

The University of Wolverhampton approach to progression and awards for those students impacted by COVID-19 pandemic

April 2020

Summary of position and approach

The University of Wolverhampton has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by temporarily adjusting some of its academic regulations in order to ensure that student attainment is supported and, where appropriate, protected. Specifically, the approach taken has been to mitigate the potential impact that Semester 2 or 3 assessment might have on expected progression, award, and final degree classifications.

The detail of the approaches taken and changes made are explored in the subsequent sections of this document, however in broad terms the approach has been:

- To support students in making assessment submissions through extended deadlines and deferral opportunities
- To support students in being able to progress to their next level or achieve their award through alternative means of non-summative assessment (where it is appropriate and possible to do so)
- To support students by adjusting the calculation to degree classifications such that module results from semester 2 and 3 can be discounted (where required) and thus not be detrimental to their final classification.

The changes introduced reflect the University of Wolverhampton's commitment and approach to minimise the impact and disruption that the pandemic will have on its students. The approaches adopted are proportionate, robust, and mitigate impact whilst remaining as closely aligned to its existing academic regulations as possible.

It is important to note that the changes are only to be implemented where it is possible to do so, and as such will not include all students on all courses. Specifically, courses with PSRB requirements might not have the amendments applied.

Progression and award credit requirements

4.5 and 5.1 of the academic regulations articulates the university's approach to credit requirements for progression and award (respectively). Principally there are no changes to the requirements for credit with respect to either progression or award. That is to say, there are currently no adjustments of the number of credits required to progress between levels or receive an award i.e. first degree honours students will still require 360 credits to obtain their award. The change instead focuses on the methods by which attainment of credit is assessed.

Approach to qualifying marks and grading schemes

Each module has an associated grading scheme that details the requirements with regards to minimum pass marks (qualifying marks) – these differ depending on whether the module is undergraduate or postgraduate in level. The qualifying marks associated with each module (and as articulated in 4.2.2 and 4.2.4 of the academic regulations) will remain in place with no downward adjustment to be made.

Exceptional Passes: non-summative award of credit

The intention, through moving teaching and assessment (where ever possible) to be wholly online, is that the vast majority of students will gain credit through the typical means i.e. summative assessment. However in recognition that some students or programmes, will be negatively impacted by being unable to access on-campus facilities (such as general IT equipment, specialist software or equipment) the university stated '*For some programmes (for example, those involving performance or practice-based assessments) decisions on progression may necessarily need to be based on alternative criteria.*'. In practice, this statement requires an adjustment to regulation 4.1.1 (marked in red) as follows:

To gain academic credit, a student must demonstrate that they have achieved specified learning outcomes. Academic credit will only be awarded to students as follows;

- a. through granted accreditation for recognition of prior learning through the defined University process, or;
- b. successful completion of module summative assessments that meet the specified learning outcomes.
- c. **through module leaders (conferred by the award board) determining (where summative assessment has not been possible) that the student has met the learning outcomes of the module through either attendance/engagement, completed assessment components, or formative assessment.**

This change will apply to 2019/20 semester 2 or 3 modules only.

Detailed guidance and criteria will be provided to module leaders and award boards to ensure consistent application of this amendment. Where a student is awarded credit based on c. then a mark will be awarded (reflecting their competency) and an exceptional pass (EP) will be recorded as the grade.

Award classification adjustments

The approach to final award classification calculations aligns to the wider approach to mitigate the impact of semester 2 or 3 modules on student progression and attainment, and thus the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their outlook.

In doing so, the University of Wolverhampton have adjusted the classification calculations across all applicable awards, such that (where needed) the module results from semester 2 or 3 are not counted where performance in them differs adversely comparative to performance in other countable modules.

Borderline profiling method

The University of Wolverhampton operates borderline zone regulation for honours degrees, whereby an award can be made at a higher classification if the overall average falls into a specific range and further criterion is met. Each individual award has different criterion, and therefore any adjustments to it are detailed in each separate award table in this document.

