

XI Regulations for Research Masters Degree Programmes (excluding MPhil programmes)

These regulations shall be understood in conjunction with requirements laid down in the General Regulations and the Examination Conventions of the University, and shall be read together with any examination conventions specific to the relevant programme, as approved by the relevant faculty graduate school committee.

Compensation

Students who started their programme before 2014/15 shall be eligible for compensation under the 2013/14 examination conventions, but there is no compensation available for students who started their award in 2014/15 or later.

A. Definitions

1. These regulations shall apply to full-time and part-time research Masters' degree programmes, excluding MPhil programmes. Where the following terms appear they are to be given the meanings assigned below:

- a) **Assessment:** A generic term for a set of processes that measure the students' achievement of the intended learning outcomes in terms of knowledge acquired, understanding developed, skills gained and attributes demonstrated. These assessments may include for example, written, aural and oral examinations, essays, poster or professional skills assessment, , other course work, dissertations and practical activity;
- b) **Class of award:** a means of distinguishing between the differences in achievement by individual students of the intended learning outcomes for a programme. The classification of a postgraduate award, i.e. Pass, Pass with Merit or Pass with Distinction as defined in the *University Common Scale* for returning marks;
- c) **Compulsory module:** a module which a student is required to study;
- d) **Condoned fail:** a decision that a Level 7 module has been failed at the first attempt with a mark in the range 40 – 49, but that a pass on resit is not required in order to maintain eligibility for a Merit or Distinction on a classified programme;
- e) **Core module:** a module which students must pass, and in which a fail mark may not be compensated; such modules are designated by the board of studies as essential;
- f) **Credit:** A quantitative measure of learning effort. The size of a module, measured by reference to student learning time so that for every 10 credits a student is expected to spend 100 hours in a combination of programmed activities, private study, or assessment. Credit is normally awarded for the achievement of a set of specified intended learning outcomes;
- g) **Degree programme director:** a member of the University who is responsible for the day-to-day management of a degree programme;

- h) **Dissertation:** an exercise in research or scholarship forming part of the programme of study for which the student is registered;
- i) **Exit award:** an exit award may be recommended by the Board where a student does not satisfy the requirements of the award for which s/he is registered, but does meet the requirements of an award at the same level, but requiring fewer credits e.g. a Research Masters' student who is not recommended for a Masters' award, but is recommended for a PG Certificate or a PG Diploma.
- j) **Module:** A discrete component of a programme of study having stated intended learning outcomes, teaching and learning opportunities designed to achieve those outcomes and assessment tasks designed to enable students to demonstrate achievement of the outcomes. Each module has a credit value specified by the programme regulations;
- k) **Non-modular aggregated assessment:** assessment additional to the assessments for each module, having the purpose of assessing a student's cross-modular understanding; *Note: all references in these regulations to assessment shall be construed to include both module assessment and non-modular aggregated assessment.*
- l) **Postgraduate academic year:** the period running from the first day of the first semester to two weeks before the start of the following academic year (September to September);
- m) **Postgraduate Certificate:** a programme comprising 60 credits in line with the University's *Qualifications and Credit Framework*;
- n) **Postgraduate Diploma:** a programme comprising 120 credits in line with the University's *Qualifications and Credit Framework*;
- o) **Research Masters Degree programme:** a tailor made programme that reflects specific research themes and aims incorporating research preparation. A programme comprising at least 180 credits of which at least 80 credits will be dedicated to the research project/ dissertation, as outlined in the University's *Qualifications and Credit Framework*;
- p) **Stage:** a sub-division of a programme, for example into a taught element and a dissertation element, which, if present in a programme, must be clearly defined in the individual programme regulations. Where such stages are defined, the requirements relating to progression from one stage to the next must be stated in the programme regulations;
- q) **Taught element:** any part of a Masters degree programme other than the dissertation.
- r) **University Common Scale:** The scale for the return of marks as set out in *Undergraduate Examination Conventions* and *Postgraduate (Taught) Examination Conventions*. The scale defines the range of marks to be given to represent degree classifications, and is designed to ensure consistency and fairness to students;

B. Masters Degree Entrance Requirements

2. An applicant may be approved for admission as a candidate for a Masters degree by the relevant degree programme director where the applicant:

- a) is a graduate of this or another approved University or degree-awarding body or holds other qualifications approved by the relevant dean of postgraduate studies; *and*
- b) satisfies such additional requirements for admission as may be set out in the relevant programme regulations or otherwise published by the University and approved by the relevant dean of postgraduate studies.

