

Section D: Assessment

This section should be read alongside the University [assessment policy](#).

Definitions of assessment terms are set out in the [glossary](#).

AST1 Extenuating Circumstances

This regulation applies to all students taking taught modules at University of Plymouth sites of delivery, and in all UK and international partnerships unless a non-standard regulation has been formally approved.

It also applies to research degree milestones ('Project Approval' and 'Confirmation of Route' – which are, in this context, to be considered 'assessments' – when extensions have not been agreed by the Doctoral College in advance. See [Research Degrees Handbook](#) for further explanation and details).

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 the [International Student Advice \(ISA\)](#).

This regulation should be read alongside the University's [Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedures](#), which sets out detailed guidance for students on what may and may not be considered as extenuating circumstances. The document also sets out the procedures that a student must follow when they believe they have extenuating circumstances relating to assessment.

In this section, the word 'University' refers to the Faculty (students on taught modules), the partner institution (for students in partner institutions) or the Doctoral College (for research degree milestones), as appropriate.

1. **Extenuating circumstances are unexpected circumstances which:**
 - **affect a student's ability to attend or complete an assessment or a number of assessments;**
 - **are exceptional;**
 - **are outside a student's control; and**
 - **can be supported by independent evidence (unless self-certifiable).**

Consideration of extenuating circumstances ensures that a student is not disadvantaged by these circumstances, while also maintaining academic standards.

All claims of extenuating circumstance will be treated carefully and in confidence.

2. The University operates a 'fit-to-sit' policy. If a student believes that their academic performance will be affected by personal or health circumstances, they must submit an extenuating circumstances form, and must not sit the exam. If a student sits an exam, this will be taken as a declaration that they consider themselves fit to do so, and will count as an attempt.

3. If a student believes that their academic performance will be affected by personal or health circumstances, they must submit details to the University on the appropriate form and provide relevant corroborative evidence as soon as possible, and no later than ten working days after the assessment deadline.

Claims submitted outside published deadlines will not normally be approved.

4. All claims, other than those that are self-certified, must be accompanied by independent supporting documentation that shows the nature, timing and evidence of the problem, and the effect the problem has had on the student's performance. Supporting evidence should not be retrospective.

Information on what may be acceptable supporting evidence is available in the [Extenuating circumstances policy and procedures for students on taught programmes](#).

A student may self-certify extenuating circumstances that affect them for five working days or fewer. Self-certifying means that students must state what their extenuating circumstances are, but they do not need to provide further evidence of the circumstances themselves. As well as describing the circumstances, the University will ask the student to tell us, in their claim, how the circumstances have impacted the student's ability to attend and complete assessments.

A self-certified extenuating circumstances claim will never allow a student to avoid submitting any assessment, even if this accounts for a small proportion of a module's grade.

5. Marks, and decisions regarding postgraduate research degree assessment and progression, will not be adjusted, even if a student has valid extenuating circumstances. Improvement to marks, and successful completion of research degree milestones, can only be achieved by reassessment.

Details of how extenuating circumstances may be taken into account are set out in the [Extenuating circumstances policy and procedures for students on taught programmes](#).

The procedure for considering extenuating circumstances claims is set out in the [Extenuating circumstances policy and procedures for students on taught programmes](#).

6. Valid extenuating circumstances claims will not be carried forward automatically to cover future assessments. A student must submit a claim for each assessment affected.

7. Students have the right to appeal the University's decision whether or not to accept an Extenuating Circumstances claim. These appeals must be submitted within ten working days of the University informing the student of the outcome of the extenuating circumstances claim.

Appeals against extenuating circumstances decisions can be made only on the following grounds:

- a A material and demonstrable procedural irregularity in the Extenuating Circumstances process.**
- b Evidence that the University did not consider all of the information available to it at the time of its consideration of the claim.**

Appeals will not be considered on the following grounds:

- a Dissatisfaction with the judgement of the University in its consideration of the Extenuating Circumstances claim,**
- b. Late submission of an application for Extenuating Circumstances, where there are no compelling reasons why the application was made late.**
- c. Late submission of evidence to support an Extenuating Circumstances claim, where there are no compelling reasons why the evidence was submitted late.**

Appeals will be considered through the University's appeals process, available at <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/your-studies/essential-information/complaints-appeals/academic-appeal>.

- 8. In the case of taught modules, appeals against an extenuating circumstances decision cannot be made once an Award Assessment Board or examining team has made a progression decision. In the case of research degree milestones, appeals against an extenuating circumstances decision cannot be made once academic decisions have been confirmed by the Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee.**

Students who want to appeal against extenuating circumstances decisions after the Award Assessment Board or Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee meeting has met should follow the University's standard [appeals procedure](#).

- 9. The outcome of any appeal against a University decision in relation to Extenuating Circumstances is final and will not be considered again later as an appeal against the decision of the Award Assessment Board (taught modules) or either examining teams or the Doctoral College Quality Sub-Committee (PGR).**

AST2 Submission for assessment (taught programmes only)

This regulation applies to all students on taught programmes at University of Plymouth sites of delivery, and in all UK and international partnerships unless a non-standard regulation has been formally approved.

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 the [International Student Advice \(ISA\)](#).

- 1. The University will provide clear and transparent assessment guidelines and briefs for each assessment, with clear information on how and when each assessment should be submitted, through programme and module handbooks.**

AST2.1 Late Submission of Coursework

- 2. Coursework that is assessed with a numerical mark will be capped at the minimum pass mark if it is submitted within the first 24 hours after the deadline date and time.**

Coursework that is assessed with a numerical mark will be awarded a mark of zero if submitted more than 24 hours late.

3. Coursework that is assessed on a pass/fail basis will be awarded a Fail if it is submitted after the deadline date and time.

The 24 hours will apply to the next University working day, irrespective of programme term dates.

Some programmes may not apply the '24 hour' rule because of professional, regulatory or statutory body requirements.

Members of academic staff cannot grant extensions to deadlines for submission of coursework. A student who misses a deadline, or believes that they will miss a deadline, due to circumstances beyond their control should submit extenuating circumstances as set out in Regulation [AST4](#). The student will normally be given a maximum of 10 working days after the original deadline to submit the work. There may be times where, because of the nature of the assessment task, or the time available to provide marks to an assessment panel, a period of more or fewer than 10 days is allowed. Where this is the case, tutors should tell students and the Faculty Office in advance.

This extra period will not normally apply to the resit period for which an absolute deadline is already set, nor to any other deadline date for marks to be considered by Subject Assessment Panels/Award Assessment Boards. The final deadline for submitting the coursework will be confirmed in writing by the Faculty Office.

4. Coursework which is submitted after the deadline will be marked but the results will not be published onto the official record until any extenuating circumstances have been considered. Informal feedback may be given on the quality of the work submitted.

If there are valid extenuating circumstances, the actual result achieved will be entered onto the record and submitted to the Subject Assessment Panel and Award Assessment Board, or PGR examining team.

If the circumstances are not considered valid, the normal penalty for submitting late will be applied, as set out in [AST2.1 \(1\)](#) above.

AST2.2 Late arrival at a formal examination

- 5. If a student arrives late to a formal University examination, they will not be allowed to enter the examination room if the examination has been in progress for more than 30 minutes, unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

If a student arrives to an examination late, and is allowed to sit their examination (within 30 minutes of the start), they will not be given extra time at the end of the examination to make up for the time missed at the beginning.

AST2.3 Late arrival at an assessment on a professional programme.

- 6. Students on programmes leading to professional registration might not be allowed to sit an assessment if they arrive late.**

The decision on whether to allow a student on a professional programme to go into an assessment late will take into account factors such as:

- whether the student's professionalism is being assessed as a competence standard
- the security of the assessment
- the logistics of admitting a student late
- whether allowing a student late admittance will disadvantage any other students.

The relevant Programme or Module Handbooks should state clearly whether or not students will be allowed to take an assessment if they arrive late.

AST2.4 Unreadable / inaccessible eSubmission

- 7. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that work is submitted in a correct format and is readable. Work that is submitted in a format other than that requested, or that is found to be unreadable by the marker, will receive a zero mark.**

The assignment brief must state clearly the requirements for eSubmission, including any required file format. If no specific format is requested, the default is that work must be submitted in MSWord, MSEXcel, or pdf format, as appropriate.

AST3 How to pass a Level (undergraduate only)

This regulation applies to undergraduate students at University of Plymouth sites of delivery, and in all UK and international partnerships unless a non-standard regulation has been formally approved.

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 the [International Student Advice \(ISA\)](#).

- 1. A student must pass 120 credits to complete the Level and progress or graduate.**

There may be occasions when a part-time student may need to mix levels of study, due to the needs of the workplace, or operational constraints.

If the needs of the workplace, or operational constraints, make it necessary for a student to mix levels of study, no more than two levels of should be studied at any one time.

- 2. A full-time student must complete a Level before being allowed to progress to the next Level, unless an extended referral has been awarded.**

An extended referral allows a student to progress to the next Level of study while completing referral work in a maximum of 20 credits. The student will be required to complete that referral work by the November of the next academic year. It prevents a student from having to repeat a whole year of study, just to pass 20 credits. Further information on extended referral is available in AST5.2 (5), below.

An Award Assessment Board will normally meet at the end of the Summer term and in September. The Faculties will make local arrangements to review the provisional marks of the immersive module at the appropriate time in order to identify those students requiring an in-year referral.

A final year student may be given an extended referral opportunity, which will mean that they can complete referral assessment by the November of the next academic year, without having to attend. Final year students can only complete extended referral work in a maximum of 20 credits. The student will then be considered at the next round of assessment Panels and Boards (normally the end of the summer term).

AST4 How to pass a module

This regulation applies to all students on taught programmes at University of Plymouth sites of delivery, and in all UK and international partnerships unless a non-standard regulation has been formally approved.

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 the [International Student Advice \(ISA\)](#).

- 1. Students cannot re-take modules that have already been successfully completed.**

- 2. The pass mark for an undergraduate module (Levels 0 and 4-6) is 40%. To pass a module, a student must achieve an overall module aggregate mark of at least the pass mark. Students on HNC/D programmes will, in addition, be awarded grades of Pass (40-59%), Merit (60-69%) or Distinction (70% or over) for all modules.**

In modules with a combination of Pass/Fail and numerically marked elements, a student will be required to achieve a Pass in all Pass/Fail elements, and an overall module mark of 40%.

- 3. The pass mark for a postgraduate Level 7 module is 50%. To pass a module, a student must achieve an overall module aggregate mark of at least the pass mark.**

In modules with a combination of Pass/Fail and numerically marked elements, a student will be required to achieve a Pass in all Pass/Fail elements, and an overall module mark of 50%.

