THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

STUDENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Examination Conventions for Modular Undergraduate Programmes 20165-176

(also available from www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/exams/conventions)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The following conventions should be read in conjunction with the University’s General Regulations (www.shef.ac.uk/calendar); reference should also be made to the General Regulations for Degrees in particular Faculties and to the Regulations for individual programmes of study. These conventions do not override or modify the Regulations in any way.

1.2 The conventions are intended as guidelines within which the departments and Faculties will normally work. However, it is the ultimate responsibility of Faculties to recommend in the case of each student that result which is deemed just in the light of all the evidence presented to the Examiners. Additional guidelines relating to degree award recommendations are provided in section 4 below.

1.3 Further information on a range of aspects relating to assessment policy and practice may be found within the Learning and Teaching Services website (www.shef.ac.uk/lets/pp/assessment). Guidance may be found there on the role of external examiners, the conduct of examination boards, procedures relating to anonymous marking, dealing with the use of unfair means (e.g. plagiarism), implementing the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, and other matters.

1.4 Further information on administrative processes related to examinations and assessment may be found within the Student Services website (www.shef.ac.uk/exams). Guidance may be found there on how to prepare examination papers, managing examination boards, processing, reporting and publication of examination results and dealing with student misconduct.

2. EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES

2.1 It is the responsibility of students to notify their tutors and supervisors, or other appropriate departmental staff, at the earliest opportunity if there are any extenuating circumstances that might have a bearing on their examination performance. Students should provide notification by completion and submission of a Special Extenuating Circumstances Form, along with any additional relevant documentary evidence where appropriate.

2.2 Departments should publish in their student handbooks any deadline by which students should notify their tutor or supervisor or other appropriate departmental staff of any extenuating circumstances which they wish the meeting of departmental examiners to be made aware of.

2.3 Departments should take medical circumstances into account when considering performance in assessed work and examinations, provided that adequate and written medical evidence is submitted. It is, the general, however, the expectation that a student who opts to take an examination is declaring themselves fit to do so. However, in certain more exceptional circumstances, departments may consider it appropriate to arrange for a student to attempt an examination in spite of medical circumstances, in order to act in the wider interests of the student’s well-being. Students who are taken ill during an examination...
will be expected to follow the correct procedures for notifying an Invigilator or other authorised person. It is the student's responsibility to notify their academic department of any withdrawal from an examination as soon as is reasonably possible, and to provide medical evidence in accordance with these Conventions and the Extenuating Circumstances Procedures.

A student should submit written medical evidence which states the nature, the date of onset and the duration (where this can be judged) of the medical problem. Medical evidence should normally be from the University Health Service, but may exceptionally be accepted from another suitably qualified authority. Where a student has medical problems that are ongoing and/or chronic, and affect more than one examination period, the student should keep their tutor or supervisor or other appropriate departmental staff informed, and may be required to submit further written medical evidence for subsequent examination periods. Students with ongoing medical conditions may be eligible for support from the Disability and Dyslexia Support Service (DDSS) and should refer to the DDSS website for information (www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/disability).

Where a student has disclosed a disability and where details have been passed to the Departmental Disability Liaison Officer by the Disability and Dyslexia Support Service, the student will not be expected to submit further written evidence at subsequent assessment and examination periods. On occasion, where any additional information concerning the impact of the disability at a particular examination period needs to be considered by the Examiners, the student should submit a Special Extenuating Circumstances Form but will not normally be expected to submit further written evidence. A student will, however, be expected to provide evidence to support other extenuating circumstances, not related to their disability, as detailed at 2.1 and 2.3 above.

2.4 Where extenuating circumstances have affected coursework but not invigilated examinations, and where these circumstances are appropriately evidenced, the student's tutor or supervisor or other appropriate departmental staff should normally consider granting an extension to the deadline for submission in the first instance. If this is not possible, then alternatively a department may consider taking action under points 2.5 or 2.6 below.

2.5 Where a student has completed all assessed work and examination/s, an adjustment of a grade/s may take place. At Level 1, this may be a departmental decision although reference should also be made to the External Examiner where appropriate. At Levels 2 and 3 the External Examiner should give their approval. Any such grade/s should be returned in the normal way, but departments should keep a record of any adjustments made.

2.6 Where a student is unable to complete an examination a 'Not Assessed' result may be returned and the student allowed to complete the examination as a first sitting on a future occasion. This will usually be in August for Level 1 & 2 examinations and may be in May-June and/or August in the case of Level 3 & 4 units, in order to enable final year candidates to graduate in the same year. (The Faculties of Engineering, Science and Social Sciences have agreed this practice in relation to final year not assessed candidates and the University Learning and Teaching Committee has recommended that all Faculties should adopt the policy).

