UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Archived Legislation

This is an archived version of the legislation current for the Session 2007-08. It is no longer current. Current legislation can be found at www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation.

Please use documents found there rather than archived documents.

POSTGRADUATE
ASSESSMENT PROTOCOLS 2006-07

These Assessment Protocols apply to students entering postgraduate programmes in October 2006 and thereafter (except for the MSc in Environmental Health (and interim awards) and the MSc in Public and Environmental Health Science (and interim awards)). They incorporate changes approved by Senate in June 2006 and replace previous Faculty Examination Rules or Conventions. They should be read in conjunction with the new University Postgraduate Regulations, available at: http://www.ppd.bham.ac.uk/policy/regs/index.htm.

The Postgraduate Assessment Protocols for students who registered for a taught postgraduate programme in October 2002 are available at http://www.ppd.bham.ac.uk/policy/assessindex.htm.

Students who entered the University before October 2002 remain under 'old' area ('faculty') regulations and Faculty Examination Rules/Conventions.

UNIVERSITY POSTGRADUATE ASSESSMENT PROTOCOLS

1 PREAMBLE 1

2 SETTING OF ASSESSMENTS 1

3 BOARDS OF EXAMINERS 1

3.1 Membership and documentation requirements 1
3.2 Role and Powers of the Board of Examiners 4
3.3 Internal Examiners 4
3.4 Role of External Examiner 4
3.5 Consideration of Mitigation or Other Extraneous Factors by School Boards of Examiners 5
3.6 Primary Appeals Committee 6
3.7 Recording of Decisions Made and Discussions Held 6

4 PROGRESS AND AWARDS BOARD OF SENATE 7

4.1 Membership 7
4.2 Role of the Progress and Awards Board of Senate 7

5 PROVISION OF INFORMATION TO STUDENTS 8

6 RETENTION OF SCRIPTS 8

7 MARKING 8

7.1 Preparation for Marking 8
7.2 Assessment Information 8
7.3 Marking Practices 8

8 PROGRESSION 9

8.1 Recording of Marks 9
8.2 Late Submission of Assessed Work 10
8.2.3 Deadlines 10
8.2.4 Submission 10
8.2.5 Extensions 11
8.2.6 Penalties for Late Submission 12
8.2.7 Marking and Feedback 12
8.3 Absence from Teaching Sessions and Assessments 12
8.3.1 Debarring and Reasonable Diligence 12
8.4 Opportunities for Re-assessment 13
8.5 Recording of Marks following Re-assessment or Repeat 15
8.6 Standardisation or Adjustment of Marks 15
8.7 Aggregation of Marks 15
8.8 Academic Failure and Withdrawal 15

9 AWARDS 16

9.1 Determination of Awards 16
9.2 Other Awards 17
9.3 Oral Examinations and Final Awards 17
9.4 Absence from Assessment and Final Awards 17

ASSESSMENT PROTOCOLS FOR TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE MODULES AND PROGRAMMES

1 Preamble

1.1 These Assessment Protocols are made under University Regulation 4.3 and apply to all types of programme including part-time provision, collaborative provision and distance learning. The Protocols will be effective for students registering from September 2003 and thereafter under the Regulations for Taught Postgraduate and Graduate Taught Programmes approved by Senate on 5 December 2001 and should be read in conjunction with the Regulations. The Protocols (together with Regulations) replace the previous Area ('Faculty') Taught Postgraduate Regulations and Examination Rules/Conventions. The Protocols take into account the Sections of the QAA Code of Practice regarding Assessment and Collaborative Provision.

1.2 These Protocols apply to all summative assessments (i.e. those contributing to the module mark) including written examinations, coursework, projects, worksheets, oral presentations or any other form of assessment. Schools should comply with the guidance in these protocols where it is practicable to do so. Other regulations also apply to assessment including Regulation 4.5.2(3)(vi) relating to Use of Electronic Calculators in Examinations and Regulation 4.5.7 relating to plagiarism and examination irregularities.

1.3 Where a School has devolved responsibility to Departments, throughout this document for 'School' read 'Department'.

2 Setting of Assessments

2.1 The Head of School shall have overall responsibility for the management of all assessment (in accordance with Regulation 4.5.2). The Head of School may choose to delegate this responsibility as appropriate.

2.2 For each module, a single member of staff shall have overall responsibility to the Head of School or his/her nominee for all of the assessments within the module. It shall be the responsibility of the Head of School concerned or his/her nominee to ensure that examination question papers and other forms of assessment as appropriate are submitted to the relevant external examiner for his/her approval.

2.3 The contribution of all assessments to the determination of the final award should be notified in writing to students in advance of the assessment.

2.4 When working with a Partner Organisation in a collaborative arrangement, Schools should ensure that the Partner Organisation understands and follows the University's requirements for the conduct of assessment.

3 Boards of Examiners

(in the following protocols, “Board of Examiners” refers to meeting(s) of examiners to make substantive and final decisions on programme awards and progress. The “main” Board of Examiners may be at School, Department or programme level.)

3.1 <u>Membership and documentation requirements</u>

3.1.1 Membership of Boards of Examiners will be determined by the relevant School committee(s) and will normally be as follows:

- Chair - the Head of School responsible for the programmes concerned or his/her nominee
- the School Examinations Officer(s) or his/her nominee for the programme(s) concerned
- all internal examiners for the programme(s) concerned

- all external examiners for the programme(s) concerned (as a minimum, for meetings where final awards are being considered)

Schools may delegate responsibility to Department level. In such cases, 'School' may be substituted for 'Department' in the list of members above and in the guidance below. See also 3.2.5.

3.1.2 Schools should establish a quoracy for each Board of Examiners, the Progress and Awards Board of Senate. All Boards of Examiners should have a quoracy of one-third of the academic membership or 10 (ten) academic members involved in providing the programme(s) (whichever is the smaller number) in addition to at least one External Examiner. A absolute minimum would be 3 (three) members of academic staff and an External Examiner (or a consulting mechanism to the External if s/he is not physically present). The external examiner must be informed of any decisions that affect progress or final results.

