



Award and classification in taught postgraduate programmes: mitigating the impact of the industrial action upon academic outcomes at the finalist exam boards 2023

Introduction

- i. This document sets out how the University will determine the award and classification of taught postgraduate programmes at the finalist exam boards for 2022/23¹ where assessment and/or the marking process has been affected by the industrial action in 2022/23, particularly where assessment and/or unit marks are missing as a result of the marking and assessment boycott. Progression within taught postgraduate programmes in 2022/23 is governed by temporary academic regulations for the [summer exam boards](#) and the [September exam boards](#).
- ii. The sections on award and classification for taught postgraduate programmes in the Regulations and Code of Practice for Taught Programmes are temporarily qualified by this document.
- iii. The action presented in stage 2 only applies as academic mitigation where assessment marks are not available due to the marking and assessment boycott when an exam board meets to consider the award and classification of degrees.
- iv. For the purposes of this document, 'industrial action' constitutes any action taken by staff during 2022/23 that has impacted upon student academic outcomes, including missed teaching due to the days of strike action. The 'marking and assessment boycott' (MAB) is a specific action undertaken by the UCU within the overall industrial action. The boycott started on Thursday 20 April and according to the [UCU's FAQs](#), covers: *"all marking and assessment processes that contribute to summative assessment decisions for students/learners, whether final (i.e. graduation/completion) or interim (i.e. progression decisions)"*.
- v. These regulations will apply when the student has completed the taught component (i.e. has achieved 120 credit points) and submitted their dissertation and can therefore be considered for award by the finalist exam board. If a student has not achieved this threshold, then their consideration for award will be delayed. As normal, exam boards will determine whether the student has completed the dissertation component before awarding the degree and determining classification.
- vi. Academic mitigation may already have been applied to permit progression at the summer exam boards under temporary academic regulation for the [summer exam boards](#) or the [September exam boards](#). Where an exam board has permitted progression from the taught component to the dissertation stage without reassessment or supplementary assessment, 120 credit points are awarded for the taught component. Exam boards will not revisit any progression decisions; however, it will use any previously missing marks that have become available when determining classification (see 3.1).

¹ Including where students have received an extension to the submission of their dissertation and are considered for award no later than the February exam boards.

- vii. Where any outstanding assessment marks in units from the taught component become available since the summer exam board, these marks will be used to calculate classification. Exceptionally, the pass mark will be awarded for a unit where a unit mark is returned that is below the pass mark and the credit points have already been awarded under the previous [temporary academic regulations](#).

Determining academic outcomes at the finalist exam boards

Within existing normal regulations

- 1.1. Where a student being considered for award has a normal² range of unit marks at the time of the finalist exam board, exam boards will make decisions based upon the normal academic regulations.
- 1.2. Any previously missing assessment marks that have become available since the summer exam board should be ratified and approved by the exam board before it considers the student's academic outcome.
- 1.3. Where a student has failed the dissertation component and it has not been significantly affected by industrial action, then the normal academic regulations will apply (see 38.20 in the 2022/23 version of the [Taught Code](#)).
- 1.4. If the impact of the industrial action upon student academic outcomes means that the normal academic regulations cannot be applied, then the initial exam board should apply academic mitigation as set out below.

When to take mitigation action to account for the impact of the industrial action

- 1.5. The exam board should take mitigating action to account for the impact of the industrial action where:
 - a. There is evidence that the industrial action (IA) has had a negative impact upon assessment within a unit/s, as indicated by missing marks due to the MAB and/or the internal impact rating, and
 - b. The impact upon assessment has not already been mitigated by other action, and
 - c. The student/s on the affected unit is being considered for classification or has not met the conditions for award according to the normal academic regulations, and
 - d. The academic outcome of the individual student/s can be improved by applying mitigation (i.e. no IA mitigation need be applied if the student has already achieved a distinction).

Within temporary academic regulation

In Postgraduate Certificates or Diplomas

- 2.1 A Postgraduate Certificate or Diploma will be awarded, notwithstanding any marks that are unavailable due to the MAB, where the student has:
 - Achieved the pass mark in each of the units that are unaffected by the industrial action, and
 - Demonstrated the relevant programme ILOs in the academic judgement of the exam board as evidenced by achieving at least 30 credit points in the Certificate and 60 credit

² A normal range of marks means there is a complete set of unit marks for a student, or where there are any missing unit marks, they are not missing as a direct result of the industrial action

points in the Diploma; a pass overall (based on the available unit marks); and passing any must-pass units.

