 10	4 week teaching-free period at Easter	1		1	1	2	20%	60%	5
Q. 11	15/30 credits will reduce admin load linked to small credits	1	1			2	50%	50%	4
Q. 12	15/30 credits will facilitate improved timetabling	1			1	3	20%	80%	5
Q. 13	15/30 credits offers significant gains in convening & admin work at school level	1		1		2	25%	50%	4
Q. 14	Changes to be implemented from 2012/13	1	1		1	1	50%	50%	4
Average score		0.9	0.4	0.7	0.9	1.5	29%	54%	4.4

5. **Areas with a spread of responses that require further discussion include:**

- a) **Retaining the current 3 term structure** (Q3: 45% agreement with 18% against).
- b) **Four week teaching- free periods at student vacation times:** Christmas (Q7: 58% agreement with 17% against) and Easter (Q10: 50% agreement with only 17% against).

6. **Open questions** were also included (Q15-20) providing an opportunity for further insight into these responses:

a) **Improvements to the proposed changes (Q15) included:**

Social Science comments: The proposal could be improved by having two 'unbroken terms' by not splitting second teaching block with Easter vacation. Law requested being able to teach during mid-year assessment period. Economics suggested we should start the academic year earlier still.

Arts & Humanities comments: All courses should be structured in two parts rather than run throughout the year to maximise flexibility. HAHF suggests reducing mid-year exam period to one week then spring term of 12 consecutive weeks teaching followed by four week vacation and four week assessment period.

Science comments: E&D would like to retain the ability to assess courses taught entirely in the first block at the end of the year by inclusion of the word 'normally' in Q4; MPS requested to teach during the mid-year assessment period. Psychology propose that the second block of teaching is also uninterrupted by delaying spring vacation until after 12 week teaching block. School holidays should no longer be constrained by Easter.

b) **Aspects of the proposal that caused concerns (Q16) included:**

Social Science comments: Strong opposition to introduction of 3rd teaching term in summer-slightly awkward to having a few weeks teaching left in the summer term. Concerns that Marks Assurance meetings will be required following mid-year assessment with sit and resit opportunities causing increased administration. LPS are concerned at imbalance between the two teaching blocks with the Easter break making teaching delivery more difficult in the second block. LPS are also concerned at long teaching first term with CPE/PG Diploma students currently starting three weeks before normal start of teaching. LPS had major concerns about the possibility of a third teaching block from June to September. BMEc also raised this issue.

Arts & Humanities comments: The more we try to push ostensibly symmetrical 12 week blocks into a familiar 3 term structure the more we restrict students and staff. Concerns about the 6 week break in teaching over Christmas and the fear that the weeks of teaching after Easter will in reality be redundant, especially in years when Easter is late leaving only 1 or 2 weeks of teaching in the summer term. Concern that the University may not adequately invest in this change with adverse impact on preparations for the REF.

Science comments: Psychology are concerned that the 4 week break in the second teaching block will disrupt the momentum of teaching with the final 2-3 weeks of teaching likely to be disliked by staff and students. Informatics is concerned re essay deadlines set mid-week in the first week back after Christmas as students may have little time over Christmas due to family obligations resulting in poor performance. Scale of curriculum redesign is likely to have negative impact on the REF. Engineering are concerned about earlier start and clash of admin work with resit boards. MPS share the concern re workloads involved in curriculum redesign

estimated at 9 weeks per faculty member. Need to allow study time between end of teaching and start of exams. MPS want to retain 26 weeks of teaching. MPS also has concerns re University's course and programme management database and capacity within the academic office.

c) Comments on the inter-term teaching free periods at Christmas and Easter (Q17) included:

Social Science comments: BMEc suggest 4 weeks each. LPS suggest 3-4 weeks each. GS want to retain 4 weeks and to stay in line with school holidays. LPS agree 3-4 weeks each. ESW support 4 week break at Christmas but raise concerns about teaching flow in second block especially in years 1 and 2.

Arts & Humanities comments: MFM recommend four weeks in both cases for research purposes. HAHP recommend 3 weeks at Christmas and 4 at Easter. English advise 4 weeks at Christmas and 2 at Easter to reduce the break in teaching in the second block.

Science comments: MPS see no reason to change the existing structure. Psychology proposes 2-3 weeks for both. Informatics are concerned that exam week in January will increase admin load and disrupt research time. E&D don't hold strong views on this- happy for students to be consulted.

d) Issues that may impact differently on PG provision (Q18) included:

Social Science comments: GS are concerned that earlier start date may shorten period for acquiring visas.

Arts & Humanities comments: MFM raise possible difficulties for PGT in terms of when dissertation work might start. English have concerns about MA teaching in the third term. HAHP feel that History will need to be modularised around discrete blocks.

