

Variations to Principles and Regulations of University of Chester and The Quality and Standards Manual 2020-21

Introduction

The on-going impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has continued to necessitate alternations to the way in which the University has operated throughout 2020-21. As far as possible, the University has continued to operate in accordance with the policies and procedures set out in the Principles and Regulations and in the Quality and Standards Manual. Where deviations from these have been necessary, care has been taken to ensure that no student is academically disadvantaged as a result.

Key measures

The detail of the variations that have been made to the University's regulatory framework is provided in this document. The key changes can be summarised as possible:

1. The rules on condonement of failure at Levels 3 and 4 remain as set out in the regulations. However, in addition to the standard volume permitted, a student who achieves an average of 40 across the level (including passed and failed modules but not deferrals) will lead to all failed modules being condoned, with no minimum module or component mark¹.
2. Introduction of a 'safety net' scheme for students completing programmes leading to a classified award on or after 1 March 2021. The scheme provides an opportunity for students to retake assessments taken and passed at the first attempt during the 2020-21 academic year without risk to the award they have already achieved (unless a breach of the Academic Integrity Policy is confirmed), to give the opportunity to improve their classification.
3. Expansion of conditional progression regulations. This increases the number of credits that a student may have outstanding whilst still being permitted to progress to the next level of study.
4. Expansion of condonement of failure regulations at Level 5. This increases the number of failed credits that can be condoned, enabling a student to progress and not be required to undergo further assessment.
5. Students who were unable to complete assessment due to illness or other personal circumstances connected with the Covid-19 pandemic were permitted to make an application to the Mitigating Circumstances Board for an extension or deferral without requiring supporting evidence.
6. Continuation of the 'no detriment' policy for degree classifications (the policy instituted in 2019-20). Students who completed a qualifying level of study under the policy in 2019-20 had a no detriment average calculated on the basis of work submitted prior to Friday 20 March 2020. Both this no detriment average and the unadjusted average will be used to calculate an award classification with students receiving whichever is most favourable.

¹ This does not apply in some professionally regulated programmed where condonement and compensation is not permitted.

Principles and Regulations

The Principles and Regulations of the University of Chester apply in full unless a specific variation is noted in this section:

Part F: Regulations Governing the Assessment of Students

F2.9: Regulations governing Failure and Reassessment

The regulations provide for further assessment opportunities only in circumstances where a student has failed to achieve the threshold standard in one or more modules². Considering that the total impact of the pandemic on individual students is unquantifiable, the University instigated a 'safety net' scheme for students taking the final year of a classified award during 2020-21.

This scheme allows students to undertake further assessment in components that they have already passed with the aim of improving their award classification. A student taking further assessment via the scheme can only improve the mark of any assessments they select; the component/module mark and classification cannot get worse as a result of assessments undertaken under this scheme³.

Students cannot utilise this scheme for assessments or modules that they have not achieved the threshold standard at the first attempt. Where this is the case, this regulation continues to apply in full.

F2.10: Progression and Conditional Progression within a Programme of Study

The second and third paragraphs of this clause is amended as follows (changes shown with yellow highlight):

Full time undergraduate students shall not be allowed to progress to the next level of study until all modules at a given level have been passed or condoned. However, a student with no more than 20 credits outstanding (deferral, reassessment or third assessment attempt) shall be allowed to progress conditionally to the next level of study. A student with more than 20 credits but no more than 60 credits outstanding shall be allowed to progress conditionally to the next level of study where the outstanding components within the outstanding module(s) amount to no more than the equivalent of a full 40 credit module. A student with more than 20 credits but no more than 60 credits of outstanding assessment shall not be allowed to progress conditionally to the next level of study where the outstanding components within the outstanding module(s) amount to more than the equivalent of a full 40 credit module. In both cases the percentage weightings assigned to the assessment components and the credit value of the modules shall be used in this calculation.

² The threshold standard is represented by an aggregate mark of 40 in the case of undergraduate modules and 50 in the case of postgraduate students.

³ Unless the student commits a serious breach of the academic integrity policy

A student with more than 60 credits outstanding shall not be allowed to progress to the next level of study.

