

University of Essex

Rules of Assessment for Full-time Taught Masters Degrees with Professional Placements 2025-2026

1 Preamble

- a) These rules apply to full-time (24 months) October and January Start Masters courses with Professional Placements. 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 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) 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. 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; 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 will be rounded to the nearest whole number – i.e. 49.5 will count as 50, 49.4 as 49.

c) The Placement Module will be assessed on a pass/fail basis only, and will be excluded from the calculation of the overall weighted average for the taught modules and the overall weighted average marks.

3 Progression to the Placement Module

3.1 In order to be permitted to proceed to the Placement Module students must:

a) Have secured an approved placement.

b) Have passed any taught modules which are core for the Masters award or the PG Diploma, or still have a reassessment attempt available in the failed module(s), to

3.2 Students will not be permitted to proceed to the Placement Module if they can only achieve a PG Certificate as an exit award.

3.3 Where students have not met the requirements to progress to the Placement Module they will be considered for:

a) a transfer to the relevant 12-month Masters course without a Professional Placement if they have met the requirements to do so, as set out in 3.1 and 3.2 above.

b) an exit award without a Professional Placement as set out in paragraph 4.2 below.

c) reassessment for an exit award without a Professional Placement.

4 Eligibility for an award

The Masters Degree

Pass

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

a) Attempt 300 credits at Masters level (Level 7) of which 260 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.

d) Pass the Placement Module in order to be considered for an award with the title 'with professional placement'. Students who are unable to take, or who fail, the Placement Module can be considered for transfer to an appropriate Masters course without a professional placement if they have met the criteria above.

4.1. A Pass with Merit or Distinction

4.1.1. 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.

4.1.2. 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.

4.2 The Postgraduate Diploma and 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 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.

Placement module credits will be excluded from the calculation of the overall weighted average for the taught modules for a PG Certificate or PG Diploma and the overall weighted average marks for a PG Diploma.

4.2.1. To be awarded a **Postgraduate Diploma** with professional placement in the title a student should:

a) Attempt 120 credits at Masters level (Level 7) excluding Placement Module credits, of which 90 must be passed, with the remaining credits condoned, subject to (c).

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.

d) Pass the Placement Module in order to be considered for an award with the title 'with professional placement'.

4.2.1.1 Students who are unable to take, or who fail, the Placement Module can be considered for a PG Diploma without a professional placement if they have met the criteria set out in 4.2.1 a-c, above.

4.2.1.2 Placement Module credits cannot be used to obtain a Postgraduate Diploma in cases where students have not met the criteria set out in 4.2.1 a-d, above.

4.2.1.3 Students who are unable to take, or who fail, the Placement Module can be considered for transfer to an appropriate course without a professional placement if they have met the criteria for the PG Diploma as set out in 4.2.1a-c, above.

4.2.2. To be awarded a **Postgraduate Certificate** with professional placement in the title a student should:

a) Attempt 60 taught credits at Masters level (Level 7), excluding Placement Module credits, of which 40 must be passed, with the remaining credits condoned, subject to (c).

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.

d) Pass the Placement Module in order to be considered for an award with the title 'with professional placement'.

4.2.2.1 Students who are unable to take, or who fail, the Placement Module can be considered for a PG Certificate without a professional placement if they have met the criteria set out in 4.2.2 a-c, above.

4.2.2.2 The Board of Examiners in Year One will not permit students to proceed with the Placement Module if they are only able to be considered for a Postgraduate Certificate or are only able to undertake reassessment for a Postgraduate Certificate with no higher award available. However, students can be considered for a Postgraduate Certificate with Professional Placement in cases where they have completed and passed the Placement Module but are not subsequently eligible for a Masters award or a Postgraduate Diploma.

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.

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 or 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 Examiners because of substantiated extenuating circumstances.

5.1.5 Where a student is required and/or is eligible to undertake reassessment regardless of whether or not they are eligible to proceed to the Placement Module, the Board of Examiners will give the student the opportunity to undertake reassessment at the first available opportunity (which is across the summer of Year One for October Start courses, and normally during the Autumn Term for January Start Model 1 courses).

5.1.6 Where a student undertakes reassessment and fails the module(s) again, the Board of Examiners can only offer further reassessment at the failed module(s) where there have been extenuating circumstances which have been accepted by the Board. The options offered by the Board will depend on the award they are being reassessed for and are set out in 5.1.6 a - 5.1.7, below.

5.1.6.a) For students who were being reassessed for the Masters award and/or the PG Diploma - the options which can be considered by the Board, where students are offered further reassessment due to extenuating circumstances, will be as follows:

- i) To delay proceeding to Year Two and to undertake reassessment without attendance, or
- ii) to proceed to Year Two and carry forward failed 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.
- iii) To transfer to an appropriate Masters course without a Professional Placement to undertake the reassessment, which may be for a Masters degree or an exit award only, as appropriate.
- iv) To undertake reassessment to be considered for an exit award without a Professional Placement.

5.1.6.b) For students who were being reassessed for the PG Certificate only and who were not permitted to proceed to the Placement Module - the only option which can be offered by the Board, if reassessment is still available, will be to undertake reassessment without attendance at the next available opportunity.

5.1.7 Following reassessment where students have not met the requirements to remain on their 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.

5.2 The Placement Module

5.2.1 The Placement Module must be attempted and passed in order to be considered for a Masters' or an exit award with the title 'with professional placement'. Students who undertake the Placement Module but fail it will be considered for an appropriate award without a professional placement.

5.2.2 Limited reassessment opportunities, if any, exist for a Placement module. Repeating the Placement Module is not permitted. Where students fail their Placement Module and the opportunity to undertake reassessment in coursework components of the Placement Module does exist, students must take and pass the necessary reassessment to be considered for an award including a professional placement. Where students fail reassessment, they will be offered no further reassessment unless extenuating circumstances have been accepted by the Board of Examiners. Students who undertake the Placement Module but fail it will be considered for an appropriate award without a professional placement.

5.2.3 Students who are unable to undertake a placement can be considered for a transfer to an appropriate Masters course without a professional placement.

5.2.4 Where a placement is cancelled or curtailed by the employer, or cannot be completed due to circumstances beyond the student's control, the department will see whether it is possible to arrange an alternative placement within the same academic year. If this is not possible, the student can be considered for an appropriate award without a professional placement.

5.3 Re-submission of Dissertations

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) 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.

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 whether the Placement Module has been passed.

c) Confirming the mark for the dissertation or equivalent, including any mark for resubmission.

d) Confirming any opportunities for reassessment for modules, including resubmission of the dissertation or equivalent; and any opportunities for condonement.

e) 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.

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

g) Determining the appropriate award for each student.

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 the taught module assessment and after reassessment. The Interim Board will also determine whether the student is still on track to be eligible for a Masters award or a PG Diploma exit award and can therefore proceed to the Placement Module, or whether they need to transfer to a relevant course not including a Placement Module. Students who are only on track for a PG Certificate cannot proceed to the Placement Module.

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 reassessment.

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.

6.2 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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