

**ACADEMIC AWARD REGULATIONS
Graduate Awards**

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| Name of regulation : | Graduate Awards |
| Purpose of regulation : | Regulations for the University's Graduate Awards (Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma) |
| Approval for this regulation given by : | Academic Board |
| Responsibility for its update : | Dean of Students and Academic Registrar |
| Regulation applies to : | To all students registered on Staffordshire University Graduate awards. |
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1. What are the Graduate Awards?

The University's Graduate Awards (Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma) are designed in accordance with the QAA 'The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland' (FHEQ)¹, published in August 2008. The awards also reflect the minimum credit level requirements set out in the 'Credit and HE Qualifications: Credit Guidelines for HE Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland' (EWNI credit levels)² published in 2008. These two documents specify the expected levels and volume of study required of certain types of award and the terminology used in the documents is reflected in these Regulations.

Each award of the University is defined by a set of Learning Outcomes that indicate the knowledge and skills the holder of the award will be able to demonstrate. Each module also has its own set of learning outcomes which are tested by the module's assessment. The awards are designed in such a way that these two sets of outcomes are linked to ensure that a student who successfully meets the outcomes of the modules in their award also fulfils the award's outcomes. Details of how the modules feed into the outcomes for your award will be provided in the documentation you receive about your award.

1.1.1 Levels, Modules and Credits – what are they?

The relationship of award, credit and module levels is shown in the following table:

| Equivalent Year of Undergraduate study (for full-time students) | Equivalent Module Level | FHEQ Qualification Levels |
|--|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Third | 6 | Level 6 |
| Second | 5 | Level 5 |
| First | 4 | Level 4 |

The Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma involve study at a level equivalent to that of the final year of an honours degree and often, though not always, represent an access route to an associated postgraduate award. They are designed normally for Graduate entry.

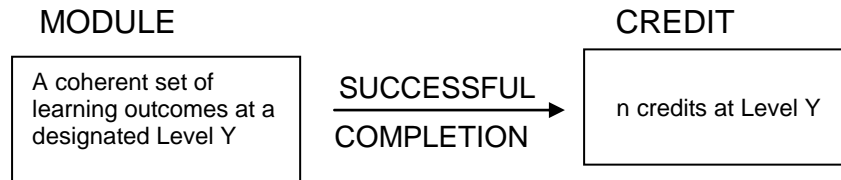
1.1.2 Modules and Credits – how many credits are there for each module?

Every module is allocated to a credit Level and is worth a specified number of credits at that level, normally associated with the total learning time required for

¹ The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, QAA, August 2008 (website <http://www.qaa.ac.uk>)

² Credit and HE Qualifications: Credit Guidelines for HE Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, EWNI Credit Bodies, November 2008

successful completion of that module. Every module is identified by a unique code the suffix of which indicates its credit Level. For example a Level 6 module is shown by its -6 suffix. Each module has a coherent set of formally identified learning outcomes. In order to earn credit for the module, you must normally satisfy the assessment criteria for all of the designated learning outcomes for the module.



The credit rating of all modules is normally either 15 or a multiple of 15. Credits are also sometimes referred to as CATS points (you should read the glossary item on CATS for more details).

The delivery pattern of multiple modules over the academic year will vary according to the module. Some are delivered during one teaching block, others are year-long. You must make sure that you know the delivery pattern of all multiple modules for which you enrol. You should read the glossary items on modules, credit and CATS for more details.

1.1.3 The Graduate Awards – what award will I be taking?

The requirements of each award in terms of the volume and level of study are as follows:

| Title of the Qualification | FHEQ Qualification Level | Credits Required at Levels |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| Graduate Certificate | 6 | 60 credits overall at a minimum of Level 6). Up to 15 credits of Masters (Level 7) study may be included |
| Graduate Diploma ³ | 6 | 120 credits overall at a minimum of Level 4. Up to 30 credits of Masters (Level 7) study may be included |

1.1.4 Registration – how long do I have to complete my award?

³ The current Graduate Diplomas in Psychology and in Law do not match these credit/level requirements in view of the necessity for the awards to meet professional body specifications.

