



Industrial Action: Mitigating the Impact on Assessment, Progression and Award

Examples for Boards of Examiners

Introduction

Heriot-Watt University has a well-established policy on **mitigating the impact of industrial action on assessment, progression and award and provides the framework for academic decision-making and maintaining academic standards**. The policy provides a framework for the University in all instances of industrial action and is reviewed at each instance to determine whether the policy needs to be updated and applied or whether the mitigation can be managed under [Regulation A10: Authorities in Exceptional Circumstances](#).

The specifics of industrial action are likely to vary from one occasion to another (eg full strike action impacting on all aspects of learning, teaching and assessment, a marking boycott or action short of strike) and the impact will vary across and within Schools. Consequently, the policy, once revised and implemented, represents the full range of procedures which could be followed, recognising that the approaches taken in actuality will depend on the scale of the impact in each School, programme or course.

For the industrial action in 2025/26, the Academic Continuity Group (ACG)¹ determined that Schools were managing the impact within existing academic decision-making policies and procedures and within the specific actions determined by the ACG under *Regulation A10: Authorities in Exceptional Circumstances*, and consequently, there was no need to revise and implement the institutional industrial action policy. However, it was further agreed that the scenarios within the policy document were still very useful to Boards of Examiners in evaluating the impact and in determining action to be taken.

Therefore, **the 2025/26 version of this document is designed to provide scenarios and examples to guide Boards of Examiners in their decision-making**.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the “Academic Decision-Making” [policies](#) and [procedures](#), which set out the University’s overall framework for dealing with circumstances which have impacted on a whole cohort in relation to assessment, progression and award, although the sections related to industrial action are repeated in full here. These also contain a full overview of the process for considering results in non-standard circumstances affecting whole cohorts.

(Note: the University’s [Mitigating Circumstances](#) arrangements apply to individual student cases).

The University’s policies and procedures have been devised to ensure that a robust framework is in place for ensuring no academic disadvantage due to industrial action, while simultaneously maintaining academic standards, retaining academic decision-making in full, evaluating attainment of learning outcomes, securing academic integrity and preserving the value of qualifications over time.

After each instance of industrial action, the Registry and Academic Support Directorate, in conjunction with the Deputy Principal (Education and Student Life), will produce an institutional report in relation to the academic impact and actions taken for consideration by key committees and for submission to the Quality Assurance Agency Scotland.

Regulation A10: Authorities in Exceptional Circumstances

The key information relating to the use of Regulation A10: Authorities in Exceptional Circumstances is summarised in the box below.

Regulation A10: Authorities in Exceptional Circumstances

1. In all events of industrial action, the SCIBE will be invited to enact [Regulation A10: Authorities in Exceptional Circumstances](#).
2. Regulation A10 applies *when the full range of information normally taken into account in academic decision making, is not available; and/or the circumstances have affected the ability to deliver the planned*

¹ The 2025/26 Academic Continuity Group is a cross-institutional group of senior leaders chaired by the Deputy Principal (Education and Student Life) and empowered by the Senate Committee for Business and Effectiveness (SCIBE) to manage the impact of the Middle East Conflict and of industrial action on learning, teaching, assessment, progression and award.

learning and teaching and/or assessment and requires immediate adjustments [extract from Reg A10].

3. Regulation A10 also permits Boards of Examiners (Course Assessment, Progression and Award) to be convened and to operate with a smaller membership than that specified in Regulation A5: Academic Decision-Making Boards and thereby legitimately take all decisions relating to assessment, progression and award.

Other key information around the operation of Regulation A10 includes the following:

Membership

- 1) Boards of Examiners should include the Head of the Primary Academic Unit (Executive Dean) as Chair (or nominee, who must be approved by UCQS to chair Boards of Examiners – see [list of approved Chairs](#)) and must have completed the requisite training), a member of the teaching team for each programme (Award and Progression Boards) or for each course (Course Assessment Board) and anyone else at the discretion of the Head of the Primary Academic Unit.

The member of the programme or course teaching team can be a member of HWU staff from any campus location or mode of delivery.

Award Boards must include a Dean or Deans Rep and the External Examiner(s). If an External Examiner is absent (including due to their own participation in industrial action), another External Examiner must be present.