3.1.3 The terms of reference for each Board of Examiners must be presented to a meeting of the Board once per year and should include:

- membership and quoracy
- timing and frequency of meetings
- the authority of the Board in relation to other Boards of Examiners (for instance, in multi-departmental Schools there may be a formal School-level Board that receives the final decisions of Departmental Boards for information only).
- role of the external examiners
- a procedure for Chair's Action (if required between meetings)

3.1.4 All Boards of Examiners should have a written agenda, with at least the following items:

- At initial meeting of the year, approval of terms of reference and membership.
- Receipt and confirmation of module marks (see 4.5.5 above).
- Receipt of report from mitigations panel or equivalent.
- Report of any further special factors (e.g. procedural irregularities).
- Determination and confirmation of awards and progress decisions within Regulations.
- Re-consideration of cases referred back to Board by a Primary Appeals Committee.
- Consideration and confirmation of awards and progress decisions made notwithstanding Regulations involving mitigations, if the criteria detailed in 3.2.3 are met.
- Consideration of all other cases notwithstanding Regulations, to recommend to appropriate Progress Board.
- External Examiners' comments on examinations, assessments and programmes (include discussion of any items of interest to External Examiner that may appear in his/her report).

3.1.5 Full minutes should be kept of all Boards of Examiners meetings and returned to the Academic Office with any appropriate marksheets and the signed Chair of Boards of Examiners statement.

3.1.6 Schools should ensure the provision of adequate notice of meetings of the Board of Examiners, and in particular any reconvened meetings, to all who are expected to attend.

3.1.7 Members of the Board of Examiners should declare personal relationships or involvement with a student during the meeting and, if appropriate, withdraw from the meeting while that student is being considered.

3.1.8 When examining collaborative provision, where possible a common Board of Examiners should be used to ensure close comparability of approach. However, where this is not possible, arrangements that are put in place should take proper account of quality issues. Arrangements for Boards of Examiners should be set out in the Memoranda of Agreement covering programmes.

3.1.7 The taught component of a postgraduate programme must be considered at a meeting of the Board of Examiners.

Where no dissertation is involved the final award of a qualification must be considered at a meeting of the Board of Examiners.

Where a dissertation is involved, the final award of a qualification must be considered either at a meeting of the Board of Examiners, or according to alternative arrangements which must involve the external examiner.
Consideration should be given to the timing of the Board of Examiners' meetings on a programme-by-programme basis.

3.1.8 The University Progress and Awards Board of Senate will normally meet four times a year:

(a) In *March* (from 2007) to receive details of Schools' Boards of Examiners and Mitigations Panels procedures.

(b) In *June* to receive results of students who will be eligible for a final award in summer, marks of those full-time and other students who have completed all taught elements, and decisions of Boards of Examiners with regard to opportunities for re-assessment.

(c) In *September* to receive results of students who will be eligible for a final award in December, the outcomes of re-assessment, marks of students who have completed all taught elements, and decisions from Boards of Examiners with regard to opportunities for re-assessment.

(d) In *November* to receive results of students who will be eligible for a final award in December, marks of students who have completed all taught elements, and decisions from Boards of Examiners with regard to opportunities for re-assessment.

3.1.9 Students should be notified in advance of the Board of Examiner meetings at which the results of their assessments will be considered.

3.2 Role and Powers of the Board of Examiners

3.2.1 The Board of Examiners will make final decisions on all module marks, the satisfying of the taught component of programmes, and the final award (see 3.1.6). Such decisions will be made only on the basis of actual performance in those assessments which have formally been defined as contributing to the final award. In all cases, the Board of Examiners must be satisfied that the learning outcomes of the module or programme have been achieved.

3.2.2 . Boards of Examiners have the formal authority, on behalf of Senate to make final award and progress decisions in all cases where the relevant protocols and regulations have been followed.

3.2.3 Boards of Examiners have the formal authority, exercised on behalf Senate, to make final progress and award decisions notwithstanding University regulations if there are mitigating circumstances and the following criteria are met:

a) the School provides a written copy of their mitigations procedure to the appropriate Progress and Awards Board of Senate by the end of the Spring Term of the current academic year and can prove in subsequent documentation that this procedure has been followed.
b) the School provides an anonymised summary of all decisions to the appropriate Progress and Awards Board of Senate taken under their mitigation procedure and approved by their Examination Board. This should include decisions taken within Regulations and notwithstanding Regulations.

3.2.4

All recommendations made notwithstanding the regulations where there 3.2.3 does not apply should be passed to the Progress and Awards Board of Senate for consideration and final decision.

3.2.5 In multi-department Schools, where there are Departmental level Board of Examiners meetings, results should be forwarded to the School Board, which will ratify the assessment processes and take appropriate measures to review and confirm decisions/recommendations.

3.2.6 Where students have taken modules outside their School or Department, the Board of Examiners for the 'home' School shall be responsible for considering the student's overall results for the programme and recommendations accordingly.

3.2.7 For designated interdisciplinary programmes where there is a clearly defined separate Board of Examiners responsible, this should include representatives from all of the relevant Schools or Departments, which contribute modules to the programme, as appropriate to the cases under consideration.

See also sections 3.7 and 9.4.

3.3 Internal Examiners

3.3.1 The Head of School will appoint internal examiners annually. Internal examiners are responsible for the assessment of the performance of students and are automatically members of the Board of Examiners that makes recommendations on progression and decisions on module marks and final awards. Actual membership of the Board may vary according to the size of the provision and the cases being considered. All members of the academic staff (see Regulation 1.5 for definitions) of a School are eligible to serve as internal examiners for programmes of study and modules, which are the responsibility of that School.

