

POSTGRADUATE EXAMINATION SUB-BOARD GUIDANCE (2020/21)

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1. General Principles

- 1.1 The role of the Sub-Board is defined by the School's [Instructions for Examiners](#) as follows:
- (a) ensuring that there is appropriate scrutiny in place for question-setting for all types of summative assessments. If requested, departments should be able to provide documentation that sets out their scrutiny procedure;
 - (b) ensuring that suitable examination papers are available for students who last attended teaching in at least the preceding three years for undergraduates or two years for taught graduates;
 - (c) ratifying the marks for all students on each of its courses. Final agreed marks should be returned in advance of Sub-Board meetings;
 - (d) recommending progression decisions for continuing students to the school board;
 - (e) classifying awards for finalists who have satisfied the requirements of their programme;
 - (f) recommending to the appropriate school board that regulations are suspended for any student(s) who, because of documented exceptional circumstances, should be given special consideration.
- 1.2 For 2021, Sub-Boards will also be expected to oversee and follow the supplementary procedures that have been implemented as part of the School's assessment support package in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This approach has involved a review and revision of existing practices, procedures and assessment modes to provide an equitable, accessible assessment period for students in light of the current exceptional circumstances. Various adjustments have been made in recognition of the challenging circumstances in which students will be attempting assessment, to give more flexibility and introduce choice wherever possible to ensure no student is disadvantaged.
- 1.3 Attendance at Sub-Board meetings should, wherever possible, constitute a representative quorum. Guidance on the composition of Sub-Boards can be found in section 6.2 of the School's [Instructions for Examiners](#). The guidance in this document should be followed alongside the guidance in the [Virtual Sub-Boards Guidance Document](#).
- 1.4 The new [4-unit, graduate classification scheme](#) applies to all students studying in the 2020/1 academic year. Section 7 below sets out the differences between the old and new classification schemes.
- 1.5 New classification schemes for programmes comprised of greater than [four-units](#) can be found in the School's [Calendar \(five-units, eight-units\)](#)
- 1.6 For all programmes, marks of 49, 59 and 69 have no special meaning and there is no provision to raise a *9 mark.
- 1.7 In order to be eligible for a degree, a student must have attempted and completed all elements of assessment for each course.
- 1.8 Students who make no attempt at an assessment should be recorded as Zero Absent in that component and Zero Incomplete for the course if it is worth less than 100% of the course mark. Or, Zero Absent for the course if the assessment is worth 100% of the course mark. The absence will count as one of their two attempts to pass the course. See Section 5.2 below.
- 1.9 Dissertations are now deferred to or resubmitted in the new January PGT Resit and Deferred Assessment Period (RDAP) in the first instance. Students who are unable to submit their deferred

dissertation or resubmit by the end of the RDAP should defer submission to the following Summer Term i.e. students who have deferred the dissertation to RDAP in January 2022 would defer from RDAP to Summer Term 2022. Please see [Annex A](#) for further details.

2. Marking at course level

- 2.1 Changes to online assessment delivery and assessment methods should not impact the standard marking practice of using one of the three approved forms of marking: double-blind marking; sighted double marking; and moderated single marking, involving a second examiner. Where double marking is normally used, departments may want to consider developing a process for moderated single marking involving a second examiner as a backup should first/second examiners fall ill or be unavailable due to COVID-19. Moderated single marking involving a second examiner may also facilitate a quicker, yet equally robust, process if marking deadlines have been compressed by the revised assessment schedule. Changes to marking practice should be approved by the DTC Chair in coordination with the Sub-Board Chair and reported to Teaching Quality Assessment & Review Office via ard.capis@lse.ac.uk.
- 2.2 Although students can request an extension, defer or submit ECs to account for personal circumstances, examiners should assume that a general COVID-19-related disruption is likely to have affected all student preparation for and performance in assessments taken during ST 2020 or the 2020/21 academic year. These factors could mean that the overall performance of students at course-level might be impacted.
- 2.3 The School's standard mark ratification process already allows departments to scale marks up or down as part of the marking moderation process. These measures will continue to operate for assessments taken in 2020/21 to protect the academic integrity of assessment and ensure the value of degrees awarded over time.
- 2.4 An additional step has been added to the mark ratification process for 2020/21 course marks. Internal Examiners are required to scale marks up to account for COVID-19 impact where there is clear evidence of significant negative deviation from expected mark distributions. By acknowledging that the whole year has been impacted, this not only accounts for unforeseen challenges experienced by students in MT 2020, but also enables a more transparent and simpler approach to scaling. Departments will be provided with enhanced historical mark datasets and asked to conduct analyses to identify under-performance. 2019/20 course marks will be excluded from the dataset provided to departments given that 2019/20 was similarly affected by the pandemic.
- 2.5 Where significant negative deviation is identified, Examiners should scale marks at course level. Rather than assessing mark distributions at course level and then having to reverse engineer mark adjustments for only the individual components of assessment completed in Summer Term, as happened in 2020, internal examiners will be able to assess mark distributions at course level and apply the same scaling calculation to all components proportionally to achieve the overall uplift to marks at course level.
- 2.6 The revised mark ratification process will involve two additional steps (i.e. after the normal marking and moderation process):
 - (a) Step 1:
 - *Compare 2020/21 course mark distributions against previous cohort final mark summative assessment results to identify negative variation from previous years.* Departments have been supplied with a 'Departmental Historic Assessment Data' spreadsheet including course-level final results for years 2014/15 - 2018/19 (where data is available). This spreadsheet can be filtered by department and by course and displays a 'historic average (all students)' that can be used to analyse previous student performance in comparison with the 2020/21 cohort. Although

the spreadsheet includes 2019/20 data for completeness, the historic average for each course *does not* include 2019/20 results and 2019/20 results should not be used when comparing mark distributions with previous results.

- As a guide, 'significant variation' means mark distributions that are at least 5% below the historical average, although Internal Examiners can use their discretion to propose an adjustment for variations below this threshold. To be clear, it is open to examiners to propose to their exam sub-boards upward moderation for any variation in student performance this year compared to the performance of students in the course in previous years, with a 5%+ variation normally triggering an automatic upward moderation. For this step, departments will need to calculate their overall course marks, using component marks recorded locally, as course marks won't yet be available in SITS for 2020/21.
- For new courses with no pre-existing comparative performance data, examiners should base any judgement about upward mark adjustments on any formative/summative assessment from the current cohort, and/or by comparison with historical performance data of cognate courses (e.g. a new elective course in Department X, compared to historical performance in appropriate other elective courses in that department – the approach here cannot be formulaic, but rather can provide a broad indicator against which the level of student performance in a new course this year can be judged).

(b) Step 2:

- *Scale 2020/21 course marks where underperformance is identified.* If cohort comparison highlights any significant differences between 2020/21 academic performance and performance in previous years, examiners should scale marks before returning final results to the SSC. To ensure consistency departments should implement an agreed formula that would have to be used if COVID-19 was the reason for the adjustment. For linear scaling, one example might be:

$$\text{Adjusted Mark} = \frac{\text{Actual mark} \times \text{Reference cohort(s) average}}{\text{Actual cohort average}}$$

For some subject disciplines, a 'piecewise linear' approach might be more appropriate; namely, determining the raw marks that correspond to each classification boundary and then scaling within each class. This is a more complex approach to scaling and for departments or Internal Examiners unfamiliar with this, a simpler and more straightforward approach (as above) is recommended.

- If significant variation is identified, Internal Examiners should consult their Sub-Board Chair before scaling marks. This should only be considered once first/second marking and/or normal moderation has been completed.
- Mark adjustments should be referred to External Examiners as part of the mark scrutiny process and reported to Sub-Boards. Any decisions to make adjustments should be reported by annotating internal marksheets to include some brief questions about COVID-19 scaling that all Internal Examiners would record as part of the marking process. For example, 'Were 2020/21 course mark distributions in line with previous cohort final mark summative assessment results?' (Y/N); 'Were marks scaled upwards to account for COVID-19 variations in mark distribution?'
- Recording such consideration at Sub-Boards would also help create a consistent paper trail in case of appeal. QAA's latest guidance to members includes reference to:

"examination boards receiving 'module impact statements', developed by academic and quality teams which explain any changes made to teaching and assessment mechanisms. The statements can then be used in making progression and award decisions including those relating to extenuating circumstances, and aiding consideration of any anomalies in students'

performance.”