Although Regulation A10 allows Boards of Examiners to operate with a smaller number of members, previous instances of industrial action/Marking+ Boycotts have shown that participation in Boards of Examiners has not been significantly impacted, with attendance levels similar to normal circumstances.

Decision-Making

- 2) Regulation A10 allows the aforementioned Boards of Examiners to have the authority to:
 - make recommendations to the Senate for the award of degrees and other awards;
 - make decisions about progression;
 - award credit for individual courses;
 - defer making a decision if it is agreed that there is insufficient information available to recommend awards or allow progression.

Although the University's approach to industrial action is based on the principle of "no academic disadvantage", the opportunity to defer a decision until after the end of industrial action is an important one, as Exam Boards also have a responsibility to maintain quality and academic standards and secure the value of qualifications over time.

An award decision might, for example, be deferred in the case of a PG Certificate where there are no marks for a 20-credit course and the Board does not feel it appropriate to recommend an award when a third of the course marks are missing and student performance on the other two courses has been relatively poor. Additionally, a "proceed to dissertation" decision on a PGT Masters programme might be deferred if there is no assessment information (either no marks or no assessment was set) for more than half of the courses. A course decision might be deferred, for example, if there are established or suspected instances of academic misconduct.

The next section outlines more specific details of the approaches and decisions which Boards of Examiners can take in the event of industrial action

Decisions and Approaches

As noted above, since the specifics of industrial action and the consequent impact are likely to vary from one occasion to another, the decisions and approaches outlined below will range from being applicable in their entirety to only a subset being needed. All decisions and approaches specified here are fully aligned with *Regulation A10: Authorities in Exceptional Circumstances*.

Note on format: This section is set out in such a way as to enable School Management Teams and Boards of Examiners to focus on the circumstances relevant to them. The section is structured chronologically from setting assessment tasks to reconsidering results following the end of a marking boycott, and includes reassessment.

Setting Assessment Tasks: Coursework and Examination

1. No coursework or examination has been set for the course and there is no opportunity to produce any such assessments

In instances of coursework or examination not being set, it should be noted that the terms and conditions of Action Short of Strike (ie during a Marking and Assessment Boycott) do permit managers to ask other staff on the course to produce these assessment tasks, including members of the global teaching team located in Dubai and Malaysia. However, the decision to reallocate work, including setting of assessment tasks, will be made at University level and communicated via Executive Deans. During strike action, managers should not ask non-striking colleagues to provide cover, except in instances of significant health & safety or compliance.

Where industrial action is not concluded in time and there is no opportunity to set the assessment tasks, see point 1 under Course Assessment Board section for complete absence of assessment information.

2. Some coursework has been set for the course and completed by students, but the remaining coursework and/or examination has not been set

Depending on the timing of industrial action and when it has been concluded, there might be an opportunity to set and issue the coursework at a later date or the Exams Team might be able to accept a later submission date for exam papers.

For the remaining coursework or the examination which has not been set, if the above situation is not possible, it should be noted that the terms and conditions of Action Short of Strike (ie during a Marking and Assessment Boycott) do permit managers to ask other staff on the course to produce these assessment tasks, including members of the global teaching team located in Dubai and Malaysia. However, the decision to reallocate work, including setting of assessment tasks, will be made at University level and communicated via Executive Deans. During strike action, managers should not ask non-striking colleagues to provide cover, except in instances of significant health & safety or compliance.

Where industrial action is not concluded in time and there is no opportunity to set the remaining assessment tasks, see point 2 under Course Assessment Board section for partial completion of assessment.

3. Coursework and/or examinations have been set, but not all the material for these assessments has been covered due to classes being cancelled/disrupted by industrial action.

In such cases, the full assignment, as originally designed, should not be given to students and one of two options should be followed:

- a) *Questions relating to the uncovered material should be removed; students should not simply be asked to ignore questions which they can't answer (this makes for a stressful experience in exams). This applies to all locations in which the coursework/exam is being offered, eg even if in Dubai and Malaysia, the full course content was covered, students in Dubai and Malaysia should be given the same reduced coursework or exam paper as is being offered in the UK; OR*
- b) *The original exam paper or coursework task, covering the full course content, should be provided only in locations/modes where there has been no industrial action and an entirely different exam paper/coursework task produced specifically for those students impacted by industrial action.*

