

# Assessment Regulations for Postgraduate Modular Programmes

(including relevant Post-experience and Continuing Professional Development Awards)

Issued by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Unit  
July 2009 edition

Approved by the Academic Quality and Standards Committee, 3 June 2009

[http://www.bolton.ac.uk/Quality/QAECContents/APPR/Documents/pdf/AssesRegs-PGMProg-main2009\(ExExam\).pdf](http://www.bolton.ac.uk/Quality/QAECContents/APPR/Documents/pdf/AssesRegs-PGMProg-main2009(ExExam).pdf)

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## **Assessment Regulations for Postgraduate Modular Programmes**

### **Preamble: Applicability of the Regulations**

- (i) These Assessment Regulations, which conform to and are to be interpreted within the University of Bolton's Academic Regulations on the Assessment of Students, apply to all postgraduate modular programmes, including any constituent pathways and modules, which lead to a University of Bolton award at Level HE7 in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) published by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). They also apply to taught modules at Level HE8 offered as part of professional doctorate programmes. Where required or permitted by an external awarding body, these regulations will also apply to a programme of study delivered by the University which leads to an award of that body. The regulations encompass those eligible programmes of study which cross the boundaries of individual Schools, Research Centres and Central Services (hereafter referred to as Schools), or which are developed by individual students through CATS regulations, as well as any elective modules from other programmes of study which are not themselves subject to these regulations but which are taken as part of a programme which is encompassed by them.
  
- (ii) Any programmes of study which wish to depart from these regulations in any way must apply to have their own specific variations from these regulations considered by the Academic Board through its normal procedures of validation. Supplementary Assessment Regulations (conforming to the University's Academic Regulations on the Assessment of Students) will then define the variations from the Assessment Regulations defined below. In considering such variations the Academic Quality and Standards Committee or equivalent body, in accordance with Academic Board policy, will not accept any deviation from the structural requirements of the Assessment Regulations for Postgraduate Modular Programmes (i.e. equivalencies to the standard numbers of modules and their credit ratings) and will wish to see all programmes of study operating regulations which facilitate student choice wherever possible, both within the area concerned and from the wider range of elective provision offered within the University's modular programmes. Further, it will wish to be convinced that the rationale for the variations sought is justifiable in the light of the University's stated goal of operating all cognate programmes within a common regulatory framework.

## 1. General Principles of Assessment

### 1.1 School-level Assessment Boards for Postgraduate Modular Awards

Final Awards Boards and Student Progression Boards at School level are the final boards for the determination of awards and progression respectively for those programmes which fall within their jurisdiction. They constitute the final tier for receiving results from Module Results Boards which contribute to those programmes of study falling within their jurisdiction. Student Progression Boards and Final Awards Boards will receive the grades and marks and make decisions on progression, failure, referral (including retake and repeat), deferral, or awards as appropriate. In making their judgements they will consider the decisions of Module Results Boards concerning the academic standards attained by students on their specific programmes and the modules of which they are made up. Appendix 1 provides details of the terms of reference, membership and operation of School-level Assessment Boards.

### 1.2 Forms of Assessment

School Assessment Boards will accept the forms of assessment which are approved for individual pathways and modules and which are specified in the relevant programme and/or module specifications as approved by the Academic Quality and Standards Committee or equivalent body through validation.

### 1.3 Assessment Criteria and Marks

The generic assessment criteria used by all Assessment Boards will be those which are defined in the University's Academic Regulations on the Assessment of Students and which will be adopted by Programmes, Pathways and Modules at School level. Where non-percentage forms of grading are in use, for example letter grades or points, they should be converted to percentages for presentation to Assessment Boards. All recommendations coming to all Assessment Boards should be formulated in accordance with these criteria and expressed in the form of a numerical mark as follows:

Grade Description	Mark		
	Hons Degree Class		
Work of Exceptional Quality	High	80+	i
	Middle	75-79	i
	Low	70-74	i
Work of Very Good Quality	High	67-69	ii.i
	Middle	64-66	ii.i
	Low	60-63	ii.i
Work of Good Quality	High	57-59	ii.ii
	Middle	54-56	ii.ii

	Low	50-53	ii.ii
Work of Satisfactory Quality	High	47-49	iii
	Middle	44-46	iii
	Low	40-43	iii
Borderline Fail		35-39	
Fail		below 35	

#### 1.4 Definitions of Assessment Criteria

The definitions of the above criteria are:

##### **Work of Exceptional Quality**

Virtually all of the relevant information/skills accurately deployed. Excellent and exceptional grasp of theoretical, conceptual, analytical and practical elements. Very effective integration of theory, practice and information in relation to the objectives of the assessment. Substantial evidence of originality and creativity as appropriate to the subject.

##### **Work of Very Good Quality**

Most of the relevant information/skills accurately deployed. Good grasp of theoretical, conceptual, analytical, practical elements. Effective integration of theory, practice and information in relation to the objectives of the assessment. Significant evidence of originality and creativity as appropriate to the subject.

##### **Work of Good Quality**

Some of the relevant information/skills accurately deployed. Adequate grasp of theoretical, conceptual, analytical and practical elements. Fair integration of theory, practice and information in relation to the objectives of the assessment. Some evidence of originality and creativity as appropriate to the subject.

##### **Work of Satisfactory Quality**

Some omissions in the deployment of information/ skills. Some grasp of theoretical, conceptual, analytical and practical elements. Limited integration of theory, practice and information in relation to the objectives of the assessment. Limited evidence of originality and creativity as appropriate to the subject.

##### **Borderline**

Deficiencies or omissions in information, skills, theoretical, conceptual, practical elements. Limited integration of these in relation to the assessed work's objectives. Some relevant content and marginal evidence of skills,

knowledge or creativity which could, in the light of overall performance, constitute the basis for consideration for an overall pass grade at the examiners' discretion.

### **Fail**

Little evidence of the information, skills, theoretical, conceptual, analytical, creative or practical elements relevant to the assessment. Mainly irrelevant and/or incorrect information provided. Scant evidence of understanding of the requirements of the assessment.

## **2. Assessment Regulations**

### **2.1 Duration of Study**

- 2.1.2 The normal planned duration of the Postgraduate Certificate is 15 weeks of full-time study (or its part-time equivalent).
- 2.1.2 The normal planned duration of the Postgraduate Diploma is 30 weeks of full-time study (or its part-time equivalent).
- 2.1.3 The normal planned duration of the Masters Degree is 48 weeks of full-time study (or its part-time equivalent).
- 2.1.4 The maximum period of registration is normally twice the planned duration for the Postgraduate Certificate, the Postgraduate Diploma and the Masters Degree. An Assessment Board may, having regard for the standard of the award and the course objectives and regulations, at its discretion allow a student to be assessed beyond the maximum period of registration. The maximum period of registration will normally include any sabbatical periods taken out by a student.

