

Credit & Qualifications Framework

AU-RSC-20-3958-A

Applicable to students in all Stages/Years of programmes

2021-22



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Summary

This framework sets out core details of the qualifications that the University may award, and a number of overarching practices and definitions that are applicable across all of the University's General Regulations, including:

- Guiding principles governing Credit-Bearing Modules, known as Aston Credits (previously Aston Module Achievement (AMA)).
- How modules and programmes that are either non-credit bearing or fewer than 10 credits are recognised by the University.
- The types of Prior Learning that may be recognised by the University, including the minimum and maximum limits on the volume of prior learning that can be approved.
- Key definitions of common terms that are relevant across all of the University's General Regulations.

Related Regulations, Policies, and Guidance

The University's Ordinances also provide a formal list of awards that the University may confer. Further information on Recognition of Prior Learning and definitions of commonly used regulatory terms can be found within the General Regulations for the specific type of programme in question.

Version Control

Ref No	Version	Responsible Officer	Approved by	Approval Date	Effective Date
AU-RSC-18-1854	A	Adam Hewitt	ULTC	Jun 2019	Sep 2019
AU-RSC-19-2808	A	Adam Hewitt	ULTC	Jun 2020	Sep 2020
AU-RSC-20-3958	A	Adam Hewitt	ULTC	Jun 2021	Sep 2021

1.1 Qualifications within the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)

Qualification	Qualification Level(FHEQ)	Minimum Credits for the award	Minimum Credits at qualification level	Other requirements	FQ-EHEA Cycles	ECTS Credits
Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE)	4	120	90	None		60 ECTS credits
Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE)	5	240	90	Maximum 150 Level 4 credits	Short cycle (within or linked to the first cycle) qualifications	Approx 120 ECTS credits
Foundation Degree (e.g. FdEng)	5	240	90	Minimum 100 Level 4 credits		
Ordinary Degree	6	300	60	None	First cycle (end of cycle) qualifications	180-240 ECTS credits
Ordinary Degree with Placement Year	6	420 (including 120 at Level P)	60	None		
Pass Degree (Honours Degree)	6	320	Not specified			
Pass Degree (Honours Degree) with Placement Year	6	440 (including 120 at Level P)	Not specified			
Honours Degree	6	360	90	Maximum 160 Level 4 credits		
Honours Degree with Placement Year	6	480 (including 120 at Level P)	90	Maximum 160 Level 4 credits		
Graduate Certificate	6	60	40			
Graduate Diploma	6	120	80	None		

Qualification	Qualification Level(FHEQ)	Minimum Credits for the award	Minimum Credits at qualification level	Other requirements	FQ-EHEA Cycles	ECTS Credits
MChB	7	600				
Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert)	7	60	40	None		
Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip)	7	120	90	None		

Integrated Master's Degree (e.g. MEng, MPharm, MSci)	7	480	120	Maximum 140 Level 4 credits. 220 credits at Level 6 or 7	Second cycle (end of cycle) qualifications	The minimum requirement is 60 ECTS credits; however a range of 90-120 ECTS credits is more typical at second cycle Level
Integrated Master's Degree with Placement Year	7	600 (including 120 at Level P)	120	Maximum 140 Level 4 credits. 220 credits at Level 6 or 7		
MPhys	7	540 (including 90 at Level P)	N/A	None		
Accelerated Integrated Master's Degree with Placement Year	7	540 (including 90 at Level P)	120	Maximum of 140 Level 4 credits. 210 credits at Level 6 or 7		
Taught Master's Degree (MSc, MA, MBA, M.Ed, MRes, MCh Orth)	7	180	150	None		
Extended Taught Master's Degree (MSc, MA, MBA, MRes)	7	240	200	None		
Research Master's Degree MSc or MA (by Research)	7	Not credit rated	N/A	None		
MPhil	7	Not credit rated	N/A	None		
PhD	8	Not credit rated	N/A	None	Third cycle (end of cycle) qualifications	Not typically credit-rated
Professional Doctorate	8	Not credit-rated except for contributory modules at Master's Level and below	Taught element will be no more than one third of programme	None		
MD	8	Not credit rated	N/A	None		
EdD	8	540	360	None		