Whether option a) or b) is chosen, there is at least evidence for the Course Assessment Board to consider. If a) or b) results in all assessments for the course being completed, see point 3 under Course Assessment Board section for "full assessment completed, but impacted by industrial action"

4. Coursework and/or examinations have been set and completed by students, but there has been impact due to industrial action

In this situation, if the assessment marking has been completed, see point 3 under Course Assessment Board section for "full assessment completed, but impacted by industrial action". If the assessment marking has not been completed or only partially completed, see the sections below on Assessment Marking/Marking Boycott and then, depending on how much assessment has been completed, see point 1 under Course Assessment Board section for complete absence of assessment information or point 2 under Course Assessment Board section for partial completion of assessment or point 3 under Course Assessment Board section for all assessment has been completed and marked, but there has been an impact due to industrial action.

Assessment Marking

1. No marking has been completed for any of component of assessment

See point 1 under Course Assessment Board section for complete absence of assessment information.

2. Marking has been completed for those components of assessment already undertaken by students prior to industrial action, but the remaining coursework or examination has not been set

In this situation, there is at least some evidence for the Course Assessment Board to consider and take a decision on. See point 2 under Course Assessment Board section below for action in relation to partial assessment completion.

3. Marking has been completed for those components of assessment already undertaken by students prior to industrial action, and students have since completed further assessments, but these have not been marked or have been marked but not moderated or have been marked by a single marker

In this situation, there is at least some evidence for the Course Assessment Board to consider and take a decision on. See point 2 under Course Assessment Board section below for action in relation to partial assessment completion.

4. Industrial action has been resolved and the boycotted assessments have been marked and moderated prior decisions being taken by the Board of Examiners

The industrial action dispute might be resolved prior to the Course Assessment Board or prior to a final decision being taken by the Progression or Award Board, providing sufficient time for marking to be completed and moderated and for grades to be provided to the relevant Boards for consideration. In such cases, see sections below on "Marking Boycott", "Consideration of Results after End of Marking Boycott" and see point 3 under Course Assessment Board for "full assessment completed, but impacted by industrial action".

5. Industrial action has been resolved and the boycotted assessments have been marked, but this has taken place after decisions have been ratified by the Board of Examiners (and perhaps also communicated to students)

In this case, the relevant Board of Examiners would have already taken a decision based on the impact of industrial action; however, the marking process might have revealed that the performance of students was substantially different from the decisions returned initially by the Board, eg students who had been given EC (Exceptional Award of Credits) due to industrial action might have been awarded a Grade A or a Grade F following the end of the marking boycott. See section below on "Marking Boycott" and "Consideration of Results after End of Marking Boycott".*

Marking Boycott

Some forms of industrial action include boycotting the marking of assessment (as well as boycotting the setting of assessment) as part of "action short of a strike".

The University's approach to marking boycotts is as follows:

1. Boards of Examiners should proceed on the basis of Regulation A10: Authorities in Exceptional Circumstances and should take decisions where marking boycott has impacted on assessment, progression and award as set out elsewhere in this University Policy on Mitigating the Impact of Industrial Action, ie:

a) Marking boycott is not resolved prior to decisions being taken by Boards of Examiners and so assessments are not marked or are marked but not moderated or are marked by a single marker

In this situation, there might be some assessments marked prior to the marking boycott or assessments might be marked but not moderated or marked by a single marker, enabling the Board to take a decision based on partial information; see point 2 under Course Assessment Board section for partial assessment information. However, there might be courses where no assessment has been marked or no assessment has been provided, and so see point 1 under Course Assessment Board section for complete absence of assessment information.

b) Marking boycott is resolved and all assessments are marked and moderated prior to decisions being taken by Boards of Examiners

Where all assessments can be marked and moderated prior to the relevant Board, then the Board can proceed as per other circumstances, but still needs to consider whether there has

been any impact of industrial action. See point 3 under Course Assessment Board section for “full assessment completed, but impacted by industrial action”.

