

New and Revised General Regulations 2024/25

Detailing all significant changes to University Regulations
for the 2024/25 academic year

Summary

This document provides a summary of all significant changes to the University's General Regulations for the 2024/25 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 2024/25 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 2024/25 academic year, please access the following [link](#).

NEW REGULATIONS

- The **Guide to Exceptional Circumstances** has been significantly updated to reflect a wider array of circumstances that may be deemed exceptional, and to clarify the sources of evidence and provision to Exceptional Circumstances & Absence Panels (ECAP).

ALL REGULATIONS

- Clarifications have been added to the core regulation relating to the powers and procedure for Representations Boards across all General Regulations for taught programmes (the exact regulation number differs across each set of General Regulations):
 - o 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,~~ in person, with or without an accompanying written statement, or exceptionally, solely by the submission of a written statement in advance of the Board, of any circumstances which might have affected their performance, that were unknown to the Board when the first decision was made. Representations Boards review the original decision of the Board of Examiners to withdraw a student in light of any new evidence or mitigation submitted to the Representations Board and has the same decision-making powers as the original Board.
- The requirement for a Representations Board to take place prior to the action of any Exam Board decision to withdraw a student has been clarified across multiple references in Options in the Case of Failure in all General Regulations for taught programmes:

- Before any decision to withdraw, a Representations Board should be convened in accordance with Regulation XX (differs by regulatory document).
- A definition of reasonable adjustments and support recommendations has been added to the general regulations to clarify how support recommendations are agreed and the University's legal duties under the Equality Act 2010:
 - **Reasonable Adjustments/Support Recommendations**
Students with declared disability/disabilities may be entitled to reasonable adjustments to assessments, teaching, and learning, including deadline extensions. Support Recommendations are a document of reasonable adjustment for Aston students and are considered by the Disability and Academic Support Team on an individual basis and informed by medical and professional evidence. The provision of reasonable adjustments is the Universities legal duty under the Equality Act 2010. Reasonable adjustments may not always be possible on some programmes where specific competency standards must be met.

CREDIT & QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

- A new award type, the Masters in Management (MiM), has been added to Section 1: Qualifications within the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ):

Qualification	Qualification Level	Minimum Credits for Award	Minimum credits at qualification level
Taught Master's Degree (MSc, MA, MBA, M.Ed, MRes, MCh Orth, MPH, MChem, <u>MiM</u>)	7	180	150

- A new Regulation 4.10 has been added to the section on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), clarifying that applicants to apprenticeship programmes must meet a number of additional requirements for RPL and should reference the specific general regulations for those programmes.

GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR UNDERGRADUATE & INTEGRATED MASTERS PROGRAMMES

- A new regulation 6.5.3. has been added to the rules covering award of the Ordinary Degree, clarifying the availability of the Ordinary degree as an exit award in the event of unrecoverable academic failure:
 - Following exhaustion of final attempts, a student with at least 300 credits, with at least 60 credits being from the award level, may be awarded an Ordinary Degree as an exit award unless otherwise specified on the programme specification.

GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT PROGRAMMES

- The minimum required marks at both the Taught and Dissertation Stages for the award of a Merit or Distinction at Master's Level have been reduced to address the number of postgraduate students with overall marks significantly exceeding the threshold being awarded a lower classification of Master's due to lower performance in either the Taught or Dissertation Stage:
 - o Master's are awarded 'with Distinction' or 'with Merit' where the following criteria are met:
 - To achieve the award of distinction students must achieve an average mark of at least 70% over 180 credits. A minimum average unrounded mark of **64.50%** is required for both the Taught and Dissertation/Project Stages of the programme.
 - To achieve the award of merit students must achieve an average mark of at least 60% over the 180 credits. A minimum average unrounded mark of **54.50%** is required for both the Taught and Dissertation/Project Stages of the programme.

GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR APPRENTICESHIPS AND WORK-BASED PROGRAMMES

- The following new apprenticeship programmes have been added to the list of programmes for which these regulations apply:
 - o BSc Accounting and Finance Management Degree Apprenticeship
 - o FdSc Healthcare Science (Audiology) Degree Apprenticeship
 - o Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner Apprenticeship
 - o BSc Supply Chain Management with Procurement Degree Apprenticeship
- Regulation 1.3. defining an apprenticeship programme, has been replaced to better reflect the differences between integrated and non-integrated apprenticeships:
 - o An Apprenticeship is a programme of study, employment and off the job training studied by an apprentice and mapped against the appropriate national apprenticeship standard. An apprentice must be in employment to study an apprenticeship. An apprenticeship may be integrated or non-integrated.

Integrated Apprenticeships include an End Point Assessment (EPA) delivered by Aston University that is both the end of the apprenticeship and the degree programme.

Non-Integrated Apprenticeships include an EPA delivered by an external End Point Assessment Organisation approved to assess the relevant apprenticeship standard.
- The Sandwich degree structure has been removed from Regulation 1.21. on Patterns and Periods of Study. Students on apprenticeships and work-based programmes are

in full-time work and do not study a traditional placement. References to Undergraduate and Integrated Master's Degrees with Placement have also been removed from Regulation 4.3. on Programme Duration.

- Several minor clarifications have been in Section 2.11 on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), providing further clarity of the additional evidence required for RPL submissions for applicants to apprenticeship programmes, and the requirement for all RPL for apprenticeships to be approved by the Director of Aston Professional:
 - o 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 degrees at the level of RPL being claimed, and experiential learning whether gained before admission to the University, or during the period of enrolment. For apprenticeships, all experiential learning must be verified and signed off by the apprentice's line manager as meeting the competence and Knowledge, Skills, and Behaviour (KSB) requirements at the level required by the apprenticeship standard.
 - 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 the Degree Apprenticeship Team. The University will 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, verified and signed off by the apprentice's line manager as meeting the competence and Knowledge, Skills, and Behaviour (KSB) requirements at the level required by the apprenticeship standard;
 - 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 and KSBs 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 Director of Aston Professional.
- A new Regulation 9.1.2. has been added, clarifying that on non-integrated apprenticeships, apprentices must complete the End Point Assessment and all other requirements of the relevant apprenticeship standard before being recommended to Senate for the award of the degree:
 - o Apprentices studying non-integrated apprenticeship standards must also have successfully completed all requirements of the End Point Assessment, and any further requirements of the relevant apprenticeship standard before being recommended to Senate for award.

- Regulation 9.3.3. governing borderline candidates, has been amended to remove references to the Placement Stage in the example calculation to align with other amendments above.
- Regulation 9.5. detailing End Point Assessment (EPA) requirements, has been extensively amended to clarify that in all cases, an apprentice must complete the EPA for a degree to be awarded:
 - o The End Point Assessment (EPA) is the final element of all apprenticeship programmes. For integrated apprenticeships, the EPA forms a part of the degree and is conducted as the final component of the relevant undergraduate or postgraduate programme following completion of all other taught credit. For non-integrated apprenticeships, EPA is conducted by an external End Point Assessment Organisation following successful completion of all taught credit. The EPA on non-integrated apprenticeships does not contribute to degree or Master's classifications, but is required to successfully complete the apprenticeship and for the degree to be awarded.

GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR THE CONDUCT OF BOARDS OF EXAMINERS

