

New and amended temporary Academic Regulations (Covid-19 pandemic) applicable to students impacted in the academic year 2019/20 only (undergraduate/taught postgraduate)

The temporary and amended regulations are to ensure all students are able to progress and/or complete their award. They have been designed around the principle of ensuring that no student is academically disadvantaged (or improperly advantaged) due to the Covid-19 pandemic. All measures agreed for this academic year are set out here in the temporary *Covid-19* Academic Regulations and approved by the Academic Board.

To ensure that qualifications hold their value at the point of their award and over time we are using the following principles:

- Attainment to date from qualifying levels of study will be used to set a benchmark against which student performance will be measured
- We will not award a credit-weighted average lower than the benchmark as long as students qualify to progress/graduate
- If insufficient credits have been completed to ascertain the benchmark then the benchmark is provisional until sufficient credit is accrued to confirm the benchmark
- The benchmark will be calculated after all assessment processes have been completed i.e. mitigation, malpractice etc
- The credit-weighted average will be compared to the benchmark and the higher of two will be awarded

The rationale for the approach taken for calculating the benchmark (and alternative award calculation) for undergraduate students is based on these general principles:

- To formulate an alternative approach that is simple, which has integrity, is transparent, easy to understand by all and easy to explain to students.
- To create a benchmark/alternative calculation that is based upon actual attainment to date in Semester 1, i.e. pre-pandemic and the move to remote on-line teaching.
- That the benchmark/alternative calculation is a comparator calculation and will always sit alongside the “normal” award calculation.
- That the benchmark/alternative calculation needs to be consistent and work when applied to this year’s finalists and future years’ finalists who have marks in their profiles, which were affected by the pandemic.
- Finalists this year and in future affected years will benefit from the higher result achieved after applying both the “normal” degree calculation and the benchmark/alternative calculation.
- This approach is in alignment with and in addition to a range of measures applicable to students this academic year, articulated in previous emails to students from the DVC (Student Experience) including, ‘blanket’ mitigating circumstances.
- The assumption is that with the move to robust on-line teaching, students can still achieve positive results (and exit velocity) and therefore they are encouraged to engage fully with the remainder of their studies this academic year.
- The vast majority of students in the final year of their degree programmes will have achieved fewer than 60 credits in Semester 1, pre-pandemic and move to remote on-line delivery for students. This has informed the thinking behind the formulation of the benchmark/alternative calculations.

- Additional measures have been taken for this year's finalists including:
 - o Removal of the requirement that the dissertation must be in the higher classification for the automatic upgrade rule.
 - o A deferral option on their dissertation if the mark achieved is lower than their Semester 1 2019-20 average mark i.e. a further "first sit" opportunity.

We will make sound judgments about the basis on which we calculate the classification of awards in the current circumstances. Where the normal range of evidence of student achievement is not available, this will need particular care and we have factored this in (as above) and are recording our approach (via the Academic Board).

We are making changes to our degree classification algorithm as a direct response to the disruption caused by the pandemic, for example, for current final year students we have removed the requirement in the current 2% upgrade rule that the dissertation or independent project or equivalent is also in the classification above. This is because the submission of the dissertation or independent project or equivalent will always fall within Semester 2, which we believe will have been affected by the pandemic. We believe that this will ensure that classifications are reliable and command public confidence and that students this year are treated equitably when compared with students from previous years.

1.0 Teaching and assessment

1.1 Exceptionally, the University has implemented online teaching and assessment without any requirement for a full programme re-approval as a temporary measure in response to the pandemic situation.

2.0 Mitigating circumstances

2.1 Mitigating circumstances will be applied to all students from 25 March 2020 (when teaching/assessment moved online) to the end of the 19/20 academic year. No claim or evidence is required.

2.2 Mitigating circumstances will not be considered in cases of academic malpractice, but may in relation to the penalty applied.

2.3 The mitigating circumstances will be accepted by the Board of Examiners as mitigation against failure in those modules only (as given in 2.1), resulting in the waiving of the assessment undertaken and provision being made for the student to take the assessment as a first attempt. Students will usually only be permitted a maximum of four attempts (including the original first sit and the re-sit) at an assessment.

2.4 All work submitted for assessment, for which an application for mitigating circumstances has been given, shall be marked at face value and the marks shall be submitted to the Board of Examiners in the normal way. Marks are not altered as a result of a student's claim for mitigation.

3.0 Assessment

3.1 The University had adopted the following Regulations previously:

7B Award of Credit (Undergraduate and Postgraduate)

7B.1 Each module will generate one final grade from all the component elements of assessment within the module. Total compensation of grades will be allowed within the module, which includes where an element has been non-submitted and the mark is zero. A fail grade is, therefore, when the overall result for the module is less than 40% and re-assessment must take place in the form of one piece of pass/fail coursework (which tests the achievement of the learning outcomes of the module), subject to the following exceptions:

- Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) requirements stipulate re-assessment must be in all module assessment components.
- There are mitigating circumstances in which case first sit module assessment components apply.