While Level 7 modules are most commonly found in postgraduate taught awards, undergraduate students should be aware that Integrated Masters programmes will, and Graduate Diplomas might, also include Level 7 modules.

AST5 Procedure in the event of failure (taught programmes / modules)

This regulation applies to all students on taught programmes at University of Plymouth sites of delivery, and in all UK and international partnerships unless a non-standard regulation has been formally approved.

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 the [International Student Advice \(ISA\)](#).

AST5.1 Compensation

- 1. Where a student fails one or more taught modules, the Award Assessment Board will normally compensate for the failure, provided that the module mark(s) is/are within 5 marks (postgraduate taught modules) or 10 marks (undergraduate modules) of the pass mark.**

The Award Assessment Board may offer compensation to a student who has valid extenuating circumstances. The student may opt to take a referral instead.

The Award Assessment Board may offer compensation to a final year undergraduate student. The student may opt to take a referral instead if this will allow the student to achieve a higher classification on successful referral.

- 2. The maximum compensation allowed within each award is:**

Undergraduate awards	20 credits per Level
Postgraduate Certificate	0 credits
Postgraduate Diploma	30 credits
Masters Degree	30 credits

Compensation will be considered for undergraduate programmes only at the Award Assessment Board when the full module profile for the Level is known.

If the original module mark achieved was below the pass mark, the original mark will remain after compensation.

Compensation cannot be applied for any module where assessments are marked on a pass/fail basis, i.e. no marks are awarded.

Compensation cannot be applied to the in-year referral for the immersive module.

Students studying taught modules as part of a postgraduate research degree will not be eligible for compensation.

A part time undergraduate student may be awarded a compensated pass only at the point when the student has attempted 120 credits of a Level.

While there should be no compensation for an individual module taken as accredited CPD, a module taken as accredited Professional Development may be compensated (dependent on the module status) when it contributes to a programme or an award.

AST5.2 Referral and repeat

Definitions of assessment terms such as referral and repeat are set out in the [glossary](#).

3. Where a student fails one or more taught modules, the Award Assessment Board may:

- **award compensation in a maximum number credits, if permitted in [AST5.1](#) above, and make an award based on the aggregate mark achieved.**
- **allow the student to be referred in the module(s), in whole or in part of each element of assessment, at the next available opportunity; a student may be referred in up to 60 credits (120 credits for an MRes dissertation module).**
- **allow the student to repeat the module(s), with or without attendance, by a date to be determined by the Board;**
- **require the student to withdraw from the programme and award any intermediate qualification for which the student has achieved the credit requirements;**
- **require a student whose extenuating circumstances will prevent the completion of the award during the normal period of registration, or have prevented them from making academic progress in the previous session, to interrupt studies or withdraw from the programme.**
- **require a student whose extenuating circumstances will prevent them from meeting the learning outcomes of their programme to transfer to an alternative programme, or withdraw from the programme and be granted the appropriate exit or aegrotat award.**

A student who fails the immersive module, and who is required to take a referral, is required to refer only those components which they failed.

A student who fails any other module and is required to take a referral, will normally be required to refer only those element(s) of the module in which they received a mark below the pass mark (40% for Level 0-6 modules; 50% for Level 7 modules) and/or any Pass/Fail elements which have not been achieved. A student will be deemed to have passed the module after referral / repeat if they have achieved an overall module mark of 40% (Levels 0-6) / 50% (Level 7) and/or achieved any Pass/Fail elements. The referred module mark will be calculated using the weightings set out in the Module Record, carrying forward the marks from the original element(s) of assessment that were at or above the module pass mark, and using the uncapped marks achieved for any referral work undertaken.

- Where a student has carried out referral work as a next attempt, the overall module mark will then be capped at the pass mark for modules which are numerically marked and those with a combination of Pass/Fail and numerically marked elements.
- If a student is completing referrals with mixed attempts due to valid extenuating circumstances, the element which is referred at the next attempt will be capped and the module mark will be calculated using the uncapped mark for any referral work taken as a first attempt and the capped mark for any element carried out as a next attempt.

A student who fails and is required to repeat a module will normally be required to repeat all elements unless there is, for example, a substantial laboratory/fieldwork element which has been completed to a good standard where timetabling or other logistical problems may otherwise occur. In such cases the Award Assessment Board will set out what is to be retaken.

A student who has already been given a referral opportunity, but is unsuccessful in that referral, will normally be required to repeat the module in its entirety.

The Award Assessment Board should make its decision on whether to compensate or refer an undergraduate student at the final stage based on the student's potential to achieve a higher classification on referral.

A student who fails to submit referred assessment or fails to attend a referral examination will be awarded a mark of zero for that element, and/or fail a Pass/Fail element. Students should consider the likelihood of their success in referred assessments. Students may choose to repeat module(s) instead. If a student chooses to repeat the module(s), they must pay the standard fee and repeat all elements of the module.

The form of the referred assessment does not have to be the same as the form of assessment which was originally failed. It is the responsibility of the Award Assessment Board to specify the form of the reassessment. However, if the form of the reassessment is different (including cases where the nature of the examination or coursework has changed) students should be told in writing, via the student transcript. A student may only be referred in a Co-Curriculum Module (e.g. Learning Through Volunteering/Student Ambassador Modules) if their overall level of failure is within the limits found appropriate by the Award

Assessment Board and described at AST 5.2 (3) above. If not, a student may be required to re-take any failed Co-Curriculum Module(s) during the next academic year.

If a student has extenuating circumstances that will prevent them from completing the award during the normal period of registration, or has prevented them from making academic progress in the previous session, the Board decision will be subject to a case conference being held in line with the [Study and Wellbeing Review Policy and Procedures](#).

The decision to withdraw a student should be an exceptional decision, taken only when it is clearly in the student's best interests, and usually after the opportunity to repeat the failed modules has been applied (unless there are associated Fitness to Practise issues for those students on programmes leading to professional registration). Section [AST3.3](#) refers.

- 4. Where a student has failed a referred assessment in up to 20 credits (or has failed referred assessment in one 30 credit module), the Board may exceptionally allow the student to progress and an extended referral opportunity during the next session, subject to the number of attempts remaining. This is not intended to provide a further attempt beyond that permitted in AST5.2.8**

A final year undergraduate student may be given an extended referral opportunity, which will mean that they can complete referral assessment by the November of the next academic year, without having to attend. Final year students can only complete extended referral work in a maximum of 20 credits. The student will then be considered at the next round of assessment Panels and Boards (normally the end of the summer term).

The Award Assessment Board may determine the form of the reassessment. Where the referral takes the form of coursework, the submission deadline should normally be set for the end of November and, while marks are provisional, feedback should be given to students by the end of the Autumn Term (with academic staff consulting with External Examiners over any borderline marks). This would enable the University to advise students who had failed at their final attempt of their options and, in particular, to give students the opportunity to withdraw by the end of the first week of the following term, thereby avoiding liability for the full year's fees. Referred examinations/fieldwork will normally be taken on the next occasion on which the examination/fieldwork is scheduled.

- 5. Where a student fails the dissertation/major project module, the Award Assessment Board may at its discretion, based on a judgement of the student's overall performance and potential:**
- **allow the student to resubmit the work under its original title. The deadline for submission should be no more than twelve weeks from the date of publication of results; or**

- require the student to submit a new dissertation/project, by a date to be determined by the Board; or
- require the student to withdraw from the programme; or
- require a student whose extenuating circumstances will prevent the completion of the award during the normal period of registration, or has prevented them from making academic progress in the previous session, to suspend or withdraw from the programme.

If a programme team does not want dissertation credit to contribute to a Postgraduate Certificate / Diploma, they should request approval of a non-standard regulation.

- 6. Where a student on an undergraduate award is required to take a reassessment, the original rule for passing the module will apply, unless the Award Assessment Board has specified a single module assessment in substitution for both elements, in which case the student must achieve 40% in that assessment.**

A student on a postgraduate taught award who is being reassessed in an element of assessment must achieve a pass mark in that element. The student will fail the reassessment if s/he does not pass the reassessed elements even if s/he achieves a module mark of 50% (for a level 7 module) or 40% (for a Level 6 undergraduate module). The original rule for passing the module will apply for a student being reassessed in or retaking more than one element of assessment.

A student who fails the referral or repeat because they have not achieved the overall pass mark in the module, will still be eligible for compensation, as set out in AST5.1, above.

- 7. Where there are valid extenuating circumstances, the Board may allow a student to take referrals in the appropriate assessments at the next available opportunity even if they have failed more credits than can normally be referred. To be eligible for such a referral, students should have shown enough academic progress during the year to suggest that they have the potential to achieve all the credits in which they have been referred**

If the summer Award Assessment Board requires a final stage student to repeat failed modules under Regulation AST5.2 (3), that student can ask for referrals only in the number of credits required to achieve an Ordinary Degree (rather than an Honours degree).

If the student wants to return to the University to “top up” to Honours, they will have to re-apply for admission, normally no less than two years after the award of the Degree. The University’s decision on re-admission will be final.

8. An undergraduate student starting Level 4 for the first time in 2018-19 and thereafter will be allowed a maximum of two attempts at a module. A failed module may not be referred or repeated on more than one occasion.

An undergraduate student who completed Level 4 in its entirety before the 2018-19 academic year, or who is repeating any part of Level 4 as a next attempt in 2018-19, will be allowed a maximum of three attempts at a module. A failed module may not be referred or repeated on more than two occasions.

An undergraduate student on the foundation year will be allowed a maximum of two attempts at a module. A failed module may not be referred or repeated on more than one occasion.

A postgraduate student will be allowed a maximum of two attempts at a module. A failed module may not be referred or repeated on more than one occasion.

Where a student has valid extenuating circumstances, a referral or repeat will be offered as a same attempt and will not, therefore, count as an additional attempt towards the maximum number of attempts allowed.

9. If a student studies a different module instead of the failed module, the number of attempts at the original module will count towards the maximum number of attempts at the new module.

10. Where a failed module is successfully referred or repeated, the mark for the referred/repeated module will be capped at the pass mark (40% for Level 0-6 modules, 50% for Level 7 modules).

Marks will not be capped if the referral or repeat is taken as a first attempt.

The overall module mark will be capped at the pass mark for modules which are numerically marked and those with a combination of Pass/Fail and numerically marked elements.

Where students are transferring to a new programme and/or subject area, and taking a large number of new modules (perhaps 60 credits), Award Assessment Boards may allow students to be given whatever mark is achieved at the second or final attempt. The reasons for such an exception must be discussed with the External Examiner and recorded in the minutes.

