

**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 6th 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 Covid-19 has required a number of decisions to be 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 retain a record of these changes, providing clear University-wide guidance on the applications of the academic regulations where there is insufficient evidence available to adhere to the regulations.
- 1.3 Unless stipulated within this document, standard regulations and University policy continue to apply.

2. Academic Regulations for 2020/21 Session

- 2.1 In advance of the 2020/21 academic session, a number of adjustments were made to modules (approved through School Quality and the University Emergency Approvals Group). Adjustments include changes to module and programme structures; a move towards continuous assessment, rather than examinations; and where exams are still required, running timed, online exams (and more time-limited examinations) rather than the seven-day open book format offered in 2019/20.
- 2.2 As a result of these adjustments, standard University marking and moderation processes should be sufficient in marks agreement processes – and standard University assessment, continuation and award regulations will generally apply.
- 2.3 Extenuating circumstances will not automatically be applied to students in the 2020/21 session. However, Boards may still continue to consider outcomes for students who had extenuating circumstances applied in the 2019/20 session and may have deferred assessment or be completing uncapped, or capped reassessment opportunities. Students who progressed into 2020/21 academic session with credit pending must make good the credit during this academic session and may not be permitted to progress further.

- 2.4 It is recognised that amendments may still be required for trimester 2 and 3 modules within 2020/21 session to ensure compliance with Government Guidance. As these amendments will not comply with standard Quality timeframes or the standard University Terms and Conditions, the Emergency Approvals Group will continue to oversee in-session change proposals.
- 2.5 It is acknowledged that many students will likely have complex profiles as a result of the Covid disruption and some academic decisions may still be pending. Programme Assessment Boards may need to continue to be informed by the policy as applied in 2019/20 academic session as set out below.

Programmes where placements are referenced in Award Titles

- 2.6 Some students will be enrolled on programmes where placements are referenced within the programme title (for example: with year in industry; or sandwich), however Covid restrictions may have denied students the opportunity to undertake or complete placements and as such the award title for the programme that they are registered on may not accurately reflect their experience. Subject to confirmation that adjustments have been approved by the Emergency Approvals Group to allow students to continue to meet the programme learning outcomes, and barring no PSRB restrictions which would inhibit the award, Programme Boards may continue to make recommendations for these awards.

3. Assessment undertaken in the 2019-20 Academic Session SCQF Level 7 and 8 Modules (except modules delivered on Transnational Education Programmes and on programmes where there are PSRB restrictions)

- 3.1 On March 19th 2020, it was announced that for students on SCQF level 7 and 8 modules undertaken in trimester 2 in 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.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 The blanket pass *does not* apply to students who are enrolled on the module for reassessment only (i.e. 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.

- 3.4 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 where there is insufficient evidence to meet the approved regulation
B3.4	A certificate of higher education with distinction will be awarded to a student who has achieved an overall average of at least 65 per cent in the best 120 credits at SCQF level 7 or above programme-specific compulsory and option modules, if the approved programme structure permits.	A certificate of higher education with distinction will be awarded to a student who has achieved an overall average of at least 65 per cent in the best 60 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 – i.e. For this award where students join with RPL.
B3.6	A diploma of higher education with distinction will be awarded to a student who has achieved an overall average of at least 65 per cent in the best 100 credits from SCQF level 8 or above programme-specific compulsory and option modules, if the approved programme structure permits.	A diploma of higher education with distinction will be awarded to a student who has achieved an overall average of at least 65 per cent in the best 60 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 – i.e. For this award where students join with RPL.

Compensatory Passes

3.5 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.

4. **Steps taken in the 2019/20 Session to ensure that no student was academically disadvantaged with regards to final assessment marks and award classifications in the wake of the impact of Covid-19**

4.1 A number of measures were put in place to mitigate against the detrimental impact faced by our students due to Covid-19 disruption and campus closures. 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 seven-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).

4.2 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) was subject to the standard marking and moderation processes, including sampling and review of marking by module external examiners. Marks submissions deadlines were extended by a week and a half to allow more time for marking and internal moderation processes.

4.3 It was recognised that the amendments to assessment approaches and restrictions associated with Covid-19 poses higher risk of module results for trimester 2 in 2019/20 having an unusual profile compared to previous years. An additional formal stage was added to the Programme Assessment Board

process to ensure that module marks are reliable, consistent and fair when agreed.

- 4.4 It was a requirement that the marks profile for each module be compared against the module's profile for the previous three year period. The report highlighted where the marks deviated by +/- 5% from the average. Where marks deviate by +/- 5%, then all marks/grades were to be considered for normalisation. It was recognised that there may be valid reasons for some modules where this would not be appropriate and the module leader was required to provide a clear academic rationale for this. This step was intended to ensure that Covid-19 mitigation had 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 (2019/20)

- 4.5 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.
- 4.6 It was 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 needed 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 was required to 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 had the authority to permit students to progress with up to 60 credits pending. All pending modules must be passed within the next academic session (2020/21), in accordance with regulation B6.4.

Compensatory Passes for Students at levels 9 and 10 stages

- 4.7 Regulation B6.1, the regulation determining the award of compensatory passes could be applied at levels 9 and 10. However, if the failed module is from the trimester impacted by Covid-19, the student was in possession of 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 considering the award of Compensatory Pass, to ensure that there is no academic disadvantage to the student.

- 4.7b 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

- 4.8 We took 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 2 in 2019/20.
- 4.9 It was 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 determine 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 2019/20 would risk grade inflation and undermine the standard and integrity of Edinburgh Napier awards. As such, all of the regulations to determine Edinburgh Napier awards, and their classifications remained as per the approved academic regulations.

5. Bespoke Regulations

- 5.1 The following amendments were made to reflect the 2019/20 Section E Regulations (for pre-registration nursing and midwifery programmes to reflect the emergency NMC standards).
- Section E2c) and E2d) i) and 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 Approved 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 Approved 20/8/2020	Addition of 3.7b) – clarification regarding the award of compensatory passes following the reassessment diet.

Version 2.1 Approved by LTASEC (November 2020)	Significant amendments to reflect the position for 2020/21 and to archive decisions as applied to assessment undertaken in 2019/20.
Version 2.2 Approved 13/01/2021	Amendment added to confirm position relating to awards which include placements in the title impacted by Covid Restrictions approved by Prof A Tobin, in consultation with School Heads of Learning & Teaching.