

Draft proposals on changes to the Assessment Regulations: continuation of work already agreed by Senate for consistency of operation of the Regulations

Further to the completion of the first stage of the Assessment Regulations Review during 2014/15 and discussion at the Education and Student Committee in September 2015, a sub-group reconvened to consider and prioritise the scope of the second stage of the review. The sub-group comprised Associate Deans (Education), the Academic Lead for Assessment and the Dean of Validation, and representatives from Student and Academic Services.

The purpose of this paper is to update Education and Student Committee on the outcome of the discussion and the proposed consultation questions for Boards of Studies on the following proposals:

- **Rounding of marks/dealing with borderline marks (use of discretion)**
- **Compensation**
- **Resits/repeat years (following the previous consultation - Appendix 1)**

The sub-group also recommended that work is undertaken on the following areas to inform updates within the Regulations and associated policy and guidelines to improve clarity and consistency

- **AP(E)L**
- **Academic misconduct**
- **Late participation and extensions**
- **Panels supporting Assessment Boards**
- **Discretion on scaling of marks**
- **Module assessment components – minimum qualifying marks**

Work will also take place to:

- Redraft the Regulations to use more accessible language and terminology and to include a glossary of terms
- Reposition policy and guidance outside of the Regulations
- Review the current list of exceptions to the Regulations and include them as an Appendix of Programme Regulations
- Review the Assessment Regulations against other Senate Regulation and Policy to ensure consistency and overall coherence

Comments are sought from Education and Student Committee and the Students' Union to finalise the paper prior to its consideration by Boards of Studies.

The timeline is attached at **Appendix 2**

Education and Student Committee is asked to:

- (i) **note** that views from the Students' Union on the proposals will be sought both at the meeting and alongside the Board of Studies consultation
- (ii) **consider** and **approve** the proposed consultation questions for Boards of Studies
- (iii) **note** the other preliminary work being undertaken.

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A. PROPOSED CONSULTATION QUESTIONS FOR BOARDS OF STUDIES

Note: The Assessment Regulations state that Assessment Boards make recommendations to Senate based on the performance of students and in accordance with the Programme Specification on progression, resits, repeats, withdrawal, award, **noting that profiling of student performance should not inform these recommendations.**

1. Rounding of marks/dealing with borderline marks – use of discretion

The Regulations currently allow discretion for an Assessment Board to round marks according to certain criteria set out in section (2h)(vi) of the Regulations. Boards must avoid rounding at multiple levels to avoid undue inflation of marks, i.e. rounding should only take place once at either assessment component, module aggregate or degree classification level.

The Regulations do not provide guidance as to how Assessment Boards exercise this discretion so it can be used arbitrarily. Some Boards round all marks 0.5% below the classification boundary/pass mark whereas others decide at each Board and may or may not round but it is unclear on what basis they make this decision. It is also unclear at Board meetings whether marks have already been rounded at component/module level prior to the Assessment Board.

In order to improve consistency and transparency for students, it is proposed that:

- 1.1. Rounding should only take place at an Assessment Board and that the Assessment Board may only round up at one level. This should be at the latest point only (i.e. at the point of classification of the award) and for all students with an overall mark 0.5% or less below a classification boundary **unless** marks have already been rounded up at module level for individual students as set out in 1.2.
- 1.2. A module mark can be rounded up at an Assessment Board for any individual students who have failed the module but are within 0.5% of the module pass mark. NB students must have attempted all components within the module(s) to be eligible for rounding at module level. Where module rounding has taken place, a student will not subsequently be eligible for rounding up at classification level.
- 1.3. A record detailing which students had marks rounded at module level would be made available to the final Assessment Board considering degree classifications. Guidance would be developed for Assessment Boards to support consistent operation of the regulations.
- 1.4. Compensation would still be available for any eligible programme/student at the Assessment Board (subject to proposals under 2. below).