You have a maximum of 4 years to complete a Graduate Certificate and 5 years to complete a Graduate Diploma subject to any restrictions imposed by Professional Body requirements or award specific regulations.. These timescales apply equally to full-time and part-time students. If you find that you need to take longer than these time limits, you must apply to the Dean of Students and Academic Registrar for permission.

Any periods of intermission from your award will count towards the period of registration.

All of the above is subject to any restrictions imposed by Professional Body requirements or Award specific regulations.

The University regularly reviews and updates the range of awards and modules it offers. If as a result of extenuating circumstances or for other personal reasons you choose to intermit from your studies, the University cannot guarantee that, upon returning, you will be able to follow the same award or programme of study for which you were originally enrolled. In such circumstances, you would be counselled on what would be the most appropriate current award given the study you had already completed.

1.2 Your Award

1.2.1. Your Award Structure

Every modular award comprises a set of modules determined in advance by the Award Team and ratified by the University's Academic Board. You will normally receive an award structure for your award upon enrolment and this will tell you which modules you will need to study. In order to complete the award for which you have registered you must complete the modules specified. The set of modules specific to each award is called an Award Structure.

The Award structure for your award will normally specify some modules as '**Core**'. These are **compulsory** modules and must be taken in order to complete your chosen award. You may also find that some modules are listed as **Options**. Option modules are those which you select from within a prescribed set for a particular named award. If you are required to study some specific option modules, you must choose modules attracting the specified number of credits

1.2.2 Changing modules - can I change my modules?

Exceptionally, where your award structure allows some choice through options, you may be allowed to change your choice of modules. This will only be allowed in cases where there is a sound academic justification for the change. Any change you make to your choice of modules must be made **within two weeks** of the start of the module. If you change modules subsequent to registration you must complete a module amendment form. It is very important that both our and your records are correct. If you are recorded as studying for a module you will be eligible for assessment in that module. If we do not know that you have withdrawn from a module you could be recorded as having failed it.

Alternatively, if we do not know that you are studying a new module, any assessment undertaken may not be entered onto your records.

1.2.3 Student Workload – how much work am I expected to do?

Each module attracts a number of credits based on the time required to successfully complete the module. For every 15 credits you are normally expected to put in 150 hours of work (including tutor-led activities, independent study and assessment).

The number of credits for which you study in each academic year will determine your status as a full-time or part-time student. A full-time student will normally study modules totalling 120 credits in each academic year. However, as a full-time student you must study modules totalling a minimum of 105 credits per year. If you choose to study modules totalling fewer than 120 credits (i.e. 105) in a year you must make up the missing credits before you will be allowed to graduate

Additional modules are entirely separate from your award - they **cannot** be used as credit to count towards your award. It is important therefore, that additional modules are identified as such so that the Award Board can properly establish your eligibility for your award.

1.3 Attendance – when do I have to attend?

Your attendance is required at all teaching sessions for the modules for which you have enrolled. Sessions include all tutor-led activities such as lectures, seminars, tutorials and presentations. “Sessions” should not be interpreted as “weeks”. For small group sessions (sessions which involve a sub-set of the whole module cohort) you must attend the sessions to which you have been assigned.

If you are studying modules by distance learning which do not require your physical attendance at the University, ‘attendance’ will be interpreted as participation in any scheduled activities for students on those modules.

