

Policy for the Management of Academic Awards and Student Progression during Interruptions to Normal Timescales (INT)

1. Scope

- 1.1 This policy applies to exceptional circumstances affecting adversely the University's business in such a way as to prevent completion of student assessments and/or the operation of any Keele examination boards on the normal timescales, including those affecting the operation of Keele programmes delivered by a collaborative partner. These events, which would be determined formally by the Chair of Senate, could include, but not limited to, the loss of buildings (such library, halls of residence, teaching building), an epidemic, industrial action, and anything else that is likely to have a significant effect on student examinations, assessment and marking. The common feature is that students are prevented from completing the assessment process, as a result of serious interruptions to the University's business and through no fault of their own, within the normal timescales and in line with the regulations of the University.
- 1.2 These circumstances are provided for in the University Ordinances (Ordinance B6 paragraph 1), which state: "the Senate may, upon a report from the internal and external examiners concerned, and upon such further evidence and subject to such conditions as it shall think, award a master Degree, Degree, Diploma or Certificate."
- 1.3 The University will undertake its best endeavors to operate within the terms of this policy during times of disruption to normal business.
- 1.4 This policy sets out methods for managing the process of:
 - determining awards for finalist students;
 - allowing students on undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses to continue their programme of study when such an event (defined hereafter as an "*interruption to normal timescales (INT)*") occurs.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 "Progression" is the process of confirming whether or not a student has completed their current level of study and so is permitted to progress or proceed to the next academic level of study.
- 2.2 The progression outcome for undergraduate students on the majority of programmes (Regulation D2) are as follows:
 - 'progress' where a student achieves 120 credits at an academic level of study;
 - 'proceed' where a student, without 120 credits at an academic level of study, is nevertheless allowed to start study at the next academic level. In these circumstances, students are required to undertake assessment and achieve the missing credits during the academic year into which they have proceeded.
- 2.3 Progression for Postgraduate Taught students is set out in Regulations C7.
- 2.4 The term 'finalist' in this document refers to students nearing the completion of their studies at level 6 (bachelors degree programmes) or level 7 (integrated masters degree programmes).
- 2.5 With respect to units of assessment, the following definitions apply:
 - An "assessment element" is a unit of assessment contributing to an assessment component of a module.
 - An "assessment component" consists of one or more assessment elements.
 - An overall module mark consists of one or more assessment components

3. Students with Incomplete Assessment Components for Modules

- 3.1 In cases where there are, at the time of the relevant discipline examination board, missing or unmarked assessment components, provided that marks are available for assessment components contributing at least 67% to the overall module mark, then the marks for the assessment components that are available can be used to determine the overall module mark, and where this is a pass mark, credit can be awarded. Where the missing or unmarked assessment component/s constitutes more than 33% of the overall module mark, then the examination board will determine that the module result has to be

Version No:	1.1	Approved By:	Council	Approval Date:	06 Nov 2014	Owner:	Student and Academic Services	Review Date:	Nov 2016
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deferred until such time as assessment marks for components contributing a minimum of 67% to the overall module mark become available. Where an assessment component is comprised of multiple assessment elements which are aggregated to determine the assessment component mark that is entered into the student record system, and where some of the assessment element marks are missing, then the discipline examination board may apply academic judgement in determining whether the available elements are sufficient to determine the mark for the assessment component.

- 3.2. If and when the marks for the missing assessment component/s become available, the overall module mark will be recalculated and this will be recorded as the revised agreed mark, but the mark awarded will be no lower than the originally agreed mark.
- 3.3. In cases where one or more assessment components have not been undertaken, but assessment components contributing to at least 67% of the overall module mark have been undertaken and marked, then students will not be required to undertake the missing assessment component/s, unless professional accreditation requirements apply. Although they will have the option of taking such assessment if they wish, students who are allowed to progress to their next level of study will be counselled upon the potential impact of this on their overall assessment load. Where the missing component/s contributes more than 33%, there will have to be further assessment until the threshold of at least 67% is reached.