AST5.3 Exclusion of a Student on the Grounds of Unsatisfactory Progress (either Academic or in Terms of Professional Development)

This regulation applies to all taught students at University of Plymouth sites of delivery, and in all UK and international partnerships unless a non-standard regulation has been formally approved.

This regulation should be read alongside the University's [Study and Wellbeing Review policy and procedures](#).

- 1. A student who the Dean (or appropriate Head of a partner institution), considers to be making unsatisfactory progress (either academic or in terms of professional development), or whose conduct is unethical or unprofessional or dangerous, may be required to withdraw from a programme of study.**

If a student demonstrates unsatisfactory progress (either academic or in terms of professional development), a written formal warning will be issued by the Faculty Registrar (or nominee) or HE Co-ordinator or equivalent (Partner Institutions) after consultation with the Programme Leader, setting out the reasons for the warning. If the problem is not resolved, the Dean (or appropriate Head of a partner institution) may require the student to withdraw.

The University will not normally require a student to withdraw from a programme of study unless:

- the University can demonstrate it communicated with the student to monitor academic or professional engagement; and
- the student has not demonstrated that they have addressed the issues raised in that communication.

- 2. Students have the right to appeal against any decision to be withdrawn on the grounds of unsatisfactory progress (either academic or in terms of professional development).**

Appeals will only be accepted if there is evidence of procedural irregularity, bias, or failure to reach a reasonable decision, or if the student submits further material circumstances which could not reasonably have been expected to have been submitted for consideration at the appropriate time. Guidance on the grounds for appeal and a proforma are available from the Complaints and Appeals Office at appeals@plymouth.ac.uk. The University aims to respond to any appeal within 20 working days.

AST6 Subject Assessment Panels and Award Assessment Boards (Taught programmes / modules)

This regulation applies to all taught students at University of Plymouth sites of delivery, and in all UK and international partnerships unless a non-standard regulation has been formally approved.

- 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 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. For postgraduate programmes, 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.**

Operational instructions for Subject Assessment Panels and Award Assessment Boards are available [here](#).

AST6.1 Subject Assessment Panels

- 4. The membership of the Panel will be:**
- **Chair (the subject leader or equivalent),**
 - **Internal Examiners for all subject (or group of subjects) modules,**
 - **the Subject External Examiner(s), and**
 - **the Faculty Business Manager (or HE Administrator in a partner institution) or nominee acting as Secretary to the Panel (non-voting member).**

The membership for a Panel in a partner institution will also include a representative from Academic Partnerships, normally a Partnership Manager (PM).

All Internal Examiners must be present at the Panel. If, due to unforeseen circumstances, an Internal Examiner is prevented from attending a Panel, they must make sure that they give the Panel written comments on the marks and the standard of assessment in the module(s).

Subject External Examiners are required to be involved with the standards of assessment in all modules which contribute to a final award, and must attend the relevant Panel meetings.

- 5. The Subject Assessment Panel will consider the results of all modules in the subject, regardless of the programme or award on which the students are registered.**

The responsibilities of the Panel are to:

- a) **review the standard of assessment in the subject, and to make sure that appropriate academic standards are maintained at subject level in modules and across centres, as appropriate, including discussion of the data provided on marks distribution for modules,**
- b) **confirm or modify module marks. An Award Assessment Board cannot alter marks once they have been confirmed by a Panel, unless an error is discovered,**
- c) **discuss any problems with assessment (not about individual students),**
- d) **make recommendations on the form of referral assessment for individual modules, (including confirmation that the referral assessments meet the**

learning outcomes with which they are associated), which will be forwarded to the Award Assessment Board by the Chair of the Panel or nominee,

- e) receive a list of those modules which have been subject to detailed scrutiny by the Subject External Examiner in the current academic year and in the previous two years,
- f) receive information from the Panels/Committees of Investigation on substantiated examination and academic offences, which must be fully recorded in the notes of the Panel,
- g) receive the report from the Subject External Examiner(s) for the previous academic year, and any written response/action plan, to ensure that all issues that were raised have been addressed,
- h) receive a list of those modules for which alternative assessment has been requested and the decision on each (providing a list of all decisions, whether alternative assessment has been agreed or not, will provide a record of where it was concluded inappropriate to amend assessment and more generally facilitate transparency and consistency in decision-making).

The Panel does not receive details of extenuating circumstances relating to individual students, and does not consider the overall performance of individual students.

Issues raised in the annual reports of the Subject External Examiner(s) will be discussed by the staff involved in the Subject Assessment Panel. Discussion may take place at a special meeting of the Subject Assessment Panel or an alternative forum if more appropriate. A written response will then be agreed. If appropriate, the Chair of the Award Assessment Board (or the Head of School) could co-ordinate the responses from Panels to the External Examiner(s).

6 All discussions of the Subject Assessment Panel must be recorded formally in the minutes.

AST6.2 Award Assessment Boards

- 7. The membership of the Award Assessment Board will be:**
- **Chair (the Head of School or nominee, or a representative of Academic Partnerships, for partner institutions),**
 - **the Chair of each contributing Subject Assessment Panel or nominee,**
 - **the Programme Manager(s) or equivalent,**

- **the Award External Examiner(s) (for stages where marks contribute to the final award classification),**
- **the Faculty Business Manager or HE Administrator in a Partner Institution (or Nominee) as secretary to the Board (non-voting member).**

The Faculty Business Manager or nominee will normally attend to make sure that the University's Regulations are followed, and that decisions are clear and unambiguous.

Where the Panel and Board are joined into one meeting, the Subject External Examiners must be present for the Panel business, but cannot participate in the Award Assessment Board discussions.

The membership of the Award Assessment Board may be extended to include Subject External Examiners and other Internal Examiners where this is a requirement for professional accreditation. In such cases the membership of the Award Assessment Board must be clearly set out in the current Award definitive document.

The Award External Examiner must be present at the Board. If an Award External Examiner is unable to attend an Assessment Board, a replacement appointment will be made by the relevant Dean after appropriate consultation from amongst the other Subject or Award External Examiners.

8. The responsibilities of the Award Assessment Board are:

- a) To make decisions on progression, if appropriate, and awards for all students registered for the named award(s) for which the Board is responsible.**
- b) To ensure that decisions are made fairly and democratically, and that justice is done to the individual student, in line with the appropriate University Academic Assessment Regulations (and any approved modifications for the particular award stated in the programme documentation),**
- c) To make sure that academic standards of student performance are being maintained at award level, based on the reports received from each of the constituent Subject Assessment Panel chairs on the standard of assessment in subjects/modules, and are comparable with similar awards in other UK institutions, in the expert opinion of the Award External Examiner.**
- d) To make sure that all valid extenuating circumstances relating to individual students have been fully taken into account before a decision is reached.**

- e) **To report and discuss, where appropriate, any examination or assessment offences and take appropriate action. The Award Assessment Board will accept the recommended penalty unless the wider assessment profile means that the penalty is no longer appropriate (if, for example, a student has committed multiple offences across a programme, the penalty may be increased).**
- f) **To receive formally the Award External Examiner's report for the previous academic year, and any written response/action plan, to make sure that all issues that were raised have been discussed.**

9. The Award Assessment Board may not alter the marks agreed at a Subject Assessment Panel except where there has been an error.

10. All discussions of the Award Assessment Board must be formally recorded in the minutes.

All decisions relating to students with extenuating circumstances, any discussion of cases of examination and assessment offences, and any other instances where a Board has used its discretion, should be recorded in the minutes very carefully.

11. An Award Assessment Board runs under delegated authority from Senate. The Award Assessment Board chair cannot agree standards and, therefore, the phrase 'Chair's Action' should not be used.

The action which can be taken by Chairs between meetings of the Award Assessment Board should be set out clearly. The Summer Board should, if possible, make decisions for students with outstanding assessments that if 'X' is achieved then 'Y' degree/award will be conferred; such decisions should be clearly recorded in the minutes. Results for such students can then be released if they satisfy the requirements. If 'X' is not achieved there would have to be a meeting of the Award Assessment Board (as a Referred Board), with a membership agreed by the Summer Board.

12. The Referred Board will confirm marks, and make decisions on progression and awards.

The Referred Board is an Award Assessment Board convened to consider the assessment profiles of students who have completed referred assessments.

AST7 External Examiners

1. External Examiners must be appointed for all programmes leading to a University award, whether delivered within the University or at one of its partner institutions.

2. External Examiners must meet the University's published criteria for appointment.

Criteria for the selection and appointment of a subject or award external examiner for a taught award, or taught elements of a postgraduate research award, can be found [here](#).

Criteria for the selection and appointment of an external examiner for a postgraduate research award can be found [here](#).

3. The University has clearly defined the roles, powers and responsibilities assigned to its external examiners.

Roles and responsibilities for external examiners for taught awards can be found [here](#).

Roles and responsibilities for external examiners for postgraduate research awards can be found [here](#).

AST8 Progression for research degrees

Please see the [Research Degrees Handbook](#) for further information.

AST9 Progression for research degrees (PGR only)

9.1 Project Approval

The following regulations to all postgraduate research candidates, except where alternative processes are outlined within professional doctorate programmes (Please see relevant programme specifications for details).

- 1. The assessment of the project plan (project approval stage) for a research degree candidate will include:**
 - a. completion and submission of the following by the candidate:**
 - **RDC.1 form (except in the case of some Professional Doctorates),**
 - **a schedule of work leading to the submission of the thesis, and**
 - **any other materials specified by local Research Degrees Management Units (in supplements to the Research Degrees Handbook).**
 - **a Research Data Management Plan**
 - **confirmation of attendance at a University-wide induction event**
 - b. consideration of the academic content and quality of the programme of work to ensure that it is set at the appropriate level and achievable within the limits of the research programme,**
 - c. review of the project by an expert commentator from outside the supervisory team,**
 - d. consideration of the appropriate level of study of the candidate and programme and thus the route of study and qualification aim,**
 - e. consideration of the availability of project resources, research training, supervision for the duration of the programme,**
 - f. consideration of the extent of the relationship with any collaborating establishment and the protection of intellectual property rights and copyright of the final thesis,**
 - g. consideration of the candidate's qualifications/experience and potential,**
 - h. assurance that the candidate and research degree programme meet the requirements of the University Research Degree Regulations,**

- i. **approval of any request for collaborative or jointly-authored submission of final thesis materials (including practice),**
- j. **ethical considerations and/or approval if appropriate and not considered before.**

2. Full-time students must submit for their Project Approval assessment within 5 months of initial registration. The Doctoral College may approve extensions to this deadline (up to 6 months from initial registration) when requested by the Director of Studies for methodological reasons. This request must be received prior to the deadline.

