

Student Guide to the University's Rules for Progression and Award in Taught Postgraduate Programmes 2023/4

This guide sets out the University rules relating to assessment, progression and award for postgraduate taught programmes. We highlight the key rules and requirements concerning progression through your programme and your award¹ at the end of your programme. Full details of the assessment rules can be found in the [Guide to Assessment, Standards, Marking and Feedback](#).

Information regarding the assessment criteria, grading process, and feedback mechanisms will be provided in your student handbook and on the departmental web pages. Should you require clarification or assistance at any point, do not hesitate to reach out to your academic supervisor or postgraduate administrator for guidance.

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¹ By award, we mean Master's, pre-Master's, Bachelor's or Foundation degrees, Diplomas and Certificates of Higher Education.

Summary

To be eligible for an award from the University of York, you must:

- undertake an approved programme of study,
- obtain a specified number of credits at specified levels, and
- meet any other requirements of the award as specified in the Award and Programme specifications and other University regulations (e.g. payment of fees, completion of the Academic Integrity online tutorial, requirements of professional bodies).

This summary is explained further through the following pages. These should be read thoroughly and in the order they are presented to fully understand the Progression and Award system.

Progressing Through Your Programme

1. What is the basic structure of Master's, Postgraduate (PG) Diploma and PG Certificate programmes?

Your programme of study consists of modules varying in duration and credit value. Each module contributes credits, earned upon successful completion of assessments.

The programme will include a number of taught modules (general and specific) and likely to have a Capstone module (Dissertation) which will require you to undertake your own project or piece of research. There is normally an informal check-in, partway through a Master's programme; this is between the taught part of the programme and the Capstone. At this point you will receive notifications of aspects such as resits outstanding on taught modules and your department may contact you regarding your academic performance.

A PG Diploma outcome will include a number of modules which can include the Capstone module.

A PG Certificate outcome can include a number of modules including the capstone module

Award	Required Credit
Master's (MA, MSc)	180 credits
PG Diploma	120 credits
PG Certificate	60 credits

2. How are credit value, credit level and module marks related?

Each degree programme is made up of modules. Each of the modules you undertake will have a credit value² (e.g. 10 credits, 20 credits etc.) and a credit level.³ Most modules on a postgraduate programme will be at 'M' (Master's) level, but a few may be at 'H' (Honours) level.

Award	Min Credit Volume	Credit Levels
Master's	180	At least 150 Master's-level credits
Postgraduate Diploma	120	At least 90 Master's-level credits
Postgraduate Certificate	60	At least 40 Master's-level credits

A degree is awarded on the basis of credit acquired during your programme of study. In some circumstances, you may be eligible for an exit award if you do not achieve the full requirements for the degree for which you registered. The type of award you receive will be dependent on the number of credits you have achieved and at what level.

In some programmes you may be required to achieve more than the number of credits listed above (for example, the MA in Social Work, Erasmus Mundus Programmes and the MA in Stained Glass Restoration). Please contact your School/Department for further information if you are unsure about the credit requirements for your course.

You will achieve the credit for a module by passing the module assessments. Modules are assessed by a range of methods which will usually result in a numerical module mark out of 100. However, some modules are marked on a pass/fail basis, in which case they do not contribute to the award mark, although you must pass them to get the credit.

Note: Any H-level modules taken as part of a postgraduate programme will be marked on a pass/fail basis.

3. What do module marks mean?

The University applies the following mark scale to **postgraduate** work:

Description	Marks	
Distinguished performance at postgraduate level:	70-100	Distinction
Good performance at postgraduate level:	60-69	Merit

² One credit involves a notional workload of 10 hours. So a 10-credit module involves a notional workload of 100 hours, a 20-credit module a total of 200 hours etc. By workload we mean all work associated with the module taken, including teaching (i.e. lectures, seminars, tutorials, workshops, labs, practicals etc), private study, work required during vacations and the preparation for assessment and assessment task(s).

