

NOTE

These rules are being reviewed by Senate in April 2026. Any changes which benefit students will be introduced immediately.

University of Essex

Rules of Assessment for the Full-Time MRes Degree in the Department of Government 2025-2026

1 Preamble

a) These rules should be read in conjunction with the relevant Programme Structure, Programme Specification and online Module Catalogue entries. The Module Directory will give details 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 or equivalent. A core module must be taken as part of the programme structure and passed, with no condonement of marks below a pass allowed.

c) The MRes degrees in the Department of Government can be awarded with Distinction and 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 a Masters degree is 50. Credits are only awarded if the module is passed. In cases where failure with a mark of 40 is condoned, the credits are not awarded.

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.

3 Eligibility for an Award

The MRes Degree

Pass

To be awarded a pass in the Masters a student should:

a) Attempt 360 credits at Masters Level (Level 7) of which 300 must be passed, with the remaining credits condoned, subject to (d).

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

c) Pass at least 160 taught module credits at the first attempt unless there are substantiated extenuating circumstances accepted by the Board of Examiners.

d) Failure with a mark of 40 or more, for up to 60 credits in non-core taught modules, may be condoned provided the overall weighted average for all the taught modules is 50.

3.1 A Pass with Merit and Distinction

3.1.1 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.

3.1.2 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.

3.2 The Postgraduate Diploma

Where a student is either unable to complete their studies or does not achieve the required credits to be awarded the MRes, the award of a Postgraduate Diploma will be considered.

Departments will identify on the published Programme structure which taught modules have to be passed in order to obtain a 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. Students can be considered for the award of a Distinction and Merit for an exit award.

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

- a) Normally complete and have been assessed in 120 credits at Masters Level (Level 7) of which 90 must be passed, with the remaining credits condoned, subject to (d) for all the taught Masters modules.
- b) Subject to (e), obtain 120 credits at Masters Level (Level 7).
- c) Pass at least 60 taught module credits at the first attempt unless there are substantiated extenuating circumstances accepted by the Board of Examiners.
- d) Pass all taught core modules.

e) 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.

3.3 The Postgraduate Certificate

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 a Postgraduate Certificate will be considered.

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

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

3.3.1 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 (d).
- b) Pass all taught core modules.
- c) Pass 15 credits at the first attempt unless there are substantiated extenuating circumstances accepted by the Board of Examiners.
- d) 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 Reassessment

Reassessment for taught modules

- a) Students may have a second attempt for module(s) that have been failed, up to a maximum of 60 credits.
- 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.
- d) The Board of Examiners will reinstate the module mark for a previous attempt at a failed module if it is higher than the mark for the most recent attempt.

4.1.1 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.

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

4.1.3 Second attempts at failed examinations will take place in September of the same year.

4.1.4 Coursework: A student will only be permitted to re-submit the failed piece of coursework within a month of the publication of the results of the June Board.

4.2 Re-submission of the Dissertation or equivalent

a) Re-submission of the dissertation 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 original mark awarded 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) Re-submission is subject to the following conditions:

i) A dissertation or equivalent must normally be re-submitted 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 re-submitted because of a marginal fail shall be awarded no more than a maximum mark of 50; in the case of re-submissions because of extenuating circumstances, the full range of marks shall be available to examiners.

4.3 Progression to Year Two

a) A student will only be permitted to progress to Year Two if they fulfill all of the following criteria: have passed a minimum of 90 credits at MRes Level; have no more than 60 credits of reassessment outstanding; have no more than 30 credits of non-core modules in the condonable range.

b) Students may also decide to leave with an MA in their substantive strand. They will be asked to write a MA dissertation or equivalent (GV993) of up to 10,000 words in their MA field (60 credits). The MA assessment procedures apply - <https://www.essex.ac.uk/student/rules-of-assessment/roa-masters>

5 Assessment Procedures

5.1 Powers of the Board of Examiners

The Board of Examiners shall have the following powers:

a) Confirming the taught module marks achieved, including any resit marks presented to the Board and awarding credit;

b) Confirming the mark for the dissertation or equivalent marks;

c) Confirming any opportunities for second attempts at the assessment for modules, including resubmission of the dissertation or equivalent; 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 of the MRes;

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

5.1.1 In Year One, an Interim Board of Examiners Meeting shall normally be held at the end of June and a second will take place in September to ratify the marks awarded by the Summer School. In Year Two, an Interim Board of Examiners meeting shall normally be held at the end of June. The Final Board of Examiners meeting will normally take place in November.

5.2 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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