

Previous Frameworks in Operation: UG Graduating Cohort Arrangements, Assessment Framework, Policy on Fair Assessment and Fair Outcomes, and Emergency Frameworks for Assessment and Progression

Summary for Boards of Examiners-UG and PGT Boards

Where the Board of Examiners will be considering some student cases under previous University frameworks, this summary document may be circulated to Board members in advance of the meeting or used to provide a verbal update at the meeting itself.

UG Graduating Cohort Arrangements 2022/23

The majority of graduating students were able to take all of the credits and assessments that contributed to their degree classification. Normal Regulations applied in most cases.

However, the previous disruption will still have had some impact, particularly for students on four-year programmes, and the following was applied in order to take account of this:

- Second year marks from 2020/21 continued to be used for the degree classification only if they did not have a negative overall impact.
- For students taking a year abroad or an inverted year abroad, the marks for Stage 2 (the second year in 2020/21 and the year abroad) were only used if they improved the overall mark for degree classification.
- There continued to be simplified credit requirements for borderline students to be considered for a higher degree classification. For example:
 - For graduating cohorts on a three-year degree (BSc, BA, BEng), in order to profile up to a 1st class degree, at least 60 credits (50% of the module marks) in the final year must normally be in the 1st class category and, of the remainder, at least 40 credits must be in the 2.1 category.
 - For graduating cohorts on a four-year degree (MSci, MEng) in order to profile up to a 1st class degree, at least 50% of the module marks at Stage 3 (i.e. year 3 and 4) must normally be in the 1st class category and a majority of the remainder of the module marks at Stage 3 must be in the 2.1 category.
 - Note: There might be situations in which a student has an overall mark of <70% but is not awarded a 1st class degree because the above criteria are not fulfilled. In such cases, if the Board of Examiners decides that a student with <70% should be awarded a 1st Class Honours, based on the full profile of marks across all years of study, an award can be made 'Notwithstanding Regulations' as long as the External Examiner is supportive.
- Students continued to receive an explanatory letter with their transcripts for all four-year programmes, which explained why year 1 marks from 2019/20 are incomplete.

As introduced in 2021/22, students were permitted to retrieve failure in the final stage of an undergraduate degree (which includes year three of a four-year UG Masters degree). This includes students who took a leave of absence in 2020/21 and returned to their final year in 2021/22. Reassessment will normally be taken in the supplementary assessment period and capped at the pass mark (unless the student has ECs, as normal).

PGT Students

For the majority of PGT students graduating in 2022/23 no particular provisions were required.

For students in the final year of a multi-year part-time postgraduate taught programme (for example, Year 3 of a three-year programme), the marks carried forward from each year related to the Regulations in place at the time. The Regulations in place in each year of study were taken into account at final award Boards when calculating the student's degree. This referred to (where applicable, depending on the cohort), the Policy on Fair Outcomes and Fair Assessments for PGT students ("Fair Assessment Policy") published in January 2021, and (where applicable,

depending on the cohort) the Framework for Assessment and Progression of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Graduating Cohorts (“the Emergency Framework”) developed in spring 2020. For PGT students graduating in 2022/23, if they were also studying in 2019/20 and/or 2020/21 the requirement to have achieved a mark of 40 or more in all taught modules does not apply for credits attempted in those years; the requirement to pass all taught modules to be awarded a 3 degree with Merit or Distinction also does not apply for credits attempted in those years.

These continued to be incorporated into the automatic degree classification calculations.

Continuing Cohorts

For continuing UG and PGT students, any adjustments required at the point of graduation, such as those detailed above, will be implemented as appropriate in future years.

Assessment Framework

The Assessment Framework was drawn up for the 2021/22 academic session for UG and PGT Students. The Framework comprised a package of measures and mitigations designed to ensure fair outcomes for the 2021/22 graduating cohorts, taking into account challenges faced over the last two years for those who were in education. The aim was to ensure students were not disadvantaged in comparison to previous cohorts and to students graduating from other institutions.

PGT Students

Where applicable (i.e. if students were also studying in 2019/20 or 2020/21), the Framework was also based on the Policy on Fair Assessment and Fair Outcomes for PGT students (“Fair Assessment Policy”) published in January 2021, and the Framework for Assessment and Progression of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Graduating Cohorts (“the Emergency Framework”) developed in spring 2020.

The principles adopted for determining degree/programme classifications for students studying in 2019/20 and 2020/21 were adapted appropriately from Regulations in order to be relevant to the Policy and Frameworks. The Framework included the following mitigations for PGT students graduating in 2022 where the modules were taken in 2019/20 and 2020/21:

- for PG Cert students: removal of the requirement to have achieved a mark of 40 or more in at least 60 credits;
- for PG Dip students: removal of the requirement to have achieved a mark of 40 or more in at least 120 credits;
- for Taught PG Degree students: removal of the requirement to have achieved a mark of 40 or more in all taught modules;
- for all awards: removal of the requirement to pass all taught modules to be awarded a degree with Merit or Distinction.

Note that the mitigations *did not* apply to modules taken for the first time in 2021/22 academic session.

The full marks profile continued to be considered when determining degree classifications for all students, and was compared with that of last three years’ cohorts to ensure students were not disadvantaged.

UG Students

As graduating students had also been studying in 2019/20 and/or 2020/21, the Framework was also based upon the Fair Assessment and Fair Outcomes Policy for UG students (“Fair Assessment Policy”) published in January

2021, and the Framework for Assessment and Progression of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Graduating Cohorts (“the Emergency Framework”) developed in spring 2020.