### **2.2 Attendance Requirements and Submission of Assessed Work**

- 2.2.1 In order to progress and achieve the award for which they are registered, students must attend the classes for each individual module regularly and in accordance with any compulsory attendance requirements defined for such modules. Assessment Boards will respect any such compulsory attendance requirements for individual modules in making decisions on student progression and will also have regard to the general attendance requirements of the University. The general attendance requirements of the University are specified in the University's Attendance Policy which may be found at:

<http://www.bolton.ac.uk/Students/PoliciesProceduresRegulations/AllStudents/Documents/StudentAttendancePolicy.pdf>

Failure to abide by this requirement may result in failure in individual modules and/or failure of a stage of the programme for which they are registered.

- 2.2.2 It is a requirement for all students to submit and/or attend for the assessment of each component of module assessment at the dates and times prescribed. Failure to submit and/or attend without good reason, supported by written evidence, will result in the student being deemed unsatisfactory in the particular component of assessment and a mark of zero will be recorded. It is a student's responsibility to provide written evidence according to the University's procedures for the submission of Mitigating Circumstances.
- 2.2.3 Attendance should be recorded for all elements of a programme. Students who have attendance problems should be reported to the appropriate tutor as defined in the programme handbook for appropriate follow-up action. Students should be warned verbally at first and then if they still persist with low

attendance they should be informed in writing and any sponsoring body informed. Students who do not respond to the written warning may be recommended for expulsion from their programme by an Assessment Board on academic grounds.

- 2.2.4 Students who fail to give formal notice in writing by the specified date of their intention to withdraw from their programme or its elements and who do not complete assessments will normally be deemed to have failed the programme or its specific elements.
- 2.2.5 Students must formally request permission from their Programme Leader if they wish temporarily to suspend their studies.
- 2.2.6 If students (by reason of absence, non-submission of work, or poor performance) do not satisfy an Assessment Board in the assessment for any modules and it is established to the satisfaction of the Board that this was due to proven illness or other circumstances found valid on production of evidence, then the Board shall use its discretion to ensure that the students are not disadvantaged or advantaged as a result.
- 2.2.7 In the case of coursework assessments, programme leaders have, in cases of proven illness or other circumstances found valid on production of evidence by the student, discretion to allow the assessments to be submitted late and for them to be marked as if submitted on time. The cases shall then be submitted to the Principal Lecturer responsible for Quality in the School/Centre who shall monitor and regulate the circumstances in which short term extensions are granted. The maximum extension to be granted under these circumstances is 5 calendar days. Any request for an extension to a submission deadline must normally be made by the student, and decided upon by the programme leader, before the original submission date.
- 2.2.8 Requests for extensions for periods longer than 5 days must be made using the Mitigating Circumstances procedures.
- 2.2.9 Should a student submit coursework beyond 5 days after the original submission date then in order to be accepted it will need to be accompanied by an application for mitigating circumstances. In cases where the application is successful, the normal outcome will be a “defer” decision.
- 2.2.10 In exercising its discretion an Assessment Board may decide to allow students to be assessed as for the first time and to vary the form of assessment to be used. A Board may also, provided that there is sufficient evidence to support its judgement, deem students to have passed and, at the award level, ascribe a mark or grade to the module(s).
- 2.2.11 Students, by reason of special educational need proven by acceptable evidence, may be assessed by methods other than those approved for the programme, subject to the operation of the University’s published arrangements for such circumstances.

## 2.3 Penalties for the Late Submission of Assessed Work

- 2.3.1 Students who fail to submit assessments by the prescribed date without an extension being granted or without accepted Mitigating Circumstances, shall be subject to the following penalties.

Students who have had a request for an extension granted by the appropriate authority who fail to submit assessments by the negotiated date shall also be subject to the following penalties.

Notification of these penalties should be included in the programme handbook for the subjects which the students are studying. Assessment Boards will accept assessment marks which have had approved penalties applied to them.

Up to 5 calendar days late = 10 marks subtracted but if the assignment would normally gain a pass mark, then the final mark to be no lower than the pass mark for the assignment.

Up to 10 calendar days late = 20 marks subtracted but if the assignment would normally gain a pass mark, then the final mark to be no lower than the pass mark for the assignment.

More than 10 calendar days late = 0 marks awarded.

- 2.3.2 All assessed work should be submitted as defined in the programme handbook. Extensions may be granted by programme leaders but only in exceptional circumstances and in accordance with 2.2.7 above. Coursework not submitted will be recorded as failed, except under the circumstances noted in 2.2.2 and 2.2.6.
- 2.3.3 Cases of persistent late submission should be brought to the attention of the Assessment Board, which shall exercise its discretion to determine the student's final results.
- 2.3.4 Where assessments are graded Pass/Fail only they will not be accepted beyond the deadline date for submission and will be recorded as a Fail. Students may request an extension to the original published deadline date as described in 2.2.7 above.

## 2.4 Penalties for Exceeding Specified Word Limits in Written Assignments

- 2.4.1 Tutors may choose to specify a **maximum word limit** for a written assignment (a penalty applies for exceeding this, see 2.4.5 below),

OR to specify an **indicative word length** for a written assignment (a penalty applies for exceeding this, see 2.4.6 below),

OR to specify a **guide to the word length** of a written assignment (no penalty applies for exceeding this),

OR not to provide any guidance on the number of words in a written assignment.

2.4.2 Where a **maximum word limit** or an **indicative word length** is specified for a written assignment, students shall be informed in the assignment brief of the requirement and of the penalty system to be applied if they exceed the specified number of words in the written assignment.

2.4.3 Where a **maximum word limit** or an **indicative word length** is specified for a written assignment, students shall include the number of words at the end of the assignment.

2.4.4 Any specified **maximum word limit** or **indicative word length** of a written assignment shall **not** include references cited in the text, rubric associated with tables, figures, diagrams etc, appendices and reference lists at the end of the assignment but **will** include any direct quotations.

2.4.5 Students who exceed a specified **maximum word limit** for a written assignment shall be subject to the following penalty system.

A line will be drawn across the assignment at the point of the **maximum word limit** and the assignment will be marked only up to that line.

2.4.6 Students who exceed a specified **indicative word length** for a written assignment shall be subject to the following penalty system.

