

# Assessment Policy for Open University Programmes

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## 1. Assessment Approval

- 1.1. The type of assessment, its weighting and its timing must be those approved through the Open University at the point of validation and also by the relevant External Examiner(s).
- 1.2. Where reasonable adjustments are required to assessments i.e. for disability, this must also be approved by the External Examiner(s).
- 1.3. The programme handbook must be updated annually to include up to date and approved assessment details (such as after minor modifications have been requested and approved). Submission dates must also be published.
- 1.4. A *viva voce* may be used as an assessment method, however the regulations make it clear that this is not usual practice and must be agreed by the Board of Examiners and the external examiner:

- 16.1 Exceptionally, *viva voce* examinations may be required by a Board of Examiners (with the approval of external examiners):
- (a) to confirm the progression/result status of a student;
  - (b) to determine the result status of unusual or borderline cases;
  - (c) when there is conflicting evidence from the various assessment components;
  - (d) as an alternative or additional assessment in cases where poor performance in assessment is the result of exceptional circumstances verified through due processes.

*(Regulations for validated awards of The Open University [2015])*

## 2. Assessment Submission

- 2.1. All written work must be submitted *via* Turnitin to check its authenticity and confirm its submission date. Where authenticity is doubted, the process detailed within the *Cheating, Plagiarism and Other Forms of Unfair Practice Policy* must be initiated.
- 2.2. The submission procedure for other assessment formats such as posters, plans, recordings etc. must be confirmed by the module tutor at the start of the module.

### Late Submission, Extensions and Mitigation

- 2.3. The penalty for late submission (without accepted mitigating/extenuating circumstances) is a deduction of 10% for every day that the work is late (excluding weekends, bank holidays and college shut down dates). On the seventh day, the submission is refused and a mark of zero must be applied.

- 2.4. There is no provision for extensions to published deadlines for assessment other than under the arrangements for Mitigating Circumstances – referred to in the Open University regulations as Extenuating Circumstances (see section F., *Regulations for validated awards of The Open University [2015]*).
- 2.5. The College's policy and process for registering Mitigating Circumstances are outlined in the *Registration of Mitigating Circumstances with Guidance Notes 2014*.
- 2.6. A successful application of Mitigating Circumstances allows the student to submit the assessment as a first attempt at a nominated later date and receive the full marks available. If they fail to submit at this point and do not request further mitigation, then this first attempt will become a non-submission and a second attempt will then be capped at a minimum pass mark.
- 2.7. A student may apply for Mitigating Circumstances against a resit attempt, however, if the first attempt was a non-submission (i.e. mitigation not applied for or accepted) then the second attempt would still be capped at a minimum pass mark, whether or not mitigation is accepted against that attempt.
- 2.8. If a student's circumstances are on-going (such as through long-term illness) or affect a considerable number of assessments then the Board of Examiners may decide to put a longer deferral in place - such as extending the period of registration for the level or allowing the student to attend part-time – to allow the student opportunity to complete.
- 2.9. Further guidance for staff on mitigation is available in the *Staff Guide to Mitigating Circumstances and Mitigation 2015-16* and students can also be referred to Student Services for independent support.
- 2.10. An application for mitigation will be considered by the Mitigation Panel which meets once a semester and the recommendation for a deferral (outcome of a successful request for mitigation) will be passed to the Board of Examiners and the student notified.

### **3. Assessment Marking**

#### **General Information**

- 3.1. All assessment components for all modules are required for award and a student who passes the module will be awarded the credit (as determined within the programme handbook) for that module. Students who do not submit an assessment component either against its first or second submission will receive a zero mark and will be unable to progress to the next level or receive an award until a module resit has been undertaken (which will incur fees).

