



Classification in taught programmes from 2021/22 - for students who completed units on intermediate years of study in 2019/20 and/or 2020/21

Introduction

- i. This document sets out how the University will classify the taught qualifications of students who are considered for a classified award from 2021/22, where assessment that contributed to classification was affected by COVID-19 in 2019/20 and/or 2020/21.
- ii. This approach incorporates the previous commitments, as announced by the University as part of its package of mitigations, to implement a 'safety net' for students who took assessment that contributed to classification in 2019/20 and a cohort unit comparison check for students who took assessment in an intermediate year of study in 2020/21, at the point when they are considered for classification.
- iii. It also encompasses existing commitments to: students who were due to complete in 2020/21 but have outstanding assessment to take in 2021/22 to complete their programme; and, students studying on a part-time basis who took assessment in 2019/20 or 2020/21 that contributes to classification.
- iv. The sections on classification in the Regulations and Code of Practice for Taught Programmes (the 'Taught Code') are temporarily qualified by this document. The existing regulations in the Taught Code on eligibility for the award of a qualification apply and should be considered before classification in the normal way.
- v. The overall means by which degrees will be classified in 2021/22 and subsequently may be amended in light of ongoing circumstances related to COVID-19.

Application of these regulations

- vi. The temporary amendment to classification applies to all taught programmes that result in a classified award where assessment on a unit that contributes to degree classification was affected by COVID-19 in the 2019/20 and 2020/21 academic years. It will apply when students are considered for classification from the 2021/22 academic year. Annex 1 shows how the mitigations for classification will be enacted in each academic year by programme type.
- vii. It does not apply to non-modular undergraduate degree programmes (BDS, BVSc, MBChB), programmes that are not classified or taught exit awards from a PGR programme.
- viii. Where a student did not complete assessment in a unit in 2019/20 or 2020/21 or where a student studied but the assessment in a unit taken in 2019/20 or 2020/21 did not contribute to classification, those units are not eligible for exclusion from classification.
- ix. Stage two of classification in taught postgraduate programmes (i.e. application of a 'secondary rule') will only apply where a student has received an extension to the submission of their dissertation from 2020/21 into 2021/22.
- x. The classification of undergraduate programmes in the School of Law and the MA Law from 2021/22 are set out in separate regulations.
- xi. The temporary regulations complement but do not supersede any previously agreed arrangements in response to major disruption to specific assessments in 2020/21.

Temporary regulations for classification in undergraduate modular programmes in 2021/22 and after

1. For the purposes of classification, each of the following programme marks, **if applicable**, is calculated (rounded to the nearest integer) for each student:
 - a. **The Completed Programme Mark** consisting of the unit marks from all years of study contributing to classification ('Programme mark A').
 - b. **The Safety Net Mark** consisting of unit marks from the relevant intermediate year/s of study¹ prior to 2019/20 (if applicable), unit marks within the student's 2019/20 designated safety net and the unit marks from subsequent years of study ('Programme mark B').
 - c. **The Cohort Unit Exclusion Mark** consisting of all unit marks from intermediate years of study that contribute to classification prior to 2020/21, any unit marks from the 2020/21 year of study which have not been excluded due to a cohort impact and the unit marks from subsequent years of study ('Programme mark C').
 - d. **The Safety Net Mark + Cohort Unit Exclusion Mark** consisting of unit marks from intermediate years of study that contribute to classification prior to 2019/20 (if applicable), unit marks from the student's 2019/20 designated safety net and any unit marks from the 2020/21 year of study which have not been excluded due to a cohort impact and the unit marks from subsequent years of study ('Programme mark D').
2. The best outcome from the application of the primary and secondary rules for classification, as provided in the Taught Code, to the available programme marks A-D will determine classification.
3. The following conditions must be met where the relevant programme mark is used as the basis for classification:
 - Programme marks C or D must include a minimum of 80 credit points of unit marks from the year of study undertaken in 2020/21 (inclusive of where units marks are disregarded for other reasons – see section 6);
 - Programme mark D - no more than 100 credit points of unit marks may be excluded as a combined result of the application of the cohort unit exclusion and the safety net (inclusive of where units marks are disregarded for other reasons – see section 6), where the programme contains more than one year of study that contributes to classification.
4. Where the condition in section 3 is not met, the School and Faculty Board of Examiners must determine whether the programme mark (C or D) would result in a higher classification for the student. If it is, the Faculty Board of Examiners must refer the case to the University Taught Degrees Examination Board with a recommendation for further consideration. Otherwise, if the use of programme mark C or D does not result in a higher classification, then the School and Faculty Board of Examiners will classify on the basis of the best outcome for the student from the available programme mark/s.
5. For the application of the 'secondary rule' (32.14 in the Taught Code), if any of the programme marks A-D are within the range of a classification boundary, as set out in 32.14, the secondary