Part-time students must submit materials for Project Approval assessment within 10 months of initial registration. The Doctoral College may approve extensions to this deadline (up to 12 months from initial registration) when requested by the Director of Studies for methodological reasons. This request must be received prior to the deadline.

The Director of Studies can only recommend extensions for Doctoral College approval when required for methodological reasons. If a student needs an extension for any other reason (health, personal circumstances etc.), they must request this through the Extenuating Circumstances process.

3. The Project Approval process will be initiated and managed by the Director of Studies, not earlier than 3 months after initial registration for full-time students, or 6 months for part-time students. The process should only be initiated when the student has submitted all materials set out in 1a above.

See the [Research Degrees Handbook](#) for details of the Project Approval process.

4. If a student does not complete the Project Approval assessment successfully, they will have the opportunity to submit for re-assessment within three months of the publication of the result of the first assessment (i.e. the date the confirmation is sent to the student by GradBook).

- 5. Students who do not successfully complete Project Approval within 9 months full time, or 15 months part time, will be required to withdraw from the programme unless they have valid extenuating circumstances or their submission is under consideration for approval.**

Please note, these regulations set out the normal expectation for the conduct of the Project Approval. Any unforeseen University circumstances that compromise the set deadlines will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

9.2 Confirmation of Route

The following regulations to all postgraduate research degree candidates at University of Plymouth sites of delivery, except where alternative processes are outlined within professional doctorate programmes (Please see relevant programme specifications for details).

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 the [International Student Advice \(ISA\)](#).

- 1. Transfer is possible between the following levels of the research degrees (ResM to PhD, MD to PhD, and MPhil to PhD). The transfer (if appropriate and approved) is retrospective to the date of initial registration.**

The only compulsory Confirmation of Route is for students registered on an MPhil / PhD programme of study. An MPhil / PhD student who does not successfully complete the confirmation of route process, or who does not wish to progress onto the PhD route, will remain on the MPhil award.

- 2. The Confirmation of Route process will include:**
 - a. production of the following by the student:**
 - in the case of students intending to stay registered on an MPhil (or other M level route), a confirmation of route report that includes the plan for the same level of study**
 - in the case of students intending to transfer to PhD (or other doctoral level route), a transfer report that includes the plan for a higher level of study differentiating between masters level and doctoral level of work, including the originality and contribution to knowledge that the project will make**

- in the case of students intending to pursue a jointly-authored submission, a statement outlining the nature and extent of the collaboration and how this will be represented in the final thesis submission
 - statement of progress against schedule of work at Project Approval stage
 - written submission equivalent to at least one thesis chapter (e.g. literature review and description of methods; draft research paper)
 - any other materials or processes (e.g. presentation or viva voce examination) specified by local Research Degrees Management Units (in supplements to the Research Degrees Handbook).
- b. consideration of research training undertaken to date and details of planned training and skills development;
- c. consideration of issues related to collaboration, ethical protocol, data management / data security, copyright and intellectual property rights (as relevant);
- d. confirmation from the Director of Studies that the candidate is making satisfactory progress
- e. a recommendation by the supervisory team that the candidate should either remain on masters level programme or transfer to PhD/doctoral level status
- f. review of the project by an expert commentator from outside the supervisory team, confirming that the candidate has evidenced satisfactory progress in the research programme to date; that there is evidence that the research provides the basis for a PhD (in the case of transfers to PhD); and recommending that the candidate should either remain on a masters level programme or transfer to PhD/doctoral level status
- g. agreement with the recommendations made by supervisory team and expert commentator by the local Research Degree Management Unit.

3. The Confirmation of Route process should be initiated and managed, via the Director of Studies following submission of all materials in 2a above by the student, not earlier than 12 months after initial registration for full-time students, or 18 months for part-time students. See the [Research Degrees Handbook](#) for details of this process.

- 4. Full-time students must submit materials for Confirmation of Route assessment within 15 months of initial registration. The Doctoral College may approve an extension to this deadline (by up to 3 months) when requested by the Director of Study for methodological reasons. This request must be received prior to the original deadline.**

Part-time students must submit materials for Confirmation of Route assessment within 21 months of initial registration. The Doctoral College may approve extensions to this deadline (up to 24 months from initial registration) when requested by the Director of Study for methodological reasons. This request must be received prior to the original deadline.

- 5. The Confirmation of Route process will normally be completed within 18 months of initial registration for full-time students, or 24 months for part-time students.**

- 6. For research students on an Integrated PhD this process may add up to 12 months if full-time or 24 months if part-time.**

- 7. If the Confirmation of Route assessment is not successful (i.e. if the candidate is not permitted to transfer to PhD/doctoral level status), students will have the opportunity to submit for re-assessment within three months of the publication of the result of the first assessment (i.e. the date the confirmation is sent by GradBook).**

- 8. A research student is allowed to submit their thesis for a lower award than that for which they are registered if it is clear that they will not be able to complete a satisfactory thesis at the higher award.**

- 9. If a student does not submit a thesis, or is not awarded a research degree after examination of the thesis, they may be eligible for an exit award (a PGCert, or a PGDip) for any taught modules completed.**

A Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert) may be awarded if a student has achieved modules worth at least 60 credits, of which at least 50 credits must be at level 7 or above.

A Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip) may be awarded if a student who has successfully completed the appropriate modules worth at least 120 credits, of which at least 100 credits must be at level 7 or above.

9.3 Failure to Progress

10. Students who do not pass compulsory taught elements of their programmes of study within the maximum number of attempts allowed will be required to withdraw.

11. In the exercise of its academic judgement, the University reserves the right to terminate the registration of a research student in the case of persistent unacceptable progress.

12. The University will not require a research degree student to withdraw unless the University has previously given the student a formal written warning about their academic progress, and given the student the opportunity to improve performance within a reasonable time period.

The definition of a 'reasonable period' will depend on the circumstances of each case, but normally a period of months rather than weeks.

9.4 Examination and Outcome of Examination (PGR only)

13. All research degrees will be assessed by means of a thesis, which must include a written element, and an oral defence (*viva voce* examination).

Students must present their thesis, and any other required materials, in line with the criteria set out in the [Research Degrees Handbook](#).

14. Two examiners must be appointed for the examination of a research degree thesis. At least one of these examiners will be external to the University (the external examiner) and the other will normally be internal to the University,

but independent of the research student and their project (the internal examiner).

If the student being examined is also a member of academic or research staff of the University, two external examiners and one Chair are required. Under these circumstances, there will not also be an internal examiner.

The student being examined must not have been formally advised or supervised during this programme of study by, or had any close association with, either of the examiners.

In the case of collaboratively produced joint theses, candidates will be examined together by the same internal and external examiner with a non-examining chair (except if one or both candidates are staff – in which case two externals will be appointed and supported by a chair), normally at the same *viva voce*.

The criteria for the appointment of the examination team are set out in the Research Degrees Handbook.

The two examiners will each assess the thesis independently, each attend the *viva voce* examination, and negotiate the examination outcome together.

Local Research Degrees Management Unit supplements provide further information on what constitutes potential 'close association' between the student and the examiners, that would lead to a perception of bias.

- 15. A non-examining Chair is appointed in the following circumstances:**
- the student being examined is also a member of staff at the University;**
 - the internal examiner has no PGR examining experience at University of Plymouth;**
 - the examiners together do not have experience in a total of three UK examinations at the level of the examination;**
 - the viva voce examination is being conducted via video-conference;**
 - 'reasonable adjustments' have been made or disability has been taken into account in viva voce arrangements or conduct;**
 - the thesis is collaboratively co-authored by two students being examined together;**
 - either the internal or external examiner (or both) raise concerns about the standard and / or integrity of the thesis in the pre-viva report; or**
 - the student has requested a chair due to issues related to equality and diversity. (All students must be asked if they would like a Chair of their**

gender appointed if both their examiners are a different gender to their own.)

Discretion will be exercised in deciding whether or not to appoint a Chair to the examining team for candidates with honorary University contracts, or other personal or professional affiliations with the University.

16. Examiners can request that the candidate make a brief presentation at the *viva voce* examination, to be prepared at least 10 working days in advance. The Examiners must give the student at least 10 working days' notice of a request to make a presentation.

Students can request to make a presentation at the *viva voce* examination, but this must be requested via the Director of Studies and approved by both examiners at least 10 working days in advance of the *viva voce* examination.

It is not a standard expectation that examiners and / or students will request presentations at the *viva voce* examination.

Examiners are under no obligation to approve a student's request to give a presentation.

17. In exceptional circumstances, a *viva voce* examination can be conducted via video-conferencing, following approval by the Director of the Doctoral College.

The Doctoral College will publish cases of video-conferenced *viva voce* examinations in an annual report.

Further information on when a *viva voce* may be conducted via video-conferencing can be found in the [Research Degrees Handbook](#).

The Doctoral College will publish cases of video conferencing in the Doctoral College Annual Report.

18. Following the examination, the examiners can make one of the following recommendations, based on the [QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications \(FHEQ\)](#) at the relevant level:

a. Pass: the degree be awarded. The examining team may provide advisory guidance on editorial corrections to the thesis, such as minor typographical or grammatical errors; or

- b. Corrections: the thesis is satisfactory in substance, but the examiners have identified shortcomings in the shaping or articulation of the research. Corrections to be made to the satisfaction of one or all of the examiners by six months from the date of the formal notification of the outcome of the examination; or**
- c. Defer: resubmission allowed. The thesis is unsatisfactory in substance, with shortcomings in the presentation and / or content, and may require further research. The candidate is permitted to resubmit for the degree (with detailed advice) and be re-examined on one further occasion by twelve months from the date of the formal notification of the outcome of the examination; or**
- e. Compensatory award: the degree for which the research student is examined is not to be awarded but a lower level degree (MPhil, ResM, PgCert or PgDip) or, in the case of Professional Doctorates, and where the individual regulations for each Professional Doctorate allow, an appropriate master level degree be awarded subject to the presentation of the thesis being amended to the satisfaction of the examiners by one month from the date of the formal notification of the outcome of the examination; or**
- f. Fail: the degree not to be awarded and the candidate not be permitted to be re-examined.**

If the examiners' recommendations are not unanimous, separate report forms will be issued for the decisions to be reported separately. In this situation, the University:

- a. will normally appoint an additional external examiner to arbitrate and shall consider the reports of all examiners before reaching a decision; or
- b. may exceptionally accept the recommendation of the external examiner(s).

The recommendation of the examiners will be confirmed to the candidate informally verbally after the *viva voce* examination by the examination team.

