

# Assessment Regulations for Postgraduate Taught Programmes

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Technical updates of this document are undertaken on an annual basis to reflect changes to the University's organisational and management structures and to incorporate earlier, approved amendments to related policies, procedures and regulations.

This document relates to the current year. If you become aware of any previous versions that are available on-line please notify [SEO@bolton.ac.uk](mailto:SEO@bolton.ac.uk) so that action can be taken to remove the document(s).

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### **Scope and applicability**

These assessment regulations apply to all taught postgraduate programmes, including any constituent pathways and modules, which lead to a University of Bolton award at levels 7 and 8 of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) published by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA).

The regulations apply to:

- a) Students whose programme of study commenced in 2015/16 or subsequent academic years; and
- b) Students whose programme of study commenced in previous academic years, but who have experienced an interruption to study or who failed to proceed to their next level of study.

**Progress:** Where a postgraduate student gains the full number of credits required to complete an academic stage, is deemed to have completed that stage and may start to study the next academic stage.

**PSRB:** A Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body. This includes, but is not limited to, accrediting bodies and statutory bodies that deal with legal requirements and immigration.

**Senate:** Any reference to Senate in these regulations shall be deemed to include a reference to any committee of Senate to which Senate has delegated the relevant authority.

**Stage:** an amount of academic study and credit that normally corresponds to a phase of the programme as outlined in the Programme Specification.

## **1. Course Regulations**

- 1.1 There shall be course regulations in a form approved by Senate and incorporated into the programme specification. In course regulations, any deviation from, or modification to these regulations in respect of any programme shall require the approval of Senate.

## **2. Modules**

- 2.1 Throughout all postgraduate 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.
- 2.2 Normally, full time students will not be permitted to study with attendance for more than 75 credits in one semester, and part time students no more than 60 in an academic year, unless this has been approved by the relevant Programme Leader and Assessment Board.
- 2.3 Where a module is defined, atypically, as a pre-requisite module in the relevant programmes specification, 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 the Assessment Board, on the advice of the tutor(s) for the linked further module(s).
- 2.4 Credit-bearing modules shall be designated as FHEQ Level 7 or Level 8 and sometimes Level 6 as defined in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ).
- 2.5 Modules may be designated as Core (compulsory) or Optional within a programme.
- 2.6 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. A student will normally be required to take an alternate module for the appropriate number of credits and at the appropriate level of study, unless the student has withdrawn from the programme or suspended their studies. Withdrawal without permission and/or beyond this point without good reason will be recorded at an Assessment Board as a failure in the module (including any project or

- 3.3 A programme of study leading to a Master's Degree shall consist of modules and a dissertation or project together worth a minimum of 180 credits including a minimum of 150 credits at FHEQ Level 7 and a maximum of 30 credits at no lower than FHEQ Level 6 and including a significant element of advanced independent study in the form of a dissertation or project worth between 30 and 60 credits at FHEQ Level 7.
- 3.4 A programme of study leading to an Advanced Diploma (of Continuing Professional Development) shall consist of credits as defined in the validated programme documentation the level of which shall be predominantly FHEQ Level 7.
- 3.5 A programme of study leading to a Postgraduate Continuing Professional Development Certificate

- 5.6 The normal planned duration of the Postgraduate Certificate in Education is 1 year of full-time study (or its part-time equivalent).
- i. The student's marks for each module; and that
  - ii. The student has achieved the credits and any other requirements as defined in the validated programme documentation and can therefore be

- 6.5 A student who passes a module in which he/she has previously failed, shall be credited with the minimum mark for a pass at module level unless capping at the component level enables a better overall outcome for the student. This will not be the case where the assessment regulations for the programme explicitly specify otherwise.
- 6.6 A student shall normally be permitted one attempt to redeem unsatisfactory performance in a module.
- 6.7 Normally, only University of Bolton modules may be used to calculate the classification of an award. Where a student has previously obtained a University (of Bolton) exit award or end qualification, the marks for modules from that previous qualification cannot be used to calculate the classification of a further University (of Bolton) end qualification, unless the student agrees to surrender their previous qualification, to avoid double counting of module marks.
- 6.8



Up to 7 calendar days late = 10 marks subtracted but if the assignment would normally gain a pass mark, then the final mark to be on lower than the pass mark for the assignment;

More than 7 calendar days late = This will be counted as non-submission and no marks will be recorded.

- 6.14 All assessed work should be submitted as specified in the Student Handbook, Module Guide or equivalent. Coursework not submitted will be recorded as unsatisfactory.
- 6.15 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 dates as described above.