For completeness, it should be noted that the percentage average range for borderline consideration has not been adjusted. These are articulated in 5.2.1 and are:

| Classification | Percentage average | Criterion for award of the higher class |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|--|
| First | 70-100% | |
| First/Upper Second border range | 67.01% - 69.99% | Student must have 70% or above in at least 60 credits gained at level 6 (or at level 7 for integrated masters) |
| Upper Second | 60% - 67% | |
| Upper/Lower Second border range | 57.01% - 59.99% | Student must have 60% or above in at least 60 credits gained at level 6 (or at level 7 for integrated masters) |
| Lower Second | 50%-57% | |
| Lower Second/Third border range | 47.01% - 49.99% | Student must have 50% or above in at least 60 credits gained at level 6 (or at level 7 for integrated masters) |
| Third | 40% - 47% | |

Adjustments to award classification algorithm

The percentage grade average will be based on the grades from the student's best credits taken at the University of Wolverhampton on their current course as detailed in the tables below. Marginal fails at 35-39%, where a pass by compensation has been awarded, will be counted towards the percentage average if they fall within the best results as defined below.

First degree (with honours) adjusted

| Number of UofW credits taken on current course | Percentage average based on best results from | Borderline zone criteria |
|--|--|--|
| 240-360 | 120 level 5 and level 6 credits; There is no stipulation on the amount used from each level and it does not have to include the project module (where one exists) | 60 level 6 credits (or more) of the grades achieved in the 120 selected credits are in a higher class than indicated by the grade average. |

| | | |
|----------------|--|--|
| 160-220 | 100 level 5 and level 6 credits; There is no stipulation on the amount used from each level and it does not have to include the project module (where one exists) | 60 level 6 credits (or more) of the grades achieved in the 100 selected credits are in a higher class than indicated by the grade average. |
| Fewer than 160 | 60 level 6 credits and it does not have to include the project module (where one exists) | 40 level 6 credits (or more) of the grades achieved in the 60 selected credits are in a higher class than indicated by the grade average. |

First degree (with honours) original for reference

| Number of UofW credits taken on current course | Percentage average based on best results from | Borderline zone criteria |
|--|---|---|
| 240-360 | 180 level 5 and level 6 credits; at least 100 credits must be at level 6 and include an independent study/project module. | 100 credits or more of the grades achieved in the 180 selected credits are in a higher class than indicated by the grade average. |
| 160-220 | 160 level 5 and level 6 credits; at least 100 credits must be at level 6 and include an independent study/project module. | 100 credits or more of the grades achieved in the 160 selected credits are in a higher class than indicated by the grade average. |
| Fewer than 160 | 100 level 6 credits and include an independent study/project module. | 60 credits or more of the grades achieved in the 100 selected credits are in a higher class than indicated by the grade average. |

Sandwich Bachelor's Degrees with Honours

| Number of UofW credits taken on current course | Percentage average based on best results from | Borderline zone criteria |
|--|--|--|
| 280-400 | 160 level 5 and 6 credits; and a 40 credit, level 5 sandwich placement module. There is no stipulation on the amount used from each level and it does not have to include the project module (where one exists). | 60 level 6 credits (or more) of the grades achieved in the 160 selected credits are in a higher class than indicated by the grade average. |
| 180-260 | 120 level 5 and 6 credits; and a 40 credit, level 5 sandwich placement module. There is no stipulation on the amount used from each level and it does not have to include the project module (where one exists). | 60 level 6 credits (or more) of the grades achieved in the 120 selected credits are in a higher class than indicated by the grade average. |

Sandwich Bachelor's Degrees original or reference

| Number of UofW credits taken on current course | Percentage average based on best results from | Borderline zone criteria |
|---|--|--|
| 280-400 | 220 level 5 and 6 credits; at least 100 credits must be at level 6 and include an independent study/project module and a 40 credit, level 5 sandwich placement module. | 120 credits or more of the grades achieved in the 220 selected credits are in a higher class than that indicated by the grade average. |
| 180-260 | 160 level 5 and 6 credits; at least 100 credits must be at level 6 and include an independent study/project module and a 40 credit, level 5 sandwich module. | 100 credits or more of the grades achieved in the 180 selected credits are in a higher class than that indicated by the grade average. |

Integrated Master's Degrees

| Number of UofW credits taken on current course | Percentage average based on best results from | Borderline zone criteria |
|---|---|--|
| 480-600 | The best 300 credits across level 5, 6, and 7; it does not have to include the project module (where one exists). | 60 level 7 credits (or more) of the grades achieved in the 120 selected credits are in a higher class than indicated by the grade average. |

