

Amendments to UPR AS14 (Structure and Assessment Regulations - Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes) for 2022/23

This paper summarises the proposed amendments to UPR AS14 for the 2022/23 academic year.

1. Study rates for taught programmes

UPR AS14 outlines normal and maximum study rates within an academic year. However, there is no specified minimum requirement for full time study in the academic regulations, below which a student is classed as part-time. The current wording of limits is also unclear. The following amendments to UPR AS14, section A4 have therefore been approved:

A4 ~~Normal and maximum~~ Study rates within an academic year

(NOTE

- 5 One credit represents 10 notional hours of learning. This includes not only formal contact hours, but also preparation for these, private reading and study, and the completion of formative assessment tasks and revision.)

A4.1 ~~Normal study rate – full-time undergraduate~~ Minimum, normal and maximum study rates

The normal rate of full-time study is **120** credit points per two (2) semester academic year and **180** credit points per three (3) semester academic year.

The table below shows the minimum and maximum study rate for full-time and part-time students:

	<i>Part-time study rates (credits)</i>	<i>Minimum full-time study rates (credits)</i>	<i>Normal full-time study rate (credits)</i>	<i>Maximum full-time study rate (credits)</i>
<i>1 Semester</i>	<i>15 - 30</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>75</i>
<i>2 Semesters</i>	<i>30 - 75</i>	<i>90</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>150</i>
<i>3 Semesters</i>	<i>30 - 105</i>	<i>120</i>	<i>180</i>	<i>210</i>

Compulsory zero (0) credit-rated placement activity contributes to these credit requirements through the hours of placement required (i.e. each 150 hours of placement contributes the equivalent of 15 credits).

Any programme exemptions will require the prior written consent of the Director of Academic Quality Assurance (or Deputy).

A4.2 ~~Maximum~~ Study rates for individual students

Programme Boards of Examiners have the authority to restrict or counsel students to reduce their study rate on any programme of study. Individual students may be permitted to reduce their study rate or pattern of study, subject to availability of modules.

2. 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

3. 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. It is proposed that the following arrangements continue to apply for the 2022/23 academic session:

- D6.3 **Recommendation for an Honours classification**
and
D7.2 **Criteria for conferring University awards 'with Distinction' or 'with Commendation'**

(NOTE:

23/24 University regulations allow for up to 30 credits of failed modules (at any academic level) to be compensated by the programme board, with the classification grade being reduced by 2.5 for each 15 credits compensated. During the Covid-19 pandemic, programme boards are instructed to compensate within existing limits and not apply the penalty to the classification grade. However, where there is a proven case of academic misconduct at stage 2 or stage 3, as defined in UPR AS14 Appendix III¹, in the failed module, the compensation penalty should be applied.)

It is proposed that the following (temporary) amendments should be withdrawn for the 2022/23 academic session:

- 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.)~~

NB. As an exception, Programme Boards can apply the either/or classification for this year only to students who studied level 5 in 2020/21, if it benefits the student. However, there is no Academic Registry support to identify such students or calculate their alternative classifications. The programme board will need to do that itself.

4. Apprenticeship Provision - End Point Assessment Policy

AS14, Appendix IV has been updated to reflect sector language changes, internal University language changes and changes in organisational and governance structures and processes.