- 2.7 For courses with both 9/10-month and 12-month students taking the course, the following process should be applied to enable the above investigation at Steps 1 and/or 2:
- (a) To maintain an equitable marking process for all students on a course, the desired approach for all such courses is to mark all assessments for the entire cohort (9-, 10- and 12-month students) at the same time prior to the June deadline for mark submission to summer Sub-Boards. This will enable Internal Examiners to analyse mark distributions for the whole cohort in comparison to historic data and/or current year data, and to apply scaling decisions accordingly for all students at course-level.
 - (b) However, due to changes to assessment timings and potential impacts on marking allocations and scheduling due to COVID-19 (technical difficulties, staff illness, submission delays/extensions), the School recognises that this may not be possible in all cases. Whilst whole-cohort marking should be completed wherever possible, if this is not possible, the following approach should be used, with approval from the Sub-Board Chair:
 - For courses with 30 students or fewer, all assessments for 9-, 10- and 12-month students (the whole cohort) should be marked together, analysed, scaled where necessary and scrutinised by the External Examiner prior to the summer mark submission deadline.
 - For courses with more than 30 students, all assessments for 9/10-month students plus a random sample of 30 pieces of assessments or 50% of the assessments for 12-month students, whichever is the greater, should be marked together with the 9/10-month students' work, analysed, scaled where necessary and scrutinised by the External Examiner prior to the summer mark submission deadline.
 - (c) As per 2.7(a) above, to maintain equity of process, if whole-cohort marking is not possible and only 30 pieces or 50% of the assessments for 12-month students are selected to create a representative course-level sample to facilitate analysis and scaling decisions, the outcome of this process (to scale or not to scale) must be applied to the remaining 12-month assessments if marked at a later date. To help avoid either group being disadvantaged in this scenario, Internal Examiners are encouraged to apply upward scaling if there is evidence of lower mark distributions despite the fact that the initial analysis will be applied to a sample of marks and not the whole cohort mark distribution.
 - (d) This alternative approach, to sample assessments for 12-month students rather than mark all 9-, 10- and 12-month assessments at the same time, is a sub-optimal process that should only be used if absolutely necessary to facilitate COVID-19-related scaling and timely mark submission for 9/10-month summer Sub-Boards. For courses using this process, as well as reporting to External Examiners if scaling has been applied or not and the reasons for those decisions, Internal Examiners should also provide a brief description explaining why whole-cohort marking was not possible.
 - (e) The GSBE will review this alternative approach as part of its annual monitoring of results. The School Boards will be particularly interested in departmental rationales for sampling, so the justifications provided to External Examiners should be included in the Sub-Board minutes to facilitate review.
- 2.8 Sub-Boards are required to complete the relevant PG [course mark adjustments spreadsheet](#) in the Virtual Sub-Board MS Teams folder for *all* 2020/21 courses to confirm if any adjustments, including upward mark scaling resulting from COVID-19, have been made. Sub-Boards are also required to record if no adjustments are made. This information can be copied into Sub-Board minutes and will also be available for other Sub-Boards to see if adjustments have been made when considering ECs for example.
- 2.9 In addition to the above consideration of mark distributions, Sub-Boards should very carefully consider, discuss and record any adjustments that need to be made as a result of errors/problems with the assessment, this could include the treatment/adjustment of cohort marks within a specific question or

section of a piece of assessment.

- 2.10 It has been agreed that the use of PhDs/GTAs/experienced guest teachers can be used as markers for PGT-level assignments, but only in very particular conditions:
- (a) The use of PhDs/GTAs/experienced guest teachers (hereafter 'PhDs') as markers for PGT-level assessments should remain in exceptional option. Permanent faculty members/course leaders will normally be expected to mark PGT-level assessments.
 - (b) However, if a faculty member falls ill; or if, in the view of the Head of Department and Chair of the relevant Sub-Board of Examiners, a permanent faculty member is under particular pressure (e.g. in terms of high marking loads and planning teaching delivery for next year), a PhD may be assigned to assist with that faculty member's PGT-level marking responsibilities, subject to the following conditions:
 - Any PhDs so employed would need to be within 12 months of completion and have relevant GTA teaching experience, and ideally be PGTCert qualified.
 - Any such use of PhDs would be on a case-by-case basis only, with a clear rationale provided to the Chair of the relevant Sub-Board of Examiners for approval, e.g. "Dr Y was ill with COVID19 so Ms W who is within six months of completing her PhD, and who has worked as a GTA on a related undergraduate course, was asked to mark with Dr X as second marker. This arrangement was supported by the External Examiner".
 - Such rationales should be included in Sub-Board minutes and will be reviewed by G/SBE as part of their usual monitoring system of results processing across the School.
 - PhDs can only act as second markers for double marking arrangements, or first markers for single marking with moderation (with permanent faculty members responsible for the moderation).
 - Course leaders / relevant permanent faculty members should provide guidance on marking conventions and use of assessment criteria; and any PhD examiners should review the Eden Centre guidance on '[Preparing for online and on-screen](#)'.
 - (c) Any use of PhDs as markers in the current COVID-19 circumstances will not normalise this role for them and will not in itself justify the case for their use as PGT-level examiners in future assessment periods.

3. Materials required for use at the Sub-Board Meeting

- 3.1 The SSC will provide the Department with two electronic copies of the relevant mark frames: one named and one anonymised. These mark frames will detail the results of all students on programmes within the remit of the Sub-Board. Named copies of the mark frame are for the use of the Sub-Board Chair, Sub-Board Secretary and SSC staff only. Other Sub-Board members should only have access to the anonymised mark frame.
- 3.2 The SSC will provide electronic copies all documents submitted by students in relation to exceptional circumstances. Summaries of exceptional circumstances are not provided.
- 3.3 All Sub-Boards will be provided with a list of assessment errors that occurred in either the January or Summer 2021 assessment periods and how these were resolved.

4. The Mark Frame

4.1 Classifications

- (a) Provisional postgraduate degree classifications decisions are calculated in SITS or by SSC. These recommended decisions are provided on the mark frames issued in advance of Sub-Board meetings.

- (b) Departments must check all classification and progression recommendations carefully. If any have been calculated incorrectly, departments should manually correct the relevant mark frame(s) so that SSC can make the necessary change(s) in SITS. Please also alert the Results and Awards Team in the SSC so that the proposed changes can be checked before being processed.

4.2 Marks

- (a) Marks of zero fall into one of the following categories:
- 0 (Absent) – This mark is awarded to students who do not submit/sit **any** of the required assessed components; or do not submit an assessment that is worth 100% of the course. These will show as 0 AB on the mark frames.
 - 0 (Incomplete) – This mark is awarded to students who submit/sit some but not all required assessed components. These will show as 0 I on the mark frames.
 - 0 (Fail) – This mark is awarded to students whose assessed work for that course warrants zero marks as a result of late submission penalties or an assessment offence (e.g. plagiarism or exam misconduct). These will show as 0 F on the mark frames. In the case of 0 (Fail) a student is considered as having attempted and completed but failed the course. In the case of 0 (Absent) or 0 (Incomplete) a student is considered as having not completed the course and, therefore, will not be eligible for the award of a degree until they attempt and complete it provided they still have an attempt to do so.
- (b) Any mark of zero will count as an attempt at the paper in question.
- (c) Marks from previous years cannot be revised.
- (d) Marks from the current session should not normally be changed at the Sub-Board meeting and should never be adjusted due to individual exceptional circumstances or because of the strength of a student's performance in other papers. Sub-Boards are also advised to be very careful when changing individual marks based on comments from external examiners as this could lead to a full audit. Any moderation as a result of COVID-19 should be completed at course (rather than individual) level during the mark ratification stage detailed in Section 2.
- (e) If, in exceptional circumstances, a late change to a mark from the current session is necessary, this should be clearly marked, in red pen, with a very brief reason for the change on the mark frame which is to be returned to the SSC. The Department should also submit details of the mark change on the late mark change forms provided. This is to ensure the marks are updated correctly on the affected students' records and to provide us with a full audit trail of all mark changes that have been made by each Sub- Board.

