

## **Assessment Regulations & Policy for Postgraduate Programmes**

**2023 to 2024**

### **Scope and Applicability**

These assessment regulations apply to all taught postgraduate programmes, including any constituent pathways and modules, which lead to a University of Bolton award at levels 7 and 8 of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) published by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA).

The regulations apply to:

- a) Students whose programme of study commenced in 2015/16 or subsequent academic years; and
- b) Students whose programme of study commenced in previous academic years, but who have experienced an interruption to study or who failed to proceed to their next level of study.

For all students whose programme of study commenced before September 2018-19, progression decisions made on the previous academic session of 2017-18 shall stand. For all progression decisions made thereafter, these regulations shall be used.

### **Definitions**

The following definitions are used in these regulations:

**Academic year:** A defined period, normally lasting twelve months, in which the delivery of a level of study, or a portion thereof, is undertaken.

**Award:** Any formal qualification awarded by the University to an individual student which may be either an end qualification or an exit award

**Assessment Board:** A committee to agree final student marks, to determine progression and award of an exit award or end qualification as outlined in the Regulations for the Organisation and Conduct of Assessment Boards.

**Assessment component:** An assessment component is one of the assessment items on a module, from which the final mark/outcome for the module is derived. This process is commonly referred to as summative assessment. Formative assessments are those which do not count towards the formal outcome of the module and are not considered to be assessment components for the purpose of these regulations.

**End qualification:** The target qualification for which the student is enrolled or registered.

**Exit award:** The highest level of award which a student achieves who has not successfully completed the end qualification.

**Proceed:** where an undergraduate student without 120 credits at one academic level is, as a result of the decision of the Assessment Board, allowed to start to study at the next academic level.

**Programme of study:** A collection of modules grouped under a specific title, the details of which have been approved by Senate as leading to an appropriate end qualification and/or exit awards. A programme can also be known as a course.

**Progress:** Where an undergraduate student gains 120 credits at an academic level, is deemed to have completed that level of study and may start to study at the next academic level.

**PSRB:** A Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body. This includes, but is not limited to, accrediting bodies and statutory bodies that deal with legal requirements and immigration.

**Senate:** Any reference to Senate in these regulations shall be deemed to include a reference to any committee of Senate to which Senate has delegated the relevant authority.

**Stage:** an amount of academic study and credit that normally corresponds to an academic level as outlined in the Programme Specification.

## 1. Course Regulations

1.1 There shall be course regulations in a form approved and incorporated into the programme specification.

1.2 In course regulations, any deviation from, or modification to these Regulations in respect of any programme shall require the approval.

## 2. Modules

2.1 Throughout all postgraduate programmes one credit is associated with ten hours of notional learning time. The distribution of the total notional learning time for a module will be part of the module specification approved at the time of validation.

2.2 Normally, full time students will not be permitted to study with attendance for more than 75 credits in one semester, and part time students no more than 60 in an academic year, unless this has been approved by the relevant Programme Leader and Assessment Board.

2.3 Where a module is defined, atypically, as a pre-requisite module in the relevant programmes specification, students must normally pass such a module before being allowed to proceed to take any linked further module(s). Exceptions may be allowed at the discretion of the Assessment Board, on the advice of the tutor(s) for the linked further module(s).

2.4 Credit-bearing modules shall be designated as FHEQ Level 7 or Level 8 and sometimes Level 6 as defined in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ).

2.5 Modules may be designated as Core (compulsory) or Optional within a programme.

2.6 A student may normally only withdraw from a module within the first two weeks of the module commencing and with the approval of the module tutor and programme leader. A student will normally be required to take an alternate module for the appropriate number of credits and at the appropriate level of study, unless the student has withdrawn from the programme or suspended their studies. Withdrawal without permission and/or beyond this point without good reason will be recorded at an Assessment Board as a failure in the module (including any project or dissertation module).

