Code of Practice on Assessment 2017-18

- For students who embarked upon their honours/integrated Masters programmes on or before September 2017-18

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Code of Practice on Assessment: for students entering Honours on or before Sept 2017

Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Assessment is the central element of the process by which the University is able to make awards to candidates who have completed courses and programmes. The purpose of the Code of Practice on Assessment is to ensure that the processes of assessment are conducted in a fair, consistent and transparent manner across the University. This common approach is especially important due to the inter-disciplinary nature of many of the University's programmes which means that candidates are studying courses offered by a number of Schools and these courses are then combined together in determining the overall award.

1.2 This Code of Practice on Assessment applies only to students who have started their Honours/Integrated Masters programme on or before academic year 2017-18 (AY17-18).

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

1.3 The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework has developed a set of SCQF Levels Descriptors which illustrate the generic expectations for each level of study. Level of study refers to the level of the course, not necessarily programme year. For example, a Level 3 course will have been designed to fit to the SCQF descriptors for level 3 and that does not change, regardless of whether that course is taken in programme year 3 (PY3) or in programme year 4 (PY4). These descriptors, which set out the general characteristic outcomes, are important in terms of providing a reference point of expectations for each level of study.

1.4 The University's awards must comply with the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. In broad terms, candidates must therefore achieve the minimum number of credit points to be eligible to receive their award. These requirements are detailed in Minimum Credit Requirements for Awards.

1.5 The University Calendar entry will state the requirements for each programme and award. This should include:
   (a) The courses required to be undertaken for the programme, including courses that do not carry any credit weighting (i.e. zero-credit-rated courses),
   (b) The details of the compulsory requirements. These are courses that must be passed for the achievement of the award. Such compulsory requirements may be set by the requirements of a Professional or Statutory Body which accredits the award or may be set by the Examiners (e.g. a requirement that a candidate achieve a pass in the thesis / project).
   (c) The number of remaining credits required for achievement of the programme award.

1.6 The criteria for the following must be made explicit to all candidates at the outset of their programme:
   The courses and their relative weightings which will contribute to the determination of the overall programme award.

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1 The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework is a common national framework for all awards in Scotland. It makes clear the relationship between qualifications, levels, entry and exit points, and routes for progression between awards. Further information is available at www.scqf.org.uk

2 In the case of zero credit rated courses the relative weighting of this towards the overall determination of the award must be clearly stated to (i) students and (ii) Registry (via academicservices@abdn.ac.uk); the latter is to ensure the Student Record Systems' Degree Classification screens and algorithms are accurate.
1.7 This information should be provided in a single document to ensure transparency and ease of reference regardless of whether the degree programme is delivered by a single discipline or is a degree programme delivered by more than one discipline (i.e. joint honours).
Section 2: Marking

**Common Grading Scale (CGS)**

2.1 The Common Grading Scale provides a common marking scale which is used across the University. This enables candidates to compare their performance in different disciplines and courses and ensures consistency in assessment.

2.2 The University of Aberdeen Common Grading Scale (CGS) is an alphanumeric scale comprising 23 discrete Grades grouped into seven Bands with an associated Grade Point for each grade. These Grade Points are used for the purposes of aggregation to (i) determine the overall course mark from a number of components (e.g. end of course exam and essay mark) and (ii) determine overall honours degree classification or progression and award within a taught postgraduate award. Each band has two associated Descriptors (one for essay-based courses and one for more numerical-based courses). These descriptors should be appropriate for most assessments. There will be some forms of assessment (e.g. practical exams) where it may be necessary for these to be tailored to meet the specific learning outcomes of the assessment.

