Undergraduate and Postgraduate Assessment Procedures, 2022

Key Points to Highlight

This document highlights for the Boards of Examiners anything that is new or significantly different since the previous distribution (2021). Please discard all previous sets of guidelines and use only those documents relevant to academic session 2021/2022 (accessible from the web).

1. Regulations Review Project

Appendix 1 to this document provides details of Assessment-related revisions to the University Regulations, following the Regulations Review Project during 2020/21. In summary, these include:

   a. Regulation A5 Decision Making Boards
      • Introduction of the requirements and composition of a Mitigating Circumstances Board
      • Clarification for the composition of Boards for Combined Studies

   b. Regulation A7 Awards
      • Review of materials by External Examiners – Taught Programmes
      • Applying discretionary credits at the award stage
      • Criteria for Cert / Dip HE (reference to grades rather than percentages)
      • Grade Diploma and Postgraduate Diploma with Merit – Award Requirements
      • Higher Degree of Master – change to the award requirements (relating to resit attempts)

2. Heriot-Watt University Assessment and Progression System (HAPS)

Following the Regulations Review Project and publishing revised regulations, the HAPS document has been reordered so that it follows the format of the re-published regulations.

3. Award of Merit: Postgraduate Diplomas and Graduate Diplomas

The University introduced the award of Merit for Postgraduate Diplomas and Graduate Diplomas, for implementation in 2021, being applicable to students enrolling for the first time in the academic year starting in 2020. The requirements for the award with merit has been inadvertently omitted from the revised regulations (Regulation A7 Awards). This is being addressed. In the meantime, a screenshot of the previous regulations (Regulation 4 Postgraduate Diplomas and Graduate Diplomas) is provided below. See paragraph 19.4 below.

Extract from previous regulations (Regulation 4 Postgraduate Diplomas and Graduate Diplomas)
19 Requirements for Award

19.1 The award of a graduate diploma shall require a minimum of 120 SCQF (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework) credit points, all of which shall be at Level 9 or above in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, that is at Level 3 or above in the Higher Education part of the Framework.

19.2 The award of a postgraduate diploma shall require a minimum of 120 SCQF credit points, of which at least 90 credits shall be at Level 11 in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.

19.3 The award of a diploma shall require an overall performance in qualifying courses at Grade D or equivalent average percentage mark, or the majority of qualifying courses at Grade D and no course at less than Grade E.

19.4 The award of a diploma with merit shall require an overall performance in qualifying courses at Grade B or equivalent average percentage mark, or the majority of qualifying courses at Grade B and no course at less than Grade C.

19.5 The award of a diploma with distinction shall require an overall performance in qualifying courses at Grade A or equivalent average percentage mark, or the majority of qualifying courses at Grade A and no course at less than Grade C.

19.6 The specific criteria for the award of diploma, diploma with merit and diploma with distinction and the method used to calculate the award shall be as prescribed in the programme structures for each Programme of Study. The Studies Committee may approve criteria above the minimum standards specified in paragraphs 19.1-19.5.
4. **Mitigating Circumstances Guide for Students**

The Mitigating Circumstances Guide for Students has been refreshed and new information added. 
https://www.hw.ac.uk/uk/students/doc/mc-studentguide-2122-S2.pdf

5. **Managing Online Assessment due to VLE Access Holds and IT Services Access Holds**

This is a new document for academic session 2021/22. 
https://www.hw.ac.uk/uk/services/docs/learning-teaching/policies/onlineassessments-isholds.pdf

6. **Graduating Students (summer) – Deadline Date**

**IMPORTANT** The 02 June 2022 deadline for submitting approved paperwork for graduating students (summer) must be met to ensure students are eligible to graduate in June 2022.

7. **Appeals Against Examiners’ Recommendations of Award**

Exam Guideline Document 10

This is a reminder that, from 1 May 2020, all academic appeals were centralised which must be sent to the Central HW Appeals mailbox. Guidance reflects the changes.

