

Key changes to University Regulations 2020/21 - February 2021 as a result of implementing the Safety Net 2020-21

Due to the on-going Covid-19 public health situation resulting in significant restrictions on social-distancing and disruption to the teaching, learning and assessment for students on taught programmes, Senate approved and confirmed a range of 'Safety Net' measures for implementation during the 2021-21 Academic Year.

The 'Safety Net' 2020-21 shares some features with the 2019-20 version previously implemented by the University. Similarly it is an approach that consists of multiple actions, seeking to balance the need to respond supportively to the challenges our students face in preparing for and undertaking assessments, with ensuring the integrity of our academic awards. The University has a commitment to support all our students to fulfil their potential as well as a commitment to the integrity of University awards. The University has obligations as a degree awarding body and needs to ensure that its awards remain valued and respected by the wider world into which the students will graduate.

The elements of the 'Safety Net' 2020-21 (*web link*) include:

1. Introduction of a revised policy for the late submission of assessed work
2. Timing of deadlines for the submission of assessed work
3. Increasing the entitlement to resits for taught postgraduate students
4. A streamlined approach to PEC
5. Moderating the profile of student cohorts in 2020-21 against the performance of previous years for all modules and at all stages
6. Approaches to the use of discretion by Boards of Examiners in relation to final classification

The safety net measures apply to the majority of taught programmes. This includes research degrees with a taught credit-bearing element, although noting a small number of programmes, including some with professional recognition, where there are requirements of the relevant Professional and Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB) or programmes with non-standard structures, may not allow this Safety Net to be applied in whole or in part. Relevant University Policies are being revised to incorporate the 'Safety Net' 2020-21 measures.

The following are specific changes of principle within the University Regulations as a result of the agreed Safety Net 2020-21 Measures:-

I General Regulations for Taught and Research Programmes

The expected attendance requirement for students has been removed (I A.4) and there will be no attendance monitoring. If there are specific requirements for individual professional programmes these should be published in the programme handbook and highlighted to the student concerned.

IV. Assessment Regulations For Taught Programmes

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

9. Where you have been absent without formal approval from an examination, a mark of zero will be returned for that component of the assessment. Where you have failed to submit any other element of the assessment, a mark of zero shall be returned for that element. For

those programmes using an alternative marking scheme the equivalent failing grade will be used. Any late submissions must be considered in line with the University's Submission of Work Policy (**revised in accordance with the Safety Net' 2020/21**), available at <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/ltds/assets/documents/qsh-assmt-assessedwork-policy.pdf>

10. Where you have failed to comply with any other assessment requirement, the consequence, if any, stipulated in the degree programme handbook shall apply.

E. Marking Procedures

13. All examiners should carry out assessments in accordance with the published assessment criteria available in degree programme handbooks.

14. In line with the University Policy and Guidance on Moderation and Scaling (**revised in accordance with the Safety Net' 2020/21**) <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/ltds/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 the marking criteria, which shall be published in the degree programme handbook;
- b) Each Board of Examiners shall have a written Moderation and Scaling policy which should comply with the University's guidance.
- c) When coursework is submitted late but remains eligible for a capped mark, the mark that would have been awarded if the work had been submitted on time must be recorded and must be available to the Board of Examiners if required.

I. Principles of Discretion

27. The Board of Examiners has the discretion to override the normal regulations to pass you, in the whole (or any part) of the assessment, at any stage. Your case will be considered on its own merits, but students in similar circumstances must be treated in a consistent manner, however, discretion must not be used to your disadvantage. Where the Board of Examiners exercises discretion the reasons for the decision must be recorded in the minutes.

28. Despite your results, whilst taking account of any requirements for professional accreditation, the Board of Examiners may, in its ultimate discretion (and where applicable):

- a) Deem you to have passed specific modules – including core modules;
- b) Deem you to have passed the stage of a programme;
- c) Deem you to have progressed to the next stage of a programme, despite not meeting—a specific progress regulation or examination regulation;
- d) Make you an award or a higher award, or decide on a higher degree classification, subject to any restriction specified elsewhere in the regulations (including the Rules for Boards of Examiners).