Up to 10% over the specified **indicative word length** = no penalty

10 – 20% over the specified indicative word length = 5 marks subtracted but if the assignment would normally gain a pass mark, then the final mark to be no lower than the pass mark for the assignment.

More than 20% over the indicative word length = if the assignment would normally gain a pass mark, then the final mark to be the pass mark for the assignment.

## 2.5 The Use of Unfair Means

Cases of suspected use of unfair means (for example, cheating or plagiarism) shall be investigated according to University regulations. Where the case is

proven, a School Assessment Board (where necessary acting upon the advice of an appropriate Module Results Board), shall exercise its discretion in relation to the seriousness of the academic misdemeanour and in accordance with University Regulations on the use of Unfair Means in Assessment.

## 2.6 Stages and Levels within Postgraduate Modular Programmes

2.6.1 The Postgraduate Certificate will consist of modules worth at least 60 credits, including a minimum of 40 credits at Level HE7 and a maximum of 20 credits at no lower than Level HE6.

2.6.2 The Postgraduate Diploma will consist of modules worth at least 120 credits, including a minimum of 90 credits at Level HE7 and a maximum of 30 credits at no lower than Level HE6.

2.6.3 The Masters Degree will consist of modules and a dissertation or project together worth at least 180 credits, including a minimum of 150 credits at Level HE7 and a maximum of 30 credits at no lower than Level HE6.

2.6.4 The Advanced Diploma (of Continuing Professional Development) comprises credits taken predominantly at Level HE7 to the volume(s) approved for particular awards at validation.

### 2.6.5 The Relationship between Modules, Pathways, Programmes and Awards

- (i) Modules will normally be approved as belonging to one or more Pathways within the postgraduate modular curriculum. Pathways will be selected as one of two Pathway Types (i.e. Single or Joint) and this selection will determine the number of credits a student is required to take when they choose their programme.
- (ii) The normal minimum and maximum number of approved credits required to define the pathway type will be as follows:

	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>
Single Subject	150	180
Joint	75	105

Programme regulations will specify the precise requirements for individual pathways.

- (iii) A student will define a Programme on the basis of a choice of a single Pathway or a combination of two Pathways or an individually negotiated programme as their route through the postgraduate modular curriculum. The Student Programme will lead to one of the defined Awards available in accordance with University Regulations. Awards will be determined by School Assessment Boards.

- (iv) Where students acquire credits by completing modules belonging to three or more pathways (not counting co-credited modules or elective modules), then their award title will be in **Negotiated Studies**, unless other approved titles are available which appropriately reflect the generic nature of the programme of study.
- (v) In the case of joint awards and Negotiated Studies awards, determination of the Masters qualification title (i.e. MA, MSc, MEd) will be by reference to the relative pathway weightings in the student's programme of study and the qualification titles normally associated with those pathways. Where pathways are equally weighted, the dissertation/project pathway will normally be referred to in order to determine the qualification title.

## **2.7 Module Assessment and its Contribution to Pathways and Programmes**

### **2.7.1 Credit, Learning Time, Assessment Norms and Pass Marks**

- (i) Throughout all postgraduate modular programmes one credit is associated with ten hours of notional learning time. The distribution of the total notional learning time for a module will be part of the module specification approved at the time of validation.
- (ii) The assessment norms for modules carrying equal credit should be comparable within and across subjects and should take into account the total learning time associated with the credit value of the module. The precise requirements for individual modules will be defined at validation and will take into account the particular conventions of individual subjects.
- (iii) Assessment and progression will be based upon the grades achieved in an array of modules and, for the Masters Degree, a dissertation or project completed by the student, valued at between 3 and 6 standard modules. Each module may be assessed by a defined combination of examination and continuous assessment, examination only, or continuous assessment only, which will be approved at the time of validation.
- (iv) The overall pass mark for all modules is 40 percent. The mark awarded will be made up, where specified, of the weighted average of the examination and coursework assessment marks.
- (v) Normally, students will be expected to have achieved an overall pass mark, with no item defined in the assessment pattern for the module having a mark below 40 percent, in order to be awarded the credit for a module.
- (vi) Exceptions to the regulations on pass marks must be expressly applied for and approved as part of the variations contained within any Supplementary Assessment Regulations proposed at the time of validation of a module, although Assessment Boards may use their discretion to exceptionally allow compensation between module assessments in individual cases.

### **2.7.2 Module Load, Extra and Repeated Modules**

- (i) Students may be allowed to take modules over and above the number prescribed for their award. These modules will be known as extra modules. However, normally, full-time students may not be allowed to take modules worth more than 75 credits per semester and part-time students no more than 30 credits per semester. These total limitations shall apply to students whether they are taking extra modules, as defined, and/or repeating modules (see 2.8.2 and 2.8.6 below) as permitted by 2.7 and 2.9 below.
- (ii) Where students do take extra modules and complete the assessments, the marks for any core modules must be included in the calculation of the award. Otherwise the modules in which the student has received the highest marks will count towards any degree classification, provided that any specific requirements of the programme are met in terms of successful completion of core modules, prerequisites and other mandatory elements.
- (iii) All modules which a student wishes to take as extra modules and which may count towards assessment must be declared by a student at the time of module choice and be approved by the designated authority at programme level.

### **2.7.3 Pre-requisite Modules**

Where a module is defined as a pre-requisite module, students must normally pass such a module before being allowed to proceed to take any linked further module(s). Exceptions may be allowed at the discretion of an Assessment Board, on the advice of the tutor(s) for the linked further module(s).

### **2.7.4 Designation of the Level of Modules**

Modules may be designated as Level HE7 or Level HE6 as per the integrated credit framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The HE levels correspond to Levels 6 and 7 respectively in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) published by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). (Level HE8 modules will only apply to professional doctorate programmes)

### **2.7.5 Designation of the Type of Modules**

Modules may be designated as Core (compulsory) or Optional within a specific programme. They may also be designated as Elective if they are available to any student regardless of the programme they are taking.

### **2.7.6 Elective Modules**

- (i) Students may take an agreed number of electives as part of their programme of study but shall be subject to any specific requirements and mandatory

curricula for their awards which are laid down in the regulations for their programme.

- (ii) Students whose programme of study includes a module taken as an Elective from another programme of study will have such a module assessed by the appropriate module tutor concerned and this assessment will be verified by the subject external examiner.
- (iii) The results of an elective module will be transmitted from the host Module Results Board to the School Assessment Board ultimately responsible for the student's overall programme of study and be subject to that Board's assessment regulations on progression and reassessment.

