

UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX

PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE RULES OF ASSESSMENT (PART-TIME NON-ACCREDITED)

APPLICABLE TO STUDENTS FIRST STARTING IN ACADEMIC YEAR 2025/26

1. PREAMBLE

1.1 These rules apply to part-time Professional Doctorate programmes. The rules should be read in conjunction with the:

- Variations to the Rules of Assessment document
- [Professional Doctorate Course Credit Framework](#)
- [Programme Structure](#) - this identifies which modules are core for the Programme.
- [Programme Milestones](#) - these include the progression requirements for the research components
- Online [Module Directory](#) entries (or equivalent for Partner Institutions) - these give details of assessment arrangements and formats
- [Principal Regulations for Research Degrees](#) and [Codes of practice relating to higher degrees](#) - these outline the requirements for postgraduate research degrees

1.2 A taught module is any assessed component excluding the thesis. A core module must be taken as part of the programme structure and passed, with no condonement of marks below a pass allowed.

1.3 Taught components will be considered by a Board of Examiners. Research components, contributing to the research thesis, will be considered by both a Supervisory Panel and a Research Students' Progress Board (RSPB), who will make a recommendation about whether a student can progress. The final submitted research thesis will be examined at a viva voce/oral examination and the award will only be conferred once all of the taught and research requirements have been met, as outlined in the [Principal Regulations for Research Degrees](#).

2. PASS MARK

2.1 The pass mark for the taught modules is 50.

2.2 For the purposes of these rules, where there are taught module averages, the mark will be rounded to the nearest whole number – i.e. 49.5 will count as 50, 49.4 as 49.

2.3 Where a module requires specific components (or all components) to be passed, then a module mark of 50 will not necessarily signify that the module has been passed, and it must be confirmed that every individual component has met any necessary minimum mark. Please review the relevant variation to rules of assessment document for more information.

2.4 The thesis is not graded numerically.

3. PROGRESSION

Years One and Two

3.1 To pass the first year and proceed to Year Two, or to pass the second year and proceed to Year Three, a student must:

- a) Pass all taught modules. If the first opportunity for reassessment falls within the next year of study, the student may be permitted to proceed and undertake reassessment in up to a maximum of 30 credits at the first available opportunity (see 5.2.2).
- b) Pass the assessment of professional components/competencies if they are a part of the programme.
- c) Where appropriate, have met all research progression requirements for that year, as outlined in the relevant [Programme Milestones](#).
- d) Where appropriate, have met any variation to the Rules of Assessment for the programme.

Year Three onwards

3.2 To proceed beyond Year Three, a student must have met the appropriate research progression requirements, as outlined in the relevant [Programme Milestones](#).

4. ELIGIBILITY FOR AN AWARD

To be awarded the Professional Doctorate a candidate must:

- a) Pass all taught modules.
- b) Pass the assessment of professional components/competencies if they are a part of the programme.
- c) Pass the research thesis.

5. REASSESSMENT

5.1 Reassessment for taught modules: general principles

5.1.1 Students who have failed any taught module will have one opportunity to undertake reassessment in that module.

5.1.2 No second attempt at the assessment for a module is permitted prior to the Board of Examiners meeting, where marks are confirmed.

5.1.3 Reassessment only (which does not involve repeating the module with attendance) can only be considered where the Board of Examiners judges that the work required to achieve a pass does not include any additional experimental or practical work. The maximum mark that will be recorded for a module as a result of a second attempt at the reassessment only is 50, unless there are substantiated extenuating circumstances accepted by the Board of Examiners.

5.1.4 Where the Board of Examiners permits a student to have a second attempt at the

assessment for a module (which does not involve repeating the module with attendance), this only applies to any individual assignment/examination for the module that has been failed.

5.1.5 Where a student repeats the module with attendance as their second attempt, the mark will be uncapped.

5.1.6 Where a student has a reassessment opportunity and is repeating the whole year or some modules from that year, with attendance, they can enrol onto a different module if there are options within that component.

5.1.7 The Board of Examiners will reinstate the module mark for the previous attempt at a failed module if it is higher than the mark for the most recent attempt.

5.1.8 A student cannot repeat a module that has been passed to improve their marks unless permitted by the Board of Examiners because of substantiated extenuating circumstances or where they are repeating the entire year.

5.2 Reassessment for taught modules: available options

5.2.1 Where a student fails up to 30 credits in one academic year, and the first available opportunity for reassessment falls within that academic year, they will have the following reassessment opportunities:

a) Undertake reassessment at the first available opportunity (normally during the summer vacation) for capped module marks, subject to 5.1.3.

b) Where the Board of Examiners judges that the work required to achieve a pass includes additional experimental or practical work, the student must repeat the failed module(s), with attendance, for uncapped module marks. The student would not be permitted to progress to the next year of study until the module has been passed.

5.2.2 Where a student fails up to 30 credits in one academic year, and the first available opportunity for reassessment falls within the next year, they will have the following reassessment opportunities:

a) Proceed to the next year, subject to passing the reassessment at the first available opportunity, for capped module marks, subject to 5.1.3.

b) Undertake reassessment in the following year without attendance for capped module marks. This would require intermitting, returning to undertake the reassessment and, if successful, resuming the programme from the next available entry point, subject to 5.1.3. The student would not be permitted to progress to the next year of study until the module has been passed.

c) Repeat the failed module(s), with attendance, for uncapped module marks. The student would not be permitted to progress to the next year of study until the module has been passed.