7. Formal written confirmation of the outcome of the examination, including the corrections / amendments, will be issued to the candidate by the Doctoral College on receipt of the report form(s).

Where a student chooses to follow any advisory guidance provided with the award of outcome A in regulation AST9.4 (6) above, all editorial corrections must be made to the

thesis before submitting the electronic copy to the University repository within the normal timescale (see AST9.4 (13), below).

If the degree is awarded subject to corrections or amendments (outcome B or D in regulation AST9.4 (6) above), these must be made and submitted to the Doctoral College by the relevant date, depending on the outcome.

- 8. Possible outcomes after the submission of corrections are:**
- a. Pass: the degree be awarded. The examining team may provide advisory guidance on editorial corrections to the thesis, such as minor typographical or grammatical errors; or**
 - b. Corrections: the thesis is satisfactory in substance, but the examiners have identified shortcomings in the shaping or articulation of the research. Corrections to be made to the satisfaction of one or all of the examiners by six months from the date of the formal notification of the outcome of the examination; or**
 - c. Compensatory award: the degree for which the research student is examined is not to be awarded, but a lower level degree (MPhil, ResM, PGCert or PGDip) or in the case of Professional Doctorates, and where the individual regulations for each Professional Doctorate allow, an appropriate master level degree to be awarded subject to the presentation of the thesis being amended to the satisfaction of the examiners by one month from the date of the formal notification of the outcome of the examination; or**
 - d. Fail: the degree not to be awarded and the candidate not permitted to be re-examined.**

Examiners must submit a completed Corrections Report form to the Doctoral College with their recommended outcome. If the corrections are not completed to the satisfaction of the examiner(s) on the first attempt, outcome B should be recommended, with a list of remaining requirements. If the corrections are then submitted for a second time and still not to the satisfaction of the examiner, outcome C or D should be recommended.

Where a student chooses to follow any advisory guidance provided with the award of outcome A in regulation AST9.4 (8) above, all editorial corrections must be made to the thesis before submitting the electronic copy to the University repository within the normal timescale (see AST9.4 (13), below).

If the degree is awarded subject to corrections or amendments (outcome B or C), these must be made and submitted to the Doctoral College by the relevant date, depending on the outcome.

Failure to submit by the required date will normally result in failure of the award. Any request for an extension to the due date of the corrections must be made in writing to the Doctoral

College (supported by the supervisory team and the Faculty Research Management team) who will obtain the approval of the examiners before deciding on the period of extension.

- 9. If a candidate is permitted to resubmit for re-examination for the award:**
- a. the research student may be required to carry out further research and will require a further *viva voce* examination; details of these requirements must be submitted by the examination team to the Doctoral College who will then forward them to the student,**
 - b. the research student must submit the revised thesis to the Doctoral College office by not later than 12 months from the formal notification of the outcome of the examination.**
 - c. The resubmitted thesis will be examined in the same manner as the first submission. However, where all the examiners agree in advance on outcomes (a) 'pass' or (b) 'corrections', the examiners have the option to waive the requirement to hold a second *viva voce* examination.**

A second *viva voce* examination must be held if the examiners agree in advance that there is a chance that the resubmitted thesis will be deemed a fail.

- 10. Possible outcomes after a resubmission are:**
- a. Pass: the degree to be awarded. The examining team may provide advisory guidance on editorial corrections to the thesis, such as minor typographical or grammatical errors;_or**
 - b. Corrections: the thesis is satisfactory in substance but the examiners have identified shortcomings in the shaping or articulation of the research. Corrections to be made to the satisfaction of one or all of the examiners by six months from the date of the formal notification of the outcome of the examination; or**
 - c. Compensatory award: the degree for which the research student is examined is not to be awarded but a lower level degree (MPhil, ResM, PgCert or PgDip) or in the case of Professional Doctorates, and where the individual regulations for each Professional Doctorate allow, an appropriate master level degree be awarded subject to the presentation of the thesis being amended to the satisfaction of the**

examiners by one month from the date of the formal notification of the outcome of the examination, or

- d. Fail: the degree not to be awarded and the candidate not be permitted to be re-examined.**

Where a student chooses to follow any advisory guidance provided with the award of outcome A, all editorial corrections must be made to the thesis before submitting the electronic copy to the University repository within the normal timescale (see AST9.4 (13) below).

If the degree is awarded subject to Corrections (outcome B), these must be made and submitted to the Doctoral College by the relevant date. If the corrections are not completed to the satisfaction of the examiner(s), the candidate will either fail or be offered a lower award on the recommendation of the examining team.

If a research student is awarded a compensatory / lower degree of ResM or MPhil following a PhD, professional doctorate or an MD re-examination (outcome C), the Doctoral College will require:

- a. confirmation in writing from the internal and/or external examiner that corrections, if required, have been made to their satisfaction, as indicated on the report form. Failure to submit by the required date will normally result in failure of the award. Any request for an extension to the due date of the corrections must be made through the Extenuating Circumstances process.
- b. all references to PhD, professional doctorate or MD will need to be changed to ResM or MPhil as appropriate.

11. If a research student is not awarded a ResM, then they can be awarded either a PgCert or PgDip if they have satisfactorily completed either 60 or 120 Level 7/8 credits respectively.

12. A research student who fails to submit a corrected or revised thesis by the date set by the examiners, without formal approval, shall be regarded as having failed the examination and the recommendations of the examiners shall lapse.

- 13. An award will be made only when the electronic copy of the thesis has been submitted to the University repository, and the submission approved by the Doctoral College. Candidates should submit the electronic copy of the thesis within 60 days of the official notice of the outcome.**

The candidate should also supply the Director of Studies and any collaborating establishments with a hard copy if requested to do so but this is for the candidate to arrange.

- 14. The candidate must have paid any outstanding debts to the University before the award is made.**

AST10 Examination and Academic Offences (Taught and Research programmes, including Research Misconduct)

This regulation applies to all students at University of Plymouth sites of delivery, and in all UK and international partnerships unless a non-standard regulation has been formally approved. Partner institutions based overseas should note that, while the principles set out in these regulations will be adhered to at all times, there may be some operational differences in the implementation of the examination and academic offences procedures in these institutions due to logistical constraints.

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 the [International Student Advice \(ISA\)](#).

The University reserves the right to apply these regulations in cases where an examination or academic offence is identified after a student has left the University (i.e. to individuals who are not currently enrolled). This may lead to a decision by the University to revoke the award made to the former student.

AST10.1 Examination Offences – Taught programmes

This regulation should be read alongside the [Assessment Offences and Research Misconduct Procedures](#).

This regulation applies to examination offences occurring in formal University examinations (including postgraduate taught course examinations) and in-class tests.

Students enrolled on a University of Plymouth research degree who are undertaking taught modules as part of their programme of study will also be subject to this regulation for

assessment undertaken on these taught modules. Offences involving the thesis or *viva voce* examination will be dealt with under AST10.2, below.

This regulation, and associated procedures, applies only to those examinations and tests which contribute towards the award of credit or the satisfactory completion of CPD activity (i.e. summative and not formative assessments). On programmes leading to professional registration, alleged offences in formative assessment may also be referred through the full examination offences process and / or Fitness to Practise proceedings.

Where offences are identified in a formative assessment on all other programmes, these should be drawn to the student's attention by the module leader and the student advised of the consequences of committing an offence in a summative assessment. Where a Tutor notices that a student has received such advice on a number of occasions, this may trigger a further discussion.

- 1. The University recognises the following, including any attempt to carry out the actions described, as examination offences, regardless of intent:**
 - a. Possessing or using in an examination or test any crib sheet, revision or other notes, books, paper, mobile phone, smart watch or electronic device of any kind other than those specifically permitted in the rubric of the examination paper. The offence lies in the possession of the material and does not depend on whether there was any intention to use the material.**
 - b. Obtaining access to an unseen examination or test material prior to the start of the examination/test.**
 - c. Failing to comply with the legitimate instructions of an invigilator or examiner, or with the instructions for candidates (for example signage, written instructions, on-line information).**
 - d. Removing from an examination or test any script, paper, working notes or other official stationery, whether or not completed, or any electronic records provided as part of the examination unless specifically authorised by an invigilator or examiner.**
 - e. Being party to personation, which is any arrangement where a person fraudulently represents, or intends to represent, a candidate in an examination or test.**
 - f. Communicating with another student or with any third party, other than an invigilator or examiner, whilst in the examination/test room.**
 - g. Copying the work of another student, whether by overlooking their work, asking them for information, or by any other means, or knowingly allowing their own work to be copied.**

- h. Making false declarations in an attempt to obtain either modified assessment provisions or special consideration (e.g. of extenuating circumstances).**
- i. Attempting to persuade another member of the University (student, staff, or invigilator) to participate in any actions which would be in breach of these regulations.**
- j. Being party to any arrangement which would constitute a breach of these regulations.**
- k. Undertaking any other activity which could confer an unfair advantage to any candidate(s) taking an examination or test.**

- 2. The University reserves the right to refer any case direct to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Teaching, Learning and Student Experience to decide whether immediate suspension or referral to the [Study and Wellbeing Review policy and procedure](#) is required, while the suspected exam offence is considered.**

The decision on whether to refer the case to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience will take into account matters including, but not limited to, the severity of the alleged offence or any potential risk to the student's health or welfare.

Where a student is suspected of having committed an offence in a formal University examination, the invigilators will complete an Examination Offences Report Form.

Where a student is suspected of having committed an offence in an in-class test the invigilators will complete an Examination Offences Report Form, copying it to the Examinations Office and Faculty Office and, if appropriate, the Academic Partnerships Office, within 5 working days of the date of the test.

- 3. All cases of alleged examination offence will be considered by a University Assessment Offences Panel.**

The composition of the University Assessment Offences Panel will be as follows:

- Chair or Vice-Chair (a member of Faculty for taught modules, or Director of Doctoral College for postgraduate research degrees). For partner institution cases, the Chair should be a Faculty Partnership Manager or the Head of UK Partnerships);**

- **Two academic members (drawn from a pool of 12 academic staff, nominated by Deans of Faculty for taught modules. For postgraduate research student cases, the academic members of the Panel should have experience of postgraduate research supervision and examination. The Doctoral College may nominate these members. For UK partner institution cases, the academic members of the Panel should be drawn from a partner institution(s) other than the institution in which the student subject to investigation is studying. If a member of the Partner Institution is not available, the academic members of the Panel should be drawn from Academic Partnerships);**
- **Faculty Registrar or nominee/Academic Partnerships Operations Manager or nominee/ Doctoral College Manager or nominee (in attendance in an advisory capacity and to take notes);**

The Panel will be considered quorate provided that one academic staff member is present, in addition to the Panel Chair and Academic Registrar or nominee.

