Aston University

GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR FOUNDATION DEGREE PROGRAMMES

Applicable to students in all Stages/years of programmes

These General Regulations, approved by the University Senate, set out the minimum requirements for all programmes leading to a Foundation Degree. Programme regulations are published as part of the programme specification.

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1 DEFINITIONS

1.1 **Approved Place of Learning.** In addition to study at Aston University and/or a partner College, the University, through the University Learning and Teaching Committee and the relevant School Learning and Teaching Committee, may approve the delivery of all or part of a Foundation Degree at other locations, such as employer premises or outreach centres.

1.2 **Approved Programme** means a set of modules organised into a series of Stages leading to a formal qualification offered by the University, detailed in the programme specification approved by the Senate on the recommendation of the University Learning and Teaching Committee and the relevant School Learning and Teaching Committee.

1.3 An **Assessment** is the measurement of a student's performance in a module. This may comprise a number of elements, including written papers, oral tests, essays, continuously assessed work, laboratory or field studies or reports, or other forms of evaluation***.***

1.4 **Associate Dean** means the person designated to co-ordinate all the undergraduate programmes in a School, and to monitor the quality and standards of these programmes, normally the Associate Dean Undergraduate Programmes or the Associate Dean Learning and Teaching, or their nominee.

1.5 **Board of Examiners** means the Board of Examiners of the University for a particular programme, as approved by the Senate on the recommendation of the relevant School Learning and Teaching Committee. Boards of Examiners have responsibility for considering progression and conferment of awards, in accordance with the requirements of the individual programme, and in the light of all the separate module results and any mitigating personal circumstances, exercising powers of condonement as appropriate.

1.6 **Condonement** is the process by which a Board of Examiners, in consideration of a student's overall performance, recommends that credit be awarded for part of a programme in which the student has failed to satisfy the assessment criteria, on the grounds that the positive aspects of the overall performance outweigh the area of failure. The programme specification shall indicate whether any modules are not subject to condonement or where limits to condonement apply, having regard to the aims and learning outcomes of the programmes concerned.

1.7 **Duration of Study**: Candidates for the degree must follow an approved course of study in the University and/or at a partner College of the University, and/or other approved place of learning, normally over two years for a full-time student, and not fewer than three and not more than six academic years for a part-time student. Part-time candidates may not normally accumulate more than 80 credits in any academic year. Subject to the approval of the relevant Associate Dean, full-time candidates may accumulate up to 20 additional credits in any one academic year and part-time students a maximum of 40 additional credits throughout the course of their degree.

1.8 **Exceptional Circumstances** are circumstances which cause the student to:

a perform less well in coursework or examinations than might have been expected on the basis of other work, or

b fail to meet submission deadlines.

In general, **exceptional circumstances** will be of a medical or personal nature significantly affecting the student at or during a relevant period of time and/or during the examination period and which can normally be corroborated by independent evidence.

1.9 **Partner College.** College with whom the University has a Memorandum of Co-operation for the delivery of programmes of study.

1.10 **Patterns of Study.** An approved full-time programme consists of study spent within the University and/or partner College or other place of learning approved for this purpose. Full-time programmes should normally comprise the equivalent of 120 credits per year and a full-time student should take at least 100 credits per year. A part-time student should not normally be taking less than 40 credits per year.

1.11 **Qualifications.** The requirements for all Aston University qualifications, including credits, and Levels of awards, are detailed in Aston University Credit and Qualifications Framework.

1.12 A **Referred Assessment** in a module is a new assessment in that module, of such form and timing as the Board of Examiners may determine, undertaken upon initial failure in that module without following any further tuition for the module. They normally take place prior to the start of the next Stage or the next academic year. (See also Regulation 7 below.)

1.13 A **Repeat Assessment** in a module is a new assessment in that module, of such form and timing as the Board of Examiners may determine. The Board of Examiners may require the student to attend the University and/or partner College and/or other approved place of learning to receive tuition. Repeat assessments normally take place in the academic year following the previous attempt(s). (See also Regulation 7 below.)

