

Examination Board Guidance 2020-21

This document provides further detail on the regulations and processes for examination boards this year, including which provisions apply to which students and cohorts.

The 2020-21 provisions are online [here](#). 2019-20 provisions such as discounting 30 credits and giving automatic certified absences even where students do not submit ECs do *not* apply this year. However, students who were finalists in 2019-20 but did not complete that year will carry forward provisions that relate to classification and award, and undergraduate students who were not finalists last year will see the provisions from last year come into effect this year (discounting some or all of the 2019-20 academic year when calculating a classification). SITS has been amended to calculate according to the amended rules, but please do check its outcomes carefully.

If you have queries, please contact Simon Hayter or Alice de Havillan in ARCS (this is a staff guidance document – if students have queries that cannot be answered by the School/Institute, please advise them to contact the Student Enquiry Centre). For new SEB Chairs and Secretaries, do also contact Simon and Alice if it would be useful to run through the standard processes.

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Marking and external examiners

There are no alternative arrangements in place this year and the changes made for 2019-20 no longer apply – refer to the standard procedures in the [Assessment Handbook](#).

Extenuating circumstances

Provisions relating to extenuating circumstances (ECs) are **not** cohort-dependent – you can apply the same rules to all students this year (as all claims will relate to 2020-21 issues).

Changes from the standard policy for 2020-21

- There is now no limit on the number of times a student can self-certify (submit an EC claim without supporting evidence) - there was previously a limit of three instances per year. The automatically-applied cap in the online EC system has been removed. Self-certification is not the same as automatic approval – the SEB must still review the claims to ensure they are valid ECs before accepting them.
- The scope of what counts as valid ECs has been expanded so that students can claim for circumstances outside their control arising from the long-term effects of the pandemic. Caring responsibilities (which could already be accepted in some circumstances), suitable study environments in which to complete the assessment, and access to hardware/software can all be accepted as valid ECs.
- Where a student seeks a first take of all or part of the year (a repeat of the teaching, rather than just the assessment) we would still ask for evidence. These cases will require a detailed individual conversation with the student (as in any year).

Important changes from last year's arrangements

In 2019-20 there were additional EC provisions that do not apply this year. Notably:

- A student who does not submit and assessment will **not** receive an automatic certified absence. To have ECs considered, a student must submit a claim this year.
- The fit to sit policy applies as usual this year – once a student submits an assessment that attempt will count and we will not then accept an EC claim. When applying the fit to sit policy to online exams, please apply it based on whether or not the student has submitted answers rather than whether or not they downloaded the questions.
- The only exceptions to fit to sit – as always – are the rare cases where a student can show that they were unfit to determine their fitness to complete the assessment; these cases are most commonly dealt with through the appeal process, but contact ARCS if you have queries. A higher level of evidence will be required for these cases.

Progression

The standard progression rules as set out in the relevant edition of the Academic Regulations apply for all programmes. Last year, all students were granted automatic progression – that does **not** apply this year. This is not cohort dependent, as all students who could benefit from the 2019-20 automatic progression will already have done so.

Award requirements (including condoned failure)

'Award requirements' refers to the minimum requirements to achieve the award itself (credits taken and passed, passing core modules, minimum overall mark, etc), rather than the determination of the classification (including discounting modules), which is discussed separately [below](#). Different arrangements apply for students who were finalists last year but did not complete, and for students who are finalists for the first time in 2020-21.

Award rules for students who are finalists for the first time in 2020-21

The standard award rules as set out in the relevant edition of the Academic Regulations apply.

Award rules for students who were finalists in 2019-20

Amended minimum requirements for award continue to apply as follows:

Foundation Certificate (FdCert) (2019-20 finalists)

Take 120 credits and pass a minimum 90 credits including a minimum 30 at or above level 3. Achieve a minimum College Mark of 40.0.

Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE) (2019-20 finalists)

Take 120 credits and pass a minimum 90 credits including a minimum 30 at or above level 4. Achieve a minimum College Mark of 40.0.

Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE) (2019-20 finalists)

Take 240 credits and pass a minimum 180 credits including a minimum 30 at or above level 5. Achieve a minimum College Mark of 40.0.

Ordinary Degree (2019-20 finalists)

Take a minimum 360 credits and pass a minimum 270 credits including a minimum 30 at or above level 6. Achieve a minimum College Mark of 40.0 (calculated as a flat average of all 360 credits).