4.3 Exam Flags

- (a) Every course listed on a student's mark frame will have an 'exam flag' listed. This will indicate the status of any given assessment in a particular year i.e. whether it was a first attempt, re-sit, etc.
- (b) Instances where a student's entry to an assessment has been deferred or cancelled will also be included on the mark frame. This is intended to give as full a picture as possible of the student's academic history for consideration by the Sub-Board. NB Such instances will not, however, appear on the student's transcript.
- (c) Index of Exam Flags:

Exam Flag	Short name	Explanation
A	First Attempt	First attempt with the student having received tuition in that academic year.
AC	Attempt Cancelled	Student has been removed from the course as a result of taking a break in study (interruption). They will return the following academic year to resume tuition and complete the assessment.
AN	Attempt Deferred	Student has received full tuition in the course, but has deferred the assessment to the next academic year.
B	Barred	Barred from examination. This counts as an attempt at the course, and will be awarded a grade of '0 Fail'.
D	Deferred Assessment	Student is taking a first attempt that was deferred from a previous academic year.
DC	Deferred Assessment Cancelled	Student has been removed from the previously deferred assessment as a result of taking a break in study (interruption).
DN	Deferred Attempt Deferred Again	Student has deferred a first attempt for an additional year.
QA	Provisionally Barred	Provisionally barred from examination.
R	Re-sit	Student is re-sitting a previously failed course without having received tuition in that academic year.
RC	Re-sit Cancelled	Student has been removed from the re-sit assessment as a result of taking a break in study (interruption).
RN	Re-sit Deferred	Student has deferred a re-sit to the next academic year.
T	Repeat Tuition	Student has received repeat tuition in that academic year for a previously failed course.
TC	Repeat Tuition Cancelled	Student has been removed from a repeat tuition course as a result of taking a break in study (interruption).
TN	Repeat Tuition Deferred	Student has deferred the assessment in a repeat tuition course to the next academic year.

Where a course has been deferred or cancelled, a grade of 'NA' will appear on the mark frame.

5. Exceptional Circumstances

- 5.1 Given the marking adjustment process in Section 2 above, Sub-Boards should consider progression and award decisions in the normal way, on the understanding that individual course marks have already been through an enhanced ratification process. Where Sub-Boards request changes to individual student marks this would need to be accompanied by a rationale (e.g. pedagogical reasons or transcription error) which should not include exceptional circumstances related to COVID-19.
- 5.2 Information about the changes to the School's Deferral, Extensions and Exceptional Circumstances procedures as a result of COVID-19 can be found [here](#). Students who have submitted assessments are considered to have declared themselves fit to have done so. However, we recognise that current circumstances may significantly impact on a student's ability to perform at their best academically, whilst not rendering them unable to sit/submit an assessment. In these instances, students are required to indicate the detrimental impact of their circumstances upon their academic performance to the Exam Boards' attention via ECs. Students with unforeseen individual circumstances are required to submit ECs with or without evidence (albeit with updated [standards of evidence for 2020/21](#) and an acknowledgement that the normal standard of evidence may not be available in some instances due to COVID-19). There is a separate process for considering ECs relating to late submission outlined in section 6.15.

- 5.3 Exceptional circumstances are those which students feel may have had a significant impact on their academic performance. Such circumstances might include, but are not limited to, illness, injury or bereavement, issues with technology, home working environments and time zones. The following specific circumstances are examples of the kind of ECs that students might legitimately report as having affected their preparation for and performance in assessment (i.e. beyond the general circumstances relating to COVID-19). Students should include a narrative in their EC submission to explain why they were unable to request a deferral of their assessment. This is particularly important given that the temporary self-certified deferral procedure makes it easier for students to defer.
- (a) Been ill with Covid-19 or otherwise;
 - (b) Experienced the exacerbation of an existing health condition, including a mental health condition, including a mental health condition, due to the pandemic or for other reasons. For example, a student may suffer from long-term anxiety and stress and this was suddenly exacerbated during the assessment by factors outside of their control, such as technical issues in completing their assessment;
 - (c) Experienced the death or serious illness of someone close to them;
 - (d) Taken on exceptional caring responsibilities due to Covid-19. For example, it was not possible/practical to make alternative caring arrangements to allow a student to sit an assessment, or the person(s) a student cares for required unexpected care during their assessment;
 - (e) Been required to carry out more paid work than usual, as a “key worker” (e.g. in healthcare, retail, delivery);
 - f) Experienced significant and prolonged problems with access to teaching and learning materials, e.g. due to connectivity, power, equipment issues or because a student’s time-zone was significantly out of step with the UK for the duration of their teaching;
 - g) Needed to sit a synchronous or time limited assessment in the early hours of the morning, or late at night due to time zone constraints or another mitigating factor. For example, a student’s time zone issues may be inconvenient, but are there additional factors that meant this had a significant impact on them such as a pre-existing medical condition and/or needing to take medication at a specific time that may impact their performance at certain times of the day;
 - h) Experienced issues with hardware, e.g. laptop failure during an assessment or not having access to appropriate technology;
 - i) Needed to sit an assessment in an inappropriate location. For example, a working environment that is not conducive to sitting an assessment, but due to circumstances beyond a student’s control, such as a pandemic related lockdown, a student was unable to sit their assessment somewhere more suitable;
 - j) More generally, the circumstances may include, but are not limited to, illness (including mental health difficulties), injury, bereavement, procedural issues, personal or family difficulties or being victim of a crime.
- 5.4 Students might not be able to obtain proximate evidence for these circumstances, and that this may be particularly true when there is extra strain on health services due to COVID-19. We have asked them to submit any evidence which they can obtain that might support their case – this might be a medical note, prescriptions, written correspondence with the School and so on. Sub-boards are asked to take a reasonable approach to the consideration of such cases and accompanying evidence in the circumstances.
- 5.5 Students have been asked to explain the impact their circumstances have had on them. They have been asked to explain:
- (a) When the circumstances occurred, including any significant deterioration of ongoing circumstances/conditions, etc.;
 - (b) How these circumstances impacted on them at the time of the assessment;
 - (c) What they did to limit the impact of the circumstances before and during the assessment;

- (d) Why they did not submit by the deadline (if they submitted their assessment late);
- (e) Why they could not defer;
- (f) Why they chose to sit/submit an assessment if they were not fully fit/able to do so.

5.6 Students are required to submit details and evidence of any exceptional circumstances within the following deadlines in order for them to be considered by the relevant Sub-Board though the SSC will always do their best to get ECs submitted after these deadlines to the Sub-Board if it has not yet met:

- (a) Week zero exams; no later than seven days after the student's last exam in this period.
- (b) Summative assessments during term time; no later than seven days after the submission deadline of the student's last assessment, which could be an exam or the dissertation/project,
- (c) Summer assessments:
 - 9-month Master's students: no later than 14 days after the student's final ST assessment or by 25 June 2021, whichever is earlier
 - 12-month Master's students: no later than seven days after the student's last assessment. This means no later than seven days after the dissertation/project submission deadline.
- (d) 12 Month Master's dissertations/project work; no later than seven days after the submission deadline.

Students must submit these documents to the SSC using the online exceptional circumstances form. The SSC will then collate and provide electronic copies to Sub-Boards. Any exceptional circumstances submitted by a student should then be considered at each subsequent Sub-Board meeting until the student completes their studies with the School.

