

## University of York

### Graduate Modular Scheme: <sup>1</sup> Framework for Programme Design and the Rules of Assessment and Award

#### A. INTRODUCTION

- A.1 This document sets out the award and module requirements, and the rules relating to assessment under the graduate modular scheme. **It applies to all graduate programmes commencing in or after academic year 2012/13.** <sup>2</sup>
- A.2 A revised programme specification template is being developed which will provide additional guidance and prompts to programme designers, as well as providing clear statements for students about a programme's structure and intended learning outcomes.
- A.3 Underlined terms are defined in **Appendix I**.

#### B. OVERVIEW OF THE MODULAR SCHEME

- B.1 The University operates a modular scheme for taught programmes. The modular scheme requires academic programmes to comprise of modules, which are allocated a certain credit value based on notional student workload, and are assigned to levels based on their academic content and outcomes. To be eligible for an award of the University of York a student must undertake an approved programme of study, obtain a specified number of credits (at a specified level(s)), and meet any other requirements of the award as specified in the Award Regulations, programme specifications, and other University regulations (e.g. payment of fees). Credit will be awarded upon passing a module's assessment(s). Some credit may be awarded where failure has been compensated by achievement in other modules. Some opportunities for reassessment are available.
- B.2 Exceptions to the Award Regulations are permitted to meet non-negotiable requirements of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs). Exceptions require University Teaching Committee approval.
- B.3 Individual student cases of mitigating circumstances are dealt with by the appropriate departmental and University committees.

#### C. AWARD REQUIREMENTS

- C.1 A Graduate Certificate/Graduate Diploma will only be awarded on the basis of credits accumulated as part of an approved programme of study. However, a student who does not achieve the requirements for their intended award (including where they leave a programme early) may be eligible for a lower volume award, provided that they have met the requirements. Such awards will usually be generic University awards (for example, Graduate Certificate) and

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<sup>1</sup> Graduate programmes (Graduate Certificates and Graduate Diplomas) are those usually undertaken by students who have completed a Bachelors degree but wish to pursue further studies that are not necessarily at a higher level (i.e. the programmes are at Honours level (like a Bachelors) not Masters level (like a Masters or Postgraduate Certificate or Diploma)).

<sup>2</sup> The long lead in time is due to the links between many graduate programmes and year/stage 3 of undergraduate programmes. The undergraduate modular scheme was implemented in full for year/stage 1 from 2010/11. If a department wishes to introduce the graduate scheme before 2012/13 they should contact the Academic Support Office.

will only be recorded as having been passed.<sup>3</sup> See the University's [Generic qualification descriptors for early exit awards](#)

C.2 The University award requirements are:

Table 1

Award	Credit volume	Min credit at, at least, the level of the award (i.e. level -6 (H))	Max credits at lower levels
Graduate Diploma	120	100	Max 20 credits at levels-3 to 5 (I)
Graduate Certificate	60	40	Max 20 credits at levels-3 to 5 (I)

C.3 Where there are good pedagogic arguments, graduate programmes may exceptionally include a maximum of 20 credits-worth of level-7 (M) modules. The use of level-7 (M) credit must be approved by University Teaching Committee and will be recorded by the University and departments.

C.4 See the University's guidance on [credit level descriptors](#).

## D. MODULE REQUIREMENTS AND MARKING SCHEMES

### Module assessments and marks

D.1 Every module should be summatively assessed in order to obtain an indication of a student's success in meeting the assessment criteria used to gauge the intended learning outcomes of a module or programme.

D.2 Each module should carry one numerical mark on the relevant University mark scale, unless the module is designated as pass/fail (see below).

D.3 The University mark scale applied at graduate level is as follows:

Distinguished performance	70-100
Good performance	50-69
Satisfactory performance	40-49
Fail	0-39 <sup>4</sup>

D.4 Standards of attainment on the graduate mark scale should notionally be equivalent to those of undergraduate awards.

D.5 Any Masters-level modules taken as part of a graduate programme are subject to the taught postgraduate mark scale (pass mark is 50).

D.6 Modules may only be marked on a pass/fail basis with the permission of University Teaching Committee. Approval of such modules will only be granted where there is a clear and convincing rationale for this approach (for example, competency based modules in professional/vocational subjects). Such modules cannot be compensated.

D.7 Departments should give thought to the possibility of designating some modules in Graduate Certificates as non-compensatable,<sup>5</sup> given their small credit volume, to ensure that it is not

<sup>3</sup> Where departments wish to introduce specific, named exit points (for example, Graduate Certificate *in Geography*) programme learning outcomes must be specified.