Boards of Studies will be asked to consider the proposed change and answer the following:

- i. Do you agree that rounding should only take place at an Assessment Board and at the point of classification unless the marks have been rounded at module level as outlined in 1.2?**
- ii. If not, please provide a rationale and suggest an alternative model which would offer consistency and transparency for students.**

2. Compensation

Compensation is the award of credit for failed module(s) on account of good performance in others. Compensation can only be applied if conditions stated in the Assessment Regulations are met. In particular, the conditions state that compensation can only be applied if it can be demonstrated that the learning outcomes of the modules in the Part have been satisfied.

The sub-group identified that Assessment Boards are not currently provided with sufficient information to establish whether the learning outcomes have been met when considering whether to apply compensation. It was noted that further work would need to be progressed with programme teams to articulate the link between assessment tasks and learning outcomes (e.g. through a matrix) to support Assessment Boards in the application of compensation. The sub-group agreed that this was a medium term piece of work that should be taken forward during 2015/16 and 2016/17, and should be highlighted to Boards of Studies.

Prior to that work being completed, in order to improve consistency and transparency, it is proposed that:

- 2.1. it should not be possible to compensate modules that have been designated as core within a programme as their core status indicates that they are integral to the programme learning outcomes being met.

Note – It is suggested that the revised regulations clarify that where a student is eligible for compensation at the first attempt, this would normally be awarded rather than a resit being required.

Boards of Studies will be asked to consider the proposed change and answer the following:

- i. **Do you agree that compensation should not be applied to core modules?**
- ii. **If not, please provide a rationale for this and suggest an alternative model which would satisfy the requirement that, where compensation is applied, it must be demonstrated that the learning outcomes have been met.**

3. Resits/Repeat Years

It was agreed that further consultation will be undertaken with Boards of Studies to establish proposals for consistent practice in the following areas as outlined more fully below:

- offering resit attempts at assessment where a student has failed to participate at the first attempt without extenuating circumstances, and
- decisions on granting a repeat (third) attempt at an assessment where there are no extenuating circumstances.

Resits where students have not participated at the first attempt and there are no extenuating circumstances

Assessment Boards currently have the discretion to decide whether to offer a resit opportunity where a student has not participated in an assessment at component or module level and has no extenuating circumstances. At present, some Assessment Boards give all such students a resit automatically. Others choose whether to offer a resit opportunity or withdraw such students although the basis for making these decisions is unclear.

The sub-group agreed that there should be a consistent approach for all students, i.e. either an automatic resit, or no resit offered where a student has not participated in an assessment. To avoid students being tactical in their participation at first attempts, the sub-group agreed that the latter option to not offer resits was the preferred approach.

It is proposed that:

- 3.1. Where a student has not participated in an assessment component or module at first attempt and does not have extenuating circumstances, a resit opportunity will **not** be offered and the student will be required to withdraw. A consistent approach would need to be taken by interim assessment panels when granting resits during the year on the basis of provisional marks.

Repeat options where there are no extenuating circumstances

Boards of Studies and the Students' Union were consulted during 2014/15 on the proposal to remove repeat options from the Assessment Regulations for students without extenuating circumstances (so that they would be permitted a maximum of two attempts at an assessment). Summary responses from the 2014/15 consultation can be found at **Appendix 1**.

In light of the responses received, it was agreed that further consultation would take place during 2015/16 on the circumstances in which a repeat attempt should be offered where there are no ECs. Further discussion by the sub-group has resulted in the following proposal:

- 3.2. Where a student has failed both a first attempt and a resit attempt at an assessment component or module, a repeat attempt will not be offered and the student will be required to withdraw. Programmes that wish to offer repeat attempts in these circumstances will need to provide a rationale for consideration/approval as a Programme Regulation (i.e. an approved exception). This should clearly set out how decisions to offer repeat opportunities will be made by the Assessment Board on a consistent basis for all students on the programme.

