

Examination Boards FAQs

This document contains various scenarios and FAQs that have been brought up in conversations or at exam board briefing sessions. It is designed as an accompaniment to the wealth of guidance, recordings, policies, and other documents that are already in circulation to support the successful operation of exam boards.

Key documentation and guidance:

- [Examination and Assessment Guidelines](#)
- [Briefing Session Recording and PowerPoints](#)
- [Academic Regulations](#)

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Recognition of Prior Learning

Regulation A3 – Admissions

Clarification around credits and award, for RPL / direct entry students was provided.	
i. For a first degree, at least 50% of the credits for the stage that the student enters on must be completed as part of the programme of study to qualify for the award at that stage. <i>For Example:</i> a. If a student enters stage 4 directly, fails to meet the criteria for an honours award, they must not be awarded an Ordinary. ii. At least 50% of the credits from taught courses leading to an award for each graduate and postgraduate programme of study must be completed in order to qualify for that award. <i>For Example:</i> If a PGT student fails to meet the award criteria by: ○ failing elements of the taught component, or ○ passing the taught component and failing the dissertation they may be considered for the following awards: • Postgraduate Diploma, <u>only if</u> a minimum of 60 credits are achieved at HWU. • Postgraduate Certificate, <u>only if</u> a minimum of 30 credits are achieved at HWU.	
What about students studying through a joint educational partnership (3+1)? If they enter at stage 4 and do not do well, does that mean that they cannot get an ordinary?	
A joint educational partnership arrangement, such as a 3+1, is different as there will be joint award arrangements between HWU and the partner institution, which would allow the lower award to be given. The scenario discussed at Point a above relates to a situation where a student has already achieved credits from a separate institution and uses those credits as RPL at HWU, to gain entry at a higher level.	

Grade E and Electives

If a student gains a Grade E in an elective, does it need to be resat?
i. If the course is core, or a pre-requisite, D must be achieved for progression. ii. Boards should always refer to the individual programme regulations. The elective might be core on one programme but not on another. The specific programme regulations should be understood by those chairing the Board.
What about optional courses (differentiating from electives)?
• If a course is an elective, it is usually sufficient for a Grade E to be achieved and a reassessment would not be required. • However, it should be recognised that a course, which is an elective in one programme, might be core on another programme and so a Grade D might be required, with a Grade E result requiring a reassessment in that case. • The specific programme regulations, which will detail whether a course is an elective or not and what grades are required in particular courses, should be understood by those chairing the Board.
Where do we specify whether a course is core or not? What is a core course and how does that differentiate from a mandatory course? Do our official course programme specifications designate courses specifically as core anywhere? Must a Grade D be obtained for all mandatory courses, if they're not a pre-requisite for another
• Specific requirements for individual courses will be detailed within programme documentation (programme regulations). • Core courses can be defined as the key elements that contribute towards the named award, which usually require no less than Grade D. A mandatory course may, or may not, be core. If it is core, it will normally require a Grade D or more. If it is not core, then a student could progress with a Grade E, but the course will still be a mandatory element of the programme. • Programme regulations will clearly detail courses that have prerequisites and courses that require a minimum of Grade D or more (regardless of the terminology used). • All Chairs should be referring to published programme documentation regarding the grades required for particular courses. • It is important that the programme regulations are shared with all members of the Board so that everybody is clear about what regulations they are working with.
If Grade D is a pass, does that mean Grade E is a fail?
• If a course does not require a Grade D or above it is at the Board's discretion whether the course needs to be resat or whether credit can be awarded to enable the student to progress. • Grade D is the standard minimum for an automatic pass (unless programme regulations state otherwise). • For some courses a Grade E will not allow progression and therefore a resit is required. • Where there is no requirement to achieve a Grade D for progression, a Grade E can

allow progression.

- Where Grade E does not allow progression, it still gives credit, so allows a student to achieve an exit award – eg, if they don't meet the required grade following a resit and cannot progress.
- Each course will be assigned against a grade boundary based on what is expected to not only progress but what will give credit.
- Grade E may not be particularly relevant for some programmes, but for others it is.
- The Regulations do not define Grade E as a 'fail' or 'pass'; there is no single definition for each.
- Grade E allows academic discretion.

Examination & Assessment Guidelines

In relation to the Mitigating Circumstances Policy and the student self-certification where they are unable to obtain medical evidence.

- In relation to self-certification - although the Policy itself has not yet been revised, there is an amendment to Appendix 2 that states 'Where it is not possible for a student to obtain evidence in support of their MC application, they may submit an MC Self-certification Form explaining why it has not been possible'. Such MC applications will be passed by the triage team to the MC Committee to make a judgement.

