

POLICY FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES, PROGRESSION AND AWARDS DURING INTERRUPTIONS TO NORMAL BUSINESS AND TIMESCALES (INBAT)

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

On occasions where the student learning experience at Keele is at risk of significant disruption due to exceptional circumstances, every effort will be made by the University to communicate swiftly, clearly and comprehensively with all staff and students affected. The University will endeavour to mitigate the impact of any such disruption where possible, to allow students to continue and/or complete their studies as originally planned. It may require flexibility and cooperation from all areas and members of the University to achieve this aim. The specific measures which the University can take in this regard are set out below. Additional measures may be taken as the situation requires. Some of these measures may require the approval of Senate.

1.2 Scope

This policy applies to exceptional circumstances affecting adversely the University's business¹ which:

- prevent the University from delivering its programmes in the prescribed way;
- prevent completion of student assessments
- prevent the completion of a robust marking and moderation process; and/or
- disrupt the operation of any Keele examination boards on the normal timescales.

These events would be determined formally by the Chair of Senate. The common feature is that students are prevented from completing their studies or the assessment process within the normal timescales and in accordance with the regulations of the University as a result of serious interruptions to the University's business and through no fault of their own.

This policy sets out how the following processes will be managed when such an event occurs:

- Process for determining awards for finalist students;
- Process for allowing students on undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses to continue on their programme of study.

¹ including those affecting the operation of Keele programmes delivered at or by a collaborative partner

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2. Disruption to Teaching and Learning

2.1 Low level Disruption

Low-level disruption of teaching, such as the cancellation of a teaching session or the unavailability of a teaching resource, is an unavoidable occasional occurrence at any education provider. The University has well established procedures in place to address such disruption locally and swiftly. There is an expectation that Schools will make appropriate adjustments by (i) providing alternative means to cover the content and where necessary (ii) amending assessment briefs to ensure students are not disadvantaged. All reasonable effort will be made to provide students with the taught input at another time or in another format.

2.2 Significant Disruption

The University accepts that there may be different scenarios which may lead to more significant disruption for the student. This can either be where teaching is disrupted for much of the module, i.e. in cases or where there occurred a significant non-delivery of teaching or other disruption to the students' learning, for example due to loss of access to labs or online learning facilities. Measures will be put in place to mitigate the impact of the disruption while it is ongoing and afterwards. This will be clearly communicated and explained to students. However, the University can assess the residual impact on students only after the end of such disruption and is only then able to consider whether the measures taken were sufficient to provide students with an appropriate learning experience overall. Where this was deemed not to have been the case, the University will consider what further mitigation should be offered.

3. Students with Incomplete Assessment Components

In cases where there are, at the time of the relevant discipline examination board, missing assessment components (not taken or unmarked), provided that marks are available for assessment components contributing at least 50% to the overall module mark, then the marks for the assessment components that are available can be used to determine the overall module mark, provided module learning outcomes have broadly been met. An exception would be where this was contrary to any professional body accreditation requirements for the programme. Where this calculation results in a pass mark or condonable mark, credit will be awarded for the module.

In cases where the missing assessment component/s constitute(s) more than 50% of the overall module mark, the examination board will record that the determination of the module result will be deferred until such time as assessment marks for components contributing a minimum of 50% to the overall module mark become available. Where the not-taken component/s contributes more than 50%, students will have to take further assessment until the threshold of at least 50% is reached.

Where an assessment component is comprised of multiple assessment parts which are aggregated to determine the overall component mark that is entered into the student record system, and where some of the marks for assessment parts are missing, then the discipline examination board can apply academic judgement in determining whether the available parts are sufficient to allow a robust determination of the mark for that assessment component in light of the module learning outcomes.

Where an overall module mark has been determined from available assessment components and subsequently the marks for the missing assessment component/s become available, the overall module mark will be recalculated, and this will be recorded as the revised agreed mark. The mark awarded will be no lower than the originally agreed mark. Students will be informed of any revised marks in writing and will be issued, where appropriate, with a revised HEAR or transcript of their achievements.

In cases where one or more assessment components have not been taken, but assessment components contributing to at least 50% of the overall module mark have been taken and marked and they have broadly met the module learning outcomes, then students will not be required to take the missing assessment component/s, unless professional body or accreditation requirements apply which would prevent the University from confirming a progression or award outcome because those requirements have not been met. However, students will have the option of taking such outstanding assessment(s) if they wish. If they choose to do this, when the marks for those assessment component/s become available, the overall module mark will be recalculated and this will be recorded as the revised agreed mark. The mark awarded will be no lower than the originally agreed mark. Students who are allowed to progress to their next level of study will be counselled regarding the potential impact on their overall assessment load.

4. Determining Final Award Outcomes

Students with marks available for all required modules, including from those modules with a calculated overall mark based on at least 50% of completed assessments (section 4 above), will have their awards calculated in the normal way.