C. Preconditions to the Award of a Masters Degree

3. Before being awarded a Masters degree, or the appropriate exit award, a student must:

- a) register for and make satisfactory progress in the relevant full-time or part-time programme of study as prescribed by the programme regulations; *and*
- b) satisfy the examiners under the relevant programme regulations;
- c) where there are programme specific regulations which define progress leading to the dissertation element of the programme, satisfy these conditions before progressing.

D. Patterns of Study

4. Degree programme directors have discretion to permit a student to commence the programme at the start of Semester 2 and complete the programme in the following academic year.

5. At the discretion of degree programme directors, a student may be permitted to transfer from full-time to part-time study (and vice versa). This is subject to specific arrangements being agreed by the degree programme director to accommodate the part-time study pattern and should be reported to the board of studies and graduate school administrator. This is also subject to the student having appropriate immigration status. For international students, advice should be sought from the Visa Team <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/visa/>

6. Degree programme directors may permit a student to transfer programme during the academic year where programmes are in the same subject area and where there is considerable overlap in the taught modules. Such transfers shall be reported to the board of studies and graduate school committee.

Note: All transfer arrangements are subject to the student having the appropriate immigration status; evidence of appropriate academic qualifications is required by the Home Office and a transfer to another degree programme may affect the validity of the visas of international students. Further advice should be sought from the Visa Team in any case involving an international student <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/visa/>

7. Degree programme directors may permit a student to select modules in substitution for modules specified in the programme regulations. Such permission shall not override the provisions of *General Regulation C* (registration of module choice). All such variations shall be reported to the board of studies.

8. No student may be permitted to select modules of more than 70 credits in either semester one or semester two.

9. No student may be permitted to register for a module that is a substitution for a module previously studied.

E. Attendance and Progress

Length of Study

10. A full-time student on a Masters programme is normally expected to complete the programme in 1 year and a part-time student on a Masters programme is normally expected to complete the programme in 2 years.

11. Where there are no programme-specific regulations regarding length of study, the maximum time for a part-time student to complete is 4 years.

Satisfactory Progress

12. The student is required to make satisfactory progress in the relevant programme of study and, during each semester, the student's progress shall be reviewed in all modules by the degree programme director.

13. Failure to make satisfactory progress may be grounds for:

- a) further monitoring the progress of the student or requiring the submission of written work in addition to that required by the programme regulations;
- b) delay of the student's attempt at the whole assessment for the module(s) concerned to the August/September resit examinations in the same academic year. Where such a delay is imposed, the student's attempt shall be the second attempt;
- c) interruption or termination of the student's programme of study.

Evidence of Failure to make Satisfactory Progress

14. Any of the following may constitute failure to make satisfactory progress and all may be taken into account in considering the student's case: failure to attend for interview with the tutor, or other academic staff, as required.

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/ltds/assets/documents/gsh-personaltutoring-fwk.pdf>

- a) failure to attend for interview with the personal tutor, DPD or other academic staff as required in connection with failure to attend programme of study or failure to make satisfactory progress.
- b) failure to attend regularly the programme of study without good cause (see *General Regulation A4*);
- c) failure to perform adequately, or satisfy the examiners, in work prescribed for the programme of study;
- d) failure to submit at the required time written work prescribed for the taught programme of study (whether or not such work counts for assessment purposes);
- e) failure to attend examinations or to satisfy the examiners in the examinations prescribed under the programme regulations; in serious cases provisional examination results may be used as such evidence;
- f) failure to attend as required for dissertation supervision, failure to submit evidence of progress as required by the dissertation supervisor or to submit the dissertation by the date stipulated.

- g) failure to attend English language assessment and attend in-session English language classes as directed by the degree programme director
- h) failure to attend briefings relating to health and safety, especially as they apply to laboratory work, and to pass any assessments in relation to these briefings that are designed to ensure that students are safe to operate in the environment to which such briefings apply.

For an international student who is in breach of their visa conditions, please refer to General Regulations U72.

Students are expected to acquaint themselves with the attendance and submission requirements for lectures, seminars, tutorials, practicals, laboratory work, language classes, performances, fieldwork and examinations as well as with dissertation supervisions for their programme of study.

Note: Where a student has failed to attend or failed to complete satisfactorily an INTO pre-session programme, General Regulation D17 will apply.

Procedure for Dealing with Unsatisfactory Progress

15. A student whose progress is considered unsatisfactory by the degree programme director shall be notified in writing of the reasons for this opinion, invited to make a written response and given the opportunity of an interview with the director or nominee. Following this notice and any interview, and taking account of all known circumstances, the degree programme director may:

- a) take further action under regulation E13 (a) or (b);
- b) take further action under regulation E13 (c) with the approval of the appropriate dean of postgraduate studies.