#### **2.7.7 Admission to Modules**

Admission to individual modules will be at the discretion of the relevant programme authorities based upon academic grounds, and upon the minimum and maximum permissible student numbers allowable, as determined from year to year by the School concerned.

#### **2.7.8 Changing Modules**

A student may only change modules with the agreement of the Programme Leader and Module Tutors. Any such changes after a module commences may only take place in exceptional circumstances and normally within the first two weeks of the module commencing, failing which the change will not be permitted and the original module will remain on the student's record.

#### **2.7.9 Withdrawal from Modules**

A student may normally only withdraw from a module within the first two weeks of the module commencing and with the approval of the Module Tutor and Programme Leader. Withdrawal without permission and/or beyond this point without good reason will be recorded as a failure in the module (including any project or dissertation module).

### **2.8 Progression and Award requirements**

(see section 2.5 for parts and levels within programmes)

- (i) Students will only be eligible for any particular award defined below if their qualification aim encompasses the award; each award will only be issued under the circumstances defined in the Academic Regulations on the Conferment of University Awards.
- (ii) Where credit requirements at particular minimum levels are referred to below it is permissible, with the consent of the relevant Programme authorities, for some of those credits to be achieved at levels higher than the specified minima. However this should not be permitted to compromise the coherence and integrity of programme design and its intended learning outcomes. Due attention must be paid to the entry standards required for the programme, the need for staged progression and the constraints imposed by any core and/or

prerequisite modules and/or professional, statutory and regulatory body requirements.

### **2.8.1 Postgraduate Certificate**

- (i) In order to satisfy the requirements for successful completion of the Postgraduate Certificate students must pass modules worth at least 60 credits, including a minimum of 40 credits at Level HE7 and a maximum of 20 credits at no lower than Level HE6.
- (ii) Students will normally be required to pass all modules required for the Postgraduate Certificate before being allowed to proceed formally to the Postgraduate Diploma. In certain circumstances and at the discretion of an Assessment Board a student may be permitted to study Certificate and Diploma modules concurrently up to the module load maxima defined in 2.6.2 above. A student must pass any Postgraduate Certificate pre-requisite module(s) before proceeding to study the related module(s) at Postgraduate Diploma stage.
- (iii) Referral in modules taken in the first semester of the Postgraduate Certificate stage shall not normally preclude progress to the second semester. However an Assessment Board should have due regard to the limits on module load per semester specified in 2.6.2 when making decisions on progression.

### **2.8.2 Postgraduate Diploma**

- (i) In order to satisfy the requirements for the award of the Postgraduate Diploma students must pass modules worth at least 120 credits, including a minimum of 90 credits at Level HE7 and a maximum of 30 credits at no lower than Level HE6.
- (ii) Students will normally be required to pass all modules required for the Postgraduate Diploma before being allowed to proceed formally to the dissertation stage of their programme. In certain circumstances and at the discretion of an Assessment Board a dissertation student may concurrently study modules required to complete the requirements for Postgraduate Diploma up to the module load maxima defined in 2.6.2 above. A student must pass any Postgraduate Diploma pre-requisite module(s) before proceeding to study the related module(s) at the Masters stage.
- (iii) Referral in modules taken in the first semester of the Postgraduate Diploma stage shall not normally preclude progress to the second semester. However an Assessment Board should have due regard to the limits on module load per semester specified in 2.6.2 when making decisions on progression.

### **2.8.3 Masters Degree**

- (i) In order to satisfy the requirements for the award of a Masters Degree, students must pass modules and a dissertation or project together worth at

least 180 credits, including a minimum of 150 credits at Level HE7 and a maximum of 30 credits at no lower than Level HE6 and including a significant element of advanced independent study in the form of a dissertation or project worth between 30 and 60 credits at Level HE7.

- (ii) A student shall be recommended for the award of Masters Degree with Distinction if (a) their overall average mark for the taught modules and dissertation/project contributing to the required 180 credits is at least 70% and (b) the dissertation/project mark is at least 70%. An Assessment Board shall have recourse to the regulation on boundary grades, modal analysis and 'upgrading' below and the related guidance in the Appendices to these Regulations.
- (iii) Where the overall performance of a student being considered for a Masters degree falls within the marginal boundary grade 68% - 70% a modal profile (i.e. analysis of the grades achieved in each module which contributes to the final award) should be used where appropriate to enable judgment to be made about whether or not to make an award with distinction. Thus, a student whose aggregate mark is within the relevant boundary grade (68% - 70%) and who has a majority of their module grades, including the dissertation/project module in the higher classification band, shall be awarded the Masters degree with distinction.
- (iv) In those wholly exceptional and infrequent cases where an Assessment Board uses its discretion and academic judgement (which may only be in a student's favour) to make an award which departs from that arrived at through this regulation, then the Board shall ensure that its decision is fully justified and is recorded accordingly in the Board's minutes.

#### 2.8.4 **Post experience and Continuing Professional Development Awards**

In order to satisfy the requirements for the award of the Advanced Diploma (of Continuing Professional Development) students must obtain at least the number of credits at the requisite level(s) (predominantly Level HE7), as defined in the validated programme documentation.

#### 2.8.5 **Limitations on Progression**

At the discretion of an Assessment Board, students registered for any stage or final award and whose overall performance in modules taken at a particular stage or stages is considered to be marginal, may be required to complete their programme of study at a given stage and may not be permitted to proceed to the succeeding stage; such students will have their award registration amended accordingly (see also 2.8.7).

### 2.9 **The Determination of Assessment Results**

#### **Preamble**

- (i) An Assessment Board will determine its decisions on students' progression status on their programmes of study (2.8.1) and on the assessment and reassessment of individual modules (2.8.2) within the context of the University's Academic Regulations and will use the categories of decision defined in the Regulations, as elaborated below. The diagram at the end of Section 2.8 (p. 17) provides guidance on the alternatives available when Assessment Boards are making recommendations decisions on assessment of students in individual modules.
- (ii) An Assessment Board will determine recommendations and decisions for stage and final awards and their classification for those student programmes which fall within that Board's jurisdiction. It will also agree and determine recommendations and decisions on student progression, failure, referral and deferral and agree arrangements for the reassessment of students and consider the outcomes of reassessment.
- (iii) Recommendations and decisions on **student status, progression and awards** made by an Assessment Board will be determined within the context of the University's Academic Regulations on the Assessment of Students and will use the categories of decision referred to therein and elaborated in **2.8.1** below to determine and describe a **student's progression status on their programme of study**.
- (iv) Recommendations and decisions on **student performance in individual modules** made by an Assessment Board will be determined within the context of the University's Academic Regulations on the Assessment of Students and will use the categories of recommendation and decision referred to therein and elaborated in **2.8.2** to determine and describe a **student's standing with regard to individual modules**.