F4.3: Condonement of Failure in Assessment

The third paragraph of this clause is amended as follows (changes shown with yellow highlight and additional text shown with blue highlight):

Level 3

In the case of a student who is registered for a minimum of 120 credit points at Level 3, an Awards Assessment Board, having due regard to the standard of the award, the programme objectives, the programme assessment requirements, and any professional requirements, may allow condonement of failed modules up to and including 20 credits at Level 3. In order for this to apply, the student must have a profile (following initial assessment, reassessment or a third assessment attempt) with no more than 20 failed credits. If these conditions are met, condonement will be applied to those failed module(s) where both the overall module mark falls in the range 30-39% and there is no component mark below 20%. The Board will deem that a student in this position has achieved the credit for the condoned module(s), although the fail marks themselves will stand and will be recorded on the student's transcript. In addition, if a student at Level 3 achieves an average of 40% across the level (including passed and failed modules but not deferrals), all failed modules will be condoned with no minimum module or component mark required.

Level 4

In the case of a student who is registered for a minimum of 120 credit points at Level 4, an Awards Assessment Board, having due regard to the standard of the award, the programme objectives, the programme assessment requirements, and any professional requirements, may allow condonement of failed modules up to and including 40 credits at Level 4. In order for this to apply, the student must have a profile (following initial assessment, reassessment or a third assessment attempt) with no more than 40 failed credits. If these conditions are met, condonement will be applied to those failed module(s) where both the overall module mark falls in the range 30-39% and there is no component mark below 20%. The Board will deem that a student in this position has achieved the credit for the condoned module(s), although the fail marks themselves will stand and will be recorded on the student's transcript. In addition, if a student at Level 4 achieves an average of 40% across the level (including passed and failed modules but not deferrals), all failed modules will be condoned with no minimum module or component mark required.

Level 5

In the case of a student who is registered for a minimum of 120 credit points at Level 5, an Awards or Progression Assessment Board, having due regard to the standard of the award, the programme objectives, the programme assessment requirements, and any professional requirements, may allow condonement of failed modules up to

and including 40 credits at Level 5. In order for this to apply, the student must have a profile (following initial assessment, reassessment or third assessment attempt) with no more than 40 failed credits. If these conditions are met, condonement will be applied to those failed module(s) where both the overall module mark falls in the range 30-39% and there is no component mark below 20%. The Board will deem that a student in this position has achieved the credit for the condoned module(s), although the fail marks themselves will stand and will be recorded on the student's transcript.

F4.8: The Determination of the Final Degree Classification (Honours degrees)

IMPORTANT NOTE: the clauses below apply only to students who studied part of or completed a qualifying level of study in the **2019-20** academic year. Such students will have had a 'no detriment' average calculated for the level, based on any work that had been submitted prior to the start of the pandemic. Where, upon successful completion of the programme, a student holds a 'no detriment' average for a qualifying level of study, their award classification will be calculated using both the 'no detriment' average and the standard average. Their final award classification will be given using whichever is most favourable.

The following preface is inserted and the current clause re-numbered 4.8.1.:

In response to the COVID-19 disruption, students who studied at Level 5 (Level 6 in the case of students on an integrated Masters programme) in the **2019-20** academic year, and who were expected to submit assessment after 20 March 2020, shall have final averages calculated using both calculation methods described in F4.8.1 and F4.8.2 below, with the average which gives the best outcome used in the determination of the final classification.

New clause 4.8.2. is added:

An average for the Level(s) being studied by the student in the **2019-20** academic year shall be calculated, using only the marks of components submitted by the student on or before 20 March 2020; these components must also have been due for submission on or before this date. The percentage weighting of the component(s) and the credit value of the module(s) shall be taken into account in the calculation of the average.

This no-detriment average shall be combined with the standard average for levels not studied in the **2019-20** academic year, with a weighting of one-third for the Level 5 average mark and two-thirds for the Level 6 average mark. Where a student has been admitted by direct entry to Level 6, the overall mark shall be calculated on the basis of the Level 6 marks only. Figures used in this calculation shall not be rounded but will be expressed to two decimal places.

In cases where the student completed Level 5 before the **2019-20** academic year, the average for Level 5 will only be used for degree classification purposes if there are numerical marks for 50% or more of the required Level 5 credits.

