

# **University Policy & Guidance to inform Programme Assessment Board Decisions Developed as part of the invocation of University Emergency Regulations in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic**

## **1. Background**

1.1 At its meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2020, the Academic Board agreed to the establishment of the University LTA and Quality Emergency Approvals Group which has devolved responsibility for invoking the University emergency regulations and for managing the University response to managing the impact of Covid-19 and its associated restrictions on learning, teaching and assessment practices.

1.2 A number of decisions were taken by the University LTA and Quality Emergency Approvals Group which deviated from, or impacted on the application of the University academic regulations. This policy document seeks to provide clear University-wide guidance on the applications of the academic regulations where there is insufficient evidence available to adhere to the regulations. For example, where module marks are missing; where modules have been unable to be completed or where there is insufficient evidence to make standard decisions.

1.3 This document considers the main changes approved by the University LTA and Quality Emergency Approvals Group and sets out guidance to ensure consistency in application University-wide.

## **2. SCQF Level 7 and 8 Modules (except modules delivered on Transnational Education Programmes and on programmes where there are PSRB restrictions)**

2.1 On March 19<sup>th</sup> 2020, it was announced that for students on SCQF level 7 and 8 modules undertaken in trimester two 2019/20 delivered as part of on-campus or global online provision and where there are no restrictions set by external Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Bodies (PSRBs) would automatically receive a pass grade for the module. Students will achieve academic credit, but no overall mark for the module. This decision superseded Regulation B5.3 and B5.4 which define the pass criteria for undergraduate modules.

2.2 In recognition of the diversity of assessment strategies applied across our modules, it was deemed too complicated to incorporate any additional requirements related to academic achievement or engagement on the module to date. The decision applied to all relevant modules as a blanket decision.

2.3 The blanket pass *does not* apply to students who are enrolled on the module for reassessment only (ie. Who completed the learning and teaching prior to the Covid-19 pandemic) – these students are still required to complete their reassessment at the next available opportunity.

2.4 For the majority of the University academic regulations the change to a pass grade, rather than a mark will not impact on decisions required for programme assessment boards. The only exception will be for Cert HE and Dip HE awards (or exit awards) when considering whether the students are entitled for an award with distinction. Programme Assessment Boards may not have sufficient evidence of marks across the full award. On occasions,

where there is insufficient evidence to make the award, due to the pass grade in SCQF level 7 and 8 modules, the following amended regulations should be considered.

	Approved Regulation	Application due to Covid-19 <b>where there is insufficient evidence</b> to meet the approved regulation
<b>B3.4</b>	A <b>certificate of higher education with distinction</b> will be awarded to a student who has achieved an overall average of at least 65 per cent in the best <b>120</b> credits at SCQF level 7 or above programme-specific compulsory and option modules, if the approved programme structure permits.	A <b>certificate of higher education with distinction</b> will be awarded to a student who has achieved an overall average of at least 65 per cent in the best <b>60</b> credits at SCQF level 7 or above programme-specific compulsory and option modules, if the approved programme structure permits.  NB. There is no change to Regulation B3.19a – ie. For this award where students join with RPL
<b>B3.6</b>	A <b>diploma of higher education with distinction</b> will be awarded to a student who has achieved an overall average of at least 65 per cent in the best <b>100</b> credits from SCQF level 8 or above programme-specific compulsory and option modules, if the approved programme structure permits.	A <b>diploma of higher education with distinction</b> will be awarded to a student who has achieved an overall average of at least 65 per cent in the best <b>60</b> credits from SCQF level 8 or above programme-specific compulsory and option modules, if the approved programme structure permits.  NB. There is no change to Regulation B3.19b – ie. For this award where students join with RPL

### Compensatory Passes

2.5 The automatic pass decision for modules at SCQF levels 7 and 8 equates to a condonement decision at the level of that stage of study. As such, regulation B6.1, related to the award of compensatory pass for a failed module in the same stage of study should not be considered. Students will be required to engage in the reassessment opportunity.