#### 2.9.1 **Permissible Assessment Board Outcomes relating to Recommendations and Decisions on Student Status on a Programme of Study with respect to Progression and Stage or Final Award**

##### Complete or Proceed to Next Stage/Year

*(as indicated by the student's module profile and according to any published guidance)*

- i. Pass and Complete  
With award of class/grade if appropriate (normally in respect of final award decision).
- ii. Pass and Proceed (or Interim Award and Proceed, if eligible) Proceed to next stage/year of programme. Decision on progression from one stage/year to another.
- iii. Proceed with Result Outstanding  
Continue to next stage/year with extra requirement(s) to fulfil. Decision on progression from one stage/year to another.

##### Not to Proceed to Next Stage/Year

*(as indicated by the student's module profile and according to any published guidance)*

- iv. Defer  
For bona fide reasons the student's status will be reconsidered at a subsequent meeting of the Board and within a time period determined by the Board - as if for the first time.
- v. Refer  
Reassessment in unsatisfactory assessment(s) for any or all modules and within a time period determined by the Board.
- vi. Retake  
Reassessment in all assessment(s) (whether unsatisfactory or not) for any or all modules and within a time period determined by the Board.
- vii. Repeat  
(Re)assessment in all assessment(s) for any or all modules or for specified substitute modules with attendance at relevant classes and within a time period determined by the Board.
- viii. Fail and Finish (or Interim Award and finish if eligible)  
Not to proceed or submit to any reassessment within the current course.
- ix. Fail and Finish on Pathway  
Not to proceed or submit to any reassessment within the current pathway.
- x. Exclusion  
To decide that a student be excluded from any specified course and/or programme(s) within the Board's jurisdiction or (subject to Academic Board approval) from the University. Circumstances are defined in the Academic Regulations on the Assessment of Students.

#### No Decision on Student Status

- xi. Chair's Action  
A decision on the student's status cannot be determined because of absence of information and the Board delegates to the Chair responsibility for resolving the matter and arriving at a decision - the Chair will ensure that the outcome is communicated as appropriate and reported to the next meeting of the Board.

Decision i above may be qualified by one of the following statements:

#### Offer of Aegrotat Award

Offer of award under special circumstances (student to have the right to accept or reject the award). Circumstances are defined in the Academic Regulations on the Assessment of Students.

#### Offer of an Award based on existing achievement (in the light of valid reasons)

Student to have the right to accept or reject the award. Circumstances are defined in the Academic Regulations on the Assessment of Students.

A Student Progression Board or a Final Awards Board may decide that a student's profile of module results may be amended by one or more of the following processes prior to arriving at one of the decisions i-ix above:

#### Condonement

To decide in the light of mitigating circumstances that unsatisfactory performance in a module with a mark no lower than 35 percent does not need to be redeemed in order for the student to progress or to gain the award for which s/he is registered – mark is adjusted to 40 percent and a pass is recorded but with a note that condonement has been applied. Exceptionally and with evidence of good performance elsewhere and of the record of conduct and attendance of the student, for a maximum of modules worth one sixth of the total credits constituting a particular Stage of a student's programme, when considered alongside any compensated modules.

#### Compensation

To decide that satisfactory overall performance (including attendance and conduct where appropriate) can compensate for unsatisfactory performance in a module with a mark no lower than 35 percent such that the positive aspects of the overall performance outweigh the area of unsatisfactory performance - mark is not adjusted and a pass is recorded and credit awarded but with a note that compensation has been applied. Discretionary and not where the module is deemed to be essential to the fulfilment of the objectives of the programme nor where there is evidence that no serious attempt has been made to fulfil the assessment requirements. A maximum of modules worth one sixth of the total credits constituting a particular Stage of a student's programme may be compensated, when considered alongside any condoned modules.

Compensation and condonement together may not exceed the credit limits stipulated for compensation or condonement by themselves. In applying either of these processes a note will be made on the student's record that condonement and/or compensation has been exercised.

## 2.9.2 Permissible Assessment Board Outcomes relating to Recommendations and Decisions on Assessment of Individual Modules

- i. Module Pass  
Satisfactory performance - credit awarded.
- ii. Module Defer  
Performance in one or more assessment(s) for this module has been adversely affected by bona fide mitigating circumstances but the student has passed any other assessment(s) for this module not so affected - assessment(s) to be taken as if for the first time (with no mark penalty) and within a time period determined by the Board.

### Unsatisfactory Performance

- iii. Module Refer  
Performance in one or more assessment(s) for this module is unsatisfactory - unsatisfactory module assessment(s) to be reassessed (normally with a ceiling of 40 percent on the officially recorded mark for the reassessed work) and within a time period determined by the Board. (Referred modules in which performance is subsequently unsatisfactory may be subject to a final reassessment decision (module retake or repeat), at the Board's discretion, normally with no further reassessment opportunity following any second attempt at reassessment).
- iv. Module Retake  
Performance in one or more assessment(s) for this module is unsatisfactory - all module assessment(s) to be retaken whether unsatisfactory or not (normally with a ceiling of 40 percent on the officially recorded mark for the retaken work and therefore for the module) and within a time period determined by the Board. This equates to referral in all assessments (with no stipulation by the Board that a student must attend relevant classes). Retaken modules in which performance is subsequently unsatisfactory may be subject to a final reassessment decision (module refer), at the Board's discretion, normally with no further reassessment opportunity following any second attempt at reassessment).
- v. Module Repeat  
Performance in one or more assessment(s) for this module is unsatisfactory and/or the student fails to meet specified attendance requirements - all module assessment(s) to be repeated with attendance at relevant classes (normally with a ceiling of 40 percent on the officially recorded mark for the repeated work and therefore for the module) and within a time period determined by the Board. Attendance at any or all of the relevant classes as specified by the Board. Repeated modules in which performance is subsequently unsatisfactory may be subject to a final reassessment decision (module refer), at the Board's discretion, normally with no further reassessment opportunity following any second attempt at reassessment.

Decisions iii-v above are considered either to be first attempts at reassessment following initial unsatisfactory performance or second and final attempts following unsatisfactory performance after a first reassessment opportunity.

- vi. Module Fail  
Failure of an individual module. Not permitted any reassessment in this module. Normally a consequence of unsatisfactory performance following any final reassessment opportunity, although other circumstances can also lead to this decision.