Standard three-year bachelors' awards (BA, BSc, BSc (Econ), BSc (Eng), BEng) (2019-20 finalists)

Take 360 credits and pass a minimum 270 credits including a minimum 30 at or above level 6. Achieve a minimum College Mark of 40.0.

Intercalated Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Medical Sciences (iBSc/iBMedSci) (2019-20 finalists)

Take 120 credits and pass a minimum 90 credits including a minimum 30 at or above the level 6. Achieve a minimum College Mark of 40.0.

Bachelor of Law (LLB) (2019-20 finalists)

A separate document from 2019-20 covers these arrangements – if SEBs other than Law have queries, please contact ARCS.

Standard four-year integrated masters' awards (MEng, MSci) (2019-20 finalists)

Take 480 credits and pass a minimum 360 credits including a minimum 30 at or above level 7. Achieve a minimum College Mark of 40.0.

Graduate Certificate (GradCert) (2019-20 finalists)

Take 60 credits and pass a minimum 45 credits including a minimum 30 at or above level 6. Achieve a minimum College Mark of 40.0.

Graduate Diploma (GradDip) (2019-20 finalists)

Take 120 credits and pass a minimum 90 credits including a minimum 30 at or above level 6. Achieve a minimum College Mark of 40.0.

Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) (2019-20 finalists)

No changes from the standard regulations for award.

Bachelor of Dentistry (BDS) (2019-20 finalists)

Please refer to the Institute of Dentistry.

Postgraduate taught awards (CILT, PgCert, PgDip, MA, MSc, MRes, MPA, MCLinDent) (2019-20 finalists)

The standard award rules as set out in the relevant edition of the Academic Regulations apply, except that failed modules can be condoned from a mark of zero rather than from the usual 40.0, where the other standard requirements for condoned failure are met.

Classification

Different arrangements apply for students who were finalists last year but did not complete, and for students who are finalists for the first time in 2020-21.

Classification of students who are finalists for the first time in 2020-21

Undergraduate (except LLB, BDS and MBBS)

The normal classification algorithm applies except that **either** 30 2019-20 credits **or** the entire 2019-20 year (whichever gives the better outcome) will be discounted from the calculation of the Classification Mark. This refers to any credits that were part of the developmental year that the student was in during 2019-20 (whenever those credits were actually completed).

- Where 30 credits are discounted, the algorithm is unchanged but the 2019-20 year average will be an average of only the remaining module marks (weighted by credit value, as usual).
- Where the whole year is discounted, the year weighting for 2019-20 will be replaced with a zero – eg a standard 1-3-6 weighting would become 1-0-6 (first, second, third years).

SITS will calculate outcomes on both algorithms and these will be displayed in the board reports.

LLB

A separate document from 2019-20 covers these arrangements in full – if schools other than Law require details, please contact ARCS. For the standard three-year LLB, students will be classified on the best of **either** the standard LLB scheme but with the 30 credits of 2019-20 modules with the lowest marks not counting as a negative factor in the minimum profiles, **or** the scheme for other bachelors programmes outlined [directly above](#). There are additional considerations for non-standard LLB programmes.

MBBS and BDS

These programmes do not have a final overall classification, so this does not apply.

Postgraduate taught

The normal classification algorithm applies. However, students who are part-time or on multi-year PGT programmes and who are now finalists for the first time will receive the same discounting provision as students who were finalists in 2019-20 but did not complete that year (see [below](#)); for those students the discounted credits can come from anywhere in the programme and are not limited to 2019-20 modules.

Classification of students who were finalists in 2019-20

Undergraduate (except LLB, BDS and MBBS) (2019-20 finalists)

The normal classification algorithm applies except that the lowest 30 credits from the final developmental year will be discounted from the calculation of the Classification Mark.

LLB (2019-20 finalists)

A separate document from 2019-20 covers these arrangements in full – if schools other than Law require details, please contact ARCS. Standard three-year LLB students will be classified on the standard scheme, but with the 30 credits of final year modules with the lowest marks not counting as a negative factor in the minimum profiles.

MBBS and BDS (2019-20 finalists)

These programmes do not have a final overall classification, so this does not apply.

Postgraduate taught (2019-20 finalists)

The normal classification algorithm applies except that the lowest 30 credits from the final developmental year will be discounted from the calculation of the Classification Mark (except for the PgCert, where only 15 credits will be discounted). Please also note the change to condoned failure, [above](#), for this cohort.

