

ACADEMIC QUALITY HANDBOOK

SECTION 7

ASSESSMENT AND EXAMINATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES: TAUGHT COURSES AND PROGRAMMES

This document summarises the University's assessment and examination policies and practices and provides information on graduation and transcripts. It should be of interest to all undergraduate and postgraduate taught students and to all staff involved with assessments and examinations. All External Examiners for taught programmes are given the Academic Quality Handbook web address on appointment, directing them to this Section, together with Section 9 of the Academic Quality Handbook which relates to External Examining.

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7.1 Introduction

- 7.1.1 This Section of the Academic Quality Handbook should be read in conjunction with [Section 9 External Examining: Taught Courses and Programmes](#).
- 7.1.2 All of the University's undergraduate programmes, and the majority of postgraduate taught programmes, are modularised i.e. they consist of discrete courses. Normally, courses comprise a twelve-week teaching and learning period, followed by a three or four-week formal revision and assessment period culminating, where appropriate, in the formal end-of-course written examinations. The revision and assessment period for postgraduate taught courses is often only one or two weeks. Some courses, however, are of only six weeks' duration, with any end-of-course written examinations being held at the end of the relevant half-session. Exceptionally (and usually only as part of an Honours programme), a course may extend over two half-sessions.
- 7.1.3 In some cases, the formal end-of-course written examinations for first half-session courses are held at the end of the second half-session (paragraph 7.4.7 refers).
- 7.1.4 The majority of programmes leading to either an Honours or a taught Master's degree will include a project or dissertation course as a major component.

7.2 Types of Assessment

- 7.2.1 In general, the University seeks to follow a mixed method of assessment, as appropriate to the nature of individual courses. As part of Curriculum Reform, the use of different forms of assessment has been encouraged, for example, assessment of Sixth Century Courses focuses on student activity and formal unseen written examinations are not part of the assessment.

Prescribed Degree Assessments

- 7.2.2 The assessments which contribute a specified percentage of the overall assessment prescribed for a course or programme are described as Prescribed Degree Assessments. For ***undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses*** the Catalogue of Courses indicates whether a course will be assessed entirely by written examination, by in-course assessment (e.g. an essay or other assignment), by submission of a dissertation/project report, by oral/practical examination, or by a combination of these. Details of the assessment arrangements for resit examinations are also provided.

Summative and Formative Assessments

- 7.2.3 Prescribed degree assessments are ***summative*** assessments. Some courses will also include elements of ***formative*** assessment. These differ from summative assessments in that they do not contribute towards the final mark for a course or programme: they are primarily for the benefit of students in gauging their knowledge and ability at the time of the assessment. Feedback on summative assessments, however, can serve a formative function: paragraph 7.7.31 refers.
- 7.2.4 Some honours and postgraduate taught programmes will also have summative assessments which are not linked to a specific course: e.g. a General Paper or oral examination that might relate to the programme as a whole or to part of a programme. These are detailed under the prescription for the programmes

concerned in the University Calendar and in the documentation provided by Schools to students.

- 7.2.5 The ultimate authority for conduct of all prescribed degree assessments resides with the Head(s) of the relevant School(s) or, in the case of certain interdisciplinary programmes, an Honours Programme Co-ordinator appointed by the Senate. References hereafter to Heads of School refer to such Programme Co-ordinators where relevant.

7.3 Setting and Arranging Assessments

Written Examination Papers

- 7.3.1 Course Co-ordinators are responsible, under the ultimate authority of their Head of School, for preparing written examination papers in consultation with those involved with the delivery of a course. While questions should relate to the course actually delivered, they may include reference to material not actually taught, provided that students have been told explicitly (e.g. in the course documentation) that a particular subject would form part of the course aims and learning outcomes and that students would be expected to undertake self-directed learning on such material.
- 7.3.2 In finalising the draft written paper, Course Co-ordinators should ensure:-
- that the material has not been assessed previously (e.g. by way of an in-course assignment, the mark for which contributes to the overall course mark);
 - that the paper covers an adequate breadth of material;
 - that there is no overlap/similarity in material being assessed where more than one written paper is being set for a particular course;
 - that questions at Levels 3, 4 and 5 in particular are designed to allow students to demonstrate independent critical awareness and understanding of the subject, analysis and judgement, and not just rote learning.
- 7.3.3 The External Examiner **must** be asked to approve the final paper and should be sent all relevant Course Handbooks to enable them to ascertain whether the draft questions are fair and appropriate in relation to the course aims and learning outcomes. Where all substantive changes requested by the External Examiner have been incorporated into an examination paper, the Head of School, or nominee, may ratify the final version. Where a School does not act on all changes required by the External Examiner, or makes additional substantive changes to the paper, it must be returned to the External Examiner for final approval.
- 7.3.4 Heads of School should ensure that details of the School's timetable for ensuring that all examination papers are approved by the External Examiner, and are submitted to the Registry by 31 October each year.
- 7.3.5 It is good practice to draft a greater number of questions than are actually required and to ask the External Examiner to select the questions to be set for a particular paper. External Examiners should also be asked if they wish to set any questions themselves. In such cases, however, the Course Co-ordinator must ensure that all questions relate to the course aims and learning outcomes.
- 7.3.6 Wherever possible, a model answer and marking scheme should be sent to the External Examiner with the draft questions, indicating how the total marks for the

question could be achieved. [It is acknowledged that this will not be practicable for some subjects due to the nature of particular questions.]

- 7.3.7 If the question paper is structured and/or if a question is in several parts, the question paper should indicate the weighting that will be apportioned to each component: this will assist candidates in allocating an appropriate proportion of the examination time to answer a particular question.

In-Course Assignments and Projects/Dissertations

- 7.3.8 Although it is not a requirement for External Examiners to approve in-course assignments and project/dissertation titles, Course Co-ordinators should consider whether to discuss these with the External Examiner(s) before being finalised in view of the fact that External Examiners are required to approve overall course marks and, in so doing, have the right to request any item of in-course assessment (paragraph 7.9.7 below, refers).
- 7.3.9 Notwithstanding the above, topics for in-course assignments and projects and dissertations should be selected having regard to the criteria for setting written examination questions indicated in paragraphs 7.3.1 and 7.3.2 above.

Referencing and Avoiding Plagiarism

- 7.3.10 Plagiarism is defined in paragraph 7.17.1 below. It is incumbent on those setting in-course assignments, projects, dissertations, written examinations and other assessments to ensure that the requirements of the assessment are clear and do not lend themselves to plagiarism. It is also incumbent on Schools to ensure that students are given adequate advice on citation and referencing so as to avoid plagiarism.
- 7.3.11 The University Committee on Teaching and Learning requires that Schools provide the following information in their School/Course Handbooks, as deemed appropriate:-
- (a) the University's definition of plagiarism
 - (b) guidance on how to avoid plagiarism in regard to particular types of assessment, which should include the following:-
 - instructions on the correct methods of referencing sources (i.e. both in footnotes and in the bibliography), with examples;
 - advice on when to use quotation marks;
 - emphasising the importance of a student giving their own interpretation when using, quoting or paraphrasing the work of others (this would include the use of information down-loaded from Internet sites);
 - guidance for those working in groups, to indicate whether or not an individual contribution was expected in regard to the assessment of the work (it is acknowledged that it may be impossible or undesirable to identify individual contributions for some group projects).
- 7.3.12 In addition, Schools have been asked, in designing assessments, to make every effort to ensure that the design of an assessment does not promote the possibility of plagiarism but instead requires from the student individual and critical use of resources.
- 7.3.13 Staff at the University have access to TurnitinUK (plagiarism avoidance software). This is an on-line facility which enables electronic comparison of students' work against electronic sources, including Internet material and work submitted by students at the

University of Aberdeen and at other institutions. Further information can be provided by the [Centre for Academic Development](#).