7B.2 Coursework in the context of a pass/fail re-assessment will include similar or equivalent assessments, other than examinations, e.g. essay, presentation, performance, report, portfolio.

3.2 These Regulations have been applied to all assessments other than where there is a PSRB requirement and/or the assessment does not lend itself to coursework and will be deferred until such a point as it is possible to undertake the assessment.

4.0 Calculation of awards (undergraduate)

- On an exceptional basis, the DVC (Student Experience) as Chair of the main Boards of Examiners will have discretion to apply further measures as appropriate to the circumstances.
- It is a requirement for both the “normal” and benchmark/alternative calculations that all applicable modules must have been completed and passed. On some programmes, particularly performance-based programmes, some modules have had to be deferred and therefore award calculations will also have to be deferred until all applicable module results are available.
- For finalists in 2020/21, there will be a reversion to the University’s pre-pandemic Academic Regulations, including, for finalists who started their course pre-2019, reinstatement of the automatic upgrade rule, which includes the requirement for the dissertation or independent project to be in the higher category.
- The only exception to the above is that the application of the two calculations articulated in the General Principles section above will continue to apply to finalists who have marks in their academic profile, impacted by the pandemic, which count towards their award calculation.

4.1 Two award calculations will be determined: (a) the usual method, 120 credits from Level 5, weighted at 40% and 120 credits from Level 6, weighted at 60%; (b) a second method to create a benchmark, using a credit-weighted average, depending on the volume of credits successfully passed in Semester 1 and any other qualifying years of study. Whichever is the higher outcome will form the basis of the classification to be awarded.

4.2 This will be calculated and applied after all other normal assessment processes have been completed (e.g. compensation, mitigation, malpractice). Students must qualify to graduate (or to progress) based on the marks obtained this academic year.

4.3 The student transcript will reflect the calculation used.

4.4 For all final-year students in 2019/20 who undertake and submit their dissertation or independent project (or equivalent) in Semester 2 of 2019/20 that receive a mark for this which is lower than their Semester 1 2019-20 average, mitigating circumstances will apply and they will be given the following choice: (1) To accept the mark that they have been given and for their degree classification to be calculated accordingly, or (2) To submit their dissertation or independent project

(or equivalent) one further time on a 'first-sit' basis and, if receiving a higher mark than on the previous attempt, for this mark to be used in calculating their degree classification.

Final year Honours (BA/BSc) (to calculate classification in 2019/20 only)

4.5 For final-year students in 2019/20 there will be no requirement for the dissertation or independent project (or equivalent) to be in the higher classification category when calculating the classification of the award.

4.6 The alternate calculation to create the benchmark will be to use the successfully completed Level 6 marks from Semester 1 during 2019/20 plus the full profile of marks achieved at Level 5 and calculate an overall average mark to determine the benchmark.

Current Level 5 students (to calculate classification in 2020/21 only)

4.7 The alternate calculation to determine the benchmark will be to use the successfully completed Level 5 marks from Semester 1 this year plus the full profile of marks achieved at Level 6 and calculate an overall average mark to determine the benchmark.

4.8 This will include all credits achieved at Level 6 for 2020/21, and the requirement that the dissertation or independent project (or equivalent) be in the higher category will be reinstated as this will not have been affected by the pandemic.

Undergraduate QTS programmes

4.9 These will use the same benchmark/alternative calculations as for undergraduate provision (with arrangements for the recommendation of award of QTS developed by the programme team).

Undergraduate Social Work

4.10 These will use the same benchmark/alternative calculations as for undergraduate provision (with deferrals of placements, where necessary, managed by the programme team).

Undergraduate four-year Adventure Education programmes

4.11 This will be calculated in accordance with the same principles as for three-year standard undergraduate provision but noting that the 150 credits at L5 will be included in the calculation for final year students in 2019/20.

4.12 For Level 5 students undertaking their placement in 2019/20, the 30 credits allocated to the placement will be discounted and their award calculated on the basis of 120 credits from Level 5 in the preceding year and L6 in the subsequent year.

4.13 For students currently in their non-placement Level 5 year their attainment to date will be included, alongside the 30 credits from their placement in the subsequent year and the 120 credits from Level 6 in their final year of study.

Ordinary degree

4.12 These awards are unclassified so there is no requirement to consider any alternative calculation.

Integrated Masters

4.13 For integrated Masters, these are usually calculated on a 20/30/50 weighting against Levels 5/6/7. As with Honours classifications the calculation will be considered in accordance with the approach for Honours i.e. two methods will be used to calculate the outcome and the most favourable will be used to determine classification. Students would need to successfully pass research methods modules to progress to Level 7. Students would also need to average 50% across all preceding modules to successfully progress to Level 7, and/or meet with any programme-specific Regulations.