Science comments: MPS spread teaching for PGT over 30 weeks- the suggestion of a third teaching period is unattractive leading to 36 weeks of PGT teaching with the same or fewer resources is a move in the wrong direction. Informatics suggests a few positives for PGR. Concerns were expressed about third teaching block of 12 weeks for PGT detracting from project work. E&D are concerned re impact of earlier start in the year on PGT recruitment.

e) Changes that could be refined to increase benefits to research (Q19) included:

Social Science comments: BMEc suggest finishing academic year earlier. GS suggest allowing staff to concentrate teaching in one semester. LPS want a clearer statement that a third teaching block is not envisaged. Also to note Easter and September are busy conference periods. ESW suggest finishing earlier in the summer provides staff with a longer teaching free period for research and writing. ESW also state that conferences take place from Easter onwards so that a longer Easter may not necessarily help staff attend conferences.

Arts & Humanities comments: English propose that teaching should be more focussed to allow research to be conducted without interruption by other duties. HAHP suggested starting even earlier to allow assessment period before Christmas immediately after 12 week teaching block. HAHP also suggest reducing the Christmas break so that 12 week second block can be delivered followed by one month break and a one month assessment period offering a lengthy period for a third summer term.

Science comments: MPS could not identify any modifications that would benefit research. Psychology suggests keeping teaching restricted to 2 compact blocks should help research.

f) Any other comments (Q20) included:

Social Science comments: BMEc have general concerns raised by staff at other institutions who have undertaken similar processes with major upheaval and little benefits. They are fearful of impact on REF preparation. LPS expressed difficulty in responding as views in each department are wide-ranging and far from unanimous. Law could see additional benefit to students spending one semester abroad. ESW suggest there is an argument for keeping courses of 5 and 10 credits for pedagogic reasons as smaller introductory courses. However, they also state that with students entering with high A level grades, introductory courses of 15 and 30 credits may be more appropriate. Education states that it has had success in teaching non-traditional WP students who do well on 'fat' courses of 30 credits at Level 1 that encourages a deep engagement from the beginning.

Arts & Humanities comments: MFM have concerns that links with Brighton festival may be affected by the changing shape of the academic year and want reassurance that the summer term will still be regarded as dedicated research time for Faculty.

Science comments: MPS are concerned by the reduction of UG teaching from 26 to 24 weeks. Issue of professional body approval of programmes was raised with previous arguments against restructuring restated. Informatics state that course options need to stay discrete and that V/E students unlikely to stay for exams in January. Issue of professional body approval were also raised.

7. The consultation with staff has confirmed that there is a great deal of support for a revised academic year structure incorporating a mid-year assessment period. The proposal has been altered following consultation with staff and TLC is asked to consider each of the following recommendations, with those noted * currently subject to consultation with students:
 - i. That a standardised and simplified credit structures of 15 and 30 credits should be introduced for all year 1 and 2 courses (this is consistent with previous decision of Senate for year 3 and Masters courses).
 - ii. That this simplification is best achieved by delivery through two symmetrical 12 week teaching blocks.
 - iii. Plans for a third teaching block should not be included in the new academic year structure to preserve this period for research.
 - iv. *Courses entirely taught in the first teaching block should normally, but not necessarily, be assessed by the end of the first assessment period.
 - v. * The academic year should be started one week earlier than at present to enable delivery of a 12 week uninterrupted teaching block before Christmas.
 - vi. * A five week 'teaching free period' should be allowed over Christmas to incorporate a 3 week vacation and a 2 week mid-year 'teaching free' period immediately prior to the start of the second teaching block.
 - vii. * The second twelve week teaching block should be taught uninterrupted by Easter (other than public holidays over the long weekend).
 - viii. * A four week 'teaching free period' should be allowed in Spring immediately after the second teaching block.
 - ix. The second assessment period should be extended to accommodate a further 5 weeks (in addition to the mid-year assessment week making 6 in total) to allow Schools who wish to extend teaching of year 1 and 2 students

to 26 weeks, allowing for a week break prior to 2 weeks of assessment. All other schools can concentrate their assessment period to finish earlier.

- x. These changes should be implemented from 2012/13.

The current academic year structure, the model that was the subject of the staff consultation and the final proposed model (in line with recommendations above) are reproduced in **Figure 1** for comparison.

