

# General Regulations for Foundation Degree Programmes

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AU-RSC-20-3960-A

Applicable to students in all Stages/Years of Foundation  
Degree programmes

2021-22

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## Regulation Summary

These General Regulations, approved by the University [Senate](#), set out the requirements for Foundation Degree programmes, including:

- University baseline entry qualifications and regulations on the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).
- Decisions available to Boards of Examiners, including periods of credit validity, options in the case of failure, condonement, and refer/repeat/withdrawal decisions.
- General principles relating to exceptional circumstances, which are expanded on in the University's [Guide to Exceptional Circumstances](#).
- Degree algorithms and calculation of student awards.
- Requirements for progression to Honours degree study.

## Related Regulations, Policies, and Guidance

These general regulations should be read in conjunction with the University's [Credit and Qualifications Framework](#). The University's [General Regulations for the Conduct of Boards of Examiners](#) provide further information on student progression decisions.

General regulations for other types of programmes operated by the University are available on the [general regulations webpage](#). Additional programme regulations are published as part of the relevant Programme Specification.

## Version Control

Ref No	Version	Responsible Officer	Approved by	Approval Date	Effective Date
AU-RSC-18-1856	A	Adam Hewitt	ULTC	Jun 2019	Sep 2019
AU-RSC-19-2810	A	Adam Hewitt	ULTC	Jun 2020	Sep 2020
AU-RSC-20-3960	A	Adam Hewitt	ULTC	Jun 2021	Sep 2021

# 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 College 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 An **Approved Programme** is 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 [College 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 examinations, coursework, and practicals.
- 1.4 **Associate Dean** means the person designated to co-ordinate all the undergraduate programmes in a College, and to monitor the quality and standards of these programmes.
- 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 [College 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 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.
- 1.8 **Deferred Assessment** is assessment in a failed module with no increment to the attempt number for that assessment. The Board of Examiners may require the student to attend the University and receive tuition.
- 1.9 **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.

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

- a perform less well in coursework than might have been expected on the basis of other work,
- b fail to meet submission deadlines,
- c fail to attend a times assessment or examination, and/or
- d be adversely affected by an incident or issue occurring during an examination.

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.

1.11 **Moderation** is the name given to procedures for checking the accuracy and appropriateness of academic assessment. It usually involves a person 'new' to the item being moderated. That may be a person external to the University or a member of staff who has not been directly involved in the process to be moderated. Assessment processes that are moderated at Aston include examination papers and marking.

The University's [Assessment Regulations](#) further define a number of moderation processes practised on approved programmes.

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

1.13 **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.

1.14 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.

1.15 **Qualifications.** The requirements for all Aston University qualifications, including credits, and Levels of awards, are detailed in Aston University's [Credit and Qualifications Framework](#).

1.16 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. Referred

assessments normally take place prior to the start of the next academic year. (See also [Regulation 6](#) below.)

- 1.17 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 6](#) below.)
- 1.18 **Restart Assessments.** Restarting a [Stage](#) normally requires full attendance and all modules must be retaken. Restart decisions are only permitted where a student's study has been significantly affected by appropriate exceptional circumstances. Existing credits from previous attempts at this Stage will be set aside. (See also [Regulation 6](#) below.)
- 1.19 **College Learning and Teaching Committee** is responsible for the maintenance and enhancement of the academic standards and quality of the taught programmes of a College. College 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.
- 1.20 **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.
- 1.21 **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.
- 1.22 **Transcript.** Students, except those in academic-related debt to the University or a [Partner College](#) as set out in the University Sanctions Policy, will, at the end of each Stage, be supplied by their College 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 College staff. The College 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 LEAVE OF ABSENCE

The [College Learning and Teaching Committees](#), or the committees' nominees, may approve a maximum of 24 months leave of absence.

### 4 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.

### 5 DECISIONS OF THE BOARD OF EXAMINERS

- 5.1 Wherever the Board of Examiners considers that more than one outcome is applicable, it may allow the student to choose between those options available.
- 5.2 Subject to the Aston University [Credit and Qualifications Framework](#), 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 (where a student's study has been significantly affected by appropriate exceptional circumstances), 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 7](#) below.

- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 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 6](#) 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.
- 5.6 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.
- 5.7 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.

## 6 OPTIONS IN CASE OF FAILURE

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 The Board of Examiners may allow a student up to three attempts to pass a module at all Stages.
- 6.3 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.
- 6.4 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.
- 6.5 The Board of Examiners' decisions in case of failure are governed by the options set out in [Regulation 5.2](#) above.
- 6.6 A student who fails not more than 45 credits for the Stage has the right to take referred assessments in the failed modules.
- 6.7 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.
- 6.8 The Board of Examiners may require a student who fails in more than 45 credits for the Stage to either,
- where a student's study has been significantly affected by appropriate exceptional circumstances, to 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 [6.14](#) below.
- 6.9 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.
- 6.10 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

where a student's study has been significantly affected by appropriate exceptional circumstances, 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 [6.14](#) below.

- 6.11 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.
- 6.12 If a student fails restart assessments, where these constitute the second attempt, the Board of Examiners may require the student to take referred assessments.
- 6.13 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.

<b>OPTIONS IN CASE OF FAILURE</b>			
<b>Stage</b>	<b>Failure in up to 45 credits</b>	<b>Failure in between 46 and 60 credits</b>	<b>Failure in over 60 credits</b>
<b>In-Stage Programme Board</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *Referred assessments</li> <li>• **Withdraw and, if applicable, recommend a lesser award</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *Referred assessments</li> <li>• *Repeat</li> <li>• Restart</li> <li>• Withdraw and, if applicable, recommend a lesser award</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *Repeat</li> <li>• Restart</li> <li>• Withdraw and, if applicable, make a lesser award</li> </ul>
<b>End-of-Stage Programme Board</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *Repeat</li> <li>• **Withdraw and recommend a lesser award</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *Repeat</li> <li>• *Restart</li> <li>• Withdraw and recommend a lesser award</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *Repeat</li> <li>• *Restart</li> <li>• Withdraw and recommend a lesser award</li> </ul>

\* Examination Boards may take account of exceptional circumstances or other mitigating factors and recommend that the attempt is deferred.

\*\* If failure is 3<sup>rd</sup> attempt.

Boards of Examiners may use their discretion in making these decisions and decisions may be used in conjunction with condonement (in accordance with Regulation 5.5).

**All decisions should be made in accordance with relevant General and Programme Regulations, and with a view to ensuring consistency, parity and fairness.**

#### 6.14 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.

#### 6.15 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 the ability to undertake further training and develop new skills within a structured and managed environment;
- f has the qualities and transferable skills necessary.

## 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. Students should supply any relevant evidence and must comply with any procedures published by the relevant Associate Dean.

7.3 By being present beyond the start time of an examination or other fixed-time assessment, students will be regarded as having deemed themselves fit to be able to undertake the assessment in question, and accept the outcome of the assessment as valid, subject to consideration of factors affecting performance which may arise subsequent to beginning an assessment which are notified to the Board of Examiners by the student. Any factors affecting performance that result in a student leaving an examination or other fixed-timed assessment must be raised with the Chief Invigilator and must be recorded in the Chief Invigilator's Report. Where a student has deemed themselves fit to sit, the Examination Board will normally consider the student to have made a valid attempt at the assessment.

- 7.4 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 8 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 to circumstances genuinely beyond the student's control.
- 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 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 At the final Stage of assessment the Board of Examiners may also consider recommending to the appropriate [College 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](#))
- 7.8 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.

## 8 AWARD OF DEGREE

- 8.1 A student who has gained the appropriate number of credits at the appropriate Levels shall be recommended to the [Senate](#) for award.
- 8.2 Foundation Degrees may be awarded 'with Distinction' or 'with Merit'.
- To achieve the award of distinction students must achieve an average mark of 70% over all modules which contribute to the award (240 credits).
  - To achieve the award of merit students must achieve an average mark of 60% over all modules which contribute to the award (240 credits).

- 8.3 Borderline candidates
- a Candidates who are 0.5% or less below a boundary will be promoted automatically to the higher grade.
  - b Candidates whose mark falls within a 2.0% band below automatic promotion will be considered for promotion to the higher grade:
    - Any candidate who has 50% or more of the 14 eligible units in the higher grade should be promoted automatically. The 14 eligible units are:
      - 12 units representing the final stage weighted appropriately, i.e. 30 credit modules count as 3 credit units;
      - 2 units representing the average mark for the first academic stage (normally Stage 1);
    - If a candidate does not have 14 eligible units, 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 grade in 50% or more of the remaining units.
- 8.4 For each Stage contributing to the final degree classification, a minimum of 90 credits should have a numerical mark.
- 8.5 In order for an award to be conferred a student must have discharged all academic-related obligations to the University and/or [Partner College](#) as set out in the University Sanctions Policy, normally within 12 months of the date upon which the [Board of Examiners](#) recommended the award.

## 9 PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 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.
- 9.3 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.

## 10 PROGRESSION TO AN HONOURS DEGREE

- 10.1 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.
- 10.2 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.

## 11 WAIVERS OF REGULATIONS

Where, in the opinion of the [College 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 College 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.