UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

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Welcome to Guidance on Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificates

The purpose of this paper is to clarify current practice. The status of the Graduate Diploma is likely to be the subject of further discussion during 2003/04.

1. Preamble

This paper provides guidance to those Schools and Departments who have or will be introducing H-level Graduate Diplomas and Certificates following the introduction of the QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), its nation-wide implementation for cohorts entering from 2003, and the subsequent revisions made to the University's regulations. It is intended to provide guidance in relation to the management of both Graduate Diplomas and Graduate Certificates, but for ease of reference the emphasis is placed on Graduate Diplomas.

2. Background

The FHEQ states:
'Titles with the stem "postgraduate" (eg Postgraduate Diploma) should be restricted to qualifications where the learning outcomes of the programme of study match the relevant parts of the descriptor for a qualification at M level or above.'
The new Honours Level Graduate Diploma therefore provides a route for graduates to convert from their first degree subject to another subject area, eg Law. It is a postgraduate qualification in terms of time, but not level and is therefore subject to Undergraduate regulations.
In some parts of the University the Graduate Diploma has been introduced to replace Postgraduate Diplomas which were not delivered or assessed at M level.

3. University Definitions

H-level Award:	*In order to be eligible for the named award, a student must:*
Graduate Diploma	Achieve at least 100 credits at level H or above. No more than 20 credits may be at level C or I.
Graduate Certificate	Achieve at least 60 credits at Level H or above.

The pass mark for H-level modules is 40%.

M-level Award:	*In order to be eligible for the named award, a student must:*
Masters	Attempt at least 180 credits (of these no more than 30 credits may be at level C, I or H). At least 80 credits must be achieved at level M in modules taken as part of the taught component of the programme, and a further 60 credits must be dissertation components at level M.
Postgraduate Diploma	Attempt at least 120 credits (of these no more than 30 credits may be at level C, I or H). At least 80 credits must be achieved at level M.
Postgraduate Certificate	Attempt at least 60 credits (of these no more than 20 credits may be at level C, I or H). At least 40 credits must be achieved at level M.

The pass mark for M-level modules is 50%

4. Entrance Requirements

Typically, the entrance requirements for a Graduate Diploma will be a first degree or its equivalent.

5. Transfer/progression between Graduate Diploma, Postgraduate Diploma and Masters

In some areas of the University, the Graduate Diploma has been introduced in place of Postgraduate Diplomas and Postgraduate Certificates which were postgraduate in time though not in level. In these cases, under previous regulations a Postgraduate Diploma or a Postgraduate Certificate may have had a lower passmark than the related Masters programme and students were considered for 'transfer conversion' or 'acceleration' to the higher award if they achieved a masters level mark. In these cases, the new Graduate Diploma is being used to provide a route for those applicants who do not have adequate academic qualifications for postgraduate (M-level) entry but do have appropriate experience.

a) **Admissions**

Where Schools and Departments are recruiting to related Graduate Diplomas and Masters programmes, decisions need to be made on an applicant by applicant basis whether they should be admitted to the Graduate Diploma or to the Postgraduate Diploma (where both exist), based on their prior qualifications/experience. As it is possible to take M-level modules as part of a Graduate Diploma programme, and some level C, I or H modules on a Postgraduate Diploma programme, students should be counselled appropriately according to their qualifications and experience. Applicants should be clear about what is required to subsequently transfer qualifications, where this is possible.

b) **Shared teaching**

Schools and Departments can teach H-level and M-level students together. However, as a module is defined as 'a coherent and identifiable unit of learning and teaching with defined learning outcomes', separate learning outcomes and assessment for the two levels are required, and two (or more) module codes will be generated. Schools and Departments should also give careful consideration to the delivery of teaching; ensuring that those students who are to be assessed against M-level learning outcomes have received adequate instruction. (For example: additional support in the form of tutorials may be appropriate for M-level students; the breakdown of a larger seminar into smaller groups for discussion according to student 'type' may be necessary.) These arrangements should be clearly conveyed to students.

c) **Assessment**

It is important to note that different marking scales apply to the different standards at H and M level; it is not possible to make direct comparisons across the two scales as they are qualitatively different. Hence, it is possible for an H-level student to achieve a mark above the Master's level pass mark without achieving M-level outcomes. If a School or Department believes that a student may pass at the other level, the assessment should be re-assessed using the relevant assessment criteria and learning outcomes for that level of study.

In such instances, complications may arise when using the Electronic Marks System (EMS), and so extra care will be needed to ensure that module registration is correct. Where students are to be transferred from their original programme, Student Services will need to be notified, together with the details of the modules affected.

d) **Credit accumulation**

It should be noted that students who succeed at obtaining 120 credits at H-level on the Graduate Diploma (an undergraduate qualification) would not have achieved sufficient and appropriate credit, even with the addition of the Masters dissertation, to be awarded a Masters degree. (Taught postgraduate programmes consist of M-level modules and may consist partly of credit at levels C, I or H. However, as per University regulations, the maximum total number of credits from modules at levels C, I or H that can contribute to a taught postgraduate degree programme is 30 credits. Note that it would be necessary for such allowances to be reflected within the Programme Specification.)

For those students who have gained level H credit as part of the Graduate Diploma, Schools and Departments will need to decide whether they have met the learning outcomes of the equivalent level M modules (see section c above). The transfer of module registration to the level M modules is then necessary in addition to returning a mark using the level M assessment criteria (partly so that transcripts record the appropriate level of module). Conversely, students who fail to meet the learning outcomes for level M modules may be transferred to level H modules and the Graduate Diploma, and be re-assessed against the level H learning outcomes. Note, if transfer from Masters level to honours level is a Board of E

Schools should consider whether they wish the programme requirements for Graduate Diplomas where transfer to Masters level is permitted to include the option of taking level M modules.

e) **Timing of transfer**

Schools/Departments are encouraged to make transfer decisions prior to the end of session results processing. The possibility for early decision making will depend on the structure of the programme and timing of assessments. Where sufficient evidence for transfer exists, a clear procedure for consideration should be followed. No transfer up to Masters level should be recommended without first consulting with the student.

It is important that clear School, Department or Programme level processes and procedures relating to the above are developed, maintained and communicated at the earliest opportunity to applicants, students and staff.

6. Fees

Although undergraduate in level, Graduate Diplomas/Certificates are not subject to HEFCE fee regulations. Fees can therefore be set at market rates. Where teaching for the Graduate Diploma is shared with a related Postgraduate Diploma the same fee should be set.