



Guidance for the Development of Masters-level Provision which Exceeds 180 credits

As part of ongoing portfolio review processes to ensure the attractiveness of our course provision across key markets, the University has developed/is developing its Taught Postgraduate delivery to include extended Masters provision where courses typically span two academic years and will often include a placement or work related experience option as part of the course structure.

These guidelines are intended to support the development and approval of extended Masters provision within the University.

How many credits should the programme be?

The University's academic regulations specify that to meet the requirement for a Masters award from Edinburgh Napier a **minimum** of 180 credits at SCQF level 11 must be achieved. There is no upper limit stated within our regulations, nor do the regulations assert that the achievement of 180 credits will automatically lead to a Masters award, though this is typically the award amount calculated within the student record system (SITS) prior to Boards.

Although there is no upper limit stated within our regulations, as typically any extended Masters provision will have been designed to include a placement or work related experience option as part of the course structure, and that International Students studying on Tier 4 visas are restricted in the proportion of their programme which includes a work placement, it is **recommended** that for an 'extended' programme leading to the award of **MSc** or **MA** – then **200 credits** should be the maximum number of credits that form part of the award.

The University offers other named masters programmes – such as the MFA which require the achievement of more academic credit (300 credits) – but these awards are determined by additional academic regulations.

Please contact quality@napier.ac.uk if you are considering a different extended award as it is important that we ensure the appropriate set up within SITS and application of the correct academic regulations accordingly.

How should the extended Masters programme be distinctive?

In developing an Extended Masters programme, Schools may be seeking to develop a brand new programme, or seeking to ‘extend’ an already approved MSc/MA programme.

It is an important principle that the achievement of the Masters award is based on completion of the whole programme of study and its agreed learning outcomes not merely by the achievement of a minimum of 180 credits i.e. Should a student on an Extended Masters qualification not complete the full intended programme, but does manage to accumulate 180 credits, they would not be eligible for the Masters award as they have not achieved the full learning outcomes or the intended full number of credits as outlined in the programme specification for the course.

As such in developing and approving an extended version of an existing programme, the programme specification must be clear that the additional 20 credits is an essential component of achieving the full MSc award i.e. the student will only the programme-specific requirements if they achieve the 200 credits. To provide additional mitigation, Schools are encouraged to consider whether there are additional ‘unique’ credits that can form part of the programme so that less than 180 credits of the already approved MSc/MA programme form part of the extended route.

It should be clear that the only exit qualifications for students on the extended version of the programme would be a PG Cert (60 credits) or PG Dip (120 credits) and that they would not be entitled to a masters award on only achieving 180 credits as they would not have met the programme specific requirements for the award – To achieve the target award, students must achieve the full intended 200 credits.

To reflect the above and to differentiate the programmes in recruitment and promotional materials, it is recommended that the title of the programme follows one of the following naming conventions:

Where the extended Masters programme includes a formal work experience/placement element for all or the majority of students then MSc SUBJECT NAME (with Work Placement) is the recommended title format.

Where the extended Masters do not include a formal work experience/placement element available to all or the majority of students then MSc SUBJECT NAME – EXTENDED is the recommended title format.

Exact titles can be determined by the School – but should reflect the nature of the programme and clearly distinguish the extended programme from the standard one.

Could a student who has failed a module be transferred to the ‘non-extended’ version to achieve a Masters award?

As per the guidance given above, students should not be awarded a Masters degree by default should they fail the programme upon which they were admitted to study. A reminder that where Schools are creating an extended programme from an already approved MSc/MA programmes, schools are encouraged to have 40 or more ‘unique’ credits that form part of the extended programme, so that it is not possible for a student to accumulate the exact same 180 credits and learning outcomes of a student on a standard Masters pathway.

Note also that International Students are 'sponsored' to complete a named degree programme. Transferring students to another programme of study may not always be possible owing to 'academic progression rules currently in place at the time of writing.

Does the new extended version of the programme require a University-level Programme Approval Event?

If the programme is a completely new programme – the full programme approval process, as set out in Section 1 of the Quality Framework should be applied.

If the development of the extended programme is built upon an existing approved programme and is essentially the approval of the addition of a new 20 credit module, and possibly amendment to another module within the programme to offer 40 credits which are unique to the extended version of the programme, with amendments to the extended programme learning outcomes to reflect this, then this could be deemed a major change to an existing programme (noting a new title is necessary to distinguish the extended programme from the standard programme) as set out in Section 1 of the Quality Framework.

How would the distinction calculation apply to extended masters programmes?

Regulation C3.11 and C3.12 state:

A **master's degree with distinction** will be awarded to a student who has satisfied a programme specific requirements and has gained a minimum of 180 credits at SCQF level 11 of which at least 120 credits is at 70 per cent or above.

And

A **master's degree with merit** will be awarded to a student who has satisfied all programme specific requirements and has gained a minimum of 180 credits at SCQF level 11 of which at least 120 credits is at 60 per cent or above

Programmes constituted of more than 180 credits inevitably provide students with a greater opportunity to gain 120 credits at the required percentage for merit or distinction.

If a programme were 200 credits long, to gain a merit or distinction students would only require a merit or distinction in 120 credits of the programme (i.e. distinctions in 60% of the programme as opposed to 66% for standard Masters programmes).

However, if the regulation were amended for extended masters programmes to require the additional 20 credits to be at merit or distinction for an award with merit or distinction – i.e. 140 credits out of 200 credits at the required percentage, then this would require the student to achieve distinctions in 70% of the programme, which is more demanding than for the standard award.

As such, it is recommended that the University standard regulation for the award of master's degree with **distinction (C3.11) continue to apply to extended masters programmes up to 200 credits.**

Version Control	
V1.Approved by Quality & Standards Committee April 2018 (Qs(17/18)34 appendix B	
V1.2 Amendments to reflect the change to the Quality Framework – February 2023 and to add emphasis that Regulation C3.9 should continue to apply to the award of distinction for extended masters	

programmes up to 200 credits (action from 17 th May 2022)	
V1.3 Amendments added to emphasize the need to ensure correct set up within SITS (and to seek advice accordingly (August 2023)	
V2.4 Amendments to take account of the change to percentage marking and the addition of the merit award. (May 2025)	