2.3 It is University policy that an overall grade for each course must be awarded. From 2019-20 as well as releasing the alphanumeric CGS for the course, the associated overall course grade point (to two decimal places) will also be given to students. Assessments that are graded directly using the alphanumeric scale can continue to release the alphanumeric CGS to students. For any continuous assessments that are graded, for example using rubrics, resulting in grades that are not whole numbers, this grade to two decimal places should be released to students. If grading is carried out in percentage or in another scale these must first be converted to the CGS prior to release to students. If a School or Discipline wishes to use a grading scale other than the CGS, this must be mapped to the CGS and approval given by the University Committee on Teaching & Learning via the Quality Assurance Committee.

2.4 Band descriptors should be read in conjunction with the SCQF Levels Descriptors which detail the expected level of attainment at each level of study.

2.5 The Band Descriptors should be used to inform the judgement as to which grade should be awarded for a piece of assessment. In doing so, it is important that this is done in the context that the top band represents the best that a candidate at that level could be expected to achieve. Candidates should be made aware of the band descriptors for each assessment. It should be noted that this means a grade obtained at one level is not equivalent to the same grade awarded at a different level.

2.6 Normally in awarding a grade, Examiners should use the band descriptor to determine which band is appropriate and should then select the middle grade within that band (i.e. Grade B2 from within the Band B1, B2 and B3). Adjustment upwards or downwards to a higher or lower grade (i.e. B1 or B3) within that band can then be determined, if appropriate, based on how well the candidate’s performance meets the band descriptor. Where an assessment is more quantitative in nature, it may be possible to map directly onto the grade.

2.7 A Grade should be awarded for each component of assessment (i.e. each essay or examination question). These component marks can then be aggregated to determine the final overall grade for the course (see paragraph 12 below). In some cases, it may not be considered appropriate to award a Grade directly (for example in a multiple choice test or quantitative type test). In these cases, taking account of the band descriptors, Schools should determine the appropriate percentage (or other) scale that would be used to convert the mark to a grade on the Common Grading Scale. This information should be approved by the Quality Assurance Committee, made readily available to all candidates and such conversions should be published in course handbooks and made available to all Examiners.
Determination of Overall Course Grade

2.8 Most courses involve more than one component of assessment. In order to determine the overall Grade for a course, the individual component grades must be aggregated taking account of the relative weightings of each component. Candidates must be made aware of the relative weightings of each component at the outset of the course.

2.9 Each Grade on the Common Grading Scale is associated with a numerical Grade Point (0-22). These Grade Points are used for the purposes of aggregation so that the overall Grade for the course can be determined. Senate agreed in March 2019 to abolish the rounding of course grades from AY 2019-20. Once aggregated, the overall course grade (to two decimal places) determines the alphanumeric grade that is awarded for the course. Grades awarded prior to AY2019-20 will have been rounded to the nearest whole number to determine the alphanumeric grade for the course but it is the unrounded grade (to two decimal places) that is used to calculate degree classification.

For example: A course has two essays each weighted 20% and one exam weighted 60%, the Grades for which are B2, A3 and C1 respectively. The overall Grade for the course would be determined as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Grade Point</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
<th>Calculation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>(20% x 16) + (20% x 20) + (60% x 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>= 3.2 + 4 + 8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>= 15.6 = rounded up to 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>= 15.6 = rounded up to 16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: although the grade has been rounded up to determine the alphanumeric grade for the course it is the unrounded grade point that is used for GPA calculations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course taken in AY2018-19</th>
<th>Course taken in AY2019-20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Grade Point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: from AY2019-20 it is the unrounded grade point that determines the alphanumeric grade for the course

However, as before, it is the unrounded grade point which is used for GPA calculations (i.e. the move to abolish rounding course grades does not impact the final GPA or degree classification.)
Internal Examiners/Markers

2.10 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.

“Blind” / Anonymous Marking

2.11 Written Examination Scripts: All written examination scripts must be anonymous, i.e. students should only be identified by candidate number. The University’s examination booklets require candidates to write their student ID number on their scripts with their name being concealed in a sealable section.