2 Credit-Bearing Modules: Aston Credits (formerly Aston Module Achievement (AMA))

- 2.1 Students enrolled on approved credit-rated modules as follows will be eligible for recognition of their Aston Credits:
- Students taking modules which are 'extra' to their programme specification e.g. Languages for All (University-Wide Language Programme modules);
 - Occasional or Associate students taking modules at any Level;
 - Students enrolled on programmes by Flexible Credit Accumulation.
- 2.2 Aston Credits may only be awarded if the student has passed the module and the award has been formally approved and recorded by an Aston Module Board. Condonement or referral decisions can only be made by the relevant Programme Board.
- 2.3 Any short courses which are credit-rated should be approved by the providing College and recorded on the student record system.
- 2.4 Further guidance on Aston Credits is available on the University web-site: [Recognising Achievement of Aston Modules outside a Programme Specification](#)

3 Non-Credit-Bearing Modules or Courses

Qualification	Qualification Level	Credits required for the award
Aston University Record or Statement of Attendance	Any Level	Non-credit-rated or programme of fewer than 10 credits.

4 Recognition of Prior Learning

- 4.1 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) refers to:
- a credit or qualifications that have been awarded by a UK higher education degree-awarding body in accordance with the relevant higher education qualifications framework, recognition of which may also be referred to as credit transfer.
 - b certificated prior learning (such as professional development awards or employment-based awards) which is at higher education level but which has not led to the award of credits or qualifications positioned on the relevant higher education qualifications framework
 - c experiential prior learning, which is learning gained through experience where the learning has not been formally assessed.
- 4.2 A process of assessment must be carried out to enable a decision to be made about whether the learning defined in 4.1b and 4.1c above is suitable for recognition.
- 4.3 Where a percentage mark is available for learning undertaken either at Aston University or at another institution (type 4.1a) the responsibility for making a decision on whether it should be used resides with the College concerned. For example, in

some cases it may not be appropriate for the College to accept a percentage mark from a different institution or professional body where approaches to marking standards might be very different-

- 4.4 The University should award credit, but not marks, for prior learning of types 4.1b and 4.1c. This takes into account the University's current relative lack of experience in this area, and the perceived difficulty of identifying a fully reliable method of awarding marks which will be accepted by all Colleges. It is intended that this be kept under review.
- 4.5 Where credit is awarded but no mark is available, degree classification will be calculated on the basis of the other marks (i.e. Aston marks, and any marks from prior learning of type 4.1a deemed appropriate for use) using the formula for degree classification specified in the appropriate regulations.
- 4.6 The smallest amount of learning which can be submitted for recognition should be 10 credits. A maximum of two thirds of the total credit required for an Aston Bachelor award, or three quarters of the total credit required for an Integrated Master's award may be submitted for recognition as RPL.
- 4.7 Any claim for RPL should be submitted before the beginning of the relevant Stage of the programme. In the case of a Master's programme this means submission before the programme has begun. RPL claims put forward after the beginning of the relevant Stage will not be accepted.
- 4.8 Current regulations regarding the currency of credit apply to credit claimed and awarded via the RPL process. For example, for a postgraduate programme current General Regulations state that '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'.
- 4.9 RPL is a separate process to module substitution and should not be confused with the substitution practices of Regulation 6.1.2 and Regulation 6.1.3 in [General Regulations for Undergraduate and Integrated Master's Programmes](#).
- 4.10 RPL should be clearly recorded on transcripts.

5 Definitions of key terms

5.1 Core Module

A core module is a module that students must complete in order to be considered for a particular degree. The core modules for each programme are given in the relevant programme specification.

5.2 Co-requisite Module

A Co-requisite refers to two or more modules a student is normally required to study at the same time within the same Stage of a programme. This is not necessarily the same as a Core module which students are required to study as a compulsory element of a particular programme.

