

# SCHEME FOR THE AWARD OF A TAUGHT MASTER'S DEGREE FOR ALL STUDENTS STARTING IN OR AFTER THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2023/24: EIGHT UNIT PROGRAMMES

*This Classification Scheme is approved by the Graduate School Board of Examiners. Last updated: August 2025*

This scheme should be read in conjunction with the [General Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Students](#), the relevant [taught master's degree programme regulations](#), the relevant on-line [taught master's course guides](#), the [Code of Good Practice for Undergraduate, Diploma and Postgraduate Programmes: Teaching, Learning and Assessment](#) and the [Addendum - Regulations for 2020/21 updated in response to COVID-19](#).

## 1. Mark and Grade for a Course and Eligibility for Award

1.1 The examiners for each course will decide a numerical mark for each student using the following scale:

Grade	Mark
Distinction	70 - 100
Merit	60 - 69
Pass	50 - 59
Fail	(x+1) - 49
Bad Fail	0 - x

1.2 Each department will specify the Bad Fail mark to the value of x as either 19, 29 or 39 for all its courses. The School will publish a list of [Bad Fail marks](#) in the [Calendar](#) and in Departmental student handbooks.

1.3 The grade of Bad Fail will be used internally to indicate when a fail cannot be compensated and, therefore, must be re-attempted. The Grade of Bad Fail will not appear on official transcripts.

1.4 In order to be eligible for a degree, a student must have submitted all elements of assessment (e.g. coursework, exams, group work etc.) required for each course as listed in the corresponding [programme regulations](#).

1.5 A student who makes no attempt at an element of summative assessment for a course, as set out in the [General Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Students](#), will be considered not to have completed the course and will be marked as "Absent" or "Incomplete". An Absent or Incomplete mark will count as one of the two attempt opportunities allowed to pass each course. Therefore, students must follow to the School's [deferral](#) or [extension request](#) procedures if they are unable to attempt an assessment.

1.6 The School considers that when a student submits an assessment they are declaring themselves fit enough to do so. If a student experiences disruption prior to the assessment submission deadline or day of exam, they must consider whether an extension or deferral is more appropriate.

1.6.1 Any student unable to follow the extension or deferral procedures, must follow the [Exceptional Circumstances \(EC\)](#) procedure. Such circumstances must be sudden, unforeseen, out of the student's control and have occurred in a period proximate to the assessment submission deadline or exam date.

1.6.2 When considering ECs, the exam boards must be satisfied a student has provided a good reason for not proceeding with an extension or deferral, has provided acceptable corroborating evidence and satisfies all of conditions listed at Paragraphs 5 or 6 below.

1.7 Having attempted and completed all elements of assessment for the programme, a student will normally be awarded a degree at the first point at which they become eligible.

## 2. Calculation of the Award<sup>1</sup>

2.1 The Sub-Board of Examiners can designate a course or courses as being critical to assessment for a programme and establish '[local rules](#)'<sup>2</sup> where the specific course(s) and/or marks will be given special consideration in the awarding of the degree. These [local rules](#)<sup>2</sup> will be published in the [Calendar](#) and in Departmental student handbooks.

2.2 The classification of each student will be based on sixteen classification marks, with full-unit marks counted twice and half unit marks counted once. Fail marks are not considered as classification marks for the purpose of calculating an award under section 2.4 below, an award aggregate<sup>3</sup> as defined by [local rules](#)<sup>2</sup>, or a compensation aggregate<sup>3</sup>.

2.3 In all cases, the classification marks will be based on marks obtained by the student at their latest attempt at each course.

2.4 The overall classification of an award will be calculated as follows, subject to the penalty rules for failed courses in section 4 and the application of any [local rules](#)<sup>2</sup>:

- 2.4.1 For the award of Distinction: at least half i.e. eight or more classification marks must be at Distinction level; or
- 2.4.2 For the award of Merit: at least half i.e. eight or more classification marks must be at Merit level or Distinction level; or
- 2.4.3 For the award of Pass:
  - 2.4.3.1 At least Pass grades to the value of fourteen classification marks; or
  - 2.4.3.2 At least Pass grades to the value of twelve classification marks with compensation for the failed course(s) as described under section 3.

### 3. Fail Marks and Compensation

- 3.1 Where a student receives a Fail mark in any course, the following penalty rules will apply:
  - 3.1.1 A [Bad Fail mark](#) in any course of any unit value will result in the need to resubmit all failed assessments (which might include resitting an exam) in that course. A Bad Fail mark cannot be compensated by other marks.
  - 3.1.2 A Fail (but not a Bad Fail) in a course or courses totalling 0.5 or 1.0 unit value does not require compensation.
  - 3.1.3 A Fail (but not a Bad Fail) in a course or courses to the value of 1.5 or 2 units will result in the need to resubmit all failed assessments in the failed course(s) unless, compensated either:
    - (i) by a mark of at least 60% in courses of an equivalent value. For the avoidance of doubt, a mark of at least 60 is required in each course providing compensation; or (ii) by a compensation aggregate<sup>3</sup> mark of 660 in the non-failed courses.
  - 3.1.4 Where a student would normally be eligible for an overall Distinction or Merit award but a Fail mark has to be compensated with other marks, the overall award classification will drop by one classification boundary. Compensated Fail marks will have no further impact where an overall Pass is to be awarded<sup>4</sup>.
  - 3.1.5 Where a student has fail marks but satisfies the compensation rule at 3.1.3 above they will be awarded the degree subject to the penalty rule at 3.1.4 above; or students that receive a Bad Fail mark or cannot compensate the failed course(s) will be required to resit in accordance with section 4 below.