4. Progression and Award Decision-making

4.a) Finalists

4.a.1 Finalist students with marks available for all modules studied, including from those modules with a calculated overall mark based on at least 67% of completed assessments (para. 3 above), will have their awards calculated in the normal way.

4.a.2 Such students will be presented to the University examination board where all module marks, including those with a calculated overall mark based on at least 67% of completed assessment components (para.3 above), will be confirmed.

4.a.3 Where the result of outstanding assessment/s becomes available at a later date and results in a higher module mark/s, then the student's award will be recalculated to check if they are now entitled to a higher classification.

4.a.4 The University will not award a degree unless a student has overall module marks available for all modules studied.

4.a.5 All students will however be issued with an interim transcript (HEAR) (signed by the Director of PAA) which will include the following information for prospective employers and other education institutions (for those applying for postgraduate study):

- The confirmed marks for modules taken at previous Levels of study
- Those marks from Level 6 that were confirmed by the examination board
- Details of those modules, including module code and title, for which no or only partial assessment outcomes are available
- Statement concerning the Keele Graduate Attributes
- Explanation of the circumstances affecting the assessment of students and steps that will be taken by the University once normal business resumes

4.b) Continuing Students

4.b.1 The University's regulations describe the circumstances under which a student may not progress/proceed to the next academic level. It would be unreasonable to refuse to progress a student with evidence of good engagement with studies and good academic performance whose credits fell short of the requirements through no fault of their own, and where the available marks do not suggest that they would not be able to meet the normal progression requirements.

Version No:	1.0	Approved By:	Council	Approval Date:	06 Nov 2014	Owner:	Planning & Academic Administration	Review Date:	Nov 2016
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4b.2 Where progression cannot be determined within the normal timescale, the University should defer the formal date of progression until the outcome of all assessments is known. The normal threshold standards as set out in the University regulations will be applied when progression decisions are taken.

4.b.3 Where there is an incomplete set of marks, students should normally be permitted to proceed provisionally to the next academic year and to begin work at the next academic level, unless there is clear evidence based on the existing marks that the progressions thresholds cannot be met when the outstanding marks are available.

4.b.4 The University should normally ensure that outstanding assessments and/or resits (when outcomes are known) are held at the earliest opportunity.

4.b.8 Once the progression status of students is formally determined by the examination board, those students who have failed to meet the normal progression standards will not be permitted to continue to studying at the higher level of the programme. They will be offered the normal options as provided for in the University Regulations during the current or next academic year: repeat assessments for failed modules; repeat the complete year of study in the next academic year, following a leave of absence for the current academic year and financial reimbursement of any reasonable expenses incurred directly and reasonably as a result of beginning the next level of study prior to the progression outcome being known and which would not otherwise have been incurred, subject to proof being provided that such expenses were in fact incurred. The University may also exceptionally provide the opportunity for a partial repeat year of study, thereby enabling students to retake the failed modules with attendance and to be provided with two assessments attempts with the first uncapped (in line with the provisions for a full repeat year of study).

5. Changes to Assessment Arrangements

5.1 Disruption of students' programmes of study (affecting either continuing students or finalists), including excessive assessment burdens and/or significant delays in assessment should be minimised in the interests of the quality of the educational student experience. The following mitigating actions should be considered:

- alternative methods of assessment - to enable late assessment or reassessment on different timescales to the normal University examination periods.
- additional opportunities to sit the assessments in the original format.

5.2 Any change of assessment will require prior formal approval by the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Education and Student Experience (or another Chair of a University Examination Board) under advisement from the Director of Planning and Academic Administration and in consultation with the relevant Dean. Proposals should be submitted by the Head of School (or the Director of Learning and Teaching nominated by the Head of School) in writing and should be based on the following criteria:

- Proposal provides an appropriate means of assessing the student learning outcomes;
- Proposal reduces the residual assessment burden during the next level of study, for example, by providing an opportunity for an assessment in early autumn (prior to the next academic year) for submission remotely.

