Assessment Regulations for Postgraduate Taught Programmes

Issued by the Standards and Enhancement Office
2021-22 Edition

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Technical updates of this document are undertaken on an annual basis to reflect changes to the University's organisational and management structures and to incorporate earlier, approved amendments to related policies, procedures and regulations

This document relates to the current year. If you become aware of any previous versions that are available on line please notify SEO@bolton.ac.uk so that action can be taken to remove the document(s).

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Scope

These regulations apply to:

a) Students whose programme of study commenced in 2015/16 or subsequent academic years; and
b) Students whose programme of study commenced in previous academic years, but who have experienced an interruption to study or who failed to proceed to their next level of study.

For all students whose programme of study commenced before September 2018-19, progression decisions made on the previous academic session of 2017-18 shall stand. For all progression decisions made thereafter, these regulations shall be used.

Applicability of the Regulations

These assessment regulations apply to all taught postgraduate programmes, including any constituent pathways and modules, which lead to a University of Bolton award at levels 7 and 8 of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) published by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA).

Definitions

The following definitions are used in these regulations:

Academic year: A defined period, normally lasting twelve months, in which the delivery of a level of study, or a portion thereof, is undertaken.

Award: Any formal qualification awarded by the University to an individual student which may be either an end qualification or an exit award

Assessment Board: A committee to agree final student marks, determine progression and award of an exit award or end qualification as outlined in The Regulations for the Organisation and Conduct of Assessment Boards.

Assessment component: An assessment component is one of the assessment items on a module from which the final mark/outcome for the module is derived. This process is commonly referred to as summative assessment. Formative assessments (assessments which do not count towards the formal outcome of the module) are not considered to be assessment components for the purpose of these regulations.

End qualification: The target qualification for which the student is enrolled or registered.

Exit award: The highest level of award which a student achieves who has not successfully completed the end qualification.

Proceed: where an undergraduate student without 120 credits at one academic level is, as a result of the decision of the Assessment Board, allowed to start to study at the next academic level.

Programme of study: A collection of modules grouped under a specific title, the details of which have been approved by Senate as leading to an appropriate end qualification and/or exit awards. A programme can also be known as a course.

Progress: Where a postgraduate student gains the full number of credits required to complete an academic stage, is deemed to have completed that stage and may start to study the next academic stage.

PSRB: A Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body. This includes, but is not limited to, accrediting bodies and statutory bodies that deal with legal requirements and immigration.

Senate: Any reference to Senate in these regulations shall be deemed to include a reference to any committee of Senate to which Senate has delegated the relevant authority.

Stage: an amount of academic study and credit that normally corresponds to a phase of the programme as outlined in the Programme Specification.

1. Course Regulations

1.1 There shall be course regulations in a form approved by Senate and incorporated into the programme specification. In course regulations, any deviation from, or modification to these regulations in respect of any programme shall require the approval of Senate.

2. Modules

2.1 Throughout all postgraduate programmes one credit is associated with ten hours of notional learning time. The distribution of the total notional learning time for a module will be part of the module specification approved at the time of validation.

2.2 Normally, full time students will not be permitted to study with attendance for more than 75 credits in one semester, and part time students no more than 60 in an academic year, unless this has been approved by the relevant Programme Leader and Assessment Board.

2.3 Where a module is defined, atypically, as a pre-requisite module in the relevant programmes specification, students must normally pass such a module before being allowed to proceed to take any linked further module(s). Exceptions may be allowed at the discretion of the Assessment Board, on the advice of the tutor(s) for the linked further module(s).

2.4 Credit-bearing modules shall be designated as FHEQ Level 7 or Level 8 and sometimes Level 6 as defined in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ).

2.5 Modules may be designated as Core (compulsory) or Optional within a programme.

2.6 A student may normally only withdraw from a module within the first two weeks of the module commencing and with the approval of the module tutor and programme leader. A student will normally be required to take an alternate module for the appropriate number of credits and at the appropriate level of study, unless the student has withdrawn from the programme or suspended their studies. Withdrawal without permission and/or beyond this point without good reason will be recorded at an Assessment Board as a failure in the module (including any project or dissertation module).

