



GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR GRADUATE DIPLOMA PROGRAMMES

Applicable to students in all Stages/years of programmes

These General Regulations, approved by the University Senate, set out the requirements for Graduate Diploma awards. Programme regulations are published as part of the programme specification.

CONTENTS

1	Definitions	2
2	Entry Qualifications	3
3	Structure of Programmes	4
4	Leave of Absence	5
5	Decisions of the Board of Examiners	5
6	Options in Case of Failure	6
7	Factors affecting performance/Exceptional Circumstances	6
8	Transfer between Modes of Attendance	7
9	Award of Diploma	8
10	Publication of Results	8
11	Re-enrolment	8
12	Waivers of Regulations	8

1 DEFINITIONS

- 1.1 **Aegrotat.** An Aegrotat Qualification may be awarded to individual candidates who have enrolled for a Diploma and who, in the judgement of the Examination Board, would have qualified for the award had he or she not been prevented by illness or incapacity from being fully examined. Information about the ability and standard of performance on the programme of the holder of an Aegrotat Qualification may be obtained through references.
- 1.2 **Approved programme** means a set of modules leading to a formal qualification offered by the University prescribed by 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 this will be 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 exceptional 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 **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.

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

Framework.

- 1.9 A **Referred Assessment** in a module is a new assessment in that module, after initial failure in up to 40 credits, of such form and timing as the Board of Examiners may determine and to be taken once only, at the next normal occasion, without following any further tuition for the module.
- 1.10 **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.
- 1.11 **Transcript.** Students, except those in debt to the University, will 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 assessment.

2 ENTRY QUALIFICATIONS

- 2.1 An applicant for an approved programme must produce evidence of having been awarded either a first degree from a recognised University or Institute of Higher Education or a qualification deemed by the appropriate School Learning and Teaching Committee to be at least of equivalent standing.
- 2.2 Approval, for the purposes of admission, of any academic award of any University or College or National Council or professional body shall be determined by the School Learning and Teaching Committee responsible for the programme, in consultation with the Registry.
- 2.3 Applicants must provide evidence of proficiency in the English language as demonstrated by a pass at GCSE grades A*, A, B or C, or a qualification recognised by the Senate as being equivalent.
- 2.4 Applicants must produce evidence of having fulfilled the entry requirements as prescribed by the programme specification relating to that particular programme.
- 2.5 In certain cases, the Associate Dean may require an applicant to undertake a specified course or courses and/or pass an assessment before enrolling on the programme.
- 2.6 The Associate Dean may exempt from part of a programme of study a student who has satisfactorily pursued a previous programme of study of an appropriate nature and standard. The Associate Dean may award credit to a maximum of 40 credits of the total credit required for the programme leading to an Aston award and the extent of the credit awarded must be recorded by the Board of Examiners.
- 2.7 The following basic principles have been drawn up to assist Schools in developing procedures for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), in cases where this is accepted

by the School. RPL includes certificated learning and experiential learning whether gained before admission to the University, or during the period of enrolment.

- 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 STRUCTURE OF PROGRAMME

3.1 Level

The overall outcomes for any Graduate Diploma programme shall be at Honours Level (Level 6) as defined by the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

3.2 Duration

A full-time Certificate programme (consisting of 60 credits) must not normally be of more than six months' duration.

A full-time Graduate Diploma programme (consisting of 120 credits) must be between six months' and 12 months' duration.

- 3.3 Where a programme of the same title is offered on a full-time, part-time or flexible credit accumulation basis, the various versions of the programme must cover equivalent elements regardless of mode of attendance.
- 3.4 The University will continue to provide modules to students enrolled on a programme by flexible credit accumulation in the event that the programme is suspended or withdrawn, normally for one full academic year.
- 3.5 The specification for a programme offered by flexible credit accumulation will include regulations detailing how the Examination Board will manage student progression.

4 LEAVE OF ABSENCE

The School Learning and Teaching Committees, or the committees' nominees, may approve a maximum of 24 months leave of absence.

