The University of Cumbria’s Approach to Teaching, Learning and Assessment as a Result of COVID-19 and Emergency Regulations

The period we have now entered will be one of turbulence, uncertainty and challenge with respect to delivering our academic portfolio. However, the University’s aim regarding the operation of our academic portfolio, as far as is practicable, is to ensure students are able to complete their studies and assessments for the 2019/20 academic year without disadvantage, with progression and award decisions made broadly in line with our original timeframe. Our approach adheres to the OfS expectations in that ‘providers should make all reasonable efforts to enable students to complete their studies, for achievement to be reliably assessed, for qualifications to be awarded securely’.

Further guidance received from the OfS on April 3rd has been closely cross-checked with these provisions to confirm that the University is compliant with OfS expectations in terms of student opportunity and the maintenance of standards.

The University’s overarching principle is to allow students to continue with their learning and assessment through a series of enabling actions, as outlined below, and by the approval of a set of Emergency Regulations, which ensure students are not disadvantaged in terms of progression and award decisions as a result of the current situation.

- To enable students to complete the year, we have transferred the remaining teaching and learning activity for March 23rd – June 30th 2019/20 online. Students’ academic work is supported by their Personal Tutors, module tutors and programme leaders. We have maintained student access to study skills provision through Skills@Cumbria, and to the pastoral care offered by our Student Support services. Academic staff are actively monitoring student engagement and following up to contact and support those students whose engagement is low, inconsistent, or entirely lacking. The University is lending laptops and dongles for internet access to those students who do not have the necessary equipment for online study at home.

- We seek to enable students at all levels of study (3 – 7) to continue to assessment where possible, and to support them with latitude in relation to extensions to assessment deadlines and Extenuating Circumstances. Both these processes have been revised to increase the eligible criteria and to reduce the requirements for evidence, in response to the exceptional pressures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. These provisions are made to support students to do their best work in what many will find to be difficult circumstances.

- Where students are not able to continue studying and/or need to delay assessments for a longer period, we will use the Extenuating Circumstances process to permit additional deferral of submission.

- All remaining assessments for April, May and June 2020 have been reviewed within the Institutes and adjusted where necessary to eliminate the need for attendance on campus. Adjustments include changes to the format or deadline dates of some coursework, and the conversion of formal scheduled examinations to other types of assessment, which can be completed online. Examinations have been replaced, as appropriate to the learning
outcomes, with such alternatives as written coursework, time-limited tasks, and online tests. All changes to assessment have been overseen by the DVC Academic’s Teaching, Assessment and Income Planning Group, with input from the Directors of Institutes, the Directors of AQD and SAAS, and the Dean for Student Success. All changes to assessment have been reviewed and signed off by Institute Directors (or nominee) as part of the changes to managing minor modifications.

Emergency Academic Regulations

The Assessment Boards for the 2019/20 year, including boards in October and November 2020, will work with a modified set of regulations (the “Emergency Academic Regulations”) to take account of the exceptional circumstances affecting student achievement, and to prepare us to operate robustly in the event of significant disruption to marking, internal moderation, and external moderation of student assignments.

Our Extenuating Circumstances process includes provision for action to be taken to adjust module outcomes for a whole cohort when exceptional circumstances have had a significant negative effect on the students’ achievement. Assessment Boards will be reminded of this existing provision; any proposed changes arising from its being invoked will be referred to the DVC Academic’s COVID-19 Regulations Group for consideration and approval prior to the Board meeting.

There are two main areas of focus in terms of ensuring fairness for students: facilitating progression, and awards profiling.

Facilitating Progression:

- The rules on compensation (formerly called condonement) for Levels 3 - 6 have been revised so that a module may be compensated on a mark of 30% - 39% (the normal minimum mark for compensation is 35%).
- At Levels 3 and 4, up to 60 credits may be compensated (the standard limit is 40 credits).
- At Level 5, up to 40 credits may be compensated (the standard limit is 20 credits).
- At Level 6, the lower marks threshold of 30% applies and there is no change to the maximum permissible compensation, at 20 credits.
- The rules on compensation (formerly called condonement) for Level 7 have been revised so that a module may be compensated on a mark of 40% - 49% (the normal minimum mark for compensation is 45%).
- The rules on reassessment at Levels 3 – 7 have been revised so that the Board may grant an additional reassessment opportunity if this is needed to enable a student to progress.
- Level 3 and Level 4 students who have not submitted all assignments (including outstanding reassessments from a previous semester), and who are therefore not eligible for compensation, will be permitted to progress to the next year of study with up to 40 credits of deferred assessment or reassessment to complete (normally the limit on reassessment is 20 credits).
• Level 5 students will be permitted to progress to Level 6 with up to 40 credits of deferred assessment or reassessment to complete (normally the limit on reassessment is 20 credits).