Figure 1: New Models projected for 2012/13 and 2013/14 sessions against published calendar

2012-13				2013-14			
	Existing Pattern	Model 1- staff consultation	New Model 2		Existing Pattern	Model 1- staff consultation	New Model 2
week begins				week begins			
03/09/2012				02/09/2013			
10/09/2012				09/09/2013			
17/09/2012				16/09/2013			
24/09/2012	T1	T1	T1	23/09/2013	T1	T1	T1
01/10/2012	T2	T2	T2	30/09/2013	T2	T2	T2
08/10/2012	T3	T3	T3	07/10/2013	T3	T3	T3
15/10/2012	T4	T4	T4	14/10/2013	T4	T4	T4
22/10/2012	T5	T5	T5	21/10/2013	T5	T5	T5
29/10/2012	T6	T6	T6	28/10/2013	T6	T6	T6
05/11/2012	T7	T7	T7	04/11/2013	T7	T7	T7
12/11/2012	T8	T8	T8	11/11/2013	T8	T8	T8
19/11/2012	T9	T9	T9	18/11/2013	T9	T9	T9
26/11/2012	T10	T10	T10	25/11/2013	T10	T10	T10
03/12/2012	T11	T11	T11	02/12/2013	T11	T11	T11
10/12/2012	T12	T12	T12	09/12/2013	T12	T12	T12
17/12/2012				16/12/2013			
24/12/2012				23/12/2013			
31/12/2012				30/12/2013			
07/01/2013	T11		A1 (mid-week Marking)	06/01/2014	T11		A1 (mid-week Marking)
14/01/2013	T12	A1 & Marking	T1	13/01/2014	T12	A1 & Marking	T1
21/01/2013	T13	T1	T2	20/01/2014	T13	T1	T2
28/01/2013	T14	T2	T3	27/01/2014	T14	T2	T3
04/02/2013	T15	T3	T4	03/02/2014	T15	T3	T4
11/02/2013	T16	T4	T5	10/02/2014	T16	T4	T5
18/02/2013	T17	T5	T6	17/02/2014	T17	T5	T6
25/02/2013	T18	T6	T7	24/02/2014	T18	T6	T7
04/03/2013	T19	T7	T8	03/03/2014	T19	T7	T8
11/03/2013	T20	T8	T9	10/03/2014	T20	T8	T9
18/03/2013		T9	T10	17/03/2014		T9	T10
25/03/2013			T11	24/03/2014		T10	T11
01/04/2013			T12	31/03/2014			
08/04/2013				07/04/2014			
15/04/2013	T21			14/04/2014	T21		
22/04/2013	T22			21/04/2014	T22		
29/04/2013	T23	T10		28/04/2014	T23	T11	
06/05/2013	T24	T11		05/05/2014	T24	T12	
13/05/2013	A1	A2	A2	12/05/2014	A1	A2	A2
20/05/2013	A2	A3	A3	19/05/2014	A2	A3	A3
27/05/2013	A3	A4	A4	26/05/2014	A3	A4	A4
03/06/2013	A4	A5	A5	02/06/2014	A4	A5	A5
10/06/2013	A5	A6	A6	09/06/2014	A5	A6	A6
17/06/2013	A6			16/06/2014	A6		
24/06/2013				23/06/2014			

Key:		Induction
		Teaching week
		Assessment week (with unseen exams)
Notes:	Good Friday 29/3/13 Easter Monday 1/4/13	
	Good Friday 18/4/14 Easter Monday 21/4/14	

CONSULTATION ON THE STRUCTURE OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR

Autumn Term 2010

1. At its meeting on 22 September Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC) considered a report from the Senate Working Group on the Structure of the Academic Year and it was agreed that there should be a further consultation exercise, this term, on proposals to change the structure of the academic year. This note sets out the issues under consideration, and provides a number of questions to which the School TLCs are asked to respond, via their Heads of School. To provide further clarification on the proposed model a list of frequently asked questions has been included.
2. **The deadline for responses is the end of week 6.** A report on responses will be presented to the TLC meeting in week 8, with a final paper submitted to Senate in week 10.
3. A separate consultation exercise is being arranged for students. This will aim to feed student views back to schools via their student representatives, but we anticipate that a final report on the student responses will be received by Senate at its week 10 meeting.

The Proposal

4. **Figure 1** outlines the proposed structure of the Academic Year against the current published dates. In summary the change being proposed is to move to a new structure with two 12 week teaching periods, overlaid on the University's existing 3 terms with a mid-year 2 week teaching free period to facilitate assessment and feedback; for introduction from academic year 2012-13. Although this change is driven largely by the opportunities it allows to greatly improve the delivery of standard full-time undergraduate programmes (and consequent benefits for research activity), it is envisaged that a third 12 week teaching block, running from June to September, may need to be developed to support taught postgraduate provision particularly where this does not follow a traditional dissertation/major project route. This possible third teaching period would also raise opportunities for the delivery of non-standard 2 year undergraduate programmes depending on individual school aspirations.