5 DECISIONS OF THE BOARD OF EXAMINERS

- 5.1 Subject to the Aston University Credit and Qualifications Framework and subsequent versions, 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 shall be recommended for an award, or
 - b should be required to take one or more referred assessments, or
 - c should be required to withdraw from the programme.
- 5.2 The Board of Examiners shall have the discretion to decide the period of validity for credit, which will not normally be more than five years.
- 5.3 The Board of Examiners shall have the discretion to decide whether a student who is required to take a referred assessment may be exempted from repeating any part(s) of the relevant modules and the form and method of their assessment, which need not be the same as on the first occasion.
- 5.4 The Board of Examiners shall have the discretion to condone failure in a maximum of one third of the taught credits, provided that there is evidence of adequate performance from the student concerned. The threshold for condonement of modules at Levels 4, 5 and 6 shall be 35%. Marks below the threshold may not normally 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 programme and/or the grade of the Diploma. The actual mark obtained by the student shall be used by the Board of Examiners in calculating the overall mark. The student's transcript shall indicate that the module was passed by condonement.
- 5.5 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 may have affected his/her performance, that were unknown to the Board when the first decision was made.
- 5.6 A student may make representations to the Board of Examiners if the Board has recommended the award of a lesser qualification, following the student's failure to achieve the standard required for the qualification for which the student was first registered.
- 5.7 A student may make representations to the Board of Examiners if the Board has exercised its discretion under Regulation 8 below to require the student to transfer on

academic grounds to a programme leading to a lesser qualification than that for which the student was first registered.

- 5.8 A student wishing to request a formal review of the decision of the 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 and administration of assessments; the decisions of the Board of Examiners in all matters relating to academic judgement shall be final.

6 OPTIONS IN CASE OF FAILURE

6.1 Principles

- 6.1.1 Students may not be reassessed in any module for which they have already obtained credit.
- 6.1.2 For each referred module passed the Board of Examiners shall record a percentage mark equivalent to the minimum pass mark for the module.
- 6.1.3 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 the minimum pass mark for the module shall be recorded for modules passed.

6.2 Failure in Assessments

- 6.2.1 A student who fails to satisfy the Board of Examiners normally in not more than one third of the credits in an approved programme has the right either

to take referred assessments, or

to choose to accept the award of a lesser qualification than that for which the student was registered, if permitted by the programme specification, provided that the student has satisfied all the requirements for that award.

- 6.2.2 In the case of a student who fails in more than one third of the credits in an approved programme or who fails referred assessments, the Board of Examiners may either

recommend the award of a lesser qualification than that for which the student was registered, if permitted by the programme specification and provided the student has satisfied all the requirements for that award, or

require the student to withdraw from the programme.

7 FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE/EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

- 7.1 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.

- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 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.
- 7.4 A student who is prevented from taking all or part of an assessment by illness or other sufficient cause may 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 which prevented his or her attendance.
- 7.5 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 as allowing a longer length of time for an examination). These Exceptional Circumstances will be deemed to be 'spent' (already dealt with).
- 7.6 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 grade band 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.
- 7.7 Evidence of exceptional circumstances taken into consideration by Boards of Examiners should be carried forward to any meetings of Boards of Examiners considering the student's progress at subsequent points in the programme.

8 TRANSFER BETWEEN MODES OF ATTENDANCE

- 8.1 A student may apply for transfer between full-time, part-time, flexible credit accumulation and distance learning variants of a programme, subject to any constraints specified by the programme specification.

8.2 Such transfers must be approved by the Associate Dean.

9 AWARD OF DIPLOMA

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 Graduate Diplomas 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 (120 credits).
- b To achieve the award of merit students must achieve an average mark of 60% over all modules which contribute to the award (120 credits).

9.3 The borderline band for a Graduate Diploma programme of 120 credits is 0.5% or less below a borderline.

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 assessments, both by module and overall, 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 Associate Dean may determine.

10.3 The final award is regarded as public information and may be published by the University in any form and released to enquirers on request.

11 RE-ENROLMENT

11.1 A student who has been required to withdraw from a programme because of academic failure will not be allowed to re-enrol on that programme.

11.2 A student who has been awarded a lesser qualification than that for which he/she was first registered because of academic failure will not be allowed to re-enrol on the relevant Graduate Diploma programme.

12 WAIVERS OF REGULATIONS

12.1 Where 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 Learning and Teaching Committee may:

- a waive any 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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