

**UNIVERSITY OF BEDFORDSHIRE**

**ACADEMIC REGULATIONS 2014/15**

**SECTION 5b Assessment Regulations for Postgraduate Taught  
Studies**

## **5b.1 Introduction**

5b.1.1 The University of Bedfordshire's Academic Regulations provide the regulatory framework for assessment processes. Academic Regulations are agreed by and can only be amended by the Academic Board. The implementation of these Regulations is set out in guidance in the Quality Handbook. The Handbook also covers arrangements for quality assurance of implementation, and has been designed to complement, and be read in conjunction with, these Academic Regulations.

## **5b.2 Purposes and Principles of assessment**

### **5b.2.1 Purposes**

5b.2.1.1 Within its regulations the University of Bedfordshire identifies the purposes of assessment as:

- To measure a student's achievements against the intended learning outcomes of the unit and course.
- To assist student learning by providing appropriate feedback on performance.
- To provide a reliable and consistent basis for boards of examiners to determine the progression of, and conferment of awards to, students.

5b.2.1.2 Assessment is an integral part of our approach to facilitating student learning. It is part of a progressive process by which students learn to develop their criticality and their ability to analyse and take responsibility for their own work. It contributes to their employability and to their ability to be life-long learners.

5b.2.1.3 Assessment practices and processes must be robust and conform to internal and national expectations, ensuring confidence in the reliability, validity and authenticity of grading.

### **5b.2.2 Principles**

5b.2.2.1 The following principles underpin effective assessment practices and the University's approach to assessment.

#### **Assessment strategies**

- The assessment of unit outcomes is designed to contribute to, or to support, the achievement of course level outcomes.
- Assessment strategies are coherent and developmental across a course, supporting learner development and enabling students to achieve their potential.
- Assessment strategies strike a balance between summative and formative assessment.
- Students experience a range of assessment activities designed to support the progressive development of their knowledge, understanding, skills and employability.

#### **Standards**

- Assessment practices and processes are robust and conform to internal and external expectations, ensuring confidence in the reliability, validity and authenticity of grading.
- Assessment criteria are clearly specified, aligned to the level of the unit and its learning outcomes, and used as the basis for marking and grading.

#### **Assessment activities**

- Assessment activities relate to the intended learning outcomes of the unit and support the overarching assessment strategy for the course.
- Assessment activities enable students to demonstrate the learning outcomes in ways which are inclusive and equitable.
- Assessment activities support academic integrity and minimise opportunities for academic offences.

#### **Engaging students**

- Students are supported in developing an understanding of expectations through detailed assessment briefs and active engagement with the assessment process and criteria.
- Assessment supports student self-management and reflection, giving students the confidence and skills to use the variety of feedback available to them to monitor and improve their performance.
- Realistic and balanced assessment workloads spread the assessment loading and ensure adequate time for the associated learning.
- Timely and meaningful feedback supports the learning process.

#### **Reviewing and evaluating**

- The design and delivery of assessment is a collegiate activity which necessitates academic teams discussing and agreeing expectations and outcomes.
- Assessment practices are continuously reviewed and refined to ensure they are supporting students and their learning, and meeting institutional principles.
- Dissertations should be submitted in accordance with the information set out in the University's guidance notes for the presentation of dissertations.

#### **Grades**

- 5b.3 Student work will be marked using the University grading scheme (refer to Table A).
- 5b.4 Exceptionally, some units are graded on a pass/fail basis, requiring approval by Academic Board.
- 5b.5 Grades for elements of assessment must be whole numbers. If there are a number of components within an assessment these must be aggregated and the calculation, rounded

using the convention: 0.5 and above rounded up, otherwise rounded down, to the nearest whole number.

- 5b.6 Grades, or parts of grades, are not awarded for attendance.
- 5b.7 Credit is awarded on successful completion of a unit.
- 5b.8 Successfully completed units cannot be reassessed.
- 5b.9 Units taken in addition to the prescribed course will not contribute to the award.

### **Progression and Award**

- 5b.10 In making judgements about students' ability to progress, Boards of Examiners will take into account decisions concerning mitigating circumstances on the basis of advice and recommendations from the Student Engagement and Mitigation team. If the circumstances persist, students will be granted the right to undertake the assessment for the first time at a later date. Such students must be given a new assessment task, normally at the next scheduled opportunity. Academic Board may determine that for some types of assessment, submission may be undertaken prior to the next scheduled opportunity.
- 5b.11 Where allegations of academic offences are made they will be investigated. Such offences include cheating, plagiarism, the fabrication of information and impersonation.
- 5b.12 Postgraduate courses are divided into two stages: the taught component; and the Master's level independent work or dissertation (called "dissertation" throughout this document). The taught component will consist of 120 credits and the dissertation stage will amount to 60 credits.
- 5b.13 Students progress to the dissertation stage provided they have attempted all elements of the prescribed assessment for the taught stage; have passed units to the value of at least 90 credits; have not failed a Unit on which the dissertation depends; and providing that the referral is not due to an academic offence.
- 5b.14 Students who have attempted all requisite units (as described in 5b.13) and have no failed units may commence work on the dissertation stage pending the outcome of an Examination Board decision. The Examination Board will make a decision about progression in line with 5b.13. Students who do not meet the requirements will be required to cease work on their dissertation until they are in a position to progress as described in 5b.13.
- 5b.15 A student who has not attained a minimum of 30 credits by the end of the taught stage i.e. after referral, will be required to leave their course as determined by the relevant Board of Examiners.
- 5b.16 The classification of a student's award is determined by the Board of Examiners. No units may later be substituted with the intention of changing the award title or improving the class of award.
- 5b.17 **University Grading Scheme**