5.2.3 Where a student fails more than 30 credits in one academic year, they will have the following reassessment opportunities:

a) Where reassessment falls within the current year, undertake reassessment at the first available opportunity for capped module marks, subject to 5.1.3.

b) Undertake reassessment in the following year without attendance for capped module marks. This would require intermitting, returning to undertake the reassessment and, if successful, resuming the programme from the next available entry point, subject to 5.1.3. The student would not be permitted to progress to the next year of study until the module has been passed.

- c) Repeat the failed module(s), with attendance, for uncapped module marks. The student would not be permitted to progress to the next year of study until the module has been passed.
- d) Repeat the entire year, with attendance, for uncapped module marks.

5.3 Reassessment for research component

The standard postgraduate research examination outcomes for the research thesis, as appropriate for Professional Doctorates, apply, as stated in the [Principal Regulations for Research Degrees](#).

6. DOWNGRADE/CHANGE OF COURSE

A student may be downgraded as a result of a recommendation from the RSPB or through a voluntary change of course request from the student.

6.1 Where a student is not meeting the progression requirements or does not wish to continue on the Professional Doctorate, before completing the taught modules, they may be considered for a change of course/downgrade to:

a) The Masters by Dissertation (MAD/MSD), subject to completing a dissertation of a maximum of 30,000 words. The requirements for the award of the degree of Masters by Dissertation are included in the [Principal Regulations for Research Degrees](#).

b) A Taught Masters (MSc/MA). The eligibility criteria for a Taught Masters is included in the [Rules of Assessment for Taught Masters Degrees](#).

6.2 Where a student has passed all of the taught modules they may be considered for a Taught Masters (MSc/MA), subject to completing a 60-credit dissertation module. The eligibility criteria for a Taught Masters is included in the [Rules of Assessment for Taught Masters Degrees](#).

7. DISCONTINUATION/WITHDRAWAL

7.1 Where a student fails a taught module having exhausted all available assessment attempts, the student will be discontinued/withdrawn by the Board of Examiners on academic grounds.

7.2 Where a student is not meeting the research progression requirements, as outlined in the relevant [Programme Milestones](#), the RSPB may make a recommendation to discontinue their studies, as stated in the [Principal Regulations for Research Degrees](#).

8. EXIT AWARDS

8.1 Research Exit Awards

If a student has passed all of the taught components and submits a thesis for examination; however, the examiners deem that the thesis has not met the requirements for the Professional Doctorate, then the lower award of Masters by Dissertation (MAD/MSD) can be considered. The eligibility criteria for the award of the degree of Masters by Dissertation are included in the [Principal Regulations for Research Degrees](#).

8.2 Taught Exit Awards

Where a student is unable to complete their studies, e.g. if they do not achieve the required credits to be awarded a Professional Doctorate or they withdraw from their studies, then the following exit awards will be considered:

- a) Postgraduate Diploma
- b) Postgraduate Certificate

The eligibility criteria for a Postgraduate Diploma and a Postgraduate Certificate are included in the [Rules of assessment for other postgraduate taught awards](#).

Departments will identify, on the published programme structures, which taught modules have to be passed in order to obtain a Postgraduate Certificate or Postgraduate Diploma.

9. ASSESSMENT AND PROGRESSION PROCEDURES

9.1 Board of Examiners

Assessment for the taught modules will be considered by a Board of Examiners.

The Board of Examiners shall have the following powers:

- a) Confirming the taught module marks achieved, including any marks for reassessment presented to the Board, and awarding credit.
- b) Confirming any opportunities for reassessment for taught modules.
- c) Considering extenuating circumstances as necessary and their implications for results.
- d) Determining whether a student is eligible to progress to the next year, based on the taught components.
- e) Requiring any student whose performance is below that required to achieve an award to withdraw from the University.
- f) Determining the appropriate exit award, if applicable, for any student who is required to withdraw from the University.

9.2 Supervisory Panel

Assessment for progress in the research thesis will be considered by a Supervisory Panel which will recommend to the RSPB whether the student can progress to the next year of study, as outlined in the [Codes of practice relating to higher degrees](#) and the [Milestones](#).

9.3 Research Students' Progress Board

The outcome of either the Board of Examiners or the Supervisory Panel is reported to the Research Student Progress Board (RSPB).

9.3.1 Where a student has passed the taught modules or has been permitted further assessment opportunities, the RSPB approves successful progression to the next year of study, or makes a recommendation for final approval by the Dean. The RSPB can approve progression, subject to a student meeting the progression requirements of the Board of Examiners, if the RSPB is taking place in advance of the Board of Examiners' decision being available.

9.3.2 Where a student has been discontinued/withdrawn by the Board of Examiners on academic grounds, the decision will be reported to the RSPB for information only.

9.4 Oral examination/Viva Voce Examination (Viva)

The research thesis is assessed in accordance with the normal arrangements for research degrees, as outlined in the [Principal Regulations for Research Degrees](#) and [Codes of practice relating to higher degrees](#).

End of document

Senate, June 2020; updated January 2026

Document Review Information	
Document owner	Postgraduate Research Education Team
Document author	Kimberley Wright
Document last reviewed by	Kimberley Wright
Date last reviewed	January 2026
Review frequency	Annually