### **3. Structure of University Awards**

**Note** that the credit requirements specified for each qualification below are always the minimum and that individual programmes leading to these qualifications may require a greater volume of credit than the specified minimum.

3.1 A programme of study leading to a Postgraduate Certificate shall consist of a minimum of 60 credits including a minimum of 40 credits at FHEQ Level 7 and a maximum of 20 credits at no lower than FHEQ Level 6.

3.2 A programme of study leading to a Postgraduate Diploma shall consist of a minimum of 120 credits including a minimum of 90 credits at FHEQ Level 7 and a maximum of 30 credits at no lower than FHEQ Level 6.

3.3 A programme of study leading to a Master's Degree shall consist of modules and a dissertation or project together worth a minimum of 180 credits including a minimum of 150 credits at FHEQ Level 7 and a maximum of 30 credits at no lower than FHEQ Level 6 and including a significant element of advanced independent study in the form of a dissertation or project worth between 30 and 60 credits at FHEQ Level 7.

3.4 A programme of study leading to an Advanced Diploma (of Continuing Professional Development) shall consist of credits as defined in the validated programme documentation the level of which shall be predominantly FHEQ Level 7.

3.5 A programme of study leading to a Postgraduate Continuing Professional Development Certificate shall consist of a minimum of 20 credits as defined in the validated programme documentation, the level of which shall be predominantly FHEQ Level 7.

3.6 A Programmes of study leading to a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) shall comprise the following minimum volumes of credit, all at FHEQ Level 7: PGCE 14+ 120.

## **4. Duration of study**

4.1 The normal planned duration of the Postgraduate Certificate programme is 15 weeks of full-time study (or its part-time equivalent).

4.2 The normal planned duration of the Master's Degree programme is 48 weeks of full-time study (or its part-time equivalent)

4.3 The normal planned duration of the Postgraduate Certificate in Education is 1 academic year of full-time study (or its part-time equivalent).

- i. The student's marks for each module; and that
- ii. The student has achieved the credits and any other requirements as defined in the validated programme documentation and can therefore be awarded the end qualification of a Postgraduate Continuing Professional Development Certificate; or iii. The student not be awarded the end qualification; and/or
- iv. The student be awarded an intermediate qualification and be deemed to have completed their studies; or
- v. The student not be awarded a qualification and be deemed to have completed their studies

## **5. Assessment**

5.1 Assessment Boards will accept the forms of assessment which are approved for the programmes and modules, and which are specified in the relevant programme and/or module specifications as approved by Senate.

5.2 The method of assessment for each module, including the weighting for each element of the assessment, shall be notified to students.

5.3 In exceptional circumstances, with the approval of the Chair of the relevant Assessment Board, an alternate form of assessment to that outlined in the approved programme documentation, which covers the same Learning Outcomes, may be approved for students with individual needs, where this is supported by appropriate

evidence and where such adjustments are deemed to be reasonable and can be made without endangering the safety of the award or unduly providing any student with an advantage or disadvantage.

5.4 The minimum mark for a pass in each module shall be 50%. Where a student satisfies the examiners in a module, s/he shall be awarded the appropriate credits at the specified level. This shall normally be calculated through a simple weighted mean of the assessment components, so long as an attempt has been made in each component. Where a PSRB, or other regulator(s), have different requirements which supersede the University norm, this shall be recorded in the relevant modules specification and notified to students.

5.5 A student who passes a module in which he/she has previously failed, shall be credited with the minimum mark for a pass at module level unless capping at the component level enables a better overall outcome for the student. This will not be the case where the assessment regulations for the programme explicitly specify otherwise.

5.6 A student shall normally be permitted one attempt to redeem unsatisfactory performance in a module. At the discretion of the Assessment Board, one further final attempt may be made to redeem unsatisfactory performance.

