

# Regulatory Framework for Taught Postgraduate Awards in Physician Associate Studies

**(changes since 2019 in bold and underlined>)**

These Regulations apply to the following University of Plymouth taught postgraduate awards:

- |   |           |
|---|-----------|
| • Postgraduate Certificate in Clinical Studies        | PgCert CS |
| • Postgraduate Diploma in Physician Associate Studies | PgDip PAS |
| • MSc Physician Associate Studies                     | MSc PAS   |

Students subject to immigration control should be aware that there may be additional restrictions on their progression. Information about current Tier 4 requirements is available from International Student Advice.

Variations from these Regulations may be permitted but will be subject to specific approval under the University's quality assurance processes. Students should refer to the appropriate student programme handbook for full details of the programme structure and assessment regulations.

## Section A: Admissions

- 1. Students seeking admission to the MSc Physician Associate Studies programmes should hold an Honours degree or postgraduate diploma of a UK University or of the CNAA; or appropriate professional or academic qualifications deemed by the University to be equivalent to an Honours degree or postgraduate diploma.**

Full details of the selection and admission requirements process will be detailed in the Physician Associate Programme Specification.

- 2. The nature of these awards is such that no recognition of prior learning or exemptions from study are permissible, other than transfer at an appropriate level of study from another Physician Associate programme.**

Any applications for transfer will be judged in accordance with the policies of the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry.

- 3. Physician Associates, as directed by the Competence and Curriculum Framework, must be deemed fit to practise. Applicants to the Physician Associate Studies programmes will be required to comply with the Faculty's requirements for Fitness to Practise screening.**

While the Faculty will endeavour to support successful applicants with an actual or potential health problem in their chosen career, some conditions may be incompatible with undertaking a clinical training programme. The Faculty will not admit to these awards any individual who, at the time of entry, would not be deemed fit to practise under the Competence and Curriculum Framework requirements or who cannot fulfil the health requirements. Upon enrolment to the programme, adherence to the Faculty's Fitness to Practise policy is an on-going requirement.

- 4. Applicants for entry to programme of study will be asked to declare any relevant health related problems which may affect their ability to fulfil the requirements of a programme and be required to comply with the immunisation policy.**

Non-disclosure of a significant mental or physical health problem that is later discovered may lead to a student being required to withdraw.

- 5. The Faculty reserves the right to refuse admission to or exclude from these awards anyone with a criminal conviction, caution, court injunction or fixed penalty notice.**

- 6. All students will be required to provide evidence of competence in English language.**

Current standards are set out in the PA admissions criteria in the Programme Specification or on the website.

- 7. If an applicant believes that, in its consideration of their application, the actions of the University have fallen below the standard expected then an applicant may make an appeal.**

The Faculty shall maintain policies and procedures for appeals regarding the selection and admissions process in accordance with University of Plymouth regulations.

## Section B: Student Registration / Withdrawal

- 1. All students must register at the time of their admission to the programme, and annually thereafter.**

Only students who have registered and paid any tuition fee required are entitled to tuition and access to any University and NHS facilities and assessments relevant to these awards.

- 2. The minimum duration of study for each award is outlined below:**

<b>Postgraduate Certificate (60 credits)</b>	<b>1 year full-time</b>
<b>Postgraduate Diploma (120 credits)</b>	<b>2 years full-time</b>
<b>Masters (180 credits)</b>	<b>2 years full-time, plus 1 year part-time</b>

Students on the Masters programme students will undertake a healthcare in-service project and will therefore study stage 3 of the programme on a part-time basis while working as a qualified Physician Associate.

- 3. The maximum period of registration allowed is two years longer than the planned duration of the programme.**

Any application for an extension to the agreed period of registration must be submitted in writing to the Faculty Head of Administration.

- 4. A student may interrupt their registration for a period of time, with the intention of resuming their studies. The period of interruption shall not exceed one academic year.**

In exceptional circumstances, for example as a result of a serious illness or other difficult personal circumstance, a student may be permitted to interrupt their studies and temporarily withdraw from the programme.