³ The credit level indicates the module's relative intellectual demand, complexity and the depth of learning and of learner autonomy. See the relevant Framework for Programme Design:

<https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/teaching/quality-assurance/design/>

Satisfactory performance at postgraduate level:	50-59	Pass
Marginal fail (potential to compensate)	40-49	Fail/Compensated pass (where eligible, see Compensation section)
Fail:	0-39	Fail

4. What does weighting mean?

Credit weighting

Each module mark is given more or less weighting according to the volume of credit (i.e. workload) that is associated with it. There are two different ways to calculate this, both providing the same result.

Note: *Pass/fail modules do not count towards the credit-weighted mean, so should be discounted entirely for this process. They must be passed to progress on your course.*

The first method of calculating the credit-weighted award mark is to multiply each of your module marks by the credits associated with the module, sum the result and divide by the total number of credits for the degree (180 for a Master's), as seen in **Column 1** below.

The second method is to take 20 credits as the base number for weighting. Using 1 as the base number for 20 credits, convert credit value for each module. For example, 30 credits would be 1.5, 60 credits would be 3. Multiply this number with the module mark and add them together. This total is then divided using the number of 20 credits in the total number of programme credits, which is 9 for a Master's (180/20). This calculation can be seen in **Column 2** below.

Module Mark	Credit Value	Column 1 – first method of calculation	Column 2 – second method of calculation
55	20	$55 \times 20 = 1100$	$55 \times 1 = 55$
62	20	$62 \times 20 = 1240$	$62 \times 1 = 62$
60	30	$60 \times 30 = 1800$	$60 \times 1.5 = 90$
52	30	$52 \times 30 = 1560$	$52 \times 1.5 = 78$
70	10	$70 \times 10 = 700$	$70 \times 0.5 = 35$
75	10	$75 \times 10 = 750$	$75 \times 0.5 = 38$
53	60 (Capstone)	$53 \times 60 = 3180$	$53 \times 3 = 159$
	Totals:	$10330 \div 180 = 57$	$517 \div 9 = 57$
	Outcome:	57 is the credit-weighted award mark	57 is the credit-weighted award mark

For Postgraduate Diploma or Certificate awards, similar calculations are carried out, but with a smaller total credit value (120 for PG Diploma, 60 for PG Certificate). In the case of a

lower exit award, the modules with the best marks will be used to determine any mark and grade.

Module Mark	Credit Value	Column 1 – first method of calculation	Column 2 – second method of calculation
55	20	$55 \times 20 = 1100$	$55 \times 1 = 55$
62	20	$62 \times 20 = 1240$	$62 \times 1 = 62$
70	10	$70 \times 10 = 700$	$70 \times 0.5 = 35$
75	10	$75 \times 10 = 750$	$75 \times 0.5 = 38$
	Totals:	$3790 \div 60 = 63$	$190 \div 3 = 63$
	Outcome:	63 is the credit-weighted award mark	63 is the credit-weighted award mark

5. What kind of Master’s or PG Diploma can I get?

Unlike undergraduate degrees, postgraduate awards are not classified i.e. you do not receive a 1st, 2:1, 2:2 or 3rd classification.

Some postgraduate degrees may be awarded with Distinction, or with Merit. The exact criteria are given below. They involve the credit-weighted mean over all modules, the mark for the Capstone module (for Master’s programmes) and a requirement that all modules should be passed at the first attempt or capped resit (see below for details of reassessment).

For the award of a **Master’s degree with Distinction**, you need to achieve the following at the best attempt at the assessment (first attempt or capped at pass mark where reassessment has taken place):

- a rounded credit-weighted mean of at least 70 over all modules (taught and capstone);
- a rounded credit-weighted mean of at least 70 in your capstone module; and
- no failed modules after resit and compensation.

For the award of a **Master’s degree with Merit**, you need to achieve the following at the best attempt at the assessment (first attempt or capped at pass mark where reassessment has taken place):

- a rounded credit-weighted mean of at least 60 over all modules (taught and capstone);
- a rounded credit-weighted mean of at least 60 in your capstone module; and
- no failed modules after resit and compensation.

