

# Guide to applying Engineering Council rules at Undergraduate Award Boards, Academic Year 2025/26

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## Introduction

This guide is for academic and professional services attendees at Undergraduate Award Boards for programmes which are accredited by either the Engineering Council (EngC) or Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) aligned with the Engineering Council.

The EngC regulations introduced for new entrants from 1 September 2022, specifically those relating to Compensation and Condonement, will take effect for the cohort graduating in the 2025/26 academic year. At Heriot-Watt University, this affects how Discretionary Credits (DC) may be applied and how E and F grades are considered when determining award outcomes. The EngC rules apply to both undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate taught (PGT) students. However, this guide refers only to UG students, as PGT students already have reassessment opportunities available to them at the discretion of the Boards of Examiners.

To mitigate and address the impact of the EngC rules, the University has introduced a final-year resit opportunity for students in the affected programmes.

**Note:** For MEng students who are in their final year but started before academic year 2022/23, please see the Detailed questions section, below.

**Key source:** the Engineering Council policy on Compensation and Condonement is linked to from this page: <https://www.engc.org.uk/resources-and-guidance/education-and-skills/higher-education-programmes/higher-education-providers/compensation-and-condonement>

## Summary of the changes

The following is a list of EngC rules for accredited programmes:

1. Evidence that all accreditation learning outcomes are met.
2. **No condonement** of modules [courses] delivering Accreditation of Higher Education Programmes (AHEP) learning outcomes.
3. A maximum of 30 credits in a Bachelors or integrated Masters degree programme can be compensated, and a maximum of 20 credits in a Masters degree other than the integrated Masters degree.
4. Major individual and group-based project modules must not be compensated.
5. The minimum module [course] mark for which compensation is allowed is no more than 10% below the nominal module pass mark.

In response to and comply with EngC rules, HWU has proposed and agreed on the following:

1. Final Year Undergraduate students on programmes accredited by the Engineering Council or aligned PSRBs shall be permitted up to two reassessments (at the discretion of the boards of examiners).
2. This does not apply to projects or dissertations.
3. This does not apply to courses for which there is a proven academic misconduct penalty.

## What are the Engineering Council's definitions?

The terms compensation and condonement are defined differently by different organisations and can be interpreted with different meanings within Heriot-Watt University. For clarity, we use EngC definitions, as follows:

Note: at Heriot-Watt we refer to courses rather than modules. For further details please refer to [HWU Engineering Council Condonement & Compensation Policy](#).

- **Compensation:** “The practice of allowing marginal failure (*ie not more than ten percentage points below the nominal pass mark*) of one or more modules [courses in HWU], often on the basis of good overall academic performance.” (emphasis added)
  - At Heriot-Watt, a minimum of ‘D’ grade (i.e., 40%) is the standard pass mark for undergraduate degrees, and so the lower limit for compensation is 30%. The ‘E’ grade awarded at HWU is considered compensation as the course has actually been failed, albeit narrowly. This interpretation has been confirmed by PSRBs.
- **Condonement:** “The practice of allowing students to fail one or more module(s) [courses in HWU] with a fail mark of *more than ten percentage points below the nominal pass mark* yet still qualify for the award of the degree.” (emphasis added)
  - At Heriot-Watt, 40% is the standard pass mark for undergraduate degrees, and so the definition of condonement would be the awarding of credit for marks less than 30%. The HWU does not permit condonement.

## What do the EngC rules apply to?

The EngC rules on Compensation and Condonement apply to all programmes accredited by the Engineering Council or by an aligned PSRB. Within those programmes, the rules apply to all modules/courses which contribute to the accreditation.

Those programmes which are *not accredited* by the Engineering Council or PSRBs aligned with the Engineering Council, should continue to apply the existing HWU regulations, DC policy and their usual specific discipline and programme rules.

## How do the EngC rules map onto HWU practices?

Note the following:

1. **Phrase usage:** HWU does not use the same definitions for *condonement* and *compensation* as those established by the EngC, which has led to some confusion among colleagues. To ensure clarity, this guide adopts the EngC definitions and then explains how HWU interprets and applies them.
2. **University regs and [policy on DCs](#):** The University permits Award Boards to award Discretionary Credits (DC) for up to two 15-credit courses where the student has failed. This is consistent with EngC rules.
3. **‘E’ grades carry credit by default:** An ‘E’ grade is awarded for course marks between 35 and 39 (in practice 34.5 and 39.4). By default, an E grade is credit bearing.
4. **“Marginal failure” incorporates Es and some Fs:** The EngC definition of a marginal failure incorporates the University definition of a ‘E’ grade *and* an ‘F’ grade for marks between 30 and 34 (in practice 29.5 and 34.4).
5. **‘E’ grades are also compensation:** So, effectively, both the use of an ‘E’ grade with credit and the use of a Discretionary Credit for an ‘F’ grade from 29.5 to 34.4 are equivalent to the Engineering Council’s definition of compensation.
6. **‘F’ grades below 30% cannot be compensated:** The use of a Discretionary Credit for an ‘F’ Grade of 29.4 or less would be equivalent to the Engineering Council’s definition of condonement, and so not permitted.
7. **Up to 2 final year resits permitted:** in response to the EngC rule changes the University is permitting up to 2 reassessments (worth 30 credits) for final year students at the discretion of boards of examiners.

