

COVID-19:

Progression and classification in taught postgraduate programmes in 2020/21 for students who studied on a part-time basis in 2019/20

Note: this document has been superseded [by temporary regulations for classification in 2020/21](#), specifically the inclusion of units in the safety net from 2019/20 and the classification method, as indicated by track changes in section 9 and 12.

Progression in 2020/21

This covers progression from the taught component to the dissertation stage in taught postgraduate programmes in 2020/21 for students who studied part-time in 2019/20. It is based on the premise that teaching and assessment in teaching block 2 in 2019/20 was impacted by COVID-19 but that mitigations were primarily applied at the time. This does not cover progression of PGR students from a taught component to their doctoral thesis. Separate rules will apply to programmes in Law and may for those individual programmes that have existing specific regulations that cover progression. The footnotes are guidance on implementation of these regulations.

1. The normal regulations for progression from the taught component will apply (i.e. by achieving 120 credit points), including the ability for the exam board to apply a compensation rule at the first or the second attempt in order to award credit for marginally failed taught units to permit progression, with the following temporary amendments.
2. The temporary regulations for taught postgraduate programmes in 2019/20 will apply to the assessment and re-assessment of units from teaching block 2¹ in 2019/20.
3. The exam board may² award credit for units in teaching block 2 from 2019/20 for the purposes of progression that have not been passed by the time of the board where the student has:
 - i. achieved a pass overall in assessment*,
 - ii. demonstrated the programme learning outcomes (e.g. by passing must-pass units, units that have professional accreditation requirements or any units from teaching block 1 where assessment was missed due to self-certified absence); and,
 - iii. achieved at least 60 credit points.

* A 'pass overall' means that a student achieves a taught component mark, as calculated per the normal regulations, of at least 50 out of 100 in assessment set by the programme.

4. Where a student is unable to progress under (6) at the progress exam board, they will be required to undertake any assessment they have missed or failed - as a first attempt if missed and a second attempt if failed.
5. A student may be permitted three attempts to meet the standard for the award of credit points for units in TB2 from 2019/20. Second attempt unit marks for these units will be uncapped and third attempt unit marks will be capped at the pass mark.

¹ Units that ran in teaching block 2 (i.e. TB2 and TB4 units)

² This clause gives discretion to the exam board (rather than automatic application) to award credit for units from the affected period in 2019/20 given the likely differential impact between individual students who study part-time

6. Students will normally be permitted to start their dissertation stage even if they have not completed assessment from the taught component. An exam board will confirm progression once the taught component has been passed.

Classification in 2020/21 or a subsequent year

This covers the classification of taught postgraduate degrees in the academic year 2020/21 for part-time students who studied in 2019/20. It is based on the premise that teaching and assessment in teaching block 2 in 2019/20 was impacted by COVID-19 but that mitigations were primarily applied at the time. Separate rules will apply to programmes in Law and may for those individual programmes that have existing specific regulations that cover classification. The footnotes are guidance on implementation of these regulations.

7. The normal regulations for classification in PGT programmes will apply, with the following temporary amendments.
8. Schools will determine how to calculate unit marks from TB2 in 2019/20³, as per the temporary regulations for 2019/20.

Safety net

9. A programme that includes part-time study may have established a quantitative safety net in consultation with the School and Faculty. The safety net will normally include:
 - a. all complete units that contribute to classification in the 2019/20 academic year (~~including those that will be completed in the 2020/21 academic year and subsequently~~) with marks unaffected by COVID-19; exceptions to this principle must be approved by the Faculty Education Director, and
 - b. any other units specified by Schools.
10. The composition of the safety net applies to all students in the programme cohort and should be decided on the basis of the assessment and units taken rather than on the individual marks achieved.
11. The value of the 'safety net mark' is calculated as the average of the marks from the units included within the safety net; each unit is weighted to give an equivalence to its normal weighting in the degree.
12. Where an assessment was taken and failed before 27th March 2020 in the 2019/20 academic year marks achieved from the re-sit (second attempt) will not alter the safety net mark⁴.
13. Any supplementary attempts at assessment taken prior to 27th March 2020 in the 2019/20 academic year will contribute to the completed programme mark but not the safety net mark⁵.
14. Where an individual student's mark for a unit included in the safety net is affected, Boards will consider this impact at the point of classification.
15. Boards of Examiners will apply the University's normal regulations on academic misconduct before they calculate the safety net mark for each student.

Classification

- ~~16. Where a programme has established a quantitative safety net for the taught component, the Exam Board will compare the taught component mark and the safety net mark (as above) for~~

³ Units that ran in teaching block 2 (i.e. TB2 and TB4 units)

⁴ The mark from the failed unit will be included in the safety net

⁵ A mark of zero will be included in the safety net where there is no unit mark due to deferred assessment

each candidate and the higher of the two will be used in combination with the dissertation mark for classification.

17. Where a programme has not established a quantitative safety net for the taught component, the Exam Board should first consider the student's taught marks profile to determine if there has been any detrimental change to their taught component outcome due to missing or affected marks in units impacted by COVID-19 or any other accepted extenuating circumstance. If the exam board judges that the impact of the missed or affected unit marks has brought the student's taught component mark to below the threshold for the classification of either merit or distinction, it has discretion to adjust the outcome of the taught component so as to enable the award of the higher classification in the event that the research component also meets the required standard for that classification. It should also ensure that any penalties resulting from the application of the University's regulations on academic misconduct are appropriately reflected in the classification.

*Approved by the Vice-Chancellor
19 August 2020*

Updated 26 May 2021