

**Executive Summary of Business
for Teaching and Learning Committee**



Title	Final recommendations on principles governing the University Examination Assessment Regulations for 2012/13
Author	Professor Clare Mackie, PVC Teaching and Learning Sharon Jones, Academic Registrar On behalf of TLC Academic Regulations Sub-Committee
Type	Paper for recommendation to Senate
Date	September 2012
Strategic context	To meet the requirements of the restructured academic year and the implementation of the revised Academic Framework both of which have previously been approved by TLC and Senate.
Summary	<p>1. Introduction</p> <p>1.1 The University Teaching and Learning Committee established an Academic Regulations Sub-Committee in November 2011 with a remit to review the University's examination and assessment regulations as part of the overall programme of work (following the agreed restructuring of the academic year) for implementation in 2012/13.</p> <p>1.2 Members agreed a two-stage approach to the revisions of the examination and assessment regulations: first the identification of matters of fundamental importance and higher level principles that are mission critical. Second, to develop supplementary rules and guidance on the application of the higher principles identified.</p>

	<p>2. Consultation</p> <p>2.1 Stage 1 consultation: The Academic Regulations Sub-Committee on Examination and Assessment agreed a set of high level principles which were issued to School Teaching and Learning Committees in early 2012. Consequently a number of high level principles were approved by the Teaching and Learning Committee in February 2012 and endorsed by Senate in March 2012.</p> <p>2.2 Stage 2 consultation: The Academic Regulations Sub-Committee on Examination and Assessment developed supplementary rules and guidance which were issued to School Teaching and Learning Committees, the Mitigating Evidence Committee and the Study Abroad Group in May 2012 for discussion. Feedback was generally positive with further work clearly needed relating to the guidance and rules relating to the use of compensation, condonement and trailed credit.</p> <p>2.3 Stage 3 consultation: The Academic Regulations Sub-Committee on Examination and Assessment to consider School responses and further discussed the guidance and rules and the Chair invited a wider group (DTL (am), DoSE (pm) together with representative exam board chairs and deputy chairs and two HoS) to an all day consultation meeting on 28th August to discuss the emerging draft regulations.</p> <p>2.4 Details of these three consultations together with group responses are provided in the Appendices.</p>
Essential reading	Attached.
Risk analysis	High
Effective date of introduction	Sept 2012
Recommendation	To consider the recommendations in section x and to recommend to Senate for approval.

1. Principles governing the University examination and assessment regulations

The Principles governing the University of Sussex examination and assessment regulations are as follows:

Principle 1: The adoption of UK sector norms as specified in the QAA national framework for higher education qualifications, including the requirement that students achieve 120 credits for progression for undergraduate awards, subject to specific rules on compensation and trailing of credit. Progression does not apply to postgraduate awards which are considered as one stage.

Principle 2: The University of Sussex Academic Framework sets out the volume and level of credit required to achieve each specific award of the University. This includes the principle that Progression and Award Boards are permitted to condone an absolute fail to a maximum of 30 credits at the final award stage based on the academic judgement of the Board that the learning outcomes for the award have been met.

Principle 3: Students are required to achieve a stage mean of 40% for undergraduate courses and 50% of postgraduate taught courses for progression and award. This principle ensures the standard for all University of Sussex awards and must be achieved prior to the application of rules on compensation, trailed credit and condonement.

Principle 4: The introduction of the entitlement for a failing student in stage 1 only to a repeat year providing that they agree to and abide by conditions set down in the standard University learning agreement.

Principle 5: A repeat year for a Foundation Year course, Stage 2 and beyond for undergraduate courses, and Masters awards is permitted at the discretion of the Progression and Award Board. Such students will be subject to an individual learning agreement.

Principle 6: Resit for honours in the final stage for all undergraduate courses is permitted at the next available opportunity where course conditions permit.

Principle 7: A student shall not be permitted to resit a module already taken and passed except where Mitigating Evidence has been accepted in which case the student will be permitted a sit as for the first time and the original mark expunged from the record even if a lower mark is obtained. There shall be no setting aside of marks in any circumstances to ensure equality of opportunity for all students.

Principle 8: Where a student has an absolute or marginal fail in a module (that is less than 35% and 35-39% respectively) and takes a resit opportunity then the uncapped resit mark will be used for progression purposes but the resit capped mark will be used for award classification.

Principle 9: A 0-100 marking scale for all taught courses and standard thresholds across the institution for classification purposes at both undergraduate and postgraduate level.

Principle 10: Individual mitigating circumstances is the University's description of conditions which are sudden and unforeseen and temporarily prevent a student from undertaking assessment or significantly impact on student performance in assessment: as such the measure

of severity is not about impact on the student but impact on the assessment at the level of the module.