Appeals against Penalties for Unsatisfactory Progress

16. A student appealing against action taken under regulation E13 may do so by submitting a Level 1 Academic Query within 14 calendar days of the written notification of the action. The Academic Queries and Appeal procedure applies www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/Regulations/SPS/appeals.htm

Note: Notwithstanding any ongoing discussion and correspondence with a student about unsatisfactory progress, the University may be obliged to report to the Home Office any International student who has failed to attend lectures, classes or seminars. The report to the Home Office may necessitate termination of the student's studies at the University under General Regulation U.

F. Study Undertaken Outside the University

17. Any student may be permitted by a dean of postgraduate studies, on the recommendation of the relevant supervisory team and head of school, to study outside the University (or an approved campus) for more than one month, provided that in respect of any period of study not undertaken in the University (or an approved campus) the dean of postgraduate studies is satisfied before the beginning of that period of study that:

- a) the student will have access to adequate facilities, resources and appropriate research training;

- b) sufficient time for study and research will be available to the student;
- c) appropriate arrangements have been made for the student's supervision and progress monitoring during the period of study outside the University, including arrangements for the supervisory team to maintain contact with and to meet with the student in accordance with requirements stated in the Code of Practice for Research Degree programmes and as often as is necessary;
- d) appropriate arrangements have been made in any case where the student is attached to or working at an institution outside the University and is offered local supervision and support by staff at that institution;
- e) any relevant health and safety issues have been considered and approved by the head of school/nominee in line with University guidelines and University Insurance policies.

Approval should normally be sought three months in advance of the start of the period of outside study.

All study visits, of any duration, by students to high-risk locations (as specified in the Postgraduate Student Travel and Outside Study Policy <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/assets/documents/PGStudent-Travel-Outside-Study-PolicyJuly15.pdf>), must also be signed off by the dean of postgraduate studies, or faculty PVC under certain circumstances.

Notes:

(i) that periods of study outside the University of less than one month should be agreed within the student's school and the student should complete a Student Notice of Absence form.

(ii) that any student who is permitted to undertake part of their study outside of the University is still required to pay the standard fees whilst within their candidature, unless alternative arrangements were approved as part of the admission process.

(iii) that any student who is permitted to undertake part of their study outside of the University is still required to have their attendance monitored on the programme, including time registered as a pending or extended submission student.

(iv) that any student who is permitted to undertake part of their study outside of the University is still required to adhere to their deadline for submission, unless an extension or interruption of studies has been agreed as part of the outside study approval.

(v) that it is unlikely that that an outside study request will be approved in the month before your dissertation submission deadline.

(vi) that students who are Tier 4 visa holders are required to inform the University if they are away from Newcastle (or approved campus) as a condition of their visa sponsorship.

G. Assessment

18. There is one final mark for each module but, where modular outlines specify, a student may be required to meet a prescribed threshold in specific components of a module in order to be deemed to have passed the module overall. The module outline must indicate components for which such thresholds apply and must make clear the

consequence of failing to meet the threshold: either failure in the module with a fail mark returned, or a deferred pass in which the component failure may be redeemed as part of the same attempt. In addition, module outlines may specify 'zero weighted pass/fail assessments', i.e., assessments that do not contribute to the module mark but that must be passed in order to pass the module.

19. All modes of assessment permitted are outlined in the programme regulations and handbook. Rules to be observed by students regarding, for example, size, form and submission dates for examinable coursework, also regarding retention and recall of work are specified in the programme handbook.

20. Any late submission of an assessment or dissertation shall be considered in line with the University's Submission of Work Policy, available at <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/ltds/assets/documents/qsh-assmt-assessedwork-policy.pdf>.

H. Interruption of Progress

Exclusion for delayed progress

21. The following students shall be automatically excluded from further study unless given special permission by the degree programme director. In granting special permission to continue, the degree programme director must consider any quality and accreditation issues relevant to the programme in question;

- a) a full-time student following a one-year programme who is more than one year in arrears in the programme;
- b) a full-time student following a programme longer than one year who is more than two years in arrears in the programme; *and*
- c) a part-time student who is more than two years in arrears in the programme.

Interruption and resumption of normal progress

22.

- a) Subject to regulation 20, the degree programme director may give permission for a student to interrupt normal progress within the programme;
- b) When a student resumes normal progress, the student shall proceed with the programme of study only under the regulations then applicable.

