



Regulation 22 Guidance & Case Study (Postgraduate Taught Degrees)

Regulations 20-22 in the University of Sheffield's General Regulations for Higher Degrees, Postgraduate Diplomas and Postgraduate Certificates relate to the overall level of Master's degree outcomes that may be awarded, and include the option for Examiners to exercise discretion in order to ensure that students are awarded the outcome that best reflects their overall performance.

Specifically, Regulations 20-22 state:

"20. The Examiners may in their discretion recommend the award of a mark of distinction or merit to a student registered for a Master's degree, such that:

- (a) a student who obtains a weighted mean grade of not less than 69.5 in the Examination as a whole and a grade of not less than 70 in units to the value of not less than 90 credits may be recommended for the award of the Degree with distinction; *and*
- (b) a student who obtains a weighted mean grade of not less than 59.5 in the Examination as a whole and a grade of not less than 60 in units to the value of not less than 90 credits may be recommended for the award of the Degree with merit.

21. The Examiners may in their discretion recommend the award of a mark of distinction or merit to a student registered for a Postgraduate Diploma, such that:

- (a) a student who obtains a weighted mean grade of not less than 69.5 in the Examination as a whole and a grade of not less than 70 in units to the value of not less than 60 credits may be recommended for the award of the Postgraduate Diploma with distinction; *and*
- (b) a student who obtains a weighted mean grade of not less than 59.5 in the Examination as a whole and a grade of not less than 60 in units to the value of not less than 60 credits may be recommended for the award of the Postgraduate Diploma with merit.

22. The Examiners may in their discretion recommend the award which, having regard to all the evidence before them, best reflects the overall performance of the student notwithstanding Regulations 20 and 21 above."

Where students meet the minimum requirements for the achievement of Merits or Distinctions (specified in Regulations 20 and 21), **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.

Examiners may consider it necessary to recommend the implementation of **Regulation 22** in order to award a higher degree outcome to students who fail to meet the minimum requirements for attaining a Merit or Distinction (specified in Regulations 20 and 21), 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 22 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 recommending the use of Regulation 22, e.g. where, in the academic judgement 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, consideration of a student's overall profile notwithstanding minimum grade requirements specified in Regulations 20 and 21, examiners **must minute the supporting rationale in detail.**

Examiners wishing to recommend the implementation of Regulation 22 need to **submit an application** to the **Student Results & Awards Team** within the Student Administration Service. The application form can be downloaded [here](#).

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

Regulation 22 Case Study

Case for awarding Distinction instead of Merit

Student X was granted a short extension for his dissertation proposal in April, when he advised his Department of the significant personal difficulties he was coping with. This is the only point at which extenuating circumstances were taken into account prior to the final examination board. When the Welfare and Final Examination Board reviewed Student X's results across the year, which suggested that he be awarded a Merit, the Board felt that there was evidence of a more widespread hindrance on Student X's ability to perform to the best of his ability during the period in which he was coping with difficult personal circumstances. Student X's case was therefore referred to the External Examiner, who confirmed the recommendation that the student be awarded a Distinction as opposed to a Merit, in order to take more full account of Student X's extenuating circumstances.