2.12 Other Summative Assessments: 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.

Moderation Procedures

2.13 Moderation is a process intended to assure that an assessment outcome is fair and reliable and that assessment criteria have been applied consistently. The UK Quality Code stipulates that “Processes for marking assessments and for moderating marks are clearly articulated and consistently operated by those involved in the assessment process. The University of Aberdeen Moderation Policy is available via the Academic Quality Handbook. Note that moderation must be carried out prior to the return of grades to students.

Return of Grades

2.14 Markers should provide timely feedback to students on all types of in-course assessment, including oral or clinical examinations, even when the grades are summative and contribute to the overall course grade.

2.15 Only marks on the Common Grading Scale may be disclosed to students. The Senate has agreed that Schools must inform students of their CGS grade for individual elements of in-course assessments irrespective of whether the marks are to contribute to the overall course CGS grade. Thus, for example, for a course assessed entirely by three in-course essays, Schools should inform students of their individual essay CGS grade (usually via MyAberdeen Grade Centre) and the Student Record (or Student Record Card via the Student Hub) will inform students of their overall course CGS grade. From AY2019-20 the Student Record Card will display the unrounded grade point for the course (to two decimal places) alongside the alphanumeric grade. This will not apply to grades awarded and released prior to AY 2019-20.

3 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.
2.16 If a course is assessed by a combination of a written examination and continuous assessment Schools should inform students of their individual essay CGS grade (usually via MyAberdeen Grade Centre) and the Student Record (or Student Record Card via the Student Hub) will inform students of their overall course CGS grade. However, it is important for students to be able to see the grades awarded for individual questions in an exam; this gives them important feedback on which areas of the course they understand well and which they may need to work at. A breakdown of exam grades can be released to students via MyAberdeen if the MyAberdeen site is set up accordingly. If not, Schools should find an alternative way to give students this vital feedback on their exam performance.

Data Protection

2.17 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 3: Determining Degree Classification (applies to students entering their Masters programme – year 3 – in AY2017-18)

3.1 There are four classes of Honours/integrated Masters degree classification: First, Upper Second, Lower Second and Third. A candidate on a four-year programme who has not met the requirements for the award of a third-class Honours degree may, subject to meeting the requirements, be eligible for the award of a designated degree. Similarly, students on a 5-year integrated Masters programme who have not met the requirements for the award of Masters degree may, subject to meeting the requirements, be eligible for the award of an Honours degree.

3.2 Degree classification should be based on performance across the Honours/Masters programme as a whole, i.e. programme years 3 and 4 or years 3, 4 and 5. Note, however, that some Integrated Masters programmes do not include Level 5 in the degree classification calculation. Schools should inform students clearly if this is the case.

3.3 Only courses coded at level 3 and above will count towards degree classification.

3.4 Students entering honours in September 2017 will have their degree classification based on both (i) the Grade Spectrum approach described in paragraphs 3.8 to 3.9 below and (ii) a Grade Point Average system as described in paragraphs 3.10-3.12 below. If the classifications differ, students will be awarded the higher of the two classifications.

3.5 An Element of assessment is defined as any component of assessment which contributes a specified percentage of the overall assessment for a course or programme. Three examples of elements of assessment are (i) a 30 credit point course may be deemed equivalent to two elements of assessment (with a 15 credit point course being one element and a 45 credit point course being three elements), (ii) in a course that is assessed entirely by written examination comprising three essay questions, it may be decided that each essay question should amount to one element of assessment in terms of the Grade Spectrum, (iii) an end-of-programme oral or summative written examination such as a general paper may be assigned a specified number of elements of assessment.

3.6 The overall grade for each course is used to determine overall degree classification with the credit values of each course determining their relative weightings. In the case of zero credit-rated courses the relative weighting of this towards the determination of the overall award must be clearly stated to students. Where a course is a compulsory part of a programme but does not contribute to honours degree classification this must also be clearly stated to students.

