

## IV. Foundation Certificate Examination Conventions

*Variations to the regulations, non-standard stage weightings and exceptions to the Qualifications and Credit Framework can only be agreed by University Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee (ULTSEC), except where the power is explicitly vested in the relevant Faculty Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee (FLTSEC) or Degree Programme Director (DPD) in the regulations themselves.*

### A. Introduction

1. These conventions shall be understood alongside the definitions of terms in the *Undergraduate Progress Regulations*, and in conjunction with requirements laid down in the General Regulations of the University, and shall be read together with any examination conventions specific to the relevant degree programme, as approved by the relevant FLTSEC.

### B. The Board of Examiners

2.-5 As in UG ECs

#### **Chair of the Board**

6. The chair of the board of examiners shall be appointed by the head of school and the appointment reported to the relevant FLTSEC. Where the programme is offered by an educational partner, the chair shall be appointed by the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Learning & Teaching). The chair is responsible for conducting all meetings of the board, and for ensuring that all decisions are taken by the board in the full knowledge of all the performances for each student. In appropriate cases, the board may delegate to the chair the right to consider and make decisions. In so doing, the chair should consult as many members of the board as possible (including the external examiners). Action taken by the chair must be reported to the next scheduled meeting of the board. The chair shall exercise discretion only in a manner consistent with the normal practices and any additional agreed principles of the board. All agreed mark sheets, confirming decisions taken by the board, shall be signed by the chair.

#### **Secretary**

7. As per UG ECs

### External Examiners

8. Procedures for appointing external examiners are set out in the *Policy and Procedures for External Examiners of Taught Programmes* at <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/ltds/assets/documents/qsh-extexam-policy.pdf>. The policy is the definitive source on matters relating to external examining and in

the event of any conflict between the policy and these regulations, the Policy would prevail. The duties of external examiners are set out in the policy.

9. The external examiner shall be a member of the relevant board of examiners and have the right to attend any meetings of the board. Normally no decision on the recommendation of an award may be made by a board of examiners unless there is an external examiner present. If, exceptionally, any external examiners cannot be present, they shall be given the opportunity to make their views known to the board.

10. External examiners have the right to speak on any matter at the meeting of the board of examiners, regardless of whether their opinion has been specifically invited. The board of examiners shall take into account, but need not defer to, the views of external examiners in taking decisions.

11. Final classification lists shall be signed by the chair and the external examiners and these lists be retained within the academic unit. Where an external examiner is unable to be present, s/he should be asked by e-mail to confirm the decisions made by the board. The minutes of the meeting should confirm whether the external examiners have endorsed the decisions made by the board.

12. The external examiners shall make an annual report and a final report at the end of their period of office to the Vice-Chancellor. These reports shall include comments and recommendations. In addition, external examiners may make a confidential report to the Vice-Chancellor on any matter at any time.

### **Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) Committee**

13. A Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) Committee shall be appointed by the board of studies to review and consider medical and mitigating circumstances which may have an effect on a student's performance. This committee shall normally consist of a chair, secretary and two other senior members of academic staff. The chair should be a senior member of academic staff with experience of sitting on a board of examiners and in the case of educational partnerships be a senior University academic. One of the members should be from outside the academic unit. The chair of the PEC Committee shall report the 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 board of examiners. The board of examiners 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.

14. -16 As per UG ECs

### **Board of Examiners Procedures**

17-20 as per UG ECs

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

21-23 as per UG ECs

### D. Aural and Oral Examinations

24 as per UG ECs

### E. Marking Procedures

25-26 as per UG ECs

### F. Return of Marks

27. The mark for each module on a Foundation Certificate programme shall be returned to the board of examiners, and disclosed to students, using the following mark scale, unless there are different requirements in the programme regulations (e.g. for English language modules):

	<b>Summary description applicable to modules <i>not used for degree classification</i></b>
0-39	Failing
40-49	Fair
50-59	Good
60-69	Very Good
70-79	Excellent
80+	Outstanding

28. The final mark returned to the board of examiners for a module shall be the rounded nearest whole number on the University Common Scale.

*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.*

## **G. Releasing and Adjusting Marks**

29-31 as per UG ECs

## **H Progression from One Stage to Another**

Conventions 32-33 do not apply to Foundation Certificates.

