



Student Guidance on Reassessment and Awarding for Master's Degrees

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Student Guidance on Reassessment and Awarding for Master's Degrees

Introduction

This guidance has been produced to help master's degree students understand how they are awarded, and also how reassessment and other important aspects of their programme work.

Which degrees does this guidance cover?

This guidance is for postgraduate students on the following master's degrees:

- Master of Science (MSc)
- Master of Arts (MA)
- Master of Laws (LLM)
- Master of Business Administration (MBA)
- Master of Public Health MPH)

The Senate Regulations which apply to this document are Senate Regulation 3 and Senate Regulation 4 which are available [here](#).

Master's degrees have different "classifications" and these are as follows, in order of highest to lowest:

- Distinction
- Merit
- Pass

The classification of your master's degree is based on many factors. Please see the section "The Dissertation and achieving your masters" for more detail.

Where can I find additional information?

Information regarding the University's Quality Assurance processes can be found [here](#).

Additional guidance can be provided by your Taught Programmes Office or personal tutor.

Programme Specific Rules and Regulations

Some programmes have different rules to what is stated in this document or the Senate Regulations, and as a student, you need to be aware of them. This could include different rules for reassessment and the awarding of your degree.

To find out if your programme has any specific or additional rules, please check the Programme Specification for your degree, which can be found [here](#) and provides all of

the essential information you need to know about the degree you are studying, such as programme learning outcomes and the blocks you will study, and any specific rules for progression and awarding.

How do I achieve my Master's degree?

To achieve your master's degree, you need to:

1. Successfully complete your taught blocks
2. Pass your dissertation

What are Blocks?

A master's degree is typically made up of 180 higher education credits, spread across a number of taught blocks and a dissertation block. Blocks represent a specific topic you will study on your degree. Each block has a credit value attached to it (normally 15 or 30) and this will be shown in your Programme Specification and within the block outline.

Blocks can be 'modular' blocks (modules) or 'study' and 'assessment' blocks, depending on the structure of your programme. The Programme Specification for your degree will show all of the blocks on your programme. It will also show which blocks you have to take, which are listed as "compulsory"; and which blocks are "optional", which means you choose them from a list.

You only achieve grades and credits for modular and assessment blocks.

What do I need to do to pass a block?

To pass a block you need to complete assessments for the block and achieve an overall grade of C- or above. Your completed assessments will be assessed using either grades (A* to F) or marks (100 to 0). The overall outcome for a block will always be shown as a grade (A* to F).

Each assessment has a "weighting" which shows how much of a contribution it makes to your overall block grade.

In a Programme Specification, some blocks are listed as "Core", of which there are three different types:

- Core Block – you need to pass the block at C- or above
- Core [and then a number/s] – you need to pass a specific assessment or assessments at C- or above. So "Core: 1" would mean that the first assessment in the block needs to be passed at C- or above
- Core All – you need to pass each assessment within the block at C-

Where an assessment has no grade and is simply pass/fail, you will need to pass it to pass the block overall.

What are extenuating circumstances?

Extenuating circumstances is the process for you informing the University if there was a significant event which negatively affected your ability to submit work, attend an assessment or perform to your usual standard in an assessment of any type. In the first instance your Department Extenuating Circumstances Panel will consider the extenuating circumstances claim. You will be told whether it is accepted or not. If it is accepted, then the decision on how best to address the impact of the extenuating circumstances on your performance falls to the Board of Examiners. The Board of Examiners will usually either give you an uncapped reassessment or waive the assessment element. For an extenuating circumstances claim to be accepted, it should be unavoidable, unexpected and beyond your control.

More information regarding Extenuating Circumstances can be found [here](#).

How do I successfully complete my taught blocks?

The first stage in achieving your master’s degree is the completion of your taught blocks. These are all of the blocks except your dissertation. Once you have completed all of the assessment for your taught blocks, your results will go to a “Board of Examiners” who will review your “grade profile”.

A Boards of Examiners is a group of academic staff who have the responsibility to confirm that students can be awarded their degree. Boards of Examiners also make decisions around reassessment.