23. A student may only be permitted to repeat a period of tuition with the express approval of the PEC Committee. The PEC Committee may also consider the setting aside of previous assessment attempts (see Convention M35).

24. Any student repeating a period of tuition, either at first attempt or resit, will be required to pay tuition fees for the additional period of registration.

Assessment Requirements for Students Returning after an Interruption of Study

25. Where a student is permitted by the degree programme director to interrupt the programme of study at any time during a stage and is required to resume those studies at the same point during a subsequent academic year, any assessments completed prior to the date of interruption shall be carried forward to the end of that stage.

J. Inconsistency between the University Regulations and the Programme Regulations

26. In the event of any inconsistency between the University Progress Regulations and the programme regulations, the University Regulations shall prevail, unless an express departure from the University Regulations has been approved by the University, Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee or the Postgraduate Research Sub-Committee acting on its behalf, and a statement that the programme regulations are to have priority has been incorporated within them.

K. Supervisory Arrangements

27. The University requires that individual supervisors are appointed for the research project/dissertation element of the programme. This should normally be undertaken by a member of academic staff, who should be demonstrably research active and on the approved research supervisors list for the school or faculty. Students should always have a second named person acting as advisor, either an additional disciplinary expert or the Degree Programme Director or School Director.

Note: The Code of Practice for Research Degree Students provides details on changes to supervisory teams and on appropriate supervisory support for research students.

L. Applications from Members of Staff of the University

28. Members of staff of the University may apply to undertake a part-time postgraduate programme in order to enhance their ability to carry out their current or agreed future work within the University provided that they hold an appointment which extends to cover the prescribed period of registration for the programme.

29. The relevance of the programme to the work (or agreed future work) of the member of staff will be determined by the relevant head of school/service and dean of postgraduate studies (or relevant pro-vice-chancellor in the case of staff who are not attached to faculties) before the academic suitability of the applicant is considered by the relevant degree programme director. Appeals against the decision of the head of school and dean of postgraduate studies (or pro-vice-chancellor) concerning the relevance of the programme will be determined by the chair of the Staff Committee.

30. A member of staff may be permitted to register for a postgraduate programme in his/her own school, but in such a case all work must be considered by an external examiner.

31. A member of staff registered for a postgraduate programme shall not normally be permitted to teach or examine in any aspect of the programme or to take part in discussion relating to the assessment of students in the programme.

M. Examination Committee

32. An examination committee shall be appointed for each award-bearing programme. An examination committee may be responsible for a number of programmes. Membership of an examination committee shall include the relevant degree programme director(s), named representatives of the main areas of study involved in the programmes and the appointed examiners. The membership of each

examination committee shall be proposed by the relevant board of studies and names of the chair and secretary reported to the appropriate faculty graduate school committee and to the examinations office.

Chair of the Examination Committee

33. The chair is responsible for conducting all meetings of the committee, and for ensuring that all decisions are taken by the committee in the full knowledge of all the performances for each student. In appropriate cases, the examination committee may delegate to the chair the right to consider and make decisions. In so doing, the chair should consult as many members of the committee as possible (including the internal and external examiners). Action taken by the chair must be reported to the next scheduled meeting of the examination committee. The chair shall exercise discretion only in a manner consistent with the practices outlined in these regulations and any additional agreed principles of the committee. All agreed mark sheets, confirming decisions taken by the examination committee, shall be signed by the chair.

Secretary

34. The examination committee shall appoint a secretary who shall be responsible for ensuring that all examiners and members of the examination committee are informed of meetings. The secretary shall also be responsible for keeping a record of all decisions reached by the committee.

Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) Committee

35. A Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committee shall be appointed by each examination committee to review and consider medical and personal circumstances which may have an effect on a student's performance. These circumstances should be brought to the Committee's attention by the student and relevant evidence should be attached. One PEC Committee can cover a number of programmes. This committee shall normally consist of the chair and secretary of the examinations committee and two other senior members of academic staff, one of whom should be selected from outside of the academic unit. If the secretary is not a member of academic staff then a fourth senior member of academic staff must be appointed to the committee. The chair of the PEC committee shall report the PEC committee's recommendations, including a summary of action taken throughout the year by the PEC Committee, members and delegated staff, to the chair of the examination committee. The examination committee shall, accordingly, be made aware if medical or other circumstances have been put forward for or by a student; however, no more detail than is necessary shall be disclosed, and this shall include no personal or medical details. All personal information shall be handled by the PEC Committee and the board of examiners in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

36. The Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committee shall have the power to grant the following, subject to the appropriate evidence being provided for or by the student;