1.3.1 Absence – what happens if I miss classes?

If you are absent from a module(s) or programme of study on four consecutive occasions in a teaching block, including lectures, tutorials, seminars, laboratory based classes and scheduled distance learning activities **for reason other than personal illness** without the written approval of the appropriate tutor or Dean of the Faculty/School in which your award is based you may be deemed to have withdrawn from the module(s) or programme of studies and your registration on that module(s) or programme of studies cancelled. You may be excluded from further teaching, denied access to examinations and refused the opportunity to submit assessment for the module or award. You will therefore need to seek permission to start again on the same module (or a replacement where applicable) or award the following year. This may affect your eligibility to

progress to the next stage of your award, it may lead to the withdrawal by a funding body of your fees and/or grant, and any other financial support that you might be receiving.

If you are unable to attend or participate for up to five working days **through illness** you must complete a **self-certification form** and hand/send it in to your Faculty/School Office. If you are unable to attend or participate for longer than five working days through illness then you must obtain a medical note from your doctor and hand/send that in to your Faculty/School Office. If your absence/illness affects any aspect of your assessment you may be eligible to submit a claim for extenuating circumstances. For further details of this you should read the **Procedures for Making a Claim for Extenuating Circumstances**.

1.4 Withdrawal from a module

If you withdraw or are withdrawn from a module because of non-attendance or other reason, you will be considered to have failed that module and any subsequent re-enrolment on that module or replacement of that module will be considered as a second attempt for the which the maximum Grade Point will be 4 (7).

If you are already attempting that module for the second time at the point you withdraw or are withdrawn from the module, you will be deemed to have failed the module with no entitlement for further enrolment on that module.

1.5 Assessment – how will I be assessed?

1.5.1 Module Assessment

You will be assessed in every module for which you enrol. You may be required to undertake more than one element of assessment for a module, and you will be given information on what is expected of you at the start of the module. The assessment will be linked to the teaching and learning methods of the module and will be designed to test your achievement of the module's learning outcomes. A range of assessment methods may be used including formal examinations, class tests, essays, projects and case studies. All assessment must be treated with equal gravity and you must attempt all elements.

1.5.2 Breaches of Assessment Regulations - Academic Misconduct

Cheating and/or plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated at Staffordshire University and will be dealt with very seriously. Cheating is defined as any attempt to complete an examination or assessment by unfair means. Plagiarism is defined as submitting the work of others as your own for the purposes of satisfying assessment requirements. Plagiarism also includes allowing your work to be copied by another student.

The University's "**Procedure for Dealing with Breaches of Assessment Regulations: Academic Misconduct**" will give you more detail about what constitutes cheating and plagiarism and about what happens if you are

suspected of cheating or plagiarism. This Procedure is included as Appendix III of the Regulations for the Academic Awards of Staffordshire University. It is your responsibility to make sure you read, understand and comply with it.

1.5.3 Submission and Late Submission of Coursework – what happens if I submit my work late?

You must submit all pieces of assessment required for each module on or before the submission date for each piece of assessment. Failure to do so is likely to result in failure of the module overall. The submission date will be specified for each piece of assessment for each module. It is your responsibility to make sure you know when your submission dates are and to comply with them. Failure to meet this deadline will be treated as a non-submission and a Grade Point N will be recorded for that component and you will not be allowed a referral in that element(s) of the module at the discretion of the appropriate Board..

The **only exceptions** to these rules apply where a valid **claim for extenuating circumstances** can be made. For further details you should read the **Procedures for Making a Claim for Extenuating Circumstances**.

1.5.4 Module Results/Assessment Referencing Criteria – what do my marks mean?

You will be given a result for your performance in each module. Your result will be determined by considering your performance in relation to the relevant assessment criteria. The assessment criteria will be closely linked to the learning outcomes of the module and will be included within the handbook for each module.