- An addition has been made to Regulation 4.2 f) on the powers of Exam Boards, to clarify that it remains at the Board's discretion
 - o f) to recommend to the Senate the award of University prizes and other prizes as appropriate, including discretion as to whether students with Severity 3 or 4 academic offences on record should be considered for prizes;
- Regulation 9.1.1. on student withdrawal from programmes, has been amended to reflect the Representations board changes made to All General Regulations as outlined above:
 - o Before reaching the decision that a student should withdraw from a programme, the Board of Examiners shall give the student concerned, aided by a member of the University, a Welfare Adviser in the Students' Union or by a member of staff acceptable to the Senate, if so desired, an opportunity to make representations in person, with or without an accompanying written statement, or exceptionally, solely by the submission of a written statement in advance of the Board. Any submissions (oral or written) need to inform the Board of any circumstances that were unknown to the Board when the first decision was made which might have affected their performance, and any accompanying reasons why the Board could not have been made aware of these circumstances in advance. Representations Boards review the original decision of the Board of Examiners to withdraw a student in light of any new evidence or mitigation submitted to the Representations Board and has the same decision-making powers as the original Board (along with, where permitted, the additional power to transfer the student to an Ordinary Degree).

ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS

- A minor amendment has been made to the section on Maintaining Standards, clarifying that illegible assessments will not be marked:
 - o It is essential that Programmes are clear on the expectations of work presentation in the marking of assessments, and communicate this clearly in assessment briefs and marking schemes. High standards of spelling, punctuation and grammar accuracy are not expected in fixed-time assessment scripts unless this is deemed a core competence to be demonstrated under these circumstances. Minor errors in fixed[1]time/fixed-window assessment presentation should not be penalised if the meaning of the student's response is clear. This excludes critical spellings such as drug names and other safety-critical terminology. Assessments must however be legible to be assessed: Assessments deemed illegible will not be marked.

- Sample sizes for internal and external moderation have been amended as follows:

Number of Assessments	Minimum Sample Size, Excluding Fails
< 50	10 (or all assessments if fewer than 10)
51 – 200	20% 15%
> 201	40 30
Samples should, where possible, be comprised of at least two assessments from each classification band, all fails, and all borderline passes. Inclusion of all fails may result in a larger sample than suggested in the figures above.	

- All references to lateness submission periods and lateness penalties in Section 5 have been amended to refer to days rather than working days to resolve perceived issues of unfair advantage to late submissions made following weekends and University closure days.
 - o Students may submit work up to five ~~working~~ days after the formal assessment deadline, but the work will be subject to a penalty. ~~(NB: 'working days' excludes submission at weekends and on Bank Holidays or University closed days, when College offices are not open to receive submissions, but it does not preclude submission during vacations. The five-working day submission window will therefore continue to run after the last day of a term.)~~
 - o The late submission penalty will be 10% of the awarded mark for each ~~working~~ day that the piece of work was submitted after the formal deadline (see Example 1 below).

Reciprocal amendments have been made throughout to Section 5 and associated lateness penalty examples to reflect this core change.

FIXED-TIME ASSESSMENT REGULATIONS FOR CANDIDATES

- An addition has been made to the regulations regarding the submission of assessment scripts and collection of work to clarify that assessment scripts that do not include the students Candidate Number will not be marked.

- At the end of the assessment, candidates shall follow the instructions for the collection/submission of the assessed work. Candidates must ensure they have written their Candidate Number on every assessment script and answer book submitted. Submissions made that do not include a Candidate number will not be marked, although attendance will still be noted and the attempt recorded as valid.
- A minor amendment has been made to Regulation 9 on mobile devices in assessment rooms to reflect current practice:
 - Outdoor clothing, briefcases and bags may be brought into assessment rooms, providing they are deposited well away from the candidates, usually at the front or rear of the assessment room. Mobile phones and other electronic devices, including smart watches, must be turned off and left with the candidate's bag/coat or placed in the clear bag provided. All other watches and camera enabled devices must be placed in the clear bag. ~~Candidates may not keep electronic devices on their desk or their person e.g. in a pocket.~~ Aston University does not accept responsibility for personal possessions in examination rooms.

GUIDE TO EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

- A minor amendment has been made to both the undergraduate and postgraduate student guidance flowchart for exceptional circumstances, clarifying that a deferred assessment is not uncapped if it is a deferred referral, and is instead an assessment with no additional increment to the attempt number.