2. As specified by Unions themselves and on advice from Human Resources, due to the requirements of employment contracts, all assessments which have been completed by students must be marked following the end of the marking boycott. Marking should take place within normal working hours and timeframes given by Executive Deans to complete this should be reasonable.
3. As a consequence of No2, even if results have been communicated to students, Boards of Examiners should reconvene to reconsider their decisions in light of the marked assessments. Boards can be reconvened under the reduced membership specified in Regulation A10: Authorities in Exceptional Circumstances and can be conducted by correspondence if required.
4. Unless there are particular exceptional circumstances (*see section below on marking after the end of industrial action*), students should not be disadvantaged in terms of reconsideration of results following marking of boycotted assessments, eg if a student received an EC (Exceptional Award of Credits) following the Board’s initial consideration and then a Grade F following the marking of boycotted assessment, the EC will be retained, but student can be given the choice of undertaking a reassessment, but cannot be required to do so except in a few specific situations (*see further below on the detail of actions to be taken in relation to post-Board marking of boycotted assessment*).
5. Particular attention should be given to ECs, ABS, Grade Es and Grade Fs when Boards have been reconvened to consider results of boycotted assessment (*see relevant section below for such cases*).
6. Where ECs/Exceptional Award of Credits* have been awarded to a whole cohort as a result of a marking boycott or other form of industrial action, this is separate from Discretionary Award of Credits/DCs which apply to individual cases and will not contribute to the 30 credit DC (45 for Combined Studies) limit outlined under Regulation A7: Awards, paragraph 2.5.2, which, at any rate, allows for flexibility in application of this limit. Additionally, such students will not be disadvantaged when considering their eligibility for the Deputy Principal’s Award (*see relevant section below for use of EC in such cases*).
7. Academic Operations will advise on the process for reconvening Boards, for submitting reconsidered results and for communicating such results and any related consequences to students (eg in terms of changes to reassessment, progression or award decisions). For the purposes of determining eligibility for the Deputy Principal’s Award, Student Records and Awards will identify those students who have been awarded DC because of a marking boycott or other form of industrial action, so that their EC is not considered as part of their overall performance.

Actions for Boards of Examiners (Course Assessment, Progression and Award)

This section provides an overview of the actions which can be taken by Boards of Examiners: Course Assessment, Progression and Award.

As is standard practice, all Boards of Examiners should record their justification for decisions taken during industrial action/Marking and Assessment Boycott in the Minutes of each meeting (including Boards which have been reconvened following the end of industrial action/MAB) in order to provide a formal record.

Course Assessment Board

In accordance with the University’s Regulations and [other policies on academic decision making](#), the Course Assessment Board should ensure that students are not academically disadvantaged due to the impact of industrial action, but should also ensure that quality and academic standards are maintained and the value of qualifications over time is secured.

1. Complete Absence of Assessment Information for the Course

If the entire course assessment has been impacted by industrial action and there is no assessment information at all (either students have not taken any assessments because no assessment task/exam paper was set or some/all assessment has been completed, but none of it has been marked), Exceptional Credits* (EC) should be awarded by the Course Assessment Board and decisions should not be deferred, except in exceptional circumstances, such as potential cases of academic misconduct or in the case of PG Certificates where ECs could account for all or the majority of the programme. If a high credit tariff project/dissertation has not been marked at all, the Course Assessment Board should

consider whether it is able to recommend an EC or needs to defer its decision.

Where ECs have been awarded to a whole cohort as a result of industrial action, this is separate from DCs/Discretionary Award of Credits*, which is used for individual cases, and will not contribute to the 30 credit DC (45 for Combined Studies) limit outlined under Regulation A7: Awards, paragraph 2.5.2, which, at any rate, allows for flexibility in application of this limit. Additionally, such students will not be disadvantaged when considering their eligibility for the Deputy Principal's Award.

The above approach applies also in the case of reassessments, ie where no reassessment paper/task has been provided or where students have completed the reassessment but none of it has been marked.

2. Partial Completion and Partial Marking of Assessment

Where there is at least some assessment evidence (students have completed only part of the assessment but it has been marked or students have completed all of the assessment but only part of it has been marked or the assessment has been marked, but it has not been moderated or it has been marked by a single marker only) for the Course Assessment Board to consider and take a decision on, there are several options available. The option selected will depend on factors such as the percentage of the overall assessment completed or extent to which course learning outcomes have been met:

- a) If the completed and marked assessment accounts for a substantial proportion of the overall assessment or if the unmoderated marks/single marker marks are deemed to be appropriate based on the performance of previous cohorts (and of the students themselves in previous years or courses), the Course Assessment Board can choose to allocate the identical grade gained for the completed assessment to the entire course, eg there are students with Grades A, B, C, D, E*, F* and ABS* for 70% of the assessment (the remaining 30% impacted by industrial action) and so the Board decides to use the same grades for the overall course performance.
- b) If the completed and marked assessment accounts for such a small proportion of the assessment that the Course Assessment Board cannot reach a justifiable decision in terms of an overall alpha grade, then the Board should award Exceptional Credits* (EC) for the entire cohort, unless there are justifiable exceptional circumstances such as potential academic misconduct or known absences.
- c) If the completed and marked assessment accounts for neither a substantive nor a small portion of the overall assessment or if the Board is of the view that the unmoderated marks are not representative of prior cohorts, the Course Assessment Board can choose either option a) award a grade based on performance in completed assessments or b) award ECs*. In either case, the Board should consider factors such as: the extent to which the course learning outcomes have been met; the extent to which all material has been covered (though not assessed); whether or not the course is a pre-requisite or core to the overall programme learning outcomes.

ABS: if a student has an ABS for a proportion of the marked assessment, the Board can award Exceptional Credits (EC)* as the overall grade or may wish to retain the ABS if it covers a substantial proportion of the assessment.

3. All assessment has been completed and marked

Where all assessment has been completed and marked and moderated, but there has been impact on learning and teaching due to industrial action, the Course Assessment Board can take the following decisions:

- a) Retain the marks/grades recommended by the Course Team on the basis the Board agrees that there has been no substantial impact on assessment due to industrial action (in reaching this decision, the Board might note that results are comparable to preceding years);
- b) Approve a readjustment of marks/grades, and the scale of the readjustment, on the basis that the Board agrees has been a demonstrable impact on assessment performance due to industrial action (in reaching this decision, the Board might note that results are at a lower level than expected).

* Where ECs have been awarded to a whole cohort as a result of industrial action, this is separate from Discretionary Award of Credits, which apply to individual cases, and does not contribute to the 30 credit DC (45 for Combined Studies) limit outlined under Regulation A7: Awards, paragraph 2.5.2, which, at any rate, allows for flexibility in application of this limit. Additionally, as per the [University's Policy on Discretionary Credits](#), where ECs have been awarded to a whole cohort due to industrial action, such courses will not be included in the overall calculation of the

award or progression. Finally, such students will not be disadvantaged when considering their eligibility for the Deputy Principal's Award.

See next section for detail on results requiring particular consideration after the end of a marking boycott.

Progression and Award Boards of Examiners

Progression

The University's response to industrial action is based on the principle of "no academic disadvantage" and so Progression Boards should use their collective academic judgement in reviewing all available evidence (including performance in previous years) to facilitate progression to the next stage, whilst at the same time ensuring that quality and academic standards are maintained. This approach applies equally to Progression Boards considering the results of reassessments.

As per the University Regulations and [Academic Decision-Making](#), only in exceptional circumstances can the Progression Board change the decisions of a Course Assessment Board.

It is expected that there might be very few cases where students have received a "cannot proceed" decision due entirely to the impact of industrial action. Such cases would include, for example, if the impacted assessment accounts for a relatively small proportion of the course (eg 20%) and the Course Assessment Board agreed to accept the performance to date as representative of the overall grade. In this scenario, students with an ABS, Grade F and, where relevant, a Grade E would receive a "cannot proceed" decision. Other cases might be where it is known that a student has not submitted coursework or has not undertaken an exam on a course affected by MAB and a Grade F and ABS decisions have been returned respectively as the final, confirmed results.

The above approach applies equally in the case of Resit Progression Boards where courses being reassessed have been impacted by industrial action/MAB.

If a student has reassessments for courses not affected by MAB or by other forms of industrial action, a "cannot proceed" decision should be returned, as in normal circumstances.

Students with a Substantial Number of MAB/Industrial Action ECs

A Progression Board (including for reassessment) might be presented with student profiles showing a substantial number of ECs applied because of MAB/industrial action, eg 4+ out of 8 courses. The Board should not prohibit such students from progressing to the next academic year, unless there is other evidence to suggest that the student has not met the progression criteria (eg performance in other courses not affected by industrial action or known absence from an exam or clear evidence of non-submission of coursework or academic misconduct).