Permission to interrupt studies shall require approval of the Head of Administration. Under normal circumstances, a student may be permitted to resume their programme of study from the beginning of the academic year only, subject to demonstrable clinical competencies and knowledge.

**5. A student has the right to withdraw from a programme of study at any point during the academic year. Where a student withdraws from a programme, they will be awarded credit for any modules completed successfully before the date of withdrawal, but will not be allowed to complete any assessment after the date of withdrawal.**

**6. A student who has withdrawn from a programme, and subsequently wishes to re-join, will be required to re-apply.**

## **Section C: Programme / scheme structure**

**1. Academic study will be organised into modules, specified in terms of credits.**

**2. The credit weighting of postgraduate awards is:**

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|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Postgraduate Certificate | a minimum of 60 credits  |
| • Postgraduate Diploma     | a minimum of 120 credits |
| • Masters                  | a minimum of 180 credits |

**All credits contributing to the above awards will be at Level 7.**

**3. Students may not be permitted to vary their programme of study at any stage due to the need to meet the outcomes of the Competence and Curriculum Framework 2012 for Physician Associates.**

The Competence and Curriculum Framework for Physician Associates is available at <http://www.fparcp.co.uk/professional-documents>.

## Section D: Assessment

- 1. A student must submit themselves for all required assessments unless authorised absence or extenuating circumstances have been approved within the appropriate timelines.**

### D1: Successful completion of a Level

- 2. To progress from Postgraduate Certificate to Postgraduate Diploma, a student must have achieved at least a Pass in all stage 1 modules.**

- 3. To progress from Postgraduate Diploma to MSc, a student must have achieved at least a Pass in all stage 2 modules.**

- 4. In order to graduate with a Postgraduate Diploma in Physician Associate Studies, a student must have obtained at least a pass in all Stage 2 modules in the same academic year.**

**In order to graduate with an MSc Physician Associate Studies, a student must have obtained at least a pass in all Stage 3 modules.**

### D2: Successful completion of a module

- 5. The Faculty will provide clear information about what students need to do to pass each module.**

Details of how students can successfully complete each module are outlined in the Physician Associate Programme Handbook. This is available to students via the Digital Learning Environment.

- 6. Module credits will be awarded at the Award Assessment Board.**

Progression through this programme does not depend only upon credit accumulation because of the requirement for currency of knowledge and skills in the programme.

### **D3: Rules of progression, and procedure in the event of failure**

- 7. When considering student progression between stages, the Award Assessment Board will consider student performance in each module. Consideration may also include the professional behaviour of the student and the student's attendance record in order to fulfil the relevant requirements of the Competence and Curriculum Framework.**

Each student's case will be considered on its own merits. The Award Assessment Board will take a holistic view of these data sets when making progression decisions.

- 8. If a student fails in any one module, they must repeat the year in its entirety.**
- If a student achieves fails in more than one module, they may be excluded from the programme.**

Where a student has submitted valid extenuating circumstances for the first or second attempts of a clinical competency, and therefore has not achieved the requisite number of clinical competencies to complete the Stage by the time of the Subject Assessment Panel, the Award Assessment Board will defer a progression decision and will offer a further referral opportunity. Progression to the next stage of the programme is dependent on successful completion of the referred assessment by the date set by the Award Assessment Board.

- 9. A student will not be allowed to repeat the same year more than once.**
- A student may be allowed to repeat two different years of the programme only at the discretion of the Award Assessment Board.**

### **D3: Subject Assessment Panels and Award Assessment Boards.**

This section of the Regulatory Framework for Taught Postgraduate Awards in Physician Associate Studies should be read alongside section AST6 of the main University academic regulations, and the Operational Instructions for Subject Assessment Panels and Award Assessment Boards.

