

University of Essex

Rules of Assessment for Part-time Masters degrees

CSEE October 2025 Start

1 Preamble

a) These rules apply to the following part-time (24 months) Masters programmes in CSEE:

Course
MSc 5G and Emerging Communication Systems (H64124) (24 months, Part-time)
MSc Advanced Computer Science (G40024) (24 months, Part-time)
MSc Artificial Intelligence (G41124) (24 months, Part-time)
MSc Computer Engineering (H61224) (24 months, Part-time)
MSc Computer Games (G61024) (24 months, Part-time)
MSc Computer Networks and Security (H60124) (24 months, Part-time)
MSc Electronic Engineering (H61024) (24 months, Part-time)
MSc Intelligent Systems and Robotics (G40824) (24 months, Part-time)

The rules should be read in conjunction with the relevant Programme Structure, Programme Specification and on-line Module Directory entries. The Module Directory will give detail of assessment arrangements. The Programme Structure will identify which modules are core for the Programme.

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

c) All Masters degrees can be awarded with Distinction or Merit.

d) It is for the Board of Examiners to determine whether the criteria for an award have been satisfied.

2 Pass Mark

a) The pass mark for all modules of the Masters degree is 50. You must also achieve a minimum mark of 40 in both the coursework aggregate mark and the exam mark, and marks of 39.5 – 39.9 will be rounded up to 40. Credits are only awarded if the module is passed and the required marks in the coursework and exam elements are achieved. In cases where failure with a module aggregate mark of 40 is condoned (as set out in paragraph 4.1.1d below), the credits are not awarded; however, the module mark will still be used to calculate the overall weighted average for the taught modules and the overall weighted average.

b) For the purposes of these rules taught module averages, the overall weighted average for the taught modules and the mark for the dissertation or equivalent will be rounded to the nearest whole number – i.e., 49.5 will count as 50, 49.4 as 49.

c) For the MSc Project and Dissertation, students are required to achieve a pass mark of 50 in the Project Demonstration Oral (PDO) and 50 in the written Dissertation element in order to pass the module and achieve the credits.

3 Progression

3.1 Progression to Year Two of the accredited course

A student will only be permitted to progress to Year Two of the accredited course if they:

a) achieve a minimum mark of 40 in both the coursework aggregate mark and the exam mark for each module;

b) have no more than 20 credits in the condonable range as set out in rule 4.1.1c) below and pass all core modules.

c) These requirements must be met before progressing to Year Two, even where there are extenuating circumstances accepted by the Board of Examiners.

3.2 Progression to Year Two of a non-accredited course or Exit Award

Where a student has not met the requirements to proceed to Year Two of the accredited Masters course, following a reassessment attempt, the Board will consider whether they are eligible to proceed to Year Two of a non-accredited Masters course or another non-accredited exit award, as long as they have passed modules which are core for the non-accredited awards.

Students will no longer be on track for a non-accredited Masters degree if they cannot be offered further reassessment attempts because they do not have extenuating circumstances accepted by the Board of Examiners. The scenarios in which students will only be permitted to proceed if, depending on their results, they are still eligible for an exit award of a Postgraduate Diploma or a Postgraduate Certificate are as follows:

- i) Having failed a core module which is not core for an exit award;
- ii) Having received a mark below 40 in a module;
- iii) Having failed more than 40 credits' worth of non-core modules with marks in the 40-49 range;
- iv) Students will only be permitted to proceed to Year Two if they still have sufficient taught credits left to study towards an award higher than the one for which they are already eligible at the end of Year One.

4 Eligibility for an Award

4.1 The Masters Degree

4.1.1 Pass

To be awarded a pass in the Masters on an accredited course a student should:

- a) Attempt 180 credits at Masters level (Level 7) of which 160 must be passed, with the remaining credits condoned, subject to (c).
- b) Pass all the taught core modules and the dissertation or equivalent.

c) Failure with a module aggregate mark of 40 or more, for up to 20 credits in non-core taught modules, may be condoned provided the overall weighted average for all the taught modules is 50. Students must still achieve a minimum mark of 40 in both the coursework aggregate and the exam mark for failure in the module to be condoned.