¹ Intermediate years of study is defined as the year or years of study that contribute to degree classification, with the exception of the final year of study

rule is applied to the programme marks that fall within the range, using the subset of units that contributes to the calculation of that programme mark.

6. Unit marks may be disregarded under existing regulations for the purposes of calculating any of the programme marks and determining classification for individual students where it is agreed in response to the impact of extenuating circumstances or a student was awarded credit for a unit in 2019/20 but not given the opportunity to improve upon a 'fail' mark.

The conditions for disregarding unit marks within the calculation of programme mark C and D is described in section 3. The existing regulations do not place a limit on the number of credit points that can be disregarded for the calculation of programme marks A and B.

7. The calculation of the programme marks is applied for and presented to the relevant meeting of the board of examiners at the point when a student is considered for award and classification.

Completed programme mark² (Programme mark A)

8. A programme mark is calculated for the purposes of classification on the basis of all unit marks within the programme that contribute to classification as a weighted average of the separate year marks in accordance with existing regulation within the Taught Code.
9. Unit marks may be disregarded, as set out in section 6, according to existing regulation. Where a unit mark is disregarded, the year mark retains its weighting for the purposes of classification.

Safety net mark (in Programme mark B or D)

10. A programme mark is calculated for the purposes of classification on the basis of unit marks from the relevant intermediate year of study³ that contributes to classification prior to 2019/20 (if applicable), unit marks within the student's designated 2019/20 'safety net' and the unit marks from subsequent years of study. The 'safety net' includes all complete units that contribute to classification from the 2019/20 academic year with marks unaffected by COVID-19.
11. Where a unit mark is excluded through application of the safety net in the 2019/20 academic year, the programme mark is calculated as the weighted average of the remaining units across the programme as a whole, rather than as the weighted average of year marks. The weightings of the remaining units within and between years of study is preserved from the original programme structure, taking into account the credit-point weighting and the specified weightings of the years of study for the programme.

Cohort unit exclusion mark (in Programme mark C or D)

12. A programme mark is calculated for the purposes of classification but excluding those units that contribute to classification where an underperformance by the cohort of a unit in 2020/21 compared with previous years' cohorts is detected, as defined below.
13. A Kolmogorov-Smirnov two-sample test is applied to check whether the performance of the cohort on a unit in 2020/21 compared with cohorts from previous unaffected years is not the product of natural variation. Where the significance level and parameters established for the test⁴ indicates – in the context of sample size and Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic parameters - that the observed difference does not arise from natural variation, the unit is eligible for

² This has been termed the 'normal' programme mark in student communications.

³ Intermediate years of study is defined as the year or years of study that contribute to degree classification, with the exception of the final year of study

⁴ A significance level of 0.01 and a minimum KS value for the test was approved in 2020/21

exclusion under programme marks C or D. Only the underperformance of the 2020/21 cohort in comparison to previous cohorts is considered.

14. The test compares:

- the mark distribution of each relevant unit in 2020/21, and
- the distribution of an aggregation of marks from comparator units from previously unaffected cohorts.

15. The mark distribution of a unit in 2020/21 is based upon the marks presented to the school board of examiners at its June/July 2021 meeting. Any unit taken by a student in their intermediate or final year of study may be excluded under this system.

16. The membership of the unit cohort in 2020/21 is defined as those students who have undertaken the unit's teaching and the associated summative assessment and are awarded credit for the unit within the 2020/21 academic year.

The following (non-exclusive) students are therefore also eligible to be members of the cohort:

- If the student studied the first part of their final year of study in 2020/21 on a part-time basis (in which case the exclusion is triggered at the point they are considered for classification, if applicable).
- If the student suspended studies after the completing the unit in 2020/21 (in which case the exclusion is triggered at the point they are considered for classification, if applicable).
- If the student took the unit/s as part of a supplementary year with teaching and assessment in 2020/21.