Your grade profile is made up of your block results.

In order for you to successfully complete your taught modules, your grade profile must not exceed the limits presented in the table below.

Maximum credit volume of Grades E+, E, E-, F	Maximum credit volume of assessment blocks containing core assessments below C-	Maximum credit volume of non-core Grade Band D (D+, D, D-)
0	0	30

What happens if I have exceeded the grade profile limits?

If you have exceeded the grade profile limits presented above at the end of your taught blocks, the Board of Examiners will allow you to be reassessed in any failed blocks up to a limit of 60 credits. The Board of Examiner may also give you an extension for your dissertation.

If you need to undertake more than 60 credits of reassessment in order for you to successfully complete your taught blocks, you will not be able to achieve your master’s degree. However, you may be offered up to 60 credits of reassessment for the

opportunity to be awarded an intermediate award (see section below), and you will be permitted to still submit your dissertation.

As every master’s student is entitled to 60 credits of reassessment for failed taught blocks, you may be offered reassessment for blocks in the D band, even though you are allowed 30 credits of this grade band in your grade profile. This is called “optional reassessment” (please see section on reassessment) and may be offered so that you have the opportunity to improve your classification.

Please see the Reassessment section for more detail on how and when assessment takes place.

What happens after reassessment?

Following reassessment, you will be in one of the following situations:

1. You have successfully completed your taught blocks
2. You haven’t met the taught block requirements, and will not be able to achieve your master’s degree. You may still be eligible for an intermediate award, and are still permitted to submit your dissertation.

Important –If you have accepted extenuating circumstances against a Block, the credit will not be counted towards your reassessment total, so you may be able to undertake more than 60 credits of reassessment in your taught blocks.

The Dissertation and achieving your master’s

To achieve your master’s you need to successfully complete your taught blocks (see previous section) and also pass your dissertation (C-). Once you have done both of these, a Board of Examiners confirms that you can be awarded your degree and which classification you should receive. The table below explains what your grade profile needs to look like in order to achieve a specific master’s classification.

Masters Degree Award Requirements					
Masters Award Class	Taught part				Dissertation
	Maximum credit volume of Grades E+, E, E-, F	Maximum credit volume of assessments blocks containing core assessments below C-	Maximum credit volume of non-core grades D+, D, D-	Minimum Taught Part Weighted GPA * (weighted by assessment block credit value)	Minimum Dissertation grade
Distinction	0	0	0	14.0	A-
Merit	0	0	0	11.0	B-
Pass	0	0	30	NA	C-

What if I haven't passed my dissertation?

If you do not pass your dissertation at first attempt, you will be offered reassessment in it. This is in addition to the 60 credits of reassessment you are entitled to for your taught blocks.

What happens after reassessment in the dissertation?

Following reassessment of your dissertation, you will be in one of the following situations:

1. You have passed your dissertation, and had previously successfully completed your taught blocks. This means that you can be awarded your master's degree.
2. You have passed your dissertation but had previously been unsuccessful in completing your taught blocks. This means that you have not met your master's degree awarding requirements, but may be entitled to an intermediate award
3. You have failed your dissertation. This means that you have not met your master's degree awarding requirements, but may be entitled to an intermediate award

What is a "GPA"?

"GPA" means Grade Point Average which is based on a weighted average of your block grades. So looking at the table above, to get a distinction, you need to have an average GPA of 14 and also an A- at minimum for your dissertation.

When working out your classification, the University also uses a "Borderline Mechanism" which looks at students who are just below a classification and checks if the higher classification should be awarded. For more information on this, and other rules when it comes to calculating your masters degree, please see Appendix A of [Senate Regulation 3](#).

Placements and Internships

If your master's degree includes a placement or internship, the associated block will need to be passed in order to be awarded the master's degree "with Placement" or "with Internship".

If you are on a placement or internship master's degree but fail the associated block, you can still achieve the standard master's degree as long as you meet the awarding requirements.