4.1.2 A Pass with Merit or Distinction

a) Pass with Merit

To obtain a Merit, in addition to achieving the requirements for a pass, a student should:

Have an overall weighted average mark of 60 or more

b) Pass with Distinction

To obtain a Distinction, in addition to achieving the requirements for a pass, a student should:

Have an overall weighted average mark of 70 or more.

4.2 Eligibility for an Exit Award

All exit awards listed below will not have professional accreditation.

On the non-accredited exit awards, credits will be awarded for a module where a pass mark of 50 has been achieved in the aggregate mark for the module. There is no additional requirement to achieve a mark of 40 in the coursework and/or exam elements of modules for the non-accredited exit awards.

The Postgraduate Diploma and Certificate Exit Awards

Where a student is either unable to complete their studies or does not achieve the required credits to be awarded a Masters, then the award of either a Postgraduate Diploma or a Postgraduate Certificate will be considered. Students can be considered for the award of a Distinction and Merit for an exit award.

Departments will identify on the published programme structure which taught modules have to be passed in order to obtain a PG Certificate or PG Diploma. In

many cases it will be possible to obtain the necessary credits for a PG Diploma by using dissertation or equivalent credits as well as taught module credits.

Dissertation or equivalent credits cannot be used to obtain a Postgraduate Certificate.

4.2.1 To be awarded a **Postgraduate Diploma** a student should:

a) Attempt 120 credits at Masters level (Level 7) of which 90 must be passed, with the remaining credits condoned, subject to (c). Students will not be required to achieve a mark of 40 in the coursework aggregate mark or the exam mark for the Postgraduate Diploma which is an unaccredited course.

b) Pass all taught core modules.

c) Failure with a mark of 40 or more for up to 30 credits in non-core modules may be condoned provided that the overall weighted average for the 120 PG Diploma credits is 50.

Credits obtained for the dissertation or equivalent can normally be used when considering whether a Postgraduate Diploma can be awarded, provided that the above criteria have been met.

A Pass with Merit or Distinction

Where a student has more than 120 credits, the best credits compatible with the structure for a Postgraduate Diploma giving at least 120 credits will be used to calculate the overall weighted average mark.

Pass with Merit

To obtain a Merit, in addition to achieving the requirements for a Postgraduate Diploma, a student should:

Have an overall weighted average mark for the 120 PG Diploma credits of 60 or more.

Pass with Distinction

To obtain a Distinction, in addition to achieving the requirements for a Postgraduate Diploma, a student should:

Have an overall weighted average mark for the 120 PG Diploma credits of 70 or more.

4.2.2 To be awarded a **Postgraduate Certificate** a student should:

a) Attempt 60 credits at Masters level (Level 7) of which 40 must be passed, with the remaining credits condoned, subject to (c). Students will not be required to achieve a mark of 40 in the coursework aggregate mark or the exam mark for the Postgraduate Certificate which is an unaccredited course.

b) Pass all taught core modules.

c) Failure with a mark of 40 or more for up to 20 credits, in non-core modules, may be condoned.

A Pass with Merit or Distinction

Where a student has more than 60 credits, the best credits compatible with the structure for the Postgraduate Certificate giving at least 60 credits will be used to calculate the overall weighted average mark.

Pass with Merit

To obtain a Merit, in addition to achieving the requirements for a Postgraduate Certificate, a student should:

Have an overall weighted average mark for the 60 PG Certificate credits of 60 or more.

Pass with Distinction

To obtain a Distinction, in addition to achieving the requirements for a Postgraduate Certificate, a student should:

Have an overall weighted average mark for the 60 PG Certificate credits of 70 or more.

4.2.3 The non-accredited Masters Exit Award

Students who do not meet the pass requirements for an accredited Masters award can be considered for non-accredited Masters award by the Board of Examiners if they meet the following criteria:

To be awarded a pass in the non-accredited Masters award a student should:

a) Attempt 180 credits at Masters Level (Level 7) of which 140 must be passed, with the remaining credits condoned, subject to (c).

b) Pass all the taught core modules and the dissertation or equivalent.

c) Failure with a mark of 40 or more, for up to 40 credits in non-core taught modules, may be condoned provided the overall weighted average for all the taught modules is 50.