The University uses a **Grade Point scale** to record assessment results.

| Grade Point (GP) | Associated Undergraduate Honours Classification (for Level 6 modules) | Associated Postgraduate outcomes (for Level 7 modules) |
|------------------|---|---|
| 15 14 13 | First Class | Distinction |
| 12 11 10 | Second Class (Upper Division) | Merit |
| 9 8 7 | Second Class (Lower Division) | Pass |
| 6 5 4 | Third Class | Fail grade which may be compensated or condoned (see section 1.5.5.2) |
| 3 2 | Fail grade which may be compensated or condoned (see section 1.5.5.2) | Fail grade which may not be |

| | | |
|--------|--|--|
| 1 0 | Fail grade which may not be compensated or condoned (see section 1.5.5.2) | compensated or condoned (see section 1.5.5.2) |
| N | Fail grade due to non-submission which may not be compensated or condoned (see section 1.5.5.2). no further attempt at module allowed. | Fail grade due to non-submission which may not be compensated or condoned (see section 1.5.5.2). No further attempt at module allowed. |

In the subsequent sections of these regulations, the undergraduate grade points will be referred to first, with the postgraduate equivalents appearing in brackets afterwards. (Eg 4 [7] = GP4 undergraduate, GP7 postgraduate).

Your results will be considered by the appropriate assessment/award board.

In determining the outcome of the assessment of your modules, these Boards will consider your performance in relation to the assessment criteria of the modules and the contribution those modules make to the outcomes of the award level.

If you are judged to have satisfied the module assessment criteria at threshold level, you will be awarded at least a Grade Point 4 [7] for the module. You will not be permitted a further attempt at any element of assessment for which you have been awarded a pass grade (Grade Point 4 [7] or above) in order to improve your grade, unless a claim for extenuating circumstances is upheld.

1.5.5 Module Failure – what happens if I fail a module?

If you have failed to satisfy the assessment criteria of the module, you will be awarded a **fail grade** (see above). If you have failed to submit an element(s) of assessment, you will be given a **Grade Point N** (Fail due to non-submission) for that element(s) and you will only be allowed a further attempt at that element(s) of the module at the discretion of the appropriate Board.

The credits for all modules, including failed modules, must be obtained in order for you to qualify for your chosen award and this can be done in one of the following ways, which will be decided by the Award Board.

1.5.5.1 Referral, Replacement and Retake

If the Assessment Board has reported a **Non-Compensatable Fail** (see 1.5.5.2 below) then you will be required to undergo further assessment on the subject matter covered by the module. This is in order to satisfy the Boards that you are capable of meeting the appropriate learning outcomes and is known as “**referral**”. The form of assessment will be determined by the Award Board, on the recommendation of the Assessment Board, as will the deadline for submission/period of the examination.

The Award Board may decide that along with a form of assessment you need to attend the classes for the module again. This may be because the module is

laboratory based, or requires specialist equipment or because your performance indicates that you would benefit from attendance. In such cases, where your timetable does not prevent you from attending, attendance is compulsory. If you are not required to attend, you will normally be required to attempt the re-assessment before the beginning of the next academic year. You must make yourself available to undertake such assessment as the Award Board requires at this time. If you do not meet the referral requirements determined by the Award Board at the time prescribed by the Award Board you will be deemed to have failed the module at that attempt.

The maximum mark awarded for a successfully completed referred element of assessment is a Grade Point 4 [7]. If your module comprises more than one element of assessment and the Award Board refers you in one or more elements, the referred element(s) will be recorded at a maximum of Grade Point 4 [7]; those elements not subject to referral will retain their original mark. **The overall module grade will be suffixed R.**

If you have **failed an Option module**, you may choose not to undertake the further assessment required by the Award Board, but to **replace** the failed module with another of the same or greater credits. Option modules can only be replaced with modules from within the same option group and which make the same contribution to the award level outcomes. You cannot replace a Core module.

The suffix + will be used to indicate that it is a replacement module and the maximum Grade Point awarded will be GP4(7). You should also read the glossary item on Replacement.

If I fail a module, can I resit it?