5.7 Normally, only Shockout/University of Bolton modules may be used to calculate the classification of an award. Where a student has previously obtained a university (of Bolton) exit award or end qualification, the marks for modules from that previous qualification cannot be used to calculate the classification of a further University [award] (of Bolton) end qualification, unless the student agrees to surrender their previous qualification to avoid double counting of module marks.

5.8 Where a programme of study includes one or more periods of industrial/professional training or periods of study/work experience either in the UK or abroad, the student's performance may also be assessed in these periods and may contribute to the final assessment. Such periods shall be detailed in the relevant programme specification.

5.9 A student who has been awarded credit in a module shall not be permitted to be reassessed in that module with a view to improving his/her mark.

5.10 If students (by reason of absence, non-submission of work, or poor performance) do not satisfy an Assessment Board in assessment components for any module(s) and it is established to the satisfaction of the Assessment Board via the University's Mitigating Circumstances Regulations and Procedures that this was due to proven illness or other circumstances found valid on production of evidence, then the Board shall use its discretion to ensure that the students are not disadvantaged or advantaged as a result.

## **Extensions**

5.11 In cases of illness or other extenuating circumstances, programme leaders (or equivalent) may allow assessments to be submitted late without penalty, following the submission of a completed extension form and relevant evidence. Such cases shall then be monitored by the Head of School or equivalent. The maximum extension to be granted under these circumstances is fourteen calendar days except for extensions for individual projects and artifacts which, at the discretion of the Programme Leader, may be longer than 14 days. Any request for an extension to a submission deadline must normally be made by the student, to the Module Tutor before the original submission date.

5.12 Requests for extensions for periods longer than 14 calendar days must be made using the University's Mitigating Circumstances Regulations and Procedures.

5.13 A Student who fails to submit assessment components by the prescribed date or the revised date as outlined in 7.11 and 7.12 shall be subject to the following penalties.

- Up to 7 calendar days late= 10 marks subtracted but if the assignment would normally gain a pass mark, then the final mark to be no lower than the pass mark for the assignment.
- More than 7 calendar days late = will be counted as non-submission and no marks will be recorded.

5.14 All assessed work should be submitted as specified in the Student Handbook, Module Guide or equivalent. Coursework not submitted will be recorded as unsatisfactory

5.15 Where assessments are graded Pass/Fail only, they will not be accepted beyond the deadline date for submission and will be recorded as a Fail. Students may request an extension to the original published deadline dates as described above.

## **Word limits**

5.16 Any relevant word limit for an assessment component shall be specified in the assessment brief. Students shall be informed in the programme handbook of any penalties to be applied if they exceed the specified word limit in a written assessment. This limit shall not include rubric associated with tables, figures, diagrams or appendices and reference lists at the end of the assessment but will include any direct quotations.

5.17 Where a word limit is specified for a written assessment, students shall include the number of words at the end of the assessment.

5.18 Students who exceed a specified word limit for a written assessment shall be subject to the following penalty system.

- Up to 10% over the specified word length = no penalty
- 10 – 20% over the specified indicative word length = 5 marks subtracted but if the assessment would normally gain a pass mark, then the final mark to be no lower than the pass mark for the assessment.
- More than 20% over the indicative word length = if the assessment would normally gain a pass mark, then the final mark to be the pass mark for the assessment.

## **6. Engagement**

6.1 Students shall normally attend the scheduled learning and teaching events for each module. In respect of students pursuing a programme of study that includes online learning, this shall include scheduled activities and interactions.

6.2 Students shall be required to submit and/or attend each assessment component at the dates and times prescribed. Failure to submit in an assessment component without good reason shall result in the student being deemed unsatisfactory in the particular assessment component and a mark of 0 will be recorded.

6.3 Attendance shall be recorded for all elements of a programme of study. Students with poor attendance shall be reported to the relevant personal tutor for action who will explore this in line with Shockout/University and/or PSRB policy. An Assessment Board shall normally consider the quality of a student's engagement with their studies when considering whether to allow an additional final attempt to redeem unsatisfactory performance.