2.7 Students should be made aware at the time any deferral is agreed that deferring an examination until August may, in the event of failure, mean that a resit examination cannot be taken until the following session and progression/graduation may be impeded as a result.

2.8 If departments wish to make use of the provisions of the General Regulation relating to Aegrotat Cases (Regulation 13), the case should be discussed at Faculty level (via the Taught
Programmes Office in Student Services) first, to ensure consistency of treatment. Such provisions should only be used in exceptional circumstances, such as cases where there appears to be no likelihood of the student concerned ever being able to complete the assessment in question, or where deferment of final examinations would have significant consequences for the student concerned. In all other cases, where a student has been unable to complete an assessment for medical reasons, a ‘Not Assessed’ result should be returned by the department and the student should be permitted a first attempt at the assessment at a later date.

(a) Aegrotat credit without grades for units can be awarded where the examiners are satisfied that a pass standard has been reached. In such cases, the degree would need to be determined without reference to this unit/s, taking due account of any unit/level weightings.

(b) The possibility of an aegrotat degree, should only be considered if a substantial part of the Final Examination (more than 60 credits) has not been completed.

2.9 Where the departmental examiners decide that, because of (written) medical evidence, a degree classification should be awarded which is higher than that justified by the grades, the Faculty (the Faculty Officers to whom the relevant powers have been delegated) must be informed and must confirm the award. See section 4.8 below for further guidelines.

2.10 Departments may take personal circumstances into account in the same way, but must satisfy themselves that the student has genuinely been affected by non-academic difficulties.

2.11 Marginal cases should always be referred to the Faculty to ensure comparability of treatment.

2.12 Medical and special personal circumstances should normally be regarded as confidential and discussions on whether the circumstances have affected a student’s examination performance or not, should be restricted to a pre-meeting of the main Examination Board specifically set up to consider such cases, and to the relevant Faculty Officer where necessary. A general recommendation, without communicating the details of the student’s special circumstances, should then be passed to the main Examination Board.

2.13 Notification of medical or personal circumstances, including assessments of dyslexia, which have not been submitted within any specified departmental deadline (as referred to in point 2.2. above) will not normally be considered by the meeting of departmental examiners. Such circumstances and will need to become the subject of an appeal under the Academic Appeals Regulations, following the publication of examination results to the student/s and must be submitted by the student in line with the specific grounds for appeal.

3 PROGRESSION AND FAILURE (continuing students)

3.1 Progression from Level 0 (Foundation Year) to Level 1
To pass the Foundation Year examination, students must obtain a grade of 40 or more in each individual module. Depending on the programme, in order to progress onto Level 1 of a University of Sheffield degree programme, students may be required to obtain a grade higher than the pass grade of 40 in some Foundation modules, and a higher weighted mean grade for the Year. A student who does not pass at the first sitting may resit the failed module in August. A student who fails in August will not be permitted to proceed to Level 1 but may repeat only the module(s) failed in the following Session. A student who has failed in August may repeat the appropriate module(s) as an internal or external student.
3.2 **Progression from Level 1 to Level 2**

3.3 The Examiners have discretion to decide whether students who have been awarded at least 100 credits and less than 120 credits may be deemed to have passed at Level 1 and permitted to proceed to Level 2, but only in cases where a grade of at least 30 has been achieved in the failed module(s). Permission to proceed in these circumstances is not automatic, and in reaching their decision the Examiners will take into account:

- whether satisfactory progress has been made across Level 1 as a whole;
- whether the student’s performance in those modules which have been passed provides compensation for the failed module(s);
- whether the student has made a demonstrable effort to succeed in the failed module(s), evidenced by adequate attendance and participation and completion of the relevant assessed work and examinations.

It should be noted that some Level 2 modules require passes in Level 1 core modules, and that, even if permission is granted to proceed to Level 2 with fewer than 120 credits, passes will normally be required in these core modules.

3.4 The above discretion may be exercised when results are approved by Faculties in June, or in August following the resit examinations. Where discretion is not exercised in June, and where the student fails again in August with a lower grade, the Examiners will take into account the original, higher, grade when deciding whether or not the student should be allowed to proceed to Level 2.