The following students are NOT eligible to be members of the unit cohort:

- If the student was on an assessment-only supplementary year in 2020/21 to complete the relevant unit.
- If the student was required to undertake a supplementary year in 2021/22 to complete the relevant unit from 2020/21; at which point they ceased to be a member of the 2020/21 cohort for that unit.

17. Cohort performance on a unit in 2020/21 is defined as the unit marks achieved by the members of the cohort as presented to the school board of examiners in June/July 2021. This means that:

- The mark of a student who failed a unit, as presented to the June/July 2021 board of examiners, is included in the cohort performance.
- The mark of a student who missed assessment and was required to complete a supplementary assessment or re-assessment in August 2021 is excluded from the cohort performance.
- Where a student completed a resit in 2020/21 following failure in a previous year of study, the uncapped mark is included in the cohort performance.

18. For each relevant unit from 2020/21, a comparable group⁵ from previously unaffected cohorts has been designated by the relevant Faculty Board of Examiners in advance of the comparison calculation.

⁵ Noting that the comparison may be between cohorts on the same unit.

19. 'Previously unaffected cohorts' is defined as the unit marks presented to the school board of examiners at its June/July meeting from the three most recent cohorts unaffected by COVID-19. This will encompass the cohorts from 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19 and Teaching Block 1 in 2019/20.
20. A unit identified for exclusion is excluded from the programme marks C and D for all members of the unit's cohort, regardless of individual student performance.
21. Where a unit mark is excluded as a result of cohort unit exclusions from units taken in the 2020/21 academic year, the programme mark is calculated as the weighted average of the remaining units across the programme as a whole, rather than as the weighted average of year marks. The weightings of the remaining units within and between years of study is preserved from the original programme structure, taking into account the credit-point weighting and the specified weightings of the years of study for the programme.

University Taught Degrees Exam Board

22. A faculty board of examiners may refer cases, with a recommendation, to the University Taught Degrees Exam Board (UTDEB) where it is unable to apply these regulations due to the specified condition for its application (see section 3) or where it believes that a manifestly unsound outcome may have been reached by the application of these regulations.
23. The UTDEB will consider each case and agree an outcome that is consistent with University regulation but may diverge from these requirements provided that: any such divergence does not disadvantage any particular student generally; and that academic judgement is applied to ensure that the scholarly integrity and rigour of assessment and examination processes are maintained.

Temporary regulations for classification on taught postgraduate programmes in 2021/22 and after

For the purposes of this document:

- the 'taught component' refers to the taught units in the programme: for a Master's degree and Postgraduate Diploma of Higher Education this consists of 120 credit points and 60 credit points for a Postgraduate Certificate of Higher Education;
- the '2020/21 academic year' encompasses all assessment normally scheduled in a programme, including the dissertation, whether or not this takes place within the academic year ending on 31 July 2021.

The existing regulations ([section 38](#) in the Taught Code) on eligibility for the award of a qualification apply and should be considered in the normal way before a student's qualification is considered for classification under these regulations.

1. Classification in taught postgraduate Master's programmes in the 2021/22 academic year is determined as follows:

Stage 1: Exclusion of unit marks for a cohort in 2020/21 when calculating the taught component for classification purposes, combined with the quantitative safety net from 2019/20 where applicable.

Stage 1 will only apply to classification in 2021/22 and after if:

- The student studied part of their taught component in 2020/21 on a part-time basis (in which case those units where credit was awarded in 2020/21 are eligible for exclusion); and/or,
- The student suspended studies after completing the unit in 2020/21 (in which case the relevant unit/s is excluded at the point the student is considered for classification, if applicable).

Stage 2: Application of a 'Secondary rule' where a higher classification may be awarded based on an individual student's mark profile if one or both of the taught component mark and the dissertation mark is just below the threshold for that higher classification, as set out in sections 24-25.

Stage 2 will only apply to classification in 2021/22 if:

- The student has received an extension to the submission of their dissertation into the 2021/22 academic year.

The classification of Postgraduate Diplomas and Certificates of Higher Education is determined by stage 1 only.

Stage 1: Cohort unit exclusion within the taught component

2. For the purposes of classification, each of the following programme marks is calculated (rounded to the nearest integer) for each student where credit was awarded for part or all of the units in the taught component in 2020/21:
 - **The Completed Taught Component Mark** consisting of all the unit marks from the taught component ('Taught component mark A').