### Word Limits

- 6.16 Any relevant word limit for an assessment component shall be specified in the assessment brief. Students shall be informed in the programme handbook of any penalties to be applied if they exceed the specified word limit in a written assessment. This limit shall not include rubric associated with tables, figures, diagrams or appendices and reference lists at the end of the assessment but will include any direct quotations.
- 6.17 Where a word limit is specified for a written assessment, students shall include the number of words at the end of the assessment.
- 6.18 Students who exceed a specified word limit for a written assessment shall be subject to the following penalty system.

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

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

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

## **7. Engagement**

- 7.1 Students must attend the scheduled learning and teaching events for each module. In respect of students pursuing a programme of study by distance learning, this shall include scheduled activities and interactions.
- 7.2 Students shall be required to submit and/or attend each assessment component at the dates and times prescribed. Failure to submit in an assessment component without good reason shall result in the student being deemed unsatisfactory in the particular module and a mark of 0 will be recorded.

- 7.3 Attendance shall be recorded for all elements of a programme of study. Students with poor attendance shall be reported to the relevant personal tutor for action who will pursue this in line with University and/or PSRB policy.
- 7.4 Students who fail to give formal notice in writing 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.
- 7.5 Students must formally request permissions from their Head of School in writing if they wish temporarily to suspend their studies.

## **8. Determination of results and action to be taken**

- 8.1 The relevant Assessment Board shall determine for a Postgraduate Certificate:
- i. The student's marks for each module; and that
  - ii. The student has achieved at least 60 credits of which a minimum of 40 credits are at FHEQ Level 7 and a maximum of 20 credits are at FHEQ Level 6, and any other requirements as defined in the validated programme documentation, and can therefore be awarded the end qualification of Postgraduate Certificate, and with what classification if any; or
  - iii. The student not be awarded a qualification and be deemed to have completed their studies.
- 8.2 The relevant Assessment Board shall determine for a Postgraduate Diploma:
- i. The student's marks for each module; and that
  - ii. The student has achieved at least 120 credits of which a minimum of 90 credits are at FHEQ Level 7 and a maximum of 30 credits are at FHEQ Level 6, and any other requirements as defined in the validated programme documentation, and can therefore be awarded the end qualification of Postgraduate Diploma and with what classification if any; or
  - iii. The student not be awarded the end qualification; and/or
  - iv. The student be awarded an intermediate qualification and be deemed to have completed their studies; or
  - v. The student not be awarded a qualification and be deemed to have completed their studies.
- 8.3 The relevant Assessment Board shall determine for a Master's Degree:
- i. The student's marks for each module; and that

- i. The student's marks for each module; and that
- ii. The student has achieved the credits and any other requirements as defined in the validated programme documentation, the level of which shall be predominantly FHEQ Level 7 and can therefore be awarded the end qualification of an Advanced Diploma; or
- iii. The student not be awarded the end qualification; and/or
- iv. The student be awarded an intermediate qualification and be deemed to have completed their studies; or
- v. The student not be awarded a qualification and be deemed to have completed their studies.

8.5 The relevant Assessment Board shall determine for a Postgraduate Continuing Professional Development Certificate:

- i. The student's marks for each module; and that
- ii. The student has achieved the credits and any other requirements as defined in the validated programme documentation and can therefore be awarded the end qualification of a Postgraduate Continuing Professional Development Certificate; or
- iii. The student not be awarded the end qualification; and/or
- iv. The student be awarded an intermediate qualification and be deemed to have completed their studies; or
- v. The student not be awarded a qualification and be deemed to have completed their studies.

8.6 The relevant Assessment Board shall determine for a Postgraduate Certificate in Education:

- vi. The student's marks for each module; and that
- vii. The student has achieved the credits and any other requirements as defined in the validated programme documentation and can therefore be

- b. Re-assessment in the failed module(s) without attendance on the module(s) during the following session (a 'refer' decision); or
- c. Re-assessment in the failed module(s) with attendance on the module(s) during the following session (a 'repeat' decision).

8.9 An Assessment Board may decide that a student's profile of module results may be amended by the following process prior to arriving at one of the decisions above;

Compensation:

i. To decide that satisfactory overall performance (including attendance and conduct where appropriate) can compensate for unsatisfactory performance in a module with an aggregate mark normally no lower than 45 percent in any assessment component such that the positive aspects of the overall performance outweigh the area of unsatisfactory performance. The mark is not adjusted, and a pass is recorded and credit awarded with a note that compensation has been applied. This is discretionary and will not be utilised where the module is deemed to be essential to the fulfilment of the learning outcomes for 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 quarter of the total credits constituting a particular Stage of a student's programme may be compensated. Where a PSRB, or other regulator(s), have different requirements which supersede this, compensation may not be used or the use of compensation may be adapted accordingly.