3. Structure of University Postgraduate Taught Awards

3.1 A programme of study leading to a Postgraduate Certificate shall consist of a minimum of 60 credits including a minimum of 40 credits at FHEQ Level 7 and a maximum of 20 credits at no lower than FHEQ Level 6.

3.2 A programme of study leading to a Postgraduate Diploma shall consist of a minimum of 120 credits including a minimum of 90 credits at FHEQ Level 7 and a maximum of 30 credits at no lower than FHEQ Level 6.

3.3 A programme of study leading to a Master's Degree shall consist of modules and a dissertation or project together worth a minimum of 180 credits including a minimum of 150 credits at FHEQ Level 7 and a maximum of 30 credits at no lower than FHEQ Level 6 and including a significant element of advanced independent study in the form of a dissertation or project worth between 30 and 60 credits at FHEQ Level 7.

3.4 A programme of study leading to an Advanced Diploma (of Continuing Professional Development) shall consist of credits as defined in the validated programme documentation the level of which shall be predominantly FHEQ Level 7.

3.5 A programme of study leading to a Postgraduate Continuing Professional Development Certificate shall consist of a minimum of 20 credits as defined in the validated programme documentation, the level of which shall be predominantly FHEQ Level 7.

4. Variations to Programmes of Study

4.1 Students may substitute studies undertaken at other providers of higher education for Bolton-based modules where such studies constitute part of an exchange scheme or formal credit transfer or recognition agreement, the terms and conditions of which have been approved by Senate.

4.2 No student may undertake modules outside of his/her approved programme without the prior approval of the Academic Registrar.

5. Duration of Study

5.1 The normal planned duration of the Postgraduate Certificate programme is 15 weeks of full-time study (or its part-time equivalent).

5.2 The normal planned duration of the Postgraduate Diploma programme is 30 weeks of full-time study (or its part-time equivalent).

5.3 The normal planned duration of the Master's Degree programme is 48 weeks of full-time study (or its part-time equivalent).

5.4 The maximum period of registration is normally approximately twice the planned duration for the Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma and the Master's Degree. The maximum period of registration will normally include any sabbatical periods taken out by a student. The Academic Registrar, may, having regard for the standard of the award and the course objectives and regulations, and on the advice of the Chair of the Assessment Board, use discretion to extend a student's registration period.

5.5 Where a PSRB requires that the maximum period of registration shall be different than that defined in these regulations, the requirement of the PSRB shall apply. Students shall be informed where the maximum period of registration is shorter than that outlined in 5.4

6. Assessment

6.1 Assessment Boards will accept the forms of assessment which are approved for the programmes and modules and which are specified in the relevant programme and/or module specifications as approved by Senate.

6.2 The method of assessment for each module, including the weighting for each element of the assessment, shall be notified to students.

6.3 In exceptional circumstances, with the approval of the Chair of the relevant Assessment Board, an alternative form of assessment to that outlined in the approved programme documentation, which covers the same Learning Outcomes, may be

approved for students with individual need. This shall be supported by appropriate evidence and adjustments shall be reasonable and ones that can be made without endangering the safety of the award or unduly providing any student with an advantage or disadvantage.

6.4 The minimum mark for a pass in each module shall be 50%. Where a student satisfies the examiners in a module, s/he shall be awarded the appropriate credits at the specified level. This shall normally be calculated through a simple weighted mean of the assessment components, so long as an attempt has been made in each component. Where a PSRB requires a pass mark in each component, this shall be recorded in the relevant modules specification and notified to students.

6.5 A student who passes a module in which he/she has previously failed, shall be credited with the minimum mark for a pass at module level unless capping at the component level enables a better overall outcome for the student. This will not be the case where the assessment regulations for the programme explicitly specify otherwise.