Awards Profiling:

• For undergraduate students graduating in 2019/20, where Extenuating Circumstances are present, there is scope to award a grade for one 20-credit module where assessment is incomplete (and where another summative assessment task on the module has been passed) and thus prevent delaying graduation.
• Students graduating with Bachelors degrees in 2019/20 will be awarded the better of two profiles (the Level 6 modules taken in the January – June 2020 semester disrupted by the pandemic may be excluded from the calculation if its inclusion disadvantages the student).
• Students graduating with Bachelors degrees in 2020/21 will be awarded the better of two profiles, one including their Level 5 modules (achieved in 2019/20) as per the standard regulations, and the other excluding Level 5 and calculated on Level 6 credit only.
• Students graduating in 2019/20 on a target Level 5 qualification (Foundation degree or HND) will be awarded the better of two profiles, whereby the Level 5 modules taken in the January – June 2020 semester may be excluded from the calculation if their inclusion disadvantages the student.
• Students graduating in 2020/21 on a target Level 5 qualification (Foundation Degree or HND) will be awarded the better of two profiles, whereby the Level 4 modules (achieved in 2019/20) may be excluded from the calculation if their inclusion disadvantages the student.
• Students graduating in 2019/20 or 2020/21 with a classified Level 7 qualification (Masters degrees) will be awarded the better of two profiles, whereby the taught modules taken in the January – June 2020 semester may be excluded from the calculation if their inclusion disadvantages the student. Masters dissertations will always be included in the classification and the Extenuating Circumstances process may be used where a student believes their performance on the dissertation or project was adversely affected by the COVID-19 emergency.
• Students graduating in later years with profiles including credit from the period January – June 2020, where that credit is included in the normal method of classification for the award, will have the same opportunity to have that credit discounted in profiling if its inclusion disadvantages the student.

The emergency regulations also make provision for the operation of Boards in a time of disruption:

• Quoracy rules are revised so that Boards can operate without requiring the presence of programme staff. The Chair may elect to invite a representative subset of other Board members drawn from normal membership of the Board.
• Board rules are revised so that Boards will not meet in person and may run either by live videoconference or asynchronously, by correspondence.
• Provision is made for marks, which have not been moderated internally, and/or externally to be reported to the Module Assessment Board, subject to the approval of the DVC Academic (or nominee).

• A specific regulation permitting the exercise of general discretion, requiring approval by the DVC Academic (or nominee), is included. This permits action to create fair outcomes for students in scenarios not anticipated in the Emergency Academic Regulations.

• Rules are in place to protect students’ ability to progress in the event that submitted work has not been marked in time for the Board.
Emergency Academic Regulations (COVID-19)

The Academic Regulations for Taught Programmes enable the provision of Emergency Academic Regulations where the University, because of exceptional circumstances beyond its reasonable control, is unable to apply the Academic Regulations as approved for an academic year. The Emergency Academic Regulations, and the period for which they will apply, are approved by Academic Board.

These Emergency Regulations have been developed in response to the 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic, and the impact on teaching, student support and assessment.

These Emergency Academic Regulations set out the modifications to and/or general exceptions from the approved Academic Regulations (old and new Regulations, and relevant Procedures and Processes) which shall apply to all taught students. The Emergency Academic Regulations are approved for a period of nine months in the first instance. The application of these regulations, or elements thereof, may extend beyond this time, as determined by Academic Board.

These regulations apply to all students on taught programmes. Requirements of Professional and Statutory Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) and Apprenticeships may oblige the University to apply these provisions in a modified way to meet external regulatory requirements.

The provisions set out in this document are intended to enable the University to continue to deliver teaching, learning and assessment and, as far as possible, enable students to progress through their programmes or achieve their intended award whilst preserving academic quality and standards.

The implementation of Emergency Academic Regulations approved by Academic Board shall not constitute a failure to apply correctly the relevant approved Academic Regulations and shall therefore not of itself provide valid grounds for an academic appeal against a decision of an Assessment Board.