REGULATIONS ON STUDENT DISCIPLINE

- An amendment has been made to the guidance around rare cases in which disciplinary investigations span academic years for further clarity:
 - In the rare case of disciplinary cases spanning academic years, the case will follow the procedures set out in the regulations from the academic year in which the investigation begins alleged offence was committed.
- Section B5: Process for Consideration of Allegations of Breaches of Discipline (non-Academic Offences) has been extensively rewritten to better reflect current process, and to include the previous Section B7: Alleged Breaches of Discipline which do not fall within the Remit of a particular Authorised Officer, which has now been removed:
 - B5.1 Any apparent (non-academic) breach of discipline, must be reported to the University Discipline Officer.
 - B5.2 The University Discipline Officer will, where necessary, investigate such allegations, and may interview and take written statements from those concerned and witnesses, including students and staff.
 - B5.3 If the University Discipline Officer is satisfied that there is no case to answer, those involved will be informed accordingly. If appropriate an informal warning may be given.

- B5.4 If the University Discipline Officer is satisfied that there is a case to answer, they shall frame the wording of the precise charge/s to be answered by the student and will inform the student in writing. The student will be requested to admit or deny the charge/s in writing and, if admitting the charge/s, will be requested to confirm whether they wish the case to be dealt with by an Authorised Officer, rather than a University Disciplinary Board.
- B5.5 The University Discipline Officer shall prepare a report of their findings and refer the matter either to the appropriate Authorised Officer (if the student admits the charge/s and wishes to have the case dealt with by an Authorised Officer), or to the appropriate University Board (if the student denies the charge/s or admits them but wishes to have the case dealt with by the University Disciplinary Board).
- B5.6 The student will be offered the opportunity to meet with the Authorised Officer (AO). In appropriate circumstances (e.g. to avoid holding two separate hearings) the AO may be accompanied at the meeting, including by not more than one other AO. An Authorised Officer must establish that the student admits the charge and has not elected to have the matter dealt with by the University Disciplinary Board. The student is required to confirm these details in writing. If the student denies the charge the matter will be referred to the University Disciplinary Board. A student is entitled to at least 24 hours' notice of an interview.
- B5.7 The Authorised Officer shall take into account any mitigation raised by the student, together with documentary evidence, where this can be provided (e.g. medical evidence, bank statements, etc.).
- B5.8 The Authorised Officer will decide upon a penalty, taking into account the degree of premeditation, whether the offence was repeated or continuous, the extent of the impact upon staff, students, the environment or the standing of the University and the previous disciplinary record of the student whether or not the offence occurred on University premises and regardless of whether the student was a member of the University at the time.
- B5.9 Penalties other than reparation for damage and injury to property can be suspended, conditional on the good behaviour of the student, for a maximum of one year.
- B5.10 If the penalty of exclusion is imposed, the exercise of this power must be reported through the Deputy Vice-Chancellor or their nominee to the next meeting of the Senate. The student shall have a right of appeal against such exclusion to the Senate Disciplinary Appeals Committee, whose decision shall be final.
- B5.11 A student who can evidence allowed grounds for appeal as set out in D2 may submit an appeal to the University Disciplinary Board in mitigation of penalties, other than exclusion, imposed by the Authorised Officer. If the student wishes to make such an appeal, this must be done in writing to the University Discipline Officer within 10 working days of the penalty being notified to the student.
- B5.12 Penalties, apart from exclusion and expulsion, shall not be imposed until the 10-day period for appeal has expired. If an appeal is to be made, the penalty, apart from that of exclusion, shall be suspended until the appeal has been resolved by the University Disciplinary Board or by the Senate Disciplinary Appeals Committee.