4.14 For final-year (Level 7) students, the benchmark will be calculated on the successfully attained marks from Level 7, Semester 1 for 2019/20 plus the full profile of marks achieved at L5 and L6 and calculate an overall average mark to determine the benchmark.

4.15 For current Level 6 students, the benchmark will be calculated on the successfully attained Level 6 marks from Semester 1 for 2019/20 plus the full profile of marks achieved at L5 and L7 and calculate an overall average mark to determine the benchmark.

4.16 For current Level 5 students, the benchmark will be calculated on the successfully attained Level 5 marks from Semester 1 for 2019/20 plus the full profile of marks achieved at L6 and L7 and calculate an overall average mark to determine the benchmark.

Progression to Honours (top-up)

4.17 For progression to Honours students, these are usually calculated on a 100% weighting against Level 6.

4.18 Therefore, the benchmark based upon the average achieved at Level 6, Semester 1 in 2019/20 will be provisional until sufficient credit has been accumulated to confirm the benchmark. The Board of Examiners will exercise discretion when awarding the classification.

Foundation degrees

4.19 Usually, for Foundation degrees, students must qualify to graduate (or progress) based on the marks obtained this academic year. Students must have completed Levels 4 and 5 successfully, and have gained 240 credits to be awarded the qualification. Students will receive a Distinction if they have an overall average of 70% across Level 5; students will receive a Merit if they have an overall average of 60% across Level 5; students will receive a Pass if they have an overall average of 40% across Level 5.

4.20 As the award is based upon the final year a benchmark based upon the average achieved at Level 5, Semester 1 in 2019/20 will be provisional until sufficient credit has been accumulated to confirm the benchmark. The Board of Examiners will exercise discretion when awarding the classification.

Higher Nationals

4.21 Higher National qualifications will be calculated in accordance with the current Academic Regulations, i.e.:

6D.3 To be awarded an Higher National Certificate, a student must achieve 120 credits at or above the level of the qualification. The classification is based upon the best 75 credits.

6D.4 To be awarded an Higher National Diploma, a student must achieve 240 credits at or above the level of the qualification. The classification is based upon the best 150 credits.

6D.5 Students will receive a Distinction if they have an overall average of 70% or above across the best credits; students will receive a Merit if they have an overall average of 60% or above; students will receive a Pass if they have an overall average of 40% or above.

BMus

4.22 The BMus is located at Level 6 of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, comprising 480 credits of study over four years of study; 120 credits at Level 4, 120 credits at Level 5, 240 credits at Level 6 (undertaken during years 3 and 4 of the programme). The award is usually calculated on the basis of year 3/4 credit so all credit awarded at Level 6, usually on a 40/60 basis (so, 40% allocated on the Year 3 average, 60% on the Year 4 average). The exit qualification is a BMus (Ord) at the end of Year 3.

4.23 For final-year students in 2019/20 there will be no requirement for the dissertation or independent project (or equivalent) to be in the higher classification category when calculating the classification of the award.

4.24 The alternate calculation to create the benchmark will be to use the successfully completed Level 6 (usually Year 4) marks from Semester 1 during 2019/20 plus the full profile of marks achieved at the preceding Level (usually Year 3) in 2018/19 and calculate an overall average mark to determine the benchmark.

4.25 For final-year students in 2020/21 the alternate calculation to create the benchmark will be to use successfully completed credits from Semester 1, Level 6 (usually Year 3) from 2019/20 plus the full profile of marks achieved from the 2020/21 academic year (Level 6, usually Year 4).

5.0 Calculation of awards (postgraduate)

5.1 For taught postgraduate students undertaking and submitting their Dissertation/Independent Project (or equivalent) in the remainder of the 2019-20 academic year, we have introduced the following supportive measure: If students achieve a grade of at least 'A' in the majority of modules (equivalent to at least 120 credits), students will be awarded a Master's degree with Distinction irrespective of the grade achieved in the dissertation. Similarly, if students achieve a grade of at least 'B' in the majority of modules (equivalent to at least 120 credits), students will be awarded a Master's degree with Merit, irrespective of the grade achieved in the dissertation.

6.0 The Conferment of Awards

6.1 It is expected that students on the final year of an undergraduate Honours programme will attend the next scheduled Graduation Ceremony provided they have attained or intend to attain the minimum threshold of 240 credits successfully attained 120 credits at both L4 and Level 5), pending

the outcome of any deferred or referred assessments. This is not applicable if the award of Ordinary Degree is not available for the programme e.g. Social Work.

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