The Key Drivers and Context for the Proposal

5. The key drivers and context for this proposal are provided in the following appendices:
Appendix 1: The paper put to TLC last month – TLC/13/9
Appendix 2: An extract from Senate papers following previous consultation in 2009
6. The change proposed is a major enabling factor for the simplification of taught credit structures. By creating two equal teaching periods it allows for a rationalisation of the number of courses delivered while maintaining credit volumes. This will allow a more cost effective use of centrally timetabled teaching space where the current pressures are in danger of constraining plans for growth at school level.
7. By providing a 2 week mid-year teaching free period for assessment and marking the change may facilitate timely feedback to students within the agreed 15 working day period and allow schools to take the necessary lead in making improvements to the quality of assessment and feedback in response to student views recorded in NSS 2010.

Outline of the Academic Year Structure Proposed

8. Teaching will **start earlier usually by one week**, usually in last week of September. It should be noted that the pattern shown in **Figure 1** for 2013-14 is exceptional, appearing to start two weeks earlier, because of the Easter public holidays falling exceptionally late.
9. The **first 12 week teaching block** will then run for 12 weeks during **term 1**.
10. This will be followed by a **4 week break over the Christmas** period. The change proposed retains a 4 week vacation for students in response to student comments received during the last consultation.
11. At the start of **term 2** there will be a **2 week teaching-free period** (termed weeks A1 and Marking), available for unseen exams and for marking. No unseen exams will take place before the Wednesday of the first week to account for students with childcare responsibilities over the vacation period, and for international students whose travel plans might be delayed.
12. It is assumed that the submission dates for assessed work relating to teaching completed in block 1 will be spread over the period between the final weeks of the autumn term and no later than the Friday of the first week of the teaching-free period (week A1). The intention here is that wherever possible the clustering of submission dates for individual students must be avoided unless there is a pedagogical justification; and heads of schools will be asked separately to keep this issue under review.
13. The **second teaching block** will commence in the last week of January, running for 12 weeks, interrupted by a **4 week break over the Easter period**.
14. The break in teaching over the Easter period will be scheduled each year so as to match the local school and public holidays so as to support those staff and students with childcare responsibilities. A 4 week break is being proposed in the light of the earlier consultation with students, and faculty comments. It will provide for faculty to attend research conferences, traditionally held in this period, and for students to undertake field work, if appropriate to their courses.
15. Following teaching period 2, an **assessment period of 4 weeks** (weeks A2-A5) will allow the traditional UG taught year to end in mid June, which may enable an earlier diet of graduation events in early July.

Key Benefits

16. The proposed structure facilitates the following desirable changes in the handling of credit structures, and importantly has the potential to impact on assessment:
 - a. A change of year 1 and 2 undergraduate courses to credit sizes of 15 or 30 credits, in line with existing policy for year 3 and Masters courses. This will remove anomalies linked to risks that 36 credit courses might unduly block students from progression. More importantly, it will allow a reduction in the number of small credit courses which will reduce the burden on timetabling and associated course administration loads (see in particular paragraphs 11 and 12 of **Appendix 1**).
 - b. Whilst 30 credit courses will continue to allow the flexibility for delivery across one or two teaching periods (often termed “short fat” or “long thin” courses respectively), 15 credit courses will be taught in a single 12 week teaching block, allowing assessment to be completed in the assessment period following that teaching block. This will be in line with Senate’s decision following the previous consultation period that “schools should ensure a direct

relationship between the timing of teaching and timing of assessment”
(S/223/M minute 6.3).

17. An additional possible advantage of the new structure of the academic year is the scope to accommodate retrieval opportunities (for example sit or re-sit assessment events) following the first assessment period (week A1). Further work will be required to fully realise these opportunities, but this potential flexibility is particularly attractive.