Information to Candidates

7.3.14 The following statement of good practice was approved by the University Committee on Teaching and Learning on 21 October 1999 and sent to Heads of School for dissemination to all academic staff in their School, in regard to the information that might be provided to students concerning written examinations:-

- that great caution must be exercised when informing students about the content (as opposed to the structure) of a written examination and should be sufficiently broad so as not to give students an unfair advantage in completing the examination;
- that any information which staff give to students in regard to the structure and/or content of an examination should be in writing and made available to all students (preferably in the Course Handbook);
- that the actual examination paper must comply with the above information provided to students;
- that written examinations (and, indeed, all assessments) must relate to the learning outcomes for a course, which should be indicated in the Course Handbook given to all students at the start of a course.

7.3.15 Course and Programme Handbooks should contain all relevant information for candidates in regard to assessments, including the deadlines for submission of in-course assignments and the consequences and penalties for late or non-submission of material for assessment.

7.4 Scheduling of, and Entry to, Assessments

Examination Diets and Timetables

7.4.1 There are three formal University diets for written examinations for undergraduate courses each year: in January, May/June and August. Special diets are held each year in regard to the MBChB, Education and some postgraduate taught programmes. The timetabling of written examinations for **courses** (except those that are part of the MBChB programme) at the three formal diets is the responsibility of the Registry. It is University Policy that no student is required to sit more than two examinations in one day and there should not be any clashes for students registered correctly for courses by the end of the second week of teaching. A draft timetable is sent to Schools prior to each diet. At this stage a School may request a change in the date of a course examination. Generally, at the May diet, Level 3 and Level 4 courses are scheduled in the early part of the examination diet. The timetable is finalised as follows:-

- by the end of the Winter Term for the January diet;
- by the start of the Summer Term for the May diet;
- by the end of the Summer Term for the August diet.

7.4.2 Students taking examinations in January, May and August can find details of the date, time and venue of examinations via their Student Portal and on noticeboards in the Infohub. The timetable can also be viewed on the Infohub website.

- 7.4.3 Students taking examinations externally (paragraphs 7.4.16-7.4.18 refers) are referred to the above web address, a paper copy of the examination timetable can be sent on request.
- 7.4.4 For those **postgraduate taught courses** that are scheduled out-with the normal examination diets, it is the responsibility of the parent School to inform students of the date, time and venue of all such examinations.

Latest Date for Submission of Overall Course Results

- 7.4.5 Schools are informed, after the October Senate each year, of the deadlines for the latest submission of results. All written papers should be timetabled to allow maximum time for internal double-marking, where required, and moderation by the External Examiner in order for **results to be submitted to the Registry by the Senate-prescribed deadlines** with reference to paragraph 7.4.1.

First Attempt

- 7.4.6 Course hand-outs should state clearly the deadlines for submission of any in-course prescribed degree assessments (e.g. essays, practicals, reports, projects, dissertations) associated with a course, together with any penalties for late submission.
- 7.4.7 The written examinations for **undergraduate courses** (except MBChB, BDS and BScMedSci examinations) normally take place in the fixed examination period at the end of each half-session, i.e. in late January (weeks 28 and 29) for first half-session courses or in late May/early June (weeks 46-48) for second half-session courses. At Levels 4 and above, particularly in Science, both first and second half-session courses taken as part of an Honours or postgraduate taught programme are often assessed in May/June along with dissertations written during the first half-session. Details are given under the relevant programme prescriptions. The School of Medicine and Dentistry Office will inform MBChB, BDS and BScMedSci students of the dates of their examinations.
- 7.4.8 Students who are awarded a Class Certificate¹ for a course are entered automatically for the first available opportunity of prescribed degree assessment following award of the certificate, i.e. in the period immediately following the teaching and learning period (or in May/June for those first half-session courses where paragraph 7.4.7 applies). Students who are refused a Class Certificate in those courses retaining the sanction of Class Certificate refusal ([paragraph 6.7.8](#) refers) or who are deemed withdrawn from the course through their failure to respond to being reported as 'at risk' in the system for monitoring students' progress ([paragraph 6.6.1](#) refers), lose the right to appear for any associated end-of-course written examination unless they have an appeal against the decision pending.
- 7.4.9 In the case of students on Study Abroad/Erasmus in the first half-session and who wish to depart at the end of week 12 (and are therefore unable to take the end-of-course assessments), Schools are required to provide an alternative form of assessment for such students. The alternative form of assessment must be approved by the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC). Schools should return the overall CAS

¹ A Class Certificate is a certificate confirming that a candidate has attended and duly performed the work prescribed for a course. With the exception of the MBChB degrees, Class Certificates are valid as an entitlement to admission to a degree assessment in the academic year in respect of which they are awarded, and in the academic year immediately following. Students holding a valid Class Certificate are permitted a total of three opportunities of assessment within this period.

mark for these students along with the overall CAS mark for those students completing the end-of-course assessment.

Re-assessment

- 7.4.10 A re-assessment opportunity for both first and second half-session **undergraduate courses** (except courses at Level 4 and above) is offered in the August/September examination diet. In the case of courses at Level 4 and above, the timing and format of the resit shall be approved by the Quality Assurance Committee on the recommendation of the Head of the relevant School. Students must formally apply to enter resit examinations (and must have a valid Class Certificate¹ for the related course(s)). Where re-assessment is by re-submission of written work, it must normally be submitted by the first day of the August/September diet. However, candidates may be declared as having passed in June if they have completed the required work by then in order to obtain the necessary credits to graduate.
- 7.4.11 In the case of courses resat as part of an Honours or postgraduate taught programme, normally only the first attempt contributes to the final award (Appendix [7.6](#) refers).
- 7.4.12 In addition to the above, a registered student may apply to re-sit a first half-session course in the following January or a second half-session course in the following May/June without having attended the course that half-session provided they possess a valid Class Certificate² for that course from a previous year.
- 7.4.13 There are fixed deadlines for resit entries, paragraphs 7.4.10 and 7.4.17 refer. Details are announced on Student Portals. Students can register for August resits directly via the Online Store, however, for January and May resits students must register by completing a Reassessment Application Form available via Student Portals or from the Infohub
- 7.4.14 Although the first entry to a prescribed degree assessment for a course may include an element of in-course assessment, this may not always be practicable for the second, or a subsequent, entry. While the resit result for some courses will be based entirely on the written examination, for others a new element of in-course assessments will be required or the result for the in-course assessment submitted for the first attempt will be carried forward and counted at the resit attempt. Schools are required to provide this information to students in Course Handbooks. **Students who are in any doubt as to the nature of the assessments associated with a resit attempt should consult the relevant Course Co-ordinator.**
- 7.4.15 **Normally there are no resit opportunities for postgraduate taught course prescribed degree assessments.** General Regulation 8 for Taught Postgraduate Awards refers. However, candidates on postgraduate 'conversion' programmes, where approval is given by the Quality Assurance Committee for exemption of General Regulation 8, are permitted a limited opportunity to resit (as detailed in paragraph 8.2 of Appendix [7.7](#)).

External Candidates

- 7.4.16 Students who have withdrawn from the University with the intention of obtaining additional credits to allow them to return to the University, and those who have left the University but who may require additional credits to satisfy the requirements for an award (e.g. a non-honours degree or a certificate or diploma), are eligible to take undergraduate course examinations as an external candidate if they possess a valid Class Certificate¹.