However, in cases of students with a substantial number of ECs, such students should be informed clearly that they might be required to undertake or retake the assessment associated with EC courses in the next academic year if there was no assessment paper provided or if, in the case of completed assessments, the post-boycott marking reveals performance at a level below that required for progression.

In the case of PGT students with a substantial number of ECs due to industrial action or decisions deferred on courses, the Board may wish to defer a decision on progression to dissertation, because, in relation to maintaining quality and academic standards, it does not have sufficient evidence (unlike UG, where performance in prior years can provide a benchmark) to make a secure, reliable judgement.

See next section for detail on reconsidering progression results, if appropriate, after the end of a marking boycott.

Award

The University's response to industrial action is based on the principle of "no academic disadvantage" and so Award Boards should use their collective academic judgement in reviewing all available evidence (including performance in previous years) to facilitate the recommendation of an award, whilst at the same time ensuring that quality and academic standards are maintained and the value of the University's qualifications over time are secured. On that basis, ie maintaining quality, academic standards and the value of qualifications, there may be certain circumstances where an award cannot be recommended until post-boycott marking has been completed.

As per the University Regulations and [Academic Decision-Making](#), only in exceptional circumstances can

the Award Board change the decisions of a Course Assessment Board.

Deferral of Award Decisions

Award decisions should be deferred only in exceptional circumstances, such as the majority of information required to facilitate decision-making is missing, in view of the potential impact on graduating students' future plans for employment or further study. Two examples are given below.

- 1) An award decision might, for example, be deferred in the case of a PG Certificate where there are no marks for a 20-credit course and the Board does not feel it appropriate to recommend an award when a third of the course marks are missing and student performance on the other two courses has been relatively poor.
- 2) An Award Board might be presented with graduating student profiles showing a substantial number of ECs applied because of MAB/industrial action, eg 4+ out of 8 courses in the final year. In such cases, the Board may wish to defer making an award decision because of a justifiable concern about the impact on quality and academic standards, on reputation, on PSRB accreditation and on the validity of academic judgement due to the absence of such large proportion of the assessment results information.

In all cases of industrial action-related award deferrals, students should be informed as soon as possible and given a clear explanation for the deferral, making reference not just to MAB, but, more critically, to aspects such as quality, academic standards, reputation, PSRB accreditation, value of qualifications, employability, further study.

See next section for detail on reconsidering award results, if appropriate, after the end of a marking boycott.

Actions for Boards of Examiners after the End of Industrial Action

This section outlines the actions to be taken after the end of industrial action, including a Marking and Assessment Boycott, including for Course Assessment, Progression and Award Boards of Examiners. As per the terms and conditions related to industrial action, unmarked assessments are required to be marked following its conclusion.

After the end of Marking and Assessment Boycott: Marking of Assessments and Consideration of Results

Courses where no assessment tasks/exam papers were set due to MAB/industrial action

When industrial action/Marking + Assessment Boycott is concluded, any assessment (coursework/exams) tasks which were not set during the course (including reassessments) should not *normally* be given to students to complete afterwards. The only exceptions would be where such assessments need to be completed for PSRB accreditation, other types of accreditation, for scholarship/funding purposes or where the missing assessment counts for a substantial proportion of the programme eg for a PG Cert or a PG Dip. Additionally, if a student had a substantial number of ECs or decisions deferred due to no assessment task/exam paper being set, the Course Assessment Board can determine that it would be in the student's best interests to undertake these assessments, eg to ensure that they are able to successfully complete subsequent courses/years of study.

These assessments would need to be provided to students at such time as not to impact negatively on other aspects of their programme, eg with considerate completion dates. Consideration should also be given to the assessment format, eg coursework could be easier to schedule than an exam as an additional component in the next year of study. In such cases, following completion of the assessment, the Course Assessment Board should be reconvened and should consider results as per the process outlined in preceding sections.

Post-MAB/industrial action marking of assessments completed by students

If assessments had been completed by students prior to the end of the course but not marked due to a Marking and Assessment Boycott (MAB), then these assessments should be marked and then moderated following the conclusion of the MAB and the results considered by a reconvened Course Assessment Board and then communicated to students.

The remainder of this section relates to marking of assessment after the end of industrial action/MAB, with particular consideration given to ECs, Grades E and F, ABS.