No Decision on Module Result

- vii. Chair's Action  
A decision on the module result cannot be determined because of absence of

information and the Board delegates to the Chair responsibility for resolving the matter and arriving at a decision. The Chair will ensure that the result is communicated as appropriate and reported to the next meeting of the Board.

Decision i above may be determined by the following:

#### Module Exemption

Satisfactory performance recorded on the basis of previous achievement. Normally in respect of credit awarded against the module on the basis of certified prior learning.

A Student Progression Board or a Final Awards Board may decide that a student's module result may be determined by one of the following processes prior to arriving at decision i above

#### Module Condonement

To decide in the light of mitigating circumstances that unsatisfactory performance in a module with a mark no lower than 35 percent does not need to be redeemed in order for the student to progress or to gain the award for which s/he is registered - mark is adjusted to 40 percent and a pass is recorded but with a note that condonement has been applied. Exceptionally and with evidence of good performance elsewhere and of the record of conduct and attendance of the student, for a maximum of modules worth one sixth of the total credits constituting a particular Stage of a student's programme, when considered alongside any compensated modules.

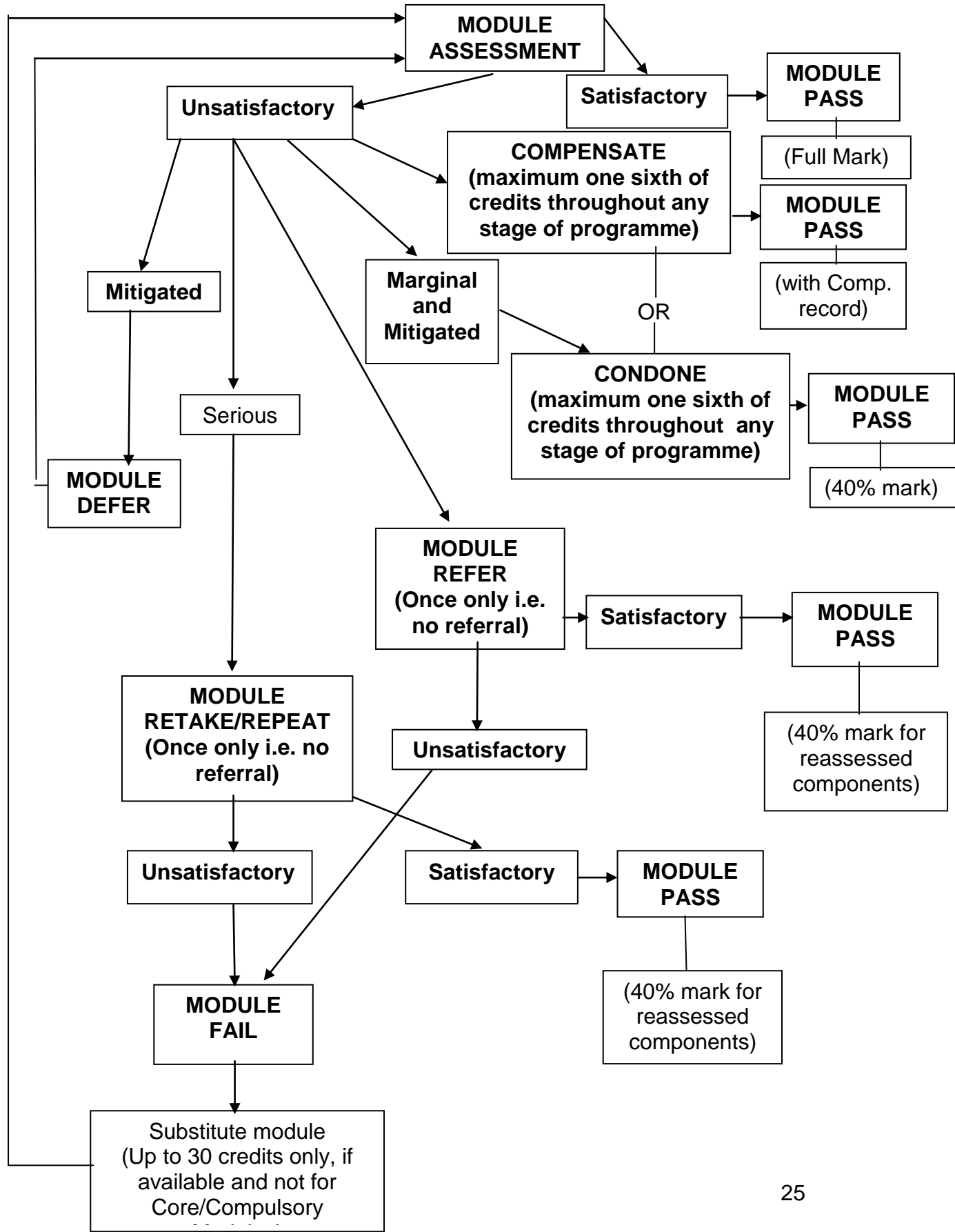
#### Module Compensation

To decide that satisfactory overall performance (including attendance and conduct where appropriate) can compensate for unsatisfactory performance in a module with a mark no lower than 35 percent such that the positive aspects of the overall performance outweigh the area of failure. Mark is not adjusted and a pass is recorded and credit awarded but with a note that compensation been applied. Discretionary and not where the module is deemed to be essential to the fulfilment of the objectives of the programme nor where there is evidence that no serious attempt has been made to fulfil the assessment requirements. A maximum of modules worth one sixth of the total credits constituting a particular Stage of a student's programme may be compensated, when considered alongside any condoned modules. Compensation and condonement together may not exceed the credit limits stipulated for compensation or condonement by themselves. In applying either of these processes a note should be made on the student's record that condonement and/or compensation has been exercised.

#### Moderation

To adjust marks for any or all of the assessments for a module for one or more students where such marks are out of line in comparison with others for the module or student or cohort. Normally in respect of an external examiner's scrutiny of assessments and marks.

**GUIDANCE FOR ASSESSMENT BOARD DECISIONS ON MODULE ASSESSMENTS**



### 2.9.3 Referral

- (i) In the case of an unsatisfactory performance in a module, a student may be referred pending a further opportunity to undertake all or part of the assessment required for the module.
- (ii) Referred performances are considered as second attempts following initial unsatisfactory performance and a student may normally be referred once only in an individual module.
- (iii) The maximum mark which may be awarded for a referred assessment component of 40%.
- (iv) The progression status of students who are referred in one or more modules will be determined by an Assessment Board in accordance with the definitions in Section 2.8.1, after considering the student's relevant module profile.