For the award of a **Postgraduate Diploma with Distinction**, you need to achieve the following best attempt at the assessment (first attempt or capped at pass mark where reassessment has taken place):

- a rounded credit-weighted mean of at least 70 over all modules used for award; and
- 120 credits or more of passed modules.

For the award of a **Postgraduate Diploma with Merit**, you need to achieve the following best attempt at the assessment (first attempt or capped at pass mark where reassessment has taken place):

- a rounded credit-weighted mean of at least 60 over all modules used for award; and
- 120 credits or more of passed modules.

Note: Postgraduate Certificates are not eligible for Distinction or Merit awards.

Examples of Master's and PG Certificate Awards

Master's student W	Master's student X
Module A (20 credits) Mark 55 x 20 = 1100	Module A (20 credits) Mark 55 x 20 = 1100
Module B (20 credits) Mark 62 x 20 = 1240	Module B (20 credits) Mark 62 x 20 = 1240
Module C (30 credits) Mark 60 x 30 = 1800	Module C (30 credits) Mark 60 x 30 = 1800
Module D (30 credits) Mark 52 x 30 = 1560	Module D (30 credits) Mark 65 x 30 = 1950
Module E (10 credits) Mark 70 x 10 = 700	Module E (10 credits) Mark 70 x 10 = 700
Module F (10 credits) Mark 75 x 10 = 750	Module F (10 credits) Mark 75 x 10 = 750
Capstone module (60 credits) Mark 68 x 60 = 4080	Capstone Module (60 credits) Mark 58 x 60 = 3480
Total 11230 ÷ 180 = 62	Total 11020 ÷ 180 = 61
62 is the credit-weighted award mark. Awarded Master's with Merit (Capstone mark above 60).	61 is the credit-weighted award mark. Awarded Master's. (Capstone mark below 60, so no Merit)

Masters student Y	PG Certificate student Z
Module A (20 credits) Mark 48 x 20 = 960	Module A (20 credits) Mark 55 x 20 = 1100
Module B (20 credits) Mark 62 x 20 = 1240	Module B (20 credits) Mark 62 x 20 = 1240
Module C (30 credits) Mark 60 x 30 = 1800	Module C (10 credits) Mark 70 x 10 = 700
Module D (30 credits) Mark 52 x 30 = 1560	Module D (10 credits) Mark 75 x 10 = 750
Module E (10 credits) Mark 70 x 10 = 700	
Module F (10 credits) Mark 75 x 10 = 750	Total 3790 ÷ 60 = 63
Capstone module (60 credits) Mark 68 x 60 = 4080	63 is the credit-weighted award mark. Awarded PG Certificate
Total = 11090 ÷ 180 = 62	
62 is the credit-weighted award mark. Awarded Masters with Merit (Failed module (Module A) is compensated, as no module mark is below 40). Compensation and reassessment will be explained below.	

6. What happens if my marks are only just below the mark needed?

Marks awarded for modules are the only data that are used in the determination of whether a Postgraduate degree is awarded (unless additional requirements are imposed by a professional body). No other conditions will be applied or assessments undertaken to determine the final calculation.

7. What happens if I fail one or more taught modules?

If you fail a taught module, don't panic! In most cases there will still be an opportunity to achieve the necessary credit through compensation or reassessment.

Important: in some programmes (for example, where professional/vocational requirements have to be met), compensation and reassessment may not be an option. Check the regulations for your programme but if you are not sure, speak to your academic supervisor.

Compensation

For Master's-level modules, the pass mark for module assessments is 50. However, if your mark for a module is in the 40-49 range, you may still be able to get the credits for the module if your performance in other modules is good enough to compensate. In other words, 'marginal' failure in one module may be compensated by achievement in others. There is, however, a limit to the amount of credit for which you can be compensated. Some modules in your programme may be designated as pass/fail, and failure in these modules cannot be compensated for. Some modules may also be designated as non-compensatable. Marks below 40 cannot be compensated.