1.14 **Restart Assessments**. Restarting a Stage normally requires full attendance and all modules must be retaken. Existing credits from previous attempts at this Stage will be set aside. (See also Regulation 7 below.)

1.15 **School Learning and Teaching Committee** is responsible for the maintenance and enhancement of the academic standards and quality of the taught programmes of a School. School Learning and Teaching Committees may formally delegate all or some of the responsibilities assigned in these General Regulations to appropriate bodies or individuals. Any such delegation of authority should be recorded in the minutes of the Committee.

1.16 **Stage**. The Stage referred to within the regulations is a period of time culminating in a decision by the Board of Examiners on progression or completion. The academic requirements for each Stage of a programme are defined in its programme specification.

1.17 **Trailed Modules**. A trailed module is a module that forms part of a preceding Stage of study and has not yet been passed. The credits associated with the module are added to the progression or award requirements of the subsequent Stage, including for purposes of eligibility for referral. For purposes of condonement, trailed credits remain subject to the maximum condonement volume of their original stage.

1.18 **Transcript.** Students, except those in debt to the University or a partner College will, at the end of each Stage, be supplied by their School with an official transcript recording the modules for which the candidate registered, the Level, the credits awarded and the percentage marks awarded. The transcript should indicate any module passed by condonement or in a referred or repeat assessment.

2 ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS

2.1 Admission to the programme is available to candidates from a wide diversity of backgrounds and with a wide range of prior learning experience. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate their suitability for entry on to the programme to the relevant Associate Dean. Further information on entry qualifications may be found in the programme specification for individual programmes.

2.2 The relevant Associate Dean may exempt from part of a programme of study a student who has demonstrated prior learning of an appropriate nature and standard. Recognised Prior Learning (RPL) includes certificated learning and experiential learning whether gained before admission to the University, or during the period of enrolment. The Associate Dean may award credit to a maximum of one third of an award: for a Foundation Degree normally 80 credits. A higher volume of RPL may be permitted where an award, such as an existing HND/HNC, closely mirrors the Foundation Degree content.

Arrangements for the Recognition of Prior Learning, including certificated learning and experiential learning will be based on the following principles:

a the responsibility rests with the student for making a claim and supporting the claim with appropriate evidence, although advice and assistance on the nature of the evidence required should be provided by the responsible member of School staff. The School should determine appropriate fees for this service;
b the experience of the student is significant only in so far as it can be identified as a source of learning;
c academic assessment of certificated and experiential prior learning is the responsibility solely of academic staff;
d attention should be paid to the matching of a student's stated achievements and competencies against the module learning outcomes for each module for which exemption on the basis of RPL is sought;
e in making offers for exemption the authorised member of staff should be sure that the student has already gained the required knowledge/skills for which exemption is awarded and that their ability to follow the rest of the programme will not be jeopardised;
f any exemptions on the basis of RPL should be approved by the appropriate Associate Dean.

Where a proposal for exemptions involving Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning applies to a group of students, the University recognises that whilst the experience of the group might be similar, the students' learning from it, and therefore the exemptions to which they may individually be entitled, might differ.

3 CHANGES TO PROGRAMMES

The University reserves the right to make variations to the contents or methods of delivery of programmes, if such action is reasonably considered to be necessary by the University. If the University discontinues any programme, it will use its reasonable endeavours to provide a suitable alternative programme.

4 ATTENDANCE

4.1 School Learning and Teaching Committee, or its nominee, may approve a maximum of 24 months leave of absence.

4.2 A student whose attendance has not met the requirements set out in the programme specification may be required by the relevant Associate Dean to withdraw from the programme. It is the responsibility of each student to advise the Associate Dean in writing of any factors that may have affected their attendance.

5 WORK EXPERIENCE

Assessment of work-based learning is an integral part of the programme and is a prerequisite for successful completion of the Foundation Degree.

6 DECISIONS OF THE BOARD OF EXAMINERS

6.1 Wherever the Board of Examiners considers that more than one outcome is applicable, it may allow the student to choose between those options available.