Questions for Consultation

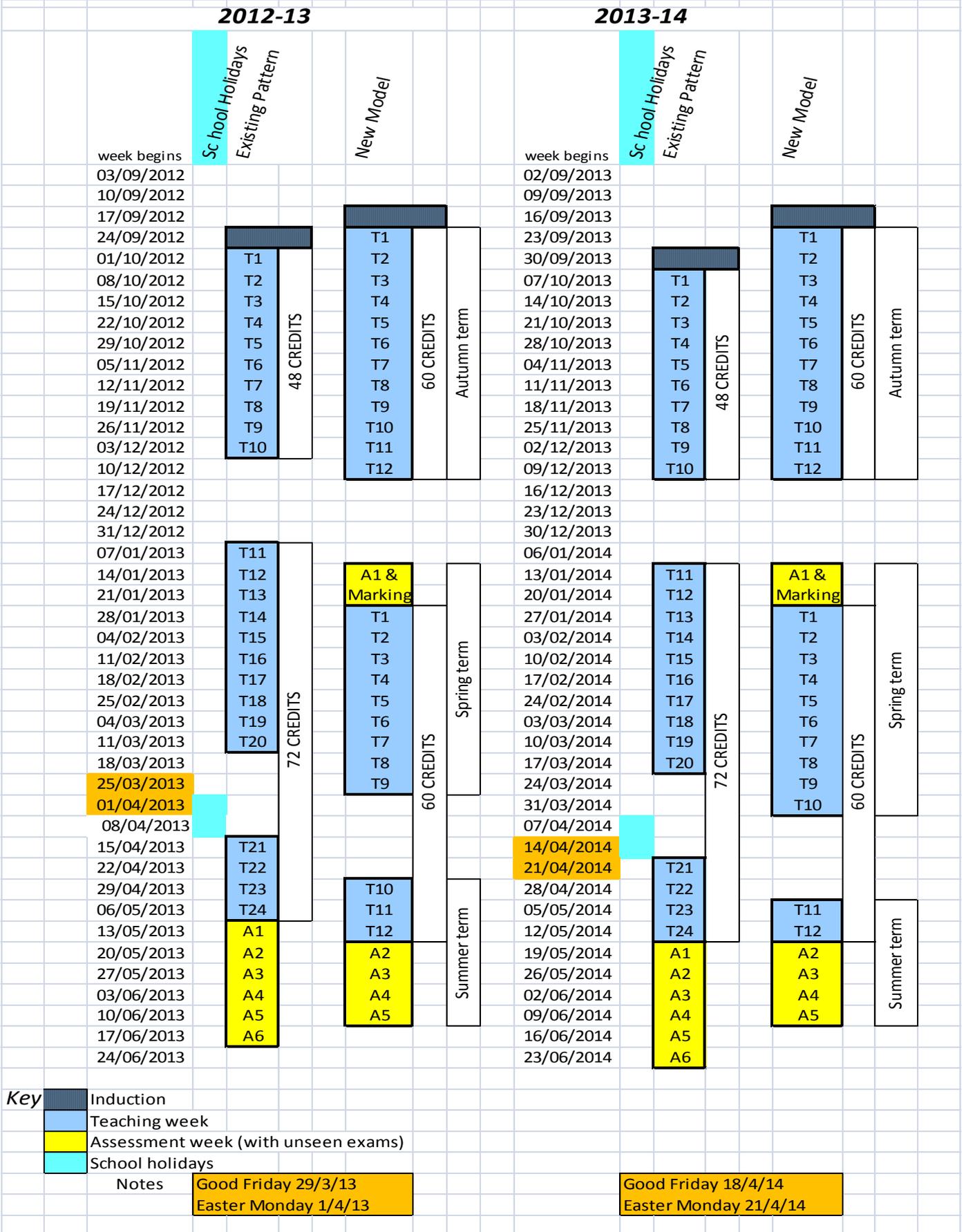
18. A list of questions for response is attached. Teaching and Learning Committees are asked to respond to these questions, through their Heads of School, who will coordinate a single response for their school, by the end of week 6. Responses should be submitted by or on behalf of Heads of Schools directly to PVC(T&L) Clare Mackie, with a copy to Ms Sam Riordan.

Professor Clare Mackie

PVC Teaching and Learning

October 15th 2010

Figure 1: New Model projected for 2012/13 and 2013/14 sessions against published calendar



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Q: Why did Senate not agree to the proposal to restructure in 2009?

A: The key objections discussed at Senate in 2009 were:

- The proposed cost of change at a time when the institution was embedding new school structures.
- The perception in some schools that any reduction in the number of teaching weeks would not allow delivery of the full curriculum - the 2 models proposed at that time resulted in a reduction in teaching weeks from 24 to 22 weeks.
- There was a clear majority of schools who supported a simplification of credit structures but felt that if major changes were to be made the 2011-12 academic year was too soon.
- Students were quite keen to have a mid-year assessment period, however there was no consensus as to whether this was before or after the Christmas break.
- Students were against any shortening of the Christmas or Easter holiday period.

2. Q: Why bring forward a new proposal to restructure at this time?

A: We feel that the new proposal addresses many of the original concerns: it retains the 24 week academic structure; provides for assessment to be phased by Schools before and after the Christmas vacation; provides a 2 week mid-year teaching free period to facilitate quality and timely feedback by Faculty and retains the 4 week teaching-free period for both Christmas and Easter. External factors have also changed in that the REF has been moved to December 2013 and the possibility of deregulation has moved nearer post-Browne such that timetabling may become the rate limiting step to Schools aspiring to grow. Finally, School Periodic Review has been suspended for 2 years to enable the new School structures to bed down - this needs to be reinstated and we have an opportunity to combine this with portfolio review during 2011 such that the revised programmes based on the new credit structure could be validated in one step without the need for extensive paperwork linked to course changes.

