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Guide to the Code of Assessment – Introduction

Location of the Code

The Code of Assessment is published as [Regulation 16](#) of the 'University Fees and General Information' chapter of the *University Regulations*. It contains most but not all of the regulations relating to assessment.

If in any case an explanation or illustration in this guide appears to contradict the terms of the Code itself, the Code takes precedence.

Please note: In response to the Covid-19 global pandemic the University introduced the [No Detriment policy](#) in 2019-20 and applied a series of Assessment Support Measures in 2020-21. Both varied some aspects of published degree regulations and the Code of Assessment. At the time of publication of the *University Regulations 2021-22*, the course of the pandemic remains uncertain. The most up to date information on any special arrangements for assessment in 2021-22 will be made available on the Senate Office webpages dedicated to [Assessment Regulations and Support Relating to the Covid 19 Pandemic](#).

In response to the pandemic, examinations have predominantly been moved online. Some of the relevant arrangements have not yet been formalised in the Code of Assessment (e.g. duration of online exams, penalties for late submission) as these remain under review. Please refer to the Senate Office website which will be updated with information for assessments taking place during the 2021-22 session.

Key changes for 2021-22

1. Abolition of Exam Board discretion in the award of Honours degrees and PGT degrees/awards

This applies to the award of:

- Honours degree classifications (including integrated masters programmes): First class, 2.1, 2.2 and Third class
- Postgraduate taught masters degrees and diplomas/certificates: Merit and Distinction

Following a University-wide consultation led by the Academic Standards Committee (https://frontdoor.spa.gla.ac.uk/committees/senate/ASC/Minutes/minutes_2020-11-20.htm and https://frontdoor.spa.gla.ac.uk/committees/senate/ASC/Minutes/minutes_2021-01-22.htm), Senate has agreed that the award of classifications will for most students be determined solely by grade point average (GPA). For the remaining students, whose GPAs fall in narrow defined GPA ranges, classification will be determined by grade profile.

For Honours degrees, this is set out in the Code of Assessment sections 16.36 – 16.37.

For postgraduate taught programmes, this is covered in the regulations applying to the specific programme of study (published in the relevant College section of the *Regulations*).

The change will ensure consistency of awards being made to all students on the same programme and to students from different areas of the University. Exam Boards will no longer have discretion to refer to any other criteria in determining the appropriate award.

These changes take effect for all awards made for students registered in their final year of study in 2021-22.

2. Nomination of internal examiners §16.55 a) iii)

In previous years the Code required the nomination of some categories of internal examiners to be approved by the Clerk of Senate. From 2020-21, all internal examiners should be approved at College level only.

Other assessment regulations

The 'University Fees and General Information' chapter of the *University Regulations* contains further Regulations relevant to assessment which are not part of the Code and are therefore not included in this Guide. These Regulations are:

- Instructions to candidates on their conduct in written examinations ([Regulation 17](#))
- Use of a computer in an examination ([Regulation 18](#))
- Use of dictionaries by students in examinations ([Regulation 19](#))
- Use of electronic calculators by students in examinations ([Regulation 20](#))
- Invigilation ([Regulation 21](#))
- Rules of invigilation ([Regulation 22](#))
- Appointment of external examiners for taught courses at undergraduate and postgraduate level ([Regulation 23](#))
- Examination and other assessment arrangements for disabled students ([Regulation 24](#))
- Code of practice for exceptional international examination arrangements ([Regulation 25](#))

The essence of the Code

Assessment is an integral part of the process by which the University makes awards to students who have completed their programmes. The regulations which comprise the Code of Assessment are intended to deliver transparently fair and consistent outcomes in all student assessment. It is the pursuit of transparency which has imposed most demands on the design of the Code and on examiners.

Consider the case of an able and hard working student who received a mark of 67% for a very good essay. We may take for granted that this mark was fair and reflective of consistent standards. We therefore assume that students who had performed as well in previous years might also have got 67%, and, within this student's own cohort, those students whose essays were less good were awarded less than 67% and those (very few) who had written better essays achieved marks (only a little) higher than 67%. But this model of fairness and academic rigour has two weaknesses:

- Its range of consistency is very limited – students in other subjects who had demonstrated as thorough a grasp of their course content might have scored 87% or even more.
- It is meaningless beyond the function of ranking students – the essay was a very good one and yet it scored only two thirds of the way up the implied scale of 0 to 100.

The object of the Code of Assessment is to make assessment outcomes as consistent as possible across all taught disciplines within this University, and to provide a clear statement of the learning that each student has demonstrated.

Chapter 1 of this Guide discusses intended learning outcomes (ILOs). ILOs tell students what they are expected to learn, and all universities are required to publish these. One of the things the Code of Assessment does is make an explicit connection between ILOs and the assessment of each student's performance. Thus employers (and anyone else) may determine what the grades reported in a student's transcript actually mean.

Chapter 2 explains how this connection is made by a set of grade descriptors, in which each grade is described in terms of a student's achievement of ILOs. What the examiner has to do is determine which grade descriptor best matches the student's performance. The University's main assessment schedule (Schedule A) uses eight grades, A to H, and the bands into which these grades are divided allow the marker 23 discrete scores from A1 to H. The chance awkwardness of this number confirms that a student's performance is being assessed against grade descriptors, not as a ratio of right answers to questions asked.

University awards are not made on the basis of a single assessment. The Code must, therefore, provide a way of aggregating grades from all summative components. The simplest and most readily transparent method of combining grades is to convert them into numbers, and Chapter 2 explains how this should be done and how the final score should be translated to a course result or a classified degree.

Other aspects of the Code

As noted, it is an objective of the Code to deliver fair and consistent outcomes in all student assessment. Consistency across the University requires regulation; fairness calls for sensitivity, on the one hand, to the individual student – recognising when their circumstances justify special provision – and, on the other, to the integrity of the University's awards. These issues are never far from the surface in the rules governing reassessment ([Chapter 3](#)) and incomplete assessment resulting from good cause ([Chapter 5](#)). Course credits represent a transferable currency – this University will recognise credits gained by students in other institutions just as other institutions will recognise the value of credits awarded here – and students must accumulate course credits in order to qualify for a certificate, diploma or degree. [Chapter 4](#) is concerned with setting minimum standards for the award of credits. [Chapter 6](#) is about making the whole thing work, and sets out the responsibilities of Heads of Schools and Research Institutes, assessment officers and examiners, both internal and external.