### 4 Resitting to Achieve an Award

- 4.1 If a student has not been awarded a degree they will normally be entitled to resubmit any failed assessment(s) within the failed course(s) on one occasion only, in accordance with the [General Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Students](#).
- 4.2 Where an assessment is failed and re-taken, the overall grade for the course for which the resit assessment was taken will be capped at Pass for the purposes of calculating the final degree classification. Both the original fail mark and grade and the new mark achieved at resit will be shown on the transcript. Where an assessment is deferred and it is taken as a first attempt, the grade will not be capped. Where an assessment is deferred and it is taken as a first attempt, the grade will not be capped. Where a resit is taken pre-emptively for [postgraduate IRDAP enabled courses](#), the mark may not be used if an award can be made on the basis of other marks achieved once they are known. In such cases the resit mark will not appear on the transcript even if it is higher than that achieved at the first attempt.
- 4.3 To be eligible for an award the following students need to resubmit failed assessment(s) or resit a failed exam(s):
  - 4.3.1 Students with any Bad Fail marks (see rule 4.4 below)
  - 4.3.2 Students who fail any course denoted as "critical to assessment" and requiring a pass mark as determined by the Departmental [local rules](#)<sup>2</sup>
  - 4.3.3 Students with either 1.5 or two units at Fail who do not satisfy the compensation rules at 3.1.3 above
  - 4.3.4 Students with more than two units at Fail
  - 4.3.5 Students with a deferred assessment - the grade will only be capped if the assessment is not a first attempt
- 4.4 Where an assessment is re-taken as a result of receiving a Bad Fail mark, the overall grade for the course for which the resit assessment is taken will be capped at Pass in accordance with 4.2 above. Additionally, a resit as a result of a Bad Fail mark will result in a drop in the overall award classification where a Distinction or a Merit would otherwise have been awarded. It will have no further impact where a Pass is to be awarded. In cases where a student is required to resit more than one Bad Fail, only one drop in the overall degree classification will be applied. Where a student

receives a Bad Fail mark in their second and final attempt at a course they cannot be awarded the degree subject to the application of section 6 below.

## 5 General Proviso

- 5.1 When considering the overall classification for an award it is open to a Sub-Board of Examiners to recommend to the Graduate School Board of Examiners (GSBE) that an individual receives a higher degree classification than this Scheme and / or from its [local rules](#)<sup>2</sup> would normally allow if, in their judgement, this would be equitable, as a direct result of a [formal exceptional circumstances submission](#) to the Student Services Centre. Such circumstances would need to be extraneous to the normal assessment process and would apply to that student only. The GSBE must also be satisfied the following conditions also apply:
  - 5.1.1 that the student is very close to the next higher classification boundary and specifically within three marks in either one or two classification marks (i.e. three marks in one full/half unit or three marks in each of two half units) or ten marks on aggregate<sup>3</sup>);
  - 5.1.2 that the student has marks in that higher classification range;
  - 5.1.3 that the student has demonstrated that the assessment or set of assessments in question were significantly affected by exceptional circumstances that were sudden, unforeseen, out of the student's own control and proximate to the assessment(s) in question;
  - 5.1.4 that the student has demonstrated that their performance in the affected assessment(s) was significantly out of line with their performance in other, unaffected assessments.

## 6 Discounting Fail or Zero marks

- 6.1 It is open to a Sub-Board of Examiners to recommend to the GSBE that a Fail, Incomplete or Absent mark be discounted (treated as a deferral) if, in their judgement, this would be equitable for any individual student as a direct result of a [formal exceptional circumstances submission](#) to the Student Services Centre. Such circumstances would need to be extraneous to the normal assessment process and would apply to that student only. The conditions set out at 5.1.3 and 5.1.4 above will need to apply.

## 7 Ethics Approval for Dissertations

- 7.1 All marks and classification awards are subject to any penalties that might be applied under the School's Regulations on Assessment Offences and/or any failure to obtain appropriate ethics approval, where required, for research undertaken in dissertations or equivalent assessments<sup>4</sup>.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Capped resit grades and a maximum capped mark of 50 will be used for the purposes of award and aggregate calculation while uncapped resit marks will be used for the purposes of calculating the compensation aggregate required to achieve an award.

<sup>2</sup> Each Sub-Board of Examiners will establish clear [local rules](#) regarding: (i) any course(s) designated as 'critical to assessment' and (ii) if the overall classification of a Distinction or Merit award will be determined by any other criteria in addition to sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2. The School will publish a list of [local rules](#) in the Calendar. Each Sub-Board will also ensure its [local rules](#) are published in the relevant departmental student handbook(s).

<sup>3</sup> The aggregate for each student is the sum of the relevant classification marks.

<sup>4</sup> In cases where a student could potentially incur more than one drop in the overall award calculation, e.g. resitting a Bad Fail and subsequently requiring compensation in order to be awarded, only one drop in the overall award calculation will be applied.

<sup>5</sup> Failure to undertake a review of the ethical implications of research or failure to apply reasonable care in assessing the likely ethical implications of a research project, may constitute research misconduct under the School's research misconduct policy and procedures. To ascertain whether ethics approval is required, students should refer to the bullet points listed [here](#).