The sub-group discussed circumstances in which a student who has failed assessments at the first attempt should be required to undertake a partial repeat during the following academic year, rather than be offered a resit opportunity. It was suggested that where there were a number of resits to be undertaken, a partial repeat of the relevant assessments in the following academic year may be more appropriate than requiring multiple resits prior to the next academic year. A credit threshold could be one way of determining whether a student was required to resit or repeat, e.g. if a student had achieved less than 80 credits in a Part of an undergraduate programme, they would be offered a partial repeat rather than a resit. It is proposed that:

3.3. Where a student has failed several assessment components or modules, the Assessment Board has the discretion to offer a partial repeat year as a second attempt instead of offering the opportunity for multiple resits within the current academic year. A student would not be able to progress to the next Part of the programme until they had successfully completed the outstanding assessments. Guidance would be developed to enable a consistent approach to offering partial repeats rather than resit attempts.

- If a student resits modules as a second attempt during a partial repeat year, module marks would be capped.
- If a student is permitted to repeat a whole year (re-accessing all learning and taking assessments as a first attempt) module marks would not be capped. This would normally only apply where a student had approved extenuating circumstances.

NB the revised Regulations will clarify that, if a student receives a lower mark in a resit for a component or module, the lower mark stands (not the first attempt mark even where this was failed); the Board cannot exercise discretion in which to accept.

Boards of Studies will be asked to consider the above proposals and answer the following:

- Do you agree with proposal 3.1? If you do not, please say why and suggest an alternative model which would offer consistency and transparency for students.**
- Do you agree with proposal 3.2? If you do not, please say why and suggest an alternative model which would offer consistency and transparency for students.**
- Do you agree with proposal 3.3? If you do not, please say why.**
- Please provide your views on the following options for the Assessment Boards to make decisions under proposal 3.3 if it were to be provided:**
 - Assessment Boards would use a standard credit threshold that a student needs to reach in order to be offered a resit opportunity rather than having to undertake a partial repeat.**
 - Assessment Boards would have the discretion to determine whether to offer a resit opportunity or a partial repeat based on the nature and number of assessments that had been failed. Guidance would be provided to support consistency.**

B. OTHER AREAS FOR CONSIDERATION

The sub-group agreed that the following areas should also be considered during 2015/16. Further discussions will take place by the sub-group to agree recommendations for change including any matters that will require consultation with Boards of Studies during the spring term:

4. AP(E)L (*already supported by Education and Student Committee*)

Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning was last reviewed in 2008 and sector guidance in this area has changed through the publication of a revised chapter of the Quality Code. Under the current University arrangements, there is some University-level guidance and regulation but specific arrangements are determined in each School set by the Board of Studies (subject to approval by Senate). This has potentially led to different approaches across the University.

Preliminary work is being undertaken to establish current arrangements within Schools and review City practice against external guidelines and sector practice to identify any gaps in current regulation/policy and guidance, areas of good practice and areas which require clarification.

The sub-group will reconvene to consider the findings and agree next steps. The following areas have already been identified as requiring clarification and it is proposed that they are addressed during the review.

- 4.1. Limitations, currency of learning, grading, min/max volume.
- 4.2. How an Assessment Board takes oversight of AP(E)L in terms of student performance within the programme and the information it would require to do this.
- 4.3. Clarification on the arrangements for topping up from a Certificate, Diploma or other award (whether from City or elsewhere) to a higher award including any time limits for doing so.
- 4.4. How the failure of a CPD or stand-alone module twice should it be dealt with if a student subsequently applies to enrol on a programme where that module is core.

5. Academic Misconduct

The regulation for academic misconduct relies on local procedures being established at School/department level in the first instance to ascertain whether misconduct has been committed. Once a case is referred to an Academic Misconduct Panel the decision as to whether the misconduct is a major or minor is based on academic judgement.