6.4 Students who fail to give formal notice in writing of their intention to withdraw from their programme or its elements and who do not complete assessments will normally be deemed to have failed the programme or its specific elements.

6.5 Students must formally request permission from their Head of School/ Centre Operational Lead in writing if they wish temporarily to suspend their studies.

## **7. Determination of results and action to be taken**

7.1 The relevant Assessment Board shall determine for a Master's Degree:

- i. The student's marks for each module; and that
- ii. The student has achieved at least 180 credits consisting of modules and a dissertation or project and of which a minimum of 150 credits are at FHEQ Level 7 and a maximum of 30 credits are at FHEQ Level 6, and any other requirements as defined in the validated programme documentation, and can

therefore be awarded the end qualification of a Master's Degree and with what classification if any; or

iii. The student not be awarded the end qualification; and/or

iv. The student be awarded an intermediate qualification and be deemed to have completed their studies; or

v. The student not be awarded a qualification and be deemed to have completed their studies.

7.2 The relevant Assessment Board shall determine for a Postgraduate Certificate in Education:

i. The student's marks for each module; and that

ii. The student has achieved the credits and any other requirements as defined in the validated programme documentation and can therefore be awarded the end qualification of a Postgraduate Continuing Professional Development Certificate; or viii. The student not be awarded the end qualification; and/or

iii. The student be awarded an intermediate qualification and be deemed to have completed their studies; or

iv. The student not be awarded a qualification and be deemed to have completed their studies.

7.3 A student shall only be permitted to continue to pursue a programme of study provided that it remains possible for him/her to complete the programme within the approved time-limit. In addition:

i. A student who has failed one or more modules within a programme may be offered a second, final attempt. If the student fails to satisfy the examiners, then the student shall be deemed to have failed and finished the programme.

7.4 The relevant Assessment Board shall determine whether a student who has not been recommended for the award of the end qualifications and is not deemed to have completed their studies be required either to: repeat the year with part time attendance or reassessment only, in which case the student will retain the credits for each passed module and retrieve each failed module by undertaking one of the following:

a. Re-assessment in the failed module(s) at the next opportunity (a 'refer' decision); or 12

b. Re-assessment in the failed module(s) without attendance on the module(s) during the following session (a 'refer' decision); or



c. Re-assessment in the failed module(s) with attendance on the module(s) during the following session (a 'repeat' decision).

7.5 The relevant Assessment Board shall determine whether a student who:

- i. has not been permitted to progress or proceed; or
- ii. has not been recommended for the award of the end qualification and is not deemed to have completed their studies;
- iii. be required either to: repeat the year with part time attendance, or reassessment only, in which case the student will retain the credits for each passed module and retrieve each failed module by undertaking one of the following:
  - a. re-assessment in the failed module(s) with attendance on the module(s) during the following session (a 'repeat' decision).
  - b. re-assessment in the failed module(s) without attendance at the next opportunity (a 'refer' decision); or
  - c. re-assessment in the failed module(s) without attendance on the module(s) during the following session (a 'refer' decision);

7.6 An Assessment Board may decide that a student's profile of module results may be amended by the following process:

### **Compensation:**

To decide that satisfactory overall performance can be used to compensate for unsatisfactory performance in a module with an aggregate mark normally no lower than 35 percent, the following shall apply. The mark is not adjusted and a pass is recorded and credit awarded, with a note that the instance of unsatisfactory performance has been compensated. This is at the discretion of the Assessment Board and will not be utilised where PSRB requirements deem that this may not be used. Compensation can apply to a maximum of modules worth, normally, one quarter of the total credits constituting a particular Stage of a student's programme of study. Where a PSRB, or other regulator(s), have different requirements which supersede this, compensation may not be used or the use of compensation may be adapted accordingly.

Course regulations may specify modules to which the provisions of 8.6 shall not apply.