5.3 Credit

A credit is a measure of the amount of work attached to each unit of teaching, learning and assessment; 10 learning hours = 1 credit. Students are required to obtain credit by compliance with the University General Regulations and the programme specification for their programme. Degrees by individual research are not credit-rated at Aston University as the research process and the majority of its meaningful outcomes are unique to the individual being assessed and not the result of a unit of teaching, learning and assessment shared by a group.

5.4 Dissertation Module (Master's only)

MA/MSc/MBA dissertations should not be larger than 80 credits or smaller than 60 credits. If a dissertation is larger than 60 credits adequate provision should be made for students to exit with a Postgraduate Diploma. For MRes programmes, the dissertation module should not be larger than 120 credits or smaller than 90 credits. Dissertations should consist of one module, subject to the requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies.

5.5 Dual, Joint and Multiple Awards

- 1 Undergraduate programmes (including Foundation Degree and Graduate Diploma):

A minimum of one third of the academic credits for any Undergraduate award should be delivered and assessed by Aston University.

- 2 Postgraduate Taught Programmes

Aston academic staff must have a formal role (as defined by [General Regulations for Postgraduate Taught Programmes](#)) in both the supervision and the marking of the dissertation module.

- 3 Aston University will not award qualifications (for example interim award) which do not meet the requirements given in Regulation 5.5.1 and Regulation 5.5.2.
- 4 A Joint Honours programme is a programme demonstrating an even (or near even) split of 60 credits per Stage from each subject area.

5.6 Foundation Degree

The Foundation Degree is an unclassified award conferred on candidates successfully completing periods of Level 4 and Level 5 study. Candidates are expected to achieve 240 credits with a minimum of 90 at Level 5 to be eligible for the award of Foundation Degree:

Candidates who successfully complete 120 credits with a minimum of 90 credits at Level 4, but do not complete the Foundation Degree, will be eligible for the award of a Certificate of Higher Education. A Foundation Degree may include Level 0 credits.

5.7 Intermediate Awards

- 1 On the recommendation of the appropriate Board of Examiners an intermediate award may be awarded to candidates who do not complete the award for which they enrolled. Intermediate awards will only be awarded where the candidate meets the requirements specified for the award in this Framework, and in the General Regulations for the relevant award.
- 2 Undergraduate programmes (Level 6 and below) and Integrated Master's programmes (Level 7)

Aston CertHE and DipHE intermediate awards are untitled, reflecting the general nature of the outcomes for these undergraduate awards (see Regulation 5.11 of these Regulations). Learning Outcomes for CertHE and DipHE intermediate awards are normally included in the relevant Programme Specification. In other cases, the Learning Outcomes for CertHE and DipHE intermediate awards in the General Regulations will apply. BSc awards may be awarded to students enrolled for Integrated Master's programmes. Learning Outcomes for intermediate BSc awards will be included in the relevant Programme Specification.

- 3 Master's programmes (Level 7)

The learning outcomes for intermediate awards at Master's Level are the same as those for the final award. Any differences are in the extent to which individual outcomes have been realised within the scope appropriate for a learning outcome at Level 7. Learning outcomes are included in the relevant programme specification.

5.8 Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are predictive statements that describe the learning that will have been evidenced as a consequence of successfully completing a module or programme of study.

5.9 Levels

Each module is ascribed one of the following Levels only. Levels are assigned to a module by considering the award to which the programme is leading and the prior knowledge or expertise required to undertake the module.

- | | |
|---------|---|
| Level 3 | the knowledge and understanding required to commence the preliminary Stage of an Honours Degree, not to be used in determining the final degree classification. |
| Level 4 | the standard of modules designed principally for the first Stage of an Honours Degree, normally not to be used in determining the final degree classification. |
| Level 5 | the standard of modules designed principally for the second Stage of an Honours Degree. |

Level 6	the standard of modules designed principally for the final Stage(s) of a Bachelors Honours Degree.
Level 7	the standard of modules appropriate to a postgraduate taught programme. Programmes at this Level normally require the prerequisite experience and skills of an Honours graduate or equivalent.
Level 8	the standard of modules appropriate to a doctoral programme. Programmes at this Level normally require the prerequisite experience and skills of a Master's graduate or equivalent.
Level P	assessed sandwich placement, linguistic experience, academic study abroad or professional practice.