3.5 Level 1 students obtaining at least 100 credits and less than 120 credits and who have failed module(s) with grade(s) of less than 30 cannot be recommended for a pass overall nor be allowed to progress, with the exception of the following:

The situation may arise where a student has obtained at least 100 credits but failed module(s) with grade(s) of less than 30 in a subject which they will not be required to carry on with at subsequent levels. In some of these cases the single/dual department may feel that the student’s performance overall warrants recommendation to progress, in which case a request could be made to the department offering the module to consider returning an adjusted module grade of 30. Any agreed adjustment should normally include consideration as to whether the student has made a demonstrable effort to succeed in the failed module, evidenced by adequate attendance and participation and completion of the relevant assessed work and examinations, and confirmation that the department offering the module does not wish to hold the student back and prevent progression. The department offering the module may consider adjusting a grade in June after the end of the spring semester once a student’s module grades for the whole year are known, or following resit in August. Any such adjusted grade should be returned in the normal way by the department offering the module, but the department should keep a record of any adjustment made. The student’s home department should subsequently recommend a progression outcome taking into account any reported module grade adjustment if applicable.

Adjustment of module grades to 30 as described above should not be the norm, and this approach should only be taken in particular instances where a strong case can be made.

3.6 Discretion is not possible in the case of some professionally accredited programmes, and permission to proceed may also be denied where core modules have been failed.
3.7 The Faculty may permit a student who has failed part of the Level 1 examination to repeat the whole year as an internal student with attendance. Such decisions may be taken by the Faculty in response to any mitigating circumstances that a student may have presented and/or what may be in the student's best academic interests. All of the original grades will be retained in University records. However, on recommencement of the programme of study at Level 1, the count of attempts for all modules will be reset to zero and only the new grades will be taken into account at the end of the repeated year for the purposes of progression. It is important that students are made aware of the consequences of this arrangement, if permitted, since there is no guarantee that all grades will be improved during the repeated year.

3.8 Progression from Level 2 to Level 3

3.9 Bachelors degrees: The Examiners have discretion to decide whether students who have been awarded at least 100 credits and less than 120 credits may be deemed to have passed at Level 2 and permitted to proceed to Level 3. Permission to proceed in these circumstances is not automatic, and does not imply the waiver of prerequisite requirements, where modules to be taken at Level 3 require a pass in a related module at Level 2.

3.10 Integrated Masters degrees (e.g. MMath, MChem): In general, progression from Level 2 to Level 3 of Integrated Masters degrees should only be granted on the basis of the minimum credit and weighted mean grade requirements specified in the regulations of the programme in question. However, where students have been awarded at least 100 credits and less than 120 credits at Level 2, examiners may, on appropriate grounds, exercise discretion to permit progression to Level 3. Such discretion may normally only be exercised in cases where a weighted mean grade of at least 49.5 has been obtained for modules taken at Level 2. Permission to proceed in these circumstances is not automatic, and does not imply the waiver of prerequisite requirements, where modules to be taken at Level 3 require a pass in a related module at Level 2. Where discretion is not exercised, students must, depending on the requirements of the individual programme of study, remain on, or transfer back to, a Bachelors degree programme.

3.11 Discretion is not possible in the case of some professionally accredited programmes, and permission to proceed may also be denied where core modules have been failed.

3.12 Students who achieve fewer than 120 credits, but who are allowed to proceed to Level 3 may choose to resit some or all of the failed modules in order to improve their level of performance, subject to the maximum number of attempts available (see 3.14-3.18 below for students who commenced Level 1 prior to September 2012. And 3.19-3.23 for students who commenced Level 1 in/after September 2012). Candidates who choose to do this must notify the relevant academic department/s of their intentions and register for the August resit examination/s by the published re-examination entry deadline in July. Students who do not resit their failed modules in August will not normally be permitted to do so at a later date, except where the agreement of the department and the relevant Faculty Officer has been obtained prior to the August examination. In these cases, it is important that Departments make students aware of the resulting increased workload during the following year. No more than a bare pass (i.e. 40) may be obtained in a Level 2 resit examination; where such students obtain a lower grade in the resit examination, the permission to proceed to Level 3 will stand, and the grade achieved on the first attempt will supercede that achieved in the resit.

3.13 Progression from Level 3 to Level 4 (integrated Masters degrees)

The Examiners have discretion to decide whether students who have been awarded at least 100 credits and less than 120 credits at Level 3 may be permitted to proceed to Level 4, but
only in cases where a weighted mean grade of 49.5 has been obtained for modules taken at Level 3. Permission to proceed in these circumstances is not automatic, and does not imply the waiver of prerequisite requirements, where modules taken at Level 4 require a pass in a related module at Level 3. Students in respect of whom discretion is not exercised or who fail to meet the above requirement may be considered for the award of a Bachelors degree.