- B5.13 All admissions and findings of guilt, together with penalties imposed shall be notified by the Authorised Officer to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor or their nominee, and to the relevant Executive Dean and/or person designated by Senate in the case of a collaborative programme with a partner institution. Admissions and findings of guilt shall be recorded on the student's University and College record. The University will inform outside bodies such as accrediting bodies or partner institutions, where relevant. Students who are covered by the General Regulations on Fitness to Practise (AU-RSC-22-5447-A) and subsequent versions), may be referred to the appropriate Fitness to Practise Officer.
- Clarification of the decisions that can be made by the University Discipline Officer have been made in Section B6.3:
 - The University Discipline Officer may come to one of the following decisions:
 - a) there is not a case to answer and those concerned will be advised accordingly;
 - b) that on the balance of probability there is not a case to answer but determines that it is appropriate to give an informal warning;
 - c) that on the balance of probability, there is a case to answer.
- An addition has been made to E1.6. on penalties for Severity 4 Offences, to clarify that all expulsions for academic offences are suspended until internal appeals processes have been completed, but a Board may still suspend expulsion on condition of good behaviour:
 - The penalty of expulsion will usually be suspended until completion of the internal appeals procedures. Internal appeal procedures are considered complete when one of the following conditions is met:
 - i. The student does not submit an appeal by the notified appeal deadline
 - ii. The student submits an appeal by the notified appeal deadline, but this appeal is not considered to have grounds
 - iii. the student submits an appeal by the notified appeal deadline, the appeal is considered to have grounds and the student is notified of the outcome of the Senate Disciplinary Appeals Committee

The student may continue to attend the University as normal during this period. This does not prevent the University Academic Misconduct Board from applying a suspension to the penalty as outlined in D1.5.
- A decision has been made to return the responsibility for considering suspected cases of mis-use of A.I. in assessment to College Academic Offences Officers, rather than automatic referral to the University Academic Misconduct Board as occurred previously.

DISCIPLINARY BOARD PROCEDURES AND ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT BOARD PROCEDURES

- References to the Pro-Vice Chancellor Students have been replaced with the Academic Registrar.

TARIFF OF PENALTIES FOR ACADEMIC OFFENCES

- A number of additions have been made to the tariff to reflect the addition of breaches in ethical approval as an explicit offence:
 - o The Tariff of Penalties is used for academic offences and breaches of the Fixed-time Assessment Regulations for Candidates, or breaches to a project's agreed ethical approval where such a breach is not covered by the Research Misconduct Policy, to assist in identifying the severity of an offence and the appropriate penalty.

Breaches of the Fixed-time Assessment Regulations for Candidates will be considered by the University Academic Misconduct Board.

Fabrication of data or other research at any level of study <u>or a breach in ethical approval in relation to data collection</u>	3 or 4
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<u>Offences relating to a breach to Ethical Approval</u>	<u>Where data has been collected or stored in a way that breaches the agreed ethical approval for a specified project the offence will be considered by the Academic Offences Officer under this Tariff of Penalties.</u> <u>At Doctorate level a breach in relation to data collection or storage may instead be considered under the Research Misconduct Policy if deemed more appropriate by the Investigating Officer</u>
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- The possession of unauthorised material in an examination room, including a mobile phone in contravention to the Fixed-Time Assessment Regulations for Candidates has been added as an explicit offence:

<u>Unauthorised material, including possession of a mobile phone or other electronic device, in an examination</u>	<u>3</u>
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- References to the University Disciplinary Board have been amended to the Academic Misconduct Board to reflect the process undertaken for academic offences in the tariff.

REGULATIONS ON FITNESS TO PRACTISE

- A new regulation has been added as A1.6. clarifying the powers of the University to withhold an award in cases where there are significant concerns regarding a student's fitness to practise:
 - o Boards of Examiners should withhold any recommendation for award to the Senate, pending the outcome of any referral made under these Regulations.
- A minor addition has been made to A1.2. on the support services available to students where a fitness to practise concerns have been raised:
 - o All parties involved in administering fitness to practise procedures should ensure that students are made aware of the support services available to them

through the College of Health and Life Sciences, the Students' Union Advice Centre, [or the Disability & Academic Support Team](#), at the earliest opportunity.