<sup>4</sup> Module marks of 0-29 are 'outright fails'. Module marks of 30-39 are potentially compensatable (see Section E).

<sup>5</sup> Departments should note that, in any case, pass/fail modules are non-compensatable by definition.

possible for Graduate Certificates to be awarded to students who have achieved failing marks in key components of the discipline reflected in the intended outcomes for the award. The risks related to such modules, and possible alternatives must be fully considered (see [Undergraduate Modular Scheme: Framework for Programme Design](#), Appendix VIII). The use of non-compensatable modules must be approved by University Teaching Committee and will be recorded by the University and departments.

- D.8 Final penalties arising from academic misconduct are subtracted at the point of award; it is recognised that a student may meet the award requirements but nonetheless fail the award for this reason.

#### **Assessment periods**

- D.9 For graduate programmes that follow the same timeline as stage/year 3 of undergraduate programmes, the University has adopted a principal model for assessment periods.
- D.10 Further information (including frequently asked questions) relating to common assessment periods is available in the [Undergraduate Modular Scheme: Framework for Programme Design](#)

#### **Permitted module sizes and shapes**

- D.11 The permitted module sizes and shapes for graduate programmes are the same as those permitted for stage 3 of undergraduate programmes (see [Undergraduate Modular Scheme: Framework for Programme Design](#)).

### **E. COMPENSATION AND REASSESSMENT**

#### **Compensation**

- E.1 In defined circumstances credit may be awarded for failed module(s) where the failure is compensated by achievement in other module(s).

##### *Compensation in Graduate Certificates*

- E.2 If a student fails one or more modules s/he may still receive the credit provided that:
- s/he has failed no more than 20 credits, and
  - no module marks fall below the threshold for compensation appropriate for its level,<sup>6</sup> and
  - the rounded credit-weighted mean over all modules taken in the programme (including the failed modules) is at least 40.

##### *Compensation in Graduate Diplomas*

- E.3 If a student fails one or more modules s/he may still receive the credit provided that:
- s/he has failed no more than 40 credits, and
  - no module mark falls below the threshold for compensation appropriate for its level,<sup>7</sup> and
  - the rounded credit-weighted mean over all modules taken in the programme (including the failed modules) is at least 40.

#### **Reassessment**

- E.4 Reassessment is an opportunity for students to redeem failure for the award of credit to meet award requirements.

##### *Reassessment in Graduate Certificates*

- E.5 Where a student fails taught modules and the award requirements cannot be met by application of the compensation rules, the student is entitled to reassessment in a maximum of 20 credits-worth of failed modules provided that they have failed no more than 20 credits. *[further clarification to follow. Sept 2011]*

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<sup>6</sup> For level-6 (H) modules, the threshold for compensation is 30. For level-7 (M) modules, the threshold is 40.

<sup>7</sup> For level-6 (H) modules, the threshold for compensation is 30. For level-7 (M) modules, the threshold is 40.

#### *Reassessment in Graduate Diplomas*

- E.6 Where a student fails modules and the award requirements cannot be met by application of the compensation rules, the student is entitled to reassessment in a maximum of 40 credits-worth of failed modules provided that they have failed no more than 40 credits. *[further clarification to follow. Sept 2011]*
- E.7 If, following the application of the compensation rules, a student has not met the overall progression or award requirements then they may be reassessed in modules for which potentially compensatable\* marks have already been achieved. This will simply be an opportunity (not a requirement).

\*By potentially compensatable marks we mean marks between 30-39 for level-H (6) modules and between 40-49 for level-M (7) modules, which could be compensated if, following reassessment, a student's profile of marks means the compensation criteria could be applied.

#### *All programmes*

- E.8 A student may only be reassessed in a particular module on one occasion.
- E.9 Whilst reassessments need to be appropriate to measure the learning outcomes, they do not necessarily have to follow the same format as the first assessment. No assessment instruments with which students are unfamiliar should be introduced at the reassessment stage, however.
- E.10 Any modules for which reassessment opportunities cannot be provided should be clearly identified in the programme specification and approved by University Teaching Committee.
- E.11 Reassessment marks are capped at the pass mark for the module. *[under review. Sept 11]*
- E.12 Where a student is not permitted a reassessment opportunity (i.e., cannot meet the specified award requirements through reassessment as defined above) and there are no mitigating circumstances s/he may be eligible for a lower volume award (see Section C above).

#### **F. AWARDS**

- F.1 See Section C above regarding the Award Requirements.
- F.2 Graduate Certificates and Graduate Diplomas are not classified. However, a distinction could be awarded for a Graduate Diploma (see criteria below).