- **The Cohort Unit Exclusion Mark** consisting of any completed unit marks from the 2020/21 year of study which have not been excluded due to a cohort impact and the unit marks from subsequent academic years ('Taught component mark C').
3. Where a student studied in 2019/20 on a programme that had established a 'quantitative safety net', then two additional taught component marks are calculated (rounded to the nearest integer) for each student:
 - **The Safety Net Mark** consisting of the student's 2019/20 defined quantitative safety net and all completed unit marks from 2020/21 and subsequent academic years ('Taught component mark B').
 - **The Safety Net Mark + Cohort Unit Exclusion Mark** consisting of the student's 2019/20 designated quantitative safety net and the completed unit marks from 2020/21 which have not been excluded due to a cohort impact and the unit marks from subsequent academic years ('Taught component mark D').
 4. The best outcome from the calculation of each of the taught component marks A-D will determine the classification, in combination with the dissertation mark, if applicable.
 5. The following condition applies where the relevant taught component mark is used a basis for classification:
 - Taught component marks C or D must include a minimum of 80 credit points of unit marks from the taught component in a Master's degree or a Diploma of Higher Education, or a minimum of 40 credit points of unit marks in a Certificate of Higher Education (inclusive of where unit marks are disregarded for other reasons – see section 7). Where a programme requires a higher number of credit points than stated by the University's credit framework, the taught component mark must include a minimum of two-thirds of unit marks from the total credit points required for the award of the programme.
 6. Where the condition in section 5 is not met, the School and Faculty Board of Examiners must determine whether the relevant taught component mark (C or D) would result in a higher classification for the student. If it is, the Faculty Board of Examiners must refer the case to the University Taught Degrees Examination Board with a recommendation for further consideration. Otherwise, if the inclusion of taught component mark C or D does not result in a higher classification, then the School and Faculty Board of Examiners will classify on the basis of the taught component mark/s that provides the best outcome for the student.
 7. Unit marks may be disregarded under existing regulations for the purposes of calculating any of the taught component marks and determining classification for individual students where it is in response to the impact of extenuating circumstances or a student was awarded credit for a unit in 2019/20 but not given the opportunity to improve upon a 'fail' mark.

The conditions for disregarding unit marks within the calculation of programme marks C and D are set out in section 5. The existing regulations do not place a limit on the amount of credit points that can be disregarded for the calculation of programme marks A and B.

8. The calculation of the taught component marks is applied and presented to the relevant 'final' meeting of the board of examiners when a student is considered for award and classification.

Completed taught component mark (Taught component mark A)

9. A taught component mark is calculated on the basis of all taught unit marks within the programme in accordance with existing regulation (section 39 in the Taught Code).
10. Unit marks may be disregarded, as set out in section 7, according to existing regulation. Where a unit mark is disregarded, the taught component mark retains its weighting for the purposes of classification, meaning that the weighting of the other units in that year of study increase to account for the disregarding of the unit mark.

Cohort unit exclusion mark (in Taught component mark C or D)

11. A taught component mark is calculated but excluding those units where an underperformance by the cohort of a unit in 2020/21 compared with previous years' cohorts is detected, as defined below.
12. A Kolmogorov-Smirnov two-sample test is applied to check whether the performance of the cohort on a unit in 2020/21 compared with cohorts from previous unaffected years is not the product of natural variation. Where the significance level and parameters established for the test⁶ indicates – in the context of sample size and Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic parameters - that the observed difference does not arise from natural variation, the unit will be eligible for exclusion under programme marks C or D. Only the underperformance of the 2020/21 cohort in comparison to previous cohorts is considered.
13. The test compares:
 - the mark distribution of each relevant taught unit in 2020/21, and
 - the distribution of an aggregation of marks from similar comparator units from previously unaffected years.
14. The mark distribution of a unit in 2020/21 is based upon the first marks presented to the school board of examiners meeting.
15. Any unit taken by a student in the taught component may be excluded under this system, except any unit that forms the dissertation stage of a Master's degree programme.
16. The membership of the unit cohort in 2020/21 is defined as those students who have undertaken the unit's teaching and the associated summative assessment and are awarded credit for the unit within the 2020/21 academic year.