As set out in the Assessment Frameworks, normal regulatory requirements were reinstated for 2021/22 in light of the reduced disruption experienced in comparison with the previous two years. The principles adopted for determining degree/programme classifications in light of disruption in previous years were adapted appropriately from current Regulations in order to be relevant to the Policy and Frameworks outlined above. These amendments were applied where possible, but may not have been possible to do so where there were specific professional requirements determined by the University and/or professional bodies.

The Framework included mitigations for students whose 2019/20 year of study contributed to their degree classification. In line with the Assessment Framework, the 2019/20 year was only used in the degree classification calculation if it improved the degree, and the weighting that the year contributes varied depending on the number of credits able to be achieved in 2019/20.

The full marks profile was considered when determining degree classifications for all students, and was compared with that of last three years’ cohorts to ensure students were not disadvantaged.

With effect from 2021/22, students were permitted to retrieve failure in the final stage of an undergraduate degree (which includes year three of a four-year UG Masters degree). This included students who took a leave of absence in 2020/21 and returned to their final year in 2021/22. Reassessment was normally be taken in the supplementary assessment period and was capped at the pass mark (unless the student has ECs, as normal). Students who had already passed sufficient credits to be awarded their degree were required to complete an online form to defer their graduation in order to take any reassessments.

Policy on Fair Assessment and Fair Outcomes

A package of measures was put in place to mitigate for Covid-19 disruption in 2020/21. This package constituted the University’s Policy on Fair Assessment and Fair Outcomes for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Students for the 2020/21 academic year, including separate information for Undergraduate Study Abroad and Year in Industry students. The Guild of Students were consulted on this package, and provided valuable input into the decision-making process. The policy also supports much of what had been requested by the joint Russell Group Student Union.

The policy included mitigations, both existing and new, which apply to all students, as well as other measures specific to graduating cohorts, and continuing students.

Existing measures and mitigations included: online assessments; Covid-adapted project pathways; weekly online group tutorials; and relaxed evidence requirements for extenuating circumstances submissions. The full marks profile will continue to be considered when determining degree classifications for all students, and undergraduate marks achieved in the 2019/20 session (that would normally count towards the degree classification) will only be included in the calculation (on a sliding scale) if they confirm or improve the outcome.

New mitigations included: an extension of the zone of discretion for each undergraduate degree classification boundary; comparison of all graduating students’ marks with those of the previous graduating cohort; removal of certain requirements for students to achieve specified marks and/or credit volumes; and calculation of degree classifications for part-time PGT students based on the number of credits attempted (subject to an appropriate minimum).

Together, these measures were designed to ensure that students were not disadvantaged by the pandemic situation, while also providing assurance that the University’s academic standards, and the value of students’ achievements for future employment, are maintained.

Emergency Assessment Framework

Introduction

- In accordance with the University's Regulations for Emergency Situations, and in order to ensure that as many students as possible were able to graduate and progress at the end of 2019/20, the University established a set of emergency Assessment and Progression Frameworks for UG and PGT students in 2019/20. The Frameworks will still be relevant for some students being considered by Boards of Examiners in 2020/21 (i.e. those who were studying and completing assessments in 2019/20), so this summary has been retained within the guidance pack for ease of reference.
- The Frameworks were developed by the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education) and the University's Senior Education Team, with input from the Guild of Students, and were approved by University Education Committee, University Quality Assurance Committee, University Executive Board and Senate.
- The Frameworks were based on the principles that, wherever possible, students should not be disadvantaged by the situation in which they found themselves in 2019/20, and that the academic standards of their degrees should be maintained.
- We recognised that the approaches we took may not have aligned with those at the home institutions of our external examiners, but this is because of differences in programme structure and also because our academic teaching year had one main opportunity for examinations in May/June (although we have moved to a fully semesterised model with two examination periods in 2020/21).

Requirements for final year UG (including UG Masters) and PGT students in 2019/20

- In order for final year UG (including UG Masters) and PGT students to have graduated in 2019/20, we must have had evidence that they had:
 - met new emergency minimum credit requirements¹;
 - satisfied any professional body requirements;
 - and met the Learning Outcomes for their programme.
- Additional online, inclusive assessments were set for students where they were missing any of those three critical elements, but they were kept to the minimum needed to ensure the integrity and academic quality of the degrees.
- Marks for additional assessments in 2019/20 were recorded in the following ways:
 - the marks were used where there were missing component marks for modules where the content had been covered by the synoptic assessment. The mark for the synoptic assessment could be used more than once; or
 - the mark had been recorded against a stand-alone synoptic assessment module.
 - an additional synoptic assessment module to supplement a partially completed module had been recorded against a new module, set up specifically with the same module title and credit value as the partially completed module. The mark for the additional synoptic assessment was entered against the new module and the full credit value for that module was awarded.

¹ For UG students, 80 credits including the dissertation/project; for PGT students, 80 credits of taught modules plus the 60-credit dissertation/project).

- Each student's individual marks profile for all years was considered by Boards of Examiners to ensure that the most positive approach was taken for each student when arriving at their final degree classification. We are particularly grateful to our external examiner(s) for their input into this.
- The principles we adopted for determining degree classifications in 2019/20 were adapted appropriately in order to be relevant to the Framework outlined above.

Requirements for non-finalist students in 2019/20

In order for non-finalist UG students to progress to the next year of study, they were asked to attempt to complete any outstanding coursework assessments for individual modules.

- Progression to the next year of study for UG students was automatic, but we also asked students to complete a single, overarching formative piece of bridging coursework that helped to ensure they were best placed to begin their studies in 2020/21. Any requirements of professional bodies were also addressed.