- 3.2. The minimum aggregate pass mark for all undergraduate awards is 40% at assessment, module, level and qualification point.
- 3.3. Where there are options available within programmes and modules are identified as pre-requisites or co-requisites then module tutors/programme leaders should ensure that the student pathway meets these requirements.
- 3.4. Students should be informed that their marks are provisional (and subject to second marking/internal moderation and external moderation) until the Board of Examiners has met to confirm the marks. Students are then notified of outcomes in writing, following the Board of Examiners meeting.

## Marking Bands

3.5. All assessments are marked as a percentage (0-100%)

% Score	Performance Standard
70+	Excellent Pass
60-69	Very Good Pass
50-59	Good Pass
40-49	Pass
0-39	Fail

## Half Marks

3.6. Half marks may be allocated, although the use of half marks usually arises through examinations. Where half marks do occur these must not be rounded up locally by the module tutor, rather these marks must be input by the nominated team as they are and rounded up electronically as part of the student's profile.

14.4 Where the result of the assessment calculation creates a mark of 0.5% or greater this will be rounded up to the next full percentage point (e.g. 69.5% is rounded to 70; 59.5% to 60%; and so on). Where the calculation creates a mark below 0.5% this will be rounded down to the next full percentage point (e.g. 69.4% is rounded to 69%; 59.4% to 59%; and so on). For the purposes of rounding up or down, only the first decimal place is used.

*(Regulations for validated awards of The Open University [2015])*

3.7. Module tutors should be aware that consistent use of half marks can cause 'double rounding'. Assessment components may be rounded up or down and rounding up or down may then occur at the classification level. For example a student can be working at a 2:2 level yet achieve a 2:1 (without any clear exit velocity) and the same can happen with rounding down, where a student may receive a lower classification than their marks suggested to date.

3.8. Online marking is recommended to ease the administrative burden of paper assessment copies and markers may also wish to take advantage of audio recordings to provide feedback.

## 4. Resit Opportunities

- 4.1. If a student fails a module, or a component of a module then they are eligible to resit. However,

17.3.1 Resit provision is subject to all the following conditions:

- (a) A student may resit the failed assessment components of a module only once. Where there are extenuating circumstances, the Board of Examiners has discretion to decide whether a further assessment opportunity shall be permitted, unless explicitly prohibited in the rules for the programme, as approved in the validation process and programme specification.
- (b) A student who does not complete the resit by the date specified shall not progress the programme, except in cases where the process for allowing extenuating circumstances has been followed.
- (c) Resits can only take place after the meeting of the Board of Examiners or following agreement by the Chair and the External Examiner of the Board.
- (d) A student who successfully completes any required resits within a module shall be awarded the credit for the module and the result for the individual assessment component capped at the minimum pass mark for the module.
- (e) A student shall not be permitted to be reassessed by resit in any module that has received a pass mark, or in a component that has received a mark of 40% or above.
- (f) The resit will normally be carried out by the same combination of written examination, coursework etc. as in the first attempt.

*(Regulations for validated awards of The Open University [2015])*

- 4.2. Students should always have the opportunity and be encouraged to resit rather than rely on compensation (see section 5., below). If they receive a compensated pass this is shown on their transcript and diploma supplement and could affect their degree classification.
- 4.3. The minimum aggregate pass marks for all undergraduate awards is 40% at assessment, module, level and qualification point.

## 5. Level Progression

- 5.1. For a student to be eligible to progress to the next level (if applicable), then 120 credits at the current level must have been achieved (whether through assessment or recognition of prior learning) at the aggregate pass mark of 40%.
- 5.2. In some cases compensation may occur, allowing a student to progress with an overall (20 credit) module mark below 40% (but over 35%) if their overall aggregate pass mark for the level is 40% or greater.