1. Changes to Assessment

(Change to Minor Modification Process as set out in Procedures and Processes for Approval of Credit Bearing Provision)

Where the operation of the approved type of module assessment is not possible, approval of alternative assessment types (different to those set out in validation documentation) may be approved by the Director of Institute, rather than through the Minor Modifications Panel. In all such instances, the alternative assessment type must enable achievement of the specified module learning outcomes to be assessed. In agreeing alternative assessments, consideration will be given to how moderation activity can take place. Alternatives to the validated types of assessment must be notified to External Examiners and approved by (or reported to) PSRBs, where required. Directors of Institutes may also approve changes to Module assessment deadlines at cohort level.

Directors of Institutes are responsible for ensuring that a log of all approved changes to assessment (including changes to module deadline dates at cohort level) is maintained and accessible for consideration during assessment, complaints and appeals processes.
2. Marking and Moderation

*(Change to Regulation F11.7 and Change to Assessment Procedures and Processes)*

It is expected that the majority of marking, internal moderation (including blind double marking) and external moderation can continue as normal, these being activities that can be undertaken remotely.

Normal sampling for moderation should be attempted. In specific instances, where it is not possible to complete internal moderation (including reasons of staff absences and/or the nature of assessment), with the prior approval of the DVC Academic (or nominee), unmoderated marks may be presented to the Module Assessment Board for consideration and ratification.

In specific instances, where it is not possible to complete external moderation (including reasons of absence of the External Examiner), unmoderated marks may be presented to the Module Assessment Board for consideration and ratification. This is permissible only where there can be confidence in the standards of marking and moderation (evidenced through previous External Examiner reports) and with the prior approval of the DVC Academic (or nominee).

3. Operation of Assessment Boards

*(Change to Academic Regulations and Assessment Procedures and Processes)*

Normal requirements for quoracy at Assessment Boards will be waived. To proceed, Assessment Boards must comprise as a minimum a Chair, an External Examiner and Secretary. The Chair may elect to invite a representative subset of other Board members drawn from normal membership of the Board.

Assessment Boards will not meet in person. The Board may operate synchronously or asynchronously (with the External Examiner(s) providing ratification with comments reported, and being invited to confirm decisions after the meeting) and will have due regard to any recommendations provided by academic, administrative and student support teams.

In the event of a scheduled Board being unable to proceed, it will be rescheduled to the next available opportunity.

4. Assessment for Progression: Undergraduate study

*(Change to Academic Regulations on Compensation/Condonement, Progression and Reassessment)*
Note: Where these Emergency Regulations use the term compensation, this extends to compensation (new regulations from September 2018) and condonement (applying to continuing students who elected to stay on the old regulations for the duration of their programme).

Progression at Level 3 and Level 4

In a variation to the Academic Regulations, compensation limits will be extended from 40 to 60 credits and compensation may be applied where the mark achieved for the module is above 30% (normally 35%)

In a variation to the Academic Regulations, a student may exceptionally progress to Level 4 with up to 40 credits of outstanding assessment (due to deferred assessment) or reassessment where the UAB considers that combined with ongoing study, this presents a manageable workload and the student is adequately prepared for study at the next level. The remaining credits at Level 3 must be completed successfully before commencing any study at Level 5.

In a variation to the Academic Regulations, a student may exceptionally progress to Level 5 with up to 40 credits of outstanding assessment or reassessment where the UAB considers that combined with ongoing study, this presents a manageable workload and the student is adequately prepared for study at the next level. The remaining credits at Level 4 must be completed successfully before commencing any study at Level 6.

In a variation to the Academic Regulations, students may be permitted an additional reassessment opportunity (a second reassessment for those on Version 1 Regulations or a third reassessment for those on Version 2). Exhaustion of reassessment opportunities would then allow students on either Version 1 or Version 2 Regulations to apply to retake one or more modules, using the process in the Version 1 Regulations.

In the exceptional situation of student work having been submitted but, after exhausting all reasonable alternatives, marking of the work has not been completed, a student may progress to the next level. The above regulations will apply once the marking has been completed and the student may be required to retrieve failure(s) of assessment within the next level of study.

Progression at Level 5

In a variation to the Academic Regulations, compensation limits will be extended from 20 to 40 credits and compensation may be applied where the mark achieved for the module is above 30%.

In a variation to the Academic Regulations, a student may exceptionally progress to Level 6 with up to 40 credits of outstanding assessment (due to deferred assessment) or reassessment where the UAB considers that combined with ongoing study, this presents a manageable workload and the student is adequately prepared for study at the next level.