All members of the Panel will have equal voting rights. A decision will be taken based on the majority vote wherever possible. When required, the Chair shall have the deciding vote.

The Faculty / Academic Partnerships / Doctoral College will provide administrative support for the operation of the Panel.

A Panel member may not consider the case of a student from their own School or Partner institution, or a student they know. Any conflict of interests must be declared to the Academic Registry.

- 4. The Panel will consider all of the evidence put before it and will ask questions of both the student and any witnesses relating to the alleged offence in order to establish the facts of the case. The student (or their representative) will have the opportunity to ask questions of any witnesses. If the student chooses not to appear before the Panel then their written statement will be considered by the Panel.**

5. The Assessment Offences Panel will decide either:

- a) That the allegation is not substantiated and that no further action is required; or
- b) That the allegation is substantiated and that one of the penalties in 6, below, will be applied. At this stage, the Panel will be made aware of any previous substantiated offences committed by the student.

On reaching a decision on which penalty to apply, the Panel will consider and record:

- The magnitude of the advantage gained by the offence, had it not been detected;
- The severity and extent of the offence;
- The student's academic stage, in relation to the University's expectations about knowledge of good academic practice and personal responsibility;
- The number of previous offences. Second and subsequent offences should incur a penalty of at least one step above that appropriate for a first offence of the same character;
- In the case of multiple offences taking place in separate examinations taken during one examination period, the opportunity for the student to learn from the detection of one offence before other assessments are submitted.

The Panel may refer the case to the Code of Conduct or the Study and Wellbeing Review procedures as appropriate, following discussion with the Faculty Registrar (or equivalent, for Partner Institutions).

If the allegation is not substantiated, the Complaints and Appeals Office, in liaison with the Faculty Registrar (or Partnerships Operations Manager in Academic Partnerships), will ensure that all records relating to the allegation are removed from the student's permanent record at the University (and partner institution if appropriate).

If the allegation is substantiated, the offence should be recorded on the student's permanent record.

6. The penalties that can be imposed are as follows:

- a) The offence be recorded on the student's permanent record but there will be no change to the mark that the student has been awarded. The offence

may be taken into account by future Panels when determining the penalty for any subsequent offences.

- b) The mark for the component be capped (at 40% for modules at Levels 4-6 and 50% for modules at Level 7). This penalty can only be awarded if the standard of the work is deemed to be worthy of the capped mark when the material which is the subject of the offence is discounted.
- c) A mark of zero will be recorded for the component.
- d) A mark of zero will be recorded for the element.
- e) A mark of zero will be recorded for the module.
- f) The final aggregate mark for the programme will be reduced by 10%.
- g) The student is required to resubmit the assessment or repeat the module, with the award of credit only, with zero marks on successful completion.
- h) A mark of zero be recorded for the module of which the assessment formed a part; the student is barred from taking the module again and must withdraw from the programme.

The Panel is able to impose a more stringent penalty than that immediately suggested by the list above, provided that the context and rationale for that penalty is clear and documented.

A student on a programme leading to registration with a professional body is likely to be required to declare any substantiated offence with that professional body upon registration. The University may also inform the professional body.

Exceptionally, the Panel may conclude that an offence is so serious that it should be referred to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience with the recommendation that the student is excluded from the University and/or partner institution. Where such a referral is made for a student on a University of Plymouth programme at a partner institution, the Principal of the partner institution will also be consulted.

7. The penalty awarded by the Panel in accordance with the tariff shall be binding upon the Award Assessment Board unless the wider assessment profile means that the penalty is no longer appropriate (if, for example, a student has committed multiple offences across a module, the penalty may be increased).

The Secretary to the Panel will report the Panel's decision to the student, Dean of Faculty or Academic Partnerships, Faculty Registrar (or Partnerships Operations Manager in Academic Partnerships) and Doctoral College (where appropriate) in writing within five working days of the date of the Panel's decision. Where a student is enrolled on a University of Plymouth programme in a partner institution, the Partnerships Operations Manager is responsible for informing the partner institution of the Panel's decision.

8. Substantiated offences will be reported to the Subject Assessment Panel and Award Assessment Board.

9. A student may appeal against the decision or penalty imposed by the Assessment Offences Panel on the following grounds;

- a) Evidence of procedural irregularity which casts doubt on the conclusion of the Panel that an offence has occurred or on the fairness of the penalty imposed;**
- b) Where there is new evidence which could not reasonably have been made available to the Assessment Offences Panel at the time it made its decision;**
- c) Where there is evidence that the Assessment Offences Panel acted unfairly or failed to take into account matters which it should have done in reaching its decision.**

Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Complaints and Appeals Office within 10 working days of the date of the letter notifying the student of the outcome of the Panel hearing.

Appeals against an Assessment Offences Panel outcome should be submitted in line with the University's Academic Appeals Procedure available [here](#)

Following completion of the University's internal appeals procedures, a Completion of Procedures letter will be issued. A student who remains dissatisfied with the outcome may make a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.

AST10.2 Academic Offences Regulations

This regulation should be read alongside the [Assessment Offences and Research Misconduct Procedures](#).

This regulation applies to offences occurring in formal University assessments (excluding formal examinations and in-class tests, which are dealt with under the Examination Offences procedures, set out in section AST10.1, above).

This regulation applies to:

- assessments which contribute towards the award of credit for taught modules,
- the satisfactory completion of CPD activity (i.e. summative and not formative assessments), or
- the Confirmation of Route process, and Project Approval process (research degrees), and
- the examination of the final thesis (research degrees).

On programmes leading to professional registration, alleged offences in formative assessment may also be referred through the full academic offences process and / or Fitness to Practise proceedings.

Where offences are identified in a formative assessment on all other programmes, or to any written document prepared by a postgraduate research degree student before the final thesis is submitted for final examination, these should be drawn to the student's attention by the module leader or supervisory team, as appropriate, and the student advised of the consequences of committing an offence in a summative assessment. Where a tutor or supervisor notices that a student has received such advice on a number of occasions, this may trigger a further discussion.

Academic offence allegations made against students registered on University of Plymouth research degree awards shall be investigated under these procedures, where the allegations relate to research undertaken for the purposes of that award. All allegations concerning misconduct in research undertaken for purposes other than the award for which a student is registered shall be investigated under procedures set out in section AST10.3, below.

- 10. Academic offences occur when activity is undertaken which could confer an unfair advantage to any candidate(s) in assessment. The University recognises the following (including any attempt to carry out the actions described) as academic offences, regardless of intent:**
- a. Plagiarism, which is copying or paraphrasing of other people's work or ideas into a submitted assessment without full acknowledgement. More information on plagiarism is available [here](#).**

- b. Collusion, which is unauthorised collaboration of students (or others) in producing a submitted assessment. The offence of collusion occurs if a student copies any part of another student's work, or allows their own work to be copied. Collusion also occurs if other people contribute significantly to work that a student submits as their own.**
- c. Contract cheating, often called 'ghost writing', which occurs when another person or people are commissioned or otherwise engaged to undertake an assessment, totally or in part, and the assessment is submitted as the student's own work.**
- d. Misrepresenting or fabricating the outcomes and results of research, investigations, or experiments.**
- e. Making false declarations in an attempt to obtain special consideration in assessment. Examples include falsely claiming a need for modified assessment provision or making false extenuating circumstances claims.**
- f. The inclusion in an assessment (other than an examination or test) of material which is identical or substantially similar to material which has already been submitted for any other assessment within the University.**
- g. Persuading or attempting to persuade another member of the University or partner institution to participate, in any way, in actions which would be in breach of these regulations.**
- h. Being party to any arrangement which would be a breach of these regulations.**
- i. Any other activity which could confer an unfair advantage to any candidate(s) in assessment.**

11. The University reserves the right to refer any case direct to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience (taught modules) or the Director of the Doctoral College (research degrees) to decide whether immediate suspension or referral to the [Study and Wellbeing Review policy and procedure](#) is required.

12. All allegations of academic offences against research degree students concerning the Confirmation of Route or the final thesis will be considered by a full Assessment Offences Panel.

13. All cases of alleged academic offence will be considered by a University Assessment Offences Panel.

The composition of the Assessment Offences Panel will be as follows:

- **Chair or Vice-Chair (a member of Faculty for taught modules, or Director of Doctoral College for research degrees. For partner institution cases, the Chair should be a Faculty Partnership Manager or the Head of UK Partnerships)**
- **Two academic members (drawn from a pool of 12 academic staff, nominated by Deans of Faculty, for taught modules. For postgraduate research student cases, the academic members of the Panel should have experience of postgraduate research supervision and examination. The Doctoral College may nominate these members. For UK Partner Institution cases, the academic members of the Panel should be drawn from a Partner Institution(s) other than the institution in which the student under investigation is studying). If a member of the Partner Institution is not available, the academic members of the Panel should be drawn from Academic Partnerships)**
- **Faculty Registrar or nominee / Academic Partnerships Operations Manager or nominee/Doctoral College Manager or nominee (in attendance in an advisory capacity and to take notes).**

The Panel will be considered quorate provided that one academic staff member is present, in addition to the Panel Chair and Faculty Registrar or nominee / Academic Partnerships Operations Manager or nominee / Doctoral College Manager or nominee.

All members of the Panel will have equal voting rights. A decision will be taken based on the majority vote wherever possible. When required, the Chair shall have the deciding vote.

Where necessary, the Chair of an Assessment Offences Panel may invite a subject specialist to advise the Panel. The nature of the discipline may mean that it is unavoidable that the adviser is from the same School as the student, but the adviser should not have taught the student. The adviser must not take part in the Panel's decision making.

The Faculty / Academic Partnerships / Doctoral College will provide administrative support for the operation of the Panel.

14. The Panel will consider all of the evidence put before it and will ask questions of both the student and any witnesses relating to the alleged offence in order to establish the facts of the case. The student (or their representative) will have the opportunity to ask questions of any witnesses.

If the student chooses not to appear before the Panel then their written statement will be considered by the Panel.

The Module Leader or Director of Studies (for PGR students) should be available at the time of the Panel meeting, should the Panel require clarification on any points of fact.