### Compensation

17.4.1 Unless otherwise stated in the approved programme specification, compensation will be applied when the following conditions are met:

- (a) No more than 20 credits, or one sixth of the total credits, whichever is greater, can be compensated in any one stage of an undergraduate or postgraduate programme.
- (b) Compensation is not permitted for modules within awards of less than 120 credits in total.
- (c) It can be demonstrated that the learning outcomes of the qualification level have been satisfied. The process for evaluating cases will be identified in the programme specification.
- (d) A minimum mark of no more than 5 percentage points below the module pass mark has been achieved in the module to be compensated.
- (e) Taking the module mark to be compensated into account, an aggregate mark of 40% has been achieved for the qualification level of the undergraduate programme (except in the case of MEng Level 7 where an aggregate mark of 50% has been achieved).
- (f) In the case of postgraduate programmes, taking the module mark to be compensated into account, an aggregate mark of 50% has been achieved.
- (g) No compensation shall be permitted for any core project/dissertation module, as defined in the programme specification.
- (h) A student who receives a compensated pass in a module shall be awarded the credit for the module. The original component mark(s) (i.e. below the pass mark) shall be retained in the record of marks and used in the calculation of the aggregate mark for the stage or qualification.

*(Regulations for validated awards of The Open University [2015])*

## 6. Level Failure/Repeat Opportunities

17.5.1 If, having exhausted all permitted resit and compensation opportunities, a student is still unable to pass; the Board of Examiners may at its discretion permit one of the following repeat options:

### **(a) Partial repeat as fully registered student:**

- (i) The student is not permitted to progress to the next stage of the programme but must repeat the failed modules and/or components in full during the following academic year,
- (ii) The student has full access to all facilities and support for the modules and/or components being repeated,
- (iii) The marks that can be achieved for the modules and/or components being repeated will be capped at the module and/or component pass marks,
- (iv) The student retains the marks for the modules and/or components already passed,
- (v) No further resit opportunities are permitted.

### **(b) Partial repeat for assessment only:**

- (i) As in paragraph 17.5.1(a) except that access to facilities and support will be limited to certain learning resources for the module(s) and/or component(s) being repeated. Participation will only be allowed for relevant revision sessions and assessments.

### **(c) Full repeat:**

- (i) This is only permitted where the student has extenuating circumstances;
- (ii) The student does not progress to the next stage of the programme but instead repeats all the modules in the current stage during the following academic year,
- (iii) The student has full access to all facilities and support,
- (iv) The marks that can be achieved are not capped, and the student is normally entitled to the resit opportunities available. However, a student is not able to carry forward any credit from previous attempts at the stage.

*(Regulations for validated awards of The Open University [2015])*

6.1. If a student is offered a repeat opportunity then programme leaders/Board of Examiners should advise the student to seek further guidance from Student Services before they accept the option to repeat - repeating can have considerable financial implications, particularly if study is funded through Student Finance England.



- **Progression with Trailing Assessments**

- 6.2. There is provision for a student to progress without having gained the required number of credits. The Open University regulations relating to a student progressing with trailing assessments can be found in section 17.5.3:

- 17.5.3 With the approval of the Board of Examiners students may be eligible to progress to a higher stage of a programme without having completed the requisite 120 points of the lower stage, may exceptionally be allowed to do so provided that each of the following conditions are met:
- (a) A minimum of 80 points at the lower level have been successfully completed including passes in all designated core modules;
  - (b) All requirements for academic prerequisites for the higher level modules are met;
  - (c) The Examination board have approved progression following a successful application for extenuating circumstances, and results are still pending in the student's profile;

*(Regulations for validated awards of The Open University [2015])*

## **7. Final Awards, Classification and Exit Awards**

### **Foundation Degree**

- 7.1. For the award of Foundation Degree, a student will have met the programme learning outcomes, achieved 120 credits at FHEQ Level 4, 120 credits at FHEQ Level 5 and achieved an aggregate pass mark of at least 40% across both levels.
- 7.2. Depending on the final aggregate mark across both levels, a student may also be awarded Merit or Distinction.