The regulation provides guidelines for an Academic Misconduct Panel on the sanctions that may be applied to a student deemed to have committed academic misconduct. A Panel may consider e.g. the nature of the module (number of credits/structure/aggregation formula), year of study, and the effect of a sanction on the student's ability to enter their chosen profession.

Some parts of the regulation require clarification and there is the potential that students with similar instances of academic misconduct are being treated differently.

Preliminary work is being undertaken to establish current arrangements within Schools to identify the standard practice and areas which require clarification. The sub-group will be asked to reconvene to consider the findings and agree next steps. The following areas have been identified as requiring clarification and it is proposed that they are addressed during the review.

- 5.1. How Panels know whether a potential instance of academic misconduct is the student's first or a subsequent offence (in that or a previous year, or in modules owned by another School).
- 5.2. How Panels know whether their decision is proportionate in relation to decisions for other students with similar instances of academic misconduct.
- 5.3. Whether it would be useful for Academic Misconduct Panels to have further guidance on how to determine whether misconduct is minor or major and the extent to which discretion could be exercised (e.g. at each year of study) and/or whether there should be any additional sanctions available for clarity.

Note: some terminology will be clarified within the revised regulations.

6. Late Participation and Extensions

The Assessment Regulations state that "Boards of Studies must approve arrangements for participation in all forms of assessment which shall encompass participation, late participation and any extensions that may be permitted in certain circumstances, usually where a student has submitted extenuating circumstances. Such procedures shall pay due regard to the nature of the subject area and any professional, statutory or regulatory requirements."

In order to improve consistency and transparency for students, preliminary work is being undertaken to establish current arrangements within Schools to inform the drafting of a policy which will support a standard approach for late participation and extensions and for discipline-specific practice to be operated where appropriate. This would include:

- 6.1. The process for granting extensions and its relationship with ECs
- 6.2. Consideration of standard penalties for late submission of work

7. Interim Assessment Panels

Interim Assessment Panels are not able to make final assessment decisions but enable early results to be offered on the basis of provisional marks. Students cannot appeal against decisions made by Interim Assessment Panels.

In order to improve consistency and transparency for students it is proposed that:

- 7.1. The wording of the regulation is reviewed and further guidance will be developed for the operation of Interim Assessment Panel

8. Module Boards

Module Boards offer an opportunity for the marks for shared modules to be reviewed for a cohort ahead of final ratification by the 'home' Assessment Board for the programme.

In order to improve consistency and transparency it is proposed that:

- 8.1. Module Boards are re-named as Module Panels to reflect their role as a body to review module performance and marks and make recommendations to an Assessment Board (but not make final decisions)
- 8.2. The wording of the regulation is reviewed and further guidance will be developed for the operation of Module Boards

9. Discretion on scaling of marks

Scaling of marks should only take place as an exception and where the External Examiner has approved the rationale. Scaling should take place prior to, rather than at,

an Assessment Board. In order to improve consistency and transparency, it is proposed that:

- 9.1. A statement outlining the criteria and/or guidelines for scaling of marks will be developed.

10. Module Assessment Components - Minimum Qualifying Marks

It has been agreed that the principles underpinning the use of minimum qualifying marks for assessment components (in-module compensation) should be clarified. They are currently used inconsistently and it is unclear on what basis it is decided whether:

- (i) a module is passed on aggregate (i.e. individual components do not need to be passed);
- (ii) minimum qualifying marks are assigned to components that are lower than the module pass mark; or
- (iii) all components need to be passed at the module pass mark.

This has led to variations in module pass requirements within and between programmes without a clear rationale.

The sub-group agreed that further work would need to be undertaken with programme teams to set out the rationale for pass requirements for modules. This would be taken forward with the work identified for compensation (see 2. above) as both areas clarify on the link between assessment tasks and learning outcomes.