3. Q: Is this really semesterisation under another guise?

A: No. Strictly, semesterisation usually involves all assessment being taken at the end of a blocked teaching period. Such structures are usually 15 week blocks with 12 weeks teaching, 1 week reading week and 2 weeks of assessment followed by a holiday before repeating this during a second 15 week semester.

The model proposed here for Sussex retains the 3-term structure which allows us to teach across the 3 terms and to plan vacations linked to local and public holidays. It is anticipated that Faculty will mainly teach 30 credit courses across all 3 terms and hold unseen examinations at the end of this period hence the scheduled 4 week assessment period at the year-end compared to only one week of assessment in January. However, the two blocks of teaching will also allow Faculty to teach 15 and 30 credit courses in one block which could be helpful for both visiting students, placement students and Faculty study leave. In addition it may permit repeating an option in each block in areas of high demand.

4. Q: Would exam boards meet at the end of the first teaching period?

A: No. A mid-year consideration of whether students can progress with their studies is not being proposed. There may be scope to formally ratify marks from teaching period 1 but these would still be subject to final consideration by the exams boards in the summer.

5. Q: Why not shorten the vacation breaks at Christmas and/or Easter?

A: The proposal responds to views from students and staff during the previous consultation period and since. However the length of these breaks is open to consideration as part of this current consultation period.

6. Q: Why implement from 2012-13?

A: An earlier implementation would be unreasonable given that the admissions cycle for 2012 is already underway. A later implementation would raise the possibility of detracting from preparations for the 2013 REF submission date.

7. Q: Will this benefit the University's research position?

A: Yes, in the longer term by organising teaching into two teaching blocks it may be easier to accommodate faculty research plans including research leave where these are part of an agreed plan.

8. Q: Will this harm the University's preparations for the REF?

A: School Periodic Review has been suspended for the past 2 years – it cannot be deferred to 2014 to avoid the REF. By combining portfolio review and periodic review it is felt that this change can be achieved without undermining preparations for the REF submission date of 2013. It will be a condition of detailed implementation planning to mitigate against this risk.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Q1-14 - LIKERT SCALE FROM 1-5 FROM STRONGLY DISAGREE TO STRONGLY AGREE

1. We should standardise and simplify the credit structure for UG year 1 and 2 courses into 15 and 30 credits.
2. This simplification is best achieved by delivery through two symmetrical 12 week teaching blocks.
3. We should retain the current 3 term structure facilitating 30 credit courses to be taught across all 3 terms (if pedagogically desirable) with final assessment at the year end.
4. If 15 or 30 credit courses are entirely taught in the first teaching block all assessment (coursework and/or unseen exams) should be completed by the end of the first assessment period.
5. We should accommodate a one week earlier start to the first teaching block to facilitate teaching in one uninterrupted block prior to Christmas vacation.
6. We should accommodate a one week earlier start to the first teaching block to facilitate a 12 month academic year which would allow overseas PGT graduates to remain for an additional 4 month period (If < 12 months – period to remain is limited to an additional 2 months often preventing attendance at winter graduation).
7. We should retain a 4 week teaching-free period at Christmas.
8. We should accommodate a 2 week teaching free period mid-year to facilitate assessment and feedback.
9. This mid-year assessment period is best located at the start of term 2 so as not to disrupt student attendance or flow of teaching in block 2.
10. We should retain a 4 week teaching-free period at Easter.
11. The simplification of the credit structure will significantly reduce the administrative load linked to processing of data linked to small credit rated courses.
12. We accept that reduced course numbers enabled by the proposed credit structure will facilitate improved timetabling.
13. A standard 15 and 30 credit structure offers significant gains in term of convening and administrative work at School level.
14. Overall, and subject to more detailed implementation planning over the spring term, any necessary changes should be implemented from 2012-13.

Questions 15-20 - open box for comment

15. Do you wish to propose any improvements to the proposed changes?
16. Is there any aspect of the proposal that causes you great concern?
17. Please comment on the optimum length of inter-term teaching free periods at (a) Christmas and (b) Easter
18. Are there particular issues in the proposals that impact differently on postgraduate and undergraduate provision?
19. Can you see any way that these changes could be refined to increase the benefits to research activity?
20. Do you have any other comments?