- 5.7 Students receive an automated confirmation that exceptional circumstances have been received and logged. This is the only communication sent from the SSC about the documents submitted; the SSC is **not able to** contact students after exam boards to explain how every piece of evidence was considered.
- 5.8 Summaries of students' exceptional circumstances are not provided by the SSC. Instead, the Chair of the Sub-Board of Examiners should refer directly to the evidence of exceptional circumstances, but bearing in mind 5.4 above, in each case. This is to ensure that the Chair, and by extension the Sub-Board, fully understand the nature and severity of each student's circumstances.
- 5.9 The Chair of the Sub-Board should acquaint him/herself with the student's mark profile, the key facts outlined in their ECs and make an anonymised statement of each student's circumstances to the Sub-Board. The Chair may interrogate the evidence in order to respond to questions from members of the Sub-Board, but the Chair should not reveal the identity of the student. The types of suspension of regulation cases to consider are set out in the table at 6.10 below.
- 5.10 Where a student has a long-term health condition or declared disability the School would expect them to have sought support from the Disability and Wellbeing Service (DWS). Where a student informs the DWS it may be possible for them to receive exam adjustments and support with their studies during the academic year. Therefore, the Sub-Board should not normally make any further adjustment (by suspending the regulations) unless the student has submitted exceptional circumstances and can clearly demonstrate that they satisfy the conditions at section 6 below. It is possible that the student's health condition may have prevented them from being able to report to the DWS during the academic year. In which case the Sub-Board should note this but should still look to apply the conditions at section 5.15 namely, proximity, specificity, evidence and precedent.
- 5.11 With the move to online assessment there were only two adjustments applied – Letters of Notification

(for all assessment, considered by the examiner at the marking stage) and additional time (**only** for time-limited assessments lasting less than 24-hours, applied to the time limit on Moodle). The rationale for this was that, for all except the time limited assessments, the replacement assessment format and duration would give individuals the opportunity to complete all the tasks in a time and an environment that is appropriate to their own circumstances (e.g. they could take rest breaks in the assessment window allowed without the School needing to grant it). This therefore removed the need for further adjustments to be granted. As a result, pre-existing IEAs not being applied would not in itself be grounds to request a suspension of regulations. However, Sub-Boards should carefully consider individual EC submissions based on disability, particularly where there is evidence of a sudden deterioration, and IEAs and determine whether there are exceptional grounds on which to make a suspension case.

- 5.12 The Sub-Board should carefully consider if the student is disabled and if so, if they are placed at a disadvantage compared to non-disabled students by the normal application of the School's rules. The exam board minutes should clearly note the discussion and consideration of the case and this question. If you have any questions about these types of cases, please check with the SSC.
- 5.13 When considering exceptional circumstances, the Sub-Board may wish to refer to the following additional sources of information:
- The Summer 2021 Assessment Schedule: timetables for present sessions can be found [online](#) and timetables for previous exam periods are available on request.
 - Attendance records: class registers are available online via [LSE for You](#) and can be accessed by Academic Mentors and Departmental Administrators.
- 5.14 The various different categories of exceptional circumstances are coded on the mark frames provided to the Sub-Board. The following format of codes is used for all evidence of exceptional circumstances submitted by students in or after 2010/11:

Code	Explanation
MEDY21	Medical (student), evidence supplied
MEDN21	Medical (student), evidence NOT supplied
BERY21	Bereavement, evidence supplied
BERN21	Bereavement, evidence NOT supplied
FAMY21	Other Family, evidence supplied
FAMN21	Other Family, evidence NOT supplied
PROY21	Procedural Defect, evidence supplied
PRON21	Procedural Defect, evidence NOT supplied
OTHY21	Other/Multiple, evidence supplied
OTHN21	Other/Multiple, evidence NOT supplied

The last two numbers in both of the code formats refer to the year in which the information was submitted. For example, 2021 will be represented by 21.

- 5.15 When considering evidence of exceptional circumstances, Sub-Boards are asked to pay particular attention to the following:

Proximity It is important that exceptional circumstances are proximate to affected assessment.

Specificity Evidence should relate to specific circumstances, rather than chronic conditions/issues. Chronic problems should be addressed in advance of assessment periods (e.g. by the Disability and Wellbeing Service or

by deferring assessment). It is the student's responsibility to address chronic problems before taking assessment.

Evidence Exceptional circumstances should meet the standards of evidence set by the School. These standards have been revised to take into account the current COVID-19 context, and the evidence requirement has been relaxed in some areas. Where there is limited or no official evidence the Sub-Board should look for evidence of a clear, compelling and plausible narrative.

Precedent An awareness of precedent may inform decisions about current students. Sub- Boards should also consider whether or not decisions made in relation to exceptional circumstances are likely to set a precedent for future cases.

5.16 As mentioned above, Sub-Boards should refer to the [Standards of Evidence policy](#). These standards provide details of the kind of evidence students are expected to submit to accompany their description of exceptional circumstances. If you have any questions about the evidence provided by a student, please check with the SSC.

6. Making a recommendation to suspend regulations

6.1 Sub-Boards may apply to suspend any part of the School's regulations. In all cases, it is important to demonstrate how the proposed suspension of the regulations would ensure equity both to the student(s) in question, as well as to other students.

6.2 Sub-Boards may also consider discounting failed components of assessment where there are ECs relating to that failed assessment and the student has deferred other assessments in that course. Failed components cannot be discounted where a student has passed the overall course.

6.3 In order to ratify any request to suspend regulations. The most common requests are to award a higher degree than their current marks would normally allow or to discount a failed mark. The Graduate School Board of Examiners will require information about acute exceptional circumstances affecting a specific assessment or group of assessments, rather than long-term conditions, together with a cogent argument for suspension from the Sub-Board (see 5.15).

6.4 Sub-Boards would normally only be expected to consider suspending regulations for cases with the following characteristics:

- (a) the assessment in question was significantly affected by exceptional circumstances that were beyond the student's control; and
- (b) the student's performance in the affected assessment was significantly out of line with their performance in other, unaffected assessments.

6.5 Sub-Boards should consider ECs as normal for borderline classifications, discounted and additional attempts, all of which are based on Sub-Board discretion with final ratification confirmed by the School and Graduate School Exam Boards.

6.6 However, the criteria for considering borderline classifications will be expanded in recognition of the fact that students may be affected by COVID-19 related circumstances for all (or the majority) of their summative assessments in ST 2019/20 (where applicable) and 2020/21. The current borderline criteria are as follows:

- (a) that the student is very close to the next higher classification boundary i.e. within 3 marks in a single paper which has been used for classification i.e. one full-unit or two half-units or 5 marks on aggregate; and
 - (b) that the student has marks in the higher classification range; and
 - (c) that the student has demonstrated that the assessment or set of assessments in question were significantly and negatively affected by exceptional circumstances that were sudden, unforeseen, out of the student's own control and proximate to the assessment(s) in question; and
 - (d) that the student's performance in the affected assessment(s) was significantly out of line with their performance in other, unaffected assessments.
- 6.7 For any student who has taken assessment during the 2020/21 academic year, the Pass/Merit or Merit/Distinction borderline criteria will be as follows:
- (a) that the student is very close to the next higher classification boundary i.e. within **4 marks** in a single paper which has been used for classification i.e. one full-unit or two half-units **OR 10 marks** on aggregate; and
 - (b) The criteria at 6.6(b-d) above will remain unchanged.
- 6.8 As a general rule of thumb, we suggest that the further a student is away from the higher classification, but still within the borderline criteria as per 6.7(a), the more compelling their ECs will need to be for the Sub-Board to recommend a suspension of regulations and the award of the higher classification.
- 6.9 The Sub-Board will retain discretion to consider EC cases relating to discounting (treating as retrospective deferral) Fail and Absent marks. However, the criteria for considering EC cases relating to borderline overall Pass/Fail students also been adjusted in recognition of the fact that students may be affected by COVID 19. Therefore, only where a student with ECs is not borderline should they be recommended for a discount or additional attempt. All other EC cases should be considered for an award if they fit the criteria outlined in section 5.15 above and meet the following borderline Pass mark profile:
- (a) Three units of Pass plus one unit of good fail and; either 3 marks away from achieving a mark of 60 in one unit OR ten marks away from achieving a compensation aggregate of 330 (calculated using the sum of non-failed marks); or
 - (b) Having received a Bad Fail, is within three marks of achieving a "good fail" which would allow for an award (either on the basis of 3.5 unit marks of pass or above or as a result of satisfying the normal compensation rules); or
 - (c) Having passed three units; is within three marks from a Pass in one half unit; or
 - (d) Is within three marks from achieving a Pass in a course deemed "critical to assessment" under the local rules which if passed would allow for an award
- 6.10 A Sub-Board can recommend a suspension of any School regulation, but some of the most common requests are:

Suspension Request	Description	Additional Criteria/Information
Award of a higher classification	Award of a classification higher than the results achieved would normally allow.	<p>The student must be very close to the next higher classification boundary (normally within 4 marks in a single paper OR 10 marks on aggregate)</p> <p>The student must have marks in the higher classification range in some papers, in order to demonstrate that s/he is capable of performing at that level.</p>
Award of degree	Award a degree where the results achieved would not normally mean that the student is eligible.	<p>This is rare and is usually only granted when the nature of a student's exceptional circumstances would significantly impede their ability to take any further assessment.</p> <p>The student would also need to have demonstrated their ability in other (unaffected) assessment.</p>
To grant an additional attempt in one or more courses	To allow a student who would otherwise have exhausted attempts in failed courses to be granted final resit attempts.	<p>This is only relevant for a student who has exhausted attempts at failed courses.</p> <p>The student would need to clearly demonstrate their ability to perform well in other, unaffected assessment.</p>
<p>To discount one or more courses</p> <p>And/or to discount one or more failed component(s) of assessment where the student has deferred any other assessments within the same course</p>	To discount one or more of a student's latest attempts in light of exceptional circumstances. Any discounted fails will be removed from the student's transcript.	<p>Sub-Boards can recommend discounts of either first or second attempts at courses but can only request discounts of failed attempts. Discounts cannot be granted for underperformance in courses that have been passed.</p> <p>The student would need to clearly demonstrate their ability to perform well in other, unaffected assessment.</p>

- 6.11 Any recommendations to suspend regulations should be clearly minuted and noted on the cover sheet of the mark frame which is to be returned to the SSC. As part of the School's assessment support package, Sub-Boards will be expected to provide clear rationale for each case in meeting minutes to explain decisions not to suspend regulations for borderline candidates and candidates who have failed in assessment taken during ST 2020 and 2020/21.
- 6.12 The Sub-Board is required to also complete a suspension of regulations pro forma for each request, which can then be presented at the Graduate School Board meeting for consideration. This is required in order to ensure all relevant information is provided to the Graduate School Board of Examiners, and to ensure that all cases are presented in a standard format.
- 6.13 The SSC will inform Departments about the outcome of any requests to suspend regulations as soon as possible after the Graduate School Board meeting and before the results are released. The SSC will write to students who have been granted a discount or exceptional additional attempt. There is no formal correspondence/confirmation issued to any student in cases where circumstances have not resulted in a suspension of regulations.
- 6.14 As well as all exceptional circumstances cases the Sub-Board must discuss and consider any assessment errors or complaints that arose during the online January and/or Summer 2021 assessment periods.
- 6.15 Dealing with late assessment submissions. Please refer to the [staff guidance](#) for full details about late penalties, grace periods and the process for dealing with late submission ECs. Students are advised that where they submit a late assessment they should contact the relevant academic Department responsible for the assessment as soon as possible after submission with an explanation as to why they could not submit in good time. This will allow that Department to consider the information outside of the formal EC procedure and in advance of the Sub-Board meeting. The student can then be informed of whether or not late penalties will be applied within a number of working days after submission which we hope will save students many weeks of uncertainty and anxiety.
- 6.16 Departments should ensure to keep an accurate record so that marks with or without late penalties are correctly returned to Student Services. Departments responsible for the course should consider how best to share these decisions with other Departments where the assessment in question is taken as an outside option.
- 6.17 Student are advised to both contact their Department as soon as possible and submit ECs. The EC form allows for students to clearly indicate where any ECs relate to late submission. Prior to summer meeting, the Sub-Board will need to check whether or not the late penalty has already been applied or lifted before considering ECs for late submission. Where the penalty has been lifted the ECs relating only to late submission do not need to be considered but there could also be ECs relating to performance in that assessment.
- 6.18 Where a penalty has been applied despite the student providing information to the Department after the submission, the Sub-Board should check if the ECs relating to the late submission are different from the information already provided to the Department. If the information is the same, then the Sub-Board should normally endorse the course owning Department decision to apply the penalty. If the ECs are different to the original information presented, then the Sub- Board should consider whether or not to apply the penalty.
- 6.19 Also, where a student has submitted ECs but did not contact the Department responsible for the assessment after submission the Board should consider whether the student's circumstances appropriately explain both why they did not try to contact the Department at the time and the reason for the late submission. Lifting late penalties does not require a suspension of regulations request or

further consideration by the Graduate School Board.

6.20 In brief, the ECs around late submission should be considered as follows:

- (a) Student submits assessment late and then submits information to the Department responsible for the assessment to explain reasons for the late submission.
- (b) If submitted within the grace period, Department confirms no late penalty will be applied – no need to consider reasons.
- (c) If a time-limited assessment is submitted outside of the grace period, a mark of Zero Fail should be awarded and the work should not be marked. Any ECs should be considered by the relevant Sub-Board and a request to suspend regulations may or may not be made. If there are valid ECs, the Fail mark can be discounted or a further attempt granted, but normally the mark cannot be reinstated.
- (d) If an assessment with a duration of 24-hours or longer is submitted outside of the grace period, the Sub-Board Chair should consider the reasons and determine whether the late assessment can be accepted. Where the assessment is accepted, the Sub-Board Chair should also decide if late penalties should be applied. The Chair should consider:
 - Is the narrative compelling/plausible?
 - Are the circumstances genuinely unforeseen and proximate to the deadline?
 - If there is no supporting evidence, is it plausible the student could not provide any (e.g. screen shots if technical malfunction), and/or they couldn't defer or request an extension?
- (e) The Department will inform the student of decision, ideally within five working days. The Department should record the decision and ensure the "home" Department is made aware of the decision.
- (f) Where a student submits ECs relating to a late submission the student's "home" Department should check if those reasons have already been considered. If a late penalty is waved or the same circumstances have been considered but rejected, then the Sub-Board Department should endorse the original decision.
- (g) If the penalty is not waved and the student submits new information the Sub-Board should consider whether or not to apply the late penalties using the rational outlined above.
- (h) If the Sub-Board decides not to apply a penalty, then no suspension of regulations is needed but the Sub-Board need to utilise the late mark change process to inform the Results and Awards Team in the Student Services Centre.

7. Resits/Deferrals, Capping and Classification Schemes

7.1 Resits/deferrals

- (a) If a student fails or defers and has attempts remaining they will take their outstanding assessments in the new January PGT RDAP.

7.2 Capping

- (a) Where a student resits a failed course their overall degree classification is no longer capped at Pass. Only resit course grades will be capped at Pass for the purpose of calculating the award classification. The only way to prevent a resit being capped is by discounting the first attempt.
- (b) Once a student resits, the cap cannot be removed. The actual mark achieved at resit cannot be used for calculating a Merit or Distinction award and will be capped at 50, but the actual mark will be utilised if it is a progression requirement or included within the compensation aggregate for an award.

- (c) Students who defer a first attempt at assessment, will sit their deferred attempt as a first attempt and the mark they receive will not be capped.

7.3 New classification scheme and mark frames

- (a) All 2020/21 classification schemes and local rules can be found via the School [Calendar](#) and here are the direct links to the new [four-units](#), [five-units](#), and [eight-units](#) classification schemes.
- (b) The revised classification schemes approved by Academic Board in December 2019 include some key changes:
- i) Awards will be calculated by counting the number of “Classification Marks” achieved within each classification boundary rather than counting the number of units achieved within each classification boundary. One classification mark is the equivalent of 0.5 units in the previous classification scheme.
 - ii) This means a 1.0 unit course is worth 2.0 classification marks with marks gained in 1.0 unit courses being counted twice when calculating the award.
 - iii) Unless stated in the Departmental local rules, students’ overall degree classifications are determined by the best performance achieved in at least half of their classification marks i.e. in the 8 classification mark (4.0 unit) scheme:
 - For the award of Distinction, at least half i.e. 4 or more classification marks at Distinction;
 - For the award of Merit, at least half i.e. 4 or more classification marks at Merit;
 - All other students eligible for the award of MSc are awarded a Pass.
 - iv) Students can be awarded a degree carrying a 1 classification mark good fail – subject to local rules, and students with 2 Classification Marks of good fail will be eligible to be awarded if they meet the compensation rules and subject to local rules as per the previous classification scheme.
 - v) Students cannot be awarded a degree where they have a Bad Fail mark at the point of classification and must resit as per the previous classification scheme.
 - vi) In cases where a student has failed one unit and requires compensation in order to be awarded, students may choose between:
 - accessing compensation and being awarded straight away subject to incurring a penalty of a drop in classification where they could be awarded a Merit or Distinction or
 - resitting the failed course/s which might allow for the award of Merit or Distinction but incurring a capped grade for each resit course.
 - vii) As noted in 7.2 a) above, capping the grade for each course which has been retaken at Pass has replaced capping the degree classification at Pass when a student resits.
 - viii) A drop in degree classification will be applied when a student needs to resit one or more Bad Fails where a student was otherwise eligible for a Merit or Distinction award.

