



Progression, award and the classification of a degree in taught programmes: mitigating the impact of the industrial action upon academic outcomes at the September exam boards 2023

Introduction

- i. This document sets out how the University will determine the academic outcome of students on undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes at the September 2023 exam boards 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. This will apply apart from for the School in Law which has its own regulations.
- ii. The sections on progression, award and classification in the Regulations and Code of Practice for Taught Programmes are temporarily qualified by this document, where identified.
- iii. This document relates to school and faculty exam boards held following the reassessment period in September 2023. It covers the academic decision-making for:
 - a. Students who took reassessment or supplementary assessment in the reassessment period.
 - b. Continuing students who have been permitted to progress but marks that were previously missing at the time of the summer exam board are now available
 - c. Finalist undergraduate students with a pending decision on their award and/or classification at the summer exam board
 - d. Finalist undergraduate students who had received their final award and classification at the summer exam board, but previously missing marks are now available
- iv. The September exam boards will consider the academic outcomes of students in (a) and (c) above and will either consider the academic outcomes of students in (b) or (d) at the September meeting or agree a process and timeline for doing so subsequent to the exam board meeting.
- v. The actions presented in this document as academic mitigation only apply where assessment and unit marks are not available to exam boards due to the marking and assessment boycott.
- vi. 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)"*.
- vii. This document encompasses the existing principles and [temporary academic regulations](#) in order to provide students and exam boards with a holistic understanding of how academic decisions will be undertaken at the September exam boards. **Any new temporary academic regulation is highlighted by boxed text.**

Determining academic outcomes at the reassessment exam boards

Within existing normal regulations

- 1.1. Where a student being considered for progression or award has a normal range of unit marks¹ at the time of the exam board, exam boards will make decisions based upon our 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 (including where they have self-certified absence from) a unit that has not been affected by the industrial action (including units with a TB4 pattern) and does not meet the conditions for progression or award within normal regulations, then they should be required to take reassessment in a supplementary year in the normal manner.
- 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 consider applying academic mitigation as set out below.

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

- 1.5 The initial exam board should take mitigating action to account for the impact of the industrial action where:
 - a. There is evidence that the industrial action 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 progression or 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 first-class degree).

Within temporary academic regulations

A. [Students who have undertaken reassessment / supplementary assessment](#)

The exam board will consider the academic outcome of students who were required to take reassessment or supplementary assessment by the summer exam board due academic failure, or the student having missed the assessment. As guided by the existing temporary academic regulations, any potential academic mitigation was paused for these students and should therefore be considered by the reassessment exam board, where there are any missing marks due to the MAB or there is evidence that the performance of students in assessment has been negatively impacted by the industrial action.

¹ 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

Progression in undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes

- 2.1 The Exam Board should apply normal regulations, or the [temporary academic regulations](#) (academic mitigation stage 1, 2 and/or 3) if the student's academic outcome has been impacted by the industrial action, when considering the student for progression.
- 2.2 If an exam board cannot make a progression decision under these regulations it will make a decision on the basis of new temporary academic regulation, as set out below.

2.3 Where a student does not have a unit mark for a must-pass unit² due to the MAB or a student has been awarded a unit mark (or an updated unit mark following missing assessment mark/s becoming available) since the summer exam boards for a previously missing **must-pass unit** but has failed the unit:

The student will be permitted to progress to the next stage but be required to undertake reassessment (or supplementary assessment for a full range of marks if there are accepted extenuating circumstances) in any failed must-pass units at the next opportunity in the following academic year, or the student can elect to undertake a supplementary year to complete those failed must-pass units.

2.4 Where a student has been awarded a unit mark (or an updated unit mark following missing assessment mark/s becoming available) since the summer exam boards for a previously missing **non-must-pass** unit but has failed the unit:

As 3.7 in the temporary academic regulations, credit points will be awarded for the unit and the student permitted to progress to the next stage without reassessment where the student has completed the assessment and demonstrated the programme intended learning outcomes relating to that year of study / taught component. In these cases, the pass mark will exceptionally be awarded for the unit. This action will supersede the compensation of a narrowly failed unit under normal regulations.

2.5 Where extenuating circumstances are accepted for a failed **non-must-pass unit**, then the exam board will award the credit points and the pass mark for the unit as 2.4. It will also consider the impact of awarding the pass mark upon the student's degree classification at the final exam board and may exclude the affected unit mark/s as appropriate. A student may appeal the decision to award the pass mark and request to take a supplementary assessment for the full range of marks in the next academic year to improve the mark.

2.6 As under normal regulation, a student will be permitted three attempts of assessment to pass the unit.

2.7 Where a student on a Master's degree programme is required or chooses to undertake reassessment or supplementary assessment in the next academic year, then they will be permitted to continue to work on their dissertation during this period but may not submit their dissertation until the exam board determines that they have completed the taught component.

² Noting that this unit may not be the one the student has been re-assessed on

Award and classification in undergraduate modular programmes

- 2.8 The Exam Board should apply normal regulations, or the [temporary academic regulations](#) (academic mitigation stage 1, 2 and/or 3) if the student's academic outcome has been impacted by the industrial action, when considering the student for award.
- 2.9 If an exam board cannot make an award decision under these regulations it will make a decision based on existing or temporary academic regulation, as set out below.

2.10 Where a student does not have a unit mark for a **must-pass unit**³ due to the MAB:

The exam board will delay its decision to the next meeting and report this to the Taught Degrees Examination Board (TDEB).