3.7 If a student takes additional credits in PY3 and PY4 which are at level 3 or above, Schools will (i) have approved the extra credits and (ii) will have asked students to identify which of the 120 credits they wish to be included in their GPA calculation at the point at which the extra credits were chosen. Students cannot wait until they have their results to choose which courses can be included in the degree classification. However, if additional credits are taken in PY3 or PY4 to replace a failed non-compulsory course, both the fail grade from the non-compulsory course and the grade from the additional course will be used in the classification calculation (see Section 6.6.vii). Students should be made aware of the implications of taking additional credit.
3.8 The *Grade Spectrum* is expressed in terms of the proportion of the CGS grades achieved in those *elements* of assessment that are defined by the sponsoring School as contributing to the determination of classification in a given Honours programme.

3.9 Degree classification based on the grade spectrum requires the following performance:

- **First**: Marks at 18 or A5 or better in elements constituting ½ of the total elements; and Marks at 15 / B3 or better in elements constituting ¼ of the total elements; and Normally marks at 12 or C3 or better in all elements.

- **2i**: Marks at 15 or B3 or better in elements constituting ½ of the total elements; and Marks at 12 or C3 or better in elements constituting ¼ of the total elements; and Normally marks at 9 or D3 or better in all elements.

- **2ii**: Marks at 12 or C3 or better in elements constituting ½ of the total elements; and Marks at 9 or D3 or better in elements constituting ¼ of the total elements.

- **Third**: Marks at 9 or D3 or better in elements constituting ¾ of the total elements.

**Example:** A student achieves the following in elements contributing to honours classification:

- Level 3 (12 elements): B1,A5,B2,A3,C1,B1,A5,A4,B2,A5,B1,B3
- Level 4 (10 elements): A5,A5,B3,A5,B1,A5,A5,C3,A5,A5
- Level 5 (8 elements): B2,B3,A5,A3,A4,B1,B1,C1

- \( \geq A5 \): 15 / 30 elements = 50%
- \( \geq B3 \): 27 / 30 elements = 90%
- \( \geq C3 \): 30 / 30 elements = 100%
- \( \geq D3 \): 30 / 30 elements = 100%

**Hence First Class**

Further information on the Grade Spectrum approach to Honours classification can be found here: Honours Classification (Grade Spectrum)

3.10 The Grade Point Average (GPA) is determined by the CGS grades achieved in those elements of assessment that are defined by the sponsoring School as contributing to the determination of classification in a given Honours/Integrated Masters programme.
3.11 Details of the GPA bands associated with each honours degree classification are provided below, and also at Honours Classification (GPA) pages of the Academic Quality Handbook.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Point Average</th>
<th>Degree Classification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18.0-22.0</td>
<td>First Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>greater than 17.49, less than 18.0</td>
<td>Borderline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.0 – 17.49</td>
<td>Upper Second Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>greater than 14.49, less than 15.0</td>
<td>Borderline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.0 – 14.49</td>
<td>Lower Second Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>greater than 11.49, less than 12.0</td>
<td>Borderline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.0 – 11.49</td>
<td>Third Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>greater than 8.49, less than 9.0</td>
<td>Borderline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 – 8.49</td>
<td>Fail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.12 The GPA and hence the degree classification that should be awarded is determined by aggregating the Grade Points for each course taking account of the relative weightings both in terms of credit and level of study, where appropriate. **If a student fails an honours course, and is successful at a subsequent resit attempt, the passing resit grade will be capped at D3 for GPA/Degree Classification purposes.** The steps involved in the process are as follows:

- Step (1): For each course, calculate Course contribution to GPA, i.e. Course GPA [grade point x course weight / total credits taken at that level, or in that programme year*]
- Step (2): Calculate GPA for each level of study/programme year i.e. sum total of courses GPAs for level of study or for each programme year (Schools to advise students which is relevant to them)
- Step (3): Apply the appropriate weighting to the level of study or programme year GPAs (Schools to advise students which is relevant to them), and combine the weighted GPAs to gain overall GPA

*Some Schools operate differential weighting in the Honours years with weighting dependent on the PY the student is in whilst other Schools operate weighting according to the level of the course that has been taken, regardless of which PY the student is in when they took that course. Schools should inform students exactly how Honours weighting applies in their case