Grade letter	Mark Band %	Grade Descriptor	Award Classification		
A+	80-100	Outstanding	P A S S	Distinction	
A	75-79	Excellent			
A-	70-74				
B+	67-69	Commendable		Commendation	
B	64-66	Good			
B-	60-63				
C+	57-59				
C	54-56				
C-	50-53	Satisfactory		Pass	
D+	47-49				
D	44-46				
D-	40-43				
E	35-39	Marginal Fail	F A I L		
F	25-34	Fail			
F-	1-24	Fail			
G	0	Non-submission			

**Table A**

5b.18 Where feasible, assessments should be submitted and graded anonymously.

5b.19 The determination of the grade for a student's assessment concludes with a decision by the Board of Examiners.

**Elements of assessment and passing units**

5b.20 Students must submit their assignments as specified in the assignment brief. Failure to submit by the published deadline will be classed as non-submission.

5b.21 Students studying on postgraduate courses will be permitted an attempt at a referral or resit for non-submission in the taught elements only, where there has been satisfactory engagement with the unit.

5b.22 Students must satisfy the Board of Examiners that they have met the intended learning outcomes of each element of assessment in the unit by undertaking examinations or assignments. The overall pass mark for a unit is 40%. Each element of assessment must achieve a minimum of 35%. The approved course specification may stipulate further requirements for one or more assessment components as specified by a PSRB or other external awarding body.

5b.23 Students who submit all elements of assessment and do not successfully complete the unit have a further opportunity to pass the unit by undertaking a referral of all failed elements of

assessment at the next opportunity. All referrals, including for non-submission, must be taken at the next scheduled opportunity. The grade for the referral element is capped at the minimum pass mark.

- 5b.24 Students who do not pass a unit on referral may normally retake the unit at the next scheduled opportunity. Students who retake must normally be assessed in all the elements of assessment in a unit. The retake marks override any previous marks for the unit. The full range of grades will be available in assessing the retaken unit unless specified by the University's Academic Conduct Panel.
- 5b.25 Students who do not pass the unit on their retake will have one final opportunity for referral as under Regulation 5b.23. This is the final opportunity that will be offered to pass the unit.

### **Award Classification**

- 5b.26 There is no general provision for taught postgraduate students to be compensated for failure in a unit, unless exceptionally authorised by the Scheme Board of Examiners.
- 5b.27 A student who has satisfied the requirements for the Masters degree may be awarded a Masters degree with Distinction if he or she has fulfilled the following criteria:
- 5b.27.1 attained a grade of 65% or above overall; and
  - 5b.27.2 attained a grade of 70% or above in the dissertation stage.
- 5b.28 A student who has satisfied the requirements for the Masters degree may be awarded a Masters degree with Commendation if he or she has fulfilled the following criteria:
- 5b.28.1 attained a grade of 55% or above overall; and
  - 5b.28.2 attained a grade of 60% or above in the dissertation stage.
- 5b.29 A student who has satisfied the requirements for the Postgraduate Diploma as an exit award may be awarded a Postgraduate Diploma with Distinction if he or she has fulfilled the following criteria:
- 5b.29.1 attained a grade of 65% or above overall; and
  - 5b.29.2 attained a grade of 70% or above in at least 60 academic credits.
- 5b.30 A student who has satisfied the requirements for the Postgraduate Diploma as an exit award may be awarded a Postgraduate Diploma with Commendation if he or she has fulfilled the following criteria:
- 5b.30.1 Attained a grade of 55% or above overall; and
  - 5b.30.2 Attained a grade of 60% or above in at least 60 academic credits.
- 5b.31 A candidate for any postgraduate award who fails to satisfy the requirements for the intended award but satisfies those for a lower award will be eligible for the lower award.

- 5b.32 When used as exit awards the Postgraduate Certificate or the Postgraduate Diploma may be awarded as an unnamed award. The Postgraduate Certificate or the Postgraduate Diploma may be established as exit awards for a course and also conferred as named awards where the requirements, including relevant assessment, are defined through the course approval process.

### **Boards of Examiners**

- 5b.33 Decisions about the assessment of students are made on behalf of the Academic Board by Boards of Examiners.
- 5b.34 Boards of Examiners are established at two levels: Portfolio Boards of Examiners; and the Scheme Board of Examiners.
- 5b.35 Portfolio Boards of Examiners have delegated authority to agree progression decisions for students and recommend award decisions to the Scheme Board of Examiners.
- 5b.36 The Scheme Board of Examiners is responsible for the conferment of awards.

### **Academic Offences**

- 5b.37 If a student on a taught course leading to a University of Bedfordshire award is accused of an alleged academic offence, the procedures described in the University's Academic Discipline Policy and Procedure (see <http://www.beds.ac.uk/aboutus/quality/regulations>) will be followed.

### **Appeals against decisions of Boards of Examiners**

- 5b.38 In line with the Policy regarding Academic Appeals and the Procedures to be followed when submitting an Appeal; a student may appeal against the decision of an examination board. The policy is found at <http://www.beds.ac.uk/aboutus/quality/regulations>.
- 5b.39 Academic appeals are not valid where they relate to academic judgement.