PROPOSED GUIDANCE ON PROCEDURES FOR RESIT ASSESSMENT FOR LEVEL 5 COURSES

1.1 The Committee considered the paper received from the College of Life Sciences and Medicine (CLSM) Graduate School regarding procedures for resit assessments for postgraduate taught courses. The Committee acknowledged the detail of the proposal, that all courses, with the exception of PUS017: Research Project would provide a resit assessment only in the form of an oral examination.

1.2 The Committee considered the feasibility of oral examinations as a form of assessment. The Committee agreed oral examinations are an appropriate form of assessment and, if appropriately set, can be a robust and sometimes more rigorous form of assessment. Members of the Committee agreed that oral examinations can allow students’ knowledge to be checked thoroughly and represents a flexible mode of assessment.

1.3 With regards to the specific proposal, however, the Committee noted concern as to whether an oral examination would be a suitable format for the courses listed. Members of the Committee noted that to impose an oral examination on students at the point of resit, when they may never have experienced an assessment in this format before, would be unfair and could potentially pose a more difficult resit than the original examination itself.

1.4 The Committee discussed the potential implications of the proposal for those students for whom English is not their first language. Some members of the Committee expressed concern that although oral examinations at this stage would allow those students who cannot articulate well in English on paper the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills, the problem of an unequal standard of assessment being set remained.

1.5 The Committee noted that there was no reference within the paper to the timeline of the resit examinations. The considered that if the time between the initial attempt and the resit assessment was too short, this would not afford the students concerned enough time to increase their knowledge and would deprive them of an opportunity to learn the course materials again. The Committee also noted concern relating to the practicalities of oral examinations as students will sit these assessments sequentially, unlike written examinations where all students sit a written assessment at the same time.

1.6 The Committee noted that in instances of borderline fails, an oral examination may be useful in acting as a viva to potentially bring the student up to a passing grade; however, it agreed that it would not be appropriate in instances when a student had outright failed to meet the learning outcomes of a course.
The Committee concluded that the proposal should not be approved. The Committee noted that the majority of students undertaking a resit examination would not previously have had exposure to such an in-depth oral assessment in that course and to ask them to do so at this stage would not be appropriate. The Committee added, however, that should individual courses, which do make use of oral forms of assessment at earlier stages, wish to propose resits of this nature, the Committee would be happy to consider them by way of an appropriate SENAS form.