6.2 Subject to the Aston University Credit and Qualifications Frameworks, the Board of Examiners for each programme shall have the discretion to decide whether the student:

a following award of the specified number of credits in the final Stage, shall be recommended for an award, or
b following award of the specified number of credits at Stages other than the final Stage, shall proceed to the next academic Stage of the programme, or
c shall be required to take referred assessments with no further tuition, or
d shall be required to take repeat assessments with or without attendance and in receipt of such tuition as is specified by the Board, or
e shall be required to restart the Stage with full attendance and in receipt of such tuition as is specified by the Board, or
f shall be required to withdraw from the programme, with or without the award of a Certificate of Higher Education.

Where exceptional circumstances are to be taken into account, further options become available to the Board of Examiners, as set out in Section 8 below.

6.3 Where the student proceeds to the next academic Stage of the programme (option b above) the credits associated with any trailed modules shall be added to the progression or award requirements of the subsequent Stage.

6.4 The period for which credit is valid for progression from one Stage of a programme to another or for the award of a degree, or other qualification applicable to that Stage, shall

be three years except where otherwise specified in the programme specification.

6.5 The Board of Examiners shall have the discretion to condone failure in a maximum of one sixth of the credits per academic Stage, provided that there is evidence of adequate performance from the student concerned, except as permitted under Regulation 7 below. The threshold for condonement shall be 35%. Marks below this threshold may not be condoned. The mark obtained by the student for each condoned module shall be used by the Board of Examiners in calculating the overall mark for the Stage of the programme, unless the programme specification specifies otherwise. The student's transcript shall indicate that the module was passed by condonement.

6.6 Before implementing a decision that a student should withdraw from a programme, the Board of Examiners shall give the student concerned, aided by another member of the University (as defined in paragraph 1 of the Charter and Section II of the Statutes) if so desired, an opportunity to make representations, in writing or in person or both, of any circumstances which might have affected his/her performance, that were unknown to the Board when the first decision was made.

6.7 A student wishing to request a formal review of the decision of a Board of Examiners may appeal on the grounds set out in the University's Academic Appeals Procedure. The Academic Appeals Committee may consider allegations of procedural irregularity in the conduct or marking of assessments; the decisions of the Board of Examiners in all matters relating to academic judgement shall be final.

7 OPTIONS IN CASE OF FAILURE

7.1 Except in the case of a restarted Stage, students may not be reassessed in any module for which they have already obtained credit. It must be made explicit to the student how a module is to be reassessed, how the percentage mark for each module is to be determined and the implications of any further failure. Reassessment should be of all elements of a module, unless the Board of Examiners specifically exempts any components.

7.2 The Board of Examiners may allow a student up to three attempts to pass a module at all Stages.

7.3 The Board of Examiners may allow a student to be assessed in a new module(s) as a substitute for a failed module(s). A substitute module(s) will be treated as a referred or repeat module(s) and a mark of 40% shall be recorded for modules passed.

7.4 The Board of Examiners shall record a mark of 40% for referred and repeat modules passed. There is no ceiling on the percentage mark a student may achieve in restart assessments.

7.5 The Board of Examiners' decisions in case of failure are governed by the options set out in Regulation 6.2 above.

7.6 A student who fails not more than one third of the credits for the Stage has the right to take referred assessments in the failed modules.

7.7 The Board of Examiners may, at their discretion, taking into account the student's overall

performance and any exceptional circumstances, allow referral in further credits up to a maximum of one half of the credits for the Stage, including any referred trailed credits.

7.8 The Board of Examiners may require a student who fails in more than one third of the credits for the Stage to either,

restart the entire Stage of assessment with full attendance and in receipt of tuition, or

undertake repeat assessments in the failed modules not later than 12 months after the first attempt, with or without attendance and in receipt of tuition as specified by the Board, or

withdraw from the programme. A student required to withdraw may be eligible for the award of a Certificate of Higher Education, see 7.14 below.

7.9 If a student fails referred assessments, where these constitute the second attempt, the Board of Examiners may require the student to undertake repeat assessments in the failed modules not later than 12 months after the second attempt, with or without attendance and in receipt of tuition as specified by the Board.