J. Reassessment

Note: The rules in this section also apply to non-modular programmes, however reference to module should be substituted with assessment.

29. If you pass a module (including by compensation or discretion), at any stage of the degree programme, you cannot be reassessed for any component of that module.

Honours Degrees and Foundation Degrees

30. If you fail the final stage of an Honours degree, Foundation Degree or Integrated Master's programme, you are entitled, under the conditions laid down in Regulations V.B.17.b. (Foundation Degree), V.C.37.d (Honours Degree), and V.D.6365 (Integrated Master's Degree), to one reassessment of some or all failed modules.

31. If you fail a module at any other stage of an Honours degree, Foundation Degree or Integrated Master's programme, or you fail a module in a Foundation Certificate programme, you have the right to one reassessment of each failed module.

Postgraduate Taught Programmes

32. If you fail modules on a taught postgraduate programme you are entitled to one reassessment for each taught module failed at the first attempt. ~~provided that:~~

- ~~a) No more than 40 credits of the taught element is failed at the first attempt on a 180 credit master's programme or a postgraduate diploma programme;~~
- ~~b) No more than 20 credits of a postgraduate certificate is failed at the first attempt.~~

33. On a postgraduate taught programme the deeming of a first attempt failure on a module as a 'condoned fail' in line with convention V F. 91 does not remove the right to reassessment. If you have one or more modules deemed to be condoned fails, you may still undertake reassessment in those modules either for the purpose of improving your transcript or for the purpose of improving your overall average.

~~34. A Master's programme with more than 180 credits may set a higher number of credits that may be resat in its programme regulations, but the proportion of credits available for resit should be in proportion to those on a 180 credit programme.~~

~~35. If you are a Master's or Postgraduate Diploma student who fails more than 40 credits, or a Postgraduate Certificate student who fails more than 20 credits, at the first attempt of the taught element of the programme, you will not be permitted to continue without explicit consent of the Board of Examiners (see also Regulation V F 90 (d)).~~

~~36. If you are a Postgraduate Diploma student taking further credit to 'top-up' a previously awarded Postgraduate Certificate (entry award), you can only be reassessed in 20 credits of the additional 60 credits taken to gain the higher award.~~

K. Resubmission of Dissertation – Postgraduate Taught

~~42. As a Master's student, you are entitled to one resubmission of your dissertation provided you have failed no more than 40 credits of the taught element of the programme at the first attempt. If you fail more than 40 credits of the taught element of the programme at the first attempt, you will not normally be permitted to resubmit your dissertation without explicit agreement of the Board of Examiners. Resubmission should be within a defined period agreed by the Board of Examiners, normally within three months of the Board of Examiners' decision.~~

V. Specific Progression and Classification Rules for Different Types of Taught Programme

The Award and Classification of Degrees

Use of Discretion (Foundation Degrees)

In addition to the principles set out in IV Assessment Regulations I 27 and 28

15. The Board of Examiners must consider whether or not to exercise discretion, after the first attempt at Stage 2 (including the possibility of awarding a higher classification of degree, if relevant) when:

- a) You have a Stage 2 average within ~~two~~ **three** marks of a class boundary. The Board of Examiners shall have regard to the following:
 - i. The overall profile of individual marks you achieved in your modules;
 - ii. Exceptional performance by you in any particular module, including, for example, research-based modules or in an oral examination where this is part of the degree programme regulations;
- b) You have a positive assessment of the impact of medical or other mitigating circumstances by the Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committee.

Use of Discretion (Undergraduate Honours Degrees)

In addition to the principles set out in IV Assessment Regulations I 27 and 28

35.