4.2.3.1 This award can be passed with a Merit or Distinction as set out in paragraph 4.1.2 above.

4.2.3.2 The titles of the non-accredited Masters awards are as follows:

Titles of non-accredited Masters awards

Non-accredited Masters Award Title	Accredited Masters Award Title
MSc Computing (G456)	For students originally enrolled on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSc Advanced Computer Science (G40024) (24 months, Part-time) • MSc Artificial Intelligence (G41124) (24 months, Part-time) • MSc Big Data and Text Analytics (G51524) (24 months, Part-time) • MSc Computer Games (G61024) (24 months, Part-time)
MSc Computer Systems Engineering (GH64)	For students originally enrolled on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MSc 5G and Emerging Communication Systems (H64124) (24 months, Part-time) • MSc Computer Engineering (H61224) (24 months, Part-time) • MSc Computer Networks and Security (H60124) (24 months, Part-time) • MSc Electronic Engineering (H61024) (24 months, Part-time) • MSc Intelligent Systems and Robotics (G40824) (24 months, Part-time)

4.2.4 The Board of Examiners will determine if a student is eligible to proceed on or be awarded a non-accredited Master’s degree. Where students have been transferred to the non-accredited Masters course but do not meet the requirements for the Masters

award, the Board will consider them for a non-accredited exit award on their new course title as set out in paragraphs 4.2, 4.2.1 and 4.2.2, above.

5 Reassessment

5.1. Reassessment for taught modules

- a) Students who have failed any taught module will have one opportunity to undertake reassessment in that module.
- b) No second attempt at the assessment for a module is permitted prior to the Board of Examiners meeting where marks are confirmed.
- c) The maximum mark that will be recorded for a module as a result of a second attempt is 50, unless there are substantiated extenuating circumstances accepted by the Board of Examiners. Where a student is undertaking reassessment in a component to meet the minimum mark of 40 requirement in each component, the module mark will be capped at either: the pass mark of 50 if the pre-resubmission module aggregate was below 50; or at the previous module aggregate, where this was above 50.
- d) 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.

5.1.2 If a student fails a module on the second attempt at the assessment no further attempt is allowed unless there are substantiated extenuating circumstances accepted by the Board of Examiners.

5.1.3 Where the Board of Examiners permits a student to have a second attempt at the assessment for a module this only applies to any individual assignment/examination for the module that has been failed.

5.1.4 A student cannot be permitted to repeat a module unless permitted by the Board of Examiner because of substantiated extenuating circumstances.

5.1.5 Where a student has not met the requirements to pass and is eligible to undertake reassessment and/or have failed modules condoned, the Board of Examiners will give the student the opportunity to undertake reassessment. The timing of the reassessment will depend on the student's year of study and what type of modules they have failed.

a) Students who fail modules in Year One will be required to undertake reassessment at the first available opportunity in up to 60 credits as set out in rules 5.1a. Reassessment will normally be undertaken during the summer vacation of Year One where students either:

i) have failed a core module;

ii) have failed a non-core module with a mark below 40;

iii) have failed a module due to not achieving a minimum mark of 40 in both the coursework aggregate mark and the exam mark;

iv) have failed more than 20 credits' worth of non-core modules with module marks in the 40-49 range even where a minimum mark of 40 in both the coursework aggregate mark and the exam mark has been achieved.

b) Where students have failed a maximum of 20 non-core credits with marks in the 40-49 range but have achieved a minimum mark of 40 in both the coursework aggregate mark and the exam mark, they can choose to undertake voluntary reassessment where this is offered by the Board. Students who fail modules from Year Two onwards will undertake reassessment at the first available opportunity in Year Two.

c) Progression following reassessment in Year One

Students in Year One who have still failed modules after reassessment across the summer in Year One, without further reassessment being available, will only be permitted to proceed with their studies on their accredited course if they meet the following criteria:

i) have passed all core modules taken so far, unless the modules are not core for an exit award and students meet the criteria set out in 5.1.5d below.

ii) have achieved a minimum mark of 40 in both the coursework aggregate mark and the exam mark for each module;

iii) have failed no more than 20 credits' worth of non-core modules with module marks in the 40-49 range even where a minimum mark of 40 in both the coursework aggregate mark and the exam mark has been achieved.