Principle 11: The ability to study effectively may also be affected by individual circumstances but any ongoing or long term inability to study should lead to consideration for the need to suspend study. No claim of mitigating circumstances can be made against fitness to study.

Principle 12: Ongoing or longer term conditions or circumstances are not individual mitigating circumstances and may be handled by the Student Support Unit (SSU) with reasonable adjustments agreed between the SSU and the Director of Student Experience (DOSE) in the School. Such circumstances may give rise to valid mitigating claims only if they first come to light or are diagnosed or become unexpectedly and markedly worse at assessment time. All such cases shall be managed through the SSU and DOSEs without reverting to the Mitigating Evidence Committee.

2. DEFINITIONS, ASSESSMENT CYCLES, RESITS, TRAILED CREDIT AND REPEATS

2.1 Introduction

These regulations apply to all taught awards. Derogation from these regulations may be permitted by the University's Teaching and Learning Committee on recommendation from the School Teaching and Learning Committee to meet the accreditation requirements of Professional and/or Statutory Bodies (PSBs). Such derogations will be specified in the **Appendix A** to this Handbook.

2.2 Definition of Course and Module

An approved University taught Course is defined by stages of study and is comprised of a number of credit bearing modules, credit rated by volume and level, which provide a coherent learning experience, with an explicit set of learning outcomes that leads to an award of the University. Exceptionally, a particular course of study may specify a requirement to successfully complete a non-credit weighted module linked to a specific award title as specified in **Appendix B**.

The University's courses are comprised of credit bearing modules which are defined as: A self-contained, formally structured and credit-bearing unit of study, with a coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes and assessment criteria. Modules should be appropriate to the level of study with each level showing clear progression.

2.3 The assessment cycles

Modules taken by a student in a given Stage of study provide a single assessment cycle comprising one sit and (where necessary and available) one resit attempt for each module. This assessment cycle applies to all Stages of study.

Where a stage has been failed, a repeat assessment cycle may be available comprising of one further sit and (where necessary) one further resit.

2.4 Resits

A resit is an opportunity to retrieve an initial fail *without* repeating a module. The resit mode may vary, depending on the nature of the initial assessment. The pass mark at resit shall be capped

at the pass threshold for the individual module (40% on undergraduate modules and 50% on postgraduate modules).

Resit opportunities will only be offered for modules where the module has not been passed and the credit *has not* been awarded by the Progression and Award Board (PAB). Resit marks are capped at the threshold pass mark. The capped resit mark will be used for award classification purposes.

2.5 Modules exempted from providing resits

In some cases the nature of the mode of assessment may preclude the opportunity for a resit, for example, practice placements where assessment requires the execution of specified activities that are inextricably integrated with the practice-based learning. In such cases a student failing to pass the module may be required to repeat the module, term or year in order to obtain academic credit. The exemption of a module from the opportunity to provide a resit must be approved by the University Teaching & Learning Committee. The special status of such modules must be clearly flagged to students in course handbooks.

2.6 Trailed Credit

A student on an undergraduate course may exceptionally be offered the opportunity to progress to the next Stage of study while trailing up to a maximum of 30 credits from the previous stage at the discretion of the PAB in September, provided that an uncapped stage mean of 40% has been achieved. Credit can be trailed at all stages, including into the final stage. Permission to trail up to the maximum 30 credits will normally only be granted by a PAB following a failed resit, where there is good evidence that the student is likely to succeed at the next assessment cycle.

Normally, trailed credit will result in the student retaking assessments for modules already studied by the student with the aim of retrieving the initial fail *without* attendance. Exceptionally, the PAB may offer a student an alternative module/s for the same trailed credit value. All students trailing a module/s will be entitled to a repeat assessment cycle (a first attempt and a resit attempt).

In all cases a repeat assessment cycle for trailed credit will result in the capped mark being used for progression and award classification purposes.

Where trailed credit has not been awarded after the conclusion of the second assessment cycle the PAB may consider the option of compensating a marginal fail where the compensation criteria have been met for the relevant Stage of study with the credit shortfall, a repeat of the term or year, or the award of credit via condonement for students in the final stage.

2.7 Repeat Stage of Study or Repeat Module

The repeat of a Stage of study means retaking the Stage *ab initio* as prescribed in the course handbook. All previous marks and credit will be expunged from the student record and a new full assessment cycle undertaken.

The opportunity to repeat a Stage is automatic for any candidate who fails to progress at Stage 1 providing the course of study is running in the following academic session. For foundation Stages, and for students at Stages subsequent to Stage 1 (including the final year), there is no automatic right to repeat the Stage. Any such offer will be at the PABs discretion, normally at the September exam board. In exercising its discretion, the PAB should only make a repeat Stage

offer where there is evidence of both student engagement and/or underachieved academic potential such that the PAB judges that there is a good prospect of success at the repeat attempt.

