

VII. Regulations for Research Masters Degree Programmes (excluding MPhil programmes)

These regulations apply to all postgraduate students registered in academic year 2020/21 (or in the case of B. Masters' Degree Entrance Requirements, are applying during 2020/21).

These regulations shall be understood in conjunction with requirements laid down in the General Regulations and the Examination Regulations of the University, and shall be read together with any examination regulations specific to the relevant programme, as approved by the relevant Faculty Postgraduate Research Committee.

Variations to the regulations, non-standard stage weightings and exceptions to the Qualifications and Credit Framework can only be agreed by University Education Committee (UEC), except where the power is explicitly vested in the relevant Faculty Education Committee (FEC), DPD and/or Dean of Postgraduate Studies in the regulations themselves.

Where these regulations refer to Academic Unit, this is an overarching term for School and Institute.

Where these regulations refer to the Degree Programme Director, Dean of Postgraduate Studies or Head of Academic Unit, this role could be undertaken by an approved nominee.

A. Glossary of Terms

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

- a) **Assessment:** 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) **Award:** A qualification awarded by the University on completion of a programme of study;
- c) **Class of award:** a means of distinguishing the achievement of different students of the intended learning outcomes of a programme. Postgraduate entry awards are classified as Pass, Pass with Merit or Pass with Distinction as defined in the *University Common Scale* for returning marks;
- d) **Compulsory module:** a module which a student, registered for a degree programme, is required to study;
- e) **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;

- f) **Core module:** a module which students must pass, and in which a fail mark may neither be carried nor compensated; such modules are designated by the Board of Studies as essential for progression to a further stage of the programme or for further study in a further module and shall clearly be shown as core in the programme regulations.
- g) **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, independent study, or assessment.;
- h) **Degree Programme Director:** a member of University academic staff who is responsible for the day-to-day management of a degree programme;
- i) **Degree programme regulations:** the regulations approved by the University for a particular programme of study ;
- j) **Dissertation:** an exercise in research or scholarship forming part of the student's programme of study;
- k) **Entry award:** the award for which a student is registered;
- l) **Exit award:** awarded where a student does not satisfy the requirements for the award on which they are registered, but meets the requirements of an award with fewer credits (e.g. postgraduate certificate or a postgraduate diploma);
- m) **Module:** A discrete component of a programme of study that has 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. Modules are allocated credit values and have a defined level;
- n) **Non-modular aggregated assessment:** assessment having the purpose of assessing a student's cross-modular understanding;
- o) **Postgraduate academic year:** An academic year from the first day of the first semester to two weeks before the start of the following academic year (i.e. September to September). Some programmes may have alternative start dates;
- p) **Postgraduate Certificate:** a programme or exit award comprising 60 credits in line with the University's *Qualifications and Credit Framework, with at least 40 of at Level 7;*
- q) **Postgraduate Diploma:** a programme or exit award comprising 120 credits in line with the University's *Qualifications and Credit Framework, with at least 90 credits at Level 7;*
- r) **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;*
- s) **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;

- t) **Taught element:** the remainder of the research master's programme once the dissertation is excluded;
- u) **University Common Scale:** the scale for the return of marks as set out in *Taught Programme Regulations – Specific Progression and Classification Rules*. The scale defines the range of marks to be given to represent degree classifications, and is designed to ensure consistency and fairness to students across all modules.

B. Masters Degree Entrance Requirements

2. An applicant may be approved for admission as a student 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 for an Award

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 Assessment Regulations and the programme regulations;
- c) satisfy any conditions in the relevant programme regulations which define progress leading to the dissertation element of the programme. Such programme specific regulations shall be approved by the relevant Faculty Education Committee.

D. Patterns of Study

4. A Degree Programme Director has the 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 the Degree Programme Director, 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. This is also subject to the student having appropriate immigration status. For international students, advice should be sought from the [Visa Team](#). Part-time students will be required to pass each stage of the part-time programme.

6. The Degree Programme Directors of both programmes may permit a student to transfer programme during the academic year, provided there is significant overlap in

the modules previously studied. Such transfers shall be reported to the board of studies and Faculty Postgraduate Research 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.

7. A Degree Programme Director may permit a student to select modules in substitution for modules specified in the programme regulations. Such permission shall not override the provisions of 'III Progress Regulations for Taught Programmes - B Module Registration'. 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, where there is a clear academic rationale;
- b) delay of the student's attempt at the whole assessment for the module(s) concerned to the August/September resit examinations, or equivalent resit period, 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:

- a) Failure to attend for interview with the Personal Tutor, Degree Programme Director or other academic staff as required in connection with failure to attend programme of study or failure to make satisfactory progress.