In a variation to the Academic Regulations, students may be permitted an additional reassessment opportunity (a second reassessment for those on Version 1 Regulations or a third reassessment for those on Version 2). Exhaustion of reassessment opportunities would then allow students on either...
Version 1 or Version 2 Regulations to apply to retake one or more modules, using the process in the Version 1 Regulations.

In the exceptional situation of student work having been submitted but, after exhausting all reasonable alternatives, marking of the work has not been completed, a student may progress to Level 6. The above regulations will apply once the marking has been completed and the student may be required to retrieve failure(s) of assessment within the next level of study.

**Progression at Level 6**

In a variation to the Academic Regulations, students may be permitted an additional reassessment opportunity (a second reassessment for those on Version 1 Regulations or a third reassessment for those on Version 2). Exhaustion of reassessment opportunities would then allow students on either Version 1 or Version 2 Regulations to apply to retake one or more modules, using the process in the Version 1 Regulations.

The application of all decisions on compensation and progression carrying failure may be constrained by Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body requirements. Programme Leaders will discuss these provisions with the relevant PSRB and inform the Chair of the Board of any constraints to the application of the Emergency Regulations prior to the Board meeting.

**5. Assessment for Award: Undergraduate study**

**New Regulation**

For students at the award stage of their programme, Boards will have the discretion to determine a final module assessment outcome for up to 1 x 20 credit module where there are multiple items of summative assessment required in the module but one of the assessment items is missing, either due to non-submission (having notified the University of Extenuating Circumstances in relation to the module) or not having been marked. In such instances, the confirmed module mark will be that which was awarded for the other assessment item(s) completed on the module, and the award will be offered on that basis. Students will have the option of accepting this module mark or deferring their award subject to confirmation of the mark for the missing assessment item. If the student takes the latter option, the higher mark will be awarded.

In cases where there are marks outstanding for an individual student beyond the volume described above, Chair’s Action will be taken to ensure that the student’s award is conferred as soon as possible after confirmation of outstanding results. If five or more students are to be awarded by Chair’s Action due to the late marking of one or a group of modules, a special Assessment Board will be convened as soon as possible after the marks become available.

**Variation to Regulation**

Normal compensation limits will apply at Level 6. In a variation to the Academic Regulations, compensation may be applied where the mark achieved for the module is above 30%.
Undergraduate Degree Classification

(Change to Academic Regulations on Degree Classifications H3.6.3)

Bachelor Degrees

In a variation to the Academic Regulations related to the weighted mean, final profiles for Level 6 students in 2019/20 will be calculated in both of the following ways and the calculation applied will be that which best advantages the student:

a) A weighted mean for Level 6 and Level 5 study in the ratio of 70:30 (existing method)
b) A weighted mean for Level 5 study and Level 6 study excluding January – June 2020 modules, in the ratio of 30/70

For Level 5 students graduating in 2020/21, final profiles will be calculated in both of the following ways and the calculation applied will be that which best advantages the student:

a) A weighted mean for Level 6 and Level 5 study in the ratio of 70:30 (existing method)
b) A mean of Level 6 study

For students on top-up degrees, graduating in 2019/20, final profiles will be calculated in both of the following ways and the calculation applied will be that which best advantages the student:

a) The mean mark of the marks for all modules undertaken (existing method)
b) The mean mark of the marks for all modules undertaken, excluding January – June 2020 modules

Foundation Degree / Target DipHE (H3.8)

In a variation to the Academic Regulations related to the weighted mean, final profiles for Level 5 students in 2019/20 will be calculated in both of the following ways and the calculation applied will be that which best advantages the student:

a) A weighted mean for Level 5 and Level 4 study in the ratio of 70:30 (existing method)
b) A weighted mean for Level 4 study and Level 5 study excluding January – June 2020 modules, in the ratio of 30/70

For Level 4 students graduating in 2020/21, final profiles will be calculated in both of the following ways and the calculation applied will be that which best advantages the student:

a) A weighted mean for Level 5 and Level 4 study in the ratio of 70:30 (existing method)
b) A mean of Level 5 study

Students may have taken Year-long modules in 2019/20 and found that part of one or more modules has been disrupted in the January-June 2020 period. In this case, the Board will apply the two methods of calculation above, creating the (b) profile by using an aggregate of the summative
assessment marks on the year-long module(s) achieved before 1st February, 2020 and excluding summative marks achieved after 2nd February, 2020.