To be eligible for compensation, you must meet the University's compensation criteria, which on standard programmes are: a maximum for 40 credits compensatable fails on taught modules of and no modules with 'outright' fail marks (a module failed by a margin or more than 10 marks below the pass mark). This means that a decision about whether a failed module can be compensated can only be reached when marks for all of the non-Capstone modules in your programme are available.

The University's compensation criteria vary depending on your intended award (Master's, PG Diploma or Certificate). The following are provided purely as examples; please consult the full [UoY Rules for Progression and Award](#) and your programme's regulations for the exact rules that will apply to you.

In a **Master's programme**, assuming no modules have been designated as non-compensatable, a maximum of 40 credits' worth of modules can be compensated as long as there are no modules with marks below 40.

For example, a student has the following profile of module marks:

Module A (20 credits): 53 (Pass)	In this example, none of the modules have been designated as non-compensatable and none of the module marks are below 40. Therefore, the marginal failures in Modules B and F (30 credits) can be compensated.
Module B (20 credits): 48 (Fail)	
Module C (30 credits): 52 (Pass)	
Module D (20 credits): 51 (Pass)	
Module E (20 credits): 50 (Pass)	
Module F (10 credits): 48 (Fail)	
<i>Capstone (60 credits): not eligible for compensation</i>	

In a **Postgraduate Certificate programme**, assuming no modules have been designated as non-compensatable, 20 credits' worth of modules can be compensated as long as there are no module marks below 40.

For example, a student has the following profile of module marks:

Module A (20 credits): 45 (Fail)	In this example, none of the modules have been designated as non-compensatable and none of the module marks is below 40. Therefore, the marginal failure in Module A can be compensated.
Module B (20 credits): 55 (Pass)	
Module C (20 credits): 53 (Pass)	

Reassessment

If you get a module mark below 40, this cannot be compensated and you will need to be reassessed. Reassessment (resit marks) can be used toward your award. However, they will be capped at the pass mark for the module of 50 for M modules and there is a limit to the number of failed credits in taught modules that can be reassessed;

- **Master's** students are entitled to reassessment on up to 60 credits' worth of taught modules.
- **Postgraduate Diploma** students are entitled to reassessment on up to 60 credits of taught modules.
- **Postgraduate Certificate** students are entitled to reassessment in a maximum of 20 credits of taught modules.

If you get a mark between 40 and 49 in more than 40 credits of taught modules you are not eligible for compensation because you have failed too many modules. For details see full rules in the [UoY Rules for Progression and Award](#).

You cannot choose to be reassessed in a marginal fail in a module that can be compensated.

Though most modules can be reassessed, some cannot. If unsure, please check with your department/school. If you fail a module that has been defined as non-reassessable and the failure cannot be compensated, you will fail the programme but may be eligible for a lower award.

Modules can only be reassessed once. If you fail a module at reassessment and the failure cannot be compensated, then you will fail the programme but may be eligible for a lower award.

If you fail and are reassessed in a module your resit mark for the module will be capped at the pass mark, 50 for M Modules. Degree calculations will use your best attempt at the assessment, capped at a pass mark where a reassessment has taken place.

If you pass all modules but your degree average is under 49.5, your degree average will be raised to 50 to achieve a pass mark at award level (49.5 rounded to 50).

The marks for all modules, both first attempt and 2nd attempts (reassessments), are included on your final transcript.

If more than 60 credits of taught modules are failed, compensation or reassessment are not permitted. A student could carry on to their capstone module, but would not be eligible for resits and compensation of taught modules.