(i) If you made an attempt at your assessments at the first attempt:

You will only be guaranteed an opportunity to attempt a referral(s) **once IF, and only if**, you have made an attempt at the assessment(s) on the first occasion unless a claim for Extenuating Circumstances has been successful. If you fail to achieve a satisfactory performance in your referral attempt and are not awarded a compensated pass (see 1.5.5.2 below), then the module result will be deemed a Fail. You may, however, at the discretion of the Examination Board, be able to **retake** the module, except in circumstances where a GPN has been recorded for both the original attempt and the referral. In such cases, you will not be allowed to retake the module. Retaking a module means that you will have to undertake any elements of assessment attached to the module that you have failed. **The maximum mark for a retaken module is Grade Point 7 (4). The suffix K will be used to indicate that it is a retaken module.** If you fail one or more elements, your results will be treated as indicated in Section 1.5.5, except that retaken modules carry no reassessment entitlement. A module may be retaken on one occasion only. You should also read the glossary item on Retake.

(ii) If you did not make an attempt at your assessments at the first attempt

If you do not submit work or attend assessments at the first attempt, that guarantee of a referral is lost and the appropriate Board will decide whether or not to allow you a referral. In making its decision, the Board may take account of your engagement with that module.

If the Board does allow you a referral(s) and you do not take the referral(s) at the time notified to you by your Faculty/School, no further referral opportunity will be given to you and you may fail the award.

Option modules which have been awarded a Fail (i.e. where no reassessment entitlement remains) may be replaced or retaken as previously described where this is possible. However, if you have exhausted all referral/retake opportunities for all modules in a specific option group, then you will not be able to meet the requirements of your chosen award and will not be permitted to continue on that award.

Core modules cannot be replaced. If you are awarded a Fail for a Core module then you will not be able to meet the requirements of your chosen award and will not be permitted to continue on that award.

When can I take my referral(s)

In all cases, if you are allowed a referral(s), the referral(s) must be taken at the next referral opportunity. For most students, this will be in August immediately following your first attempt but will depend on the nature of your award and the timing of your assessments.

It is your responsibility to make sure that you know when you are required to resit.

1.5.5.2 Compensation

In certain circumstances, the Assessment Board may recommend to the Award Board that you should not be required to undertake further assessment of a failed element of assessment, but that the failure should be compensated.

What is Compensation?

Compensation is the awarding of credits for a failed module if you have demonstrated elsewhere in your modules your ability to satisfy the learning outcomes of your award.

Action of the Assessment Board

The Assessment Board has discretion to compensate failure of elements of assessment within a module, provided that the overall module grade is a pass (see 1.5.4 above). The compensated element will retain its original mark,

suffixed C, the overall mark will be based on the weightings of the different elements and will be used for classification purposes. This will be reported to the Award Board.

The Assessment Board may recommend to the Award Board that an overall module Grade Point of 2 or 3 [4, 5 or 6] in a module is compensated. **The final decision lies with the Award Board.**

Action of the Award Board

The Award Board has discretion to award the credits for a module in which a compensatable fail (ie Undergraduate GP 2 or 3; Postgraduate GP 4, 5 or 6) has been reported in a module. The result will be recorded as 4C [7C], but the original grade point will be used in calculating classification.

An overall module grade point of 0 or 1 [0, 1, 2 or 3] or N (a non-submission) may not be compensated.

It should be noted that some awards within the University are accredited by a professional body. These professional bodies may have regulations which supersede those of the University in terms of compensation of failure. Your award documentation will include details where this is the case.

Where no Assessment Boards have met at the end of a Teaching Block, provisional results may be issued but these are subject to confirmation by the Award Board when it next meets. Consequently provisional results may be altered as a result of confirmation by the Assessment and Award Board process.

How many credits can be compensated?

A maximum of **15 credits** may be compensated within a **Graduate Certificate**. A maximum of **30 credits** may be compensated within a **Graduate Diploma**. Partial compensation of a module (ie awarding some, but not all, of the credits associated with a module) is not allowed. Where more than 15 credits (Graduate Certificate) or 30 credits (Graduate Diploma) have been failed, no compensation may be applied. The Board may only award a compensated pass for a module once you have achieved 45 credits (Graduate Certificate) or 90 credits (Graduate Diploma).