- 7.4.17 External candidates entering undergraduate course examinations at the end of the first half session; end of the second half session; or over the resit examination diet should submit their resit application and the appropriate fee (where applicable) by the resit application dates as published through the [Infohub](#) website.
- 7.4.18 External candidates can request a copy of the relevant examination timetable. A self-addressed stamped envelope is required. They should also be familiar with the information provided in paragraphs 7.4.13 and 7.4.14 above. The timetable is available as a PDF file at www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub. Students should check their student portal for their examination timetable to ensure there are no errors in their examination registration. Candidates should take their Online Store order confirmation email as a receipt and should check the email provided in the order regularly as this will be used should there be any issues with registration.

Examination Entry Fees

- 7.4.19 There is no fee to pay for a first attempt at a Prescribed Degree Assessment. However, students must pay a re-assessment fee for any subsequent attempt, unless they were unable to take the first attempt due to medical reasons or other good cause (paragraphs 7.7.23 and 7.10 refer) and have this recorded on their Student Record. This requirement applies irrespective of the mode of re-assessment.
- 7.4.20 Details of re-assessment fees are announced on Student Portals, and can be obtained from the Registry.

Examinations Held Outwith Aberdeen

- 7.4.21 The University Committee on Teaching and Learning (21 October 1999) agreed that no change be made to the policy concerning requests to hold examinations outwith Aberdeen. Permission to hold outwith Aberdeen those examinations which are published in the University's examinations timetable (paragraph 7.4.1 refers) is only granted in exceptional circumstances (which do not include personal inconvenience or expense). The decision does not rest with Heads of School. Requests for examinations to be held outwith Aberdeen must be submitted in writing to exams@abdn.ac.uk by the end of teaching in the relevant half-session or in the case of August resit diet by the resit application deadline. Requests will be passed to the Vice-Principal (Learning & Teaching) for a decision.

Examinations Held Outwith the Formal Diets

- 7.4.22 Similarly, it is University policy that permission to hold a special diet of examinations in Aberdeen out with the three formal diets will only be given in the most exceptional circumstances (which do not include personal inconvenience or expense). Requests must be submitted in writing to exams@abdn.ac.uk for consideration by the Vice-Principal (Learning & Teaching).

7.5 Rules for the Conduct of Prescribed Assessments and Written Examinations for Degrees or Diplomas

- 7.5.1 The Senate has approved *Rules for the Conduct of Prescribed Assessments and Written Examinations for Degrees or Diplomas* which relate to the following and which are provided as Appendix [7.1](#):-
- Responsibilities of the Registry

- Responsibilities of Heads of School
- Responsibilities of Senior Invigilators and Invigilators
- Rules for Candidates
- Cheating in Prescribed Degree Assessments
- Guidance Note on the Use of Readers and Amanuenses in Examinations

7.5.2 Plagiarism is defined within the University's Code of Practice on Student Discipline ([paragraph 2.1.1\(h\)](#) refers).

7.6 Disabled Candidates

7.6.1 *Notes of Guidance for Those with Responsibility for Making Examination Arrangements for Disabled Candidates* have been approved in relation to candidates with disabilities [Appendix [7.2](#) refers].

7.6.2 In addition, staff should consult [Section 5](#), Appendix [5.9 Recommendations Concerning Students with Dyslexia](#) for information on characteristics of, and assessment for, dyslexia, and for good practice in regard to teaching, learning and assessment practices.

7.7 Marking and Assessment Policies

Double, "Blind" and Anonymous Marking

Written Examination Scripts²

7.7.1 All written examination scripts must be **anonymous**, i.e. students should only be identified by candidate number. This is facilitated by the University's examination booklets requiring candidates to write their student ID number on their scripts with their name being concealed in a sealable section.

7.7.2 The standard of the results for written examination scripts that are taken as part of an Honours or Postgraduate taught programme will be assured by a system of moderation which requires, as a minimum, a range of scripts to be double-marked. **Double-marking** should normally be undertaken internally, with the two markers assessing a script "**blind**", i.e. without knowledge of the other's mark. Double-marking is required for:

- all scripts for which the first marker has awarded an overall CAS mark of 8, 11, 14, and 17-20, and additionally, in the case of Level 4 courses, a CAS mark of 5.
- Schools should ensure that a **minimum of 10%, or 10, whichever is the lesser figure, of each marker's scripts have been double marked**. If this proportion is not met by the double marking of the CAS band boundaries outlined above, a selection of scripts for which the first marker has awarded a CAS mark of 6/7, 9/10, 12/13 and 15/16 should also be double marked.

7.7.3 Only in exceptional circumstances should an External Examiner be asked to be the second marker.

² A script is defined as the totality of a candidate's answers to a written examination paper i.e. the answers to the required number of questions per paper.

- 7.7.4 In view of the number of students taking certain courses, particularly at Levels 1 and 2, it is not practicable or necessary for written examination scripts for courses that **do not contribute towards degree classification or a postgraduate taught award** (i.e. Levels 1 and 2, and some Level 3, courses) to be double-marked: they may therefore be marked by one internal marker (who will, however, not know the identity of the candidate – paragraph 7.7.1 refers). **The standard of the results for such courses will be assured** by a range of scripts being sent or made available to the External Examiner(s) [paragraph 7.9.8 refers]. This provides for all overall course CAS marks of 8 (and CAS 5 in the case of courses at Level 4 and above) to be confirmed by the External Examiner, or moderated if considered necessary.

Other Assessments

- 7.7.5 Where appropriate, all other assessments should be marked anonymously. In determining the appropriateness of anonymous marking, the impact of this on the quality of the feedback subsequently available to students should be considered.
- 7.7.6 Where double-marking is required (see paragraph 7.7.2 above) and it is practicable, they should be marked “blind” by two internal markers. Where they do not contribute to an overall course mark or programme award (e.g. Levels 1 and 2 courses, and Level 3 courses taken as part of a non-Honours programme), they may be marked by a single marker, with the standard of the results being confirmed or moderated by the policy concerning written scripts (paragraph 7.7.4 above refers).

Common Assessment Scale (CAS)

- 7.7.7 The University’s *Common Assessment Scale* (CAS) (Appendix [7.3](#)) was introduced in 1992 to enable students and the University to compare more easily the level of performance in different subjects. It is University policy that, unless exemption has been given by the Quality Assurance Committee, an overall CAS mark (in the range 0-20) for each course must be awarded, and that only marks expressed on the Common Assessment Scale may be released to students and External Examiners.
- 7.7.8 Schools are encouraged to award CAS marks for each component i.e. each essay or examination question of prescribed degree assessment, which can then be used (after weighting where stipulated) to arrive at the overall CAS mark for the course. However, Schools are permitted to award initial (raw) marks according to historical practice, e.g. as a percentage: in these cases, Schools are required to have clearly defined conversion scales to indicate how the overall CAS mark is derived from the initial (raw) mark(s).
- 7.7.9 The CAS system applies to both undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses and programmes. Several general principles apply, as indicated in Appendix [7.3](#): the following general principles are reiterated:-
- the CAS is not a linear scale: where Schools award “raw” marks (see above), in converting these to CAS marks there is no requirement that there should be the same interval of raw marks for each of the 21 CAS marks;
 - points on the CAS scale indicate levels of performance: they do not correspond directly to percentages or other marking systems;
 - it is incorrect to average CAS marks and round-up or round-down the average mark;
 - each CAS should be an integer (i.e. decimals should not be used).