3.4 Role of External Examiner

3.4.1 No University qualification, including those made under collaborative agreements, may be awarded without participation in the assessment process by at least one examiner external to this University, who will be a full member of the relevant School or Subject Board of Examiners.

3.4.2 External examiners, as full members of the relevant School (or programme) Board of Examiners, have the right to be present at all examiners' meetings at which significant decisions are to be taken in regard to the programme with which they have been concerned, including the setting of written examination papers and projects and dissertations. They are normally required to be present at any meeting where final awards are determined for the programme(s) in which they have been involved. In cases within Regulations, External Examiners must be informed of any changes to a result, which they have previously agreed.

3.4.3 The views of the external examiner must be particularly influential where there is disagreement on the mark to be awarded for a particular module. The views of the external examiner must also be particularly influential in considering instances of apparent examination irregularities such as plagiarism and in considering mitigation.

3.4.4 If no External Examiner(s) is/are available for a Board of ERxaminers, the School should inform them of any decisions made as soon as practicable.

3.5 <u>Consideration of Mitigation or Other Extraneous Factors by School Boards of Examiners</u>

3.5.1 Mitigations Panels shall be established to consider the possible effects of extraneous circumstances on the qualifications to be awarded to individual candidates. The Mitigations Panels should be University level panels Panels held at School level and their membership and procedures should be consistent with the principles of best practice contained within the University's Guidelines on Mitigations. It shall be the responsibility of the Dean concerned to ensure that such procedures comply with basic principles of good practice including the need:

The basic principles of best practice include the need:

- For the Mitigation Panel to act on behalf of the University in maintaining the greatest possible level of confidentiality concerning the personal affairs of students.
- To maintain a clear and permanent record of all cases.
- To define clearly the nature of admissible evidence (which should be provided in writing where possible with independent third party evidence)
- To provide sufficient publicity for students about the mitigations process for them to be aware of the importance of raising mitigation before the meeting of the Board of Examiners.

3.5.2 Mitigation Panels shall consider detailed written evidence presented for mitigation and make recommendations to the main Board of Examiners. The Board of Examiners should receive a list of all students for whom a request for mitigation has been made and any action already taken on behalf of the Board of Examiners, for approval. The Board of Examiners will not have the right to receive or review any specific details of the mitigations that have been raised.

3.5.3 The Board of Examiners will determine marks without reference to any extraneous circumstances. The Board of Examiners will then consider individual cases where it is known that there are extraneous factors, which may have adversely affected a student's performance. In consultation with and with the full agreement of the external examiner, the Board of Examiners may then decide to recommend a final award or progress decision which is consistent with the performance which, on the evidence available, the Board of Examiners judges the individual would have achieved if their performance had not been affected by extraneous factors. In such cases the marks attained should not be adjusted, but a written record of the factors and the action taken by the Board of Examiners should be made available to the Progress and Awards Board of Senate. The original, unamended mark will appear on the student's transcript.

3.5.4 If circumstances occur which seem to require a change to the level of an award determined by the Board of Examiners (eg submission of late and unexpected medical evidence), any such change should be approved by or on behalf of the Board of Examiners concerned. All such changes must have external examiner approval. However, if it is not possible to contact all internal examiners in the time available, it will be the responsibility of the Board of Examiners to determine whether the change can be made on the basis of whatever consultation has been possible and to report this fact to the Progress and Awards Board of Senate. All such changes should be forwarded to Academic and Student Administration as soon as possible, and no later than one month before the beginning of the next academic session.

3.5.5 Once the Board of Examiners, or Progress and Awards Board of Senate, has approved its recommendations, no changes may be made to module marks, progress decisions or awards (except as provided for in Examination Regulations 4.7.4 (7)) other than through the operation of the Code of Practice on Primary Appeals Procedures.

3.6 Primary Appeals Committee

3.6.1 The University will assume that students will normally have brought to the attention of their personal tutor or supervisor, in the normal course of events, mitigating circumstances which they consider might affect their future examination performance, and made appropriate submissions in mitigation to their School or Department prior to meetings of the relevant Board of Examiners, so that the Board of Examiners may take such circumstances into account in formulating results, decisions and recommendations. The Primary Appeals Committee will not normally therefore consider as 'new evidence' information, which the student could have brought to the attention of his or her School.

3.6.2 The University will consider appeals from students against decisions following examination made on the following grounds:

- that there were circumstances unknown to the examiners which contributed to a student's academic performance and consequently to the decision against which appeal is being made and the student can present good reason for these circumstances not having been made known in mitigation prior to the meeting of the Board of Examiners; or
- that there was an administrative irregularity or failure in procedure giving rise to a reasonable doubt as to whether the decision would have been different if it had not occurred.

3.6.3 Students on collaborative programmes have the same right of appeal as other categories of student.

3.6.4 For more information on the operation of the Primary Appeals Procedures please see the Code of Practice on Primary Appeals Procedures.

3.7 Recording of Decisions Made and Discussions Held

3.7.1 All Schools will keep a formal record of the attendance at, discussions held and decisions made at the meeting of the Board of Examiners. Heads of Schools should ensure that adequate systems are in place in order that they are able to satisfy themselves that appropriate regulations and procedures have been adhered to in reaching any such decisions. Such systems are subject to review during Academic Audit and Heads of Schools will be asked to confirm that the appropriate regulations and procedures have been adhered to..

3.7.2 As a minimum, all evidence on which a decision was based should be retained until one year after the student has left the University (see also Section 6).

4 Progress and Awards Board of Senate

4.1 Membership

4.1.1 The Senate appoints the University's Progress and Awards Board.. A list of members Academic Office is published on the web.