6.6 A student shall normally be permitted one attempt to redeem unsatisfactory performance in a module.

6.7 Normally, only University of Bolton modules may be used to calculate the classification of an award. Where a student has previously obtained a University (of Bolton) exit award or end qualification, the marks for modules from that previous qualification cannot be used to calculate the classification of a further University (of Bolton) end qualification, unless the student agrees to surrender their previous qualification, to avoid double counting of module marks.

6.8 Where a programme of study includes one or more periods of industrial/professional training or periods of study/work experience either in the UK or abroad, the student's performance may also be assessed in these periods and may contribute to the final assessment. Such periods shall be detailed in the relevant programme specification.

6.9 A student who has been awarded credit in a module shall not be permitted to be reassessed in that module with a view to improving his/her mark.

6.10 If students (by reasons of absence, non-submission of work, or poor performance) do not satisfy an Assessment Board in assessment components for any module(s) and it is established to the satisfaction of the Assessment Board via the University's Mitigating Circumstances Regulations and Procedures that this was due to proven illness or other circumstances found valid on production of evidence, then the Board shall use its discretion to ensure that the students are not disadvantaged or advantaged as a result.

<u>Extensions</u>

6.11 In cases of illness or other extenuating circumstances, programme leaders (or equivalent) may allow assessments to be submitted late without penalty, following the submission of a completed extension form and relevant evidence. Such cases shall then be monitored by the Head of School or equivalent. The maximum extension to be granted under these circumstances is fourteen calendar days with the exception of extensions for individual projects and artifacts which, at the discretion of the Programme Leader, may be longer than 14 days. Any request for an extension to a submission deadline must normally be made by the student, to the Module Tutor before the original submission date.

6.12 Requests for extensions for periods longer than 14 calendar days must be made using the Universities Mitigating Circumstances Regulations and Procedures.

6.13 Students who fail to submit assessments by the prescribed date, or the revised date, as outlines in 6.11 and 6.12 shall be subject to the following penalties:

Up to 7 calendar days late	= 10 marks subtracted but if the assignment would normally gain a pass mark, then the final mark to be on lower than the pass mark for the assignment;
More than 7 calendar days late	= This will be counted as non-submission and no marks will be recorded.

6.14 All assessed work should be submitted as specified in the Student Handbook, Module Guide or equivalent. Coursework not submitted will be recorded as unsatisfactory.

6.15 Where assessments are graded Pass/Fail only, they will not be accepted beyond the deadline date for submission and will be recorded as a Fail. Students may request an extension to the original published deadline dates as described above.

Word Limits

6.16 Any relevant word limit for an assessment component shall be specified in the assessment brief. Students shall be informed in the programme handbook of any penalties to be applied if they exceed the specified word limit in a written assessment. This limit shall not include rubric associated with tables, figures, diagrams or appendices and reference lists at the end of the assessment but will include any direct quotations.

6.17 Where a word limit is specified for a written assessment, students shall include the number of words at the end of the assessment.

6.18 Students who exceed a specified word limit for a written assessment shall be subject to the following penalty system.

Up to 10% over the specified **word length** = no penalty

10 – 20% over the specified indicative word length = 5 marks subtracted but if the assessment would normally gain a pass mark, then the final mark to be no lower than the pass mark for the assessment.

More than 20% over the indicative word length = if the assessment would normally gain a pass mark, then the final mark to be the pass mark for the assessment.

7. Engagement

7.1 Students must attend the scheduled learning and teaching events for each module. In respect of students pursuing a programme of study by distance learning, this shall include scheduled activities and interactions.

7.2 Students shall be required to submit and/or attend each assessment component at the dates and times prescribed. Failure to submit in an assessment component without good reason shall result in the student being deemed unsatisfactory in the particular module and a mark of 0 will be recorded.

7.3 Attendance shall be recorded for all elements of a programme of study. Students with poor attendance shall be reported to the relevant personal tutor for action who will pursue this in line with University and/or PSRB policy.

7.4 Students who fail to give formal notice in writing of their intention to withdraw from their programme or its elements and who do not complete assessments will normally be deemed to have failed the programme or its specific elements.