- a) If the Course Assessment Board awarded alpha grades on the basis of partial assessment information and the results emerging following the marking of boycotted assessment reveal that the performance of some/all students is **lower than the results from the partial assessment**, then the principle of “no academic disadvantage” applies and the original higher results from the partial assessment are retained; this should be communicated to students. This means that if post-boycott marking has revealed that students would have a reassessment when they had previously been told that they would not have to be reassessed, then students cannot be asked subsequently to undertake the assessment*.
- b) If the Course Assessment Board awarded alpha grades on the basis of partial assessment information and the results emerging following the marking of boycotted assessment reveal that the performance of some/all students is **higher than the results from the partial assessment**, then the principle of “no academic disadvantage” applies and the post-boycott higher results are applied and communicated to students. This means that if students had originally been told that they had a reassessment, but post-boycott marking has indicated that they no longer have a reassessment, students should be told that they do not need to take the resit.

* the only exceptions, ie where a resit would be required, would be cases similar to those outlined where no assessment task/exam paper was set, ie: PSRB accreditation, other types of accreditation, scholarship/funding purposes, assessment information missing for a substantial proportion of the overall programme.

Grade E, Grade F, ABS and EC require more detailed consideration following the post-boycott marking:

- i) Exceptional Credits: if a student received an EC following the Board’s initial consideration and then a Grade F or ABS following the marking of boycotted assessment, the original EC remains. Students should be notified that if they want to try to improve their EC to an alpha grade, then they could undertake a reassessment at the next available opportunity, but that there would be no requirement to do so*.
- iii) Grade E: if a student received a EC following the Board’s initial consideration and then a Grade E following the marking of boycotted assessment, the Grade E should replace the EC, but students should not need to undertake a reassessment even if a Grade E on the course would, in normal circumstances, require a resit. Students should be notified that if they want to try to improve their Grade E, then they could undertake a reassessment at the next available opportunity, but that there would be no requirement to do so (not applicable to qualifying courses)*.

* The only exceptions, ie where a student would be required to undertake a reassessment, would be where such a reassessment needs to be completed (and an A-F grade returned) for PSRB accreditation, other types of accreditation, for scholarship/funding purposes or assessment information was missing for a substantial proportion of the overall programme.

Additionally, if a student had a substantial number of ECs or decisions deferred due to no assessment task/exam paper being set and post-boycott marking reveals the actual results to be Grade Es and Fs, the Course Assessment Board, on the advice of the Progression Board, might determine that it would be in the student’s best interests to undertake a reassessment, eg to ensure that they are able to successfully complete subsequent courses/years of study.

Any such reassessments would need to be provided to students at such time as not to impact negatively on other aspects of their programme, eg with considerate completion dates; consideration should also be given to the assessment format, eg coursework could be easier to schedule than an exam as an additional component in the next year of study. In such cases, following completion of the reassessment, the Course Assessment Board should be reconvened and should consider results as per the process outlined in preceding sections.

Updated course results will be published on Student Self-Service.

After the End of Industrial Action: Progression and Award Boards of Examiners

Progression

As a consequence of the principle of “no academic disadvantage”, it is not expected that the process of marking boycotted assessment would lead to a change in progression decision. However, if there do emerge such cases, then the Progression Board should be reconvened to review and ratify the changed decisions and students notified of such.

A “cannot proceed” decision might become a “proceed” decision following the end of a Marking and Assessment Boycott where the Course Assessment Board had agreed to accept performance to date on the course as representative of the overall grade and to discount the proportion allotted to the impacted

assessment, and returned the usual alpha grades. In this scenario, for those students who had been given an ABS, Grade F and a Grade E requiring a resit and a “cannot proceed” decision, the post-industrial action marking might lead to revised grades which would result in the original decision being replaced by a “proceed” decision.

If a student, who had a substantial number of ECs, had been allowed to progress to the next academic year, and subsequently, the post-industrial action marking reveals the actual results to be Grade Es and Fs, the Progression Board can determine that it would be in the student’s best interests to undertake reassessments, eg to ensure that they are able to successfully complete subsequent courses/years of study. The Progression Board’s decision should be communicated to the Course Assessment Board in such cases.