2.11 Where a student has been awarded a unit mark (or an updated unit mark following missing assessment mark/s becoming available) since the summer exam boards for a previously missing **must-pass unit** but has failed the unit:

The student will be required to undertake reassessment (or supplementary assessment if there are accepted extenuating circumstances) in any failed must-pass units at the next opportunity as part of a supplementary year.

2.12 Where a student has been awarded a unit mark (or an updated unit mark following missing assessment mark/s becoming available) since the summer exam boards for a previously missing **non-must-pass unit** but has failed the unit:

Under normal regulations (30.19 in the [Taught Code](#) for 2022/23), the exam board will award 120 credit points for the final year of study. The unit mark achieved by the student will be awarded. Any accepted extenuating circumstances will be considered under normal regulations (see 19.28 in the [Taught Code](#)).

B. [Students who have progressed but marks that were previously missing are now available](#)

Under the existing temporary academic regulations, an exam board may have awarded credit and permitted a student to progress to the next stage of their studies at the summer exam board where it determined that the academic standards for progression have been met, including passing any must-pass units. Marks that were previously missing may now have become available since the summer exam boards for these students.

Continuing students in undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes

3.1 The exam board may consider and approve any new marks that were previously missing. Where it approves any new marks in a unit for which credit has already been awarded, but the student has failed the unit:

In line with 3.7 in the temporary academic regulations, the pass mark will exceptionally be awarded for the unit.

3.2 Where extenuating circumstances are accepted for a failed unit, then the exam board will award the pass mark as 3.1. It will also consider the impact of awarding the pass mark upon the student's degree classification at the final exam board and may exclude the affected unit mark/s as

³ Noting that this unit may not be the one the student has been re-assessed on

appropriate. A student may appeal the decision to award the pass mark and request to take a supplementary assessment for the full range of marks in the next academic year to improve the mark.

- 3.3 Where a student on a Master's degree programme chooses to undertake reassessment or supplementary assessment in the next academic year, then they will be permitted to continue to work on their dissertation during this period but may not submit their dissertation until the exam board determines that they have completed the taught component.

C. Undergraduate finalist students who have a pending academic outcome

Under the existing temporary academic regulations, the summer exam board was able to determine a preliminary academic outcome for some students where the intended award and/or final classification could not be made due to the impact of the MAB. There were also a number of students for whom the summer exam board could not make a decision under the temporary regulations ('decision pending'). The academic outcome of these students should be reviewed by the exam board.

- 4.1 The exam board will consider and approve any new marks that were previously missing and then consider whether a further academic outcome can be made under the normal or existing temporary regulations for those students who do not yet have a final academic outcome:
- a. If 'decision pending' – the exam board will consider whether a preliminary Ordinary degree (3.9), the intended award with classification or intended award with classification pending (3.12) can be made under the temporary academic regulations. The exam board will require a student to undertake reassessment if they have failed a must-pass unit.
 - b. If 'preliminary Ordinary degree awarded' – the exam board will consider whether the intended award with classification or intended award with classification pending can be made under the temporary academic regulations.
 - c. If 'award but with classification pending' – the exam board will consider whether a classification can be awarded under the temporary academic regulations.
- 4.2 If the exam board cannot determine a further academic outcome for these cases, then it will delay its decision to the next meeting of the exam board.
- 4.3 The exam board should report the outcome of consideration of all the cases outlined in 4.1 and 4.2 to TDEB including where no further academic decision can be made.

D. Undergraduate finalist students where a classification was made with missing marks

The existing temporary academic regulations states that where a classification is made notwithstanding missing unit marks, the exam board will review its decision and where applicable re-award a higher classification should any outstanding unit marks become available (3.16). Additionally, where any previously missing assessment marks become available since the summer exam board, unit marks should be updated to include the new assessment mark.

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- 5.1 The exam board may consider and approve any new marks⁴ that were previously missing.
- 5.2 Where it approves any new marks and the **full range of marks**⁵ is now available for a student, the exam board may review the classification of a student and re-award a higher classification, if applicable, under the existing temporary academic regulations (see 3.16).
- 5.3 Where the full range of marks is not yet available, it will review the classification again at the next meeting of the exam board.

Reassessment and supplementary assessment in the next academic year

- 6.1 Units being reassessed in the following academic year will be capped at the pass mark unless the student is permitted to repeat the assessments 'as the first time' due to validated extenuating circumstances.
- 6.2 Students who are permitted to progress with outstanding credit points under these regulations will be permitted three attempts in total at passing the unit, as set out in normal regulation. If a student has not achieved the credit for any outstanding units by the end of the next academic year and are still eligible for reassessment, they will be required to undertake a supplementary year before being considered for further progression or award.
- 6.3 The exam board will consider the award of credit for the outstanding failed unit/s before considering progression from the year of study into which the student has progressed.

Referral to Taught Degrees Exam Board

- 7.1 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 the University Academic Quality and Standards Committee, 14 August 2023*
- *Approved by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students), Chair of University Education Committee, 15 August 2023*
- *Approved by the Vice-Chancellor, Chair of Senate, 18 August 2023*

⁴ Where a unit mark had been agreed under stage 2 of academic mitigation in the existing temporary academic regulations, the addition of previously missing assessment marks may mean that the final unit mark is lower as well as higher.

⁵ And as determined by TDEB, where a FEB reports that a mark will not become available in the near future