2.2 If the award is classified, section 3 in these regulations will apply.

In Master's degrees

Award of credit for the dissertation component and the award of the degree

2.3 If a student has completed the dissertation component and achieved the pass mark, then they will be awarded the associated credit and deemed to have completed the programme of study such that a Master's degree with classification can be awarded, under normal regulation.

2.4 If the impact of the industrial action means that there are missing assessment marks within the dissertation component or it has affected the performance of the student in the dissertation, then the initial exam board should apply academic mitigation as set out below.

Academic mitigation – stage 1

2.5 Where a student has a fail mark for the dissertation unit but there is evidence that their performance has been significantly impacted by industrial action, the principal form of mitigation is to allow a resubmission of the dissertation for the full range of marks.

2.6 Where a student has a pass mark for the dissertation component but there is evidence that their performance has been significantly impacted by industrial action, the impact has not been previously mitigated and any mitigation would make a difference to classification in the academic judgement of the exam board, the exam board may take the impact into account when determining classification, as provided in normal regulation (see 19.31-19.32 in the 2022/23 version of the [Regulations and Code of Practice for Taught Programmes](#)).

Academic mitigation – stage 2

2.7 Where there are missing assessment marks within the dissertation component due to the industrial action, the exam board will undertake the action below, where doing so will allow an academic decision on award to be made by the exam board.

2.7.1 A mark for the dissertation component unit may be awarded for an individual student for the purposes of award and classification providing:

- i. the student has undertaken and completed the **research element (e.g. a dissertation) of the summative assessment** and any must-pass assessment, and
- ii. any missing assessment marks are not essential to demonstrate the relevant programme ILOs, and
- iii. the application of this clause does not compromise any PSRB accreditation, and
- iv. the new unit mark is at or above the pass mark.

In such circumstances, the weighting of the assessment component/s with a mark will be scaled up to calculate the unit mark, with the proportions of individual assessment contributions maintained where applicable.

2.8 Otherwise where a student does not have a mark for the dissertation component unit by the time of the finalist exam board due to the industrial action and an academic decision cannot be reached on the basis of stage 1 or 2 of academic mitigation, the exam board will defer its consideration of the student's academic outcome to the next meeting of the exam board.

Classification

- 3.1 Following award, exam boards will use the most recently agreed marks when determining classification (i.e. marks that were previously missing when the student was considered by the summer or reassessment exam board will be used if they become available).
- 3.2 Where the student has met the conditions for award, but unit mark/s in the taught component are unavailable including as a result of the MAB or due to being excluded from classification under stage 1 of academic mitigation under the temporary regulations covering progression for [the summer exam boards](#) (see 1.6) and/or the [September exam boards](#) (see 2.5), the exam board will either:
 - Award a classification where there is sufficient evidence to do so (i.e. there is a mark for the dissertation component and unit marks from at least 60 credit points from the taught component mark), or
 - Determine that there is not sufficient evidence to award a classification but award a degree with a pending classification.
- 3.3 Where a unit mark from the taught component is excluded, subject to 3.2, the weighting of the remaining unit marks is scaled up to calculate the taught component mark.
- 3.4 Where a classification is made under 3.2 notwithstanding missing unit marks, the exam board will review its decision and where applicable re-award a higher classification where **the full range of marks**³ becomes available.
- 3.5 Where a pending classification is made under 3.2 notwithstanding missing unit marks, the exam board will determine the classification for the student where any outstanding missing unit marks become available, where applicable.
- 3.6 Where a pending classification is made under 3.2 and no further unit marks are available by the next convening of the exam board, then the exam board should report this to the institution-level Taught Degrees Exam Board.

Referral to Taught Degrees Exam Board

- 4.1 Exam boards should be assured that the combined result of the application of mitigation leads to a fair and reasonable outcome for students. If a faculty board of examiners is unable to apply appropriate or sufficient mitigation to account for the impact of the industrial action upon assessment, it should refer the case with a provisional recommendation to the Taught Degrees Exam Board.

Approval:

- *Approved by the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality and Standards), Chair of University Academic Quality and Standards Committee, 22 August 2023*
- *Approved by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students), Chair of University Education Committee, 24 August 2023*
- *Approved by the Vice-Chancellor, Chair of Senate, 24 August 2023*

³ And as determined by TDEB, where a FEB reports that a mark will not become available in the near future