No student shall be permitted to repeat a Stage of study more than once and shall only be permitted to repeat where the stage has been failed.

A student's entitlement to repeat a Stage of study is dependent upon agreeing to and abiding by a learning agreement. Where the repeat year is automatic at stage 1, the learning agreement will be standard, as agreed by the University Teaching & Learning Committee. Where the PAB offers a discretionary repeat year it may specify any conditions to be added to (or removed from) the standard learning agreement. The School Student Progress Committee may commence withdrawal proceedings for any student in breach of their learning agreement.

The PAB also has discretionary powers to require a student to repeat a module or term with attendance. In taking such a decision the PAB should be mindful of the maximum period of registration and any undue delay imposed on the student in achieving their award aim, when offering a repeat year.

3 THE AWARD OF CREDIT, UNDERGRADUATE PROGRESSION AND AWARD CRITERIA, COMPENSATION AND CONDONEMENT

3.1 The award of credit

Credit is automatically awarded for all modules where the pass threshold for an individual module has been met. The pass threshold is set at 40% for undergraduate modules and 50% for postgraduate modules.

The University's Academic Framework sets out the overall credit volume requirements for each taught award and the minimum credit requirement that needs to be achieved to be recommended for a degree.

3.2 Automatic compensated credit

Where a student has not achieved the credit requirement for progression or award following any resit opportunity, but has met the following criteria then credit for the module will automatically be awarded by compensation provided that the remaining credits in the stage have reached the threshold pass in addition to:

- an uncapped stage mean of 40% for an undergraduate course or 50% for a postgraduate course;
- a marginal fail on the module/s (35-39% for undergraduate modules or 45-49% for taught postgraduate modules), including trailed undergraduate module/s.

This is referred as a pass by compensation for a marginal fail. A maximum of 30 credits per Stage in undergraduate courses may be awarded by automatic compensation to enable for stage progression or award. A maximum of 30 credits for taught modules may be awarded by compensation in postgraduate courses on the basis that a taught Masters is classified as a single postgraduate Stage of study.

3.3 Discretionary use of a combination of compensation and trailed credit.

Where the criteria for compensation have not been met, the PAB has discretionary power to permit up to 30 credits to be trailed to the next Stage of study for undergraduate awards, including into the final stage following a period of study/placement abroad. Rules on discretionary compensation are applied at the September exam board, with the exception of the final stage where discretionary compensation may be awarded at the summer exam board.

Where a student has not achieved the required 120 credits for progression, following any resit opportunities, and has more than 30 credits in the marginal fail/absolute fail zone the PAB has discretionary powers at the September exam board to offer a combination of compensation, trailing credit, repeats or recommendation for withdrawal as required to assure the standard of the award where the overall threshold of stage mean of 40% has been met,. In these circumstances the student has no automatic right to compensated credit.

Trailed credit cannot be given for a failure in the final stage.

3.7 Condonement of a failed module/s at the award stage

Where a student has not met the award requirement at the summer exam board, following the application of compensation, the PAB may consider giving a resit for Honours/Masters to be taken at the next assessment opportunity. Exceptionally the PAB may give credit via condonement up to a maximum of 30 credits where the course learning outcomes and a stage mean of 40% had been achieved. A shortfall in credit as a result of credit trailed from stage 2 may also be condoned at award stage provided that the pass threshold has been achieved in all final year modules. Credit via condonement is not dependent upon a threshold mark being met or the submission of mitigating circumstances. A combined maximum of 30 credits in the final stage may be given via compensation or condonement.

3.4 Criteria for transfer from a 3 to a 4 year course with study abroad or a professional placement year.

Courses enabling students to undertake a year-long study abroad and/or professional/industrial placement may require specific additional conditions for transfer. These are formerly approved by the University Teaching and Learning Committee and included in **Appendix C**.

3.5 Progression from foundation year to stage 1 of an associated undergraduate course

Regulations for progression to stage 1 from a foundation year are set out at **Appendix D** (the standard University regulations do not apply as these are effectively admissions criteria). Where a student fails to achieve progression from a Foundation Year to Stage 1 but passes overall shall receive an exit award of a Certificate of Education.

4. AWARD CLASSIFICATION

4.1 Rounding of marks

The mark for a module, Stage Mean and Grand Mean (overall degree weighted mark) shall be a whole number rounded up ($\geq 0.45\%$) or down ($\leq 0.44\%$) at each Stage.

4.2 3-year honours degree

A 3-year honours degree will be awarded to students who achieve 360 credits across Stages 1,2 and 3, following the application of rules on compensation and condonement. Award

classification shall be calculated on a degree weighted mark based on a ratio of 40:60 for Stages 2 and 3.

