

Amendments to University Policies and Regulations for 2022/23

This paper summarises the amendments to the University's academic UPRs (University Policies and Regulations for the 2022/23 academic year, available at: <https://www.herts.ac.uk/about-us/governance/university-policies-and-regulations-uprs/uprs/academic-assessment-and-awards>) that students need to be aware of. *Amendments are identified in red italics.*

This paper should be read in conjunction with UPR SA07 (*Regulations and Advice for Students' Particular Attention – Index*, (at: https://www.herts.ac.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0005/233096/SA07-RegsandAdviceforStudents_ParticularAttention-Index.pdf) and the StudyNet guidance on the Academic Regulations (at: <https://www.study.net2.herts.ac.uk/ptl/common/studentcentre.nsf/page/98370E73AE82CA21802577E60057CE00x>).

1. Temporary regulations in response to the Covid-19 pandemic

The University introduced a Safety Net policy in response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, some of which continued to apply for the lifespan of the pandemic. The following (temporary) amendments to UPR AS11 and UPR AS14 have been withdrawn for the 2022/23 academic session:

(a) UPR AS11:

2.4 Award titles acknowledging employment experience (UPR AS11)

2.4.1 Sandwich awards

A sandwich award requires the successful completion of at least **30** weeks full-time equivalent placement activity from a maximum of two separate approved placements, neither of which will be normally less than **12** weeks in duration, in order for the award to be made. The sandwich award title should be:

<Award title (Sandwich)>

In exceptional circumstances, the Director of Academic Quality Assurance is able to approve a Sandwich award for the successful completion of at least 24 weeks full-time equivalent placement activity.

NB. This withdrawal applies to students undertaking their placement from the 2022/23 academic year onwards. The exception still applies to those students who undertook a placement in 2021/22 and are considered for a final award in 2022/23 onwards.

(b) UPR AS14:

D6 Final awards – Honours classification

D6.1 Calculation of overall classification grade for Honours classification (Bachelor's Degree)

(NOTE:

~~21~~ — As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, overall classification grades may alternatively be calculated as follows:

~~i~~ — **Current level 6 Bachelor's students**

~~The final programme board has the discretion to disregard all level 5 grades when calculating degree classification. The best 90 credits at level 6 would be used, as if the student were a final year direct entrant.)~~

D6.2 **Calculation of overall classification grade for Honours classification (Integrated Master's Degrees)**

(NOTE:

~~22~~ As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, overall classification grades may alternatively be calculated as follows:

~~i~~ **Current level 7 Integrated Master's students**

~~The final programme board has the discretion to disregard all level 6 grades when calculating degree classification. The best 90 credits at L7 plus the best 120 credits from the remaining L5/7 modules would be used.)~~

2. Coursework Extensions

The University has decided that details of the operation of coursework extensions should be set out in the regulations. The following amendments to UPR AS12, Appendix I, section 4 have been approved:

4 Assessment of coursework

4.1 *Students* are:

- a responsible for familiarising themselves with any submission deadlines or penalties and any other requirements associated with the coursework;
- b expected to contact their module lecturers if they are unclear about anything concerning the coursework assessment requirements;
- c required to submit all work for assessment by the deadline that has been stipulated unless an extension of time has been granted, in writing, by the appropriate member of the academic staff *via the process identified in their programme information (see 4.2 below);*
- d responsible for familiarising themselves with the penalties that may be imposed as a result of their having submitted their coursework after the published deadline.

4.2 *Coursework Extensions*

- a *A coursework extension is permission to hand in an assessment after the published hand-in date without either incurring a penalty or waiting to re-take an alternative assessment as a referred or deferred student;*
- b *Coursework extensions are not automatic, permission must be granted. Students must request a coursework extension from the person(s) or via the process identified in their programme information. They must provide an explanation in writing for requesting an extension specifying the number of days required, which may be for up to a maximum of seven (7) calendar days;*
- c *For some assessments, applications for extensions may not be possible, or not possible for the maximum of 7 calendar days, because of the nature of the assessment or its position in the assessment calendar. In such cases this will be made clear to students in the assessment brief / module information.*
- d *Whilst an extension can be requested any time up until the coursework deadline, it is reasonable to expect that it may take up to two (2) working days after receipt of the request to confirm whether or not the request has been accepted;*
- e *For students who have been granted an extension, coursework will be returned to them together with feedback no later than four (4) calendar weeks after the expiry of the maximum extension period available for the particular module, regardless of the period of extension granted or when the work is actually submitted.*

3. Permitted grounds for a request for the review of an assessment decision

This amendment makes the grounds of appeal easier for students to understand. The previous wording was not written in plain English and resulted in many students appealing on all three of the current grounds supported by unstructured text. This then made it difficult to investigate the appeal. No material change to the grounds for appeal is intended, but simply a clearer explanation of the grounds on which a student may appeal. They will be used in the template appeal form completed by students and will enable investigators to understand more easily the basis of a student's appeal. The general principle set down in 5.3.1 is also included in the template appeal form. There is detailed guidance on Ask Herts which includes examples of what type of situation will fall into each of the grounds below. In addition, the appeal template completed by students has been amended to provide guidance/examples on each of the grounds below. The following amendments to UPR AS12, Appendix I, section 5 have been approved:

5.3 General principles *for a request for the review of an assessment decision*

- 5.3.1 Whilst *students* may raise queries about the results of an assessment, the University will not *consider* queries which consist solely of a challenge to the academic judgement of Examiners in assessing the merits of a *student's* work.
- 5.3.2 A Short Course/Module or Programme Board of Examiners (see sections 5.6.1 and 5.6.2) acts under authority delegated to it by the Academic Board and the decision of the Board of Examiners on a referred appeal is final, other than in exceptional circumstances where the Academic Board may decide to exercise its powers in accordance with the provisions of section B5, UPR AS14² (see section 5.8 of this document also).
- 5.3.3 With limited exceptions, all *investigation* materials considered by the Dean of School (or nominee) or the Vice-Chancellor under this policy will be provided to the *student*.

5.4 Permitted grounds for a request for the review of an assessment decision

5.4.1 *Subject to the general principles set out in section 5.3 above*, the grounds on which *students* are permitted to lodge a request for the review of *an assessment* decision are *where evidence exists* that:

- a the assessment procedures were not followed properly;*
- b there has been an administrative error that would affect the outcome of the assessment decision;*
- c the examinations or other assessments were not conducted in accordance with the approved programme regulations;*
- d University and/or programme-specific regulations on progression and awards were not complied with;*
- e relevant information, including information that has already been provided by the student, was overlooked;*
- f there is new evidence that would affect the outcome of the decision that the student was unable, for good reason, to provide earlier in the process;
there is a reasonable perception of bias during the process.*

5.4.2 *Students should note that:*

- i the University will respond only to those matters that fall within the permitted grounds for the request of a review set out above; and*
- ii with the exception of appeals from Exceptional Circumstances claims, the powers of the Dean of School and the Vice-Chancellor are limited to the referral of a case back to a Short Course/Module or Programme Board of Examiners for reconsideration, where they are satisfied that this is a justifiable course of action.*

5.4.3 *Students considering an appeal are advised to consult the information and guidance available on Ask Herts.*

4. Serious Adverse Circumstances

(a) Renaming 'Serious Adverse Circumstances as 'Exceptional Circumstances'

Academic Board has agreed that 'Serious Adverse Circumstances' (SACs) should be renamed Exceptional Circumstances. The phrase 'Serious Adverse Circumstances' is not plain English and has been shortened to 'SACs' in communications, resulting in students not understanding the difference between SACs and Coursework extensions and, importantly, missing the point that an option to defer is not designed to be a way of managing your assessment but only for students with exceptional (and mostly unexpected) challenges.

(b) Responsibilities of Module Boards

Changes to responsibilities of Module and Short Course Boards are to provide greater certainty to students about the outcome of their SAC at the time the application is made but to still enable Module Boards (and ultimately the Dean of School to take some decisions on SACs/ Exceptional Circumstances in the light of local knowledge). The following amendment to UPR AS14, section C3.4 has therefore been approved:

C3.4 Responsibilities of Module Boards and Short Course Boards

The responsibilities of Module Boards and Short Course Boards are:

- i to receive and consider marks and/or grades for the modules and short courses for which the Module Board or Short Course Board has responsibility (in fulfilling this duty, Module Boards and Short Course Boards will consider the comments of External Examiners and the overall average student performance on the module or short course);
- ii in the case of Module Boards, confirm and report to Programme Boards the award of grades for all *students*, in accordance with section D1 'Assessment and Award Regulations' of this document (UPR AS14);
- iii *to receive decisions on Exceptional Circumstances (see section 3.8) that have come to the Module Board via the Exceptional Circumstances team and to determine the appropriate status code. Only Exceptional Circumstances submitted via the submit request function on the Student Portal will be considered. However, where an Exceptional Circumstances application has been accepted by the Exceptional Circumstances team (see section 3.7), the Module Board may apply the decision to other assessments that fall within the relevant timescale but that have not been included by the student in their application.*
- iv *Module Boards and Short Course Boards may only overturn decisions of the Exceptional Circumstances team:*
 - a *if acceptance of an Exceptional Circumstances application is contrary to programme specific assessment regulations; or*
 - b *where the student has provided incorrect information e.g. they have not indicated that they sat /submitted the relevant assessment, or the assessment hand-in dates given are incorrect and so do not align with the dates on evidence provided; or*
 - c *if an administrative error on the part of the Exceptional Circumstances team comes to light (e.g. dates misread).*
- v *where a student has successfully appealed to the Dean of School (or nominee) against a rejection of their application for Exceptional Circumstances, within the permitted grounds of appeal set out in UPR AS12 Appendix 1^J section 5.4, the Module Board must follow the decision and determine and apply the appropriate status code.*

- vi to consider other written communications from staff and/or students relevant to its work which they wish the Board to take into account e.g. issues concerning learning and teaching, errors on an examination paper, disruption caused by fire alarms.*
- vii to *apply* the academic penalties imposed in proven cases of Academic Misconduct (see Appendix III, UPR AS14).
- viii In the case of Module Boards, to monitor