Approval/Moderation of Marks and Results

- 7.7.10 Where assessments are double-marked (see paragraph 7.7.2 above) and the two internal markers differ in the marks they recommend, they should discuss the assessment and agree the mark to be awarded, for approval by the External Examiner. Where they cannot agree, the External Examiner should be asked to moderate and award the final mark. [In such cases, some Schools may choose to identify a third internal marker, in which case it would be for the three internal markers to agree the mark to be awarded (or to send the assessment to the External Examiner for moderation if they cannot agree)].
- 7.7.11 Normally, External Examiners serve as moderators: i.e. they confirm the standard of the marking by agreeing or revising, as appropriate, the marks being recommended by the internal markers, and by adjudicating where internal markers cannot agree on the mark to be awarded. If an External Examiner has concerns as to the standard of the internal marking, s/he may request a Head of School to arrange for the assessment for a group of students to be reviewed by another, senior, internal examiner, before being re-submitted to the External Examiner for approval.
- 7.7.12 The role of the External Examiner in undertaking this function is described in section 7.9 below.
- 7.7.13 The results (i.e. Achieved or Not Achieved) of all courses assessed at the end of the first half-session must be approved by an External Examiner in January/February³ and are final (with one exception – see below), irrespective of Level. The CAS marks for such Level 1 and 2 (and non-honours Level 3) first half-session courses are also final and should be approved by the External Examiner in January/February. However, the CAS marks for such first half-session courses that constitute part of an Honours or postgraduate taught programme are provisional – they can be raised or lowered at the final Examiners' meeting later in the same Academic Year (with one exception). The exception is that while CAS 8 (Not Achieved) for a first half-session course that forms part of an Honours or postgraduate taught programme may be changed at the final Examiners' meeting to CAS 9 or above (Achieved), CAS 9 or above can NOT be changed to CAS 8 or lower.
- 7.7.14 For Honours programmes of more than one year's duration, the CAS marks for courses taken in previous years can NOT be modified at the end of the Final Honours Year – they are regarded as having been signed-off in previous years by the External Examiner in office at that time (who may not be in post when a candidate reaches the end of his/her programme). However, the External Examiner in office at the end of the Honours programme may request that a candidate's scripts and in course/continuous assessments taken in previous years be made available at the end of the Final Honours Year to assist the Examiners in determining the final degree classification: this may be particularly the case where the Examiners wish to use their discretion in departing, in an upward direction, from the classification indicated by the Grade Spectrum.
- 7.7.15 The signature of two Examiners must be appended to the list of results as evidence that the marks and results are agreed and approved and that processes have been carried out in accordance with the conventions of the University. Normally, no result will be published unless the results are signed by the Examiners.

³ Several Examiners' Meetings for the MBChB degrees are held throughout the year, as well as a Final Examiners' Meeting in June. CAS marks and results are confirmed at each of the meetings.

- 7.7.16 Normally, the decision of the External Examiner in confirming a course or programme result shall prevail. Where, after appropriate discussion, two External Examiners disagree as to the mark or result to be awarded to a particular candidate, the higher mark or result shall be awarded, i.e. the candidate shall receive the benefit of any doubt.

Determination of Honours Classification (*Grade Spectrum*)

- 7.7.17 In 1995, the Senate approved guidelines for the determination of Honours degree classification in Joint Honours programmes. This was commonly known as the *Grade Spectrum*, and indicated the relationship between elements of assessment, the CAS marks for such elements, and the final degree classification. The relationship between such elements for Single Honours programmes was left to individual Schools to determine. A revised *Grade Spectrum*, for the determination of honours classification in ALL degree programmes, was introduced for all students commencing an honours programme in 1996/97, unless permission to use a different system was granted by the University Committee on Teaching and Learning (UCTL).
- 7.7.18 A condition of approval of alternative proposals by the UCTL was that a School must publicise its procedures for determining degree classification in the information they give to students. Although two exceptions were granted, **all** first degrees have been classified on the basis of the *Grade Spectrum* since 2000/01.
- 7.7.19 The *Grade Spectrum* was reviewed in 1998 and included feedback from External Examiners and Heads of School. No changes were made. However, the Senate (17 November 1999) approved the addition of "Notes" to the *Grade Spectrum* to clarify the position concerning failure to complete elements of Honours assessment and the application of discretion in applying the *Grade Spectrum*, to clarify issues that had been raised by External Examiners in light of an academic appeal. The *Grade Spectrum* is provided as Appendix 7.4.
- 7.7.20 In 2003/04, the *Grade Spectrum* was further reviewed in the light of (i) a small number of comments received from External Examiners, and (ii) the publication of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). In particular, the review focused on the limited condonement of failure provided for by the *Grade Spectrum*. The SCQF set out the credit requirements for the award of an Honours degree. The condonement of failure permitted by the *Grade Spectrum* resulted in students graduating with a Lower Second or Third Class Honours degree having failed a proportion of their Honours courses.
- 7.7.21 In addressing the issue of condonement of failure, provision for resit of courses taken as part of an Honours programme was extended. Previously, students normally only re-sat failed Honours courses where these were required either to meet the School requirements for progression within an Honours programme or to meet the requirements for professional accreditation by Professional or Statutory Body (PSB). However, normally only the result achieved at the first attempt contributes to final degree classification.
- 7.7.22 Hence, while the provision of resits at Honours was a significant change, only minor changes were made to the *Grade Spectrum* approved by the Senate on 16 June 2004 and included the abolition of the Pass Degree.

Good Cause

- 7.7.23 The " Notes" define Good cause as any reason out-with a candidate's control (e.g. compassionate or unavoidable circumstances) and does not include, for example, misreading of the examination timetable in regard to the date, time or venue of an examination.

Aegrotat Degrees, Designated and other non-Honours Degrees

- 7.7.24 Candidates who do not fulfil the requirements for the award of a Third Class Honours degree will normally be awarded the relevant Designated Degree, if they are qualified, or, if not, a non-Honours Degree (see 7.7.26 below).
- 7.7.25 In accordance with General Regulation 21 for First Degrees, the examiners may recommend the award of an Aegrotat degree to candidates who, on account of illness or other good cause, have been unable to complete a sufficient number of elements of Honours degree assessment at the prescribed time to allow the candidates to be placed in a particular Honours class, provided that a candidate's past record provides sufficient evidence that they would have achieved at least Third Class Honours standard. Aegrotat degrees may be awarded only after obtaining the consent of the candidate.
- 7.7.26 In addition to the degrees of MA and BSc being conferred with Honours, these two degrees may also be offered as non-Honours degrees. In both cases, candidates completing a Designated programme of study as prescribed by the Regulations, with a preponderance of courses at Level 3 in a specified discipline, will be entitled to apply for the award of the Designated degree with the name of that discipline inscribed on their Degree Certificate. Where candidates have not followed such a prescribed programme of study but have followed a more general programme, if eligible they may apply for the award of the non-Honours degrees of BSc or MA. With permission of the Quality Assurance Committee, a student who, for good cause, is unable to complete the requirements of their Honours programme may apply for the award of a Designated degree, appropriately designated. This provision applies where the student, while having achieved 90 credit points at Level 3, does not meet the programme requirements for any of the Designated degrees offered.
- 7.7.27 Most of the University's other degrees can be conferred with Honours or as non-Honours degrees, and as Designated degrees in some cases. Details are to be found in the University Calendar.

Determination of Postgraduate Awards

- 7.7.28 The General Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Awards indicate the credit requirements for the award of a Postgraduate Certificate, Diploma or Master's degree. Supplementary requirements in terms of the attainment of a particular standard (e.g. a specified CAS mark) in an individual course or courses may be identified in the programme prescription, with specific details being provided in course and programme handbooks, where appropriate.
- 7.7.29 In June 2002, the Senate approved Procedures for Determining Progression and Award in Modularised Postgraduate Taught Programmes of Study (*Grade Spectrum*).
- 7.7.30 In order to maintain the standards of the University's awards, the Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Awards also indicate that candidates may only resit courses in exceptional circumstances and on the unanimous recommendation of the examiners

unless the candidate is on a postgraduate 'conversion' programme, approved as such by the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) and where the QAC has approved resits. This would not preclude an award being made to a candidate who had failed a course or courses, provided the examiners considered that a candidate's overall performance warranted an award being made. Candidates in this position would be deemed to have satisfied the credit requirements for their award.