### 2.9.4 Deferral

- (i) In the case of students who are unable to complete an assessment, and/or where the assessment is materially affected by extenuating circumstances made known to an Assessment Board, the result is deferred, pending a further opportunity to undertake the assessment component.
- (ii) Deferred performances are considered as first attempts and there is no limit placed upon the reassessment mark which can be obtained.
- (iii) The progression status of students who are deferred in one or more modules will be determined by an Assessment Board in accordance with the definitions in Section 2.8.1, after considering the student's relevant module profile.

### 2.9.5 Retake

- (i) In the case of an initial module assessment which is considered by An Assessment Board to be seriously unsatisfactory, An Assessment Board may determine that a student must retake the assessment for the module, i.e. that all module assessments, including any which may have been satisfactory at the first attempt, must be retaken.
- (ii) Retakes of modules are therefore second attempts and no referral of retaken assessments will normally be permitted.
- (iii) The maximum mark which may be awarded for any retaken assessments is 40%.
- (iv) The progression status of students who are required to retake the assessment for one or more modules will be determined by An Assessment Board in accordance with the definitions in Section 2.8.1, after considering the student's relevant module profile.

### 2.9.6 **Repeat**

- (i) In the case of an initial module assessment which is considered by An Assessment Board to be seriously unsatisfactory, An Assessment Board may determine that a student must repeat the assessment for the module, i.e. that all module assessments, including any which may have been satisfactory at the first attempt, must be repeated with attendance at relevant classes.
- (ii) Repeats of modules are therefore second attempts and no referral of repeated assessments will normally be permitted.
- (iii) The maximum mark which may be awarded for any repeated assessments is 40%.
- (iv) The progression status of students who are required to repeat the assessment for one or more modules will be determined by an Assessment Board in accordance with the definitions in Section 2.8.1, after considering the student's relevant module profile.

### 2.9.7 **Module Fail, Fail and Finish and Exclusion**

- (i) A Board may decide that a student must fail an individual module under the circumstances described in 2.8.2(vi) above.
- (ii) Where a student's performance is so unsatisfactory as to cause serious concern for his/her progress, or as to prevent completion of the registered programme of study, either because of repeated unsatisfactory performance in one or more particular modules, or because of a module profile considered by a Board to be seriously deficient, an Assessment Board may decide that it is not possible to offer the student any further (re)assessment opportunities in any (unsatisfactory) modules.
- (iii) In such cases a Board may decide that the student fail and finish the registered course and/or programme of study (possibly with a recommendation for an interim award and/ or to transfer to another programme), that the student be excluded from any specified course and/or programme(s) of study within the Board's jurisdiction, or recommend exclusion from the University on academic grounds (subject to Academic Board approval).

### 2.9.8 **Compensation**

- (i) At the discretion of a Student Progression Board or a Final Award Board, satisfactory overall performance (including, where appropriate, attendance and conduct) may compensate for unsatisfactory performance in a particular module at a particular level in a student's programme.
- (ii) An Assessment Board may compensate for failure in modules up to a maximum value of 30 credits throughout the duration of a student's programme. These total limitations will apply to compensation and/or

condonement (as defined below) whether both or one of these processes is employed.

- (iii) Such compensation provision will not normally be applied where the failed module is deemed to be essential to the fulfilment of the objectives of the programme, nor where there is evidence that no serious attempt has been made to fulfil the assessment requirements of the failed module.
- (iv) Where compensation is applied the student will be awarded the credits for the module but the module will be recorded with the original grade and with an indication that compensation has been applied.

#### **2.9.9 Condonement**

- (i) At the discretion of a Student Progression Board or a Final Awards Board, in the case of students whose performance has been affected by mitigating circumstances exceptionally a marginal failure in modules up to a maximum value of 30 credits throughout the duration of a student's programme may be condoned and the mark adjusted upwards to 40%.
- (ii) These total limitations will apply to condonement and/or compensation (as defined above) whether both or one of these processes is employed. Condonement will be influenced by evidence of good performance elsewhere and the record of conduct and attendance of the student.

#### **2.9.10 Module Substitution**

- (i) Where a student, through unsatisfactory performance in specific modules, does not complete the requirements for a particular award, he or she may substitute alternative modules at the discretion of an Assessment Board up to a maximum value of 30 credits throughout the duration of their programme of study.
- (ii) At the discretion of an Assessment Board the student may receive the full value of any marks awarded in the assessment of the substitute module(s) at the first attempt and be entitled to a reassessment under the same conditions as defined in 2.9.
- (iii) Modules which are defined as compulsory or core elements of a student's programme may not be substituted but may be repeated or retaken at a discretion of an Assessment Board.

## 2.10 Reassessment Conditions

- (i) Student Progression Boards and Final Awards Boards will receive recommendations from Module Results Boards on the assessment, re-assessment and progression of students and on eligibility for interim and final awards. In making recommendations and decisions upon reassessment the following regulations will apply. The various forms of reassessment and the conditions under which they are normally applied are outlined below and detailed in Section 2.8 above.
- (ii) Students who do not pass an individual module at their first attempt and who may be referred, or required to retake or repeat the module, shall normally have only one reassessment opportunity, whichever of the above decisions is recorded as result of the initial unsatisfactory performance.
- (iii) Students who do not in their first attempt satisfy an Assessment Board that they have passed the required modules may, at the Board's discretion, be referred in any or all of the modules in which an unsatisfactory performance has been recorded, once only. The reassessment of any referred module (or its specific assessment components) must take place within two years of the original assessment. A maximum mark of 40% will be awarded to any referred component of assessment within a module.
- (iv) Alternatively, where a student's unsatisfactory performance is deemed to be serious (e.g. clear as opposed to borderline fail mark), an Assessment Board may decide on the following courses of action:
- that the student must retake all of the assessment for any or all of the assessed modules once only within a specified period, normally with the limitation of obtaining a maximum mark of 40% for the retaken components of assessment;
  - that the student must repeat any or all of the modules and their assessment once only within a specified period, with attendance, normally with the limitation of obtaining a maximum mark of 40% for the module.

Where a student has not satisfied an Assessment Board in their reassessment for any referred, retaken or repeated module(s), an Assessment Board may decide on the following course of action:

- that the student must fail the module(s) and, where substitution of the failed module(s) is not possible within the regulations, to decide that the student fail and finish the registered course and/or programme of study, (possibly with a recommendation for an interim award and/or to transfer to another programme), or recommend exclusion from the University (in the latter case subject to Academic Board approval).
- (v) Where a student is subject to a fail and finish decision, or an exclusion, an Assessment Board may decide to recommend that the student be awarded an

appropriate interim award, if validated for the programme, and for which they have successfully passed the relevant modules and acquired the required numbers of credits at the appropriate levels.