3.14 Repeat examinations (students who commenced Level 1 prior to September 2012)

A student who fails a module or modules during Level 1 or Level 2 may resit the examination(s) in August. Departments will determine the form of the resit examination (which may differ from the examination held at the end of the previous two semesters) and the parts of the examination to be retaken.

Level 2 resit results will be capped at 40 which is the maximum mark overall that can be awarded for a resit at this Level.

3.15 A student who fails a module or modules during Level 1 or Level 2 may resit the examination(s) in August. Departments will determine the form of the resit examination (which may differ from the examination held at the end of the previous two semesters) and the parts of the examination to be retaken.

Level 2 resit results will be capped at 40 which is the maximum mark overall that can be awarded for a resit at this Level.

3.16 A student who fails again in August may repeat the module(s) failed in the following session, with or without attendance. A department may if necessary prescribe that failed module(s) are repeated with attendance. Except where the failed module is core to the degree programme, an alternative module may replace the failed module provided that the student attends the new module and completes any required coursework. Where an alternative module is taken to substitute for a previously failed module the result will still be capped at 40 at Level 2 and beyond.

3.17 Where a student fails a repeated year, their case is normally referred by the relevant department to the Faculty Student Review Committee for consideration.

3.18 A student who fails a module or modules during their final year of study and who has not been recommended for the award of a degree, may be reassessed on one occasion, subject to time limits, either in the following year or during August of the year of failure, as determined by the relevant department. See also point 4.7 below.

Level 3 and 4 resit results will be capped at 40, which is the maximum grade overall that can be awarded for a resit for modules at FHEQ Levels 4, 5 and 6.

However, for students commencing Level 3/4 modules at FHEQ Level 7 in or after September 2013, resit results will be capped at 50, which is the maximum grade overall that can be awarded for a resit for modules at FHEQ Level 7.

3.19 Repeat Examinations (students who commenced Level 1 in or after September 2012)

3.20 Resit results will be capped in accordance with the maximum overall grade that can be awarded for the relevant FHEQ Level. Resit results will be capped at 40 for modules at FHEQ Levels 4, 5 and 6 (Levels of study 1-3). However, for students commencing FHEQ Level 7 modules in or after September 2013 (Levels of study 3/4), resit results will be capped at 50.

3.21 Level 1:
A student who fails a module or modules during Level 1 may resit in August. Departments will determine the form of the resit examination (which may differ from the examination held previously) and the parts of the examination to be retaken.

A student who fails Level 1 at resit in August may repeat the failed module(s) on one further occasion in the following session, with or without attendance. A department may if necessary prescribe that failed module(s) are repeated with attendance. Except where the failed module is core to the degree programme, an alternative module may replace the failed
module provided that the student attends the new module and completes any required assessment. Where an alternative module is taken to substitute for a previously failed module the result will still be capped at 40.

Where a Level 1 student fails a repeated year, they will be withdrawn from their programme of study as an unsuccessful completion and their registration terminated.

3.22 Level 2:
A student who fails a module or modules during Level 2 may resit on one occasion in August. Departments will determine the form of the resit examination (which may differ from the examination held previously) and the parts of the examination to be retaken.

A student who fails Level 2 at resit in August may not repeat the failed module(s) again, but will be withdrawn from their programme of study as an unsuccessful completion and their registration terminated.

3.23 Level 3 (Bachelors degrees) and Level 4 (Integrated Masters degrees):
A student who fails a module or modules during their final year of study and who has not been recommended for the award of a degree, may be reassessed on one occasion, subject to time limits, either in the following year or during August of the year of failure, as determined by the relevant department. Departments will determine the form of the resit examination (which may differ from the examination held previously) and the parts of the examination to be retaken. See also point 4.7 below.

4. FINAL DEGREE RECOMMENDATIONS (Level 3 & 4 students)

4.1 If a student is permitted to register for more than 120 credits at any of Levels 2, 3 or 4, it must be agreed in writing from the outset (i.e. not once grades are known) which units are to count towards the degree classification.

4.2 Full details for the calculation of degree classifications for students commencing Level 2 in 2006-07 onwards are set out in the General Regulations for First Degrees (www.shef.ac.uk/calendar).

4.3 Approval has been granted in certain Faculties for the use of non-standard level weighting policies for the calculation of degree classifications. Departments who obtained such approval for specific degree programmes should ensure that the relevant programme regulations in the University Calendar contain details of the weightings to be used.