7.10 If a student fails repeat assessments, where these constitute the second attempt, the Board of Examiners may require the student either,

to take referred assessments, or

to restart the Stage of assessment with full attendance and in receipt of tuition;

to withdraw from the programme. A student required to withdraw may be eligible for the award of a Certificate of Higher Education, see 7.14 below.

7.11 If a student fails repeat assessments, where these constitute the third attempt, the Board of Examiners will require the student to withdraw from the programme of study.

7.12 If a student fails restart assessments, where these constitute the second attempt, the Board of Examiners may require the student to take referred assessments.

7.13 If a student fails restart assessments, where these constitute the third attempt, the Board of Examiners will require the student to withdraw from the programme of study.

OPTIONS IN CASE OF FAILURE			
	2 further attempts		
Failure in up to 1/3	Referred Assessments	->Repeat Assessments	-> Withdraw
credits of the Stage			
Failure in between 1/3	Restart*	->Referred Assessments*	-> Withdraw
and 1/2 credits of the Stage	**or**		
	Repeat Assessments*	->Restart or Referred	-> Withdraw
	or	Assessments*****	
	Referred Assessments*	->Repeat Assessments*	-> Withdraw
Failure in over 1/2	Restart*	->Referred Assessments*	-> Withdraw
credits of the Stage	**or**		
	Repeat Assessments*	->Restart or Referred	-> Withdraw
		Assessments*****	
*****	**at the discretion of the Board of Examiners**		

7.14 **Certificate of Higher Education**

A student who has gained 120 credits with at least 90 credits at Level 4, but who is unable, for whatever reason, to complete their degree programme shall be awarded a Certificate of Higher Education.

7.15 The award of a Certificate of Higher Education indicates that the student:

a has knowledge of the underlying concepts and principles associated with their area(s) of study, and an ability to evaluate and interpret these within the context of that area of study;
b has an ability to present, evaluate and interpret qualitative and quantitative data, in order to develop lines of argument and make sound judgements in accordance with basic theories and concepts of their subject(s) of study;
c can evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems related to their area(s) of study and/or work;
d is able to communicate the results of their study/work accurately and reliably, and with structured and coherent arguments;
e has a the ability to undertake further training and develop new skills within a structured and managed environment;
f has the qualities and transferable skills necessary.

8 FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE/EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

8.1 The Board of Examiners will consider any claims of exceptional circumstances. All decisions relating to adequate performance and the allocation of marks are at the discretion of the Board, and such circumstances will inform, but not determine, its decisions.

8.2 It is the student's responsibility to inform the Chair of the Exceptional Circumstances and Absence Panel (ECAP) in writing, normally prior to the meeting of the Panel, of any factors that occurred either during or prior to any of their assessments which they feel may have affected their performance. Students should supply any relevant evidence and must comply with any procedures published by the relevant Associate Dean.

8.3 By entering an examination room and viewing an examination or assessment paper students will be regarded as having deemed themselves to be able to undertake the assessment in question, subject to consideration of factors affecting performance (including factors which may arise subsequent to beginning an assessment) which are notified to the Board of Examiners by the student. In such cases the Examination Board will not normally allow the assessment to be retaken as if for the first time.

8.4 A student who is prevented from taking all or part of an assessment, or whose performance has been significantly affected, by illness or other sufficient cause may, where none of the options available in Section 7 is deemed sufficient or appropriate, be allowed to sit the assessment at the next normal occasion as if for the first time. Sufficient cause should be taken as circumstances genuinely beyond the student's control.

8.5 Exceptional Circumstances claims which are judged to meet University Regulations will be addressed by taking appropriate action specific to the individual module(s)/assessment(s) concerned whenever possible (e.g. by allowing a further attempt with no penalty), or by putting in place provisions to address a special need (such allowing a longer length of time for an examination). These Exceptional Circumstances will be deemed to be 'spent' (already dealt with).

