

University of Manchester

Faculty of Humanities

Guidelines for Joint Honours Programmes

Joint Honours (JH) programmes can, by their very nature, prove difficult to administer. The aim of this paper is to provide guidelines, drawn on current practice within the Faculty and the experience of those running JH programmes. For JH where the two subject areas fall within one School, many of the guidelines here will not apply, though in some cases, 'School' can be replaced by 'discipline group' (or equivalent) within a School. For JH which cross Schools, we have used the term Admitting School for the School which bears administrative responsibility, and Partner School for the other party to the JH programme.

Difficulties sometimes arise simply as a result of information not being communicated in time between Schools. Below is a list of bullet points to help avoid problems.

- Responsibility for each JH programme rests with the Admitting School.
- Each JH programme should be allocated a Programme Director, and named administrative support, normally within the Admitting School.
- For JH which span more than one School, there should be one person (academic or administrative) in the Partner School who has special responsibility for the JH and who acts as contact person for the Programme Director.
- There should be one dedicated handbook for the JH programme, or alternatively, students on JH programmes should receive two programme handbooks, one from each School (or Discipline).
- If there is one JH handbook, the Admitting School is responsible for putting the information together, this includes ensuring that relevant information from the Partner School is received, through the JH contact person. A draft version of the handbook should be sent to the contact person in the Partner School in good time to allow comments to be made and acted upon before the final version is printed.
- If students receive two separate handbooks, the Programme Director will be responsible for ensuring that handbooks are exchanged with the contact person in the Partner School in good time to allow comments to be made and acted upon before the final version is printed. Both handbooks must make explicit mention of the JH, and the programme handbook from the Admitting School must contain detailed information about the structure of the programme.
- Each JH programme should be the responsibility of a programme committee, usually within the Admitting School, but some JH will have a separate programme committee with equal representation between the two Schools. It

is not necessary to have a separate programme committee for each JH programme, but JH can be dealt with by a programme committee that also deals with other single or joint honours programmes, so long as each programme can be given due attention.

- Changes to programmes should be dealt with by the programme committee and, if necessary, communicated to the Partner School immediately. The partner School must communicate smaller changes, e.g. in reading lists, to the Admitting School, so that these can be passed on to students.
- Under the current system, it is the Partner School's responsibility to pass on exam results to the Admitting School as soon as they are available. Once the new student records system becomes operational, the results can be expected to be accessible to the Admitting School as soon as they have been entered.
- Boards of Examiners (BoE) can be arranged in a parallel way to the programme committee, either as a JH committee or as part of the BoE of the Admitting School. In the latter case, the contact person in the Partner School should be invited to attend the BoE. The responsibility for decisions relating to progression and degree classification rests with this BoE, so that if this is within the Admitting School, then that School has the final power of decision. In order to ensure consistency, decisions relating to special circumstances pertaining to specific course units will normally be taken by the special circumstances committee of the Admitting School.
- Each JH student should have a personal tutor. Tutors would normally be allocated from the Admitting School, but each student should also have a contact person in the Partner School.
- In the induction week, first year students should have a meeting in both Schools and the timing of the two meetings needs to be communicated between the Programme Director and the contact person in the Partner School in order to avoid clashes.
- JH students need to be made aware of how they register for course units in the Partner School, this holds also for pre-registration for second and subsequent years.

Some students of JH programmes may lack the sense of belonging to a School enjoyed by single honours students. Anything that can be done to mitigate this and aid retention is encouraged. Drawing again on experience from within the Faculty, the following may be of help:

- Where possible, JH students should receive peer mentors who are on the JH programmes themselves, and appreciate their situation. The peer mentors can then help especially in induction week and with registration, a process which is more complex for JH students.
- For larger JH programmes, a dedicated induction programme, introductory library tour and separate staff-student meetings may be feasible.

Whilst the above may seem obvious as examples of good practice, it is hopefully useful to have a list drawing on current practice, experience and concerns within Schools operating JH programmes within the Faculty.

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