#### **Distinctions (Graduate Diplomas only)**

- F.3 To be recommended to Senate for the award of a Graduate Diploma with distinction a student must achieve the following *at the first attempt*:
- (i) a rounded credit-weighted mean of at least 70 over all modules, and
  - (ii) no failed modules.

## Glossary

Term	Definition
Assessment	<p><b>Formative assessment</b> has a developmental purpose and is designed to help learners learn more effectively by giving them feedback on their performance and on how it can be improved and/or maintained. Reflective practice by students sometimes contributes to formative assessment.</p> <p><b>Summative assessment</b> is used to indicate the extent of a learner's success in meeting the assessment criteria used to gauge the intended learning outcomes of a module or programme. <i>Definitions taken from the QAA CoP on the Assessment of Students, 2006</i></p> <p>An assessment process can, and often does, involve more than one of these assessment purposes. For example, an assessment component submitted during a module may provide formative feedback designed to help students improve their performance in subsequent assessments. An end-of-module or end-of-programme examination or other assessment normally results in a summative judgement being made about the level the student has attained, but any feedback on it may also have an intended formative purpose that can help students in assessment later in their programme, or on another programme. <i>Text taken from the QAA CoP on the Assessment of Students, 2006</i></p> <p>A clear timetable for providing students with feedback should be available, students should receive feedback within six weeks of the submission of the assessment. This timetable should enable students to reflect and potentially improve on their performance.</p>
Assessment period(s)	Designated period(s) within a programme of study with no timetabled teaching or supported learning, to enable students to prepare for and complete significant assessment tasks.
Award Regulations	The broad set of University-wide regulations that govern all programmes leading to the same award (for example, BA Hons, MA), which deal with issues such as, progression requirements, compensation, reassessment and degree classification. See the <a href="#">Guide to Assessment, Standards, Marking and Feedback</a>
Compensation	Is the process by which an assessment board, in consideration of a student's overall performance, recommends that credit be awarded for part of a programme in which a student has failed to satisfy the assessment criteria, on the grounds that positive aspects of the overall performance outweigh the area of failure. <i>Definition taken from (or modified from) Credit and HE Qualifications: Credit guidelines for HE qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (November 2001)</i>
Credit	A quantified means of expressing equivalence of learning. Credit is awarded to a learner in recognition of the verified achievement of designated learning outcomes at a specified level. One credit corresponds to a notional workload of 10 hours (including all classes, private study and assessment). <i>Definition taken (or modified) from Credit and HE Qualifications: Credit guidelines for HE qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (November 2001)</i>

Credit Level (for modules)	<p>Indicates the module's relative intellectual demand, complexity and depth of learning and of learner autonomy.  Definition taken (or modified) from <i>Credit and HE Qualifications: Credit guidelines for HE qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (November 2001)</i></p> <p>See the University guidance on <a href="#">credit level descriptors</a></p>
Learning Outcomes	<p>Statements of what a student is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate (these can be at lecture (etc), module or programme level).  Definition taken (or modified) from <i>Credit and HE Qualifications: Credit guidelines for HE qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (November 2001)</i></p>
Module	<p>A self-contained, formally structured, learning opportunity with a coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes and assessment criteria. A module may comprise elements taught by different departments and its function may vary from one programme to another.</p> <p><b>Core module</b> : a module required for a programme.  <b>Optional module</b> : a module chosen from a prescribed list of modules within the approved programme.  <b>Pre-requisite module</b> : a module which must be satisfactorily completed prior to embarking on another defined module.  <b>Co-requisite modules</b>: module(s) which are mutually dependent. Both/all of which must be studied within a particular programme.  <b>Mutually exclusive modules</b>: modules both/all of which cannot be studied within the same programme.</p> <p>Definitions taken (or modified) from <i>Credit and HE Qualifications: Credit guidelines for HE qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (November 2001)</i></p>
Programme	<p>The set of modules studied for a named award (this may include modules (core or optional) from outside the main department). These are set out in the Programme Regulations and approved by University Teaching Committee.</p>
Programme Specifications	<p>Govern a programme of study as an approved pathway leading to a particular named award of the University (for example, BA in Archaeology, BSc in Biology, BA in English and Philosophy). They consist of a defined combination of modules, at an appropriate level, and set out the learning outcomes. These regulations are developed and maintained by Boards of Studies/Combined Boards of Studies/Graduate School Boards and approved by University Teaching Committee.</p>
Stage	<p>A 'stage' is equivalent to a year's full-time undergraduate study and usually comprises 120 credits.</p>