15. The Assessment Offences Panel will decide as follows:

- a) That the allegation is not substantiated and that no further action is required; or**
- b) That the allegation is substantiated and that one of the following penalties in 16, below, will be applied. At this stage, the Panel will be made aware of any previous offences committed by the student.**

On reaching a decision on which penalty to apply, the Panel will consider and record:

- The magnitude of the advantage gained by the offence, had it not been detected ;**
- The severity and extent of the offence;**
- The student's academic stage, in relation to the University's expectations about knowledge of good academic practice and personal responsibility;**
- The number of previous offences. Second and subsequent offences should incur a penalty of at least one step above that appropriate for a first offence of the same character;**
- In the case of multiple offences taking place within separate assessments submitted in a short space of time, the opportunity for the student to learn from the detection of one offence before other assessments are submitted.**

The Panel may refer the case to the Code of Conduct or the Fitness to Study procedures as appropriate, following discussion with the Faculty Registrar (or equivalent for partner institutions).

In all cases where an allegation is substantiated, the University will direct the student to guidance and support to avoid repeat offences.

Where an allegation is not substantiated, the Faculty Registrar, Doctoral College Manager (or Partnerships Operations Manager in Academic Partnerships) will ensure that all records relating to the allegation are removed from the student's record at the University (and partner institution if appropriate).

16. The penalties that can be imposed for offences in taught modules are as follows:

- a) The offence be recorded on the student's permanent record but there will be no change to the mark that the student has been awarded. The offence may be taken into account by future Panels when determining the penalty for any subsequent offences.**
- b) The mark for the component be capped (at 40% for modules at Levels 4-6 and 50% for modules at Level 7). This penalty can only be awarded if the standard of the work is deemed to be worthy of the capped mark when the material which is the subject of the offence is discounted.**
- c) A mark of zero will be recorded for the component.**
- d) A mark of zero will be recorded for the element.**
- e) A mark of zero will be recorded for the module.**
- f) The final aggregate mark for the programme will be reduced by 10%.**
- g) The student is required to resubmit the assessment or repeat the module, with the award of credit only, with zero marks on successful completion.'**
- h) A mark of zero be recorded for the module of which the assessment formed a part, the student is barred from taking the module again and must withdraw from the programme.**

The Panel is able to impose a more stringent penalty than that immediately suggested by the list above, provided that the context and rationale for that penalty is clear and documented.

A student on a programme leading to registration with a professional body is likely to be required to declare any substantiated offence with that professional body upon registration. The University may also inform the professional body about the offence.

Exceptionally, the Panel may conclude that an offence is so serious that it should be referred to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience with the recommendation that the student is excluded from the University and/or partner institution. Where such a referral is made for a student on a University of Plymouth programme at a partner institution, the Principal of the partner institution will also be consulted.

17. The penalties that can be imposed for offences in research degrees are:

Doctoral degrees	
During the degree (i.e. academic offence relating to research reports / other written work and research undertaken to date).	
At final examination stage (i.e. academic offence relating to the final submitted thesis / <i>viva voce</i> examination).	
1	<p>A formal warning which is recorded on the student's record. The student must correct and resubmit the work to the Supervisory Team, e.g. handing in a corrected version of a literature report or similar (if the supervisory team has had cause to give words of advice to the student previously).</p>
2	<p>Referral in the transfer assessment, to be resubmitted within three months.</p>
3	<p>Requirement to undertake a piece of work and/or training, not necessarily connected to the student's academic programme but related to the offence committed.</p>
4	<p>Withdrawal from the degree – student not being allowed to progress e.g. as 1 above but at a more serious level such as directly copying another student's transfer report.</p>

Master degrees (MPhil/ResM)		
	During the degree (i.e. academic offence relating to research reports / other written work and research undertaken to date).	At final examination stage (i.e. academic offence relating to the final submitted thesis / <i>viva voce</i> examination).
1	A formal warning which is recorded on the student's record. The student must correct and resubmit the work to the Supervisory Team.	Referral – student being allowed to submit a revised thesis within one year for re-examination for an MPhil/ResM degree and, where appropriate, attend an oral examination e.g. major referencing problems which were not deliberate.
2	Requirement to undertake a piece of work and/or training not necessarily connected to the student's academic programme but related to the offence committed.	
3	Withdrawal from the degree – student not being allowed to progress.	Rejection of thesis – student not being allowed consideration for any award and not permitted resubmission.

A student who is also registered with a professional body is likely to be required to declare any substantiated offence to that professional body. The University may also inform the professional body about the offence.

In deciding which penalty should be imposed, consideration should be given to whether the student was at pre- or post-submission stage.

The Faculty Registrar (or Partnerships Operations Manager in Academic Partnerships) / Doctoral College Manager will report the Panel's decision to the student, the School (and the partner institution or Doctoral College if appropriate) in writing within five working days of the date of the Panel's decision.

- 18. A student may appeal against the decision or penalty imposed by the Academic Offences Panel on the following grounds;**
- a) **Evidence of administrative error or procedural irregularity which casts doubt on the conclusion of the Panel that an offence has occurred or on the fairness of the penalty imposed;**

- b) Where there is new evidence which for good reason was not available to the Academic Offences Panel at the time it made its decision;**
- c) Where there is evidence that the Academic Offences Panel acted unfairly or failed to take into account matters which it should have done in reaching its decision.**

Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Complaints and Appeals Office (taught modules) within 10 working days of the date of the letter notifying the student of the outcome of the Panel hearing.

Appeals must be submitted in line with the University's Academic Appeals Procedure available [here](#)

Following completion of the University's internal appeals procedure, a Completion of Procedures letter will be issued. A student who remains dissatisfied with the outcome may make a complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.

AST10.3 Research Misconduct (Postgraduate Research degrees only)

- 19. Research misconduct includes the following, whether deliberate, reckless or negligent:**
 - a. Failure to obtain appropriate permission to conduct research;**
 - b. Deception in relation to research proposals;**
 - c. Unethical behaviour in the conduct of research (the University's policy in Ethical Principles for Research Involving Human Participants applies, but other ethical issues may also be involved);**
 - d. Unauthorised use of information which was acquired confidentially;**
 - e. Deviation from good research practice, where this results in unreasonable risk of harm to humans, other animals or the environment;**
 - f. Distortion of research outcomes, by distortion or omission of data that do not fit expected results;**
 - g. Dishonest misinterpretation of results;**

- h. Publication of data known or believed to be false or misleading;**
- i. Misquotation or misrepresentation of other authors;**
- j. Inappropriate attribution of authorship;**
- k. Fraud or other misuse of research funds or research equipment;**
- l. Attempting, planning or conspiring to be involved in research misconduct;**
- m. Inciting others to be involved in research misconduct;**
- n. Collusion in or concealment of research misconduct by others, and**
- o. Failure to comply with relevant legislation, including that relating to health and safety, data protection, intellectual property, human rights and animal experimentation.**

Research misconduct does not include honest error or honest differences in the design, execution, interpretation or judgment in evaluating research methods or results or misconduct unrelated to the research process. Similarly it does not include poor research unless this encompasses the intention to deceive.

The above list is not exhaustive and other misconduct specifically related to research activity may be dealt with under this procedure.

The University expects all postgraduate research students to follow the [University's Code of Good Research Practice](#) protocols, and the University's [Research Ethics Policy](#).

Where a postgraduate research student is suspected of research misconduct, the Doctoral College Director or equivalent, or nominee, will investigate the alleged offence in consultation with the Doctoral College Manager. The Doctoral College should also inform the Faculty Registrar that the investigation is taking place.

If the Doctoral College Director or equivalent, or nominee, completes the investigation and concludes that there is no evidence of an offence being committed, all records of the allegation will be removed from the student's University record. A copy will be kept in the Doctoral College for audit purposes.

If the Doctoral College Director or equivalent, or nominee, completes the investigation and concludes that there is evidence to suggest research misconduct has occurred, the case will be processed under the Student Research Misconduct procedures.

20. The penalties that can be imposed for research misconduct offences in postgraduate research degrees are:

Doctoral degrees		
During the degree (i.e. academic offence relating to research reports / other written work and research undertaken to date).		At final examination stage (i.e. academic offence relating to the final submitted thesis / <i>viva voce</i> examination).
1	A formal warning which is recorded on the student's record. The student must correct and resubmit the work to the Supervisory Team, e.g. handing in a corrected version of a literature report or similar (if the supervisory team has had cause to give words of advice to the student previously).	Referral (PhD/MD/Prof Docs) – student allowed to submit a revised thesis within one year for re-examination for a doctoral degree and, where appropriate, attend an oral examination e.g. major referencing problems which were not deliberate.
2	Referral in the transfer assessment, to be resubmitted within three months.	Not applicable
3	Requirement to undertake a piece of work and/or training, not necessarily connected to the student's academic programme but related to the offence committed.	Referral (MPhil/ResM) – student allowed to submit a revised thesis within one year for re-examination for a master degree and, where appropriate, attend an oral examination. The maximum award that may be given is MPhil or ResM.
4	Withdrawal from the degree – student not being allowed to progress e.g. as 1 above but at a more serious level such as directly copying another student's transfer report.	Rejection of thesis – student not considered for any award and not permitted a resubmission attempt.

Master degrees (MPhil/ResM)		
	During the degree (i.e. academic offence relating to research reports / other written work and research undertaken to date).	At final examination stage (i.e. academic offence relating to the final submitted thesis / <i>viva voce</i> examination).
<u>1</u>	A formal warning which is recorded on the student's record. The student must correct and resubmit the work to the Supervisory Team.	Referral – student being allowed to submit a revised thesis within one year for re-examination for an MPhil/ResM degree and, where appropriate, attend an oral examination e.g. major referencing problems which were not deliberate.
<u>2</u>	Requirement to undertake a piece of work and/or training not necessarily connected to the student's academic programme but related to the offence committed.	
<u>3</u>	Withdrawal from the degree – student not being allowed to progress.	Rejection of thesis – student not being allowed consideration for any award and not permitted resubmission.

A student who is also registered with a professional body is likely to be required to declare any substantiated offence to that professional body. The University may also inform the professional body about the offence.

AST11 Appeal Against the Decision of an Assessment Board (Taught students) or Academic Decision (Research students)

This regulation applies to students at University of Plymouth sites of delivery and in all UK and international partnerships unless a non-standard regulation has been formally approved.

This regulation should be read alongside the Academic Appeals, available [here](#).