- a) After the first attempt at the final stage, the Board of Examiners must consider whether or not to exercise discretion to award a higher classification of degree when you have a final programme average within ~~two~~ **three** marks of a classification boundary. The Board of Examiners shall have regard to the following:
 - i The overall profile of individual marks achieved in modules;
 - ii Exceptional performance in any particular module (for example research-based modules or an oral examination where this is part of the degree programme regulations);
 - iii Where the stages which determine your degree classification are equally weighted, progressive improvement in performance during the final 2 (or 3) stages of study.
- b) When there is a positive assessment of the impact of medical or other mitigating circumstances by the Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committee.

Use of Discretion (Integrated Master's Degrees)

In addition to the principles set out in IV Assessment Regulations I 27 and 28

63.

- a) After the first attempt at the final stage, the Board of Examiners must consider whether or not to exercise discretion to award a higher classification of degree when you have a final programme average within ~~two~~ **three** marks of a classification boundary. The Board of Examiners shall have regard to the following:
 - i The overall profile of individual marks achieved in modules;
 - ii Exceptional performance in any particular module (for example research-based modules or an oral examination where this is part of the degree programme regulations).
- b) When there is a positive assessment of the impact of medical or other mitigating circumstances by the Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committee.

Use of Discretion (Graduate Diplomas and Graduate Certificate Programmes)

84. You are entitled as of right to the class of award (i.e. Pass, Merit or Distinction) yielded by the final programme average mark.

85. The Board of Examiners must consider whether or not you should be awarded a higher classification of award by the exercise of discretion in the following cases:

- a) Where you have a final programme average within ~~two~~ **three** marks (after rounding of marks) of a class boundary. The Board of Examiners shall have regard to the overall profile of individual marks achieved in modules;
- b) The Board may also use discretion to award a Graduate Diploma or Graduate Certificate of any class to a student who has not been made an award under clauses V.E.84 of these regulations;
- c) Where there is a positive assessment of the impact of medical or other mitigating circumstances on you by the Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committee.

G The Award and Classification of Master's Degrees, Postgraduate Diplomas and Postgraduate Certificates (entry awards)

94. You are entitled to the award of an appropriate Master's degree, Postgraduate Diploma or Postgraduate Certificate if all the requirements for the award are met and all the modules in the programme are passed (at either first or second attempt).

If you pass all core modules and fail up to 20 credits of non-core modules from the taught stage of the programme (whether after one attempt or two), you will be entitled to the appropriate Master's degree or Postgraduate Diploma, provided that the final programme average is at least 50. If you are on a classified programme (except as provided by Regulation IV.F.100) you will be eligible as of right for the award of a pass only; you would be entitled to a Merit or Distinction, as indicated by your final programme average, only if you have passed all modules (at either first or second attempt, or have accumulated no more than 20 credits in condoned fails). The same principle applies to the award of a Postgraduate Certificate if you fail up to 10 credits of non-core modules.

95. Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate entry awards may be classified if this is stipulated in the programme regulations. In such cases, the classification is determined by the principles in Regulation V.F.96 a–d below.

96. The class of your award is normally determined as follows:

- a) You are entitled to the class of award yielded by the final programme average;
- b) If you are a Master's student with a final programme average within ~~two~~ **three** marks (after rounding of marks) of a class boundary, you will always be considered for the next higher class of award taking account of:
 - i The overall profile of individual marks achieved in modules;
 - ii Exceptional performance in any particular module, including, for example, research based modules;
 - iii Progressive improvement in your performance.
- c) If you are a Postgraduate Diploma or Certificate student with a final programme average of **47**, 48 or 49, you will be considered for the award of a Pass. Postgraduate Diploma and Certificate students with final programme averages of **57**, 58 or 59, and **67**, 68 or 69 shall be considered for the next higher class of award if provision for classification is included in the programme regulations, using the criteria in b) above.
- d) The Board of Examiners, when considering the exercise of discretion will also take account any recommendation from the Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committee on the effect and scope of medical or other mitigating circumstances affecting you that were submitted to the Personal Extenuating Circumstance Committee.

97. In exceptional circumstances, an individual programme, with Faculty Education Committee approval, may set additional criteria which must also be taken into account when determining the class of award. The additional criteria must be written into the individual programme regulations and programme handbooks.