In cases where numerical marks exist for between 100 and 120 credits at the relevant level, the calculation will be based on the highest 100 credit marks at that level. In cases where numerical marks exist for in excess of 120 credits at the relevant level, the lowest 20 credit mark will be deducted from the calculation. In cases where numerical marks exist for fewer than 100 credits at the relevant level, all marks will be used. This shall apply to all levels included in the calculation of the final average, including the no detriment average for levels studied in the **2019-20** academic year.

Notwithstanding the omission of certain module marks for the purpose of calculating overall degree classification, all modules must be passed or condoned in order for a student to obtain a degree.

Marks obtained at another institution prior to admission to University of Chester may not be counted for the purpose of determining the degree classification.

Where, exceptionally, students are registered for programmes based upon a 15-credit modular structure, the classification should be calculated using the identical number of credits as described above.

Once this procedure has been completed, the Awards Assessment Board shall determine the class of degree in accordance with the following scale:

70% and above	-	First class honours
60% – 69%	-	Upper second class honours
50% - 59%	-	Lower second class honours
40% - 49%	-	Third class honours
0% - 39%	-	Fail

A list of students shall be provided to the Awards Assessment Board, ranked by overall mark total express to two decimal places. The indicative, provisional degree class shall be ascribed.

Students whose overall total marks fall within one of the following ranges shall have that initial overall mark raised the threshold of the next degree class above, i.e.:

- a mark within the range 69.50 to 69.99 shall be raised to 70
- a mark within the range 59.50 to 59.99 shall be raised to 60
- a mark within the range 49.50 to 49.99 shall be raised to 50

Students whose overall total mark falls within one of the following ranges shall be reviewed for possible raising of the indicative degree classification to the next class above, i.e.:

- 67.00 to 69.49 shall be considered for raising to the first class
- 57.00 to 59.49 shall be considered for raising to the upper second class
- 47.00 to 49.49 shall be considered for raising to the lower second class

Where a student's Level 6 average has been determined by the no detriment calculation, and where the student has an overall total mark within one of those

ranges stated above, the higher class shall be awarded where at least half the Level 6 component credits for which numerical marks are available, and which were included in the calculation of the Level 6 no detriment average, are in the higher class.

Where a student's Level 5 average has been determined by the no detriment calculation, but where the Level 6 average has not been determined by the no detriment calculation, in cases where the overall total mark falls within one of those ranges stated above, the student shall be placed in the higher class where at least half the Level 6 module credits for which numerical marks are available are in the higher class, in the same way as under F4.8.1.

The Academic Integrity Review Panel may make a recommendation on the calculation of the student's average mark or degree classification.

F4.8: The Determination of the Final Degree Classification (Foundation degrees)

The following preface is inserted and the current clause re-numbered 4.8.3 'Standard calculation':

In response to the COVID-19 disruption, students who studied at Level 5 in the 2019/20 academic year, and who were expected to submit Level 5 assessment after 20 March 2020, shall have final averages calculated using both calculation methods described in F4.8.3 and F4.8.4 below, with the average which gives the best outcome used in the determination of the final classification.

New clause F4.8.4 'no-detriment calculation' is added:

These requirements are sequential.

Students who have fulfilled the credit requirements for the award of a Foundation Degree will be awarded the classification on the basis of Level 5 module marks only. Level 4 modules must be passed or condoned but the marks do not contribute to the average upon which the classification is based.

An average for Level 5 shall be calculated, using only the marks of components submitted by the student on or before 20 March 2020; these components must also have been due for submission on or before this date. The percentage weighting of the component(s) and the credit value of the module(s) shall be taken into account in the calculation of the average. The final average shall not be rounded but will be expressed to two decimal places.

The number of Level 5 credits used to determine the average is dependent upon the number of counting Level 5 credits for which numerical marks exist. In cases where numerical marks exist for between 100 and 120 credits, the best 100 credits will be used; where numerical marks exist for in excess of 120 credits, the lowest 20 credit mark will be deducted from the calculation. In cases where numerical marks exist for fewer than 100 credits, all marks will be used.