It should be noted that in instances where more than one penalty drop in degree class may be applicable e.g. a student needs to resit a Bad Fail and subsequently requires compensation in order to be eligible for an award, only one drop in degree classification will be applied.

- (c) SITS will automatically count up the number of classification marks and add up the aggregate and the totals will appear on the mark frame together with the recommended award.
- (d) For students that started prior to 2020/21 and prior to the application of this new classification scheme, there will be a transition period to ensure those students will not be disadvantaged by the change. The SSC will be able to identify and check any students that may have been better off under the old scheme and they will be classified under either the old or new scheme depending on which one awards them the higher degree. The mark frame will indicate where the SSC has checked a student against both schemes.

8. After the Sub-Board Meeting

8.1 Returning materials to the SSC (upload onto Teams)

(a) Mark frames:

- The named copy of the mark frames and accompanying cover sheet(s) should be uploaded to Teams immediately after the Sub-Board meeting.
- The cover sheet should be electronically signed by both the Sub-Board Chair and the external examiner(s).
- The cover sheet should also list any instances where the Department wish to recommend to the Graduate School Board of Examiners that the normal application of the regulations be suspended. These should be accompanied by one suspension of regulations pro-forma per case. We will use the list on the coversheet as a final check that forms have been submitted for each case.
- The Department may wish to retain a copy of the anonymised mark frame(s) for their records. All documentation should, however, be deleted from Teams immediately after the meeting.

8.2 Minutes

(a) Minutes of the Sub-Board meeting, once approved by the Chair, should be emailed to ssc.staffresults@lse.ac.uk by 5 July 2021. There is no requirement for hard copies to be kept.

(b) Please refer to [Annex C](#) for a template, which should be used for the minutes.

(c) In the interests of ensuring the anonymity of all students, it is essential that no reference is made to names or gender and that only candidate numbers are used in Sub-Board meetings minutes.

(d) Minutes should include details of:

- confirmation that all course grades and degree classifications were confirmed as per the relevant mark frames;
- all individuals present at the Sub-Board and agreed apologies;
- any discussion of general principles;
- how every submission of exceptional circumstances was considered;
- Copy and paste the exceptional circumstances summary spreadsheet into the minutes and include in the table details of why requests to suspend regulations for any borderline students or students with fails were/weren't recommended to the Graduate School Board of Examiners. Then add a general statement below the table to record that all exceptional circumstances documentation was considered for the listed students. An example of the statement is as follows:

'As stated above, the examiners have taken the general impact of COVID-19 circumstances into account for all assessments submitted in this period. In addition, all statements/evidence of exceptional circumstances made available to the Sub-Board were carefully considered and the relevant candidate numbers are listed above. However, unless stated otherwise above, the circumstances were not deemed sufficient to change individual classifications for finalists (including final fails) or to discount fails for continuing students. Exceptional circumstances submitted by continuing students not related to fails will be revisited at the time of the classification.'

- In addition to the above statement, Sub-Boards will be expected to provide clear rationale for each case in meeting minutes to explain decisions not to suspend regulations for borderline candidates and candidates who have failed in assessment taken in ST 2020 or 2020/21;
- Provide a separate list (or table) detailing the discussion of each final fail student, providing confirmation of and reasons for any decisions that were made (e.g. requesting to suspend regulations or confirmation of final fail decision). There is no need to repeat information from the exceptional circumstances table; you can simply refer to the final fail information where appropriate;
- any discussion of exam or assessment issues or complaints, and how these were resolved; including, if necessary, statements to be released to students or forwarded to other Sub-

Boards;

- the names of Departmental prize winners (in addition to completing the prizes spreadsheet);
- **IMPORTANT:** the Sub-Board's analysis of mark distribution data, including details of any adjustments made to course marks in light of COVID-19, including the upward scaling of marks listed by course and the use of sampling for courses with 9/10/12-month students where this alternative approach was used (see Section 2 above). The reasons for not making any adjustment to marks for assessments that would normally be an exam should also be clearly explained.

(e) It is important to remember that minutes are held as one of the main School records of Sub-Board decisions and the School is often required to refer back to them (e.g. for appeals, if a student wishes to check their exceptional circumstances were considered). Minutes should be written on the understanding that a third party (including the student) may be entitled to access them at a later date. The Office of the Independent Adjudicator is entitled to see copies of the relevant minutes when a student makes a complaint against the School after an unsuccessful appeal.

8.3 Sub-Boards should inform the SSC directly if immediate action is required following a Sub-Board meeting, either by completing the relevant paperwork (e.g. suspension of regulations forms) or by email. Recording a request in the minutes will not necessarily mean that requests are received in time for the Graduate School Board of Examiners meeting. We apologise for any apparent duplication this may cause, but it is necessary for us to separate administrative processes from academic records.

8.4 Prizes

(a) The Sub-Board will be required to consider the award of departmental prizes (if appropriate) to students who have been assessed in the current year. Local rules should have been established within the Department to facilitate this; there are no standard School rules around eligibility criteria.

(b) Once prizes have been agreed, the Secretary must record these in the minutes and by using the prize winners' spreadsheet provided by the SSC. The prizes will appear on the students' transcripts exactly as entered onto the spreadsheet (including capital letters, punctuation etc.). In order to ensure uniformity on the transcripts, please ensure that:

- all prizes end with a full stop and must start with Winner (or Joint Winner) of...
- the prize does not include the symbol '&', as this symbol is not recognised by the transcript system.

8.5 Please return all prize spreadsheets to ssc.staffresults@lse.ac.uk by 2 July 2021.

9. Publication of Results

9.1 Students will be able to access their results via LSE for You by midnight in line with the [Results Publication Dates](#).

9.2 Academic mentors and departmental administrators can access assessment results via the 'Exam Results' link on the online class registers at the same time as they are released to students on LSE for You.

9.3 Students who have an outstanding debt to the School will have their results withheld until such time that Credit Control confirm the debt has been cleared. Students with ongoing academic misconduct cases will also have their results blocked. Please contact the SSC if a student queries why they are unable to view their results, but do not release any results in case they have an intentional block on their record.

10. Contact details

If you have any queries relating to this guidance or during the results processing period more generally, please don't hesitate to contact either ssc.staffresults@lse.ac.uk.

Annex A – Guidance on resit or deferred dissertations

Resit or first deferral: RDAP

1. Examination Sub-Board Chairs are asked to note that students who need to defer the dissertation or are required to resit the dissertation will submit their dissertation in the following January PGT RDAP, as with all other assessments which they have deferred and/or are required to resit in order to be classified.
2. Students will automatically be entered by Student Services to submit their deferred or resit dissertation by the end of the RDAP.
3. New Sub-Board and Graduate School Board of Examiners meetings will be scheduled following the RDAP assessment period to allow eligible RDAP students to be awarded in March immediately following the RDAP.
4. All RDAP submission deadlines including the dissertation should be no later than the end of RDAP. However, if the end of RDAP does not allow sufficient time for marking and applying standard moderation practices for the dissertation to take place in advance of the deadline set by Student Services for returning RDAP marks (approximately 1 month after the end of RDAP), departments should set an earlier dissertation submission deadline which accommodates the required marking and moderation timeframe. It is recommended that this submission deadline is no later than the start of RDAP i.e. students should be expected to submit their deferred or resit dissertation during RDAP.
5. Students will be able to submit Exceptional Circumstances for assessments taken during RDAP, including dissertations, for consideration by the RDAP Sub-Boards and Graduate School Board.
6. Further information regarding RDAP Sub-boards can be found in section 6 of the [Instructions for Examiners](#).

