

Guidance for Boards of Examiners for New Dissertation Module progression Regulations

For the 2017/18 academic year, Regulation Sub-Committee has made significant additions to Regulation 7.1.4 of REG/16/665 General Regulations for Postgraduate Taught Programmes, relating to the conditions under which a postgraduate student may be allowed to begin their dissertation module.

These additions have been made to allow a greater degree of flexibility for students to begin their dissertation module immediately following the completion of their taught modules, before the Board of Examiners has met to make progression decisions. It is also hoped that the amendments will serve to reduce the load on students trailing a significant amount of referred taught credit into the dissertation module stage.

Intention of the Regulations

Postgraduate students, on completion of their taught programmes, will now be permitted to begin their dissertation module prior to the meeting of the [Board of Examiners](#) which would previously have ratified their ability to progress. When the Board of Examiners meeting takes place, the Board should continue to make decisions on student progression along the following lines:

- Students who are found to have successfully passed all of their taught modules may continue with their dissertation module.
- Students who are found to have failed up to a maximum of 30 taught credits may continue with their dissertation module, trailing the 30 referred taught credits concurrently into their dissertation module study.
- Students who are found to have failed more than 30, but no more than 60 taught credits, will be required
 - either to cease study on their dissertation module in order to complete referrals in their failed modules,
 - or to continue with their dissertation module only, completing their referrals at the next available opportunity following submission of their dissertation module assessment.
- Boards of Examiners should consider whether one or both of the above options are viable on a student-by-student basis. The nature of the student's postgraduate programme may preclude one of these options from being viable, for example, dissertation modules which require specific laboratory based work using facilities that are only available at certain times of year.
- Students who are found to have failed more than 60 taught credits will be required to withdraw from their programme of study, and should be recommended for the award of a lesser qualification if permitted under the programme specification and provided the student has satisfied all the requirements for that award.

Considerations for Boards of Examiners

Where a student has failed more than 30, but not more than one half of the taught credits in their programme (normally 60 credits), [Boards of Examiners](#) should take into account the following considerations when agreeing whether one or both options should be made available to the student:

- The next normal assessment date available for the student to submit their dissertation module or referred assessments/examinations. This should be clearly identified and communicated to the student.
- Any VISA compliance issues which may affect the viability of any options otherwise available to the student. Advice should be sought from the Visa Compliance Officer if such possible issues are identified.
- [Exceptional Circumstances Affecting Performance](#) which may have had an impact on the volume of taught credits completed by the student.
- Alternative methods of assessment should be considered for modules and assessments if appropriate, but should apply to the entire module and referred cohort, not individual students.
- Any limitations on the provision of dissertation or laboratory project opportunities, based on the availability of required facilities and support.
- Programme Director input and consultation with Module Tutors via the Programme Director.

Student Choice, Results Letters and Default Decisions

Where the [Board of Examiners](#) decides that a student should have the choice of two courses of action i.e. continuing with their dissertation module or pausing to complete their referred modules, this choice should be made clear to students in their results letter. The letter should also include an invitation to discuss the options with an academic member of the programme team, who is familiar with the student's profile. A deadline for students to inform the University of their decision should be provided, and a default choice stipulated in the event of the student not communicating their preference.