Aggregate % Score	Grade
70+	Distinction
60-69	Merit
50-59	Pass
40-49	
0-39	Fail

- 7.3. Like assessment/module marks, rounding up (.5% or greater to the next full point) or rounding down (.4% or below) occurs if a half mark arises at the classification point.

- 7.4. As detailed within programme specifications, a student withdrawing after successful completion of Level 4 may request the award of a Certificate of Higher Education.

### **Honours Degree**

- 7.5. For the award of an Honours Degree, a student will have met the programme learning outcomes, achieved 120 credits at FHEQ Levels 4, 5 and 6 and achieved an aggregate pass mark of at least 40% across all levels.
- 7.6. Classification is based upon the mean mark across Level 6 and Level 5 at a ratio of 2:1 respectively.

Aggregate % Score	Grade
70+	First Class (1 <sup>st</sup> )
60-69	Upper Second Class (2:1)
50-59	Lower Second Class (2:2)
40-49	Third Class (3 <sup>rd</sup> )
0-39	Fail

- 7.7. Like assessment/module marks, rounding up (.5% or greater to the next full point) or rounding down (.4% or below) occurs if a half mark arises at the classification point.
- 7.8. As detailed within programme specifications, a student withdrawing after successful completion of Level 4 may request the award of a Certificate of Higher Education, or after Level 5, a Diploma of Higher Education. A student may also be eligible to withdraw before completion of the project/dissertation component of an Honours degree and be eligible for the award of an Ordinary Degree (successful completion of Levels 4 and 5 and 60 credits at Level 6).

### **Honours Degree (Top-Up)**

- 7.9. For the award of an Honours Degree (Top-Up), a student will have met the programme learning outcomes, achieved 120 credits at FHEQ Level 6 and achieved an aggregate pass mark of at least 40% across the level.
- 7.10. Classification is based upon the mean mark across Level 6.

Aggregate % Score	Grade
70+	First Class (1 <sup>st</sup> )
60-69	Upper Second Class (2:1)
50-59	Lower Second Class (2:2)
40-49	Third Class (3 <sup>rd</sup> )
0-39	Fail

- 7.11. Like assessment/module marks, rounding up (.5% or greater to the next full point) or rounding down (.4% or below) occurs if a half mark arises at the classification point.
- 7.12. As detailed within programme specifications, a student may be eligible to withdraw before completion of the major project/dissertation component of an Honours degree and be eligible for the award of an Ordinary Degree (60 credits at Level 6).

## **8. Recognition of Prior Learning**

8.1. As detailed within the *Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Learning 2015-16* there are limits on the use of RPL (page 7), some of which impact upon classification:

- No more than 50% of a programme's credit can be awarded through the RPL process, i.e. 180 credits of a Bachelor's Degree or 120 credits of a Foundation Degree, with the exception of an Honours Degree Top Up, in which applicants are expected to complete 120 credits at Level 6.
- Modules/levels for which RPL is granted cannot be granted marks or used toward final classification unless an Open University approved articulation/credit transfer agreement is in place with the named institution.
- No credit can ever be awarded for the dissertation/major project element of any programme.
- Modules/levels that are granted RPL should be designated a 'pass'. No marks can be awarded for a module that RPL has been granted for, unless the applicant is transferring programmes internally and some modules are core and studied across all programmes.

8.2. For further information about the use of RPL within assessment please refer to the Guidelines.

## **9. Aegrotat and Posthumous Awards**

- 9.1. Under exceptional circumstances, an Aegrotat award may be made by the Board of Examiners. This is only if a student is unable to complete their studies, such as through serious and permanent illness or other circumstances.
- 9.2. If an Aegrotat award is made, the Board must be confident that if the circumstances had not arisen, the student would have passed the award.
- 9.3. The Board of Examiners can also apply to the Open University Ratification Panel to request an award for a student who passes away before study is completed.
- 9.4. For further information on Aegrotat and Posthumous awards please see 21.0 in the *Regulations for validated awards of The Open University (2015)*.