The Award Board has the discretion to determine whether or not to award a Compensated Pass using the criteria outlined in this section.

Exceptionally the Award Board may refer to your previous attempt in determining the operation of compensation but only in cases where you have made an attempt at the reassessment. This decision is entirely at the Award Board's discretion and will be considered on a case by case basis. Alternatively, the Award Board may require the module to be retaken.

1.5.6 Review of an Assessment or Award Board Decision – how to request a review

Students who wish to request a review of an Award Board decision may do so in accordance with the appropriate **University Procedures for Review of an Examination Board Decision** as detailed in the University's Academic Awards Regulations.

1.5.7 Extenuating Circumstances – what happens next if my claim is upheld?

If, having submitted a claim for extenuating circumstances, your claim is upheld, the Assessment Board may take one of the following actions:

- i. confirm the grade achieved
- ii. refer the matter to the Award Board for decision
- iii. exceptionally raise the grade based on sufficient evidence of your performance elsewhere

In the case of i, ii, or iii above, you will be given the opportunity **either to accept the grade achieved or submit for further assessment in that module (or components of that module)** which you had claimed had been affected by extenuating circumstances.

If you decide to submit for further assessment in the module (or components of that module) which were upheld to have been affected by extenuating circumstances, and you obtain a **higher** grade than the original grade, the **higher** grade will be recorded. If you obtain a **lower** grade than the original grade, the **original** grade will be recorded.

If you have had your claim for extenuating circumstances upheld against a number of modules (or components of modules) you must decide which modules (or components on modules), if any, you wish to submit for further assessment.

You must make that decision by informing your home Faculty/School, within ten working days of the decision of the relevant examination board being notified to you, in writing, which module(s) (or components of module(s)) you have decided to submit for further assessment. A proforma for such purposes is available from your Faculty/School Office.

If you do not return the proforma within the ten working days specified, your home Faculty/School will assume that you do not wish to submit for further assessment. It is therefore your responsibility to abide by this deadline.

1.6 The Conferment of Awards

1.6.1 Eligibility for your Award

Once you reach the end of your Award, the Award Board will consider whether you have met all the learning outcomes and the credit requirements for successful completion of the award. If you have met the requirements the Award Board will grant you that award. At the same time they will also consider whether you should be awarded a Merit or Distinction.

If the Board has recommended a failure in any of your modules, the Award Board will determine the course of action for retrieval of those modules, as previously described. If you are to retrieve a failure by referral (or retake or replacement where applicable) you will not be considered for the award until that referral (or retake or replacement) is successfully completed.

If you have exhausted all referral, replacement or retake entitlements for a module, your module failure will be confirmed. This will render you ineligible for the award on which you are enrolled at this stage. The credits associated with successfully completed modules will be awarded to you.

1.6.2 Awards with Merit or Distinction

The Award Board will award you a **Graduate Certificate with Distinction** if you have achieved the following:

- A pass in all modules (ie no compensated fails or replacement modules)
- A grade point average of at least 12.5

The Award Board will award you a **Graduate Diploma with Merit** if you have achieved the following:

- A grade point average of at least 9.5
- A compensated pass in no more than 15 credits

The Award Board will award you a **Graduate Diploma with Distinction** if you have achieved the following:

- A pass in all modules (i.e. no compensated fails or replacement modules)
- A grade point average of at least 12.5

Staffordshire University's commitment to equality and diversity means that this policy has been screened in relation to the use of gender-neutral language, jargon-free plain English, recognition of the needs of disabled people, promotion of the positive duty in relation to race and disability and avoidance of stereotypes. This document is available in alternative formats on request. If you think we can improve the fairness of this policy, please contact the individual who has responsibility for its update.