A provisional degree class should be awarded in accordance with the following scale:

70% and above	-	Distinction
60 to 69.99%	-	Merit

Students whose average mark falls within one of the following ranges shall have that initial overall mark raised to the threshold of the next degree class above, i.e.:

a mark within the range 69.50 to 69.99 shall be raised to 70 and a distinction awarded

a mark within the range 59.50 to 59.99 should be raised to 60 and a merit awarded

Students whose average mark falls within one of the following ranges shall be reviewed for possible raising of the indicative classification to the next class above, i.e.:

67.00 to 69.49 shall be considered for raising to distinction

57.00 to 59.49 shall be considered for raising to a merit

Where a student's Level 5 average has been determined by the no detriment calculation, and where the student has an overall total mark within one of those ranges stated above, the higher class shall be awarded where at least half the Level 5 component credits for which numerical marks are available, and which were included in the calculation of the Level 5 no detriment average, are in the higher class.

The Academic Integrity Review Panel may make a recommendation on the calculation of the student's average mark or their eligibility to be awarded a foundation degree with distinction or merit.

F5: Additional Assessment Regulations pertaining to Integrated Masters Programmes

From the fifth paragraph, new clause F5.1. 'standard calculation' containing the existing text. The following preface is added:

In response to the COVID-19 disruption, students who studied at Level 5, 6 or 7 in the 2019/20 academic year, and who were expected to submit assessment after 20 March 2020, shall have final averages calculated using both calculation methods described below, with the average which gives the best outcome used in the determination of the final classification.

New clause F5.2 'no-detriment calculation' is added:

An average for the Level(s) being studied by the student in the 2019/20 academic year shall be calculated, using only the marks of components submitted by the student on or before 20 March 2020; these components must also have been due for submission on or before this date. The percentage weighting of the components and the credit value of the modules shall be taken into account in the calculation of the average.

In the case of students studying Level 7/Year 4, the no detriment average for Level 6/7 will be calculated using all Level 6/7 components submitted on or before 20

March 2020 (and which were due by that date), including relevant components submitted in previous academic years.

Classification of Integrated Masters programmes will be by means of a weighted average of Level 5 marks and the marks for Levels 6 and 7 together.

Averages for Level 5 and Level 6/7 shall be calculated, with each mark weighted according to its credit value.

At Level 5, in cases where numerical marks exist for between 100 and 120 credits, the calculation will be based on the highest 100 credit marks at that level. Where numerical marks exist for in excess of 120 credits, the lowest 20 credit mark will be deducted from the calculation. In cases where numerical marks exist for fewer than 100 credits, all marks will be used.

These averages shall then be combined in the ratio of 20:80. Figures used for this calculation shall not be rounded but will be expressed to two decimal places.

The degree classification will then be determined by the method used in the determination of Bachelors degrees set out in F4.8.1 and F4.8.2, except that the marks for Levels 6 and 7 taken together should be used in the calculation of whether a borderline degree class should be raised; in borderline cases based on the no detriment average, the higher class shall be awarded where at least half the Level 6/7 component credits for which numerical marks are available, and which were included in the calculation of the Level 6/7 no detriment average, are in the higher class.

The Academic Integrity Review panel may make a recommendation on the calculation of the student's average mark or degree classification.

Quality and Standards Manual

The requirements of the Quality and Standards Manual apply in full, unless a specific variation is noted in this section.

Handbook F: Assessment

The contents of Handbook F referring to failure and reassessment, condonement of failure and award classifications are varied by virtue of the changes and additions noted in Part F of the Principles and Regulations and which are described above.

In addition:

Section 7: Mitigating Circumstances

The University recognised the disruption to the lives of all of our students caused by the pandemic. Clause 7.3 (evidence in support of requests for the consideration of mitigating circumstances) was suspended, enabling students to make a statement rather than obtain independent documentary evidence when seeking an extension or a deferral.

Section 8: Assessment Boards

New provisions to enable the conduct online of Module Assessment Boards and Awards/Progression Boards has been put in place; however, the functions and responsibilities of these has been maintained.

Handbook G: Postgraduate Research Degrees

Section 7: Examination and Examiners

The prohibition on remote vivas (1.13) was removed and a new policy to enable this to take place as approved by the Academic Quality and Enhancement Committee.

Safety Net Scheme

The rules of the Safety Net Scheme are set out in the Student FAQ document, circulated after 1 March 2020. The normal rules regarding marking and moderation apply to assessments submitted under the Scheme. The ability to request an extension to a deadline may be constrained in some instances and, where this is the case, students will be entitled to request a deferral of the deadline for an assessment without prejudice.

Further details about the Scheme have been made available to students in guidance documents available to students via the Registry Services Portal pages and on the University's website.