

PROCEDURES FOR DETERMINING PROGRESSION AND AWARD IN MODULARISED POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT PROGRAMMES OF STUDY (*Grade Spectrum*)

A *Grade Spectrum* for determining progression and award in modularised postgraduate taught programmes of study has been in use since 2002/2003. The details below were approved by the Senate on 10 February 2010, with further revisions to Section 8 approved on 8 February 2012.

The revised Section 9.1 (approved 10 February 2010) applies to all postgraduate taught students who began study between the 2010/11 academic year and January 2014, and to part-time students or students who started in January 2010 and who completed the standard period for their degree programme in the 2010/11 academic year. Please note that the revised *Grade Spectrum* applies only to the part of their degree programme from 2010/11 onwards and is not applied retrospectively to studies already undertaken. For all other postgraduate taught students who began a modularised programme of study before 2010/11 academic year, please consult the appropriate previous version of the *Grade Spectrum* (available on request from the Registry). For postgraduate taught students who began their programme of study on or after September 2014 please consult the Code of Practice on Assessment (<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/teaching/assessment-policies-and-guidance-6099.php>).

1. The University Calendar entry will specify the constituent courses of each Postgraduate Taught Programme. The parent School for each course will specify the precise assessment details and the weighting given to each component of summative assessment in determining the overall CAS mark for a course. The parent School for each Programme will specify any additional assessment details for the Programme (e.g. summative written examinations which are not related to a single course but which relate to a group of courses or to the Programme as a whole) and the weighting given to each in regard to the *Grade Spectrum* (see below).

Where a course is a compulsory part of a Programme but does not contribute to the resultant Programme award, this should be stated (e.g. a zero credit-rated field course). Progression and award should be based on performance across the Programme as a whole.

2. The **criteria** for the following must be made explicit to students at the outset of their Programme:
 - narrative description of the requirements of each CAS / CGS band;
 - definition of “element” in regard to the Programme’s constituent courses and, where applicable, summative assessments, for progression to the next stage of the Programme;
 - the constitution of each Stage of the programme (N.B. a stage may consist of taught courses or a research dissertation/project or a continuation of both taught and research, which typically will cover learning outcomes associated with at least 60 credit points at Level 5 (SCQF Level 11));
 - for the award of Pg Cert, PgDip and Masters Degree (i.e. see point 3);
 - for the award of the PgDip with Commendation or Distinction;
 - for the award of a Master’s Degree with Commendation or Distinction
3. All students will be required to meet the following credit requirements: Postgraduate Master’s Degree – 180 credit points, including at least 150 credit points at Level 5; Postgraduate Diploma – 120 credit points, including at least 90 at Level 5; Postgraduate Certificate – 60 credit points, including at least 40 at Level 5.

4. Where a Programme consists of courses delivered by more than one School CAS marks / CGS Grades for each course which contribute towards the Programme must be agreed by the relevant external examiner(s) for the course before being considered by the Examiners (including the external examiner) for the Programme. CAS marks / CGS Grades for courses that form part of Stage 1, or Stage 2 or Stage 3 must be conveyed to the parent School for the Programme as soon as possible after the end of the relevant Stage examination results have been published and in sufficient time to consider progression to the next stage of the Programme.
5. The University's Policy and Procedure on Student Appeals shall apply to the consideration of medical or personal circumstances which may have affected a student's performance in an element of prescribed assessment. Where medical or other personal evidence is considered relevant by Examiners it should 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 award. However it is recognised that in some cases the evidence may be better assessed at the time of deciding progression or final award.
6. When an oral examination is used as part of the assessment for an individual course the result should be employed to inform the overall CAS mark / CGS grade for the relevant course. When an oral examination is a separately identifiable and separately-weighted summative examination taken by all candidates and is a stated element of the Programme, the parent School shall inform students of the weighting given to the oral examining in regard to its contribution (to the course CAS mark/ CGS grade in courses, or overall result in Programmes) to the *Grade Spectrum* (see below).
7. Where candidates are unable to complete an element of prescribed assessment on account of illness or other good cause, General Regulation 10 for Taught Postgraduate Awards shall apply. Where an element is returned as "No Paper" (NP) without such good cause, a mark of zero/G3 will be used in the process of determining progression or award. [See Note 1]
8. If the candidate has completed an element of prescribed assessment but been awarded a mark of CAS 6 - 8 inclusive (or CGS E1-E3), and if they would otherwise be permitted to progress to the next stage of the programme, they shall be awarded the same amount of unnamed specific credit, not exceeding 30 credit points in total, at level 3 for a Postgraduate Diploma or for a Master's Degree and not exceeding 20 credit points in total, at level 3 for a Postgraduate Certificate. Such level 3 credits will count towards achieving the overall credit requirement of the award in question. If the mark awarded is less than CAS 6 / CGS E3, the candidate shall not be permitted to progress to the next stage of the programme. For candidates on postgraduate 'conversion' programmes, approved as such by Senate, progression will not normally be permitted if the mark awarded is less than CAS 9 or CGS D3/RP (PGT Resit Pass). For students who started their degree programme on or after September 2014, please see note 5 below.