## **2.11 Viva Voce Assessment**

External examiners have the right to examine any candidate by viva voce in addition to the assessments specified in the programme regulations. The viva voce may be used:

- (a) to determine difficult or borderline cases, such additional assessment being used only to raise and not to lower a candidate's marks;
- (b) as an alternative or additional assessment where valid reasons for poor performance have been established.

## **3. Procedures for the Review of a Decision of an Assessment Board**

(Full details of the University's Review procedures are given in the Examination Regulations published on the University's website and available from the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Unit).

The following is an extract from the Regulations.

### **3.1 Personal circumstances during the examinations**

If a candidate is aware of factors, such as illness, adversely affecting performance during examinations, supporting documentary evidence should be obtained by the candidate. The Chair of the Assessment Board should be informed as soon as possible. This should normally be before the Assessment Board meeting, unless, for valid reasons, the candidate is unwilling to divulge the information in advance of a meeting of the Board.

### **3.2 Conduct of the Examinations**

Candidates should refer to the published regulations on the conduct of examinations at the University, contained within the University's Examination Regulations, which they are required to read before an examination.

### **3.3 Grounds for Review**

- 3.3.1 A candidate may request a review of the decision of the Assessment Board on the grounds that performance in the examination was adversely affected by illness or some other factor which the Assessment Board was unaware of because the candidate was unable or for valid reasons unwilling to divulge before the Assessment Board reached its decision. The candidate's request must be supported by medical certificates or other relevant documentary evidence.

- 3.3.2 A candidate or any other person may request a review of the Assessment Board decision on the grounds that there has been a material administrative error, or that the examinations were not conducted in accordance with the current regulations for the course, or that some other material irregularity has occurred.
- 3.3.3 A candidate may request a review either of the Assessment Board's decision about the student's use of unfair means or on the grounds that the consequential academic action is unreasonably severe within the context of the Assessment Board and Validating Body's examination and assessment regulations.
- 3.3.4 A Review Committee shall automatically be convened by the Secretary to the Academic Board to consider an Assessment Board recommendation that a student be expelled from the University for academic reasons.
- 3.3.5 A review of the decision of an Assessment Board will be concerned solely with the conduct of the examinations or with the personal circumstances of the candidate or on the use of unfair means and any academic action or recommendation on expulsion from the University. It will not be concerned with questioning the academic judgement of an Assessment Board.

#### **4. Mitigating Circumstances**

(Detailed guidance and procedures are published separately)

- 4.1 Mitigating circumstances will consist of those personal difficulties which cause exceptional interference with academic performance and which are over and above the normal difficulties experienced in life. They will be submitted by a student, supported by acceptable documentary evidence, and may be taken into account by Assessment Boards in determining the progression of students, the recommending of awards and the classification of qualifications.
- 4.2 No student shall be put in a position of unfair advantage over other students; the aim is to enable all students to be assessed on equal terms.
- 4.3 All work submitted by students for assessment shall be marked and graded on its merits without consideration of any mitigating circumstances known to the marker.
- 4.4 Mitigating circumstances will not be used by assessors or Module Results Boards to alter students' marks and/or grades.
- 4.5 Students must submit mitigating circumstances according to the separate written procedures and by the deadlines given therein.
- 4.6 Mitigating circumstances judged to be acceptable by Mitigating Circumstances Panels will be considered by Assessment Boards under the following circumstances and according to University and programme regulations:

- 4.6.1 In determining whether a student may progress to the next stage of their programme.
- 4.6.2 In determining whether a student may be offered an award, whether aegrotat or otherwise.
- 4.6.3 In determining the classification of a student's award where the student is borderline and/or there are conflicting classifications in the profile of the student's maths and grades.
- 4.6.4 In determining whether a student's assessment should be deferred to a subsequent occasion as if for the first time and without penalty.
- 4.7 Normally, mitigating circumstances will not be taken into account where the circumstances have already been allowed for (for example by virtue of special assessment arrangements). Special assessment arrangements should be pre-arranged in cases of known disability and in all cases should be agreed before an examination period begins.
- 4.8 Mitigating circumstances submitted beyond the specified deadline should normally only be considered if the student was unable, or for valid reasons unwilling, to submit them prior to the deadline.
- 4.9 Mitigating circumstances will be scrutinised by the Mitigating Circumstances Panel, noting the documentary evidence submitted, and a summary of accepted cases made available to the Assessment Boards. Access to the original evidence is restricted to the Chair, Secretary and External Examiners unless the student declares otherwise.
- 4.10 Only mitigating circumstances submitted directly by the student according to the procedures will be recorded and considered by the Mitigating Circumstances Panel and, if accepted, passed to the Assessment Boards. Tutors and other staff should advise students accordingly.
- 4.11 The Student Progression Board or Final Awards Board will consider a student's full profile of mitigating circumstances as relevant to the stage in question and which have not previously been taken into consideration. Original evidence should be available for inspection by the Chair, Secretary and External Examiners if they so desire.
- 4.12 A note should be made in the minutes of the Board and a record included for entry onto the student record system of the Board's consideration of mitigating circumstances and of the outcome of that consideration.
- 4.13 The key factors to be taken into account by the Board will be:
  - 4.13.1 Whether acceptable documentary evidence has been submitted.
  - 4.13.2 Whether the student has performed unexpectedly poorly in a given module or module(s).

4.13.3 Whether there is a significant difference between the student's performance in the period in question and their previous or later performance.

4.13.4 Whether poor performance correlates with the evidence provided.

4.14 Possible outcomes of a Board's consideration include:

4.14.1 Whether, where it is not possible because of the severity of the mitigating circumstances for the student to undertake further assessment, an aegrotat award may be offered under the regulations in appropriate course.

4.14.2 Whether the Board has sufficient evidence of a student's performance to be able to permit their progression to the next stage of a programme or to make an award (classified as appropriate), as permitted under the regulations on condonement.

4.14.3 Whether a student may be deferred in the assessments found to be affected by mitigating circumstances and assessed on a subsequent occasion as if for the first time and without penalty.

4.14.4 Whether, from the evidence available and on the balance of probabilities, there has in the Board's judgement been no material adverse impact on a student's performance, in which case the original mark(s) and/or grade(s) should be confirmed and a progression or award decision made accordingly.