## **J. Principles of Compensation**

*The principles in this section shall apply unless the programme regulations state otherwise.*

34. A student shall, on assessment and any reassessment, be deemed to have passed all modules, notwithstanding that marks of less than 40 have been obtained in one or more modules for that stage, provided that each of the following conditions for compensation are met:

- a) the average is not less than 40;
- b) no single mark for any module of assessed is below 35;
- c) the modules for which marks lies between 35 and do not include core modules and have total credit value at most 40 (out of the 120 credits studied). Where a Foundation Certificate contains more than 120 credits the maximum number of credits which can be compensated is one third of the total credits in the award.

The modules in c) above are deemed to be **passed by compensation**.

Conventions 35-36 do not apply.

37. Where the rules for compensation do not apply, the board of examiners may still exercise discretion under Conventions 18, 38-40.

## **K. Principles of Discretion**

38. Notwithstanding the student's results, and without prejudice to the requirements for professional accreditation, the board of examiners may, in its ultimate discretion:

- a) Deem a student to have passed specific modules – including core modules,
- b) Deem a student to have passed the programme.

39. The exercise of discretion does not set a precedent as each individual case should be considered individually. However, in any discussion regarding

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

40. 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. The minutes shall record the issues raised and the decisions reached, whilst maintaining, wherever possible, the anonymity of board members contributing to the debate. Boards of Studies are required to report annually on the exercise of discretion as part of the Annual Monitoring and Review Process.

## **L. Reassessment**

41. A student who passes a module (including by compensation or discretion), at any stage of the degree programme, cannot be reassessed for any component of that module.

Convention 42 does not apply

43. A student has the right to a maximum of one reassessment of each failed module (Convention 47).

44. The form of the reassessment 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 reassessed must be informed of the style of reassessment to be adopted, including identification of the various assessment components and weighting. Boards may specify components for which students may opt to carry forward marks. Changes to the format of assessment must apply to the whole cohort.

45. A final module mark is calculated by using the most recent component marks. In some cases, this may be a combination of second and first attempt component marks, depending on the resit arrangements for the module. It is not the case, however, that the best component marks automatically carry forward to the final module mark.

Convention 46 does not apply.

### **Timing of reassessment at any stage other than the final stage**

47. *Second Attempt*

A student who has the right to a second attempt will automatically be entered for failed modules at the next available occasion of assessment.

48. Does not apply to Higher Education Certificates

## **M. The Award**

49. A student is recommended, as of right, for the award of the Foundation Certificate if all the requirements for the award as set out in the programme regulations are met and the programme average is not less than 40.

Conventions 50-53 do not apply.

### **Use of Discretion**

**The Board of Examiners under Conventions 18, 38 - 40 has a general power to exercise discretion to treat any student more generously than the numerical and other conventions require.**

54. Discretion may be applied to board decisions on whether candidates have passed or failed. The board of examiners must consider whether or not to exercise discretion when there is a positive assessment of the impact of medical or other mitigating circumstances by the Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committee (Conventions 13 and 14).

55. The University does not permit the use of a viva voce for such programmes.

56. In any discussion regarding the possible exercise of discretion, the board shall ensure that no student in similar circumstances has been treated less favourably as a result of any particular decision.

### **N. Recording of Module Marks after Reassessment, Compensation or Discretion**

57. Where a student has achieved a passing mark following reassessment at any stage, including the final stage, or has been deemed to have passed in an assessment by the exercise of compensation or discretion, the actual mark achieved by the student must be recorded on the transcript, with an appropriate note if compensation or discretion has been applied, and a statement that a mark of 40 will be used in any calculations. However, in such cases, the board of examiners may, in its ultimate discretion, have regard to the actual mark obtained at resit.

Conventions 58. – 72 do not apply

### **V. Retention of Assessed Work**

73. All material for assessment, which contributes to 30% or more of a final module mark, should be retained for a minimum period of the current academic year plus one year. Further information can be found in the Policies on Submission of Assessed Work, Feedback on Assessed Work and Return of Assessed Work at <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/ltds/assets/documents/qsh-assmt-assessedwork-policy.pdf>.