9.1 It is emphasised that Examiners retain the final discretion in deciding progression and the Programme award. However, progression and award for all Programmes will normally be based on performance on the following *rules*. [See Note 4] To allow for different practices between disciplines, the spectrum is expressed in terms of the proportion each element of assessment constitutes as part of the overall total after it has been appropriately weighted. The parent School for the Programme shall be responsible for informing students, at the start of their Programme, of the definition of "element" in regard to the Programme's constituent courses and, where applicable, summative assessments.

9.2 REQUIREMENTS FOR PROGRESSION FOR MODULARISED POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT PROGRAMMES OF STUDY

Progression from Stage 1 to Stage 2, and then from Stage 2 to Stage 3 of the Programme, should normally be based on marks at **CAS 9/CGS D3/RP or higher** in all elements for each of the respective stages.

9.3 DETERMINATION OF AWARD FOR MODULARISED POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT PROGRAMMES OF STUDY

AWARD OF POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE OR POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA

Normally marks at **9/D3/RP or better** in 60 credit points, for a Certificate, or 120 for a Diploma .

AWARD OF POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA WITH COMMENDATION

120 credit points, and marks at **15/B3 or better** in elements constituting half of the assessment; **and**

Normally marks at **12/C3 or better** in all elements.

AWARD OF POSTGRADUATE DIPLOMA WITH DISTINCTION

120 credit points, and marks at **18/A5 or better** in elements constituting half of the total assessment; **and**

Marks at **15/B3 or better** in elements constituting three quarters of the total assessment; **and**

Normally marks at **12/C3 or better** in all elements.

AWARD OF MASTER'S DEGREE

Normally marks at **9/D3/RP or better** in 180 credit points, inclusive of the project/dissertation.

AWARD OF MASTER'S DEGREE WITH COMMENDATION

180 credit points, and marks at **15/B3 or better** in all elements constituting half of the total assessment, inclusive of the project/dissertation (**which must also be graded at 15/B3 or better**); **and**

Normally marks at **12/C3 or better** in all elements.

AWARD OF MASTER'S DEGREE WITH DISTINCTION
<p>180 credit points, and marks at 18/A5 or better in elements constituting half of the total assessment, inclusive of the project/dissertation (which must also be graded at 18/A5 or better); and</p> <p>Marks at 15/B3 or better in elements constituting three quarters of the total assessment; and</p> <p>Normally marks at 12/C3 or better in all elements.</p>