7.5 Students must formally request permissions from their Head of School in writing if they wish temporarily to suspend their studies.

8. Determination of results and action to be taken

8.1 The relevant Assessment Board shall determine for a Postgraduate Certificate:

i. The students marks for each module; and that
ii. The student has achieved at least 60 credits of which a minimum of 40 credits are at FHEQ Level 7 and a maximum of 20 credits are at FHEQ Level 6 and can therefore be awarded the end qualification of Postgraduate Certificate, and with what classification if any; or
iii. The student not be awarded a qualification and be deemed to have completed their studies.

8.2 The relevant Assessment Board shall determine for a Postgraduate Diploma:

i. The students marks for each module; and that
ii. The student has achieved at least 120 credits of which a minimum of 90 credits are at FHEQ Level 7 and a maximum of 30 credits are at FHEQ Level 6 and can therefore be awarded the end qualification of Postgraduate Diploma and with what classification if any; or
iii. The student not be awarded the end qualification; and/or
iv. The student be awarded an intermediate qualification and be deemed to have completed their studies; or
v. The student not be awarded a qualification and be deemed to have completed their studies.

8.3 The relevant Assessment Board shall determine for a Master's Degree:

i. The students marks for each module; and that
ii. The student has achieved at least 180 credits consisting of modules and a dissertation or project and of which a minimum of 150 credits are at FHEQ Level 7 and a maximum of 30 credits are at FHEQ Level 6 and can therefore be awarded the end qualification of a Master's Degree and with what classification if any; or
iii. The student not be awarded the end qualification; and/or
iv. The student be awarded an intermediate qualification and be deemed to have completed their studies; or
v. The student not be awarded a qualification and be deemed to have completed their studies.

8.4 A student shall only be permitted to continue to pursue a programme of study provided that it remains possible for him/her to complete the programme within the approved time-limit. In addition:

i. A student who has failed one or more modules within a programme may be offered a second, final attempt. If the student fails to satisfy the examiners then the student shall be deemed to have failed and finished the programme.

8.5 The relevant Assessment Board shall determine whether a student who has not been recommended for the award of the end qualifications and is not deemed to have completed their studies be required either to: repeat the year with part time attendance or reassessment only, in which case the student will retain the credits for each passed module and retrieve each failed module by undertaking one of the following:

a. Re-assessment in the failed module(s) at the next opportunity (a 'refer' decision); or
b. Re-assessment in the failed module(s) without attendance on the module(s) during the following session (a 'refer' decision); or
c. Re-assessment in the failed module(s) with attendance on the module(s) during the following session (a 'repeat' decision).

8.6 An Assessment Board may decide that a student's profile of module results may be amended by the following process prior to arriving at one of the decisions above;

Compensation:

i. To decide that satisfactory overall performance (including attendance and conduct where appropriate) can compensate for unsatisfactory performance in a module with an aggregate mark normally no lower than 45 percent in any assessment component such that the positive aspects of the overall performance outweigh the area of unsatisfactory performance. The mark is not adjusted and a pass is recorded and credit awarded with a note that compensation has been applied. This is discretionary and will not be utilised where the module is deemed to be essential to the fulfilment of the learning outcomes for the programme nor where there is evidence that no serious attempt has been made to fulfil the assessment requirements or where PSRB requirements deem that this may not be used. A maximum of modules worth one quarter of the total credits constituting a particular Stage of a student's programme may be compensated.

8.7 Course regulations may specify modules to which the provisions of 8.6 shall not apply.

9. Structure and content of re-assessment

9.1 Where a student is required to be re-assessed in one or more assessment components, the re-assessment shall be of the same structure as the assessment at the time of the initial failure, unless:

i. An alternative form of re-assessment has been approved for the purpose in which case this shall be stated in the relevant module specification and/or Module Guide; or
ii. The relevant Assessment Board decides that this is not practical.

Re-assessment shall be based upon the same syllabus as the original assessment.