## What are the rules to follow for UG Award Boards?

These are the rules which must be applied when making award decisions for final year students on programmes accredited by the Engineering Council or aligned PSRBs:

1. The student is allowed to resit a maximum of two courses – unless some of those resits are as a result of mitigating circumstances.
  - Those resits cannot be for projects or dissertations.
  - Courses with proven disciplinary cases are not permitted to be reassessed.
2. Discretionary Credits (DC) cannot be awarded for marks of less than 30% (after rounding)
  - That is defined as *condonement* by EngC rules – and not permitted. It should be noted that HWU also does not permit *condonement*.
3. In order to be eligible for an accredited award, no more than two courses (or 30 credits) can have been awarded DC and/or 'E' grades for SCQF levels 8, 9, 10 and 11.
  - Those DC or 'E' grades cannot be for projects or dissertations.
  - As stated, DCs cannot be awarded for marks of less than 30% (after rounding)
  - The total of DC and 'E' grades are considered across all years of study.
  - Note that a DC cannot replace an 'E' grade.
4. Award Boards must still judge whether the student with an 'E' or being considered for a DC has achieved the learning outcomes of the programme.
  - These are referred to as Accreditation of Higher Education Programmes (AHEP) learning outcomes by the Engineering Council.

## Detailed questions

These questions may be expanded on in later versions of this document.

1. **Do the Exceptional Credits (EC grades) awarded in 2023 count towards the total compensated?** No. The Engineering Council was aware of that decision and will not count those credits in the compensated total.
2. **How will students with earlier DC or E grades be highlighted?** DCs are now totalled on the broadsheets MG01 and MG02. Means of identifying extant E grades for affected students will be investigated before the board and a solution identified.
3. **Are students with Mitigating Circumstances still limited to two final year resits?** No, resits as a result of MCs are not included in the two-resit maximum.
4. **Are Award Boards able to award DC grades for students with MCs?** Yes, if the board is convinced that the programme learning outcomes have been met; but the limit of 30 credits of compensation remains (all DC and E grades) across all stages of the programme.
5. **What changes are there for final year MEng students who started before 2022/23?** While the new Engineering Council rules apply only to those students who started in academic year 2022/23, the allowance of up to two resits in the final year applies to all final year students in programmes accredited by the Engineering Council and aligned accrediting bodies. Examples include 5 year MEng students who started in 2021/22 and 6 year MEng students with industry placements who started in 2020/21

- 6. If a student changed degree programme and has DC or extant E grades from their original programme, do these count towards the total limit of compensation for their current programme?** No, for these purposes, students who change degree into a new 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> year will be treated in the same way as direct entry into those years.
  - 7. Are there any changes to the rules governing 4<sup>th</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> year progression for MEng students?** No, HWU regulations already permit resits for students in stage 4 of a 5 stage programme.
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## List of Affected Programmes with students in 2025/26

- B311-EEE: BEng Electrical & Electron Eng
- B344-RAI: BEng Robotic Auton & Inter Sys
- B351-EEE: MEng Electrical & Electron Eng
- B354-RAI: MEng Robotic Auton & Inter Sys
- B3G2-GLA: BEng Eng D and M (Electronic)
- B3W2-GLA: BSc in Data Science
- B411-CEN: BEng in Chemical Engineering
- B41M-CHE: MEng Chemical Engineering
- B4A1-CED: BEng Chem Eng & Dip Ind T
- B4B1-CED: MEng Chemical Eng & Dip Ind T
- B4G2-GLA: BEng EIMC (GA)
- B50A-ERO: BEng Aerospace Engineering
- B511-MEG: BEng Mechanical Engineering
- B51A-ERO: MEng Aerospace Engineering
- B531-MEG: MEng Mechanical Engineering
- B542-MEE: BEng Mech Eng & Energy Eng
- B54M-MEE: MEng Mech Eng & Energy Eng
- B564-AUE: BEng Automotive Engineering
- B581-MED: MEng Mech Eng & DIT
- B5G2-GLA: BEng Eng D and M (Mech) (GLA)
- D1B1-AEN: BEng Architectural Eng
- D1C1-AEN: MEng Architectural Eng
- D211-CIE: BEng Civil Engineering
- D241-STE: BEng Structural Engineering
- D281-GLA: BEng Civil Engineering (GA)
- D291-STE: MEng Structural Engineering
- D2B1-CIE: MEng Civil Engineering
- D600-ARC: BA Architecture
- F211-SDB: BSc Software Dev for Bus (GLA)
- F212-DSC: BSc Data Science
- F291-COS: BSc Computer Science
- F293-CSC: BSc Computing Science
- F29T-COD: BSc Computer Science and DIT
- F2C1-GCP: BSc Comp Sci (Comp Games Prog)
- F2C2-CGP: BSc Computer Sys (CGP)
- F2C3-CCS: BSc Comp Sci (Cyber Sec)
- F2CC-CSE: BSc Computer Systems
- F2CT-CSD: BSc Computer Systems and DIT
- F2D3-CDS: BSc Computer Sc (Data Science)
- F2DT-CDD: BSc Comp Sci (DataSci) DIT
- F2J1-CSE: BSc Computer Sc (Software Eng)
- F2M1-SOE: MEng Software Engineering
- F2P1-CSA: BSc Computer Sc (Art Int)
- F902-MDS: BSc Data Sciences

