

University of Essex

Rules of Assessment for Full-time Masters degrees

January 2026 Start – (Model 1)

1 Preamble

a) These rules apply to the following full-time (12 months) Masters programmes:

Department	Course
CSEE	MSc Applications of Artificial Intelligence (MSC G412 JS) (There is also a separate variation to the Rules of Assessment for this course)
Essex Business School	MSc Management (MSC N200 JS)
Government	MA Politics (MA L201 JS) Essex MPP (Master of Public Policy) (MPP L430 JS)
Health and Social Care	MSc Global Public Health (MSC L439 JS)
Mathematical Sciences	MSc Applied Data Science (MSC G305 JS) MSc Data Science and its Applications (MSC G306 JS) MSc Data Science (MSc G304 JS) (There is also a separate variation to the Rules of Assessment for these courses)

b) 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.

c) 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.

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

e) 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.

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 Masters Degree

Pass

To be awarded a pass in the Masters 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.

3.1 A Pass with Merit or 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 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.

3.2.1 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).

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.

3.2.2 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).
- 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 Reassessment

4.1 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.

4.1.2 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.

4.1.3 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.

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

4.1.5 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. The timing of the reassessment opportunity will depend on the point the student has reached on the course and when the department is running reassessment. Students will be offered an opportunity to undertake reassessment at the next available opportunity.

4.2 Re-submission 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) 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.

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

5.1.1 Interim Board of Examiners Meetings shall normally be held at the end of the taught module assessment. An additional Interim Board will normally also be held following the assessment of the first term's modules for departments which are offering reassessment across the summer.

5.1.2 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 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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