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

- b) Failure to attend regularly the programme of study without good cause;
- c) Failure to perform adequately, or satisfy the examiners, in work prescribed for the programme of study;
- d) Failure to submit written work required under your programme regulations (whether or not such work counts for assessment purposes) at the required time;
- e) Failure to attend examinations or pass the prescribed examinations for your programme; 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 or complete satisfactorily an INTO pre-session programme,
- i) 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 in that environment.
- j) If you are an international student who is in breach of your visa conditions, please refer to General Regulations I 33-34

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.

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, invited to make a written response and given the opportunity of an interview with the Degree Programme Director. 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, provided that the student was invited to attend an interview, including notice that the interruption or termination of the student's programme was likely to be considered, and advised to bring details of any medical or personal circumstances (with evidence) relevant to the student's progress.

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 under the [Academic Queries and Appeals procedure](#) within 14 calendar days of the written notification of the action.

Note: Even though there may be 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 I 34.

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/Degree Programme Director and Head of Academic Unit, to study outside the University (or an approved campus) for more than one month. Approval should normally be sought three months in advance of the start of the period of outside study, where possible, and the Dean of Postgraduate Studies should be satisfied before the beginning of the period of study that:

- a) the student will have access to adequate facilities, resources and appropriate research training;
- b) the student will have sufficient time available for study and research;
- 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 Academic Unit in line with University guidelines and University Insurance policies.

All study visits, of any duration to high-risk location must also be signed off by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies, or Faculty PVC under certain circumstances (more information is available in the [Guidance for Postgraduate Student Travel](#)).

Notes:

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

(ii) that a 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.*
- *have their attendance monitored on the programme, including time registered as a pending or extended submission student.*
- *adhere to their deadline for submission, unless an extension or interruption of studies has been agreed as part of the outside study approval.*

(iii) that it is unlikely that that an outside study request will be approved in the month before a student's dissertation submission deadline.

Notes for Tier 4 Visa Holders

(iv) that a student is required to inform the University if they are away from Newcastle (or approved campus) as a condition of their visa sponsorship.

(v) that a student who leaves the UK to write-up in their home country or elsewhere, will normally have their Tier 4 visa curtailed.

G. Assessment

18. There is one final mark for each module but, where module outlines specify, a student may be required to meet a prescribed threshold in specific 'essential' 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 without any increase in the original mark. 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. The modes of assessment permitted shall be those specified in the degree programme regulations, programme specifications, module specifications and handbook. Where the assessment does not take the form of written examinations, rules to be observed by students (for example, in relation to the size, form and submission dates for examinable coursework or dissertations, and including rules governing the arrangements for the retention and recall of assessed work) shall be those specified in the degree programme handbook.

20. Any late submission of an assessment or dissertation shall be considered in line with the University's [Submission of Work Policy](#).

H. Provisions for Interruption of Progress

21. The University reserves the right to suspend or terminate a student's studies. This will generally be in accordance with normal academic regulations or student procedures noted within University Regulations.

22. In such cases a student will have the right to appeal under the Academic Queries and Appeals procedure.

Exclusion for delayed progress

23. The following students shall be automatically excluded from further study;

- a) a full-time student following a one-year programme who is more than one year overdue;
- b) a full-time student following a programme longer than one year who is more than two years overdue; *or*
- c) a part-time student who is more than two years overdue.

unless given express permission by the Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committee. The Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committee shall be advised by the Degree Programme Director on any quality and accreditation issues relevant to the degree programme in question and on whether the student has met the learning outcomes of the programme as currently delivered. The Personal Extenuating

Circumstances Committee shall specifically consider the needs of disabled students where the disability leads to delays in progress and take into account any recommendations from the Student Health and Wellbeing Service along with any recommendations arising from the Support to Study Procedure

Permission for Interruption of Normal Progress

24. Subject to regulation 23, the Degree Programme Director may give permission for a student to interrupt normal progress within the programme;

Resumption of Normal Progress

25. When a student resumes normal progress, the student shall proceed with the programme of study only under the regulations then applicable to the next and remaining stages of the programme. Any variation in module selection made necessary by the interruption shall be considered as set out in Section D (Patterns of Study), with Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committee approval required if assessments need to be varied or set aside.

Permission to Repeat Tuition

26. A student may only be permitted to repeat a period of tuition with the express approval of the Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committee. The Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committee may also consider the setting aside of previous assessment attempts (see Regulation L37). You will be required to pay tuition fees for any additional period of registration.