Would it be possible to unify all university programme regulations to avoid such confusion, instead of leaving it to each School's individual pro-grammes?

- There are a number of programmes that have external professional accreditation requirements which are written into the specific programme regulations, so one unified approach would not be possible, although it may be possible to streamline and minimise the differences.
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- Schools have the discretion to set a uniform approach across all of their own disciplines/programmes (changes to programme regulations in terms of progression and award need to be submitted to the University's Studies Committee for approval).

Can a chair refer back to a previous regulation, like A10?

- In the event of a board discussing a student's previous performance in order to inform a decision, the Chair can highlight where a regulation has been applied, this would only be by exception, and would never result in a change to any previous decisions taken.
- To apply Regulation A10, it must be enacted by the Senate and the Chair must be fully aware of the circumstance which A10 covers. There is no opportunity to apply this regulation retrospectively, it is applied only for full cohorts (and not individual circumstances) and those circumstances are only covered in the period of approval.

Canvas and Release of Results

What are the planned dates for formal release of results to students
- Dates for release of marks to students is available here on the Assessment Results page. - Additionally, the list of Key Deadlines for Marks, Grade and Decisions for UG and PGT Students document contains further information on various deadlines.
What's the guidance on students that have 'active holds' on being able to be reassessed
- These VLE Hold/IT Access Holds are a Finance decision so as soon as the student clears their debt then they can continue, Academic Operations cannot remove these holds. - Normal reassessment rules apply to UG and PGT students even if they have failed a course due to VLE Hold/IT Access Holds and they do not get additional reassessment attempts.
Students with a mid or end semester VLE hold can sometimes disappear from Canvas - how do we retrieve their grades stored on Canvas?
- This is a question for the Canvas technical specialists. - Please contact ishelp@hw.ac.uk for any canvas related issues.

Making Decisions

When is it acceptable to use the decision code '4X Decision Pending further consideration of additional assessment information'?
- Deferred decisions should be only used in exceptional circumstances. - Pre-boards should be held to allow discussion and reach agreement about recommended decisions. - Boards should only defer if they do not have the information they need to make a decision (and not because they cannot reach a conclusion). - A formal change in decision must be made as soon as possible after the Board and ideally it should be resolved within a week as the delay impacts downstream processes such as graduation and May Semester reassessments. - If information is missing for full cohorts, the Board should be deferred.
Sometimes 'IP' (investigation pending) can be next to a course, how should the board deal with this?
The board should use decision code '4G' Deferred decision – awaiting outcome of Discipline Committee.
If a Board is deferred, when would it need to reconvene?
If the decision is deferred '4X' can this be updated by Chairs Action, or do we need to reconvene the board by email or otherwise?
How long after a board the chair should still be approving decisions?

- Within a week.
- There should be high levels of communication between Schools to discuss the timing of their boards and obtaining grades required.
- Academic Operations will be publishing all Board dates on its SharePoint site which should make it easier for Schools.
- Deferred decisions be completed via chairs action/correspondence. The board does not need to reconvene.
- The board chair should approve all decisions within one week of the board.

How many times might we offer a repeat for a given year? (Ordinances P-2 section 3.5) seem to suggest that in a programme of study only ONE repeat year is possible in total (I assume MC excepting)

- Undergraduates have one opportunity to repeat, so in total, that would be four assessment opportunities in a single course. See Regulation A6 Progression (page 33)
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- If a decision is made to allow a student to repeat because of MC, then it's likely to be at the first opportunity (i.e., their actual first opportunity is disregarded).
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- Any additional resits beyond the normal would need to go to an appeal.
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- MSc students by exception can be given a 4th resit by the Board of Examiners. Additionally, if the board decided that they were not allowed to continue the student would need to appeal.

Operation of Examination Boards

The Academic Operations Team will provide support for the operation of Examination Boards in the following ways:

- Agree Board dates with the Senior Director of Studies (or DoQ for SoSS), based on graduation deadlines each year.
- Support all operational work relating to all Boards.
- Supply Clerks to the Award and Progression Boards.
- Supply students' marks profiles for all Boards (as broadsheets).
- Manage students' records.
- Create Course Marks Reports (CMRs) after the marks have been transferred to FSS by Course Leaders.
- Manage all post-Board work and provide ARR/SERs.