Appendix 4

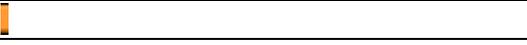
Student Consultation on academic year structure

23rd November- 3rd December 2010: 579 respondents.

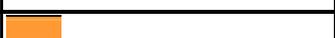
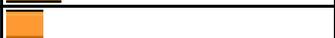
1. Which School (or equivalent) do you belong to?			
Business, Management and Economics:		7.6%	44
Education and Social Work:		1.2%	7
Engineering and Design:		2.8%	16
English:		7.1%	41
Global Studies:		15.0%	87
History, Art History and Philosophy:		9.3%	54
Informatics:		3.8%	22
IDS:		0.2%	1
Centre for Language Studies:		0.9%	5
Law, Politics and Sociology:		11.1%	64
Life Science:		23.8%	138
Mathematical and Physical Sciences:		9.8%	57
Media, Film and Music:		2.2%	13
Psychology:		5.2%	30

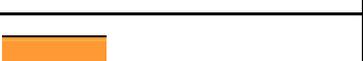
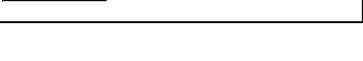
2. What is your year or level of study?			
Foundation Year:		1.0%	6
1st Year Undergraduate:		35.1%	203
2nd Year Undergraduate:		25.2%	146
3rd Year Undergraduate:		23.1%	134
4th Year Undergraduate:		3.3%	19
Visiting or Exchange Year:		0.5%	3
Postgraduate Taught:		7.4%	43
Postgraduate Research:		4.3%	25

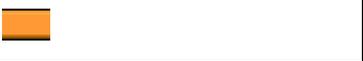
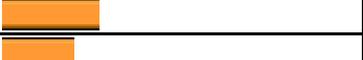
3. Are you a:			
Home (UK) Student:		77.5%	444
Non-UK European Union Student:		14.7%	84
Overseas (non-EU) Student:		7.9%	45

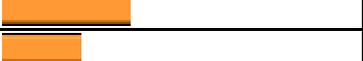
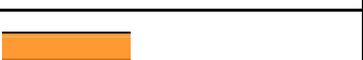
4. Do you consider yourself to have a disability (including learning difficulties such as dyslexia) that is covered by the Disability Discrimination Act?			
Yes:		9.1%	52
No:		90.0%	514
I don't know:		0.9%	5

5. Do you have caring responsibilities, e.g. children, or others who depend on you on a regular basis?			
Yes:		4.0%	23
No:		96.0%	551
I don't know:		0.0%	0

6. How do you fund your studies?			
Student loan:		n/a	420
Other types of loan:		n/a	14
Paid work during term:		n/a	156
Paid work during vacations:		n/a	184
Support from parent(s), partner or other patron(s):		n/a	263
Student grant:		n/a	164
Scholarship or Bursary from the University:		n/a	119
Savings:		n/a	137
Other (please specify):		n/a	13

7. As you can see in the diagram the proposal is that term would start one week earlier than it does currently. Do you:			
Strongly agree with this proposed change:		11.1%	64
Largely agree with this proposed change:		19.2%	111
Not mind either way:		30.4%	176
Largely disagree with this proposed change:		20.9%	121
Strongly disagree with this proposed change:		18.5%	107

8. As you can see in the diagram, beginning the teaching block one week earlier and ending one week later, would allow for a 12-week block of teaching before Christmas. Do you:			
Strongly agree with this proposed change:		10.4%	60
Largely agree with this proposed change:		18.3%	106
Not mind either way:		14.3%	83
Largely disagree with this proposed change:		31.8%	184
Strongly disagree with this proposed change:		25.2%	146

9. As you can see in the diagram, in the proposed new structure, there is a two-week assessment and feedback period following the Christmas Vacation. You can read more about this proposal by clicking on 'more info'. Having read the information do you:			
Strongly agree with this proposed change:		17.3%	100
Largely agree with this proposed change:		22.6%	131
Not mind either way:		14.7%	85
Largely disagree with this proposed change:		22.5%	130
Strongly disagree with this proposed change:		23.0%	133

10. As you can see in the diagram, there is a four-week Christmas Vacation. How do you feel about this? You can read more about this proposal by clicking on 'more info'. Would you prefer to:

Keep 4 weeks vacation at Christmas, followed by an assessment period:		29.5%	171
Have 3 weeks vacation at Christmas, followed by an assessment period:		4.8%	28
Have 3 weeks vacation at Christmas, followed by a prescribed week to prepare for assessment:		15.2%	88
Keep it the way it is now, with 4 weeks for Christmas, and examinations in the Summer:		44.0%	255
I do not mind:		6.4%	37