**Example: Integrated Masters, based on 20:40:40 weighting of level of course (not programme year they were studied in)**

**Step 1: Calculate course contribution to GPA (Note: one L3 course has been taken in PY4 so the total number of L3 credits = 140 and total number of L4 credits = 105 and total number of L5 credits = 120)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme Year 3</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Grade Pt</th>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Step 1 Course GPA</th>
<th>Calculation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17/18</td>
<td>CM3032</td>
<td>D3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>9*5/140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/18</td>
<td>CM3037</td>
<td>B3</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>15.4*30/140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/18</td>
<td>CM3038</td>
<td>B3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.61</td>
<td>15*15/140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/18</td>
<td>CM30Ps</td>
<td>C1**</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>13.7*15/140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/18</td>
<td>CM3534</td>
<td>A4**</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>18.5*30/140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/18</td>
<td>CM3536</td>
<td>C1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>14*30/140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme Year 4</td>
<td>Course</td>
<td>Grade</td>
<td>Grade Pt</td>
<td>Credits</td>
<td>Step 1 Course GPA</td>
<td>Calculation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/19</td>
<td>CM4037</td>
<td>C1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>14*15/105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/19</td>
<td>CM4038</td>
<td>D2**</td>
<td>9.87</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td>9.87*15/105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/19</td>
<td>CM4036</td>
<td>B3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>15*15/105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/19</td>
<td>CM4537</td>
<td>B2**</td>
<td>15.67</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>15.67*15/105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/19</td>
<td>CM4538</td>
<td>B1**</td>
<td>16.67</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>16.67*15/105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/19</td>
<td>CM4535</td>
<td>C1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>14*30/105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/19</td>
<td>SX3504</td>
<td>B1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>17*15/140</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** rounding up of course grades applies in 2017/18 and 2018-19 and determines the alphanumeric for the course, but it is the unrounded course grade that is used in the GPA calculation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme Year 5</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Grade Pt</th>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Step 1 Course GPA</th>
<th>Calculation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19/20</td>
<td>CM5003</td>
<td>C1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>14*60/120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/20</td>
<td>CM5505</td>
<td>D3*</td>
<td>9.87</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>9.87*60/120</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# course grades no longer rounded up so alphanumeric for the course is determined by the unrounded course grade.

**Step 2: Calculate GPA for each level of study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>GPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 3 course GPA</td>
<td>15.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4 course GPA</td>
<td>14.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4 course GPA</td>
<td>11.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Step 3: Apply the appropriate weighting to the level of study GPAs, and combine the weighted GPAs to gain overall GPA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>GPA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 3 GPA</td>
<td>15.48 x 20% = 3.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4 GPA</td>
<td>14.17 x 40% = 5.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5 GPA</td>
<td>11.94 x 40% = 4.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final GPA</td>
<td>3.10 + 5.67 + 4.78 = 13.55 [2:2 classification]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NB: All GPA calculations are computed to 2 decimal places**

3.13 In exceptional circumstances, where a candidate has been unable due to medical reasons or other good cause to complete the requirements for honours degree classification and, where medical advice indicates that it would be unreasonable to require a candidate to appear for assessment on a subsequent occasion, and if the candidate’s past record provides sufficient evidence that they would have obtained Honours, the Examiners may recommend the award of an Aegrotat degree, but only after obtaining the consent of the candidate. The award of an Aegrotat degree will debar candidates from counting towards Honours degree assessment any result achieved thereafter.
Section 4: Borderline Candidates

4.1 Where a candidate is borderline for a higher class of degree, as approved by Senate in March 2019, the examiners will take account of the following where applicable:

a) **Grade profile** across Honours/integrated Masters courses. Students with 50% or more of their credits in the higher classification should be considered for upgrading.