Students graduating in later years with profiles including credit from the period January – June 2020, where that credit is included in the normal method of classification for the award, will have the same opportunity to have that credit discounted in profiling if its inclusion disadvantages the student.

Assessment Boards will give due consideration to the long-term best interests of the student in applying award decisions.

The application of all decisions in relation to compensation, progression and award will be governed by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body regulations, as required. (Programme Leaders will discuss with the relevant PSRB and inform the Chair of the Board of any constraints to the application of the Emergency Regulations prior to the Board meeting.

6. Postgraduate (Level 7) Progression and Award

In a variation to the Academic Regulations, failed credit may be considered for compensation with a minimum module mark of 40% (normally 45%).

The limit of credit that may be compensated for each award will be as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postgraduate Certificate</th>
<th>20 credits may be compensated (no compensation normally allowed)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate Diploma</td>
<td>20 credits may be compensated (no change - up to 20 credits normally allowed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters (inc MBA &amp; LLM)</td>
<td>20 credits may be compensated (no change - up to 20 credits normally allowed)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: the limits are for the whole award and not for stage of study, on the basis of the target award for which the student is registered at the time compensation is considered.

In a variation to the Academic Regulations, students may be permitted an additional reassessment opportunity if this supports progression and completion of the award.

Classification of Masters Degrees

In a variation to the Academic Regulations final profiles for Masters students will be calculated in both of the following ways and the calculation applied will be that which best advantages the student:

a) Mean of all the contributing modules (existing method)

b) Mean of all the contributing modules excluding taught modules in the January – June 2020 Semester

Where a dissertation or final project is part of a Masters degree, the mark for that module will be included in both calculations above. A student who believes their performance on the dissertation or project has been adversely affected by the COVID-19 emergency should lodge a claim for Extenuating Circumstances (EC) specifically in relation to that module.
The application of all decisions in relation to compensation, progression and award at Postgraduate level will be governed by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body regulations, as required. (Programme Leaders will discuss with the relevant PSRB and inform the Chair of the Board of any constraints to the application of the Emergency Regulations prior to the Board meeting.

7. Extraordinary Discretion

(New Regulation)

Exceptionally, a University Assessment Board Chair may recommend to the DVC Academic (or nominee) a course of action in respect of progression or award outside these regulations. Such discretion is applied highly exceptionally and only to prevent an unfair outcome for a student or group of students in the circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic.

8. Extensions

(Change to reporting process)

Normal extension procedures for individual students will apply, with extensions of up to 10 working days allowed and by exception longer, providing that the revised deadline enables the resulting mark to be reported to the appropriate Module Assessment Board. All approved extensions for individual students must be reported to the Assessment Team by email.

Students studying as Apprentices must have extensions granted in such a way that there is no break in their engagement with learning. This may restrict the use of long extensions to deadlines.

9. Late Submission

(Change to Regulations)

In accordance with the existing Academic Regulations, work submitted without an agreed extension and beyond the submission date but within 3 working days (i.e. excluding weekends, public holidays and periods of University closure only) will be accepted as an unauthorised late submission but, in a variation to the current regulations, the mark will not be capped and this regulation will also apply to reassessment.

10. Malpractice panels

(Change to Procedures and Processes)

Where it is not possible, for operational reasons, to convene a full malpractice panel to make decisions in a timely way, allegations of malpractice may be considered by a smaller panel of one member of Assessment Team and one senior academic member of staff (with the proviso that no member of academic staff adjudicates allegations from their own institute in this scenario).

11. Extenuating Circumstances
(Change to Procedures and Processes)

Extenuating Circumstances will continue to be operated and considered in accordance with normal University Procedures but:

- where the nature of the Extenuating Circumstances relates to disruption or ill health arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and its wider impact, there will be no requirement for evidence. This extends to allowing students to claim ECs for ill health not related to COVID-19 without a doctor’s letter, to reduce any avoidable demands on the NHS at this time.
- the criteria for Extenuating Circumstances will be extended to include a wider range of issues as grounds for consideration.

Additionally, Extenuating Circumstances affecting groups of students will continue to be operated but:

- where the nature of the extenuating circumstance relates to disruption or impact arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, recommendations must be submitted to the COVID-19 Regulations Group, which will be chaired by the DVC Academic (or nominee).
- the decision of the COVID-19 Regulations Group will be reported to the Assessment Board that will implement action across the cohort.

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1 OfS Guidance Letter 26/3/20