8. **Regulation A10: Authorities in Exceptional Circumstances**

SCIIBE has approved the use of Regulation A10: Authorities in Exceptional Circumstances to manage exceptional circumstances, and particularly:

- The COVID-19 Pandemic
- Industrial action (UK focus)
- The situation in Ukraine and Russia
- The cyberattack

The following documents are available to help Boards of Examiners manage these exceptional circumstances.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document B</th>
<th>Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 on Examinations and Assessment: Guidance for Boards of Examiners in 2021/22</th>
<th>This is a summary of COVID-19 related information</th>
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<tr>
<td>Document D</td>
<td>Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 on Examinations and Assessment: Maintaining Academic Standards</td>
<td>These are guidelines for Boards of Examiners on implementing HWU’s Academic Safety Net (ie, Document C)</td>
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Additionally, a **briefing for External Examiners** has been produced which Academic Quality will share with all Chief/External Examiners:

**Briefing for External Examiners on HWU’s Approach to Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19**
9. Supporting the Process of Assessing and Examining Students

As in the previous session, a number of documents are available for supporting academic staff with the assessment and examination process. All documents are published on the Learning and Teaching Policy Bank, and are listed separately below:

**Academic Integrity**
- Academic integrity presentation packs:
  - Academic integrity and professionalism
  - Types of academic misconduct and how to avoid cheating
  - The academic misconduct process
- Academic rigour in assessed work policy
- Avoiding academic misconduct in take home open book exams: student guide
- Contract cheating detection and reporting: a staff guide
- Contract cheating: a guide for students
- Course statement on contract cheating
- Guidance on academic integrity
- Plagiarism and collusion, detection and reporting: a staff guide
- SoSS guidance for staff on detecting and reporting academic misconduct

**Assessment 2021/22: Key Policy Information**
- Assessment 2021/22: Summary of Key Policy Information
- Assessment 2021/22: Changes to Assessment
- Assessment 2021/22: Types of Assessment
- Assessment 2021/22: Take-Home Open Book Exams
- Assessment 2021/22: Assessment Scheduling
- Assessment 2021/22: Submission of Coursework Policy
- Assessment 2021/22: Feedback on Assessment
- Academic Safety Net 2021/22: Summary of Approach (for Staff) *(this is Document C within the suite of Exam Guidelines, referenced under Point 7 above)*
- Academic Safety Net 2021/22: Guidelines for Boards of Examiners in Maintaining Academic Standards (for Staff) *(this is Document D within the suite of Exam Guidelines, referenced under Point 6 above)*
- Academic Safety Net 2021/22: Summary for Students
- Academic Safety Net 2021/22: Guide to Students on What Happens after Exam Board
APPENDIX 1

Assessment-related revisions (following the Regulations Review Project)

Following the Regulations Review Project, assessment-related revisions to the Regulations are highlighted within this document.

Regulation A5 Decision Making Boards
a) Mitigating Circumstances Board (para 3)

Regulation A7 Awards
a) External Examiners – Taught Programmes (para 2.2)
b) Discretionary Credits for Award (para 2.5)
c) Undergraduate Certificates and Diplomas - Award criteria
d) Graduate Diplomas and Postgraduate Diplomas - Requirements for Award
e) Higher Degree of Master - Requirements for Award (para 8.5)

10. Regulation A5 Decision Making Boards

a) Mitigating Circumstances Board (para 3)

i) The main point to note in this Regulation is the introduction of paragraphs and requirements in relation to Mitigating Circumstances Boards. This did not previously exist in the Regulations

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<td>3.1. A Student shall notify the Head of their Primary Academic Unit of any illness or other mitigating circumstance which may have adversely affected their performance and which they would like the examiners to take into account in making their decision.</td>
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<td>3.2. A Mitigating Circumstances Board must be constituted and held prior to any relevant Assessment, Progression or Award Board.</td>
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<td>3.3. A Mitigating Circumstances Board shall consist of the following members:</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.3.1. The Chair who shall be the Director of Academic Quality of the Primary Academic Unit or their nominee; and</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.3.2. At least two other members of the Academic Staff from the Primary Academic Unit.</td>
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<td>3.4. A Mitigating Circumstances Board shall determine the impact of mitigating circumstances affecting one or more students and shall:</td>
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<td>3.4.1. agree on the extent of the impact, and</td>
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<td>3.4.2. make recommendations on mitigating action to be taken to the relevant Assessment, Progression and Award Board,</td>
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<td>all as in accordance with the University’s Mitigating Circumstances Policy.</td>
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<td>3.5. A Mitigating Circumstances Board must record its recommendations to be considered by the relevant Assessment, Progression and Award Board.</td>
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ii) Additionally, to address difficulties faced by colleagues responsible for Combined Studies programmes, wording has been inserted to state that, regarding the composition of Boards,
- “the members of Academic Staff involved in teaching shall be represented by the appropriate Associate Director of Studies”.
11. Regulation A7 Awards

a) External Examiners – Taught Programmes (para 2.2)

i) Paragraph 2.2.6 is wording that did not exist in the previous Regulations and was introduced to address inconsistencies in moderation practice. **NOTE:** UCQS has approved that the 70% requirement, referenced within paragraph 2.2.6 below has been deferred until academic session 2022/23.

