

# General Regulations for Graduate Diploma Programmes

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Applicable to all students and learners enrolled or re-enrolled from 1st August 2023

2023-24

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## Regulation Summary

These General Regulations, approved by the University [Senate](#), set out the requirements for Graduate Diploma 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/withdrawal decisions.
- General principles relating to exceptional circumstances, which are expanded on in the University's Guide to Exceptional Circumstances.
- Diploma algorithms and calculation of student awards.

## 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-18-1857	A	Adam Hewitt	ULTC	Jun 2019	Sep 2019
AU-RSC-19-2811	A	Adam Hewitt	ULTC	Jun 2020	Sep 2020
AU-RSC-20-3961	A	Adam Hewitt	ULTC	Jun 2021	Sep 2021
AU-RSC-21-4827	A	Adam Hewitt	ULTC	Jul 2022	Sep 2022
AU-RSC-22-5436	A	Adam Hewitt	ULTC	Jun 2023	Aug 2023

# 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 they 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 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 programme at other locations, such as employer premises or outreach centres.
- 1.3 **Approved programme** refers to 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 College Learning and Teaching Committee.
- 1.4 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. Assessments will be one of (i) fixed-time assessments, (ii) fixed-window assessments or (iii) coursework, each as defined in the [Assessment Regulations](#).
- 1.5 **Associate Dean** means the person designated to co-ordinate all the undergraduate or postgraduate programmes in a College, and to monitor the quality and standards of these programmes.
- 1.6 **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.
- 1.7 **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.
- 1.8 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.
- 1.9 **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.

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

- a fail to meet submission deadlines,
- b fail to attend a fixed-time assessment or engage with a fixed-window assessment, and/or
- c be adversely affected by an incident or issue occurring during a fixed-time or fixed window assessment.

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 assessment 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, these procedures include Internal and External Moderation, Sampling, and Pre-Assessment Scrutiny.

The University's [Assessment Regulations](#) provide further information on the moderation processes and quality assurance of assessment required by the University.

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

1.13 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.

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

1.15 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. For Graduate Diploma Programmes, referred assessments in up to 45 credits or up to one third of the taught credits, whichever is the higher credit total, may be taken at the next normal occasion.

1.16 **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.)

- 1.17 **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.
- 1.18 **Stage.** The Stage referred to within the regulations is a period of time culminating in a decision by the Board of Examiners on completion. Graduate Diploma programmes normally have one Stage.
- 1.19 **Student Discipline.** Students of the University are subject to the Charter and Statutes of the University and to Ordinances, Regulations and other rules made under them. Infringements of such rules may render a student liable to disciplinary action.

[Regulations on Student Discipline](#) provide further details of the University's disciplinary procedures, offences and the scope of penalties available.

- 1.20 **Transcript.** Students, except those in academic-related debt to the University or a [Partner College](#), as set out in the University Sanctions Policy, will 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 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 [College 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 College Learning and Teaching Committee responsible for the programme, in consultation with Student and Academic Services.
- 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, (Grades 9, 8, 7, 6, 5 or 4 in the GCSE grading structures used from September 2017) 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 relevant 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. Following the recommendation of the relevant Programme Director, 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 Colleges in developing procedures for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), in cases where this is accepted by the College. 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 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 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 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 [College 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:
- following award of the specified number of credits shall be recommended for an award, or
  - should be required to take one or more referred assessments, or
  - 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
  - should be required to withdraw from the programme.
- 5.2 The maximum period of enrolment on a programme is the normal length of programme plus two years, except where otherwise specified in the Programme Specification for the programme.
- 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 shall be 5% below the pass mark. 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 their 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 Except in the case of a restarted Stage, 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. There is no ceiling on the percentage mark a student may achieve in restart assessments.
- 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. Substitution is at the discretion of the Examination Board and consideration needs to be given to the Level of the substituted credit and the relevance of the failed credit to the programme learning outcomes.
- 6.1.4 Where programmes operate stages structured of a single module, the relevant programme specification will set out approaches to referral, condonement and trailing that do not align with the General Regulations.

### 6.2 Failure in Assessments

- 6.2.1 A student who fails to satisfy the Board of Examiners normally in not more than 45 credits or up to one third of the taught credits, whichever is the higher credit total, 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 45 credits or up to one third of the taught credits, whichever is the higher credit total, 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

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

require the student to withdraw from the programme.

6.2.3 If a student fails restart assessments, where these constitute the second attempt, and virtuous credit is not available or appropriate, the Stage Examination Board will require the student to withdraw from the programme of study.

6.2.4 If a candidate has failed 15 credits or fewer at a final attempt, the Board of Examiners may substitute concurrently achieved virtuous credit from a pre-determined list approved by University Learning and Teaching Committee.

## 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 being present beyond the start time of a fixed-time assessment, or engaging with a fixed-window 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

7.4 Factors affecting the ability of students to attempt/complete an assessment which arise subsequent to the beginning a fixed-time or fixed-window assessment must be notified to the Board of Examiners by the student. Any factors affecting performance that result in a student leaving an invigilated/proctored fixed-timed assessment must be raised with the Chief Invigilator/proctor and, for invigilated assessments, must be

recorded in the Chief Invigilator's Report. Where a student has deemed themselves fit to sit, the Board of Examiners will normally consider the student to have made a valid attempt at the assessment.

- 7.5 By submitting a coursework assessment students will be regarded as having deemed themselves fit to have been able to undertake the assessment in question and accept the outcome of the assessment as valid. Where a student has deemed themselves fit to submit, the Board of Examiners will normally consider the student to have made a valid attempt at the assessment.
- 7.6 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 assessment). Exceptional Circumstances which meet University Regulations will not be addressed using condonement.

## 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 A minimum of 90 credits should have a numerical mark.
- 9.5 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.

## 10 PUBLICATION OF RESULTS

- 10.1 In the case of modules with marks, the results achieved in all assessments, both by module and overall, should be released to individual students in the form of a transcript detailing their 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 they were 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 [College 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.