- a) Extensions within and beyond those permitted as part of the Submission of Work policy;

- b) Exemptions from minor elements of assessed work (normally a maximum of 20% of the module in question);
- c) Deferral of a formal examination or assessment attempt to the next normal occasion;
- d) Deferral of a formal examination or assessment attempt to a later normal occasion;
- e) Extraordinary examinations, including those outside of the regular assessment periods;
- f) Setting aside previous attempt(s) at a module, stage or semester and allowing repeat tuition if required;
- g) Allowing a student to retake a module, semester or stage with tuition (subject to payment of the appropriate tuition fees);
- h) Allowing a student to proceed to the next Stage of a programme carrying fails and
- i) To provide boards of examiners with an assessment of the scope and severity of mitigating circumstances affecting a student, which have not been addressed by a-e above (i.e. to recommend the use of discretion).

37. A PEC Committee may, on occasion, need to consider other adjustments in response to a student's Personal Extenuating Circumstance case. Adjustments other than those listed in 36 a-i above must be approved by the appropriate dean of postgraduate studies.

Guidance on PEC procedure is provided by the Student Progress Service (www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress)

38. Students shall be reminded annually by notice (in electronic or paper form) of the Personal Extenuating Circumstances procedure and reminded that applications should be made by the deadline given. A student who fails to disclose relevant circumstances to the Committee in time should be aware that this may have a bearing on whether an adjustment can be allowed.

Internal and External Examiner

39. A candidate's research dissertation shall be examined by one internal and one external examiner nominated by the head of school or other faculty nominee and appointed by the dean of postgraduate studies. The examination shall consist of a review and assessment of the candidate's research dissertation (and where appropriate, other artefacts). A candidate may be required to take an oral examination in addition to submitting a research dissertation.

40. A member of the supervisory team will not be appointed as an internal examiner. Where the University is unable to appoint an internal examiner a second external

examiner will be appointed. In all cases where two external examiners are appointed and an oral examination is required by the examiners, the dean of postgraduate studies will also appoint an independent member of University staff who will chair the oral examination. In all cases where the dean of postgraduate studies has determined that an independent chair is required, where possible the independent chair should be from outside the candidate's school/institute. (*The Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes provides further details in the section, 'Criteria for Appointment of Examiners'*).

The independent chair is not an examiner of the dissertation but provides guidance on University regulations and procedures to ensure that the oral examination is conducted in accordance with normal University practice. The independent chair is required to be present for the duration of the oral examination.

N. Absence from Examinations, Failure to Submit Assessed Work and Assessment Irregularities

41. Where a student has been absent without formal approval from an examination, a mark of zero shall be returned for that component of the assessment. Where a student has failed to submit any other element of the assessment, a mark of zero shall be returned for that element. Any late submissions must be considered in line with the University's Submission of Work Policy, available at <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/ltds/assets/documents/qsh-assmt-assessedwork-policy.pdf>.

42. Where a student has failed to comply with any other assessment requirement, the consequence, if any, stipulated in the programme or module handbook shall apply.

43. The University's procedure for assessment irregularities shall apply to any reported or suspected cheating or plagiarism. It should be clear that sanctions imposed under the Assessment Irregularity Procedure takes precedent over the examination committee, and therefore cannot be overturned. The procedures are available at <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/assets/documents/Procedure-for-Assessment-Irregularities.pdf>

P. Marking Procedures

44. It shall be a duty of all examiners to carry out all assessments in accordance with the published assessment criteria approved by Faculty Graduate School Committees and normally available in programme handbooks.

45. In line with the University Guidance on Moderation and Scaling (available at <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/quilt/assets/documents/qsh-assmt-modscal-pol.pdf>), the following shall constitute the procedure and, where appropriate, minimum requirements, for marking throughout the University.

- a) All marking shall be guided by explicit statements of standards, which shall be published in the programme handbook
- b) Each board of examiners shall have a written Moderation and Scaling policy which should comply with the University's guidance

R. Return of Marks

46. The mark for each module on a Masters degree programme, postgraduate

diploma or postgraduate certificate must be returned to the examination committee and disclosed to students using the University Common Scale for the return of marks below:

	Marking scale applicable to <i>level 7</i> modules and master's programmes	Marking scale applicable to modules <i>below level 7</i>	Marking scale applicable to postgraduate certificate and diploma programmes
0-39	Fail	Fail	Fail
40-49	Fail	Pass	Fail
50-59	Pass	Pass	Pass
60-69	Pass with Merit	Pass with Merit	Pass
70-100	Pass with Distinction	Pass with Distinction	Pass

47. The final mark returned for the assessment of any module, shall be rounded to the nearest whole number before being returned to the relevant examination committee. The rounding of marks shall follow the convention: decimal marks with a decimal component of 0.5 or larger shall be rounded up to the next whole number; marks with a decimal component of less than 0.5 shall be rounded down to the next whole number.