### 2.6 Scenarios to sense-check understanding

- A second year student with valid ECs from 2018/19 academic session had an exceptional reassessment attempt in Tri 2 2019/20. In this case, the blanket pass does not apply as the original attempt was before covid 19. The student will still need to engage in reassessment at the next opportunity.

- A second year student has been **repeating modules** in trimester 1 and trimester 2. They did not submit anything in trimester 1, possibly did not engage in trimester 2 yet has benefitted from a pass for trimester 2 modules. These modules passed will be recorded in the student transcript as being impacted by covid-19.

The student will have reassessments to complete from Tri 1 at the reassessment diet. It is possible that the pass gained this trimester motivates the student to re-engage. However, if they do not engage, or if they fail – they will be exited at a future Board. They will be exited with academic credit gained in Trimester 2 this year.

- A third year student took an optional level 8 course in trimester two 2019/10 alongside their level 9 modules, and received a blanket pass. They also failed a level 9 module with 37%. Due to the award of a pass for the level 8 module, the student is not entitled to consideration for a compensatory pass and they must engage with the reassessment opportunity.

### 3. **Steps taken to ensure that no student will be academically disadvantaged with regards to final assessment marks and award classifications in the wake of the impact of Covid-19**

3.1 A number of measures have been put in place to mitigate against the detrimental impact faced by our students due to Covid-19. These include:

- a) deadlines being extended by two weeks across the University;
- b) time limited unseen examinations being changed to take home open book examinations to be completed over a 7 day period (the extended time was intended to mitigate against a range of adverse conditions experienced by students as a result of covid restrictions)
- c) Some coursework assessments and weightings were amended to reflect learning, teaching and assessment restrictions
- c) all students being regarded as having valid extenuating circumstances for all trimester 2 module assessments so no deferral or extenuating circumstances applications were required to be submitted in connection to trimester 2 modules;
- d) Any components of assessments not sat/submitted in the trimester 2 assessment period will be automatically rolled over to the summer assessment period (or next available opportunity for students on programmes where there is no summer assessment period) without penalty (as defined in regulation A11.2.8).

3.2 The marking of all assessed work at level 9 and above (and all levels for assessed work on TNE programmes and programmes with additional PSRB restrictions) will be subject to the standard marking and moderation processes, including sampling and review of marking by module external examiners. Marks submissions deadlines have been extended by a week and a half to allow more time for marking and internal moderation processes. It's

important this extended deadline is met by everyone to ensure that preparation for the Programme Assessment Boards is informed by full and complete evidence.

3.3 It is recognised that the amendments to assessment approaches and restrictions associated with Covid-19 poses higher risk of module results for trimester 2 2019/20 having an unusual profile compared to previous years. An additional formal stage is being added to the Programme Assessment Board process to ensure that module marks are reliable, consistent and fair when agreed.

3.4 It will be a requirement that the marks profile for each module be compared against the module's profile for the previous 3 years period. The report will highlight where the marks for June 2020 deviate by +/- 5% from the average. Where marks deviate by +/- 5%, then all marks/grades should be normalised. It is recognised that there may be valid reasons for some modules where this would not be appropriate and the module leader must provide a clear academic rationale for this. This step is intended to ensure that covid-19 mitigation has been factored when agreeing module marks. [NB. Further operational details are available from <https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/dlte/Pages/COVIDProgAssessBoards.aspx>]

### **Student Progression and the Continuation Regulations**

3.5 Regulation B6.2 allows students to progress to the next stage of study carrying a fail of no more than 20 credits. This regulation should continue to be applied as it is not in any student's interest to progress while still having to make good failure from the previous academic session.