(c) Exceptional circumstances and Exceptional circumstances Team

To ensure the exceptions to the 'fit to sit' operate fairly in a way that protects the interests of our most vulnerable students but also prevents abuse from students relying on the exception(s) months after the assessment date and at a time when they have their results, the following amendments to UPR AS14 sections C3.7 and C3.8 have been made:

C3.7 ~~Serious Adverse Circumstances Assessment Panels~~ Exceptional Circumstances team

- C3.7.1 The *Exceptional Circumstances team* is established under powers delegated by the Academic Board.
- C3.7.2 The *Exceptional Circumstances team* is designed to provide an effective way to achieve consistency of approach and to facilitate the work of Module Boards and Short Course Boards in considering students who require special consideration because of *Exceptional Circumstances*.
- C3.7.3 The *decisions* of the *Exceptional Circumstances team* must be *recorded*. If necessary, an 'in confidence' record, accessible only to the *Team Leader* will be kept to provide justification for the *decision of the team*.

C3.8 ~~Serious Adverse Circumstances~~ Exceptional Circumstances

- C3.8.1 *Exceptional Circumstances* are significant *unforeseen* circumstances beyond a student's control that would have affected their ability to perform to their full potential if they were to sit or submit an assessment at the appointed time.
- C3.8.2 If a student has problems or difficulties significantly affecting performance on their programme of study, they should *consult the online advice and guidance on Ask Herts and* discuss *their concerns* with *either their personal tutor or an academic support officer or their programme leader*.
- C3.8.3 *Exceptional Circumstances significantly* affecting student performance will only be considered by a Module Board or Short Course Board if submitted by the student via *their Student Portal using the submit request function*. The claim(s) must be submitted by the student at the earliest possible time *after the applicable assessment deadline and* within fifteen (15) working days of the assessment deadline, and *at least five (5) working days* before the *applicable* Board of Examiners' meeting. Information and guidance are available to students via the 'Ask Herts' service to explain how to submit a request for *Exceptional Circumstances*. Students may find out the dates of the relevant Module or Short Course Board *via the Ask Herts service*.
- C3.8.4 Students who sit or submit an assessment deem themselves to be sufficiently able to take the assessment and cannot later claim to have suffered *Exceptional Circumstances*.
- C3.8.5 However, the following two circumstances are considered to be exceptions to C3.8.4, above:
 - i where, at the time of sitting or submitting the assessment concerned, the student was not capable of understanding that their performance was likely to be affected seriously by ill health and/or its treatment and this view has the written support *from a psychiatrist or mental health practitioner who has been treating the student. A GP may also give support if they are aware of (a) treatment or referrals to such specialists (b) an incident that may have temporarily affected the student's capacity to take decisions.*

Claims based on exception i must be made *by a student via their Student Portal using the submit request function within fifteen (15) working days of the assessment date*.

or

- ii where a student suddenly becomes unwell during an examination or in-class test and elects to leave without completing the assessment. *Where the assessment is invigilated*, before leaving the examination room, the student must notify the Invigilator *or Proctor* of the *Exceptional Circumstances* which have necessitated their leaving the examination or test.

Claims based on exception ii must be made by a student via their Student Portal using the submit request function by midnight on the calendar day after the on-line assessment. By submitting a claim based on exception ii, a student renders their original attempt null and void.

- C3.8.6 A student's *Exceptional Circumstances application must include* full details and *written* evidence from independent third parties. If the student is concerned about the personal nature of the information or finds it difficult to obtain *evidence* they should consult the Associate Dean of School (Academic Quality Assurance) (or nominee) and/or the Dean of Students prior to submission of the statement.
- C3.8.7 Students can be assured that all statements of *Exceptional Circumstances* will be treated as confidential. Where circumstances are particularly sensitive, students may request that they are disclosed only to *the Exceptional Circumstances team, unless further permission has been sought and granted by the student.*
- C3.8.8 The *acceptance of Exceptional Circumstances* will not necessarily cause the Module Board or Short Course Board to come to a different decision.

(d) Exception to 'Fit-to-Sit'

Currently, only a doctor, psychiatric nurse or mental health practitioner can evidence that a student was not capable of understanding that their performance was likely to be affected seriously by ill health and/or its treatment at the time of submitting or sitting and assessment. However, the term 'psychiatric nurse' is no longer in use. The following amendment to UPR AS14, section C3.8 has therefore been approved:

C3.8 ~~Serious Adverse Circumstances~~ *Exceptional Circumstances*

C3.8.4 However, the following two circumstances are considered to be exceptions to C3.8.3, above:

- i where, at the time of sitting or submitting the assessment concerned, the student was not capable of understanding that their performance was likely to be affected seriously by ill health and/or its treatment and this view has the written support of a doctor, ~~psychiatric nurse~~ or mental health practitioner; or
- ii where a student suddenly becomes unwell during an examination or in-class test and elects to leave without completing the assessment. In these circumstances, before leaving the examination room, the student must notify the Invigilator of the *Exceptional Circumstances* which have necessitated their leaving the examination or test.

Claims based on