Assessment Requirements for Students Returning after an Interruption of Study

27. 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. The Degree Programme Director may approve variations to the normal pattern of study where the programme has changed.

J. Supervisory Arrangements

28. 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 Academic Unit 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 Programmes](#) provides details on changes to supervisory teams and on appropriate supervisory support for research students.

K. Applications from Members of Staff of the University

29. 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.

30. The relevance of the chosen programme to the employment (or agreed future work) of the member of staff will be determined by the relevant Head of Academic

Unit/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 Academic Unit 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.

31. A member of staff may be permitted to register for a postgraduate programme in their own Academic Unit, but in such a case all work must be considered by an external examiner.

32. 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.

L. Examination Committee

33. 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 Postgraduate Research Committee and to the Examinations Office.

Chair of the Examination Committee

34. 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 normal practices 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

35. 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. In all cases of the exercise of discretion, the reason for the decision shall be recorded.

Personal Extenuating Circumstances (PEC) Committee

36. A Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committee shall be appointed by each Examination Committee to review and consider medical and mitigating circumstances which may have an effect on a student's performance. One Personal Extenuating Circumstances 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 Committee's recommendations, including a summary of action taken throughout the year by the Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committee, members and delegated staff, to the Chair of the Examination Committee.

37. If a student's academic performance is seriously affected by medical or personal circumstances, and they would like to request some adjustment to take account of this, a student should submit a Personal Extenuating Circumstance Form in line with the Personal Extenuating Circumstance policy <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/Regulations/Procedures/change/PEC.htm>. 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 in a timely manner. A student who fails to disclose relevant circumstances to the Committee at the time of impact, should be aware that this may have a bearing on any future appeal.

38. 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 Personal Extenuating Circumstances Committee and the Examination Committee in accordance with the requirements of data protection legislation. *Guidance on Personal Extenuating Circumstances procedure is provided by the Student Progress Service (www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress)*

39. 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 the Examination Committee with an assessment of the scope and severity of mitigating circumstances affecting a student, which have not been addressed by a-h above (i.e. to recommend the use of discretion).

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 39 a-i above must be approved by the appropriate Dean of Postgraduate Studies.

Internal and External Examiner

40. A student's research dissertation shall be examined by one Internal and one External Examiner nominated by the Head of Academic Unit and appointed by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies. The examination shall consist of a review and assessment of the student's research dissertation (and where appropriate, other artefacts). A student may be required to take an oral examination in addition to submitting a research dissertation.

41. 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 student's Academic Unit. (*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.

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

42. 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](#).

43. 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.

44. 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.

N. Marking Procedures

45. All examiners should carry out assessments in accordance with the published assessment criteria approved by Faculty Postgraduate Research Committees and normally available in programme handbooks.

46. In line with the University's [Policy and Guidance on Moderation and Scaling](#) 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 Examination Committee 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 had the work been submitted on time must be recorded and must be available to the Examination Committee, if required.

P. Return of Marks

47. The mark for each module on a Master's 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

48. 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.

49. The rounding of marks shall follow the regulation: 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.

R. Releasing and Adjusting Marks

50. 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.

S. Credits Required and Using Credit Value

51. 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.

T. Progression within Research Masters' Programmes

52. 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.

U. Reassessment

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

54. 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.

55. The deeming of a first attempt failure on a module as a 'condoned fail' in V60 b) does not remove the right to reassessment. A student who has one or more modules deemed to be condoned fails may still undertake reassessment in those modules either for the purpose of improving their transcript or the purpose of improving their overall average (calculated as prescribed in W62).

56. The form of the reassessment at any stage may vary from the original, at the discretion of the board of studies. The Board of Studies may delegate this authority to the Examination Committee, but students who are to be reassessment must be informed of the style of the reassessment to be adopted, including identification of various assessment components and weightings. Changes to the format of assessment must apply to the whole cohort.

57. 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 Examination Committee.

58. A student who is entitled 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 Examination Committee. 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.

V. Principles of Discretion

59. The Examination Committee has the discretion to override the normal regulations to pass a student, in the whole (or any part) of the assessment, at any stage. A student's 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 a student's disadvantage.

60. Despite a student's results, while taking account of any 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:
 - i. the student has passed all other taught modules
 - ii. the relevant marks are in the range 40 – 49 and
 - iii. 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 Regulations U54 – U57, but a condoned fail will not diminish eligibility for a Merit or Distinction under Regulation Z69. In such circumstances the student will retain the right to a second attempt at the module, subject to the provision of Section U (Reassessment).