## Scenario examples for students who started in 2022/23

Note that Awards Boards will need to be satisfied that students with extant E grades have achieved the learning outcomes of the programme and that those E grades are permitted within the bounds of the curriculum.

Example No.	Scenario description	DC/Es in previous stages (except stage 1)	Accred. Course 1	Accred. Course 2	Accred. Course 3	Award options within EngC rules	Reason
1	More than two F grades below 30%.	None	29 F	29 F	29 F	Exit Award <sup>1</sup>	Max 2x resits, condonement not permitted, i.e., cannot apply DC to 29 F
2	Two F grades below 30% and one F grade of 30%; but two DCs already awarded in an earlier stage.	2x DC	29 F	29 F	30 F	Exit Award	Max 2x resits, max 2x compensation (The student has run out of DC allowances); 29 F cannot be awarded DC.
3	Two F grades below 30% and one F grade of 30%	None	29 F	29 F	30 F	2x resits <sup>2</sup> and 1x DC	Compensation permitted for course 3.
4	Two F grades below 30% and one E grade; but two DCs already awarded in stage 3.	2x DCs	29 F	29 F	35 E	Exit Award	Max 2x resits, max 2x compensation. The E is a form of compensation.
5	Two F grades below 30% and one E grade	None	29 F	29 F	35 E	2x resits and 1x E grade remains	Compensation permitted for course 3
6	Two F grades below 30% and one D grade	None	29 F	29 F	40 D	2x resits	Up to two resits are permitted
7	Two F grades below 30% and one D grade; but two DCs already awarded in stage 3.	2x DCs	29 F	29 F	40 D	2x resits	Up to two resits are permitted. Up to 2x DCs are permitted.

<sup>1</sup> Ordinary degree

<sup>2</sup> Subject to the conditions set out by HWU and explained above

Example No.	Scenario description	DC/Es in previous stages (except stage 1)	Accred. Course 1	Accred. Course 2	Accred. Course 3	Award options within EngC rules	Reason
8	One grade F below 30% and one grade F of 30%	None	29 F	30 F	40 D	1x resit and 1x DC, or the Award Board may require 2x resits	The marginal fail (31 F) can be compensated but the significant fail (29 F) cannot resits
9	One grade F below 30% and one grade E	None	29 F	35 E	40 D	1x resit and 1x E, or the Award Board may require 2x resits	The marginal fail (35 E) can be left as compensation but the significant fail (29 F) cannot resits
10	Three grade F of 30%	None	30 F	30 F	30 F	1x resit and 2x DC, or the Award Board may require 2x resit and only one DC	These are marginal fails; but only a maximum of 2 can be resit; and only a maximum of 2 can have DC.
11	Three grade E	None	35 E	35 E	35 E	1x resit and 2x E remain, or the Award Board may require 2x resit and only one E remains	These are marginal fails; but only a maximum of 2 can be resit; and only a maximum of 2 can remain at E grade (a form of compensation)
12	Three grade E; but existing E grade in stage 3	1x E	35 E	35 E	35 E	2x resit and 1 grade E remains.	Grade Es are considered compensation and so a maximum of 2x are permitted. A maximum of 2x resits are permitted.
13	Three grade E; but existing 2x E grade in stage 3	2x E	35 E	35 E	35 E	Exit Award	Max 2x resits, max 2x compensation. Grade Es are considered compensation.

# Decision flow diagram for students with 'E' grades or Fails

Decision making flow for Award Boards considering students with 'E' or Fail grades for final-year courses in accredited programmes aligned with the Engineering Council and who started in academic year 2022/23. Aligns with list of examples provided, above.