4.2 Role of the Progress and Awards Board of Senate

4.2.1 For taught programmes, the role of the Progress and Awards Board of Senate is:

-
- To determine recommendations made notwithstanding regulations (where special or mitigating circumstances have not been considered by the School) received from Boards of Examiners for taught programmes.
- To identify quality issues relating to examination processing, and report as appropriate to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee.
- To annually receive:
  - Reports of Schools' examination procedures including those for special or mitigating circumstances and information provided by Schools to students on mitigations.
  - Anonymised summary data on special circumstances or mitigations considered by Schools.
  - Summary data on Primary Appeals Committee cases referred back to Boards of Examiners.
- To produce an annual report for the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee on recommendations notwithstanding regulations for students on taught programmes considered by the Progress and Awards Board.

5 Provision of Information to Students

5.1 University Regulation 4.5.5(6) states that mark sheets shall be treated as strictly confidential but the marks awarded to an individual candidate may be disclosed to the candidate in a way which protects the confidential nature of the marks of other candidates. Attention is drawn to the University Data Protection Policy and the implications for storage of student information and provision of information. In particular, the Policy states 'Staff, students and other users of the University have the right to access any personal data that is being kept about them either on computer or in certain files. Any person who wishes to exercise this right should contact the Academic Registrar's Office.' and 'Students will be entitled to information about their marks for both coursework and examinations as part of their tutorial support. This is within the provisions of the Act relating to the release of data.' For more information, contact the University Data Protection Officer.

5.2 Final lists of results, progress decisions and final awards will be published by the School as soon as possible after the meeting of the Board of Examiners at which they are determined.. In the exceptional circumstances where a recommendation is made 'notwithstanding the regulations' and mitigating circumstances are not involved (see 3.2.3 above), the provisional list of results should not indicate the result but should indicate that a decision is 'pending' the meeting of the Progress and Awards Board of Senate

5.3 Following determination of marks for the taught elements of a programme by the Board of Examiners, where students are continuing, Schools will inform individual students of their module marks where appropriate, through progress review tutorials.

5.4 It will be at the discretion of the School as to whether or not they will release to students the marks that they obtain in each assessment (where available) of a module. However, students should be given timely feedback on assessments, particularly those undertaken during a module and used to inform the student's learning (e.g. coursework). Schools may wish to provide this feedback in ways other than by provision of actual marks. Where marks are provided in advance of confirmation by the Board of Examiners, it should be emphasised that these marks remain provisional.

6 Retention of Scripts

6.1 Schools shall ensure compliance with Regulation 4.5.2.4(iii) which states that, with the exception of dissertations, all written examination answer books and other papers shall remain confidential to the examiners and shall be destroyed after a period of not less than twelve months after the declaration of the results of the examinations.

7 Marking

7.1 Preparation for Marking

7.1.1 It is recommended that Schools have in place staff development and guidance procedures for all marking processes in use within the School. All staff involved in marking should be required to familiarise themselves with relevant material and practices and attend formal or informal briefing sessions.

7.1.2 Visiting lecturers and post-graduate students, involved in assessment, should normally undergo a period of training, as appropriate to the duties they are required to perform. This may include formal training provided by the Staff Development Unit for postgraduate students or training provided within Schools. In addition, each postgraduate student involved in undergraduate teaching should have a 'mentor', an experienced member of staff who can provide advice and support as necessary. See also the Guidelines on Undergraduate Teaching by Postgraduate and Undergraduate Students.

7.1.3 Where inexperienced internal examiners undertake marking of work, which contributes towards the module mark, this should be under the guidance of an experienced internal examiner.

7.1.4 With regard to the information provided to External Examiners, it is recommended that Schools adhere to sections 8 and 9 of the Guidance on the University's External Examiner System for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Programmes on the briefing of External Examiners and the participation of External Examiners in assessment procedures. For example, on appointment External Examiners should be provided with a schedule outlining all relevant information relating to marking of assessments, (including information given to students).

7.1.5 The Head of School (or nominee) shall establish a formal timetable to ensure that external examiners have scripts in their possession sufficiently in advance of examiners' meetings to enable the external examiner to express an informed opinion on them and shall make this timetable known to all examiners, internal and external normally at the start of the session.

7.2 Assessment Information

7.2.1 To ensure consistency and transparency, Schools should publish assessment criteria appropriate to the module being assessed and the method of assessment and should make this information available to internal and external examiners and students. For some subject disciplines this may include the provision of model answers to internal and external examiners. Criterion (not norm) referencing should be used for all assessments.

7.2.2 Schools should publish guidelines on the conduct of assessment (for example on plagiarism or late submission of work) for modules and should make this information available to internal and external examiners and students. Any amendments to programme and module assessments should also be made available to all internal and external examiners and students. Where students are required to pass specific assessments within a module ('internal hurdles'), module descriptions should specify whether the assessment has to be passed to achieve overall modular credit.

7.3 Marking Practices

7.3.1 At its meeting in March 1995, Senate agreed that Schools be required to adopt anonymous marking for all written examinations that contribute to the final award. In December 1999, Senate agreed that anonymity should be extended at least to the second marker stage and that it should be recognised good practice that scripts remain anonymous even at the stage at which they are considered by the external examiner.

7.3.2 Where possible, anonymous marking of assessed work should be undertaken for course work, with the exception of practical assessments and projects.

7.3.3 Where individual questions in a paper are marked by different examiners, a single examiner shall be responsible for the overall mark for the paper returned to the Board of Examiners.

7.3.4 Schools should ensure that a technical check of assessment marks is carried out (ie, to ensure that simple arithmetic errors or omissions have not been made).

7.3.5 All assessment that contributes to a module mark must be moderated in some way, where moderation is defined as some form of independent academic checking in addition to the technical check of marks. Moderation may involve looking at pieces of assessed work (eg double marking) or it may involve analysis of marks for the cohort for the assessment. The amount of moderation may vary dependent upon the nature of the assessment, the contribution made to the module mark and the overall contribution of the assessment to the award qualification or to the achievement of the award.

7.3.6 Moderation may be undertaken either on a random sampling basis, or by targeting of individual cases following previous moderation or identification of a potential problem (for example where there is significant disparity between the different elements of assessment for an individual student or within a module or where there is significant disparity between the marks of different markers for a particular assessment or within a module).