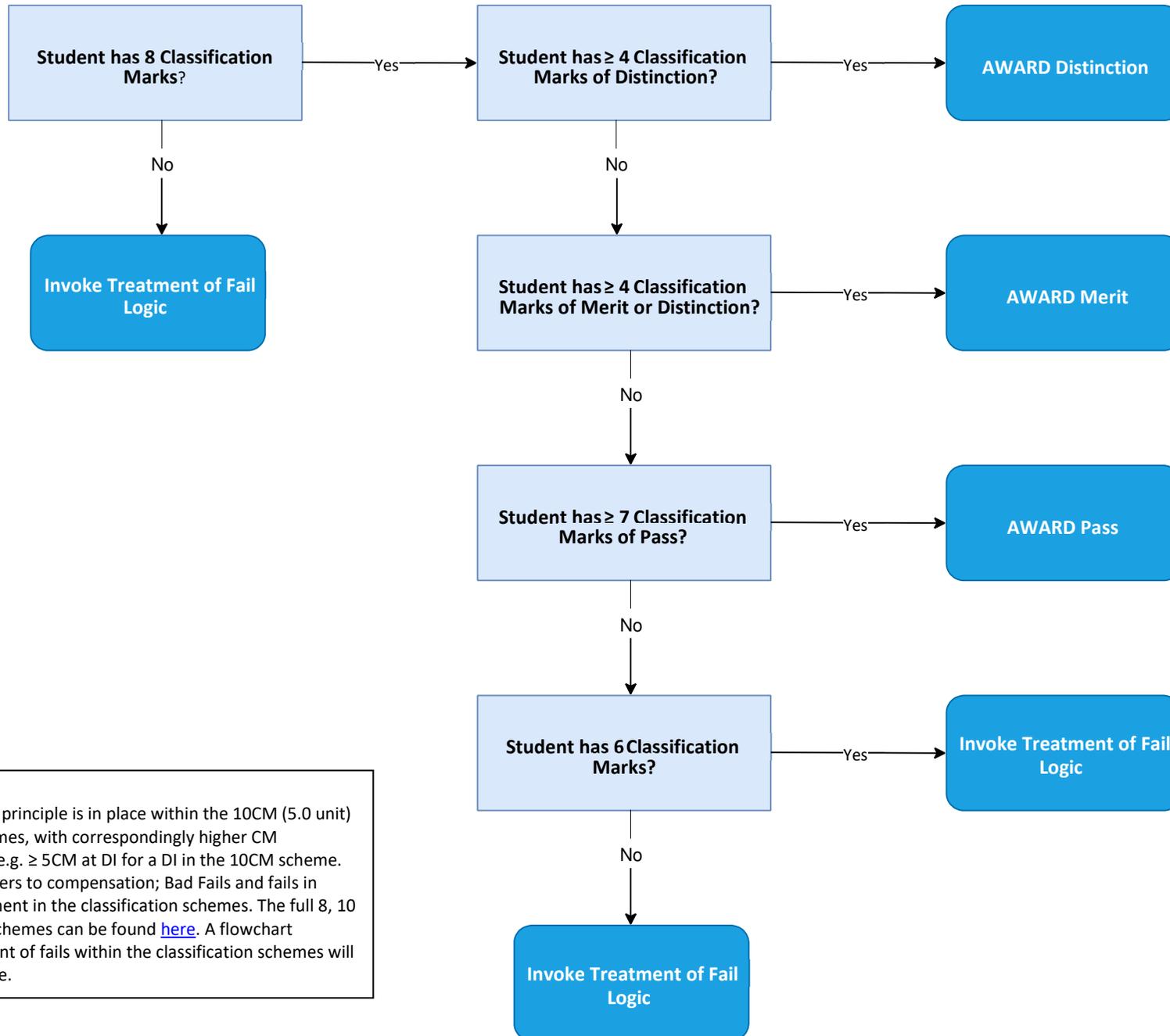
Second resit or deferral: Summer Term

7. In cases where the student is unable to submit their dissertation during the RDAP e.g. personal circumstances continue to affect them or major revisions are required, students can defer the dissertation submission to the following Summer Term.
8. The rationale provided by the student for any deferrals from RDAP could relate to a high RDAP assessment load or extensive revisions meaning the RDAP deadline did not allow enough time for the student to complete the dissertation and/or could relate to personal circumstances.

Student support

9. Departments should establish and publish in Handbooks both:
 - i) the extent to which feedback will be provided to the student in the event of a failed dissertation submission; and
 - ii) the extent to which supervisory support will be available for resit and deferred dissertations.

Annex B – 4.0 Unit Postgraduate Classification Flowchart PGT Classification Scheme 8 Classification Marks (CM)



Notes:

- 1) The same preponderance principle is in place within the 10CM (5.0 unit) and 16CM (8.0 unit) schemes, with correspondingly higher CM requirements for awards e.g. ≥ 5CM at DI for a DI in the 10CM scheme.
- 2) Treatment of Fail logic refers to compensation; Bad Fails and fails in courses critical to assessment in the classification schemes. The full 8, 10 and 16CM classification schemes can be found [here](#). A flowchart documenting the treatment of fails within the classification schemes will be published in due course.

Annex C – Template of Minutes

LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS
DEPARTMENT OF X
BSc/BA/MSc X SUBJECT BOARD OF EXAMINERS

Date

In Attendance: X

Apologies: X

1. To determine the marks, progression and classifications of:

[list all degree programmes]

2. General principles [optional. E.g. discussion of the application of pairing half units/summary of classification scheme, local rules etc.]

Also, due to COVID-19, each Sub-board should include the following statement under this section to confirm that anxieties borne from the pandemic – and their potential impact on attainment – have been factored into the moderation process:

“The final marks attributed to all summer term 2019/20 assessments and all assessments submitted during the 2020/21 academic year are the result of an extremely thorough moderation procedure that safeguards candidates from being unduly affected in their academic performance by the impact of COVID-19.

Historic course marks from previous academic years (excluding 2019/20) were made available to moderators as a means of ensuring that the current cohort have not been disadvantaged by the general anxiety surrounding current events, or from changes such as the need for distance learning and reformatted exams. The School also amended its approach to Deferrals, Extensions, Exceptional Circumstances and Standards of Evidence to support students attempting assessments during COVID-19. Where an individual has been specifically affected in ways that might not be accounted for by this moderation process, the School has made clear it is incumbent on them to submit Exceptional Circumstances (ECs) – and details relating to the consideration of ECs are listed under the relevant section of these minutes.”

3. Confirmation of marks and awards

All marks, progression codes and classifications (including final fails) for the above programmes were correct as indicated on the mark frames provided by SSC and have been ratified by the Sub-Board.

[Please state one of the following. Either]

No mark adjustments were made for any [Department] undergraduate courses, as this year’s distribution in each case was in line with or better than the recent historic averages.

[Or]

Some mark adjustments were made to this year’s cohort marks. Please see the table below for a course-by-course table of any adjustments made. [Please see the example in the table below. This table should include details about the way in which marks have been up-scaled.

Course Code	Comparison with historic marks? Y/N (if 'No', please explain why not)	Was significant negative variation identified (we suggest 5% below the historical average as a guide)?	Were course marks scaled upwards as a result of identifying significant negative variation? (if 'Yes', please state the % increase and/or provide a brief description of the method used, or state 'No')	If 'No' to previous question and course marks were not scaled, please explain why adjustments were deemed unnecessary?	Were any errors/disruption noted for this assessment? Y/N (if Yes, please provide details e.g. typo, incomplete instructions, Moodle disruption, etc.)	If 'Yes' to previous question, were adjustments made (in addition to any C-19 adjustments) to resolve potential impact? If 'No', please explain why it was not necessary (e.g. considered as part of C-19 adjustment, etc.)
AB123	Yes	No	No	The average mark is higher than historical marks.	No	N/A

4. Exceptional circumstances

Submissions were received from the following students listed below on the [programme]:

[Insert a description of circumstances and mark profile for each borderline/fail student. Explain specific reasons for chosen action (either to recommend suspending the regulations or to confirm marks (e.g. consideration of late penalties) and/or progression or award decisions as per the mark frame(s).]

For example: “Considered with no further recommendations to GSBE when requests are not being made to suspend the regulations. [Directly after this line, provide as much detail for this decision as possible. Where possible, you should expand on the examples provided below]:

- “Although the Board is sympathetic, the mark(s) obtained by the candidate in this/these affected assessment(s) are not out of line with their results achieved in other affected assessments. Therefore, there is no compelling evidence to suggest the candidate’s performance in [insert course/name of assessment] was/were unduly affected by their circumstances” [Or]
- “Although the Board is sympathetic, this candidate does not have a borderline mark profile” [Or]
- “Although the Board is sympathetic, it determined the circumstances are not specific enough to the assessment in question to clearly demonstrate they would have performed better had those circumstances not occurred.”