Such students will be presented to the final examination board where all module marks, including those with a calculated overall mark based on at least 50% of completed assessment components (section 4 above), will be confirmed as appropriate.

Where the result of outstanding assessment/s becomes available at a later date and results in a higher module mark/s, then the student's award will be recalculated to check if they are now entitled to a higher classification. Students will be informed of all recalculations in writing and will be issued with a revised transcript and certificate where applicable.

5 For finalists failing to obtain their intended award, where a reassessment opportunity remains on their failed modules, they will be offered such reassessment. However, in cases where a failed module mark is based on less than the full set of assessment components (as outlined in section 4), reassessment will be delayed until the student has had the opportunity to be assessed for the first time on the missing assessment components of the module, unless the weighting of the missing component is so small that passing it could not result in passing the module overall. This will allow an uncapped module mark to be calculated. Only where this still results in a failed overall module mark will reassessment take place on any failed assessment components.

The University will not award a degree unless a student has overall module marks available for all modules studied. However, students who cannot have an award calculated may be issued with an interim transcript which will include the following information for prospective employers and other education institutions (for those applying for postgraduate study):

- The confirmed marks for modules taken at previous levels of study, together with those taken in their final level of study which could be confirmed by the examination board
- Details of those modules where a mark cannot be confirmed

The interim transcript will be accompanied by an explanation of the circumstances affecting the assessment of students and the steps that will be taken by the University once normal business resumes.

5. Determining Progression Outcomes for continuing students

The University's regulations describe the circumstances under which a student may progress/proceed to the next level of study. There are no formal progression requirements for

Postgraduate Taught students. The progression requirements for postgraduate research students are set out in [Regulation C9 and C10](#).

For undergraduate and integrated masters students, the normal progression requirements (see [Regulation D2](#)) are as follows:

- 'progress' where a student achieves 120 credits at an academic level of study;
- 'proceed' where a student, without 120 credits at an academic level of study, is nevertheless allowed to start study at the next academic level. In these circumstances, students are required to undertake assessment and to be awarded the missing credits during the following academic year.
- For some undergraduate programmes, deviations from the requirements set out in D2 can be found in their academic programme regulations which can be found [here](#)

Continuing students with marks available for all modules studied, including from those modules with a calculated overall mark based on at least 50% of completed assessments (section 4 above), will have their progression decision calculated in the normal way.

Where there is an incomplete set of module marks, students should normally be permitted to proceed provisionally and to begin work at the next academic level, unless the marks that are available indicate that they would not be able to meet the normal progression requirements. This is because even where one or more module mark cannot be confirmed, it would be unreasonable to refuse to progress a student with evidence of good engagement with studies and good academic performance whose credits fell short of the requirements through no fault of their own.

The University should defer the final progression decision until the outcome of a sufficient number of modules is known. The normal threshold standards as set out in Regulation D2 will be applied when this progression decision is taken unless otherwise determined by the Senate.

The University should normally ensure that outstanding assessments and/or reassessments (for those modules where outcomes are known) are held at the earliest opportunity. This may take the form of an alternative type of assessment/s (see section 7)

Once the final progression decision of students is formally determined by the examination board, those students who have failed to meet the normal progression threshold will not be permitted to continue on to study at the higher level of the programme. They will be offered the normal options to repeat their failed level of study with attendance as provided for in the University Regulations, either by repeating their level of study in full or only repeating study of their failed modules. Depending upon their circumstances and the point in the academic year, this could be done either in the current academic year or in the following academic year, following a period of leave of absence. Financial reimbursement will be considered for any reasonable expenses incurred directly and reasonably as a result of beginning the next level of study prior to the final progression decision being known and which would not otherwise have been incurred, subject to proof being provided that such expenses were in fact incurred.

6. Changes to Assessment Arrangements

Disruption of students' programmes of study (affecting either continuing students or finalists), including excessive assessment burdens and/or significant delays in assessment should be minimised in the interests of the quality of the educational student experience. The following mitigating actions should be considered:

- additional opportunities to sit the assessments in the original format;

- alternative or a choice of methods of assessment, where necessary and approved as set out below.

Any change of assessment will normally require prior formal approval by the relevant Faculty Dean of Education (or the PVC Education) based on advice from Academic Services. Proposals should be submitted by the School and should be based on the following criteria:

- Proposal provides an appropriate and robust means of assessing the student learning outcomes;
- Proposal reduces the residual assessment burden during the current and/or next level of study, for example, by providing an opportunity for an assessment in early autumn (prior to the next academic year) for submission remotely.

Once a decision has been made and communicated by Academic Services to the School, it will be the responsibility of the School to ensure that all impacted students are notified formally and in sufficient time of the nature of the assessment and when this will take place.

7. Exceptions

A number of Keele Programmes have regulations that reflect the requirements of professional bodies for progression to the next academic level of study. Unless explicitly prevented by professional accreditation requirements, the principles in this policy for proceeding to the next level of study should apply to these programmes, whilst noting that there may be pre-requisites for commencing certain elements of the next level of study which cannot be waived.

