PASS/FAIL ONLY COURSES

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(November 20, 2013)

This is to initiate discussion on an issue that has not (to my knowledge) previously been addressed. The University has a well defined procedure for dealing with academic misconduct. There are various penalties possible; for most cases the appropriate one is to reduce the mark of the work affected, possibly to 0. This allows for a gradation that reflects the seriousness of the misconduct under question. However this is not possible with courses that have no marks but are only given a pass/fail result (this applies to the MSc courses IRR and IRP).

My view is that we should move away from having any credit bearing courses as pass/fail only. This is not only to allow for a gradation of penalties but it also recognises the possibility of an error in any system no matter how well run. As matters stand it is possible that a student is reported and a pass turned into a fail which could then imply no progression. This is particularly relevant for IRR and IRP as they are both 20 point courses. Punishment should be proportional to the offence. Any minor infringement on a pass/fail type course either has to be ignored or punished far too severely. The School Academic Misconduct Officer has no option about reporting an offence to College from third year upwards; if he/she is convinced that that an offence was committed then it must be reported no matter how minor.

The School should formulate a policy on this matter. It is true that returning a pass/fail is a little less work than deciding a mark but this seems a very poor basis for a policy. The work need not be doubled by insisting on second marking for courses, only for projects.