d) If students do not meet the criteria outlined in paragraphs c i-iii the Board will assess if they can progress to Year Two provided:

i) they have enough remaining new credits they can study towards the non-accredited Master's degree or another non-accredited exit award, such as a Postgraduate Diploma or Postgraduate Certificate; and

ii) they are not required to undertake any further reassessment in the previously failed modules, unless there are extenuating circumstances accepted by the Board of Examiners which permit another assessment attempt.

e) Following a failed reassessment attempt across the summer of Year One, where further reassessment is permitted in some or all failed modules due to extenuating circumstances which have been accepted by the Board, the options offered by the Board of Examiners will be as follows:

i) in the case of failed core modules to undertake reassessment without attendance but not to proceed to Year Two on any course until they have been passed.

ii) In the case of failed non-core modules:

- To delay proceeding to Year Two and to undertake reassessment without attendance,

or

- To proceed to Year Two and carry forward a maximum of 20 failed non-core credits into Year Two and undertake reassessment at the earliest opportunity offered by the department during Year Two. Carrying forward the reassessment in failed credits is called trailing.

or

- To proceed to Year Two of the non-accredited Masters course or Exit Award.

f) Where students have not met the requirements to proceed to Year Two on either the accredited or the non-accredited course, and no further reassessment can be offered, they will be required to withdraw but will be considered for an exit award based only on the credits achieved up to that point.

g) Students from Year One who are permitted by the Board to trail reassessment in modules into Year Two due to extenuating circumstances, will have their reassessment marks in the trailed modules considered alongside their Year Two marks at an Interim Board, which will make a progression decision. Where the trailed modules are failed again, students will not be given another attempt at the assessment unless there are extenuating circumstances accepted by the Board of Examiners which permit another assessment attempt.

h) Students who fail modules from Year Two onwards will undertake reassessment at the first available opportunity in Year Two.

5.2. Resubmission of Dissertations or equivalent

a) Re-submission of dissertations or equivalent is only permitted in the following circumstances:

- i) Either substantiated extenuating circumstances accepted at the discretion of the Board of Examiners or
- ii) where the current Dissertation Module Aggregate Mark is at least 40 and the Board of Examiners judges that the work required to achieve a pass does not include any additional experimental or practical work.

b) Resubmission is subject to the following conditions:

- i) A dissertation or equivalent must normally be resubmitted within two months of the formal notification of permission to resubmit; in cases of extenuating circumstances, this may be extended to a maximum of twelve months;
- ii) A dissertation or equivalent which has been resubmitted because of a marginal fail shall be awarded no more than a maximum mark of 50; in the case of resubmissions because of extenuating circumstances, the full range of marks shall be available to examiners.

6 Assessment Procedures

6.1. Powers of the 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 the mark for the dissertation or equivalent, including any mark for resubmission.
- c) Confirming any opportunities for reassessment for modules, including resubmission of the dissertation or equivalent and reassessment on a new course; and any opportunities for condonement.

d) Considering each student's marks profile so that they can be advised on the range of possible award outcomes, including whether it is possible for them to make use of dissertation or equivalent credits.

e) Considering extenuating circumstances as necessary and their implications for results.

f) Determining the appropriate award for each student.

g) Determining whether a student can progress to the second year.

h) Requiring any student whose performance is below that required to achieve an award to withdraw from the University.

6.1.1. An Interim Board of Examiners Meeting shall normally be held at the end of a year of study and at the end of the taught module assessment.

6.1.2. Where a student has not met the requirements to pass and is eligible to undertake reassessment and/or have failed marks condoned, the Board of Examiners will give the student the opportunity to undertake at the next available opportunity.

6.1.3. Students will be required to withdraw where the accumulation of further credit would not result in the achievement of any postgraduate award according to the Rules of Assessment.

6.1.4 The Board of Examiners will also confirm whether students are required to transfer to a non-accredited Masters course.

7 Extenuating Circumstances

If you submit Extenuating Circumstances and they are accepted as valid, the Board of Examiners may be able to offer additional assessment opportunities, such as reassessment for uncapped module marks or voluntary reassessment, in line with the Extenuating Circumstances [Policy](#) and [guidelines](#). When extenuating circumstances are accepted, the Board of Examiners will use its discretion to determine what if any action should be taken in accordance with the powers set out in the Policy. Except in the case of accepted extenuating circumstances, Boards of Examiners do not have powers of discretion in relation to the application of the rules of assessment.

End

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