7.3.7 Double Marking is the term used where student work is assessed by more than one marker. This may be done 'blind' or 'non-blind'. In blind double marking, the marks and comments of the first marker are not available to the second marker. A final mark is either agreed by the two markers in collaboration with the module leader or equivalent or the Examinations Officer, or produced by simple averaging of the two marks.

7.3.8 In non-blind double marking the marks and annotations of the first marker are available to the second marker. This latter method is usually used where the role of the second marker is seen as more one of checking the marks given by the first marker, such as where first markers are less experienced, or where there are several first markers and consistency may be an issue.
The mark of the first marker usually stands, unless there are significant discrepancies between the marks of the two markers. Schools should determine their own policies in this area, including clear a definition of what would constitute a significant discrepancy, as appropriate to the marking practices in the School.

7.3.9 Double marking is recognised good practice for all assessments, which contribute significantly to the final award, projects, dissertations and other substantial pieces of work.

7.3.10 Schools should ensure that the methods that are used are agreed within the School and that clear procedures are in place for moderation and the resolution of discrepancies or disagreements between markers.

8 Progression

8.1 <u>Recording of Marks</u>

8.1.1 A module is a coherent and identifiable unit of learning and teaching with defined learning outcomes. A module is passed if its specified learning outcomes have been achieved. The assessment of each module shall be designed so as to assess the achievement of the learning outcomes of the module. The assessment of each module shall generate a single mark between 0% and 100% expressing the extent to which the learning outcomes have been achieved. A number of different assessments may be combined within a module to generate the single mark.

8.1.2 The pass mark for all postgraduate modules is 50% (Regulation 4.3.7). Where there is more than one assessment contributing to the module mark, Schools may specify that particular assessments must be passed in order to pass the module (known as 'internal hurdles'). The weighting of each assessment, or the requirement to pass a particular assessment, must be clearly stated as a percentage of the module mark in the approved module descriptions as published on the Academic Office website. The website is updated to take into account approved late changes to module content or assessment.

8.1.3 The module mark should be expressed as a percentage and as a whole number. Guidance on the return of marks, results and recommendations will be provided by Academic and Student Administration each academic session. Where students complete the programme within an academic session marks should normally be returned via the Electronic Marks System.

8.2 Late Submission of Assessed Work

8.2.1 Where students are required to submit coursework (e.g. essays, practical reports, projects, problem sheets) that contributes to the module mark Schools should have in place published arrangements for the applying of penalties for the late submission of such work. Coursework, which is not submitted by the initial deadline given, shall be subject to a penalty applied to the mark achieved for that piece of work.

8.2.2 The following are standard University procedures that should normally be used for the submission of assessed work that will count towards a final programme mark. It may be necessary, in circumstances where there are good academic reasons, to adopt other procedures, for example, where assessed work is to be discussed in class shortly after the deadline. In such cases the relevant Dean should be notified. These protocols are supplemented by Submission of Assessed Work: Good Practice Guidelines for Students (see Appendix A).

8.2.3 Deadlines

Students should be made aware, in writing, at the beginning of a module, what the assessments for the module are, the deadlines, where and to whom assignments should be submitted, and the penalties for late submission (see below). Deadlines should be set taking into account, where possible, revision and examination periods and student workload, for example submission dates for other assignments in Joint Honours programmes.

8.2.4 Submission

The School should have clear submission procedures for assignments that form part of the assessment for a module. These procedures should be made clear to students, in writing, at the beginning of the academic year and again at the beginning of each module. Students should also be issued with the Good Practice Guidelines for Students (see (1) above).

Each student should be issued with a receipt for submitted coursework that either indicates clearly that the work was submitted before the deadline, or shows the time and date of submission for any work submitted after the deadline. Receipts should be signed by a designated member of School staff.

If Schools or Departments believe they have justifiable reasons for not issuing receipts to students they should liaise with the relevant Dean to devise an alternative. If electronic or postal submission of coursework is permitted Schools should have a receipt mechanism in place that ensures that the student has positive evidence that the assignment has been received. Students should be made aware of what they can expect to receive. If students submit work by post they should ensure that they obtain proof that the assignment has been posted. Electronic submission should be supplemented as soon as possible, preferably on the same day, either by post or in person, by a paper copy of the assignment. Students should declare on the paper copy that no changes have been made since electronic submission.

8.2.5 Extensions

The School should have a clear procedure for granting extensions including guidance on circumstances, that will and will not be considered acceptable. Each case should be considered on its merits and below are examples of acceptable/unacceptable circumstances.

Acceptable	**Unacceptable**
Major computer problems (eg failure of university IT systems, such as network or server failure)	Minor Computer problems (eg lost or damaged disks, printer breakdown)
Significant medical problems	Lost assignments
Personal problems	Desired books not in library
Compassionate, (for example, family bereavement)	Unverifiable travel difficulties
	Not realising deadline imminent

Students should be required to apply in writing for an extension (this could be on a standard School form) explaining the reasons why they require an extension. Appropriate evidence should be attached.

To ensure equity of treatment for all students, only one person should grant extensions. This would normally be the Head of School (or Department) of the School (or Department) who owns the module, or authorised nominee.

The Head of School (or nominee) should be responsible for ensuring that appropriate staff are informed of extensions that have been granted.

8.2.6 Penalties for Late Submission

It is recommended that, if no extension has been granted, or there is not sufficiently good cause for work being submitted late, then a penalty of 5 marks should be deducted from the mark actually achieved for each day the assignment is late until 0 marks is reached, for example, a mark of 67 would become 62 marks on day one, 57 marks on day two, and so on. Penalties should not include weekends, public and University closed days. When setting deadlines weekends and closed days should be borne in mind to minimise student manipulation of penalties. Schools who wish to adopt a different penalty should liaise with the relevant Dean.