## **8. Structure and content of re-assessments**

8.1 Where a student is required to be re-assessed in one or more assessment components, the re-assessment shall be of the same structure as the assessment at the time of the initial failure, unless:

- i. an alternate form of re-assessment has been approved for the purpose in which case this shall be stated in the relevant module specification and/or Module Guide; or
- ii. the relevant Assessment Board decides that this is not practical.

Re-assessments shall be based upon the same syllabus as the original assessment.

8.2 For re-assessment beyond one year of the initial failure, where the structure of the assessment is different from that at the time of the initial failure and/or the re-assessment is to be based upon a different syllabus, the Head of School concerned shall make arrangements for the student to be: i. Informed of changes in the structure of the assessment and the syllabus content; and ii. Offered, for an appropriate fee, the opportunity of attending relevant classes.

## **9. Award**

9.1 Students will only be eligible for any particular end qualification or exit award defined below if it is defined as available within the programme specification for the programme of study; each end qualification or exit award will only be issued under the circumstances defined in the Regulations and Procedures for the Conferment of University awards.

9.2 To qualify for an end qualification or exit award, a candidate must:

- i. have enrolled with the University before proceeding to the prescribed programme of study; and
- ii. have paid all prescribed fees and charges; and
- iii. in accordance with this policy have satisfactorily completed a full-time or part-time programme of study, within the maximum period of time defined above.

9.3 A student who has satisfied the examiners in at least 60 credits at FHEQ Level 7 or higher, in accordance with 3.1 above, and in any other requirements as defined in the validated programme documentation, shall be eligible for the award of a Postgraduate Certificate which is an unclassified award.

9.4 A student who has satisfied the examiners in at least 120 credits at FHEQ Level 7 or higher, in accordance with 3.2 above, and in any other requirements as defined in the validated programme documentation, shall be eligible for the award of a Postgraduate Diploma which is an unclassified award.

9.5 A student who has satisfied the examiners in at least 180 credits at FHEQ Level 7 or higher, in accordance with 3.3 above, and in any other requirements as defined in the validated programme documentation, shall, where he or she satisfies the requirements of the classification scheme as approved by Senate (cf. 11. below) be recommended to Senate for the award of a Master’s Degree.

9.6 A student who has satisfied the examiners in at least the specified credits, and in any other requirements as defined in the validated programme documentation, shall be eligible for the award of a Postgraduate Certificate in Education.

9.7 Students who register for certain end qualifications may be required by the course regulations to satisfy the Assessment Board in all those modules identified as requirements for the purposes of professional exemption.

9.13 Unless otherwise agreed by Senate in respect of specific courses, no student may receive more than one award for study on a course.

## 10. Classification

10.1 The following scheme shall be used for the classification of Master’s Degrees and Postgraduate Certificates in Education, where the criteria for the mark bands are derived from those in the University’s General Assessment Guidelines for postgraduate level assessments:

Grade	Mark
Distinction	70%-100%
Merit	60%-69%
Pass	40%-59%

Where the average falls into one of the following bands: 58.00- 59.49 or 68.00-69.49; and a student has achieved marks clearly in a classification category higher than their average for 50% or more of the awarded credit, then they shall be awarded a qualification in the classification category one higher than that indicated by their average.

Where the average falls into one of the following bands: 59.50- 59.99 or 69.50- 69.99 then a student shall automatically be awarded a degree in the classification category one higher than that indicated by their average.

The exit awards of Postgraduate Certificate and Postgraduate Diploma shall not be graded unless Senate agrees otherwise for any specific programme.

## **11. Equality Impact Assessment**

Shockout and its awarding partner the University of Bolton is committed to the promotion of equality, diversity and a supportive environment for all members of our community. Our commitment to equality and diversity means that this policy has been screened in relation to the 16 uses of plain English, the promotion of the positive duty in relation to race, gender and disability and avoidance of discrimination to other equality groups related to age, sexual orientation, religion or belief or gender reassignment.