

COVID-19 – Student update 27 April

Dear Students

I hope you are safe and well and that you had as good an Easter vacation as was possible.

As I promised, I can now update you on a number of important matters relating to the Safety Net.

At every step since the COVID-19 pandemic forced us to suspend our normal operations, the University has been committed to ensuring that, as far as possible, students will have continuity of study and will be awarded their qualifications in the expected time period. We have moved **our teaching and learning online**, and **have provided alternative summative assessments** as well as open book examinations where possible. We also introduced [the Safety Net policy](#), to apply to every University taught degree, as a way of mitigating the negative impact that the situation might have upon student performance and progression.

Over the last few weeks, the University's Teaching, Learning and Quality Committee (UTLQC) has been working through the details of how to implement all aspects of the Safety Net to ensure that you are supported, and that your awards retain their quality and standards.

Late last week, **the University's Senate approved the temporary changes to our Academic Regulations proposed by UTLQC** enabling us to move forward with all aspects of the Safety Net.

So, what does that mean for you?

Our aspiration has been to ensure that no student will do any worse than the position they were in as of Monday 16 March. As we have looked at the further detail of how the Safety Net might work, and importantly at every set of different programme requirements across the University, it has become clear that using a cut-off date was not the fairest approach, would be unlikely to uphold academic standards and to satisfy all our professional and regulatory bodies (PSRBs).

So, we have introduced an additional element to the Safety Net, which will base your overall stage mark (your stage aggregate mark) on the **best 60 credits** that you have achieved during the whole academic year. For the majority of undergraduates, you will have already completed 60 credits during semester one, and this part of the Safety Net will ensure that you will do no worse than your aggregate across these credits. By passing your remaining summative assessments, you will only improve your mark and not lower it.

If you are studying a taught postgraduate programme, your stage aggregate mark will be calculated using your highest module marks totalling at least half of your credits and, as with undergraduate programmes, by passing your remaining summative assessments, you will only improve your mark and not lower it.

Given the variation in programme requirements, we have created [new FAQs to explain how the Safety Net applies to the full range of degrees](#), including Foundation, Top-up, and Masters. This includes explanation of how the Safety Net with its comprehensive range of protective measures will work with those programmes where 60 credits of assessment had not been completed in semester one. Please do look at [the FAQs](#) and if you have any concerns, contact your tutor or School.

We have now spoken with our **External Examiners** and shared with them that our priority is to ensure final stage students can successfully complete their awards and all other students are supported to progress to the next stage of their studies. We have informed them of the principles underpinning the Safety Net, and of the introduction of alternative summative assessments, assuring them of their quality and academic rigour.

Our Schools are also talking to **Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies** to inform them of the changes made to our academic regulations, to ensure we are still meeting their requirements. Many of you will already know whether your degree enables you to pursue accreditation and registration with a PSRB, but in case you do not, we are asking staff to remind you.

I hope this update – and the [more extensive detail that we have posted in the FAQs](#) – answers some of the questions you might have. Please do also contact your Faculty Programme Administration Team or School if you have any remaining questions.

As always, please stay safe, and follow the NHS guidelines.

Professor Julian Chaudhuri

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education & Student Experience)
& Chair of University Teaching, Learning & Quality Committee