In certain circumstances, for example, where assignments or the content are to be discussed in class shortly after the deadline, other penalties will need to be applied.

Assignments should be marked in the normal way and penalties applied afterwards.

The original mark and the penalty should be clearly indicated in documentation submitted to Examination Boards. In exceptional circumstances Examination Boards may modify decisions that have been implemented in accordance with standard procedures but which seem excessively harsh.

8.2.7 Marking and Feedback

School staff should ensure that assignments are marked and feedback given to students within a reasonable time of the submission date, taking into account that students find feedback helpful for examination revision.

8.3 Absence from Teaching Sessions and Assessments

8.3.1. Debarring and reasonable diligence

Students who do not observe reasonable diligence may be debarred from assessment in a module or be asked to withdraw from their programme of study (see Regulation 5.2.5 and 5.2.)

8.3.2 The following sets out the meanings of terms as they are used in the Regulations and Assessment Protocols concerning debarring and due diligence:

'Withdrawal' is related to programmes of study

'Debarring' relates to assessment in a module

'Reasonable Diligence' is understood as being demonstrated by:

(i) Completion of all required coursework; and, where relevant,

(ii) Submission of examination material in the prescribed manner. Attendance at an examination hall and submission of a blank or otherwise inappropriate script does not constitute reasonable diligence. The examination board may use its discretion in deciding on other similar cases.

Note: at undergraduate level, in addition to the above, students may also be required to attend 70% of specific classes in modules. At postgraduate level, Schools may also wish to require specified levels of attendance in specific modules if, for example, group assessments are included and the behaviour of students could prejudice the performance of others; where health and safety is an issue; or where core knowledge is essential for later study. In these cases it must be made clear in the module description that attendance at particular classes or at a certain level will be required (unless there are good reasons for non-attendance). Schools must also be vigilant in monitoring attendance to ensure that all students fulfil their responsibilities.

8.3.3 All students must be informed by Schools in writing of Regulations 5.2.5 and 5.2., the above definitions and the procedures they can expect to be enacted if they fail to observe due diligence.

8.3.4 For any student threatened with being debarred from assessment in a module, or a requirement to withdraw from a programme of study, the procedures for enacting the regulations on debarring and withdrawal should include the following:

- An interview with the Head of School/Department (or nominee); followed by,
- A written warning explaining what the student should do if s/he is to avoid further action being taken.

If the above measures fail and action to debar from assessment or to require a student to withdraw from a programme of study is to be taken, the following must be observed:

- A second (and final) letter should be sent to the student making it clear that it has been recommended to Senate or delegated authority that the student should be debarred from assessment in a particular module(s) or be required to withdraw from a programme of study. To enable Academic Office to set in motion the appropriate action and notify the student of his/her right of appeal, Schools who wish to enact the regulations must formally inform Academic & Student Administration *before the end of the 5th week of the semester*. This deadline is intended to give sufficient time for the completion of the appeals process before the end of the semester.

8.3.5 Students who have been debarred from the first opportunity of assessment are permitted one opportunity to repeat the module or to substitute it for another. After this students are not permitted further resits. The maximum mark that can be achieved on repeat, for the purposes of classification, is 40% at undergraduate level and 50% at postgraduate level. On the transcript 0% is recorded for the first attempt and the actual mark recorded for the second attempt. A student substituting a module is only permitted one attempt at assessments in the substitute module. On the transcript, a mark of 0% is recorded for the first module and the actual mark for the substitute module.

8.3.6 If students are debarred from assessment but nevertheless turn up and complete examination papers, the marks for these papers should not be submitted to examination boards for confirmation.

8.3.7 Where a student is registered on a module delivered by a School other than the student's home School, the home School shall be responsible for enacting procedures to debar the student from assessment in the module. There should be full consultation with the School delivering the module throughout the process.

8.3.8 Where Schools offer modules to students from other Schools, the student's home School should be informed immediately if there are concerns about the student failing to observe reasonable diligence, bearing in mind the deadline set out in (4) above.

8.3.9 For the purposes of awarding a mark, a student who fails to attend a required examination without adequate cause or who fails to complete other assessed work by the final deadline without adequate cause shall be classed deemed as having made a valid attempt, i.e. they will be deemed to have failed and shall be awarded a mark of 0% for that examination or assessment. Where there is unexplained absence from all assessments that contribute to the module mark the student will be awarded a mark of 0% for the module and will not achieve credit. Where the unexplained absence is for an assessment that contributes less than 100% to the module mark the mark of 0% for the assessment will be combined with the marks for the other assessments as for all other students. This may result in the student not achieving the pass mark for the module and failing the module. A student who provides adequate reason or mitigation for failure to complete an assessment or attend an examination may be permitted to 'sit' the module again as if for the first time, or 'sit' the assessment(s) again as if for the first time.

8.4 <u>Opportunities for Re-assessment</u>

8.4.1 A student who provides adequate reason or mitigation for failure to complete an assessment or attend an examination may be permitted to 'sit' the module again as if for the first time, or 'sit' the assessment(s) again as if for the first time. The decision on whether a student should be allowed to 'sit' should be made by the Board of Examiners (Regulation 4.3.8(5)).

8.4.2 All students who fail a module (other than subject to Regulation 4.3.7) shall have one opportunity to retrieve the failure, either by re-assessment or by repeating (Regulation 4.3.8(1)). The decision on whether a student should be allowed to be re-assessed or repeat should be made by the Board of Examiners (Regulation 4.3.8[5]). The normal expectation is that students will retrieve the failure by re-assessment.

8.4.3 For re-assessment a student is required to complete such further assessments as specified by the Board of Examiners as being necessary to demonstrate achievement of the stated learning outcomes (Regulation 4.3.8(2)). This re-assessment may take the form of additional or re-submitted coursework or an examination. For full time students the re-assessment should normally be by or at the time of the August/September supplementary examinations.