8. Operation of Examination Boards

Discipline and University examination boards shall operate in accordance with Regulation D3 in all respects other than those set out in this section or otherwise approved by the Senate. Regardless of any temporary change in the operation and terms of reference of examination boards, Senate requires that no change may be introduced which could be deemed to jeopardise the reputation and academic standards of its awards.

Discipline examination boards that make recommendation to a University Examination Board or are authorized to make progression and/or award decision² shall be convened in the usual manner. Guidance on the operation of discipline examination boards will be issued by Academic Services and will provide detailed information on the powers and operation of a discipline examination board, for assessment, progression or award classification purposes, where normal business in any part of the assessment process has been interrupted. The constitution of the discipline examination board shall be as set out in Regulation D3. Quoracy rules may be relaxed but in order to be quorate, the board must, as a minimum include a Chair, the programme / subject leads, a board secretary, and have the input from at least one External Examiner (see also paragraph 9.3 below). Where it is not possible to achieve this, the business of the discipline examination board has to be referred up to be covered by the main University Undergraduate Examination Board and for postgraduate taught programmes, to a specially convened University Postgraduate Examination Board. This Postgraduate Examination Board will be convened by the Pro Vice Chancellor Education as required.

The University already has a process in place where, with the approval from the Head of Academic Quality and Student Conduct, an examination board can proceed without the attendance of the

² This includes discipline exam boards which make recommendations to the University Exam Boards, PGT programme boards, collaborative provision exam boards, and discipline exam boards in the Faculty of Health.

external examiner³. This is predicated on the assumption that the external examiner has been able to, up to the point of the examination board itself, carry out their obligations as external examiner and undertaken tasks such as approval of assessment questions and review of samples of work. Exceptionally, under this policy, an examination board may be considered quorate and recommend progression and award decision without the contribution of the relevant external examiner(s) in such circumstances as set out in section 1 of this Policy. Where for example an external examiner fails to attend the examination board and also does not, or is not able to, carry out at least some of the work required to ensure oversight over the rigour of the University's application of academic standards, the University is required to balance the need to ensure appropriate external oversight of academic standards with the need to protect the interests of students and their right to receive timely and accurate results. For the University, this will normally mean that the outcomes of any board where such external assurances cannot be secured will remain provisional until such time that the Pro Vice-Chancellor Education, as Chair of the University Examination Board, has been assured that due process has been followed. This is normally done in consultation with the University Chief External Examiner. Where this is not possible, the University will determine whether historical evidence from previous semesters and academic years and the outcomes and reports of external examiners can provide sufficient assurances to allow the results to be confirmed by Chair's action from the Pro Vice-Chancellor only.

University examination boards shall be convened in the usual manner. Guidance on the operation of any university examination board will be issued by the Academic Services and will provide detailed information on the powers and operation of a university board, for progression or award classification purposes, where normal business in any part of the assessment process has been interrupted. The constitution of university examination boards shall be as set out in Regulation D3. Quoracy rules may be relaxed but in order to be quorate, the board must, as a minimum include a Chair, Secretary, the Chief External Examiner and at least one member of staff to represent each School with candidates under consideration.

In order to make it possible for examination boards to consider the maximum number of candidates presenting themselves with a full set of module marks, the normal timing of boards may be locally adapted and if necessary, centrally coordinated. Where it is necessary for boards to make provisional decisions, as set out above, they will reconvene with full membership at such time when complete sets of marks are available to allow awards to be (re)calculated and to convert provisional into final progression decisions. In cases where it is deemed that progression or award decisions need to be finalised with particular urgency after the return to normal business, for example in the case of some professional programmes, the Chair of the relevant board can, exceptionally, make such decisions on behalf of the board in liaison with at least one of the School external examiners. All such decisions shall be reported to the next full meeting of the board of examiners.

9. Graduation

The University will hold graduation ceremonies on the published dates for all students for whom a final award can be calculated and who are eligible to graduate.

Those students who obtain an award subsequent to graduation ceremonies, when their remaining module marks become available, will be invited to a future graduation ceremony.

10. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Roles and responsibilities for individuals, groups and committees during periods of interrupts to normal timescales and business are as set out in the main body of this policy above.

³ See External Examining Code of Practice para 5.9

11. RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This Policy should be read with reference to the University's assessment and award regulations. In particular, the following regulations are relevant to the content of this policy:

- Regulation D2 Progression and Classification Rules
- Regulation D1 Assessment
- Regulation D3 Boards of Examiners
- Regulations in Section C: Academic Programme Regulations
- Regulation B7 Complaints
- External Examiner Code of Practice

12. REVIEW, APPROVAL & PUBLICATION

This policy will be reviewed at least every five by the University Senate or earlier if external guidance or developments in sector good practice requires.

13. DOCUMENT CONTROL INFORMATION

Document Name	INBAT Policy
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Equality Analysis Decision and Date	[Decision from Equality Analysis category and date]
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