4.3 4-year honours degree

A 4-year honours degree with an integrated Year Abroad or Professional/Industrial Placement will be awarded to students who achieve 480 credits across Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4, following the application of rules on compensation and condonement. Award classification shall be calculated on a degree weighted mark based on a ratio of 40:25:60 for Stages 2, 3 and 4. For Professional/Industrial Placements that are assessed by pass/fail the weighting to revert to that for a 3-year honours degree based on a ratio of 40:60 for Stages 2 and 4.

4.4 Integrated Masters' degree

An Integrated Masters' degree will be awarded to students who achieve 480 credits across Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4, following the application of rules on compensation and condonement. Award classification shall be calculated on a degree weighted mark based on a ratio of 40:60:65 for Stages 2, 3 and 4. Where an Integrated Masters incorporates a Professional/Industrial Placement Year the award classification shall be calculated on a degree weighted mark based on a ratio of 50:40:76 for Stages 2, 3 and 4.

4.5 LLB (Graduate Entry) 2-year degree

An LLB (Graduate Entry) 2-year degree will be awarded to students who achieve 240 credits across Stages 2 and 3 (Stage 1 exemption applies), following the application of rules on compensation and condonement. Award classification shall be calculated on a degree weighted mark based on a ratio of 40:60 for Stages 2 and 3.

4.6 Integrated Awards or for final-year direct entrants

Classification for Integrated Awards or for final-year direct entrants shall be determined on the basis of performance in the final/single year only.

4.7 Classification divisions

The class of an award, both undergraduate and postgraduate shall be as follows:

Undergraduate Division	Less than	Greater than or equal to
First Class (1 st)	Not applicable	70%
Upper Second Class (2.1)	70%	60%
Lower Second Class (2.2)	60%	50%
Third Class (3 rd)	50%	40%

Postgraduate Division (Masters & PGDip/ PGCert entry awards)	Less than	Greater than or equal to
Distinction	Not applicable	70%
Merit	70%	60%
Pass	60%	50%

4.8 Borderline for degree classification

Rounding of marks at module level may result in a Grand mean mark coming close to but below a degree classification boundary. The Chair of the PAB shall give consideration to such students falling within a borderline area of one percent below each classification boundary as follows:

68.5 to 69.4	Boundary for 2:1/1 st and for postgraduate distinction/merit
58.5 to 59.4	Boundary for 2:1/2:2 and for postgraduate merit/pass
48.5 to 49.4	Boundary 2:2/3 rd and for Masters borderline fail
38.5 to 39.4	Borderline fail for undergraduate

and shall enable external examiners to review an individual student profile for all stages of study contributing to the award to provide further guidance for the Board on the treatment of students falling within the borderline zone.

In considering whether to raise a student to the higher class the PAB should consider the preponderance of credit for which the higher class has been obtained as the borderline mark may have occurred as a result of exceptional performance in a heavily weighted component of assessment which does not reflect performance overall. To raise a student to a higher class at least 50% of the credit used for classification purposes should be in the higher class.

Mitigating evidence does not provide grounds for reclassification of an award as adjustments will have already been made to the mark array under scrutiny in relation to lateness penalties or a student offered a sit to retrieve performance in such circumstances.

4.9 Specific Learning Disability (SpLD)

In cases of late diagnosis of Specific Learning Disability (SpLD) the PAB has the discretion to base classification stages on the marks achieved for which the student was in receipt of the necessary support in order that they demonstrate their full learning potential, as long as this is not detrimental to the student. No mark should be set aside.

Teaching and Learning Committee Sub-committee on Academic Regulations

Membership

Pro-Vice Chancellor Teaching and Learning (Chair)	Professor Clare Mackie
One Head of School	Professor Tom Healy
Three Directors of Teaching and Learning	Dr Geert De Neve
	Dr Claudia Eberlein
	Dr Richard Follett
One Exam Board Chair	Dr Kevin Grant
One Director of Student Support	Dr Liz Somerville
Faculty member from School involved with accreditation and placement	Cath Holmstrom
Student Development Co-ordinator – Academic Policy	Cindy Newell
USSU Education Officer	Poppy Firmin
Academic Registrar	Sharon Jones
Head of Academic Services	Sam Riordan

Secretary: Carmel Oxley-King

Terms of Reference

1. To review UG and PGT examination and assessment regulations to meet the requirements of the Portfolio Review and the new structure of the Academic Year.
2. To remove general credit and propose suitable alternatives for achievement of progression and award at undergraduate level.
3. To ensure that any proposed changes are made within the context of national developments.
4. To make any other recommendations as appropriate.