S. Releasing and Adjusting Marks

48. Marks awarded for coursework and examinations will be disclosed to students as soon as they are available and within 20 working days. It should be made clear to students that the marks are provisional marks only and will be subject to review, and to possible moderation.

T. Credits Required and Using Credit Value

49. Students are required to study 60 credits for a postgraduate certificate, 120 credits for a postgraduate diploma and 180 credits for a Masters degree in line with the requirements outlined in the University's *Qualifications and Credit Framework*. All modules of a programme contribute towards the final award and its classification. The weighting of modules for assessment purposes shall correspond to the credit value of the module specified in the relevant programme regulations. Such weighting of modules may be adjusted in accordance with any programme regulations only to allow for additional weighting allocated to non-modular aggregated assessment.

U. Progression within Research Masters' Programmes

50. Where there are progression requirements specified in the programme regulations, a student must, before proceeding from one stage to another, satisfy the examiners in the assessment for each module of that stage. This may require the student's profile of modules to be considered by the chair of the examination committee prior to being allowed to progress to the research dissertation.

V. Reassessment

51. A student who passes a module, including by discretion, cannot be reassessed for any component of that module.

52. A student has the right to one reassessment for each taught module failed at the first attempt provided that no more than 40 credits of the taught element of the programme is failed at the first attempt.

The form of the reassessment at any stage may vary from the original, at the discretion of the board of studies. Note that the board of studies may delegate this authority to the board of examiners, but that the students who are to be reassessment must be informed of the style of the reassessment to be adopted.

53. A student who fails more than 40 credits at the first attempt of the taught element of the programme will not normally be permitted to continue or be reassessed without the support of the chair of the examination committee.

54. A student who has the right to a second attempt will automatically be entered for failed modules (and any failed non-modular aggregated assessments) at the next available occasion of assessment (normally in August/September of the same academic year as the first attempt) or at an alternative occasion designated by the board of examiners. The timing of any reassessment will be such that a student's progression is not unduly delayed. The examination committee may stipulate a period for reassessment which is outside the University's normal assessment and resit periods.

W. Discretion

55. Notwithstanding the student's results, and without prejudice to the requirements for professional accreditation, the examination committee may, in its ultimate discretion:

- a) Deem a student to have passed specific modules – including core modules,
- b) Deem first attempt failures on one or more Level 7 modules on a classified programme to be 'condoned fails', provided that the relevant marks are in the range 40 – 49 and provided that a student does not accumulate more than 20 credits in condoned fails (10 credits for students registered for a Postgraduate Certificate). A condoned fail will be treated as a fail for the purposes of Conventions V52 and V53, but a condoned fail will not diminish eligibility for a Merit or Distinction under Convention AA65.
- c) Recommend a student eligible to leave the University with an award, for a higher award or degree classification.

56. The exercise of discretion does not set a precedent as each individual case should be considered on a case by case basis. However, in any discussion regarding the

possible exercise of discretion, the examination committee shall ensure that no student in similar circumstances has been treated less favourably.

57. The reasons for exercising or not exercising discretion shall be recorded in the minutes of the proceedings in every case where the exercise of discretion is considered, both those where such consideration is required under Convention AA66 or where it is considered on other grounds. The minutes shall record the issues raised and the decisions reached, whilst maintaining, wherever possible, the anonymity of examination committee members contributing to the debate. Chairs of Examination Committees should report in writing annually to the relevant Board of Studies on the exercise of discretion for the recent examination sessions. Reports should then be forwarded to Faculty Graduate School Committees for review.

X. Use of Marks after Reassessment or Discretion

58. Where a student has achieved a passing mark following reassessment, or has been deemed to have passed in an assessment by the exercise of discretion, actual mark achieved by the student must be recorded on the transcript, with an appropriate note if discretion has been applied, and a statement that a mark of 50 will be used in any calculations. However, in such cases, the examination committee may, in its ultimate discretion, have regard to the actual mark obtained at the second occasion of assessment. Where a student fails a module after reassessment, the better of the two marks for the module shall be used in calculations.

Y. Nature of the Dissertation Examination

59. The examination shall consist of a review and assessment of the candidate's research dissertation by the examiners appointed.