Borderline classification policy

Students within the specified zone of consideration should be considered under the borderline classification policy to see if they are eligible to be raised to the next classification banding. Borderline consideration is not automated, so please pay particularly close attention to these cases. As always, SEB minutes must include **all** students in the zone, whether they were raised or not (to explain why they were or were not raised). The same borderline mitigation arrangements apply to all finalists, whether new finalists or continuing finalists.

The zone of consideration is 1.5% (rather than 1%) for all students. Students falling within the zone will be raised to the next classification provided they have at least the following number of final year credits at or above the level of the higher classification:

All UG programmes that classify using the Classification Mark	45
CILT	15 (unchanged)
PgCert	30 (unchanged)
PgDip	45
MA/MSc/MRes/MPA/MBA/MClinDent	75
Euromasters (School of Physics and Astronomy, only)	105

Extenuating circumstances and the borderline policy

In a standard year, the borderline policy allows for some additional adjustments where a student has significant extenuating circumstances not taken into account elsewhere (either expanding the zone from 1% to 1.5%, or – where a student is within 1% - raising them on fewer than half of their final year credits at the higher level). These additional provisions are **not** available this year (as was the case last year), due to the criteria being amended for all students as above. The borderline rules are therefore absolutely fixed.

Review of module marks

The 2020-21 Covid Mitigating Measures Policy includes the following text:

“School/institute-level Subject Examination Boards should take patterns of student achievement into consideration and compare results against those of previous pre-Covid cohorts (and of the same cohort on other modules) to look for modules that seem out of line. If there is a variation that cannot be adequately accounted for and can be attributed to an assessment issue linked to the pandemic, restorative measures such as scaling may be presented to the Faculty-level Degree Examination Board for consideration.”

This is not a request for SEBs to undertake additional scaling, and certainly not to look at normative scaling. Rather, this is a reminder that – as in any other year – SEBs should look closely at the results of each module in context and seek to explain any significant deviations from expectations. If those differences cannot be explained, that is the point at which interventions such as scaling might be considered. As always, scaling requires DEB approval, but please contact ARCS as soon as you identify an issue as it is better to resolve these issues ahead of the DEB meeting itself wherever possible (so that the finalised marks are used when classifying).

The [Power BI tool](#) has considerable functionality that will help with the review of results on a student, assessment, and modular basis. If you are unable to access Power BI please contact Sharon Pay, Reporting Services Manager in IT Services.

Dates for examination boards and examination board processes

A small number of changes to the dates for the June-July 2021 examination boards have been made (communicated previously by Registry). The actual assessment periods are not changing, so the changes are limited but will give a little extra time to SEBs; the original 2020-21 calendar had also included some additional time set against previous years, prior to these latest amendments. There are no changes to the previously published dates for the late summer and autumn exam board periods. Dates for the main summer period are given below.

This year, TMR will be run *after* the SEBs have met and confirmed their marks; therefore SEBs will be able to extract reports anytime during the SEB window without waiting for a TMR refresh. However, it remains very important for SEBs to follow the marking deadlines, as this can seriously affect outcomes for students of other SEBs who have taken your modules. If this will not be possible for any module, make sure to inform other SEBs whose students will be affected by the delay.

Undergraduate SEBs (except MBBS and BDS*)	
Mark entry deadline	16 June 2021 (12 noon)
SEB period	18 – 25 June 2021
Submission of SEB paperwork to ARCS and submission of final post-SEB marks to SITS	29 June 2021 (12 noon)
Degree Examination Boards	6 July 2021 (H&SS 10-12.00, S&E 14-16.00 [†])
Official release of results	15 July 2021

*These have a separate calendar.

[†] Includes the (SMD) Intercolated Programmes and Global Health SEBs.

Postgraduate taught SEBs	
Mark entry deadline	16 June 2021 (12 noon)
SEB period	18 June – 2 July 2021
Submission of SEB paperwork to ARCS and submission of final post-SEB marks to SITS	6 July 2021 (12 noon)
Degree Examination Board	14 July 2021 (14-16.00)
Official release of results	21 July 2021

The late summer assessment period is unchanged, running from 2-13 August 2021.

If you will be running SEB reports, check in advance to make sure that you can log-in. If you cannot, contact Simon or Alice in ARCS to have this set up. Reports this year will include additional columns to show the different calculations in use.

SEB report generator: <https://webapps2.is.qmul.ac.uk/seb/report-two.action>

SEB report generator guidance: [Assessment Handbook](#) appendices

In all cases, the SEB paperwork for submission to ARCS comprises the Report to the DEB, the SEB minutes, the EC monitoring form, and – where relevant – any first take forms. Templates are [here](#).

03 March 2021