11. As you can see in the diagram, the teaching for the year is split into two teaching blocks, and the block after Christmas is split by the Easter Holidays. Would you prefer:

12 weeks teaching, spread either side of the Easter vacation (which could move according to where Easter falls):		31.6%	183
A complete 12 weeks of teaching followed by the Easter vacation:		10.2%	59
Neither, I like everything the way it is:		49.7%	288
I don't mind:		8.5%	49

12. As you can see in the diagram, the proposal is to keep a four week vacation over Easter. Would you prefer:

2 weeks:		5.0%	29
3 weeks:		14.3%	83
4 weeks:		63.2%	366
I don't mind:		17.4%	101

13. As you can see in the diagram, in the proposed new structure, there will be two teaching blocks, equally weighted in terms of credits, with 60 credits in each. Do you:

Strongly agree with this proposed change:		16.4%	95
Largely agree with this proposed change:		19.2%	111
Not mind either way:		30.9%	179
Largely disagree with this proposed change:		17.6%	102
Strongly disagree with this proposed change:		15.9%	92

14. Overall, what do you think about the proposed changes?			
I think the changes would be a good thing:		16.1%	93
I think that the proposals are a good idea in principle, but they need further adjustment on the detail:		29.9%	173
I'm undecided, am not sure, or think the changes would not make much difference:		14.0%	81
No thanks, I think the existing structure should be kept:		40.1%	232

15. Do you feel that you have been adequately consulted on these proposals? On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is poor and 10 is excellent, how would you rate this consultation process?			
1 poor:		10.7%	62
2:		4.5%	26
3:		8.1%	47
4:		6.0%	35
5:		11.6%	67
6:		11.2%	65
7:		18.3%	106
8:		16.2%	94
9:		5.7%	33
10 excellent:		7.6%	44

Acknowledgements:

Student Union Officers: Lita Wallis and Jo Goodman

Sam Riordan, Head of Academic Registry

Dr Anne Hole, Education Developer, TLDU

Appendix 5

Key features of revised Academic Year Structure together with consultation responses (staff and students)

Note: Text underlined illustrates where a change has been made to final proposals in response to consultation

19. That a standardised and simplified credit structures of 15 and 30 credits should be introduced for all year 1 and 2 courses (this is consistent with previous decision of Senate for year 3 and Masters courses).

Staff consultation: 75% agreement with 17% against

20. That this simplification is best achieved by delivery through two symmetrical 12 week teaching blocks

Staff consultation: 82% agreement with 18% against

Student consultation: 36% agreement with 33% against and 31% don't mind

21. That a 2 week teaching free period be set aside for assessment and marking and that this is best located at the start of the spring term.

Staff consultation: 67% agree with 18% against mid-year assessment with 75% agreeing location at the start of spring term with 25% against.

Student consultation: 40% agreement with 45% disagree and 15% don't mind

22. Courses entirely taught in the first teaching block should normally, but not necessarily, be assessed by the end of the first assessment period.

Staff consultation: 64% agreement with 18% against and good made case for exceptions related to pedagogy.

Student consultation: n/a

23. The academic year should be started one week earlier than at present to enable delivery of a 12 week uninterrupted teaching block before Christmas.

Staff consultation: 73% agreement with 18% against

Student consultation: (a) one week earlier - 30% agree with 40% against and 30% don't mind and (b) 12-week blocks – 29% agree with 57% against and 14% don't mind

24. A five week 'teaching free period' should be allowed over Christmas to incorporate a 3 week vacation and a 2 week mid-year 'teaching free' period immediately prior to the start of the second teaching block.

Staff consultation: 58% agreement for 4 week holiday at Christmas, however concerns expressed that 6 week teaching free would be too long- TLC agreed 5 weeks teaching free as maximum.

Student consultation: 30% agreed 4-week vacation followed by assessment period, 44% preferred current position with exams in Summer.

25. The second twelve week teaching block should be taught uninterrupted by Easter (other than public holidays over the long weekend)

Staff consultation: Only 45% agreed to retaining the 3 term structure with the majority concerned at one month break to second block of teaching- TLC agreed uninterrupted block of teaching with the exception of a short Easter break aligned to local holidays.

Student consultation: 50% prefer no change, 32% preference for 'moveable' Easter

26. A four week 'teaching free period' should be allowed in Spring immediately after the second teaching block.

Staff consultation: 50% agreement to 4 weeks holiday at Easter- this has been revised to 1 week at Easter followed by 3 weeks at the end of teaching.

Student consultation: 63% in favour of 4-week Easter break

27. These changes should be implemented from 2012/13.

Staff consultation: 75% agreement with 25% against

Student consultation: