

# New and Revised General Regulations 2023/24

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Detailing all significant changes to University Regulations  
for the 2023/24 academic year

## Summary

This document provides a summary of all significant changes to the University's General Regulations for the 2023/24 academic year, and should be read as an overview in conjunction with the regulatory documents available on the Quality Team webpages.

## Related Regulations, Policies, and Guidance

For full versions of regulatory documents for the 2023/24 academic year, please see the following:

- [General Regulations](#)
- [Examinations and Assessment](#)
- [Discipline of Students](#)

For changes to the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis and Research Degrees for the 2023/24 academic year, please access the following [link](#).

## NEW REGULATIONS

- **University Academic Misconduct Board Procedures** have been introduced for 2023/24. Academic Offences that would previously have been referred to the University Disciplinary Board will instead go to the Academic Misconduct Board for consideration. These procedures regulate the membership, conduct, and powers of the new Board. The full Procedure can be found on the [Discipline of Students](#) webpage.
- **Guidance for Staff on Stages Comprised of a Single Module** have been introduced for 2023/24 to set out key principles and points to consider when developing an undergraduate or postgraduate module where Stages are comprised of a single, integrated module, such as the 120 credit modules used in the existing MBChB programme. The guidance can be accessed on the [General Regulations](#) webpage.
- **Exceptional Circumstances Process Flowcharts** have been adapted from existing resources in Colleges to provide guidance to students on the process and possible outcomes. These flowcharts can be accessed on the [Assessment and Examinations](#) webpage.
- The **General Regulations for the MBChB Programme** have been significantly updated to take into account the new **Physician Associate Practice Programme**. These regulations can be accessed on the [General Regulations](#) webpage.

## ALL REGULATIONS

- A reference to programmes with Stages comprised of a single module has been added to all General Regulations:

- 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.
- All references to specific details on moderation have been removed from all General Regulations and have been replaced by generic references and links to the extensive moderation and pre-assessment scrutiny information available in the updated [Assessment Regulations](#):
  - 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.
- Regulations governing the validity of credit and maximum periods of enrolment have been simplified in all General Regulations to replace a limit on progression between Stages with a consistent maximum period of enrolment, equal to the normal length of the programme plus two academic years:
  - 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.
- A minor clarification has been added to the regulations around the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) to specify that the Associate Dean makes RPL decisions based on the recommendations of the relevant Programme Director:
  - The relevant Associate Dean may exempt from part of a programme of study individual students who have 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 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. The extent of the credit awarded must be recorded by the Board of Examiners.
- An addition has been made to all Disciplinary and Fitness to Study/Practise Regulations to clarify what is meant by an in-person meeting. Virtual meetings may take place where either the Chair or student involved requests it to prevent unnecessary delays or for other practical considerations:
  - In-person meetings. It is expected that meetings described as 'in person; are held with all participants physically present. At the request of the student, and with the agreement of the Chair, meetings may be held virtually via videoconference. Meetings may also be held virtually by videoconference at the request of the Chair, in consultation with the student, if it is deemed appropriate to prevent unnecessary delay or for other relevant practical reasons. A hybrid approach may be taken where appropriate at the request of the Chair.

- All references to the Student's Union Advice & Representation Centre have been amended to the Student's Union Advice Centre.

## CREDIT & QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

- Amendments have been made to Section 2 on Credit-Bearing Modules: Aston Credits on regulations governing credit-bearing activity that does not lead to a specific programme or award, to take micro-credentials into better account:
  - 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;
    - Students studying credit-bearing micro-credentials at any Level.
  - 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. Credit-bearing modules require students to pass at least one summative assessment for credit to be awarded. Condonement or referral decisions can only be made by the relevant Programme Board, or Module Board in the case of credit-bearing micro-credentials not studied as part of a defined award.
  - 2.3 – Any short courses which are credit-rated should be approved by the Programme Approval and Development Sub-Committee (PADSC) and recorded on the student record system.

## GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR UNDERGRADUATE & INTEGRATED MASTER'S PROGRAMMES

- Regulations 6.5.3 and 6.5.4, relating to the transfer from an Ordinary Degree to Honours Degree study have been removed, as previous changes to the Ordinary Degree mean that no student should be put on that pathway that could theoretically secure enough credits to return to Honours study:
  - ~~6.5.3 – Transfer from Ordinary Degree to Honours Degree shall be prior to the start of the final Stage. Students on an Ordinary Degree must pass any trailed modules before transfer to the Honours Degree is considered.~~
  - ~~6.5.4 – The Board of Examiners should review the situation of every student on an Ordinary Degree at the end of each Stage of assessment following the transfer from Honours.~~

## GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR APPRENTICESHIPS AND WORK-BASED PROGRAMMES

- Minor amendment to the regulations around Flexible Credit Accumulation work-based programmes:

- A flexible credit accumulation programme will not be more than seven years duration, not including any End Point Assessment activity on non-integrated apprenticeship programmes.

## GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR THE CONDUCT OF BOARDS OF EXAMINERS

- Formal requirements for deputisation of key roles at Exam Boards have been added to Section 1 of the Regulations:
  - 1.1.8 - Exceptionally, it may be necessary for a non-member to deputise formally for a member who is unable to be present. In such circumstances, a nominee may be formally deputised as a member of the Board through approval of the Chair or Deputy Chair of the College Learning and Teaching Committee.
  - 1.2.3 - Exceptionally, if both the Chair and Deputy Chair are unable to attend, a deputising Chair may be formally appointed through approval of the Chair or Deputy Chair of the College Learning and Teaching Committee. The deputising Chair should be appointed from among the academic staff within the College currently approved by the Senate to act as a Chair or Deputy Chair of a Board of Examiners.
- The involvement of External Assessors and Examiners in End Point Assessment for integrated Degree Apprenticeships has been added to Section 2.4.4 of the regulations:
  - 2.4.4 - In recommending External Examiners for appointment, Colleges should specify whether the appointment is to advise on the assessment of a module or group of modules or to advise on the assessment of a programme or group of programmes, ~~or~~ to advise on both, or to advise on and assess End Point Assessment activity on integrated apprenticeship programmes.
- Section 2.5.2 of the regulations, governing External Examiner attendance at Exam Boards, has been amended to reflect the ongoing virtual nature of Boards in some areas where the requirement to attend in person was impossible due to the format of the Board:
  - 2.5.2 – External Examiners appointed to programmes are expected to attend final Programme Boards where degree classifications for the graduating cohorts are discussed and approved. External Examiners appointed to individual modules are expected to attend Module Boards where those marks contribute to the final Stage of an award. Attendance may be physical or virtual (e.g. video conferencing), dependent upon the scheduled format of the Board. ~~though External Examiners are expected to attend in person a minimum of one meeting of the Board of Examiners each academic year.~~
- All references to specific details on External Examiner scrutiny and moderation have been removed from the Conduct of Boards of Examiner Regulations and have been replaced by references to the extensively updated information available in the updated [Assessment Regulations](#):

- 2.6.1 – Requirements for the External Examiner pre-scrutiny and moderation of assessments are set out in Section 2.5 of the University’s Assessment Regulations.
  - 2.6.2 – Regulations defining the size and nature of the sample of assessments to be moderated by the External Examiner are set out in Section 4.7 of the University’s Assessment Regulations.
  - 6.2.1 – Requirements for the marking of assessments are set out in Section 4 of the University’s [Assessment Regulations](#).
- The requirements for the archiving of assessed work in Section 7.2.1 has been updated to reflect the increased auditing and scrutiny requirements of various external bodies:
    - 7.2.1 - All submitted assessment material which contribute to the final mark for a stage should be kept at least for six-one years following the year in which they were submitted. These data should be kept to allow the University to deal with any appeals/complaints from students that withdraw or leave with lesser awards, as well as meeting the JISC guidance.
  - An amendment has been made to Criteria 9 of the Appointment Criteria for External Examiners, requiring no more than one External Examiner from the same institution to be appointed in the same Aston subject area, rather than to the same Module or Programme Board:
    - 9 - No more than one external examiner should be appointed from an institution to a programme or programmes which are considered part of the same Aston subject area. at the same Module and/or Programme Board.

## ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS

- The University’s Assessment Regulations have been extensively reordered and rewritten to reflect the Assessment Lifecycle and clarify the pre-assessment scrutiny and moderation requirements of the University, including standard setting, sampling, External Examiner input, and double marking. A reference table detailing the Assessment Lifecycle has been added as a second Appendix. The full Regulations can be accessed on the [Assessment and Examinations](#) webpage.
- Minor amendments have been made to the Sections on Maintaining Standards and Use of Text-Matching Software to reference Artificial Intelligence detection tools.
- The Section on Lateness Penalties for Coursework has been reordered to make it clear that the penalty collar on late submissions of coursework also applies to Pass/Fail assessments submitted up to 5 days late.
- A new Postgraduate Generic Grade Descriptor has been added to the Appendices of the Assessment Regulations to complement the existing Undergraduate Grade Descriptor.

## REGULATIONS ON STUDENT DISCIPLINE

- Extensive amendments have been made to reflect the implementation of the new University Academic Misconduct Board and associated Procedures, removing academic procedures from the remit of the University Disciplinary Board.
- An addition has been made to Section B2.6 on criminal convictions, requiring the permission of the student to share the details of their disciplinary case with their nominee:
  - o B2.6 Where a student has received a custodial sentence for a criminal conviction, and has been referred to the University [Disciplinary Board](#) the following principles will apply and the relevant Sections of the Regulations on Student Discipline will be interpreted, or not applied, accordingly:
    - a) The student will be advised that a hearing is taking place rather than being invited to attend the hearing.
    - b) The student will be permitted to nominate a representative to attend the hearing on their behalf even though they will not also be present. If a nominee is identified, the student must give consent for the details of the case to be shared with the nominee. The Regulations concerning attendance at the hearing and the University Disciplinary Board's authority to proceed in the student's absence will apply equally to any representative nominated by the student.
- New additions have been added to Regulation C1 to articulate the University's disciplinary approach to the misuse of artificial intelligence tools:
  - o Misusing Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools – In an assessment where the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools is not permitted, a student uses one or more AI tools to generate assessment content which is then submitted as their own original work. AI tools can include Chatbots used to generate text or AI tools used to generate images.
  - o C1.6 - In cases where it is suspected that a student has misused Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to create assessment content which has then been submitted as their own independent work, it should be noted that this type of offence will, on completion of stage one of the disciplinary process, be referred to a University Academic Misconduct Board.
- A clarifying amendment has been made to Regulations C1.7 and C2.6 to specify that referral of a suspected academic offences cases to an Academic Offences Officer should include all relevant supporting evidence to enable the appropriate investigation:
  - o C1.7 - It is the responsibility of members of staff to refer cases of suspected academic offences to the Academic Offences Officer of the College in which the student is enrolled, or the person designated by the Senate in the case of a student enrolled on an inter-College or collaborative programme. As part of this

referral all supporting evidence should be provided to the Academic Offences Officer to enable a thorough investigation to take place.

- C2.6 (excerpt) The student will also be provided a copy of the Regulations on Student Discipline, the Tariff of Penalties for Academic Offences and a copy of any written material the Academic Offences Officer intends to present at the hearing. Written material in cases of alleged plagiarism would usually be expected to comprise of marked up original source documents in addition to the text matching software report.
- An addition has been made to Regulation C2.12c to specify that any suspected academic offence committed by a student on a PhD or Professional Doctorate Programme should automatically be referred to the University Academic Misconduct Board.
- An entire new Section E has been added, covering the implementation of the University Academic Misconduct Board and how it interacts with the Regulations on Student Discipline.

## **DISCIPLINARY BOARD PROCEDURES**

- Extensive minor wording amendments have been made to reflect the implementation of the new University Academic Misconduct Board and associated Procedures, removing academic procedures from the remit of the University Disciplinary Board.

## **TARIFF OF PENALTIES FOR ACADEMIC OFFENCES**

- A new offence has been added to the Tariff of Penalties on the unauthorised use of A.I. in an assessment submission.
  - Unauthorised or inappropriate use of artificial intelligence to generate all or part of an assessment submission (Severity Level 1 – 4, dependent on the proportion of A.I. generated content included in the assessment).

## **ASTON STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT**

- An amendment has been made to the Student Code of Conduct entry on the commissioning of work, to include the unauthorised or inappropriate use of artificial intelligence to create a piece of work, with the recommended penalty of expulsion.

## **GUIDE TO EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

- Legacy references to exceptional circumstances relating to assessment performance have been removed. Due to Fit to Sit & Fit to Submit regulations, submitting exceptional circumstances in relationship to assessment performance is only possible for students experiencing illness or other circumstances during a fixed-time or fixed-window assessment. Further emphasis has been added to the act of submission or sitting of an assessment represents the student declaring themselves fit to take the assessment and can't subsequently submit for exceptional circumstances.



- The list of example exceptional circumstances and the typical evidence that may be considered in each case has been expanded to cover more regularly encountered situations. This includes a minor amendment to clarify that references to illness include illnesses of both a physical or mental nature. The full document and breadth of changes can be accessed on the [Assessment and Examinations](#) webpage.
- The timing of student submission of exceptional circumstances applications has been clarified:
  - o Claims/evidence for exceptional circumstances should be made after the relevant assessment deadline, but cannot be accepted after the published exceptional circumstances deadlines unless you can provide good reason why you were not able to submit them earlier. You should note that this is not a basis for making an appeal.

## **REGULATIONS ON FITNESS TO PRACTISE**

- The BSc Nursing Studies programme has been added to the list of programmes whose students come under the remit of Fitness to Practise Regulations in Section A1.4.