

Operation of Discretion by Exam Boards: awards made in session 2020-21

The following arrangements take effect in respect of decisions being made in the exam boards for final awards made in academic year 2020-21. The arrangements for awards made in session 2019-20 are set out [here](#). Advice will follow on the position for future graduating cohorts whose assessment has in part been completed during the period impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Guide to the Code of Assessment sets out the discretionary criteria available in normal circumstances to exam boards when making borderline decisions for Honours and PGT awards. These criteria provide additional evidence that may support the promotion of a student from a borderline zone to the higher classification.

The No Detriment policy was introduced in 2020 in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. For any student who completed assessment in the period 16 March 2020 – 11 September 2020, it makes changes to the way that the results of assessment are treated when calculating a student's grade point average. The changes affect:

- the volume of completed assessment required for an award
- the selection of assessment results for inclusion in grade point average and the way that those results are aggregated
- the availability of reassessment opportunities in session 2019-20.

In the context of the current pandemic, the information available to exam boards may be significantly different from usual, with gaps in assessment varying partly in relation to the way that programmes/courses scheduled their assessments in 2019-20 as well as in relation to the particular circumstances experienced by students.

In light of these factors, it was decided that the usual guidelines for the operation of discretion should be suspended,¹ as there was low confidence that applying the usual criteria would provide reliable and equitable additional evidence on which to base decisions. In their place the amended rules, as set out below, should be applied.

Where awards are made on the basis of study completed only in session 2020-21, no assessment will have been completed within the No Detriment period and therefore students should have complete assessment records. However, in order to avoid confusion, the amended arrangements set out below should be applied to all students receiving awards in 2020-21.

Amended rules for operation of discretion

Students whose grade point average puts them in the following bands will be promoted automatically to the classification indicated:

	Grade point average	Classification
Honours and integrated masters students	17.5 – 17.9	1st class
	14.5 – 14.9	2.1
	11.5 – 11.9	2.2
	8.5 – 8.9	3 rd class
	17.5 – 17.9	Distinction

¹ This is a temporary arrangement and has no relevance to the review of the future operation of discretion currently being conducted by Academic Standards Committee.

PGT Masters combined grade point average (taught courses GPA + dissertation/project)	14.5 – 14.9	Merit
Note: In order to qualify for the award of merit and distinction, normally PGT masters students must also meet minimum requirements in relation to the taught courses GPA and to the dissertation/project grade as specified in the relevant degree regulations. For students completing in session 2020-21, in some cases these requirements are varied. Further details are available here .		
PGT Diploma/Certificate	17.5 – 17.9	Distinction
	14.5 – 14.9	Merit

GPA's in the lower range of discretionary zones

Students whose grade point average does not fall within the above bands will not be automatically promoted. There may be a small number of cases identified by exam boards where there is concern that a student could be disadvantaged if not also considered for promotion. These cases will relate to students whose final GPA includes **all or almost all** results, including those from assessment taking place within the period 16 March 2020 to 11 September 2020, and the available information supports promotion through application of the published discretionary criteria. These cases fall into two categories:

1. No assessment set aside under No Detriment policy

These students will not have benefited from the setting aside of poorer performances because either:

- performance in all assessments falling within the No Detriment period was at or above the baseline level; or
- no assessment fell within the No Detriment period (as is the case for PGT students who have studied solely in session 2020-21).

In such cases where a student's GPA is in the lower half of the discretionary zone, i.e. between .1 and .4 and, where application of published discretionary criteria (such as course grade profile) would under normal circumstances have resulted in promotion to the next classification, **the exam board may promote the student** as indicated in the table below.

2. A small amount of assessment has been disregarded under the No Detriment policy in the calculation of final GPA

Where a student's GPA is in the lower half of the discretionary zone, i.e. between .1 and .4:

- and up to a maximum of 10% of **weighted** programme assessment (see further below) or, in the case of PGT programmes, a maximum of 10% of taught courses assessment, has been disregarded in the calculation of final GPA; **and**
- where, on incorporating the disregarded component(s), the GPA would remain in the .1 - .4 discretionary range: **and**
- where application of published discretionary criteria (such as course grade profile) would, under normal circumstances, have resulted in promotion to the next classification, **the case may be referred to the Clerk of Senate** for consideration of promotion as indicated in the table below.

	Grade point average	Possible promotion to classification
Honours and integrated masters students	17.1 – 17.4	1st class
	14.1 – 14.4	2.1
	11.1 – 11.4	2.2
	8.1 – 8.4	3 rd class
PGT Masters combined grade point average (taught courses GPA + dissertation/project)	17.1 – 17.4	Distinction
	14.1 – 14.4	Merit
Note: In order to qualify for the award of merit and distinction, normally PGT masters students must also meet minimum requirements in relation to the taught courses GPA and to the dissertation/project grade as specified in the relevant degree regulations. For students completing in session 2020-21, in some cases these requirements are varied. Further details are available here .		
PGT Diploma/Certificate	17.1 – 17.4	Distinction
	14.1 – 14.4	Merit

10% Maximum weighted programme assessment

On honours programmes the weighting of junior and senior honours needs to be taken into account. For example, on an honours programme where JH and SH are equally weighted, each 20 credit course in junior honours carries 8.3% of programme assessment weighting. Therefore, say, two 50% components (from 20 credit courses) taken in the No Detriment period could have been disregarded from calculation of the final GPA.

On an honours programme where the years are weighted JH 25% SH 75%, each junior honours 20 credit course carries 4.2% of programme weighting. One component weighted at 75% (worth 3.2% of programme assessment) and two at 50% (each worth 2.1%) could therefore have been disregarded (total disregarded = 7.4%).

On a PGT course with 120 taught credits, each 20 credit course carries 16.7% of the assessment contributing to the taught GPA. One component weighted at 60% assessment for the course (worth 10% of the total taught course assessment) could have been disregarded.

Example of case to be referred to the Clerk of Senate:

A senior honours student (junior honours and senior honours years equally weighted) whose final GPA is 14.3:

- the student's baseline GPA is 13.5. In one exam, taken in April 2020, weighted 50% of a 20 credit course the student's result was C3 (12) and is therefore disregarded from calculation of final GPA. If that grade had been included in the calculation, the final GPA would have been 14.2; **and**
- under normal circumstances, the course grade profile – including the C3 grade – would have resulted in promotion to the next classification.

Any such cases identified by boards should be referred for review by the Clerk of Senate at clerk-of-senate@glasgow.ac.uk. The Clerk of Senate will work with a small group of senior Academic Services staff to make a recommendation to the Exam Board using consistent criteria and ensuring equity of treatment for students across the University. Assistance can be provided in identifying relevant cases.