60. The examiners shall determine whether or not the candidate should be examined orally. The normal practice will be that an oral examination is only convened when the external examiner contacts the graduate school administrator to request an oral examination. Such a request will be considered by the dean of postgraduate studies. If approved, the supervisor will be asked to co-ordinate the arrangements. The purpose of the viva is to enable the examiners to:

- a) establish that the research has been undertaken by the candidate;
- b) test the ability of the candidate to defend his or her work;
- c) establish whether the candidate has a satisfactory knowledge of the wider field surrounding the research topic.

61. If an oral examination is required, the academic supervisor may, at the request of the student, be present during the oral examination but will make no contribution to the examination. However, in all cases, the main supervisor should be available to be consulted by the examiners on the occasion of the oral examination and will have the right to confer with the examiners on request.

62. Where an oral examination is held, the purpose of such an examination will be to enable the examiners to determine whether the student has reached a satisfactory level of knowledge and understanding for the award of the degree at the pass/merit/distinction level. An oral examination may also be used to establish that the research has been undertaken by the candidate. Any oral examination shall be

conducted in accordance with the guidelines in the University's *Handbook for Examiners of Research Degrees*.

63. In examining a candidate's research dissertation, the examiners should take into consideration both the extent and merit of the work submitted and the quality of the exposition. With regard to the extent of the work, the examiners should satisfy themselves that the candidate's work shows evidence of adequate industry and application. With regard to the merit of the work, the candidate is expected to show distinct ability in conducting research investigations and in testing ideas, whether the candidate's own or others'. The exposition of the work in the research dissertation must be clear and must show that the candidate understands the relationship of the work embodied in the research dissertation and the theme of that work to a wider field of knowledge.

Z. Recommendations Open to the Examiners

64. Following submission and examination of a candidate's research dissertation, the examiners should return an agreed mark and make one of the following recommendations:

- a) That the candidate be awarded the relevant Research Masters degree;
- b) That the candidate be allowed to revise and resubmit their dissertation, normally within a period of six months of receiving formal notification of the revisions to be made. The revised thesis will be examined by the internal examiner;
- c) That the Research Masters degree not be awarded and that the candidate be returned to the examination committee for consideration of a postgraduate diploma or postgraduate certificate.

AA. The Award and Classification of Masters Degrees

65. A student is recommended, as of right, for the award of an appropriate Masters degree if all the requirements for the award are met and all the modules in the degree programme are passed (at either first or second attempt).

A student who passes all core modules and fails up to 20 credits of non-core modules from the taught stage of the programme (whether after one attempt or two) is recommended, as of right, for the award of an appropriate Master's degree or Postgraduate Diploma, provided that the weighted average mark for all modules and all non-modular aggregated assessment (taking credit values into account) is at least 50. In classified programmes, such a student will be eligible as of right only for the award of a pass; a student would only be entitled to a Merit or Distinction, as indicated in their overall average, if they have passed all modules (at either first or second attempt). The same principle applies to the award of a Postgraduate Certificate to a student failing up to 10 credits of non-core modules.

66. The class of award is determined as follows and returned to the graduate school administrator by the examination committee:

- a) Candidates are entitled as of right to the class of degree yielded by the average mark for all modules and all non-modular aggregated assessment taking credit values into account.

- b) Candidates with weighted averages of 48 or 49, 58 or 59, 68 or 69, (after rounding of marks) shall always be considered for the next higher class of award. However, the examination committee are not limited to this category of student when considering the use of discretion.
- c) The examination committee when considering the exercise of discretion, shall have regard to the following:
 - i. Any recommendation from the Personal Extenuating Circumstance Committee on the effect and scope of Medical or other mitigating circumstances that were submitted to the Personal Extenuating Circumstance Committee, see Convention M35.

In cases where the weighted average is within two marks of a class boundary as defined in clauses b) and c) above:

- ii. The overall profile of individual marks achieved in modules;
- iii. Exceptional performance in the research dissertation, as recommended by the examiners;

BB. Award of a Postgraduate Diploma

67. A candidate for a Masters degree, who fails to meet the criteria for the Masters degree, can be recommended for the award of a postgraduate diploma by the examination committee:

- a) Where there is an associated postgraduate diploma, this may be awarded using the criteria laid down in those regulations;
- b) Where there are no associated regulations, a postgraduate diploma may be awarded to a candidate who has achieved an average mark of at least 50 over the course of 120 credits, which may include the dissertation element.

68. A student who is not entitled to a postgraduate diploma as of right may be recommended for a postgraduate diploma by the examination committee, using its ultimate discretion, following the principles laid down in Conventions W55-57.

