

TEMPORARY ADJUSTMENTS TO POLICIES AND PROCEDURES IN LIGHT OF ACTION SHORT OF A STRIKE (ASOS)

1 Background

At its meeting in March 2024, Academic Council approved the proposal for temporary adjustments to regulations and policies relating to assessment in order to mitigate the impacts of ASOS on students. These adjustments will only be implemented in the case that ASOS is ongoing beyond the dates of Tier 2 Exam Boards (beginning June 2024). Should the action be resolved prior to this date, other procedures to mitigate against disruption (including reopening mark entry, and tabling marks at exam boards) will be taken.

2 Principles of fair assessment

The regulations and policies relating to assessment have been reviewed with a view to mitigating the negative impacts on students as far as reasonably possible. The aim is to balance the overarching principle that students will not be academically penalised with maintaining the integrity of university awards, and to contextualise this in the light of emerging practice in the sector. In drafting these proposed revisions, we have also drawn on the principles of fair assessment that were developed in partnership with UHI students during COVID19:

The University of the Highlands and Islands partnership will aim to:

- enable students to complete their qualification or progress to the next stage of their studies
- make progression and award decisions within normal timescales wherever possible
- maintain the academic standards of our awards, and the value of our qualifications to students, graduates and employers
- award credit and qualifications consistently to recognise student achievement
- continue to meet the accreditation requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, where relevant
- make assessment decisions that are fair and students are treated consistently.

3 Temporary adjustments to academic assessment regulations for progression and award

3.1 Exceptional progression

We propose putting in place exceptional progression arrangements for continuing students in the light of the current disruption and uncertainty. If the unavailability of student marks due to strike action (for S2/S3/SC modules only) at Tier 1 and Tier 2 Exam Boards means that progression decisions cannot be made, we will temporarily permit exceptional progression to the next stage of study, including into Honours level (SCQF Level 10).

These temporary measures require changes to the regulations to allow:

- Students to progress without recording any marks for modules designated as 'core for progression'
- Students to progress, when they may not have achieved the normal requirements for progression (40% in each of six modules) or may be carrying forward more than the currently permitted 40 SCQF points.

The risk of allowing students to progress, who would not normally be able to do so, will be mitigated by using a temporary progression code within the student records system and then entering marks retrospectively as these are received. Where these indicate that students have not submitted, or failed an assessment, normal regulations for reassessment will apply.

As marks are expected to be available in due course, the award of ungraded credit is not recommended at this time, in the interests of recognising where possible the true performance of our students.

There are some programmes where professional body requirements preclude students from progressing under these circumstances. We are currently confident that there are relatively few of such modules which are affected by ASOS, but these will be clearly identified at the relevant Exam Board.

3.2 Final awards and condonement

We propose a further change to the regulations to allow students to exit with a final award where:

- The marks profile indicates agreed pass marks for all required credits with no more than 20 credits incomplete due to missing marks
- Missing marks are due to ASOS and not to non-submission. Non-submissions should be identified and recorded as such at Tier 1 Exam Boards.

In these cases, Tier 2 Boards will be directed to condone the missing mark and the student will be awarded credit for the relevant module(s). This applies to all awards including postgraduate taught awards.

3.3 Final awards – Honours degree classification

We propose a change to the calculation of Honours degree classification. Our normal regulatory framework applies uses the mean (average) mark across all Level 10 credits to determine Honours classification.

For this session, for those students with a shortfall of 20 credits due to ASOS, we will employ the same calculation, but using the mean (average) mark across the 100 credits at SCQF Level 10 for students with condonements.

Where marks are received at a later stage these will be entered retrospectively and a second calculation made using the mean (average) mark across all 120 credits.

If this second calculation indicates a higher classification than the initial one, that will be awarded. But it will only be used to improve a classification outcome, not to lower it ('no detriment' approach).

3.4 Final awards – Distinction classification (CertHE, DipHE, Ordinary degree)

We propose a change to the calculation of Distinction classification for CertHE, DipHE and Ordinary degree awards. Our normal regulatory framework applies one calculation to determine eligibility for Distinction. This requires a mean (average) mark of 70% across all modules at the relevant level.

For this session, for those students with a shortfall of 20 credits due to ASOS, we will employ the same calculation, but using the mean (average) mark across the 100 credits at the relevant level for students with condonements.

Where marks are subsequently received these will be entered retrospectively and a second calculation made using the mean (average) mark across all 120 credits.

If either calculation indicates student has met the 70% threshold, the Distinction classification will be awarded.

3.5 Postgraduate taught (PGT) awards and Distinction classification

We propose a change to the calculation of Distinction classification for PGT awards.

The normal regulatory framework requires achievement of a minimum number of credits at Distinction grade (70%) for a postgraduate award with Distinction (40 for postgraduate certificate, 60 for postgraduate diploma, 100 for Masters).

For this session, for those students with a shortfall of 20 credits due to ASOS, we will employ a different calculation. This uses two criteria: a minimum number of credits at 70+ AND a mean (average) mark across the relevant number of credits at SCQF Level 11 which will need to be at 67+ for Distinction.

PG Certificate (60 credits)	Min 20 L11 credits at 70+ AND a mean (average) mark at 67+ over 40 credits
PG Diploma (120 credits)	Min 40 L11 credits at 70+ AND a mean (average) mark at 67+ over 100 credits
Masters (180 credits)	Min 80 L11 credits at 70+ AND a mean (average) mark at 67+ over 160 credits

Where marks are subsequently received these will be entered retrospectively and a second calculation made using the mean (average) mark across all SCQF Level 11 credits (the normal regulations).

If either calculation indicates student has met the criteria, the Distinction classification will be awarded.