5.3 Once a decision has been made and communicated by PAA to the School, it will be the responsibility of the Head of School to ensure the students are notified formally in sufficient time prior to the assessment date or deadline of the timing and nature of the assessment.

6. Exclusions

6.1 A number of Keele Programmes have regulations that reflect the requirements of professional bodies for progression to the next academic level of study. Unless explicitly prevented by professional accreditation requirements, the principles in this paper for proceeding to the next academic year should normally apply to these courses, whilst noting that there may be pre-requisites for commencing certain elements of the next academic level of study.

7. Operation of Examination Boards

7.1 Discipline and University examination boards shall operate in accordance with Regulation D3 in all respects other than those set out in this section or otherwise approved by the Senate. Regardless of any temporary change in the operation and terms of reference of examination boards, Senate requires

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that no change may be introduced which could be deemed to jeopardize the reputation and academic standards of its awards.

- 7.2 Discipline examination boards shall be convened in the usual manner. Guidance on the operation of discipline examination boards will be issued by the Head of Records and Examination and Head of Governance and Quality Assurance and will provide detailed guidance on the powers and operation of a discipline examination board, for progression or award classification purposes, where normal business in any part of the assessment process has been interrupted. The constitution of the discipline examination board shall be as set out in Regulation 9. Quoracy rules may be relaxed but in order to be quorate, the board must, as a minimum include a Chair, Secretary, at least one External Examiner and the programme / subject leads. Where it is not possible to achieve this attendance, the business of the discipline examination board has to be referred up to be covered by the University Examination Board.
- 7.3 University examination boards shall be convened in the usual manner. Guidance on the operation of any university examination board will be issued by the Head of Records and Examinations and Head of Governance and Quality Assurance and will provide detailed guidance on the powers and operation of a university board, for progression or award classification purposes, where normal business in any part of the assessment process has been interrupted. The constitution of university examination boards shall be as set out in Regulation D3. Quoracy rules may be relaxed but in order to be quorate, the board must, as a minimum include a Chair, Secretary, at least one Faculty Chief External Examiner and at least one member of staff to represent each School with candidates under consideration.
- 7.4. In order to make it possible for examination boards to consider the maximum number of candidates presenting themselves with a full set of module marks, the normal timing of boards may be locally adapted and, at the request of the Senate, centrally co-ordinated. Where it is necessary for boards to make provisional decisions, as set out in 4.a.2 and 4.b.3 above, they will reconvene with full membership at such time when complete sets of marks are available to convert provisional into final progression decisions and to classify any outstanding awards. In cases where it is deemed that progression or award decisions need to be finalized with particular urgency after the return to normal business, for example in the case of some professional programmes, the Chair of the relevant board shall be authorized by the Senate to make such decisions on behalf of the board in liaison with at least one of the subject external examiners. All such decisions shall be reported to the next full meeting of the board of examiners.

8. Graduation

- 8.1 The University will hold graduation ceremonies on the published dates in July for all students set out in 4.a.1 above and who are awarded a minimum of a pass degree.
- 8.2 Those students with one or more module mark outstanding, and therefore where a degree award cannot yet be awarded, will also be invited to attend the July graduation ceremonies, provided that the module marks that are available would entitle them to a minimum of a pass degree.
- 8.3 For those students who do not yet have sufficient module marks available to attain a minimum of a pass degree, a later graduation opportunity will be provided once sufficient module marks become available to entitle them to a pass degree or higher.

9. Student Redress

- 9.1 Students are entitled to seek redress through the normal internal complaints and appeals channels as provided for in the University Regulations. However, they would not be entitled to appeal on the grounds of procedural irregularity based solely on the operation of this policy.

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