Feedback to Students

- 7.7.31 Feedback is an important part of the learning process and can serve a dual purpose: it can confirm a student's strengths and/or identify potential weaknesses, which may assist a student to focus on their future learning requirements, thereby serving a formative function; and it can provide motivation for future learning and assessments. Timely and appropriate feedback should be provided to students, as indicated below. Students should be informed of the arrangements for the provision of such feedback in Course or School Handbooks, which should include the timescales in which students can expect to receive feedback. Our Enhancing Feedback website brings together materials and sources of further information to support staff in providing the best possible feedback to their students, including examples of feedback proformas from Schools within all three Colleges. The website also provides information to raise students' awareness of their role in the feedback process and to help them to engage successfully with the feedback they receive.
- 7.7.32 Only marks on the Common Assessment Scale may be disclosed to students (Appendix [7.3](#) refers).
- 7.7.33 In November 2009, the UCTL approved an Institutional Framework for the Provision of Feedback on Assessment (Appendix [7.8](#)). This was produced in response to the Curriculum Reform Commission's recommendation that such a Framework should be established. The Curriculum Reform Commission also recommended that all programmes should review the way in which they provide formative feedback to students. This review will be undertaken as part of the review of all programmes in advance of the introduction of the new curriculum in September 2010.

Written Examination Scripts

- 7.7.34 Although it is University policy not routinely to return written examination scripts to students, students can expect to receive feedback on their performance in all written examinations other than final examinations⁴. The mechanism by which feedback on written examinations should be given is left to the discretion of Schools. Students will be informed of the mechanisms and timescales via relevant handbooks [paragraph 7.7.31 refers].

In-Course Assignments

- 7.7.35 Markers should provide timeous feedback to students on all in-course assignments, even when the marks are summative and contribute to the overall course CAS mark. The Senate has agreed that Schools must inform students of their CAS mark for individual elements of in-course assignments irrespective of whether the marks are to contribute to the overall course CAS mark. Thus, for example, for a course assessed entirely by three in-course essays, Schools should inform students of their individual essay CAS marks and the Registry would inform students of their overall course CAS

⁴ Feedback on final written examinations should be made available to those students who intend to resit a final examination e.g. in order to satisfy accreditation requirements.

mark. However, only the latter would be released to students in regard to a course assessed entirely by written examination.

Other forms of assessment

- 7.7.36 Course, Programme or School Handbooks, as appropriate, should also indicate the arrangements for the provision of feedback to students in regard to other forms of assessment e.g. oral or clinical examinations or presentations.

Data Protection

- 7.7.37 Schools should be aware that the Data Protection Act 1998 gives students the right to request access to personal data held relating to them (including from 1 January 2005 such data held in manual datasets which are not structured by reference to individuals). This could include examination scripts and any written comments made by examiners on their assessments. Schools should therefore ensure that all Examiners, including External Examiners, are aware that their written comments on candidates' written examination scripts may be provided to students who make a formal application for disclosure of their personal data under the Data Protection Act ([Section 1.12 refers](#)).

Analysis of Marks

- 7.7.37 Schools should undertake routinely an analysis of marking and marking trends to facilitate comparisons and provide evidence of standards. This will be audited through the Internal Teaching Review process.

7.8 Internal Examiners/Markers

- 7.8.1 University Court Ordinance 404 and the General Regulations for First degrees and for Taught Postgraduate Awards indicate that the Examiners for each degree shall be the "Professors, Readers and Lecturers in the University [including those holding such status on an honorary basis] whose courses qualify for that degree, and such External Examiners as may be appointed by the University Court". Notwithstanding these Regulations, the Senate has agreed that Heads of School may also permit others without that status, such as Teaching Assistants, Teaching Fellows, Clinical Tutors or Recognised Teachers, (including those appointed as Relief Teachers and/or on a part-time basis) to mark prescribed degree assessments (in-course assignments and/or written examination scripts) where the Head of School is satisfied that the person concerned is sufficiently experienced to be a competent marker.

7.9 External Examiners

Nomination, Appointment and Induction

- 7.9.1 Full details concerning the nomination, appointment and induction of External examiners are given in [Section 9](#) of the Academic Quality Handbook *External Examining: Taught Courses and Programmes*. The roles and responsibilities of External Examiners are described in detail below.

Approval of Prescribed Degree Assessments

- 7.9.2 The role of the External Examiner in approving written examination papers and other summative assessments is described in detail in section 7.3 above.

Assessment of Examination Scripts⁵

- 7.9.3 An External Examiner has the right to see all written examination scripts.
- 7.9.5 The guiding principle for selection of scripts is that External Examiners should have enough evidence to determine that internal marking and classifications are of an appropriate standard and are consistent.
- 7.9.6 External Examiners should see a sample of scripts from the full range of the CAS bands, and should normally be sent all scripts of borderline candidates and of those assessed internally as first class, as detailed in paragraph 7.9.8 below.

Assessment of In-Course Assignments and Projects/Dissertations

- 7.9.7 An External Examiner has the right to see any work that contributes to the overall CAS mark for a course or to the degree classification or programme award, including work undertaken on courses off-campus that contributes to the programme award (see paragraph 7.9.8 below).

Selection of Scripts and other work to be sent/made available to the External Examiner

- 7.9.8 It is important that External Examiners are able to satisfy themselves that the boundaries between Pass and Fail and between each CAS band have been set at the appropriate standard. Consequently, each candidate's scripts and any in-course assignments (including projects and dissertations) either should be sent to the External Examiner or should be made available to the External Examiner where he/she prefers to review candidates' work while visiting the University, for the following:-

Courses and summative assessments (e.g. general or language papers) which are part of an Honours or postgraduate taught programme

- those for which the internal markers have agreed an overall CAS mark of 11, 14 and 17 - 20
- those for which the internal markers have agreed an overall CAS mark of 8 (in the case of Level 4 courses, an overall CAS mark of 5)
- a small selection of those for which the internal markers have agreed an overall CAS mark of 9-10, 12-13 and 15-16, to include a selection of single and double marked scripts
- those for which the internal markers have been unable to agree an overall mark
- any others requested by the External Examiner or the Head of School

⁵ A script is defined as the totality of a candidate's answers to a written examination paper i.e. the answers to the required number of questions per paper.

For all other courses

- those for which the internal markers have agreed an overall CAS mark of 6-8
- a selection of those for which the internal markers have agreed an overall CAS mark of 9-20
- those for which the internal markers have been unable to agree an overall mark.

7.9.9 Notwithstanding the above, for all Honours and postgraduate taught courses each candidate's in-course assignments (including projects/dissertations) should be made available to the External Examiner on request.

7.9.10 There is no requirement for a School to photocopy written examination scripts (which is a time-consuming process): it is acceptable to send scripts and other assessments to External Examiners by registered post.

Oral Examinations and Interviews

7.9.11 Oral examinations are where the Examiners ask a student questions relating to the student's programme of study, the answers to which can influence a student's overall mark for a course or programme. There are two types of oral examination: compulsory and discretionary.

7.9.12 Oral examinations, where held, must take place within the published dates of term⁶ and must be conducted by at least two (and no more than three) Examiners: normally, one External Examiner and one (or two) internal examiner(s).

7.9.13 An External Examiner may request to interview students, either individually or in a group, in the absence of any internal examiners in order to allow the External Examiner to discharge his/her responsibilities (paragraph 7.9.19 below refers).

Compulsory oral examinations

7.9.14 Where an oral examination is to be a compulsory component of the assessment for a course or programme that all candidates would be expected to take, with the marks contributing a stated proportion of the overall result for a course or programme, the prior permission of the Quality Assurance Committee must be obtained (normally via the relevant Course or Programme proposal form).