Impact of Missing Deadlines

Missing the deadline for submitting approved ARRs can have consequences for:

- Graduations – the Student Records and Awards Team has a very tight deadline to produce graduation ceremony programmes, organise seating and arrange prizes. Delaying an award decision can lead to a student losing job offers or places on MSc

programmes.

- Progressing students – missing this deadline has consequences for creation of reassessment records, reassessment timetabling, creation of 2025/26 records etc.

Will Academic Operations update MCs or should those MCs be added to the CMRs?
• Academic Operations now upload the MC notes to Banner and they will appear on the CMRs and Broadsheets as a course note.
Is data for externals on grade distribution etc, provided by Academic Operations?
The mark and grade profiles are recorded on the Course Marks Reports (CMRs) and these are available for the External Examiner to review.
For Award Boards, External Examiners have expressed their preference in holding in-person boards. Do we still get Clerk support in this case? It can be helpful for External Examiners to meet students face-to-face too.
• The clerking support provided by Academic Operations will continue to be in an online format, including provision of e-paperwork. During the Covid-19 Pandemic, all Exam Boards had to be online and there was an equalising aspect to that - Board members had equal access wherever they were in the world, the Boards could be administered from any location, and the logistics of administrations were more straight-forward. • There is the collegiate aspect of Boards which could be lost in that shift, such as peers in a discipline meeting together with colleagues from within and outside the University. Schools might consider inviting External Examiners onto campus explicitly for those reasons, who could then join the Boards online from within campuses.
How will viewing of scripts work for Externals attending Boards online?
• Scanned in-person exam script samples will still be provided for External Examiners. If samples are required for Canvas- based assessments, the Externals can be given access as an 'Observer' to the Canvas site. • If External Examiners visit the campus, then hard copies of in-person pen and paper style examination scripts can be made available. Academic staff would need to inform the Academic Operations Team that this is required.
Is there any training for new Year Coordinators in signing off the ARRs?
• The Manager in Academic Operations is happy to talk through the process with individual staff to help them understand a student's assessment record. Please contact Amanda Lyness via email or MS Teams.
When are broadsheets made available to Schools?
• Ideally, at least five days in advance, but as soon as the marks are ratified and approved broadsheets can be run.

- Delays arise when not all marks are available, or they change, and broadsheets must be run again. This is one reason for the necessity to set deadlines for completing and ratifying marks.
- The broadsheets will be accessible from SharePoint or a MS Teams site (as chosen by the School).

What do we do with students who have a financial hold? Do we get a list of students who are on financial hold?

- The Board should reach an academic judgement for all students. The broadsheets will not provide information that allows the Board to identify students with a financial hold.
- Professional Services will withhold information going out to the student if financial holds are in place. Lists of students on financial hold are not provided; such information is confidential.

Are pre-boards a must? Can we make pre-boards a mandatory part of the process and build them into the timeline?

- Holding a pre-Board (especially Award) is good practice and is recommended.
- It allows the Chair to look for any gaps in the information needed for the Board to reach decisions, and for the collection of any missing information in advance of the formal Board taking place. It also allows the discussion of difficult cases or issues so that the formal Award Board can run smoothly and efficiently, thus giving the External Examiner confidence that the academic teams have all the information required to reach award decisions.
- If pre-Award Boards are always scheduled they can easily be cancelled if they are not required. Although this practice is strongly recommended, it cannot be made mandatory as it could cause more issues in terms of the logistics for getting things through in a timely and there will be some situations where pre-Award Boards are not required.

When the board scheduling is done can the Course Assessment Boards (CABs) across all schools not be scheduled before the award and Progression Boards?

- All CABs are scheduled before the relevant progression and Award Board. Ideally CABs, across all Schools, would be held before any progression or Award Boards but this is difficult to achieve when there are courses with many students and large marking loads. It is an issue especially for Combined Studies Year 4 students when they are often taking Level 9 courses that are marked after the graduating student Level 10 and 11 CABs.
- Marking is prioritised for graduating students as the deadline for releasing results to meet the graduation downstream processes is earlier than progressing students.
- There should be high levels of communication between Schools to discuss the timing of their boards and obtaining grades required.
- Academic Operations will be publishing all Board dates on its SharePoint site which should make it easier for Schools.