3.6 It is possible that there may be cases, as a result of PSRB stipulations, or delays in module marks arriving from a study abroad module, or students choosing to defer assessment, that academic credit may still be *pending* for some students (rather than failed). Programme Assessment Boards will need to consider this on a case-by-case basis, however the capacity of students to progress to the next academic session with module outcomes pending, and with additional academic work to undertake must be considered. In the majority of cases, students should only be allowed to progress with 20 credits pending, however in very exceptional cases, Programme Boards have the authority to permit students to progress with up to 60 credits pending. All pending modules must be passed within the next academic session, in accordance with regulation B6.4

#### **3.7 Scenarios to sense-check understanding**

A third year student failed a module in Trimester 1 (2019/20). They did not have valid ECs for their initial assessment. At the resit diet (in July 2020) they fail once more. The student has valid ECs for the resit diet and is entitled to a further reassessment attempt. This would be capped as the original assessment was in Trimester 1. If this was the only module that the student had failed, they would be able to progress as per Regulation B6.2.

A third year student fails three modules in Trimester 2 (2019/20). They had valid ECs due to covid-19. At the reassessment diet (in July 2020) they pass one of the modules – which is uncapped as it was taken as if it were a first attempt. They fail the other two modules. This student should not be permitted to progress to the next stage of study, but has a further third opportunity for reassessment.

A Veterinary nursing student is unable to complete two of their modules due to requirement for a face-to-face examination as part of the assessment stipulated by the

PSRB. The student has passed 80 credits at the stage of study. The Board may permit the student to progress as the credit is not failed, rather it is not yet achieved. However, it must be completed prior to the student progressing to the subsequent stage of study.

A third year student was delayed from undertaking their 60 credit study abroad opportunity in Germany. Online learning has now recommenced and the student is engaging in this. The partner institution is continuing the module over summer and assessment decisions are due August 2020. The student will have completed all work by the end of July 2020. The Board take the exceptional decision to recommend progression to fourth year on the basis that the student would be carrying no additional workload burden into the fourth year and confirmation that the module has been passed should be received early in the trimester.

### **Compensatory Passes for Students at levels 9 and 10 stages**

3.7 Regulation B6.1, the regulation determining the award of compensatory passes can be applied at levels 9 and 10. However, if the failed module is from the trimester impacted by covid-19, the student will have valid extenuating circumstances, and as such the reassessment attempt would be uncapped, allowing the student to obtain a higher mark/grade. As such, Programme Assessment Boards should recommend that students complete all reassessment opportunities prior to the considering the award of Compensatory Pass, to ensure that there is no academic disadvantage to the student.

3.7b Once students have been afforded an uncapped resit opportunity, and if they still meet the criteria to be considered for a compensatory pass in accordance with Regulation B6.1, then Boards may deem this to be in the best academic interests of the student.

### **Awarding Decisions**

3.8 We have taken steps to mitigate against the impact of Covid-19 at the point of assessment, and in the additional steps taken to ensure that the University can be confident in the module marks presented for trimester two 2019/20.

3.9 It is recognised that Covid-19 might have impacted on individual students differently and caused an anomaly in their overall profile. In preparing this policy a modelling exercise was undertaken to consider the impact of amending the regulations which determining honours awards classifications, including the removal of impacted modules from the classification calculation. The outcome from the modelling process highlighted that changing the degree algorithm for this year would risk grade inflation and undermine the standard and integrity of Edinburgh Napier awards. As such, all of the regulations to determine Edinburgh awards, and their classifications remain as per the approved academic regulations.

### **Bespoke Regulations**

4.1 The following amendments have been made to Section E Regulations (for pre-registration nursing and midwifery programmes to reflect the emergency NMC standards)

- Section E2 - E2. c) and E2.d) i) & ii) amended to replace the term 'mentor' to assessor/practice supervisor

- Removal of E6.2 and E6.3

Version 1.1 Approved 8/5/2020	Approved by Prof A Tobin, Vice Principal – Learning & Teaching on behalf of Academic Board – following invocation of Emergency Regulations A9.
Version 1.2 8/6/2020	Minor amendment to 3.1d to clarify Reference to components of assessment Reference to additional information added to 3.4
Version 1.3 20/8/2020	Addition of 3.7b – clarification regarding the award of compensatory passes following the reassessment diet