- c) Recommend a student eligible to leave the University with an award, for a higher award or degree classification.

61. Where the Examination Committee exercises discretion the reasons for the decision must be recorded in the minutes. 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 Regulation AA71 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 Postgraduate Research Committees for review.

W. Use of Marks after Reassessment or Discretion

62. 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, the actual (uncapped) module mark achieved by the student, using the normal University scale, will be shown 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 module 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.

X. Nature of the Dissertation Examination

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

64. The Examiners shall determine whether or not the student should be examined orally. The normal practice will be that an oral examination is only convened when the External Examiner contacts the Graduate School 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 student;
- b) test the ability of the student to defend his or her work;
- c) establish whether the student has a satisfactory knowledge of the wider field surrounding the research topic.

65. If an oral examination is required, the Dissertation 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 Dissertation 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.

66. 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 student. Any oral examination shall be conducted in accordance with the guidelines in the University's [Handbook for Examiners of Research Degrees](#).

67. In examining a student'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 student's work shows evidence of adequate industry and application. With regard to the merit of the work, the student is expected to show distinct ability in conducting research investigations and in testing ideas, whether the student's own or others'. The exposition of the work in the research dissertation must be clear and must show that the student understands the relationship of the work embodied in the research dissertation and the theme of that work to a wider field of knowledge.

Y. Recommendations Open to the Examiners

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

- a) That the student be awarded the relevant Research Masters degree;

- b) That the student 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 student be returned to the examination committee for consideration of a postgraduate diploma or postgraduate certificate.

Z. The Award and Classification of Masters Degrees

69. A student is entitled, 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 entitled to 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 final programme average, if they 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 to a student failing up to 10 credits of non-core modules.

70. The class of award is determined as follows and returned to the Graduate School by the Examination Committee:

- a) A student is entitled as of right to the class of degree yielded by the final programme average for all modules and all non-modular aggregated assessment taking credit values into account.
- b) A student with a final programme average within two marks (after rounding of marks) of a class boundary, 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 the research dissertation, as recommended by the examiners;
 - iii. Progressive improvement in a student's performance

However, the Examination Committee are not limited to this category of student when considering the use of discretion.

The Examination Committee when considering the exercise of discretion, will also take into account any recommendation from the Personal Extenuating Circumstance Committee on the effect and scope of Medical or other mitigating circumstances affecting the student that were submitted to the Personal Extenuating Circumstance Committee, see Regulation L36.

AA. Award of a Postgraduate Diploma (exit award)

71. A student 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 student who has achieved an average mark of at least 50 over the course of 120 credits, which may include the dissertation element.

72. 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 Regulations V59-61.

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

BB. Award of a Postgraduate Certificate (exit award)

74. A student 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 student who has achieved an average mark of at least 50 over the course of 60 credits.

75. 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 Regulations V59-61.

76. The award of a postgraduate certificate is not classified under this provision.

CC. Minor Revisions or Corrections

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

78. In exceptional cases, an extension of time for making the corrections may be granted by the appropriate Dean of Postgraduate Studies, subject to the student presenting a case justifying such an extension, supported by the student's main supervisor.

79. It shall be the expectation that the research dissertation will not require referral back to the external examiner and that the student 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.

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

80. Where a student 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 Regulations 68 (a) or (c) only.

EE. Provision to the student of Information about Revisions Required

81. In all cases where a student 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 student and the student '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 student and the Student's Dissertation Supervisor. When forwarding the final report to the student, it will be made clear to the student that resubmission will not guarantee the award of a qualification.

FF. Communication of the Result to the Student

82. In any case where an examiner chooses to give the candidate an informal indication as to the recommendation that will be put forward, the examiner concerned must stress that the recommendation is subject to ratification. Only the Graduate School Manager, on behalf of the Academic Registrar is empowered to issue official result and provide notification of this to the candidate

GG. Disagreement between the Examiners

83. 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.

84. 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 student 's research dissertation and decide whether an oral examination is required. If there is to be an oral examination the student 's Dissertation 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. They shall submit a final report to the relevant Graduate School which will, subject to the approval of the relevant Examinations Committee, be forwarded to the student and the student 's supervisor in the normal way.

85. Where an additional Examiner has been appointed, the student shall be informed of this and whether another oral examination is required. The student shall not be informed as to the nature of the disagreement and shall not be given a copy of their report. If, however, the student 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 student and the student 's supervisory team.

86. In the event that recommendation 68 (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.

HH. Mid-year Student Withdrawals

87. 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 Examination Committee.