9.2 For re-assessment beyond one year of the initial failure, where the structure of the assessment is different from that at the time of the initial failure and/or the re-assessment is to be based upon a different syllabus, the Head of School concerned shall make arrangements for the student to be:

i. Informed of changes in the structure of the assessment and the syllabus content; and
ii. Offered, for an appropriate fee, the opportunity of attending relevant classes.

10. Award

10.1 Students will only be eligible for any particular award defined below if it is defined as available within their programme specification; each award will only be issued under the circumstances defined in the Academic Regulations on the Awards of the University.

10.2 To qualify for an award, a candidate must:

i. have enrolled with the University before proceeding to the prescribed programme of study; and
ii. have paid all prescribed fees and charges; and
iii. in accordance with 11.2, 11.3, 11.4 and 11.5 below have satisfactorily completed a full-time or part-time programme of study, within the maximum period of time defined above.

10.3 A student who has satisfied the examiners in at least 60 credits at FHEQ Level 7 or higher, in accordance with 3.1 above, shall be eligible for the award of a Postgraduate Certificate which is an unclassified award.

10.4 A student who has satisfied the examiners in at least 120 credits at FHEQ Level 7 or higher, in accordance with 3.2 above, shall be eligible for the award of a Postgraduate Diploma which is an unclassified award.

10.5 A student who has satisfied the examiners in at least 180 credits at FHEQ Level 7 or higher, in accordance with 3.3 above, shall, where he or she satisfies the requirements of the classification scheme as approved by Senate (cf. 11. below) Senate be recommended to Senate for the award of a Master's Degree.

10.6 Students who register for certain end qualifications may be required by the course regulations to satisfy the Assessment Board in all those modules identified as requirements for the purposes of professional exemption.

10.7 Unless otherwise agreed by Senate in respect of specific courses, no student may receive more than one award for study on a course.

11. Classification

11.1 The following scheme shall be used for the classification of Master's Degrees and Postgraduate Certificates in Education:

Grade	**Mark**
Distinction	70%-100%
Merit	60-69%
Pass	50-59%

11.2 Where the average falls into one of the following bands: 58.00- 59.49 or 68.00-69.49; and a student has achieved marks clearly in a classification category higher than their average for the majority of their modules, then they shall be awarded a qualification in the classification category one higher than that indicated by their average.

11.3 Where the average falls into one of the following bands: 59.50- 59.99 or 69.50- 69.99 then a student shall automatically be awarded a degree in the classification category one higher than that indicated by their average.

11.4 The exit awards of Postgraduate Certificate and Postgraduate Diploma shall not be graded unless Senate agrees otherwise for any specific programme.

12 Equality Impact Assessment

12.1 The University of Bolton is committed to the promotion of equality, diversity and a supportive environment for all members of our community. Our commitment to equality and diversity means that this document has been screened in relation to the use of plain English, the promotion of the positive duty in relation to race, gender and disability and avoidance of discrimination to other equality groups related to age, sexual orientation, religion or belief or gender reassignment.

13 Other Related Policies

13.1 Other relevant regulations/policies are given on the Student Policy Zone

14 Monitoring and Review

14.1 These regulations will be monitored by the Standards and Enhancement Office.

14.2 The regulations will be reviewed every three years.

15 Dissemination of and Access to the Policy

15.1 These regulations will be available on the University's website (Student Policy Zone).

ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS FOR POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES	
Policy ref: SEO/1	
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Name of Developer/Reviewer	Academic Registrar
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Approving committee/board	Senate
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Reviewing committee	Senate
Consultation history (individuals/group consulted and dates)	Drafts of the regulation have been considered by: Education Committee Senate Academic Coordinators SEO
Document history (e.g. rationale for and dates of previous amendments)	This was an update of the previous iteration of the postgraduate regulations and follows the layout of the revised undergraduate regulations from 2014. Changes to extensions added December 2015. New qualification added May 2016. The October 2018 version incorporates clarification of language, updating of role titles and arrangements for compensation and the classification of qualifications. August 2019 version updates the regulations for compensation.