8.4.4 Students should be notified of their performance in the taught component of the programme and whether they are required to be re-assessed. In the case of students whose programme is spread across several academic sessions, the recommendation relating to re-assessment can normally only be made once all the assessment of the taught elements are completed. Where it is known that the module needs to be reassessed, reassessment should take place at the first opportunity. Students on part-time programmes may be given the chance to retrieve the failure at the first opportunity at the discretion of the Examination Board. Examination Boards should inform Academic and Student Administration through EMS which modules it has decided are to be re-assessed.

8.4.5 Students whose programme are spread across several academic sessions and who fail a module can exercise the right for one re-assessment at an appropriate time up to the final opportunity specified by the Board of Examiners.

8.4.6 For full time student re-assessment should normally be by, or at the time of, the August/September supplementary examinations. The results should be considered by the September Board of Examiners. For part time students the re-assessment should normally be within one calendar year. The nature of the re-assessment should be made clear in the approved module description as published on the Academic Office website.

8.4.7 A student who is required to repeat a module is required to attend teaching sessions as specified by the School or Department and to complete all the assessment requirements associated with the module in order to achieve the stated learning outcomes (Regulation 4.3.8(3)). Repeat students should normally complete the repeat of the module within one calendar year of the initial failure. If a student does not attend teaching sessions as specified by the School or Department they may be debarred from the assessment of the module. Students may repeat some or all modules as determined by the Board of Examiners.

8.4.8 In some modules the nature of the module will be such that retrieval of failure can only be by means of repeat (e.g. laboratory-based modules). Such modules should be designated as repeat only in module descriptions (Regulation 4.3.8(4)).

8.4.9 Students who have not submitted coursework or been examined for a module due to illness or other reason accepted by the Board of Examiners may be permitted to repeat a module or be re-assessed in a module or a number of modules as though they were taking the module for the first time. They will retain the right to an opportunity for re-assessment should they fail the module / modules. If repeating the module as if for the first time, the student is required to attend all teaching sessions as specified by the School or Department and to complete all the assessment requirements associated with the module in order to achieve the stated learning outcomes. If being re-assessed as if for the first time, the student is required to complete such further assessments specified by the Board of Examiners as necessary to demonstrate achievement of the stated learning outcomes. The re-assessment should normally be by or at the time of the August/September supplementary examinations

8.5 Recording of Marks following Re-assessment or Repeat

8.5.1 Following successful re-assessment or repeat of a failed module, the mark used for the purpose of arriving at decisions on progress or the final award will be the pass mark for the module (Regulation 4.3.5(11)). The mark actually achieved in any re-assessment or will however be recorded in the Electronic Marks System (see Appendix A), the student records system and on the student's transcript, with an indication of the number of sits taken.

8.5.2 Following unsuccessful re-assessment or repeat the higher of the two fail marks should be used for the purpose of arriving at decisions on progress or the final award.

8.5.3 Where a student has failed to attend a re-examination or not submitted re-assessed work, without adequate cause, the mark recorded for the module will be 0%.

8.5.4 Following unsuccessful re-assessment or repeat of a failed module, the mark used for arriving at decisions on progress or the final award shall be the higher of the two fail marks achieved, at initial assessment and at re-assessment.

8.5.5 Where the student has been permitted to substitute a module the mark achieved will be recorded and used on the transcript. The mark used for the purpose of arriving at decisions on the final award will be the maximum pass mark.

8.6 Standardisation or Adjustment of Marks

8.6.1 Where marks are adjusted, the rank order of affected students for the assessment must be maintained and the mark distributions should normally be preserved. The normal method of mark adjustment might be a simple addition or subtraction of an agreed percentage; however, Schools may use more sophisticated methods within the above constraints.

8.6.2 There should be no adjustment to marks if they accurately reflect the achievement or otherwise of the learning outcomes and have not resulted from an error in the assessment process or some other factor which would have affected students.

8.6.3 All adjustments to marks must be recorded in the minutes of the School Board of Examiners.

8.6.4 School quality assurance mechanisms should ensure that any concerns identified in the assessment process or other aspects of the module result in a review of that module.

8.7 Aggregation of Marks

8.7.1 Marks should be aggregated for the purposes of determining the final award according to the credit weighting of the module and in accordance with the relevant University Regulation. For example, a mark for a 20 credit module would be weighted one sixth of the overall mark for the 120 credit taught component of the programme. Marks for the taught and research components of a programme must be aggregated separately.

8.8 Academic Failure and Withdrawal

8.8.1 Students who do not achieve the required number of credits to proceed to the next stage of their programme, as set out in Regulation 4.2.11(3) or in programme requirements following re-assessment or repeat shall be required to withdraw. Such students will be informed of their right of appeal (see Code of Practice on Primary Appeals). Students who have achieved the requisite number of credits may be eligible for the award of a Postgraduate Certificate, a Postgraduate Diploma, a Graduate Certificate or a Graduate Diploma.

9 Awards

9.1 Determination of Awards

9.1.1 The class of award of each student shall be determined in accordance with the Regulation 4.3.7.

9.1.2 In order to be achieve the award of Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma or Masters Degree, students are required to: (a) achieve the minimum number of credits as specified in Regulation 4.3.7 and (b) have gained the weighted mean marks as specified in 4.3.7; and (c) have achieved a mark of at least 40% in the specified number of credits

To pass with Merit a student must (a) achieve the mark stated in 4.3.7(9); (b) pass all modules taken as part of the programmeachieve the weighted mean marks as stated in 4.3.7(7).

To pass with Distinction a student must (a) achieve the the first attempt, and, for the Taught Postgraduate Degree, achieve the weighted mean marks as stated in 4.3.7(10.