If you are on a placement or internship master's degree, the timing and process for reassessment and Boards of Examiners may be a little different. Please speak to your Taught Programmes Office or check your programme specification for more information.

How do I get my Results?

How and when

Your results will be published on eVision shortly after the Board of Examiners has met. The expected release date for your results will be published by your Taught Programme Office on eVision earlier in the year.

Results service

Your Academic Department/School will hold a results service after the Board of Examiners has met. This is an opportunity for you to discuss any queries you may have regarding your results, reassessments (if any are offered to you), or for general feedback on your overall performance. Departments will communicate the timings of the results service to you in advance of each Board of Examiners.

Finance queries

Your results may be withheld if there is a financial query on your account. However, in this situation, details of any reassessment offered to you by the Board of Examiners will be emailed to your Brunel email account by the Taught Programme Office.

Reassessment – what are the rules?

Here are the most important things you need to know about reassessment:

1. Reassessment is only offered when you haven't met the pass grade for a block, and only for the assessment/s within the block which haven't met the pass grade.
2. There is a limit on how much reassessment you can undertake, and this is described in the sections above.
3. You are only given one reassessment attempt per block, which could be for one or more assessments within the block.
4. If a re-assessment is attempted but you do not achieve a better grade than at your first attempt, the highest grade achieved will be counted.
5. In most cases, re-sits happen at the next available opportunity, which is normally during one of the University's reassessment periods. If you have a significant amount of reassessment to complete (more than 45 credits), the Board of Examiners may decide that you need to repeat an academic year or term, which will delay you continuing on your degree.
6. When you are offered reassessment, it will be described to you as "compulsory" or "optional". This is what those terms mean:
 - **Compulsory** – you must do this reassessment and pass the block in order to be awarded your degree. As this is reassessment, if you don't attempt it or don't pass it, you won't be offered another attempt, unless you have accepted extenuating circumstances.
 - **Optional** – You're being offered the reassessment because you are entitled to do it, but you don't have to in order to be awarded. You may choose to do the reassessment to improve your grade profile and potentially your final award classification. You should therefore think carefully about your decision and discuss it with your personal tutor or appropriate academic member of staff.

7. When you are offered reassessment, it will also be described as “capped” or “uncapped”. This is what those terms mean:
- **Capped** - This means that your overall block grade will be capped at a pass (i.e. C-) regardless of how well you do in your reassessment.
 - **Uncapped** – This means that your overall block grade will not be capped at a pass, so the better you do in your reassessment, the better your block grade could be. Uncapped reassessment is only offered to students with accepted extenuating circumstances. For more information on this and extenuating circumstances generally, please see [here](#).

Intermediate Awards

If, following all of the reassessment you are allowed you are still unable to meet the awarding requirements for your master’s degree, you may still be entitled to an intermediate award. The standard requirements for each of these awards are below, however some programmes may have specific requirements, so please check your programme specification.

Postgraduate Certificate

This is a level 7 award and can be awarded if you have 60 credits in your taught blocks which do not exceed the limits presented in the table below.

Maximum volume of assessment blocks (excluding dissertation) permitted in the taught part			
<i>Grade Bands A, B and C (A++, A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C-)</i>	<i>Grade band D (D+, D, D-)</i>	<i>Grade bands E and F (E+, E, E-, F)</i>	<i>With grade below C- in any core block or core element of assessment</i>
Any	15	0	0

Postgraduate Diploma

This is a level 7 award and you can be awarded it if you have achieved 120 credits in your taught blocks which do not exceed the limits presented in the table below.

Maximum volume of assessment blocks (excluding dissertation) permitted in the taught part			
<i>Grade Bands A, B and C (A++, A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C-)</i>	<i>Grade band D (D+, D, D-)</i>	<i>Grade bands E and F (E+, E, E-, F)</i>	<i>With grade below C- in any core block or core element of assessment</i>
Any	30	0	0

In a situation where a student has passed their dissertation, but not successfully completed their taught modules, some programmes allow a passed dissertation to be used to make up for some failed taught block credits. Where allowed, this will be confirmed in the programme specification.