b) **Exit velocity**: *NB: This can only be considered if equal weighting is adopted for that student’s programme of study.* A borderline student should be considered for upgrading to the higher classification if their GPA for **L4 courses** (not courses taken in PY4) is higher than their GPA for **L3 courses**.

c) **Mitigating circumstances**: *NB This can only be considered for a borderline student if not already considered at course level (see Section 6 for some examples of practice).* Notwithstanding the approach that should be taken for impaired performance (as set out in section 6), there may exceptionally be situations where a candidate’s performance has been impaired for a prolonged period of time (for example long term illness of a parent). In such exceptional circumstances, the Examiners may take account of this in reviewing borderline cases to determine final degree classification or postgraduate award. Where a clear majority agreement cannot be reached, the lower award should be confirmed.

4.2 **Viva voce exams are not permitted** for determining the final classification of borderline students.

4.3 In all borderline cases, the rationale for the final degree class or postgraduate award given must be clearly recorded in the minutes of examiners’ meetings.
Section 5: Mitigating Circumstances / Impaired Performance

5.1 Mitigating circumstances/good cause (MC/GC) indicates that a student has suffered some illness or other personal difficulties which have affected their performance in an assessment or prevented them submitting an assessment or sitting an exam. Students are required to inform the University in good time (within seven days of the assessment in question unless their circumstances prevent them from doing so)\(^4\).

5.2 MC/GC circumstances can impact on both course grades and overall degree classification. It is not possible to adjust the grade awarded for an assessment that is thought to have been affected by mitigating circumstances. For example, a student submits an assignment and is awarded a C2 by the marker. The School are aware that the student has submitted a medical certificate showing that they were unwell in the lead up to the assignment and are content that this is genuine and that the grade awarded is not representative of the student’s normal work. Even having accepted this, it is not possible for the Examiners to make a judgement about the extent of the impact and thereby to determine the compensation which should be applied to the obtained grade, i.e. it is not possible to change the grade awarded; the work cannot be graded at B2, for example, as it is not of a standard that warrants a B2. How Schools should deal with MC/GC is outlined below.

5.3 At course level:
   (a) If the Examiners are confident that the assessments already completed by the candidate prior to the mitigating circumstances provide evidence that they have met ALL the learning outcomes of the course then, subject to at least 75% weighting of the assessments for the course having been completed, an overall grade for the course may be returned on the basis of the prior assessments. For example, if a student has failed to submit (or performs badly in) one essay or lab report counting for 20% of the overall course grade due to MC/GC but all the learning outcomes of the course have been met through other essays or lab reports, the examiners may set aside this assessment, i.e. the C2 above, and the overall course grade will be calculated on the 80% of the course that has been completed.

   (b) Where less than 75% weighting of the components of assessment for the course have been completed, the affected assessment(s) should be set aside and the candidate should (wherever possible) be given another opportunity to take the assessment(s) with the affected attempt(s) discounted. For example, if a student has long-term, intermittent health issues which have affected several assessments that contribute 50% of the course grade due to MC/GC but all the learning outcomes of the course have been met through other essays or lab reports, the examiners may set aside this assessment, i.e. the C2 above, and the overall course grade will be calculated on the 80% of the course that has been completed.

   (c) Where the Examiners do not consider the grounds presented to be sufficient good cause, the assessment should be treated in the same way as it would have been had no mitigating evidence been submitted. No partial compensation for good cause can be given.

5.4 At degree classification level: [NB: for Borderline students only]
   Where the Examiners agree that illness or other good cause has impacted on performance it is important to determine whether or not that has already been taken into account at course level. MC/GC cannot be taken into account at both course level and degree classification level and can only

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be considered for students who are at a borderline between one degree classification and another. If mitigating circumstances have not already been considered at course level the Examiners’ meeting may consider this as justification for moving that student into the higher degree classification.