- 9.3 These rules define the threshold standards against which progression and award decisions are made. The Examiners, however, have discretion (in the circumstances defined in Note 3 below) to depart from this norm. Discretion may take account of actual marks within bands. Where discretion is exercised, clear reasons must be identified for doing so and a record kept.
- 9.4 Notwithstanding 9.2, discretion based on the award of compensatory credits for the purpose of progression will not normally be permitted for candidates on programmes approved by Senate as postgraduate 'conversion' programmes. For students who started their degree programme on or after September 2014, please see note 5 below.
- 9.5 CAS marks/ CGS Grades for courses that constitute part of a Postgraduate Taught Programme are provisional- they can be raised or lowered at the Final Examiners' meeting later in the academic year (with one exception). The exception is that CAS 8/CGS E1/RF (PGT Resit Fail) (Not Achieved) may be changed at the Final Examiners' meeting to CAS 9/CGS D3/RP or above (Achieved), but CAS 9/CGS D3 / RP can NOT be changed to CAS 8/CGS E1/RF or lower. Departments must inform the Registry, on an exception basis, of those marks that have been altered by External Examiners.
- 10.1 General Regulation 11 for Taught Postgraduate Awards states that "unless exemption is approved by Senate on application, candidates who do not complete satisfactorily a prescribed element of assessment for any course at level 5 may be re-assessed in that element only in exceptional circumstances, and on the unanimous recommendation of the Examiners. In no circumstances shall any candidate be permitted to submit themselves for assessment in any element more than twice." For students who started their degree programme on or after September 2014, please see note 6 below.
- 10.2 Candidates on postgraduate 'conversion' programmes, where exemption from Regulation 11 has been specifically approved by Senate, are permitted to count no more than 60 credit points gained through resits towards a Postgraduate Diploma or Master's award, with no more than 30 credit points being re-taken in Stage 1 of the Programme. **This permission excludes the project/dissertation where the project/dissertation is a compulsory element of assessment.** The maximum resit mark which can be recorded is CAS 9/RP; the result of any resit will count in determining progression and award. In no circumstances shall any candidate be permitted to submit themselves for assessment in any element more than twice. For students who started their degree programme on or after September 2014, please see note 6 below.
- 10.3 A candidate who is registered for, but fails to satisfy the requirements of a Master's Degree, or of a Postgraduate Diploma, or who elects not to proceed to further study, may, if otherwise qualified, be awarded a Postgraduate Diploma or Postgraduate Certificate, suitably designated, as appropriate."

11. If students appeal against the Programme award which is recommended by the Examiners the Policy and Procedures on Student Appeals in force at that time will apply.

Notes

1 General Regulation 12 for Taught Postgraduate Awards shall apply where candidates have been unable to complete an element of assessment at the prescribed time on account of illness (which must be certified by a medical practitioner) or other good cause. [Good cause is defined as any reason outwith 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].

2 Where candidates fail to complete an element of assessment at the prescribed time without good cause (see Note 1), they shall be awarded a No Paper (NP) for each such element: for the purposes of the grade spectrum, this shall be interpreted as candidates having been awarded a mark of 0 for these elements. Candidates in this position cannot expect to be awarded a Distinction unless the Examiners choose to use their discretion to depart from the Award indicated by the grade spectrum.

3 There can be no undertaking that the Examiners will choose to use discretion to depart from that indicated by the grade spectrum. Where the Examiners choose to use their discretion to depart, in an upward direction, from that indicated by the *Grade Spectrum*, it shall normally be as a consequence of (a) a candidate's overall performance and (b) the particular circumstances which have resulted in a candidate not satisfying the normal grade spectrum requirement.

4. Where the Examiners choose to use their discretion and allow progression notwithstanding the requirements of the *Grade Spectrum*, a mark of CAS 9 / CGS D3 in the project/dissertation is required for the award of the Master's Degree. A higher mark cannot be required.

5. For students who started their degree programme on or after September 2014, the award of unspecified credit at level 3 is only permitted in exceptional circumstances. These are outlined in paragraph 53 of the Code of Practice on Assessment.

6. For students who started their degree programme on or after September 2014, reassessment is permitted in the terms outlined in paragraphs 22 – 27 of the Code of Practice on Assessment.