NB. A ‘suspension of regulations form’ must also be completed for all suspension requests in order for SSC to identify which cases are for the attention of the Graduate School Board].

Example below:

Examination Med / Exceptional Cs	Cand. No.	Year	Consideration/Decision
MEDY21	X	1	Considered with no further recommendation to GSBE. The candidate reports having undergone a minor hand operation in September 2019 which, according to the medical evidence provided, has continued to cause the individual pain since that time. As such, this problem was not unforeseen and it is not clear why the candidate declared themselves “fit to sit” the assessment on 12 May 2020.
OTHN21	X	1	Considered with no further recommendation to GSBE. The mark in the assessment referred to in the candidate’s ECs is not out of line with their attainment across other courses; indeed, their final mark in “X” course is higher than in other courses and therefore there is not sufficient evidence to suggest that the candidate was particularly impacted by the culmination of their stressful financial situation and their poor health.
MEDY21	X	1	The Sub-Board noted that the student had submitted medical evidence that clearly documented [condition]. The medical evidence was proximate to the exam period and the student claimed that symptoms were particularly acute before the X exams (the student achieved X marks respectively, for these courses). The Sub-Board agreed that the student's mark profile would suggest that they were capable of achieving an overall X had they not experienced these circumstances. The Sub-Board recommended that the normal application of the regulations be suspended in this case and the student be awarded an overall X.

As stated above, the examiners have taken the general impact of COVID-19 circumstances into account for all affected assessments submitted in this period. In addition, all statements/evidence of exceptional circumstances made available to the Sub-Board were carefully considered and the relevant candidate numbers are listed above

However, unless stated otherwise above, the circumstances were not deemed sufficient to change individual classifications for finalists (including final fails) or to discount fails for continuing students. Exceptional circumstances submitted by continuing students not related to fails will be revisited at the time of the classification.

5. Final Fail students:

Cand. No	Year	Exceptional circumstances submitted yes/no	Consideration/Decision
X	X	No	Final Fail
X	X	Yes	Note of consideration of ECs [all HD ECs must be discussed]

6. Reports on specific exam issues [including all exam complaints or question paper errors]

7. External Examiner comments

8. Prizes

9. Signing of Agreed Results by the Chair and External Examiners

The Chair and External Examiners signed and agreed the results.

Annex D – Examples of Suspension of Regulations cases considered by the GSBE

Upheld: Request for additional attempt/discount failed January exam

- Candidate explained their severe health problems of summer 2019 when they spent three months in hospital has left them with residual health issues.
- The evidence provided from January 2020, indicated that in December 2019 these issues were ongoing.
- Additionally, the candidate's ill-health and subsequent passing of their partner's father (evidenced by the burial record in early January 2020) also supported why they were not in a position to submit a deferral request for an assessment in December 2019.
- Given the candidate did request deferrals for all other assessments, the Sub-Board believe that the candidate's health issues and family circumstances were an acceptable explanation for them having not requested to defer the assessment
- The Board noted there was evidence of an ongoing condition and bereavement after illness and the timeline of the deferrals suggested they were unable to defer prior to December

Upheld: Request for discount failed exams

- The student has been deferring the majority of their assessments since 2017/18, due to an ongoing mental health issue. Evidence of their condition has been provided in the past to support deferral requests
- The student was not able to provide medical evidence on this occasion, as all their GP appointments were cancelled due to COVID-19.
- The student describes struggling to study for exams not only due to the stress caused by the COVID-19 situation but also on account of the medication they have taken which caused drowsiness. The student had been trying to get a GP appointment to discuss changing their medication but this had not been possible.
- Whilst the Board were concerned about the lack of proximate evidence they were satisfied there was evidence of a long term health problem, their explanation for not providing proximate evidence was plausible and the Department had been happy to endorse the student's explanation

Rejected: Request for additional attempt

- Candidate contacted the department after EC deadline. It appeared they had been unclear about deferral procedure this year due to COVID-19.
- The Board discussed this case in relation to the COVID-19 no disadvantage approach to summer assessments.
- The Board determined there should be some circumstantial evidence to explain why the student was unable to engage with School procedures. There was no evidence or plausible explanation provided to allow the Board to apply the no disadvantage policy in this case.

Rejected: Request award of overall Distinction from Merit

- Candidate is borderline due to Sub-Board local rule requirement of a Merit in XXX.
- Limited evidence supplied. The Board discussed whether they are able to apply the 'No Disadvantage Approach' to minimal evidence. Candidate's circumstances occurred in a period where COVID testing was limited.
- The circumstances were agreed by the Board to be too diffused and not specific to the borderline assessment in question.
- The Board agreed there was no compelling narrative and no specific or proximate evidence.

Annex E – Assessments and Appeals Ethics Protocol

This is a protocol governing communications with individuals or organisations who have a connection with or an interest in a student of the School who is or will be undertaking academic assessments. Such individuals may include, but are not limited to, parents, alumni, donors and potential donors. For the purpose of this protocol, 'third party' is used as a generic term applying to all enquirers.

The protocol applies to all staff of the School and is designed to prevent inappropriate influence of funders or other interested parties on academic oversight, assessments and academic independence.

1. If a third party enquires about assessments and/or about the academic regulations of the School you should refer him/her to the Calendar and to the more detailed information available from the SSC.
2. If a third party asks about the status of a student, their academic progress or their results, you should refer him/her to the SSC.
3. If a third party enquires about details of a member of staff in the context of their acting as an assessor or examiner or about membership of Boards of Examiners, you should refer him/her to the SSC.
4. If a third party enquires about appealing¹ against an assessment result or an academic award on behalf of a student you should:
 - (a) advise him/her that the School's appeal procedure must be followed and that individuals or departments (other than the Assessment Regulations Team) cannot intervene in the appeal process;
 - (b) advise him/her that the student should discuss the matter with the Assessment Regulations Team (ART).
5. If a third party enquires about raising a complaint² about any aspect of assessment you should:
 - (a) advise him/her that the School's complaints procedure must be followed and individuals or departments (other than those referred to in paragraph 6b) cannot intervene in the submission or consideration of a complaint and
 - (b) advise him/her that the student should discuss the matter with the Governance, Legal and Planning Division (GLPD) or ART for guidance on the relevant process.
6. The Data Protection Act prohibits all School staff from providing confidential or personal information about a student to a third party, including parents. The SSC and GLPD will only issue personal information or discuss a specific student's situation when they have received written consent to do so from the student.
7. Communication with third parties regarding a registered student should be kept to an absolute minimum, except where formal sponsorship of a student makes provision for such discussion. Enquiries should be passed to staff in the SSC.

¹ Appeals are often submitted by students who have failed an examination, failed their programme of study or who believe they are entitled an academic award at a higher classification than that conferred. The appeals procedure is publicly available and provides a fair and transparent method for reviewing such circumstances.

² The School's complaints procedures allow students to raise concerns about academic matters or about a service. GLPD, or ART staff will be able to advise students about the most appropriate way to raise their concern(s).

Useful Links

Appeals (undergraduate and taught postgraduate students):

<https://info.lse.ac.uk/Staff/Divisions/Academic-Registrars-Division/Teaching-Quality-Assurance-and-Review-Office/Assets/Documents/Calendar/AppealsRegulations.pdf>

Calendar (for current and past regulations): <http://www.lse.ac.uk/resources/calendar/>

Complaints:

<https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/Services/Policies-and-procedures/Assets/Documents/comPro.pdf>

Ethics (further information and guidance): www.lse.ac.uk/ethics

Governance, Legal and Planning Division:

<https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/Secretarys-Division/Governance>

The SSC (undergraduate and taught postgraduate examination information):

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/students/registrationTimetablesAssessment/home.aspx>

Contacts

Assessments Regulations Team: Martin Johnson (SSC.appeals@lse.ac.uk).

The SSC: Please use SSC.staffresults@lse.ac.uk to email your enquiry will be forwarded appropriately.