The following (non-exclusive) students are also eligible to be members of the cohort:

- If the student has suspended studies after completing the unit in 2020/21 (in which case the exclusion will be triggered at the point they are considered for classification, if applicable).
- If the student undertook the unit/s as part of a supplementary year with teaching and assessment in 2020/21-

The following students are NOT eligible to be members of the cohort:

- If the student was on an assessment-only supplementary year in 2020/21 to complete the relevant unit.

⁶ A significance level of 0.01 and a minimum KS value for the test was approved in 2020/21

- If the student is required to undertake a supplementary year in 2021/22 to complete the relevant unit; at which point they cease to be a member of the 2020/21 cohort for that unit.
17. Cohort performance on a unit in 2020/21 is defined by the unit marks achieved by the members of the cohort as presented to the school board of examiners in June/July 2021. This means that:
- The mark of a student who fails a unit, as presented to the June/July board of examiners, is included in the cohort performance.
 - The mark of a student who misses assessment and is required to complete a supplementary assessment or re-assessment in August 2021 is excluded from the cohort performance.
 - Where a student has completed a resit in 2020/21 following failure in a previous year of study, the uncapped mark will be included in the cohort performance.
18. For each relevant unit from 2020/21, unit/s from previously unaffected cohorts will be designated by the relevant Faculty Board of Examiners to form a comparable group⁷ in advance of the comparison calculation.
19. 'Previously unaffected cohorts' is defined as the unit marks presented to the school board of examiners at its June/July meeting from the three most recent cohorts unaffected by COVID-19. This will encompass the cohorts from 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19 and Teaching Block 1 in 2019/20.
20. A unit identified for exclusion will be excluded from the taught component mark for all members of the unit's cohort, regardless of individual student performance.
21. Where a unit mark is excluded, the taught component mark is calculated as the weighted average of the remaining units in the taught component.

Safety net mark (in Taught component mark B or D)

22. The taught component mark is calculated on the basis of unit marks from the 2019/20 academic year within the designated 'safety net', where applicable, and the unit marks from subsequent years of study. The 'safety net' includes all complete units that contribute to classification from the 2019/20 academic year with marks unaffected by COVID-19.
23. Where a unit mark is excluded, the taught component mark is calculated as the weighted average of the remaining units in the taught component.

Stage 2: 'Secondary rule' for the classification of Master's degrees

24. The school board of examiners will use the best outcome from the taught component marks A-D and the dissertation mark to classify per existing regulations (section 39 of the Taught Code).
25. In addition, a secondary rule will apply where a student has received an extension to the submission of their dissertation from 2020/21 into 2021/22⁸ AND:
- a. both the taught component mark and the dissertation mark are within one mark of a classification threshold (merit or distinction), OR

⁷ Noting that the comparison may be between cohorts on the same unit.

⁸ For the avoidance of doubt the end of 2021/22 is the 31 July 2022 for the purposes of section 25.

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- b. one of the taught component mark or dissertation mark is already at or above the classification threshold (merit or distinction) and the other component is within one mark.

In either (a) or (b) above, the school board of examiners will award a higher classification if 50% or more of the rounded individual unit marks (i.e. from the taught component and dissertation stage), weighted by credit point value, are at the higher classification.

University Taught Degrees Exam Board

26. A faculty board of examiners may refer cases, with a recommendation, to a University Taught Degrees Exam Board (UTDEB) where it is unable to apply these regulations due to the specified conditions for its application (see section 5) or where it believes that a manifestly unsound classification has been reached by the application of these regulations.
27. The UTDEB will consider each case and agree an outcome that is consistent with University regulation but may diverge from these requirements provided that: any such divergence does not disadvantage any particular student or students generally and that academic judgement is applied to ensure that the scholarly integrity and rigour of assessment and examination processes are maintained.

*Approved by the Vice-Chancellor
7th October 2021*

Annex 1: Application of mitigations to classification by academic year and length of programme

Based on full-time study

Standard length of programme	Academic year of classification			
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
3-year UG modular programme	CUC	N/A	N/A	N/A
4-year UG modular programme	SN CUC	CUC	N/A	N/A
5-year UG modular programme	SN CUC	SN CUC	CUC	N/A

Key =

- CUC = Cohort unit comparison mitigation applied
- SN = Safety net mitigation applied
- N/A = Not applicable