The average of each level is then aggregated according to the weightings in the table below (this will also include the 40 sandwich placement credits where this option is selected);

| Level | Weighting |
|--------------|------------------|
| 5 | 20% |
| 6 | 30% |
| 7 | 50% |

Integrated Master's Degrees original for reference

| Number of UofW credits taken on current course | Percentage average based on best results from | Borderline zone criteria |
|---|---|--|
| 480-600 | 120 level 5, level 6 and level 7 credits; at least 60 credits must be at level 7 and include an independent study/project module. | 60 credits or more of the grades achieved in the 120 selected credits are in a higher class than indicated by the grade average. |

Foundation Degrees

In addition to meeting the credit requirements for the qualification, a Foundation Degree may be awarded with Merit or Distinction as follows;

| Qualification | Pass with Merit criteria | Pass with Distinction criteria |
|----------------------|--|--|
| Foundation Degree | At least 60 credits at grade 60% or above at level 5 | At least 60 credits at 70% or above at level 5 |

Foundation degrees original for reference

| Qualification | Pass with Merit criteria | Pass with Distinction criteria |
|-------------------|---|---|
| Foundation Degree | At least 80 credits at grade 60% or above at level 5. | At least 80 credits at 70% or above at level 5. |

Master's Degrees

In addition to meeting the credit requirements for the qualification, a Master's Degree may be awarded with Merit or Distinction as follows;

| Number of UofW credits taken on current course | Pass with Merit criteria | Pass with Distinction criteria |
|--|--|--|
| 180 | At least 80 credits at 60% or above, it does not need to include the research project/dissertation | At least 80 credits at 70% or above, it does not need to include the research project/dissertation |
| 140-160 | At least 60 credits at 60% or above, it does not need to include the research project/dissertation | At least 60 credits at 70% or above, it does not need to include the research project/dissertation |
| 100-120 | At least 40 credits at 60% or above, it does not need to include the research project/dissertation | At least 40 credits at 70% or above, it does not need to include the research project/dissertation |

Master's Degrees original for reference

| Number of UofW credits taken on current course | Pass with Merit criteria | Pass with Distinction criteria |
|--|--|--|
| 180 | At least 120 credits at 60% or above, including research project/dissertation. | At least 120 credits at 70% or above, including research project/dissertation. |
| 140-160 | At least 100 credits at 60% or above, including research project/dissertation. | At least 100 credits at 70% or above, including research project/dissertation. |
| 100-120 | At least 80 credits at 60% or above, including research project/dissertation. | At least 80 credits at 70% or above, including research project/dissertation. |

Higher National Certificates and Higher National Diplomas

In addition to meeting the credit requirements for the qualification, an HNC or HND may be awarded with Merit or Distinction as follows;

| Qualification | Pass with Merit criteria | Pass with Distinction criteria |
|---------------|---|---|
| HNC | At least 40 credits at grade 60% or above at level 4. | At least 40 credits at 70% or above at level 4 |
| HND | At least 80 credits at grade 60% or above at level 4 or 5 . | At least 80 credits at 70% or above at level 4 or 5 |

Higher National Certificates and Higher National Diplomas original for reference

| Qualification | Pass with Merit criteria | Pass with Distinction criteria |
|---------------|---|---|
| HNC | At least 80 credits at grade 60% or above at level 4. | At least 80 credits at 70% or above at level 4. |
| HND | At least 80 credits at 60% or above at level 5. | At least 80 credits at 70% or above at level 5. |

Coverage of award classification adjustments

Students for whom these adjustments apply

This addendum to the 2019/20 academic regulations will apply to all students studying at level 5, 6 or 7 who were current and active in the 2019/20 academic year. The addendum will therefore also apply to degree awards made at future dates where the awardees meet the criteria of being current and active for level 5, 6 or 7 in 2019/20. For example, current level 5 students in 2019/20 will have their award calculated as per this addendum in 2020/21. Students on industrial placement (sandwich year) in 2019/20 will not have the addendum applied to their final award calculation.

Students on leave of absence and repeating students

Students who take a leave of absence or repeat a year of study, but were current and active on level 5, 6 or 7 in 2019/20, will have their award calculated as specified by this addendum.

Part-time students

Completing part-time students who were active on semester 2 or 3 modules that otherwise would count have towards the calculation of their classification in 2019/20, will have the adjustments outlined in this paper applied. Part-time students not completing their award this year, will not have the adjustments applied in the future.