7.9.15 Schools must make the following explicit to students in Course or Programme Handbooks in regard to compulsory oral examinations:-

- the percentage contribution of the oral examination to the overall course or programme mark and result;
- the timing of the oral examination;
- the range of material that could be covered in the oral examination;
- the criteria for the award of marks for the oral examination.

Discretionary oral examinations

7.9.16 If Schools, exceptionally, want the right to hold discretionary oral examinations for some candidates only, details for the selection of candidates and the purpose of the examination must be submitted to the QAC, as part of the process for approving the assessment arrangements for courses and programmes.

⁶ For postgraduate taught programmes, oral examinations should be held by the end of week 50 of the programme.

- 7.9.17 Heads of School should clarify with External Examiners, on their appointment, whether or not they might wish to invite some candidates to attend a discretionary oral examination, subject to paragraph 7.9.12 above. Where discretionary oral examinations are requested, Heads of School should agree the principles for the selection of such candidates, including whether a candidate may request an oral examination, and the purpose of the examination with the External Examiner: these should be submitted to the QAC for approval and, if approved, they should be made explicit to students via Course/School Handbooks.
- 7.9.18 Under no circumstances shall the outcome of a discretionary oral examination be used to lower a mark or result that has been provisionally awarded to a candidate prior to such an examination: i.e. candidates can only benefit from a discretionary oral examination. Students invited to attend a discretionary oral examination should be informed of the purpose of the examination and that their provisional mark would become their confirmed mark if they declined to attend a discretionary oral examination.

Interviews

- 7.9.19 External Examiners, in addition to participating in the assessment process, are required to report on the academic standards of student performance and the University's awards. In order to fulfil these responsibilities, an External Examiner may invite students, either individually or as a group, to attend for an interview (paragraph 7.9.13 refers). An interview with an individual student is likely to be requested where an External Examiner wishes to ask a student questions on their programme in order to judge whether the standard of the award that was to be made to the student (which had been determined prior to the interview and could not be altered as a consequence of the interview) was appropriate. Interviews with groups of students are likely to be where the External Examiner wishes to obtain views from a representative group of students on their educational experience at the University, which may include their comments on the quality of the learning resources available.
- 7.9.20 Students who are invited to attend for interview with the External Examiner should be informed of the purpose of the interview and that it would not be part of the student assessment process.

7.10 Medical and other Extenuating Circumstances

- 7.10.1 If candidates believe that illness and/or other personal circumstances may have affected their performance in an element of assessment they must submit written details to the Head of the relevant School. In line with the University's Policy on Student Absence, where advance notification of circumstances is not possible, these should be reported on the day and certainly no later than three days following the date on which they submitted or appeared for the assessment concerned, to allow these to be taken into consideration by the internal markers. Heads of School should bring details of medical or other extenuating circumstances to the attention of the External Examiner in at least the following cases:-
- for all courses where the internal markers have agreed an overall CAS mark of 0-8, irrespective of Level
 - for all courses taken as part of an Honours programme where the internal markers have agreed an overall CAS mark of 11, 14 or 17.
- 7.10.4 The Senate (12 June 2013) approved a Policy and Procedures on Student Absence.

- 7.10.5 Following concerns raised initially by local General Practitioners (GPs), about the level of medical certification being requested by students and the impacts this was having on GPs ability to deal with in person queries and appointments, the University reviewed its requirements for certification of absence which had been in place since 2001/02. As a result of discussions, the University Committee on Teaching and Learning recommended to Senate the adoption of a Policy on Student Absence which permits self-certification at levels one and two. The Policy on Student Absence aligns the timelines for notification of absence with the requirements placed on University staff.
- 7.10.6 This Policy is kept under review by the University Committee on Teaching & Learning, in particular to ensure that it takes account of any national changes implemented by the Scottish General Practitioners Committee.

7.11	Guidelines for those who fail, or who fail to attend or complete, an element of prescribed assessment⁷
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- 7.11.1 The Senate (June 2000) approved a Guidance Note for Students who either Fail, or who Fail to Attend or Complete, an Element of Prescribed Degree Assessment (Appendix [7.6](#)). This Guidance Note was substantially revised in June 2004 following the decision to introduce provision for resit examinations at Honours to ensure that Honours degrees awarded are compliant with the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (see [1.6.9](#)). This requirement took effect for students entering an Honours programme in or after 2004/05.
- 7.11.2 The Guidance Note details the credit requirements in terms of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework of all University's awards.
- 7.11.3 Students failing a course at the first attempt would normally be required to resit for credit accumulation purposes. However, in the case of students in the final year of an Honours programme, a number of exceptions to the requirement to resit are provided. These are detailed in paragraph 5 of the Guidance Note (Appendix [7.6](#)).
- 7.11.4 In particular, a system of compensation is provided for students achieving CAS 6, 7 or 8 in a course at Level 4 or above taken as part of an Honours programme. Students achieving such a CAS mark will be compensated for their marginal fail up to a maximum of 30 credit points by the award of the same number of credit points assigned to the course but as unnamed specific Level 1 credits. Such Level 1 credit will count towards overall credit requirements.
- 7.11.5 Students who are unable to complete or attend a course at Level 4 or above on account of illness or other good cause will also be required to make up this credit shortfall. However, the result of such a resit will count towards final degree classification, in accordance with the *Grade Spectrum* (paragraphs 7.7.17-22 refer).

⁷ This procedure applies to candidates entering an Honours programme in or after 2004/05. For the procedures for students entering an Honours programme before 2004/05, refer to the Guidance Note (Appendix 7.6) in the Academic Quality Handbook 2nd edition.

Number, Composition and Purpose of Examiners' Meetings

- 7.12.1 The University does not hold Examination Boards as such: the outcomes of assessments are approved by Examiners' Meetings.
- 7.12.2 It is the responsibility of Heads of School (a) to decide how many Examiners' Meetings they need to convene each year and (b) to ensure that External Examiners are informed of the dates well in advance (paragraph 7.12.19 refers).
- 7.12.3 Normally, Final Examiners' Meetings (at which at least one External Examiner would be required to attend⁸) are held in June for undergraduate programmes and in the final month of the programme for postgraduate programmes. In addition, Schools may elect to hold a meeting of internal examiners⁹ after the May/June diet and immediately before a Final Examiners' Meeting, primarily to identify any potential borderline candidates, for whatever reason (including medical/other extenuating circumstances): this would allow a candidate's scripts and in-course assignments to be collated and made available to the Final Examiners' Meeting, in order to ensure that sufficient time is allocated to candidates for whom the assessment outcome may not be unambiguous.
- 7.12.4 Schools may also elect to hold an (internal) Examiners' Meeting at the end of the first half-session or resit (August) examination diets, to agree the marks, scripts and other information to be sent to the External Examiners: there is no requirement for External Examiners to attend these meetings.
- 7.12.5 Where an Examiners' Meeting is not held at the end of the first half-session or resit diet, it shall be for the Head of School and Course Co-ordinator to approve the marks for an individual course, which should be submitted to the External Examiner for award of the final overall mark (subject to the policies outlined in paragraph 7.7.13 above).
- 7.12.6 The primary purposes of Final Examiners' Meetings are:-
- to make recommendations in regard to programme awards;
 - to finalise the marks to be awarded for all second half-session courses and those first half-session courses that are assessed at the end of the second half-session;
 - to finalise the first half-session CAS marks for courses for Honours and postgraduate taught candidates (paragraphs 7.7.13 and 7.7.14 refer);
 - to take into consideration, in all of the above, any medical or other extenuating circumstances that had been submitted to the School within the required time limits;
 - to assist Heads of School in identifying candidates for the award of any prizes that are the responsibility of a School;

⁸ In cases where a final Examiners' Meeting would be considering a very small number of candidates, it is acceptable for an External Examiner to request that s/he should not be required to attend the University if candidates are not required to undergo an oral examination and if the External Examiner (a) is sent details of any extenuating circumstances that a student has submitted in regard to their performance so that these can be taken into account by the External Examiner in approving overall course CAS marks and programme awards, (b) is sent, for each candidate, the written examination scripts and all in-course assessments not previously seen by the External Examiner, (c) agrees to raise any issues with the Head of School by telephone, facsimile or e-mail prior to confirming the marks and awards and in sufficient time for the School to meet the Senate-approved deadlines for the submission of results to the Registry and (d) agrees to provide feedback to the Head of School in regard to the appropriateness of the assessment procedures and the standards attained by candidates, and the appropriateness of the curricula.

