

THE UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Examination Conventions for Modular Taught Postgraduate Degrees 2017-18

(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, particularly in the case of any non-modular programmes. 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. Where a Faculty recommendation is contrary to regulations, the approval of the Senate is required.
- 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 Administration Service's **Examination Resources 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. ADMISSION TO TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMMES

- 2.1 In particular cases, in line with Regulations, individual candidates may be admitted initially at postgraduate Certificate or Diploma level, with a view to upgrading to Masters level studies in due course. Certain Faculties have agreed additional guidance relating to such admissions, which is set out in the Appendix.
- 2.2 The Student Administration Service will notify academic departments each year of the dates by which recommendations for upgrades to Masters level studies should be submitted.
- 2.3 The General Regulations specify the minimum time which must be spent studying for a degree and during which fees are payable. On payment of a continuation fee, an extension to the normal period of study may be agreed for an individual candidate, in order to allow additional time for submission of the dissertation. Overall time-limits for completion are also set out in the Regulations.

3. EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES

- 3.1 It is the responsibility of students to notify their tutors/supervisors, or other appropriate departmental staff, at the earliest opportunity if there are any extenuating circumstances that might have a bearing on their performance in assessments. Students should provide notification by completion and submission of an Extenuating Circumstances Form, along with any additional relevant documentary evidence where appropriate.
- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 Departments should take medical circumstances into account when considering performance in assessed work and examinations, provided that adequate and written medical evidence is submitted. 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. Where a student has medical problems that are ongoing and/or chronic and that affect more than one examination period the student should keep their tutor/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 an 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 3.1 and 3.3 above.

- 3.4 Where extenuating circumstances have affected coursework but not invigilated examinations, 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 3.5 or 3.6 below.
- 3.5 Where a student has completed all assessed work and examination/s, an adjustment of a grade may take place although reference should also be made to the External Examiner(s). These grades should be returned in the normal way, but departments should keep a record of any adjustments made.
- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 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.
- 3.8 Marginal cases should be referred to the Faculty to ensure comparability of treatment.

- 3.9 Medical and 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 extenuating circumstances, should then be passed to the main Examination Board.
- 3.10 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 3.2. above) will not normally be considered by the meeting of departmental examiners and will need to become the subject of an appeal under the Academic Appeals Regulations following publication of examination results to students.

4. AWARD OF QUALIFICATIONS

- 4.1 If any student is permitted to register for more than the required number of credits (eg 180 credits for a Masters degree), it must be agreed from the outset (i.e. not once grades are known) which units are to count towards the qualification.
- 4.2 Where students meet the minimum requirements for the achievement of Merits or Distinctions, as specified in Regulations 22 and 23 of the General Regulations for Higher Degrees, Examiners are advised to award Merits and Distinctions automatically, unless a good reason is identified not to award a Merit or Distinction, e.g. inconsistency of a student's overall grade profile, despite attainment of the minimum weighted mean grade requirements.
- 4.3 Examiners may consider it necessary to invoke Regulation 24 in the General Regulations for Higher Degrees, in order to award a higher degree outcome to students who fail to meet the minimum requirements for attaining a Merit or Distinction, as specified in Regulations 22 and 23, e.g. where failure to meet such requirements is due to a shortfall of a single mark, or where students have met the minimum weighted mean grade but have not achieved a minimum grade across 60/90 credits.

Regulation 24 should not be invoked to raise a degree award without the availability of additional evidence to warrant the use of discretion, and normally only extenuating circumstances should be considered as appropriate evidence on which to exercise discretion.

Where other circumstances are viewed as necessary bases for invoking Regulation 24, e.g. where, 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 a higher outcome, notwithstanding minimum grade requirements specified in Regulations 22 and 23, examiners must minute the supporting rationale in detail.

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

5. FAILURE AT MASTERS LEVEL

- 5.1 Students failing again after resit and who are not recommended for the award of a Masters degree or a Postgraduate Diploma, may be eligible for the respective award of a Postgraduate Diploma or Certificate, where provision is made for this in the relevant Programme Regulations.

APPENDIX - INDIVIDUAL FACULTY PROCEDURES

6. Faculty of Arts

A student admitted initially to a PG Diploma may be upgraded to MA status if the course tutors recommend such upgrading on the basis of work submitted for the first units, at a point when 60 credits have been obtained, normally at a level not less than grade 58. A student who obtains a level of not less than grade 55 in the first 60 credits may subsequently be upgraded on the basis of an improved performance in later units.

7. Faculty of Engineering

7.1 Where candidates do not satisfy the minimum admissions criteria set out in the General Regulations, departmental admissions selectors must submit individual applications for the attention of the Faculty Director of Learning and Teaching or their nominated designate. The following general guidelines are used when reviewing cases:

7.1.1 Admission to MSc/ MSc(Eng):

Candidates holding a 3rd class honours degree in a subject related discipline, usually plus a period of work experience (approx 30 months) in the subject related discipline, subsequent to graduation.

If there is any doubt as to the standard of the qualification, a candidate is usually recommended for admission initially for the PG Diploma.

7.1.2 Admission to PG Diploma:

Candidates holding:

- a) a BTEC, HND, HNC or equivalent qualification in engineering, plus five years of experience working in a subject related discipline, usually subsequent to the qualification.
- b) City & Guilds qualification in a subject related discipline, plus ten years of experience working in a subject related discipline, usually subsequent to the qualification.

Where appropriate, appropriateness or relevance of qualifications and experience could be considered against the need for the applicant to have sufficient understanding to be able to solve standard BEng examination questions.

7.2 Suitable PG Diploma candidates may be recommended by their department for an upgrade of their candidature to that of Masters, following the successful completion of units to the value of 40 credits. Such requests require Faculty approval.