Programmes must have sufficient credit available, appropriate to the qualification Level of the programme, for a student to achieve the award without studying credits of a higher Level.

5.10 Module

A module is an agreed unit of teaching, learning and assessment comprising 150 hours of notional student effort for 15 credits. Modules may be offered for exact multiples of 15 credits, from 15 upwards. Where a module has more than one assessed element, the required mark will be the weighted average of the marks for each element as defined in the module description. Research Programmes may contain credit-rated modules. A Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) for undergraduate and Diploma Supplements for postgraduate students will record credits gained through modules.

5.11 Naming of Awards

The following **final** awards do not have names: MSc or MA (by Research), MPhil, PhD, MD.

- a Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE) and Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE) awards which are intermediate awards do not have names. CertHE and DipHE awards which are final awards in their own right have the names agreed during programme approval.
- b All Postgraduate Certificate and Postgraduate Diploma awards have the names agreed during the programme approval process. In the case of intermediate awards this will be the same as the final award unless a different name is approved as part of programme approval. The naming of postgraduate intermediate awards reflects the high level of subject specific expertise that the programmes develop in their graduates.

5.12 Optional Module

An optional module is a module that a student chooses to complete as part of their

programme from a number of options offered. Optional modules may be offered by the same College and subject area as the student's programme of study, or by another College/Subject Area. The available option modules will be listed in the programme specification.

5.13 Ordinary Degree

An Ordinary Degree, into which a student may transfer during their period of study in accordance with the programme specification for the programme, has specific programme requirements, but requires a lower credit total than a degree with Honours; 300 credits for a full-time degree and 420 for a sandwich/language degree. At least 60 credits must be at Level 6. A student may not be admitted directly to an Ordinary Degree programme.

The Ordinary Degree is constituted of a minimum of 300 credits, consisting of a number of modules as decided by the relevant Representations Board. The Learning Outcomes for an Ordinary Degree are the same as those of the corresponding Honours Degree, demonstrated to a restricted extent.

5.14 Pass Degree

A student who has followed an approved programme leading to a degree with Honours, but who fails to reach at least a 3rd Class Honours standard, may, at the discretion of the Board of Examiners, be awarded a Pass Degree; provided that they have achieved a minimum of 320 credits for a full-time degree, or 440 credits for a sandwich/language degree overall. There shall be no Pass Degree for programmes leading to an Integrated Master's Degree, however a Pass Degree may be awarded as an exit award prior to commencement of Level 7 study.

5.15 Pass Mark

In order to gain credit for a module a student must normally have gained a pass mark in that module of at least 40% for modules at Levels 4, 5 or 6, and 50% for modules at Level 7.

Master's (Level 7) modules should have a pass mark of at least 50% when part of an Integrated Master's programme or when available as an option on an undergraduate programme.

Level 4, 5 and 6 modules should have a pass mark of at least 40% when part of an Integrated Master's or postgraduate programme.

5.16 Prerequisite Module

A Prerequisite refers to a module a student is normally required to study prior to studying a module for which it is a prerequisite. This is not necessarily the same as a Core module which students are required to study as a compulsory element of a particular programme.

5.17 Programme Specification

All approved taught programmes shall have a programme specification in the format approved by the University. There is no programme specification for programmes of individual research. General Regulations specify the information that should be provided to students by Colleges.

5.18 Research Degrees

Research Degrees are MSc by Research, MPhil, PhD, MD and Professional Doctorate. A Research Degree is awarded on the basis of a thesis (or a portfolio for some Professional Doctorates) which assesses outcomes unique to each student and their topic. A student may complete modules as part of a research degree but these are not the basis on which the award is determined. Research degrees may therefore include credit-rated modules but are not themselves given an overall credit-rating.

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