HERIOT-WATT UNIVERSITY
ACADEMIC QUALITY

LEARNING AND TEACHING
BRIEFING PAPER 5 (VERSION 3)

DATE: FEBRUARY 2019
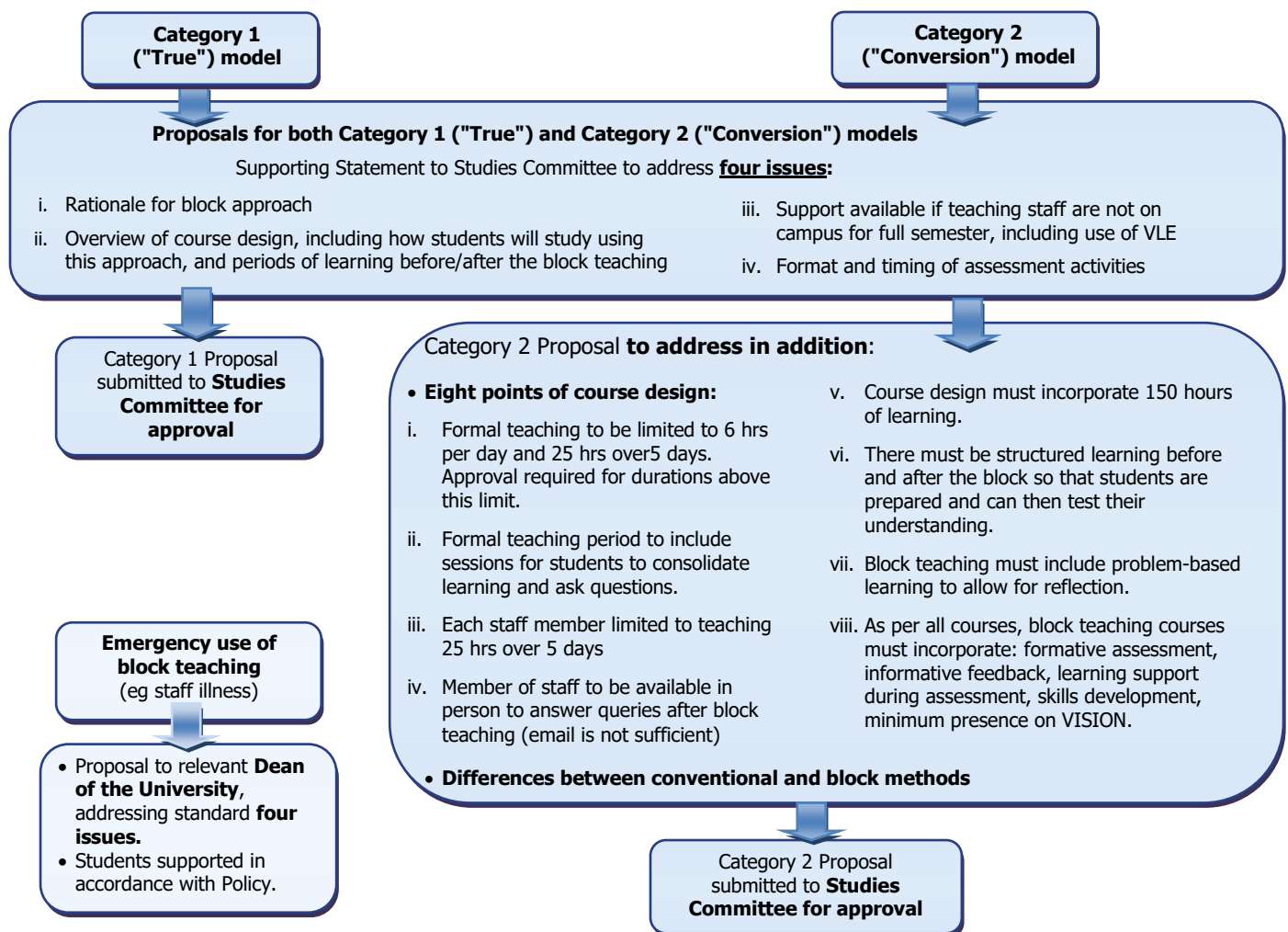(reissue of November 2012 version)

POLICY ON BLOCK TEACHING

Key Points

1. A University Policy on Block Teaching was introduced **at the start of session 2012/13**.

2. Block Teaching refers to any arrangement of classes where the teaching and student learning are compressed into in an **intensive block of a period between 1 to 6 weeks**.

3. All new and existing programmes must adhere to the University Policy on Block Teaching.

4. There are **two forms of block teaching**, both of which require approval of the Studies Committee:

   (1) "true" block teaching, where this is the most appropriate pedagogic model for a programme;
   (2) "conversion" of an on-campus/conventional delivery model to block teaching for practical purposes.

   The University Policy on Block Teaching focuses on the **"conversion"** type.

Block Teaching: Design and Approval

Category 1 ("True") model

Category 2 ("Conversion") model

Proposals for both Category 1 ("True") and Category 2 ("Conversion") models

Supporting Statement to Studies Committee to address **four issues**:

i. Rationale for block approach

ii. Overview of course design, including how students will study using this approach, and periods of learning before/after the block teaching

iii. Support available if teaching staff are not on campus for full semester, including use of VLE

iv. Format and timing of assessment activities

Category 1 Proposal submitted to **Studies Committee for approval**

Category 2 Proposal **to address in addition**:

- **Eight points of course design:**

i. Formal teaching to be limited to 6 hrs per day and 25 hrs over 5 days. Approval required for durations above this limit.

ii. Formal teaching period to include sessions for students to consolidate learning and ask questions.

iii. Each staff member limited to teaching 25 hrs over 5 days

iv. Member of staff to be available in person to answer queries after block teaching (email is not sufficient)

v. Course design must incorporate 150 hours of learning.

vi. There must be structured learning before and after the block so that students are prepared and can then test their understanding.

vii. Block teaching must include problem-based learning to allow for reflection.

viii. As per all courses, block teaching courses must incorporate: formative assessment, informative feedback, learning support during assessment, skills development, minimum presence on VISION.

- **Differences between conventional and block methods**

Emergency use of block teaching
(eg staff illness)

- Proposal to relevant **Dean of the University**, addressing standard **four issues.**
- Students supported in accordance with Policy.

Category 2 Proposal submitted to **Studies Committee for approval**

References and Further Information