9.2 Other Awards

9.2.1 Where a student does not fulfil the requirements for the Postgraduate Diploma or Masters degree; the modules the student has undertaken may be reassessed against the module learning outcomes for a Graduate Diploma or Graduate Certificate to ascertain whether it meets the requirements of these awards. If a student does not fulfil the requirements for a Postgraduate Certificate the modules may be reassessed against the learning outcomes for a Graduate Certificate. These provisions will require that learning outcomes and assessment requirements for a related Graduate Diploma and/or Graduate Certificate have been specified in programme specifications and approved by Senate or delegated authority.

9.2.2 Where a student was previously registered on a Masters programme, the Postgraduate/Graduate Certificate or Postgraduate/Graduate Diploma awarded will normally have the same title as that programme. The title of the award should reflect the content. In some circumstances (particularly where specialisms reflected in the programme title are not taught until the final stage) it may be more appropriate to award a Certificate or Diploma with the name of the School or Department. In all other cases and except where special provision has been made and approved by or on behalf of Senate or delegated authority, the title of the award will be the name of the School or (where relevant) Department.

9.3 Oral Examinations and Final Awards

9.3.1 Decisions on the achievement of an award are based on credit accumulation and aggregation of individual module marks. All assessment is related to the learning outcomes of a specific module. Consequently all assessment that may affect the award qualification must be related to a specific module and the mark included in the module mark.

9.3.2 Oral examinations are permitted as one of a range of assessment methods available within modules. Where such oral examinations are used, they should be used where the competencies/achievements of the stated learning outcomes for the module may only be demonstrated through these means, or where the oral examination is an integral part of the assessment of a module (eg in relation to the project or dissertation, or language skills). All students taking a module should be subject to the same form of assessment.

9.3.3 Generic additional oral examinations as previously used in some sections of the University for a subsection of students when determining the final degree classification or the achievement of an award are not permitted. Examples of where this type of additional examination has previously been used include

- as a means of calibrating the overall student performance or standard of a student cohort
- assessing students' competence across a range of modules
- in determining the degree classification of a borderline candidate.

9.3.4 Exceptionally, an additional oral examination may be used to check the authorship of assessed work in case of doubt, provided that this does not conflict with any formal investigation of examination irregularity or alleged plagiarism, or where there are mitigating circumstances for poor performance.

9.3.5 Exceptionally, where there are professional validation reasons, other forms of oral examination may be permitted subject to the approval of Senate or delegated authority. The criteria against which the students' performance at the oral examination will be judged should be made available to the students and examiners in advance of the oral examination. Students should also be provided with written information and guidance should be provided in advance to students.

9.4 Absence from Assessment and Final Awards

9.4.1 Students who are ill for a significant period during the academic session (i.e. have missed key elements of their learning experience) or are otherwise prevented from following their programme of study may apply for leave of absence, returning to study once circumstances allow.. The period of leave of absence is included in the maximum time limit for the programme but students should be made aware that, when they return to study, the School might not be able to guarantee exactly the same programme of study.

9.4.2 All students, including those in their final stage of their programme, who miss assessments on individual modules through illness, or for other good reason as determined by the Board of Examiners/Mitigation Panel, should take the assessment at the earliest reasonable time (normally at the next available opportunity).

9.4.3 In cases where students miss only part of the assessment for a module for reasons or illness or other good reason as determined by the Board of Examiners/Mitigation Panel the Board of Examiners should consider whether there is enough material evidence to show that the students has satisfied the learning outcomes of the module. The mark awarded should be based on the completed work, e.g. if one of three equally weighted assessments was missed, then the mark awarded would be based on the two completed assessments equally weighted.

9.4.4 Where a student is prevented by illness or other cause from attending all or part of the final assessments for an award, the Board of Examiners may either:

- where sufficient evidence of achievement exists, recommend the award of the degree, Postgraduate Diploma, Postgraduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma or Graduate Certificate.
- where insufficient evidence of achievement exists, recommend that the student be provided with a further opportunity to complete the requirements for the qualification concerned.

Sufficient evidence of achievement would normally consist of the majority of assessed work, and evidence that the main learning outcomes of the programme have been achieved.

Appendix A

List of Documentation or Other Resources Referred to in the Protocols or Relevant:

1. University Postgraduate Regulations

http://www.ppd.bham.ac.uk/policy/regs/index.htm

2. University of Birmingham Codes of Practice

Monitoring and Informing Taught Postgraduate Students of their Academic Progress

http://www.ppd.bham.ac.uk/policy/cop/code2.htm

The External Examiner System for Undergraduate and Taught Masters Programmes

http://www.ppd.bham.ac.uk/policy/cop/code4.htm

Primary Appeals Procedures

http://www.ppd.bham.ac.uk/policy/cop/code6.htm

3. Guidance on the External Examiner System

http://www.ppd.bham.ac.uk/quality/extexam/ATCUO-guide.htm (Birmingham users only)

4. Guidelines on Plagiarism

http://www.ppd.bham.ac.uk/policy/cop/plag.htm

5. Guidelines on Mitigations

http://www.studserv.bham.ac.uk/mitigations.htm

6. Programme and Module Catalogue

http://www.ppd.bham.ac.uk/progmods/

7. Electronic Marks System

http://www.ems.bham.ac.uk/

8. Guidelines on the Use of Students in Teaching

http://www.ppd.bham.ac.uk/policy/cop/ugteach.htm

9. Guidelines on AP(E)L/WBL

http://www.ppd.bham.ac.uk/policy/cop/APELug.htm

http://www.ppd.bham.ac.uk/policy/cop/APELpg.htm

10. QAA Codes of Practice

http://www.qaa.ac.uk

11. Part Time Variants of Full Time Programmes

http://www.ppd.bham.ac.uk/policy/cop/ptvariant.htm

12. Submission of Assessed Work: Good Practice Guidelines for Students

http://www.ppd.bham.ac.uk/policy/cop/sub.htm

13. Examination Invigilation Arrangements

http://www.ppd.bham.ac.uk/policy/cop/invigilence.htm

14. Medical Certificates

http://www.studserv.bham.ac.uk/medical_cert.pdf