2.2.6. All courses in any stage of a Programme of Study leading to the classification of a First Degree honours award or a Higher Degree of Master award shall have assessment materials reviewed by the external examiner before the assessment is undertaken either synoptically or within each course. For courses that have multiple assessments, such number of assessment components as amount to 70% or more of the overall available marks must be reviewed by the external examiner.

2.2.6.1. Such assessed material as is specified in the University’s Handbook on External Examiners for Taught Programmes (Undergraduate and Postgraduate) shall be available for the external examiner at or before a meeting of the Award Board.

2.2.6.2. Exceptionally, a Combined Studies external examiner would not undertake the activities noted in paragraph 2.2.6 and 2.2.6.1. as these would be undertaken by the external examiner responsible for the original Programme of Study of which the Course forms a part thereof.

b) Discretionary Credits for Award (para 2.5)

i) Paragraph 2.5.2.3 – Previous wording relating to the award of discretionary credit by Award Boards was limited, for Higher Degrees of Master programmes, to “one course”, this has now been replaced with the number of credits.

2.5.2. The Award Board shall have the discretion to award credits, up to a maximum over the course of the entire programme, for the relevant awards as follows:

2.5.2.1. In the case of First Degrees, normally up to 30 credits over the course of the entire programme of study.

2.5.2.2. In the case of Combined Studies up to 45 credits in the case of Combined Studies degrees at the point of award.

2.5.2.3. In the case of the Higher Degree of Master, normally up to 20 credits.

ii) Paragraph 2.5.4.3 - The requirement for a student to have taken all assessment opportunities and have obtained a grade F has been inserted as a requirement at the Award stage (previously progression only). **It should be noted** that in exceptional circumstances if a student is prevented by illness or other sufficient cause from either presenting themselves for or completing the examinations which form part of a Programme of Study leading to an award, the Award Board may consider applying discretionary credits, assuring itself that the application criteria is met.

2.5.4. If the Board is applying discretionary credits in terms of paragraph 2.5.2 above, the Board shall assure itself that:

2.5.4.1. Any discretionary credit previously applied for the purposes of progression, as set out under paragraph 2.5 of Regulation A6, Progression.

2.5.4.2. The standards and learning outcomes of the award shall not be compromised by the discretionary award of credits.

2.5.4.3. The Student shall have taken all the assessment opportunities in the course in question and have obtained a grade F in the assessment(s).

2.5.4.4. The justification for allocating discretionary credits shall be recorded in the minutes of the Award Board.
c) Undergraduate Certificates and Diplomas (para 4)
Award Criteria for Certificate / Diploma of Higher Education (paras 4.2 and 4.3)

i) Paragraphs 4.2.1 and 4.3.1 – award criteria has been changed from percentages to grades

4.2.1. The award of Certificate of Higher Education shall normally require a minimum of Grade D in pre-requisites and in courses designated as requiring a minimum of Grade D. The Progression Board may recommend the award of Certificate of Higher Education as an exit award to a Student who has achieved Grade E or lower in a course which required a minimum of Grade D or was originally taken as a pre-requisite for a higher award. The Progression Board shall record its justification for any such award.

4.3.1. The award of Diploma of Higher Education shall normally require a minimum of Grade D in pre-requisites and in courses designated as requiring a minimum of Grade D. The Progression Board may recommend the award of Diploma of Higher Education as an exit award to a Student who has achieved Grade E or lower in a course which required a minimum of Grade D or was originally taken as a pre-requisite for a higher award. The Progression Board shall record its justification for any such award.

d) Graduate Diplomas and Postgraduate Diplomas (para 7)
Requirements for Award (para 7.2)

i) The University introduced the award of Merit for Postgraduate Diplomas and Graduate Diplomas, for implementation in 2021, being applicable to students enrolling for the first time in the academic year starting in 2020. The requirements for the award with merit has been inadvertently omitted from the revised regulations. A screenshot of the previous regulations (Regulation 4 Postgraduate Diplomas and Graduate Diplomas) is provided below. See paragraph 19.4 below.

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e) Higher Degree of Master (para 8)
Requirements for Award (para 8.5)

i) The requirement at paragraph 8.5.5 is new. This requirement was not in the previous Regulations.

8.5.5. The Higher Degree of Master with distinction can only be awarded to Students who have not had any resit attempts.