⁹ Under current Regulations, internal Examiners are defined as the Professors, Readers and Lecturers responsible for teaching a course, though others may mark, subject to appropriate monitoring.

- to receive oral comments from the External Examiner(s) in regard to (a) the appropriateness of the assessment procedures and the standards attained by candidates, (b) the appropriateness of the curricula, particularly in regard to any external reference points such as the national subject benchmark statement, where relevant, and (c) the structure and content of existing programmes of study, as part of a systematic reflection on the provision and appropriateness of these programmes.

Programmes delivered by one School

7.12.7 Normally, the Head of a School (or his/her nominated Deputy) should serve as Convener of all Examiners' Meetings for that School. In addition, all Course Co-ordinators would be expected to attend where the results for their courses were being considered and/or where the results for their courses would contribute to a candidate's overall programme result. All other examiners⁶ are also eligible to attend internal Examiners' Meetings. Other markers (paragraph 7.8.1 refers) may be permitted to be in attendance, but without power to vote.

7.12.8 The quorum for a Final Examiners' Meeting would be the Convener, at least one External Examiner⁹, and normally at least three other internal examiners.

Programmes delivered by more than one School

7.12.9 For programmes delivered by more than one School, the final decision on the award should be taken by an Examiners' Meeting consisting of up to three examiners from each of the participating Schools, plus appropriate External Examiners where available. Where an External Examiner is not available, decisions will be subject to subsequent ratification by the relevant External Examiner(s). For multi-disciplinary programmes with a designated Honours Co-ordinator, and separately identified External Examiners, the Examiners' Meeting must comprise, as a minimum, the Honours Co-ordinator, the External Examiner(s), and at least one representative from each School which has contributed courses.

7.12.10 For joint and major/minor honours degrees in which a candidate has studied two subjects, in practice one School will hold its Final Examiners' Meeting and decide candidates' marks to be awarded for the elements of assessment (in terms of the *Grade Spectrum*) for which it is responsible before the equivalent meeting for the second subject. Examiners representing the first School/subject will then take joint candidates' marks to the Final Examiners' Meeting for the second subject in accordance with paragraph 7.12.9: the examiners for the two subjects, jointly, will then determine the overall programme award.

Conduct of Examiners' Meetings

7.12.11 Examiners' Meetings shall be convened by the Head of the relevant School (or his/her nominated deputy) or Honours Co-ordinator where appropriate, and should be scheduled to ensure that the School can submit results, approved by the External Examiner, by the Senate-approved deadlines.

7.12.12 Those attending Examiners' Meetings are obliged to declare any personal interest, involvement or relationship with a student being assessed.

7.12.13 All written examination scripts and in-course assessments should be available for Examiners' Meetings, if requested, in regard to any student for whom an assessment outcome is being considered (paragraph 7.12.3 above refers).

- 7.12.14 Any medical or other extenuating circumstances that a candidate has brought to the attention of the Head of School within the prescribed time-limit and that has not hitherto been considered by the External Examiner (paragraphs 7.10.1 and 7.10.2 above refer) should be discussed at the Final Examiners' Meeting. Where such evidence is considered relevant by the Examiners, it shall normally be taken into account in deciding the marks for individual courses and summative assessments rather than in the process of reaching a decision on a final classification. However, in some cases, the evidence may be better assessed at the time of final classification.
- 7.12.15 Where the Examiners have evidence (e.g. a candidate's past performance) to believe that the medical or other personal circumstances submitted by, or on behalf of, a candidate may have prevented the candidate from performing in a particular course or summative assessment to their expected standard, the Examiners have the discretion to award a higher CAS mark than the actual performance might warrant.
- 7.12.16 The *Grade Spectrum* (Appendix 7.4) indicates that, in regard to degree classification, where the Examiners use their discretion to depart from the class indicated by the *Grade Spectrum*, but that such discretion can only be used in an upward direction.
- 7.12.17 In all circumstances where discretion is applied, clear reasons must be identified for doing so and a record kept.
- 7.12.18 It is the responsibility of the Convener to ensure that an appropriate record is kept of the procedures and decisions of each Examiners' Meeting.
- 7.12.19 External Examiners, as full members of the relevant Examiners' Meeting, must be invited to attend all Examiners' Meetings at which significant decisions are to be taken in regard to the specialisms with which they have been concerned (including those for which they have approved question papers). At least one External Examiner must be present at all Final Examiners' Meetings i.e. normally in June for undergraduate programmes and September for postgraduate programmes (paragraphs 7.12.3 and 7.12.8 refer). Heads of School should therefore ensure that their External Examiner(s) are informed of the dates of Examiners' Meetings for the whole session by the start of each academic year, or as soon as possible thereafter.
- 7.12.20 In addition to noting the comments from External Examiners referred to in paragraph 7.12.6, minutes of Examiner's Meetings should include the following, minimum set of information:

- Full title of Examination meeting
- Date and location of meeting
- Those present followed by those who have submitted apologies
- List of programmes and/or courses being examined
- Explanation of calculations to be used in determining marks
- Candidates with special circumstances possibly affecting their performance
- List of results

Additionally, the following points should be taken into consideration when compiling minutes:

- The use of personal information should be avoided as much as possible
- Students should be referred to by ID numbers
- All decisions should be attributed to all Examiners

Preparation, Submission, Recording and Notification of Results

- 7.13.1 Heads of School are responsible for ensuring that robust and reliable School systems are in place for the computation, checking and recording of assessment decisions, and for providing relevant information in time for the Final Meeting of Examiners. They should also ensure that appropriate back-ups are made of data that is stored electronically, and that, where required, these are erased by the final date for return of the results to the Registry (paragraph 7.13.6 below refers).
- 7.13.2 Provisional marks for undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses should be entered onto the Student Record and the list printed for the Examiners' Meeting. During the meeting, the lists should be annotated and signed by two Examiners. Following the meeting, lists should be returned either by fax or by hand to the Registry. Students are then notified of their results by the Registry, via Student Portals, and consideration is given to the implications for student progress/graduation, as appropriate.
- 7.13.3 Results are recorded using the following conventions:-
- a *Pass* is recorded as "A" (Achieved), supported by the relevant CAS mark or Honours classification;
 - *Any other Result* is recorded as "N" (Not Achieved), supported by the relevant CAS mark or other reason why credit has not been obtained, e.g. "MC" (denoting that a student had submitted a medical certificate as a reason for not attending the end-of-course examination) or "GC" (denoting that a student had submitted reasons of other "Good Cause" as to why they had not appeared for, or completed, the course assessment) or "NP" (denoting that a student had failed to complete the course assessment without medical certification or other good cause).
- 7.13.4 Course and programme results are processed as quickly as possible following confirmation by the Examiners. Course and programme results that are submitted to the Registry on a particular day are confirmed on the Student Record the same day and published via Student Portals overnight.
- 7.13.5 **All assessment results are covered by the Data Protection Act.** No CAS marks or programme results should be divulged to candidates until after the results, duly signed by two Examiners, have been submitted to, and published by, the Registry (with one exception¹⁰). Where Schools wish to publish results/marks, they should be displayed using ID numbers, in ID number order, and without names. Results should only be given to students either in person or by 'phone if steps have been taken to confirm the student's identity: they should NOT be disclosed to third parties (including parents) without a student's explicit consent. In view of the above, **it is recommended that Schools do not release any marks or results to candidates, but instead refer students to their Portal.**

¹⁰ Exceptionally, the School of Education was given permission by the UCTL to release overall provisional CAS marks together with feedback to students, with these marks being confirmed by the External Examiner(s) three times each year. This was approved on the proviso that, in the case of marks in the range CAS 7-10, candidates' scripts should be sent to the External Examiner(s) on a monthly basis for confirmation of the CAS marks before release to the students. This exception, which applies to undergraduate and postgraduate CPD provision and to students on the PGDE, was permitted to enable students to be offered a resit opportunity as soon as possible.