**Examples for putting this into practice:**

**a)** Student A had intermittent health issues over the year which resulted in them failing to submit, or achieving poor grades in, some assignments for several courses. In each case the missed/failed assignments were worth less than 25% of the course so these assignments were set aside and the course grades were calculated on the remaining material. At final classification the student has a GPA of 17.75 and so is borderline for a First class degree. As this student has already had their mitigating circumstances taken into account at course level, and had assessments set aside, the Examiners should consider that this student has already been given sufficient leeway and therefore is not eligible for upgrading to a First class degree, unless there are other factors to be considered (see Section 5 for borderline decision information).

**b)** Student B has had ongoing health issues over the year but has submitted all assessments, some late but with no penalty applied as the School were aware of their health issues and have made appropriate allowances. At final classification the student has a GPA of 17.75 and so is borderline for a First class degree. As no assessments have already been set aside but it is clear that the student’s performance over the year was impaired during the period of ill-health the Examiners may consider this student for promotion to a First class degree.
Section 6: Resits: Reassessment & Award of Compensatory Credit

6.1 With the exceptions listed in Section 6 above, candidates who fail, or who fail to attend or complete, a course for whatever reason and who wish to be awarded credit for the relevant course will be required to resit.

6.2 In order to be eligible to take a resit, a candidate must hold a valid class certificate. The validity of a class certificate is limited to the academic year in which it is awarded and to the academic year immediately following. In each academic year there are two assessment opportunities, the main diet in the relevant half-session and the summer resit diet. Candidates holding a valid class certificate are permitted a total of three opportunities of assessment within this period. Only in exceptional circumstances, in accordance with General Regulation 7 for First Degrees, may the Senate extend the validity of a class certificate.

6.3 As approved by Senate (May 2018) passing resit grades are to be included in Grade Point Average (GPA) calculations, capped at D3, for classification of degrees at UG and PGT. The actual resit grade achieved will be held in the Student Record System (SRS) but the SRS will carry forward D3 (not the actual grade achieved) into the Grade Point average calculation and classification. The actual grade achieved in the resit will be revealed in both the Student Record Card and Transcript.

6.4 If a student continues to fail at resit, the highest grade achieved for all attempts (first (original) attempt and any subsequent resit attempts) will be used for GPA and degree classification purposes.

6.5 For candidates in the final year of an Honours programme, there are three categories of exception:

(a) Candidates who achieve a Grade of E1, E2 or E3 in courses at level 4 or above taken as part of an Honours programme may be eligible for the award of an equivalent amount of compensatory level 1 credit to a maximum of 30 credit points. Such compensatory credit can only be awarded where the candidate has already achieved 90 Credit points at level 4. Candidates may not receive compensatory credit for courses defined as compulsory for their degree programme. Candidates who have failed to achieve 90 Credit points at Level 4 or who have failed to achieve a pass in a compulsory course must refer to sub-sections (b) or (c) below.

(b) A pass at the first attempt in certain courses may be stipulated as a requirement for achieving the award in question. Such compulsory requirements (see paragraph 1.5 (b) will be detailed in the programme prescription. The compensation outlined in (a) above will not apply to such compulsory courses. Candidates who fail such a compulsory course will not be eligible to resit the course and would not be eligible to receive the Honours degree concerned. They would be eligible to receive a lower award if otherwise qualified, or where appropriate a non-accredited honours degree which does not require a pass in the compulsory course(s).

(c) Where a candidate has achieved a Grade of F1 or below in a course at level 4 or above, they may elect, subject to having achieved 90 credit points at level 4, to take an alternative course or courses of the same credit value at a lower level to make up their credit shortfall rather than resitting the failed course(s). See Section 7.3.vii
6.6 Exemplar Scenarios
The following scenarios illustrate the rules regarding the adoption of our Resit Policy:

**Programme year 3**

i. Student fails a course in PY3 and sits a resit exam in the summer or in the next AY. On resit they achieve a CGS of B2 for the course. Schools should input B2 into the SRS and the SRS will carry forward a capped grade of D3 for the purposes of classification.