8.6 Exceptional Circumstances claims which meet University Regulations, but have not been dealt with by module- or assessment-specific action before the final Board of Examiners for the programme ('unspent' Exceptional Circumstances), will be dealt with by Boards of Examiners as follows:

- Exceptional Circumstances which meet University Regulations will not be addressed using condonement.
- If a candidate has 'unspent' Exceptional Circumstances and there is evidence of reasonable performance elsewhere in their profile the Board of Examiners may decide to increase the borderline band for degree classification for the candidate, taking into account the learning outcomes of the programme.
- If a candidate has 'unspent' Exceptional Circumstances the Board of Examiners may decide that a failed assessment should be attempted as if for the first time, or, accept a module mark which is based on completed components based on a mapping of the module learning outcomes against the assessments.

8.7 At the final Stage of assessment the Board of Examiners may also consider recommending to the appropriate School Learning and Teaching Committee and the Senate that the student be awarded a degree based on the available evidence, which may include an oral examination on the missed module(s) (see Ordinance 5.6)

8.8 Evidence of exceptional circumstances taken into consideration by Boards of Examiners should be carried forward to meetings of Boards of Examiners considering the student's

progress at subsequent Stages of the programme.

9 AWARD OF DEGREE

9.1 A student who has gained the appropriate number of credits at the appropriate Levels shall be recommended to the Senate for award.

9.2 Foundation Degrees may be awarded 'with Distinction' or 'with Merit'.

a To achieve the award of distinction students must achieve an average mark of 70% over all modules which contribute to the award (240 credits).
b To achieve the award of merit students must achieve an average mark of 60% over all modules which contribute to the award (240 credits).

9.3 Borderline candidates

a Candidates who are 0.5% or less below a boundary will be promoted automatically to the higher class.
b Candidates whose mark falls within a 2.0% band below automatic promotion will be considered for promotion to the higher class. Where R10.2.3.b applies:

- Any candidate who has 50% or more of the 14 eligible units in the higher classification should be promoted automatically. The 1 eligible units are:
    - 12 units representing the final stage weighted appropriately, i.e. 20 credit modules count as 2 credit units;
    - 2 units representing the average mark for the second academic stage (normally Stage 2);
    - 2 units representing the average mark for the placement. Or
- If a candidate does not have 16 eligible units (as defined in R10.2.3) ineligible units (e.g. credit from Recognised Prior Learning or other credit without marks) are removed from the calculation and promotion is based on achieving the higher classification in 50% or more of the remaining units.

9.4 In order for an award to be conferred a student must have discharged all obligations to the University and/or partner College, normally within 12 months of the date upon which the Board of Examiners recommended the award.

10 PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

10.1 The results achieved in all assessed work, both by module and overall, and at all Stages of study, should be released to individual students in the form of a transcript detailing his or her own assessment results in the form of a percentage mark per module.

10.2 Percentage marks awarded for each module will be provisional until confirmed by the relevant Board of Examiners; subject to this provision students shall be given informal guidance with regard to their academic performance at such times as the relevant Associate Dean may determine.

10.3 Any final award is regarded as public information and may be published by the University or partner College in any form and released to enquirers on request. The results of students who have been recommended for an award shall be published in a list drawn up in alphabetical order by student name.

11 PROGRESSION TO AN HONOURS DEGREE

11.1 The programme specification for the approved programme shall prescribe the requirements for progression to an Honours degree, which may include successful completion of a bridging programme.

11.2 Foundation Degree graduates should normally complete an Honours Degree within 15 months of completing the Foundation Degree if studying full-time, and within three years if studying part-time. In considering the classification of the Honours Degree the Board of Examiners will base 25% of the final mark on performance in Stage F of the Foundation Degree.

12 WAIVERS OF REGULATIONS

Where, in the opinion of the School Learning and Teaching Committee, there have been exceptional circumstances affecting a student after admission to the programme which could not reasonably have been foreseen at the time of admission and which operate to the detriment of the student, the School may:

a waive any relevant part of the programme specification on such conditions as it may deem fit to the benefit of the student, or

b recommend that the University Learning and Teaching Committee waive any relevant part of the General Regulations on such conditions as it may deem fit to the benefit of the student.

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