- 7.13.6 It is University policy that, in the case of end-of-course assessments, “raw” marks (e.g. individual markers’ marks for examination questions) that contribute to the overall CAS mark for a course or programme assessment should not be released to students and, therefore, can only be held on computer until the last date for submission of results to the Registry. After this date, such results may only be retained if they are rendered anonymous (e.g. for the purpose of statistical analysis) by removal of personal identifiers or if they are indexed by reference to criteria other than a student’s name or ID number (e.g. by tutorial group). Where an automated process is used to derive an overall mark for a course, Schools should inform students of the rules governing such processing.

Amended CAS Marks or Results

- 7.13.7 If a CAS mark is amended after it has been submitted to the Registry for reasons other than on appeal, it is the responsibility of the relevant Head of School to submit this in writing with the External Examiner(s) signature to Registry for amendment of the Student Record and to write to the student concerned giving the revised CAS mark.
- 7.13.8 Where the Examiners, including the External Examiner(s), agree that a candidate’s CAS marks and/or course or programme result should be amended as a consequence of an academic appeal being upheld, the Registry will inform the student of the Examiners’ decision in writing on receipt of confirmation of the amended mark or result from the Head of the relevant School.

7.14 Award of Certificates and Diplomas
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- 7.14.1 Students who are qualified, or about to become qualified¹¹, for the award of a Certificate or Diploma of the University should collect an application form from the Infohub.

7.15 Award of Degrees and Graduation

- 7.15.1 Students who successfully complete a programme of study must make an application to the Registry in order for their award to be conferred. Details of when and how to apply to attend ceremonies in-person are available on the Graduation website¹².
- 7.15.2 Graduands (i.e. those eligible to graduate) are not permitted to graduate if they are in debt to the University.
- 7.15.3 Degrees are conferred on behalf of the Senate at Graduation Ceremonies (which are technically meetings of the Senate) in early July and late November. Exact dates can be obtained from the Graduation website. Students not wishing, or unable, to graduate *in person* may apply to graduate *in absentia*.
- 7.15.4 The degree certificate is awarded at in-person Graduation Ceremonies, and is sent to those who graduate *in absentia* normally within one month of the date of graduation.

¹¹ Undergraduate students who leave the University without completing their programme but who, nevertheless, fulfil the criteria for the award of an Undergraduate Certificate or Diploma in Higher Education, will be awarded the relevant award without formal application.

¹² www.abdn.ac.uk/graduation

7.16 Transcripts

- 7.16.1 A transcript listing all courses which a student has taken and their associated CAS mark is included with the relevant Certificate, Diploma or Degree certificate. The transcript indicates the Academic Year (not the diet) in which a course has been assessed, its credit value, and the definition of the CAS bands. For visiting Erasmus and study abroad students, a conversion to ECTS grade/recommended US equivalent is also provided.

7.17 Assessment Offences (including Plagiarism)

- 7.17.1 The University's *Code of Practice on Student Discipline* (see [Section 5](#), Appendix [5.15a](#)) states the following:-

“Cheating in any assessment, whether formative or summative, can result in disciplinary action being taken under this Code. For these purposes “Cheating” includes:

- (a) Possession in any examination of material which has not been authorised in writing by the relevant Course Co-ordinator. Students whose first language is not English may, however, refer to a dictionary where this is approved by the Head of the School responsible for the examination;*
- (b) Copying from another student in an examination;*
- (c) Removing an examination book from an examination room;*
- (d) Impersonating another candidate in relation to any assessment;*
- (e) Permitting another person to impersonate one's self in relation to any assessment;*
- (f) Paying or otherwise rewarding another person for writing or preparing work to be submitted for assessment;*
- (g) Colluding with another person in the preparation or submission of work which is to be assessed. This does not apply to collaborative work authorised by the relevant Course Co-ordinator.*
- (h) Plagiarism. Plagiarism is the use, without adequate acknowledgement, of the intellectual work of another person in work submitted for assessment. A student cannot be found to have committed plagiarism where it can be shown that the student has taken all reasonable care to avoid representing the work of others as his or her own.”*

- 7.17.2 Where there is reason to believe that cheating in any assessment has occurred a complaint should be made in writing through the Head of the appropriate School; **it should not be dealt with as part of academic assessment.** The Head of School (or nominee in cases of plagiarism) shall normally investigate the allegation with the student (Section 7 of the Code refers). **The role of the internal and external examiners shall be restricted to the presentation of evidence; they shall have no role in deciding whether a student is guilty of cheating.** They may, as appropriate, submit evidence to a disciplinary hearing.

- 7.17.3 Although a Head of School may have delegated authority to investigate a case the Head of School must make a decision on whether cheating has occurred. If a Head of School believes that cheating has occurred he/she shall proceed in accordance with the relevant Section in the [Code](#) (7.2.6, or 7.2.10, or 7.3.4, or 7.5.8).

- 7.17.4 The penalties for examination offences, including cheating in prescribed degree assessments, are also indicated in the Code.).

7.18 Academic Appeals

- 7.18.1 A student may appeal against an examination mark or degree classification but specific rights of such appeals against a decision involving academic judgement are very limited. Academic appeals will be considered only in matters of procedure, competency and/or prejudice. Further details are provided in [Section 6](#).

7.19 Disposal and Retention of Work that Contributes to a Prescribed Degree Assessment

- 7.19.1 The University's policy on retention of assessed work (contained in the Report of the Working Party on School Storage Provision submitted to the Senate in November 1986) is that Schools should, as a minimum, retain students' work which contributes to their overall course CAS mark or programme award (e.g. examination scripts; projects; in-course assignments) as indicated below:-

- Level 1 and 2 courses (and Level 3 courses for non-Honours candidates): retain work until 12 months after the date of submission of the course results to the Registry;
- Level 3 and 4 and undergraduate Level 5 (Honours candidates) courses and programmes: retain work until 12 months after the date of submission of the programme result to the Registry;
- Level 5 (postgraduate) courses and programmes: retain work until 12 months after the date of submission of the programme result to the Registry.

- 7.19.2 While Schools may dispose of assessed work after the above dates, they should retain a sample of work that has been awarded marks in each CAS band for internal monitoring purposes, to demonstrate that assessment standards over a period of time have been at least maintained. Also, a sample of work for individuals or groups of students at all Levels should be retained, to demonstrate how the standards achieved by students have developed as a consequence of progression through each Level of Study.

- 7.19.3 Formative assessments, or summative assessments, retained in anonymous form for ITR/ELIR, are exempt from release under Freedom of Information on the basis of an expectation of confidence between student and the relevant staff within their institution and, where appropriate external examiners and reviewers.