

Modular study and study by credit accumulation

Information and guidance



Modular study is defined as the study of individual modules over a period of time, in which the credits obtained are accumulated and used towards an approved University award in a manner that differs from full-time and part-time awards. A University approved award could be a single module, a series of modules or a course.

Undergraduate

Departments who wish to introduce modular study at the undergraduate level must seek specific approval from the University.

Departments should follow the normal [approval process](#) for introducing new modules and courses.

Before developing an award at the modular level departments are encouraged to engage with staff in the [Marketing and Communications team](#) to determine whether a potential market for modular study exists.

Principles which should normally apply to modular study include:

- External Relations should take control of all admissions, including modular students, where this improves the admissions process for both students and staff.
- The fee for modular study should be set as part of the approval process and take into account market forces and the effect on equivalent and lower qualifications.
- The maximum period of registration for an award offered at the modular level should be agreed at the point of approval, taking into account any requirements of a professional or academic nature. All variations to the standard maximum period must be approved by the Senate.
- The standard Undergraduate Rules of Assessment should apply to modular students unless a specific variation has been approved by Senate.
- Students applying to study towards an approved university award may be allowed to enrol directly onto a higher level module with relevant qualifications or credits in accordance with the University AP(E)L policy.

- Boards of Examiners should consider full-time students and modular students at the same meeting, where possible.

Points of guidance which departments may like to consider when offering modular study at the undergraduate level include:

- Students need to be provided with:
 - consistent academic counselling throughout the duration of their studies, relating to what options and pathways are available to them;
 - information that is both clear and explicit throughout their academic career;
 - suitable contact time with their teachers and lecturers;
 - access to all necessary resources.
- Departments need to keep in contact with all modular students, including those who are registered but not actively taking any modules during the term or year.
- Departments should consider encouraging students to create individual study plans, with specific milestones, to help them achieve their academic goals within a set timeframe.

Postgraduate

The Academic Board* and Senate approved the following arrangements for applying the new postgraduate taught (PGT) Rules of Assessment to credit accumulation study:

- the Postgraduate Credit Framework Rules of Assessment should only be applied to students once they have registered on a course leading to an award.
- students taking a credit-accumulation route of study have one second attempt at assessment per module taken. Once a student registers on a course of study, the Rules of Assessment relating to second attempts are applied.
- condonement of failure cannot be applied at the module level; modules are either passed and credit awarded, or failed and no credit is awarded. Once a student registers on a course of study, the Rules of Assessment relating to condonement may be applied from that point onwards.
- the current AP(E)L arrangements remain for students applying to AP(E)L credits from other institutions, but do not apply to students wanting to use credit awarded at Essex to register on a course of study.
- students are not automatically given an award and certification; rather, student must apply to register for an award and will only receive certification once requested.
- departments could create awards with a generic title, which could be awarded once a student had achieved the required number of credits in any of the courses linked to the award.

- departments hold Exam Boards to confirm marks on modules and award credit.
- the maximum period for completion of studies using credit accumulation should be a period of six years (normally five years to complete all taught elements and a further one year to complete the dissertation (or equivalent)). The maximum period of study would be measured from the point at which a student first registered for a module that was being used towards the award.
- departments should seek the approval of Education Committee if they wished to introduce a module or discipline-specific credit lifetime that was less than six calendar years.

Approved by Graduate School Board* (GSB.MM.59-68/07 -21/03/07), and revised following changes made to the Rules of Assessment on 27/06/07. Further updates made to reflect changes to committee structures and terminology (August 2008, August 2013 and June 2019)

The Dean of the Graduate School, acting on behalf of the Academic Board*, approved the following additional arrangements for applying the new PGT Rules of Assessment to credit accumulation study on 21/08/07:

- the maximum period for the dissertation element of an award undertaken by credit accumulation should be twelve months. Some departments may wish to seek permission for a variation.
- students following a credit accumulation route should not be permitted to commence the dissertation module until at least 60 credits of taught modules have been passed at first attempt.

* Senate has responsibility for consideration and approval of variations to Rules of Assessment following recommendation from the Education Committee (from August 2013).

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