*Plymouth University Academic Regulations – Taught Programmes 2019/20 edition v1*

**1. The main purpose of Subject Assessment Panels and Award Assessment Boards is to make sure that the underlying principles of assessment at the University have been upheld:**

- To provide a fair and reliable measure of students' performance, knowledge and skills against the learning outcomes and discipline pedagogy.**
- To give University stakeholders confidence that a student has achieved the necessary level of achievement, giving a reliable and consistent basis for their award.**

**2. Subject Assessment Panels (with Subject External Examiners in attendance) are set up to confirm or modify module marks, to review the standard of assessment in the 'subject', and, where appropriate, to decide on recommendations on the form of referral for individual modules.**

**The confirmed marks and recommendations are then considered by the Award Assessment Board (with the Award External Examiner in attendance) which makes decisions on the final result for each student on a particular award or group of awards.**

**3. An interim Award Assessment Board must be held at the end of taught modules, with the final Board meeting at the end of the programme, to make decisions on final awards.**

**4. The constitution of the Subject Assessment Panels and Award Assessment Board will conform to the membership laid down in section AST6 of the University's [academic regulations](#), supplemented as necessary to meet any professional requirements. This may include the Director of Assessment and Assessment Psychometricians.**

**The Board will be considered quorate with a minimum one third of the specified membership.**

- 5. Neither the Award Assessment Board, nor any of its members individually, can receive individual statements from students or their agents.**

#### **D4: Extenuating Circumstances / Late Submission of Coursework**

The standard University regulations in relation to [Extenuating Circumstances and Late Submission of Coursework](#) will apply.

#### **D5: Appeals**

Appeals against the decision of an Award Assessment Board will be dealt with in accordance with the standard University regulations for [academic appeals](#).

### **Section E: Awards**

- 1. A Postgraduate Certificate in Clinical Studies will be awarded to a student who has successfully achieved 60 credits at Stage 1.**

Students awarded the postgraduate certificate (as an exit award) will not be eligible to sit the National Examination (MCQ and OSCE) for entry into clinical practice as a Physician Associate.

- 2. A PG Diploma Physician Associate Studies will be awarded to a student who has successfully achieved 60 credits at Stage 2, and 60 credits at Stage 1.**



3. A student will be awarded a Postgraduate Diploma in Physician Associate Studies with Distinction or Merit provided their cumulative standardised score, rounded to one decimal place, falls within the boundaries defined below.

<u>Cumulative standardised (z) score</u>	<u>Degree award</u>	<u>Equivalent % score range</u>
<u><math>Z \geq 1.0</math></u>	<u>PgDip with Distinction</u>	<u>70 or above</u>
<u><math>-0.5 \leq z &lt; 1.0</math></u>	<u>PgDip with Merit</u>	<u>60-69</u>
<u><math>Z &lt; -0.5</math></u>	<u>PgDip</u>	<u>59 or below</u>

Certain module assessments are excluded from calculation of the award. The module assessments used in the calculation of the award are set out in the Programme Handbook.

Resit data are excluded, unless a student has taken these as their first attempt.

If a student has repeated a Stage, the data used to calculate assessment z-scores is taken from the first attempt.

Assessment Z-scores are not weighted within modules.

The module z-scores are weighted by their module credits, averaged within each Stage of the programme and re-standardised, providing a single z-score for each student in each Stage. The z-scores for Stages 1 and 2 are weighted 1:2, averaged and re-standardised, providing a final overall z-score for each student. The PG Diploma award is based on the final overall z-score.

In determining the levels of award, only the overall z-score may be used by the Board.

4. An MSc Physician Associate Studies may be awarded to a student who successfully achieved 60 credits at Stage 3 (including a dissertation / major project), 60 credits at Stage 2, and 60 credits at Stage 1.

5. A student will be awarded a Masters degree with Merit provided that they have achieved a credit-weighted average mark of 60% or above across ALL modules (including the dissertation/major project), and provided that the mark for the dissertation/major project is not less than 60%.

A student will be awarded a Masters degree with Distinction provided that they have achieved a credit-weighted average mark of 70% or above

**across ALL modules (including the dissertation/major project), and provided that the mark for the dissertation/major project module is not less than 70%.**

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