Regulations state that if a module component is failed, the student would only be required to resit the failed component(s). The original mark is retained for components passed at first attempt, and a capped mark applied to those passed at the resit attempt. The regulations are unclear as to the resit arrangements that should apply where a module is passed on aggregate or where minimum qualifying marks exist. It is proposed that the updated regulations clarify this area in order to improve consistency and transparency for students.

11. Internal Examiners

It is proposed that the role of Internal Examiner be clarified for the purposes of the Assessment Regulations and the list of Internal Examiners be noted by the BoS at an early point in academic year. This is to ensure that all modules are represented at the Assessment Board and to provide clarity on whether or not a quorum has been reached for a Board.

12. Awards

It is proposed that we incorporate Regulation 10 (Aegrotat Award) into Regulation 19 and include a section on posthumous awards.

It is also proposed that a section on revoking of awards in certain circumstances would be developed which would cover how such decisions would be approved.

Once the outcome of the HEFCE review of quality assessment is published, preliminary work will be undertaken to consider whether all programmes should offer exit awards (most but not all do at present) ¹ *Note: this would impact on programme design so may be a longer-term consideration*

REPEAT ATTEMPTS AT ASSESSMENT - SUMMARY OF RESPONSES (JUNE 2015)

The following table summarises responses from Boards of Studies relating to the 2014/15 Consultation questions:

- i. Do you support the removal of the current repeat options from the Assessment Regulations for students without approved extenuating circumstances to clarify that students should only be permitted two attempts at an assessment?
- ii. If not, please provide details of how the repeat option is currently used within your School, why you consider it should be retained and how parity is ensured.

	Response to the proposed removal of third repeat assessment attempt from 2016/17
Students' Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggest it is more appropriate to significantly tighten the regulation regarding third attempts and give much clearer guidance in the regulations to Schools rather than not offer it at all
Cass	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note current practice relating to MBA programme (which does not include exit awards); discretion is used to offer an additional resit
Law	<p>Agreed but note:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> current practice for academic programmes (LLB, GE LLB, GDL) where repeat attempt is offered when a student has attempted assessments but failed one module at the re-sit attempt. BPTC and LPC exceptions from resit regulations due to PSRB requirements Consultation with partners required (e.g. p-t distance learning LLB Legal Practice with CILEX Law School) Ensure that reasonable adjustments would be made to comply with the Equality Act 2010*
SASS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreed, this is consistent with current practice.
SHS	<p>Note</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> requirements of particular programmes in relation to potential impact (financial implications) on contract performance current practice within particular programmes relating to offering third sit in limited circumstances within set criteria – compensation is not allowed
SMCSE	<p>Note</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> requirements of particular programmes e.g. Mathematics relating to QAA benchmark; currently a third attempt is offered to students who have failed a single module comments relating to offer of third resit on condition of attendance definition of terminology requested
LEaD	No issues raised

* included within updated Regulations for 2015/16

PROPOSED TIMELINE FOR ACTIVITY

2015	Action
October	Assessment Sub-Group meets to scope stage two of the review
October	Proposals for Board of Studies consultations to be drafted
12 November	Education & Student Committee receives proposals for Board of Studies Consultation.
November/December	Students' Union and Board of Studies Consultation
2016	Action
January	Update to Regulations incorporating Board of Studies feedback
January	Assessment Sub-Group reviews draft updated Regulations
11 February	Education & Student Committee receives report and draft updated Regulations for comment
February/March	Further revisions incorporated into Regulations
March	Draft Regulations refined and further stakeholder feedback invited (including Boards of Studies and SU)
March	Legal opinion on draft invited
16 March	Senate receives update on progress
March	Draft Regulations revised incorporating stakeholder feedback and legal opinion to produce final version
March	Assessment Sub-Group reviews final version
March	Final version circulated to Education and Student Committee
13 April	AGC receives final version for approval
14 April	Education & Student Committee receives update on progress and AGC feedback
May	Assessment Sub-Group reviews final version incorporating AGC feedback
18 May	Senate receives final version for approval
May	Disseminate notification of changes to stakeholders