4.4 The Regulations permit the award of a pass degree to candidates who have obtained at least 180 credits at Levels 2 and 3 (or at least 210 credits in the case of Bachelors level language programmes in the School of Languages and Cultures). This is not an automatic right and the Examiners (including the External Examiner) must make a positive, written, recommendation to the relevant Faculty Officers that a particular case be considered.

4.5 In cases where a student with a consistently satisfactory record produces an unexpectedly poor level of performance in a part of the Final Examination and seems likely to fail, a Head of Department may arrange for formative course work previously completed by the student and not forming part of the examination, to be submitted to the External Examiner(s). This must normally be done in good time before the meeting of the departmental examiners and must show beyond doubt that the student's performance has been of degree standard in all units or part units. Provided the External Examiners agree, the department may then recommend the award of a degree.
4.6 A student who fails the final examination and is required to retake failed units should retake all the units failed in the final examination, as although it is possible for a degree to be awarded where a student has obtained 180 or more credits at Levels 2 and 3 (or 210 credits or more for Bachelors level language programmes in the School of Languages and Cultures), or 280 credits or more at Levels 2, 3 and 4, this is not automatic.

4.7 A student who fails the final examination at Level 3 and is required to pass failed units at resit will not be eligible for the award of an Honours Degree.

4.8 Recommendation of a degree award notwithstanding the Regulations

In cases where the Examiners wish to exercise discretion to recommend the award of a degree notwithstanding the Regulations (i.e. to invoke former Regulation 42 (now Regulation 45) of the General Regulations for First Degrees) the following guidelines should be used.

The document "Guidance on Current Degree Classification Methodology" (available at www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/exams/classification) contains a description of the methodology for determining degrees in line with the General Regulations for First Degrees. Terminology from this document is referred to below.

(a) Where the 'Combined Classification' is indicated as borderline and the Final Period Weighted Mean Grade is at the higher class, i.e. is at least 69.5 or 59.5 or 49.5 etc.

The Examination Board may exercise discretion as to whether to recommend the higher class without reference to Regulation 45.

Such cases do not need to be reported separately to the Faculty.

(b) Where the 'Combined Classification' is indicated as borderline and the Final Period Weighted Mean Grade is not at the higher class, i.e. is less than 69.5 or 59.5 or 49.5 etc.

The Examiners may exercise discretion as to whether to recommend the higher class by invoking Regulation 45 only where:

i). The student has submitted documentary evidence of special circumstances (medical/personal) and these have been accepted by the Examiners present at the pre-meeting of the Examination Board as extenuating circumstances affecting performance and have recommended that the Examination Board, with the agreement of the External Examiner, consider exercising discretion,

and/or

ii). In the academic judgment of the Examiners and in light of all the evidence available, the student's overall performance is best reflected by the award of the higher class. In such cases the External Examiner must have looked at a range of the student's assessed work and exam scripts and advises that the Examination Board consider recommending the higher class. It is important to note that this is only a recommendation at this stage, and the case must be assessed by the Faculty in order to determine whether or not the Examiners’ judgement can stand, and that there is sufficient evidence to warrant the higher class being awarded.

In order for this assessment to occur, such cases must be submitted to the Faculty for approval, along with a brief explanation, in each case, of the specific reason(s) for invoking Regulation 45. You are reminded that case studies regarding the use of Regulation 45 have been published on the UG Examinations Conventions web pages at www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/exams/ugexams/recommendations. This is to support
departments/schools in determining whether it is appropriate to use this regulation to recommend a higher degree classification.

A historical log of all discretionary cases should be maintained by departments/schools for future reference, in order to ensure consistency of degree awards.

(c) Where the ‘Combined Classification’ is not indicated as borderline.

The Examiners may exercise discretion as to whether to recommend a higher class by invoking Regulation 45, only where the student has submitted documentary evidence of special circumstances (medical/personal) and these have been accepted by the Examiners present at the pre-meeting of the Examination Board as extenuating circumstances affecting performance and have recommended that the Examination Board, with the agreement of the External Examiner, consider exercising discretion.

Such cases must be submitted to the Faculty for approval along with a brief explanation, in each case, of the specific reason(s) for invoking Regulation 45.

A historical log of all discretionary cases should be maintained by departments/schools for future reference, in order to ensure consistency of degree awards.

4.9 Where a recommendation for a degree award is contrary to any other Regulations, e.g. the Programme Regulations, the Examiners must submit a request to the Faculty for the approval of a Special Regulation which must then also be approved by the Senate.

A historical log of all exceptional cases should be maintained by departments/schools for future reference, in order to ensure consistency of degree awards.