Any such reassessments would need to be provided to students at such time as not to impact negatively on other aspects of their programme, eg with considerate completion dates. In such cases, following completion of the reassessment, the Course Assessment Board should be reconvened and should consider results as per the process outlined in preceding sections.

Updated progression decisions will be published on Student Self-Service.

Award

If the reconsideration of course level results following the marking of boycotted assessment leads to a change in award decisions, then the Award Board should be reconvened to review and ratify the changed decisions and students notified of such (process to be specified by Academic Operations). If ECs are being replaced by a numerical mark and alpha grade, these should be included in the recalculation of the award.

The post-industrial action marking of assessment operates on the principle of “no academic disadvantage” and so even if the reconsideration of course-level results is indicative of a lower award, the original award is retained, and a student should not receive an award at a lower level than that originally endorsed by the Award Board.

However, it is possible that the post-industrial action marking of assessment results in a higher award than that originally endorsed by the Award Board. As a consequence of the principle of “no academic disadvantage”, the higher award should replace the original award.

If an award decision had been deferred due to the Board’s concerns about quality, academic standards, value of qualifications, reputation and validity of academic judgement, the Award Board should be reconvened to review the post-industrial action course assessment results and should proceed as per advice given in previous sections in order to reach a decision on award.

Updated award decisions will be published on Student Self-Service.

Communication and Links to Information for Staff and Students

The University’s academic decision-making includes reference to the actions which can be taken by Boards of Examiners in the event of industrial action.

The University’s approach to academic decision-making has been publicised to students via the University’s communications on preparing for the Exams and Assessment Diets and also further communicated by the Student Representative Bodies via their networks. Additionally, for students, there is a [general overview](#) and a [more detailed guide](#). Both documents are also available on the Supporting Our Students site [here](#).

Students have also received email correspondence from the University, explaining how the impact of the industrial action on assessment, progression and award will be mitigated by Boards of Examiners and how the principle of “no academic disadvantage” operates. Further details are provided in [a set of Student FAQs](#), which are revised and republished at each instance of industrial action and as each instance develops.

For staff, the communication has been via the Academic Continuity Group, staff updates from the University Executive and briefings for Boards of Examiners. In addition to this set of scenarios, there are School Management Procedures for Mitigating the Impact of Industrial Action on Assessment, Progression and Award, which have been distributed to School Management Teams (copy available from m.king@hw.ac.uk).

The University’s approaches to academic decision-making in general are published as a policy on the [Learning and Teaching Policy Bank](#) under “Academic Decision-Making and Boards of Examiners”. Additionally, there is

further, detailed [Guidance for Exam Boards \(Course, Progression and Award\) on Maintaining Academic Standards](#).

Communication with External Organisations (including PSRBs)

A range of external organisations will have an interest in the University's approach to industrial action, particularly from the perspective of assuring quality and academic standards, and maintaining the value of qualifications over time. There might be interest also from the perspective of ensuring that graduating students in particular are not disadvantaged in terms of their post-graduation plans for further study or employment.

Academic Quality, in collaboration with Human Resources and the Office of the Deputy Principal (Education and Student Life), will provide statements on the institutional position which can be provided to external organisations such as Universities Scotland, the Scottish Funding Council and the Quality Assurance Agency (Scotland and UK). Such a statement will emphasise the University's long-established, robust, transparent and fair processes.

Schools should engage with their Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) to ensure that they are aware, and accepting, of the University's approaches in relation to industrial action (and MABs). Academic Quality, in collaboration with Human Resources and the Office of the Deputy Principal (Education and Student Life), will provide statements on the institutional position which Schools can use in discussions with their PSRBs. PSRBs might also require notification of subject-specific measures, as well as the institutional approach. If PSRBs are not accepting of the University's position, notification should be made to the Deputy Principal (Education and Student Life) and the Head of Academic Quality.

PSRBs and other accreditation organisations may require Schools and/or the University to document all aspects of measures taken in the event of industrial action – not just regulations and policies, but also a record of, and justification for, decisions taken by Boards of Examiners and a statement of how learning outcomes have been met, particularly when assessments were incomplete or unmarked and an award decision was made. The Head of Academic Quality will provide Schools with templates and guidance as appropriate.

If you have any questions on managing the impact of industrial action, please contact Dr Maggie King, Head of Academic Quality, m.king@hw.ac.uk