- 1. Students will not be disadvantaged if they make an appeal in good faith.**

- 2. A student on a taught programme (or taught module as part of a research degree) may submit an appeal against a decision of an Award Assessment Board which affects their academic progress, or right to an award.**

- 3. A research degree student has the right to appeal against academic decisions affecting their progression. Such academic decisions include, but are not restricted to:**

- a. The decision to withdraw a student from the research degree due to lack of academic progress (including during the probationary period).**
- b. The decision to withdraw a student from the research degree due to lack of contact with the University (including during the probationary period).**
- c. The decision to withdraw a student from the research degree following the Project Approval process.**
- d. The decision to withdraw a student from the research degree following the Confirmation of Route process.**
- e. The decision to require a student to remain on a Masters level path following the Confirmation of Route process.**
- f. The decision, as a result of a recommendation of the examiners, not to award a student the degree for which they were registered, and not to permit the student to submit a revised thesis for the same degree.**

- 4. The University will only accept an appeal where the student can produce evidence that:**

- * Assessments were not conducted in accordance with the current Assessment Regulations; or**
- * Some other demonstrable material irregularity related to assessment has occurred**

Extenuating circumstances (whether relating to University issues, personal or medical problems or any other issue) which are not submitted to the Faculty or School/Department (taught modules) or Doctoral College (research degrees) by the due date may be considered as grounds for appeal only in the most exceptional circumstances (for instance where the student

was unable to disclose the circumstances in advance because of a medical condition). Since the University permits the submission of extenuating circumstances under confidential cover, the fact that a student did not wish to disclose personal information will not be considered as an exceptional circumstance.

5. An appeal cannot be made against the academic or professional judgement of the examiners (that is, the marks allocated, or the result in itself).

Students may not challenge the validity of their results other than in the case of an alleged transcription error, or on the basis of evidence of material irregularity related to assessment.

Students who suspect that an error has occurred in relation to the transcription of marks (e.g. the wrong mark for a module has been entered on to the transcript), should raise the matter directly and in writing with their Faculty Office or the Doctoral College. Such enquiries will not be treated as formal appeals.

Where a student, having been informed in writing that there has been no error, wishes to appeal, they must make a formal appeal to the Secretary to the Complaints and Appeals Board in the normal way, after marks have been ratified by the Award Assessment Board. If the advice to the student that there was no error is given after the deadline for submission of appeals, the deadline will be extended until ten working days after the date of that advice.

6. The appeal procedure is concerned only with formal progression or award decisions and the assessment processes which give rise to these. It is not appropriate to deal with problems experienced with programme delivery or availability of facilities (for example) via the appeal procedure.

Students should raise such problems by the appropriate means when they arise e.g. via the University complaints procedure, available [here](#)

7. No appeal will be considered if it raises for the first time issues concerning the supervision or teaching of a student.

Such matters will only be considered if they have been raised by the student promptly, at the time they first arose and pursued under the Student Complaints Procedure.

8. If, within an appeal, the student identifies issues which, in the view of the Complaints and Appeals Manager (or nominee) would be more appropriately dealt with via the Student Complaints Procedure, the student will be directed to that procedure. If the Complaints and Appeals Manager (or nominee) believes that the outcome of the complaint may be a factor in determining the appeal, the student will be advised accordingly and the appeal procedure suspended in relation to those issues until:

- **the complaint is resolved, or**
- **the student indicates that they do not wish to progress further with the University Complaints Procedure or**
- **the University Complaints Procedure has been exhausted.**

Where an appeal encompasses a range of issues, those which are not factors likely to be material to the determination of the appeal will be investigated via the complaints procedure and the outcome notified to the student in advance of consideration of the appeal. Students will be advised that whilst the University will take steps to ensure that their case is dealt with as quickly as possible, it may not be possible to conclude a complaint (and hence appeal) prior to any resit assessments, thesis resubmission deadlines, or by the Assessment Board at which the student's profile will next be considered, or by the commencement of the next stage of their course.

Where a student submits a formal (written) complaint to the Complaints and Appeals Office which raises issues which may have impacted on assessment, or a progression or award decision, the Complaints and Appeals Manager (or nominee) will advise the student that the issues being complained of will be investigated via the complaints procedure. If the complaint is upheld, the case will be referred to an Appeal Panel to determine whether the outcome might form the basis for an appeal. The appeal procedure as described in the current appeal regulations will then be followed.

9. The original progression or award decision of an examining body stands until such time as it may be changed by that body, following an upheld appeal.

In some instances, a Graduation Ceremony may be held within the two week deadline period for the submission of appeals. In such cases, students on taught programmes will be permitted to attend the Ceremony, without prejudicing any appeal they may later submit, providing the appeal is submitted within the deadline. Students on research degree programmes will not be able to graduate before the outcome of an appeal is known.

Students whose appeals are undergoing consideration at the time of a Graduation

Ceremony may also attend the Ceremony without prejudicing the outcome of the appeal process. Such students will not receive an award certificate until the appeal is concluded.

10. Academic appeals must be made by the student themselves and all subsequent correspondence from the University will be addressed to the student.

In line with the provisions of the Data Protection Act, the University has a policy on the confidentiality of information held about individual students, including their assessment results, such that information may not be released to any third party other than when required by law or at the written request of the student.

11. Appeals must be made in writing to the Complaints and Appeals Office.

Appeals submitted to the Faculty Office, the Doctoral College, the supervisory team, the Chair of Award Assessment Board, etc, will not be processed.

Students are required to complete and submit an Appeal Pro-forma, which is available to download from the Student Portal and copies are also available from Faculty Offices, Doctoral College and partner institutions.

12. For programmes operating within the standard undergraduate structure, a specific date will be identified annually as the deadline by which appeals must be received by the Complaints and Appeals Office. This deadline will be 10 working days after the deadline for publication of results lists (not the date of issue of the student's transcript), as specified in the University Academic and Administrative Timetable.

For non-standard undergraduate programmes and for postgraduate programmes, a deadline of ten working days after the actual date of publication of the official results list (not the date of issue of the student's transcript), will be set and notified to students in writing.

Research degree students must appeal within ten working days of the formal notification of the academic decision.

Students on a University of Plymouth programme at an associated Partner Institution must submit an appeal by the date specified in the results letter, which will be no later than ten working days after the date on the results letter.

For 2020/21 the deadline for appeals against the decision of the Award Assessment Board for standard programmes will be 26 July 2021. The deadline for appeals against the decision of the Referral Award Assessment Board for standard programmes will be 24 September 2021.

Students are encouraged to submit appeals as soon as is practicable. The University will take steps to expedite consideration of appeals, but there can be no guarantees that they will be resolved prior to resit examinations/ assessments deadlines.

13. Appeals submitted after the University's published deadlines will be out of time and will not normally be considered under the appeals procedures. However, the University recognises that sometimes events occur outside a student's control which prevents them from engaging with the University's Appeals Procedure at the relevant time.

If a student submits an appeal out of time they will need to demonstrate that exceptional circumstances existed that prevented them from submitting their appeal at the appropriate time.

Students will need to provide corroborative evidence such as a medical certificate to support the fact that they were prevented from submitting their appeal by the University's published deadlines. This is in addition to any evidence submitted as part of the appeal against the academic decision.

The decision on whether or not to accept an appeal submitted out of time will be taken by the Complaints and Appeals Office and is the final decision of the University, against which there is no further right of appeal.

14. All appeals will be considered in line with the published [University academic appeals procedure](#).

15. All academic appeals that are made in line with the grounds set out above will be considered at the Formal Stage by the Complaints and Appeals Office.

For appeals about taught programmes or modules, the Complaints and Appeals Office will decide:

- **the appeal is rejected since there are no grounds under the Regulations;**
or
- **the appeal is upheld and the case referred back to the Faculty for review, through the Award Assessment Board.**

For appeals about research degrees, the Complaints and Appeals Office will decide that:

- **the appeal is rejected since there are no grounds under the Regulations; or**
- **the appeal is upheld, and the most appropriate action recommended, taking into account the grounds of the appeal.**

16. Where a student remains dissatisfied with the Formal Stage decision, they may apply for their case to be considered at the Review Stage, by an Appeal Panel. A student must request a review, in writing, within ten working days of the date on the Formal Stage outcome letter.

17. Appeals will be considered at the Review Stage where a student can demonstrate that:

- **There was a material procedural irregularity in the conduct of the Formal Stage.**
- **The outcome was not reasonable in all the circumstances.**

In exceptional circumstances, the University will consider appeals at the Review Stage where new material evidence is available, which the student was unable, for valid reasons, to provide earlier in the process.

The decision on whether the University can consider the appeal under the Review Stage will be made by the Complaints and Appeals Manager (or equivalent). Where the Complaints and Appeals Manager (or equivalent) does not find that a student has demonstrated grounds for the appeal to be considered at the Review Stage, the Complaints and Appeals Office will issue a Completion of Procedures letter.

The review stage will not usually consider the issues afresh or involve a further investigation.

An academic appeal must have been considered at the Formal Stage before it can be escalated to the Review Stage.

15. The Appeal Panel considering Review Stage cases for students on a taught award (or taught module as part of a research degree) will comprise three

members, of whom at least one will be a member of the Students' Union. None of the Panel will be from the Faculty in which the appellant is registered.

The Appeal Panel considering cases for students on research degree awards will comprise two members with experience of supervising and examining research degrees, (such as local academic Research Degrees Managers, plus the Director of the Doctoral College or nominee) and an Officer from the Students' Union) . No member of an Appeal Panel shall have had no previous involvement in the case. No student or research degree candidate may be a member of an Appeal Board considering a postgraduate research appeal. None of the Panel will be from the School in which the appellant is registered.

The Complaints and Appeals Manager (or nominee) will ensure an appropriate gender balance in determining Panel membership.

16. For appeals about taught programmes or modules, the Panel will decide that:

- the appeal is rejected since the Formal Stage decision was reasonable in all the circumstances; or
- the appeal is upheld and the case referred back to the Faculty for review, through the Award Assessment Board.

For appeals about research degrees, the Panel will decide that:

- the appeal is rejected since the Formal Stage decision was reasonable in all the circumstances; or
- the appeal is upheld, and the most appropriate action recommended, taking into account the grounds of the appeal.

Where the recommendation to uphold and allow the Appeal to proceed is made, this course of action will be implemented providing the majority of Panel members consulted agree to it.

Where the recommendation to reject the appeal is made, this course of action will only be implemented provided all Panel members consulted agree to it.

If there is disagreement amongst the Panel members consulted as to whether an appeal should be rejected, the case will be considered by two other nominees drawn from across the Faculties / Doctoral College and the Students' Union (taught awards only), neither of whom will be from the Faculty in which the appellant is registered. The Complaints and Appeals Manager (or nominee) will continue to ensure an appropriate gender balance in Panel membership when determining the additional members to be consulted. The final decision on the appeal will be that indicated by the majority of Panel members.

17. The Complaints and Appeals Officer (or nominee) will process all appeal cases as soon as is practicable.

It is anticipated that all cases arising from the Summer Award Assessment Boards (taught awards only) will normally be concluded by the last working day in August.

18. All appellants will be advised of the Appeal Panel's decision in writing.

Students will be issued with an Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) 'Completion of Procedures' letter when they have completed the Review Stage.