8. What is the relationship between compensation and reassessment?

If application of the compensation rules is not enough to give you the necessary credits, then you are allowed to be reassessed (within limits for each programme). The compensation rules may then be applied a second time, if needed, after resits, for you to achieve the credits. This means that some first-attempt marks could be **potentially compensatable**: this happens when the compensation criteria are not met on the first attempt, but there are marks in the compensation range. Reassessment in other modules might allow the compensation criteria to be met (perhaps by passing failed outright modules or by reducing the credits failed), and so the potentially compensatable marks can actually be compensated without any need for reassessment in those modules.

After the taught element of your course is completed, if you have failed modules, you will be asked to indicate in which failed modules you wish to be reassessed in, if you need to resit. If you are unsure which modules to resit you should discuss this with your supervisor.

Example 1: a Master's student has the following profile of non-Capstone module marks:

Module A (20 credits): 53 (P)	This student must be reassessed on Modules B and F (30 credits total). Compensation is not possible because these marks are below 40. Reassessment is allowed because there are fewer than 60 credits at fail.
Module B (20 credits): 38 (F)	
Module C (30 credits): 52 (P)	
Module D (20 credits): 51 (P)	
Module E (20 credits): 50 (P)	
Module F (10 credits): 32 (F)	

Example 2: a Master's student has the following profile of non-Capstone module marks:

Module A (20 credits): 48 (F)	No compensation is possible because there is a mark below 40. This student must be reassessed on Module F (mark below 40) and has the option to be reassessed in Modules A and B. If Module F is passed on reassessment, then Modules A and B could be compensated for. Not taking reassessment in Module A or B would be a risk: if Module F was not passed and got a mark in the compensatable range, the student would be over the compensatable allowance of 40 credits and compensation would not be applied As cases such as these are complex, students should discuss their reassessment choices with their academic supervisor.
Module B (20 credits): 45 (F)	
Module C (30 credits): 52 (P)	
Module D (20 credits): 51 (P)	
Module E (20 credits): 50 (P)	
Module F (10 credits): 32 (F)	

9. Can I apply the same compensation and reassessment rules to my Capstone module?

The rules given above apply only to taught (non-Capstone) modules. Different rules about compensation and reassessment apply to the Capstone module of a Master's programme:

- Capstone modules cannot be compensated.
- If you fail a Master's Capstone module with a mark below 40, then no reassessment is permitted.
- If you are given a 'marginal fail' mark of between 40 and 49 on your Capstone module, then you will have the chance to make amendments and resubmit to the project part of the module to give the opportunity to reach a pass mark (50). Details of the sort of revisions that would be expected are given in the Policy on [Assessment, Examiners and Marking and Feedback](#) and from your academic department, but you will not be required to complete a different research activity or change the original research question.

Exceptional Circumstances Affecting Assessment

10. What if something happens that disrupts my studies and affects my ability to complete my modules?

If something exceptional happens that hinders your academic progress (such as a serious illness or bereavement), communicate with your academic supervisor as soon as possible. It is important that applications for exceptional circumstances are submitted to the department before assessments or deadlines. Further guidance can be found in the [exceptional circumstances webpages](#) which cover details of self-certification and the exceptional circumstances framework.

Failure, Lower Awards and Early Exit

11. What if I don't meet the award requirements?

If you do not achieve all 180 credits for a Taught Master's, you may be eligible for a lower award based on the credits that you have achieved. These are outlined in [section 2](#). After the taught element of your course is finished if you meet the requirements and are within the allowances described through this guide, compensation will be undertaken or reassessment will be offered to you.

Similarly, if, for whatever reason, you choose to leave the University part way through your programme, you may be eligible for an early exit award based on credits achieved up to that point.

For example, if you are on a Master's programme and leave the course before you undertake your Capstone module, you may be eligible for a PG Certificate (60 credits). In some programmes, you may be eligible for a PG Diploma (120 credits). Compensation and reassessment parameters are applied to the lower awards in a similar manner to those described above. But please note that as the total number of credits needed for an award lower, the allowances at compensation and reassessment may reduce also. For full details please refer to the [UoY Rules for Progression and Award](#). If you have any concerns you should speak to your academic supervisor.