69. The award of a postgraduate diploma is not classified under this provision.

CC. Award of a Postgraduate Certificate

70. A candidate for a Masters degree or postgraduate diploma, who fails to meet the criteria for the Masters degree or diploma, can be recommended for the award of postgraduate certificate by the examination committee:

- a) Where there is an associated postgraduate certificate, this may be awarded using the criteria laid down in those regulations;
- b) Where there are no associated regulations, a postgraduate certificate may be awarded to a candidate who has achieved an average mark of at least 50 over the course of 60 credits.

71. A student who is not entitled to a postgraduate certificate as of right may be recommended for a postgraduate certificate by the examination committee, using its

ultimate discretion, following the principles laid down in Conventions W55-57.

72. The award of a postgraduate certificate is not classified unless specific programme regulations are in place.

DD. Minor Revisions or Corrections

73. Where resubmission of the research dissertation is required, the candidate shall normally be required to make the revisions within six months of receiving formal notification of the revisions to be made.

74. In exceptional cases, an extension of time for making the corrections may be granted by the appropriate dean of postgraduate studies, subject to the candidate presenting a case justifying such an extension, supported by the candidate's main supervisor.

75. It shall be the expectation that the research dissertation will not require referral back to the external examiner and that the candidate will not be expected to undergo a further oral examination. However, if the internal examiner feels that it is appropriate following reconsideration of the research dissertation after the revisions have been made, the internal examiner shall refer the research dissertation to the external examiner. Where a research dissertation is thus referred to the external examiner, the examiners may determine that a further oral examination is required.

EE. Recommendations After Resubmission of the Dissertation for Re-examination by the Internal Examiner

76. Where a candidate has been permitted to revise and resubmit a research dissertation the options open to the examiners when re-examining the research dissertation shall be those set out in Conventions 64 (a) or (c) only.

FF. Provision to the Candidate of Information about Revisions Required

77. In all cases where a candidate is required to make revisions to a research dissertation it shall be the responsibility of the examiners to provide full details of the corrections and/or revisions required of the research dissertation. The examiners shall provide to the candidate and the candidate's supervisor as soon as possible after the examination, a written statement of the nature of the changes they wish to see made to the research dissertation. The examiners should also attach a copy of this statement to their final report which shall be forwarded to the candidate and the candidate's supervisor. When forwarding the final report to the candidate, it will be made clear to the candidate that resubmission will not guarantee the award of a qualification.

GG. Communication of the Result to the Candidate

78. Only the graduate school administrator, or nominee, is empowered to communicate the results of the examination or re-examination formally to the candidate. In any case where an examiner or a school chooses to give the candidate an informal indication as to the recommendation that will be put forward, the examiner or school concerned must stress that the recommendation is subject to ratification and

that only the graduate school administrator (on behalf of the Academic Registrar) is empowered to issue official results.

HH. Disagreement between the Examiners

79. If there is a disagreement between the examiners of the research dissertation where possible they shall initially collaborate to resolve the matter. Where there is irreconcilable disagreement between the examiners an additional independent external examiner shall be appointed.

80. The additional examiner shall be told that the original examiners have failed to reach agreement but will not have sight of their report. The additional examiner shall be asked to read the candidate's research dissertation and decide whether an oral examination is required. If there is to be an oral examination the candidate's supervisor (and where appropriate the internal examiner) shall be available to be consulted by the additional examiner. The dean of postgraduate studies shall appoint a member of University staff as an independent observer, who will report on the conduct of the viva, if required. The additional external examiner's recommendation shall be final. He/she shall submit a final report to the relevant graduate school administrator which will, subject to the approval of the relevant examinations committee, be forwarded to the candidate and the candidate's supervisor in the normal way.

81. Where an additional examiner has been appointed, the candidate shall be informed of this and whether another oral examination is required. The candidate shall not be informed as to the nature of the disagreement and shall not be given a copy of their report. If, however, the candidate subsequently appeals against the final decision in respect of the award of the degree, the report of the original examiners will form part of the formal record of appeal. Once a decision as to the award of the degree has been made the final report of the additional examiner shall be made available to the candidate and the candidate's supervisory team.

82. In the event that recommendation 64 (b) is made, that is, *admission to the degree subject to revisions being made within six months*, the revisions shall be subject to the satisfaction of the additional examiner.

JJ. Mid-year Student Withdrawals

83. A student who withdraws from the University during the academic year will be considered for the appropriate exit award at the next scheduled meeting of the Examinations Committee.