ii. Student fails a course in PY3 achieving a grade of E1 and sits a resit exam in the summer. They achieve a CGS of F2 for the course on resit. The student has one further attempt at the resit exam and passes with a grade of D1. Schools should input each original resit grade into the SRS and the system will carry forward D3 (not F2 or D1) into the classification calculation.

iii. Student fails a course in PY3 achieving a grade of E1 and registers for the resit exam in the summer. They were ill for the summer resit exam and were awarded MC for that attempt. They sit the next available resit exam and pass with a grade of D1. Schools should input the resit grade (D1) into the SRS and the system will carry forward D3 (not D1) into the classification calculation.

iv. Student fails a course in PY3 achieving a grade of E1 and sits a resit exam in the summer. They achieve a CGS of F2 for the course on resit. The student has one further attempt at the resit exam and achieves an E3. Schools should input each original resit grade into the SRS and the system will carry forward the best result achieved, into the classification calculation, i.e. the first result, E1, in this case.

**Programme year 4**

v. Student fails a course in PY4 achieving a grade of E1. If they are eligible for compensatory credits to achieve SCQF compliance without the need to resit, the E1 grade will be used for calculation of degree classification. Schools should input the original grade (E1) into the SRS and the system will use that grade for degree classification. However, Schools should be aware of such students and if that student ends up in a borderline position the School should calculate what difference it would make if the student was given the opportunity to do a resit exam so that they would potentially have a D3 grade being used for classification as opposed to E1. If it would make a classification difference to the student, they should be given a resit opportunity (usually at the next available opportunity, which may be in the next AY).

vi. Student fails a course in PY4 achieving a grade of F2, i.e. they cannot achieve compensatory credits for the course. Without the credits for this course they would not be SCQF compliant and so they have to be offered a resit exam which would be completed at the next available opportunity (which may be in the next AY). The student achieves a CGS of C2 for the course on resit. Schools should input the resit grade (C2) into the SRS and the system will carry forward D3 (not C2) into the classification calculation.

vii. Student fails a 15-credit course (in PY3 or PY4) that is not prescribed for their degree programme. As they do not need that specific course, but they do require the credits, they opt to take an additional 15-credit course in the next term or next AY. They pass this course with B1. As this is a new course that they have taken the grade will not be capped and the B1 grade will be used for classification purposes. However, the original fail grade will also be used for classification, i.e. the GPA will be calculated from a total of 255 credits rather than 240 credits.

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5 UoA General Regulation 21 - [https://www.abdn.ac.uk/registry/calendar/generalregulations.php](https://www.abdn.ac.uk/registry/calendar/generalregulations.php)
Section 7: Students who take extra credits at levels 3, 4 and 5

7.1 If a UG student wishes to take additional credits at level 3 or above they must seek the permission of their School(s) to do so. If approval is given, Schools will ask students to nominate (at the point of registration for extra courses) which of their non-compulsory 240 credits they wish to contribute to the GPA calculation for degree classification purposes. Note, this does not apply if a UG student is taking extra credits as a result of a fail in a non-compulsory course (see Section 6.6.vii).

7.2 Schools must ensure that students are made aware of the implications of taking additional credit.

Section 8: Students who undertake Study Abroad

8.1 The May 2015 meetings of Heads of School and UCTL approved the proposal that students who undertake to go abroad to study as part of Study Abroad or Erasmus programmes in their 3rd year should not have the marks they earn whilst abroad count towards classification; although the credits attained will count towards credit accumulation for SCQF purposes.

8.2 As such, for example, for students who study a full year abroad, their degrees will be classified on the basis of the 120 credits they undertake at L4 only. Students who study one semester abroad will have their degrees classified on the basis of 180 level 3 and 4 credits.

8.3 Exceptions to this should apply where dictated by accrediting bodies.

Section 9: Student Record Degree Classification Tool

Guidance notes for Schools as to how to use the Student Record System’s Degree Classification Screens to automatically calculate and confirm GPA and Awards are available for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programmes in the Academic Quality Handbook.