Discretionary Award of Credit (DC)

At what point can DCs be used?
- For Foundation Programme students, by the Award Board. - For UG students, by the Award Board or Progression Board as appropriate. However, Progression Boards should be mindful of using the discretionary award of credits for progression, as they may reach the maximum allowance before the award stage. - For PGT students DCs <u>cannot</u> be used for progression purposes.
What if students have already received a DC and how many DC credits are allowed?
- Foundation Programme students, normally up to 15 credits at the point of award. - First Degrees, normally up to 30 credits over the course of the entire programme of study. - Combined Studies up to 45 credits at the point of award. - Higher Degree of Master, and taught component of Postgraduate Research, normally up to 20 credits. - Where DCs have previously been awarded to full or partial cohorts for the purposes of MAB, the DC does not count towards the maximum DC allowance. - Boards need to be very clear about the number of DCs a student has previously received, and whether the DC was as a result of MAB or not.
Can a 4 th year student be given a DC?
- Yes, as long as the requirements of the Policy are met and that the discretionary award of credits are not to be applied to a dissertation, project or any other supervised research work (nor to courses which might be defined as 'pre-requisite', 'core', 'qualifying', or equivalent terminology. Refer to the Policy for guidance.
Should a DC be used within the calculation for an award classification?
- Where DC is being used for a course for which there are no accepted mitigating or exceptional circumstances, then that course shall be included. The mark from the re-assessment attempt should be included in the calculation. - Where DC is being used for a course with accepted mitigating/exceptional circumstances, then that course shall not be included in the overall award calculation.
Should Boards be encouraged to use DCs where applicable for award (i.e. if the standards and learning outcomes of the award shall not be compromised and the student satisfies the overall award criteria etc) or is it only intended to be used in exceptional circumstances (i.e. if the student has MCs)
- DC can be used when other opportunities have been exhausted or are not available, and as long as the standards and learning outcomes of the award are not compromised, and DC credit allowances are not exceeded. - As detailed within the Policy, paragraph 3.3 d, DCs must not be used as an alternative to mitigating circumstances. The mitigating circumstances process should be applied and, afterwards, the Progression or Award Board should determine an appropriate grade (either in the range of A-F, or DC).

Can a DC be applied to a qualifying course for award purposes provided the terms of the policy have been met (i.e. if the standards and learning outcomes of the award shall not be compromised and the student satisfies the overall award criteria, not a dissertation course etc)?
As detailed within the Policy, paragraph 3.3a, DCs cannot be applied to courses which are designated as requiring a minimum of Grade D for progression on the programme (and which might be defined as 'pre-requisite', 'core', 'qualifying', or equivalent terminology).
What options do we have at the Award Board for undergraduate students when they have not passed a course and the accreditation body does not allow DC's? Can the board decide to offer resits in this case?
- The Award Board should make an academic decision based on the University's regulations, irrespective of the professional body requirements. - A student can liaise directly with a professional body to determine how they can meet accreditation requirements.

Resits

Can a postgraduate taught student progress to dissertation with a resit outstanding for a core, qualifying or pre-requisite course?
- Under normal circumstances, no. - Regulation A6 Progression, paragraph 3.6.1 advises that: - To progress from the taught stage to the dissertation stage of a Higher Degree of Master, a minimum of Grade C is normally required in all courses. - If the circumstances are not 'normal' then it falls within an 'exceptional circumstance' for which a clear rationale must be given and documented.
Do students have to take all resits at the next opportunity?
Standard process would be to give them resits in everything they need, but the board has discretion to determine that no further resit opportunities are given, in cases where students have a high number of resits. The Board must detail and minute exactly why it has taken the decisions in case a student appeals.

Progression & Degree Classifications

Are Progression Boards able to make Awards?
• Yes but only in circumstances where a Board is constituted as an award board. • There may not be an External Examiner present (and so their comments should be sought) but a Dean's representative should attend, otherwise awards should not be made, including exit awards.
For determining the final UG degree classification, the mark from the first attempt will count. If such a student ends up at a borderline, the Award Board will look at the credits the student earned. <i>Example - Let's take the example where a student has a 30F or 35E in the first attempt and scores a 60B in the resit: can you confirm that the credits from the resit B grade are not to be counted for considering borderline scenarios.</i>
• Someone who has a 35E will have credits • Someone who has a 30F will not have credits. The board can consider the use of Discretionary Credits in this instance. • The classification of the degree is made up purely by the numeric marks in the relevant years and it must be the first attempt that is used in the calculation of the award. If the student is in the borderline discussion area, the board would deal with the student in the same way as dealing with any other student in the borderline area. It's up to the board to decide whether to move the student up or leave as is. The rationale for the changes must be recorded in the board minutes. • If a student gets a 35E and wishes to resit, the credits are removed and applied to the resit grade. The original mark must be used for calculating the classification.