8.10 Course regulations may specify modules to which the provisions of 8.6 shall not apply.

**9. Structure and content of re-assessment**

9.1 Where a student is required to be re-assessed in one or more assessment components, the re-assessment shall be of the same structure as the assessment at the time of the initial failure, unless:

- i. An alternative form of re-assessment has been approved for the purpose in which case this shall be stated in the relevant module specification and/or Module Guide; or
- ii. The relevant Assessment Board decides that this is not practical.

Re-assessment shall be based upon the same syllabus as the original assessment.

9.2 For re-assessment beyond one year of the initial failure, where the structure of the assessment is different from that at the time of the initial failure and/or the re-assessment is to be based upon a different syllabus, the Head of School concerned shall make arrangements for the student to be:

- i. Informed of changes in the structure of the assessment and the syllabus content; and
- ii.

the circumstances defined in the Academic Regulations on the Awards of the University.

- 10.2 To qualify for an award, a candidate must:
- i. have enrolled with the University before proceeding to the prescribed programme of study; and
  - ii. have paid all prescribed fees and charges; and
  - iii. in accordance with 11.2, 11.3, 11.4 and 11.5 below have satisfactorily completed a full-time or part-time programme of study, within the maximum period of time defined above.
- 10.3 A student who has satisfied the examiners in at least 60 credits at FHEQ Level 7 or higher, in accordance with 3.1 above, and in any other requirements as defined in the validated programme documentation, shall be eligible for the award of a Postgraduate Certificate which is an unclassified award.
- 10.4 A student who has satisfied the examiners in at least 120 credits at FHEQ Level 7 or higher, in accordance with 3.2 above, and in any other requirements as defined in the validated programme documentation, shall be eligible for the award of a Postgraduate Diploma which is an unclassified award.
- 10.5 A student who has satisfied the examiners in at least 180 credits at FHEQ Level 7 or higher, in accordance with 3.3 above, and in any other requirements as defined in the validated programme documentation, shall, where he or she satisfies the requirements of the classification scheme as approved by Senate (cf. 11. below) be recommended to Senate for the award of a Master's Degree.
- 10.6 A student who has satisfied the examiners in at least the specified credits, and in any other requirements as defined in the validated programme documentation, shall be eligible for the award of an Advanced Diploma (of Continuing Professional Development).
- 10.7 A student who has satisfied the examiners in at least the specified credits, and in any other requirements as defined in the validated programme documentation, shall be eligible for the award of a Postgraduate Continuing Professional Development Certificate.
- 10.8 A student who has satisfied the examiners in at least the specified credits, and in any other requirements as defined in the validated programme documentation, shall be eligible for the award of a Postgraduate Certificate in Education.
- 10.8 Students who register for certain end qualifications may be required by the course regulations to satisfy the Assessment Board in all those modules identified as requirements for the purposes of professional exemption.
- 10.9 Unless otherwise agreed by Senate in respect of specific courses, no student may receive more than one award for study on a course.

## **11. Classification**



## **ANNEX A Qualifications Descriptors<sup>1</sup>**

1. Qualification descriptors set out the generic outcomes and attributes expected for the award of a particular type of qualification (for example





- the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems
  - a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.
7. Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:
- make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences
  - continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches.
8. And holders will have:
- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.
9. Doctoral degrees are awarded for the creation and interpretation, construction and/or exposition of knowledge which extends the forefront of a discipline, usually through original research.
10. Holders of doctoral degrees are able to conceptualise, design and implement projects for the generation of significant new knowledge and/or understanding. Holders of doctoral degrees have the qualities needed for employment that require both the

## **ANNEX B Marking and classification**

1. The University's *General Assessment Guidelines*, published separately, are used by staff when marking students' written work. Those detailed and comprehensive Guidelines are incorporated within the University's Module Guide Template and Assessment Feedback Proforma, as appropriate to the Level of the module concerned.
2. Students' assessed work (except for Pass/Fail assessments and modules) is given a numerical mark which reflects the extent to which it meets the relevant assessment criteria. Module marks are then calculated by combining the marks for individual pieces of assessed work, as defined in the assessment pattern from the module specification.
3. Finally, a student's individual module marks are compared to the following classification scale: c+ c c- b+ b b- a+ a a- c+ c c- b+ b b- a+ a a-

<b>ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS FOR POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES</b>	
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This was an update of the previous iteration of the postgraduate regulations and follows the layout of the revised undergraduate regulations from 2014.  
Changes to extensions added December 2015.  
New qualification added May 2016.  
The October 2018 version incorporates clarification of language, updating of role titles and arrangements for compensation and the classification of qualifications.  
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