

# Section 16F

Nottingham Trent University

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## **Quality Handbook**

### **Part E: Regulations**

#### **Section 16F: Common Assessment Regulations for Higher National awards *Results and classifications***

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**In accordance with Pearson's naming conventions, modules are referred to as units.**

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 These regulations set out the rules by which the University determines unit results and award classifications for Higher National (HN) awards with effect from the 2022/23 academic year. This sits within the broader NTU assessment policy which is articulated in the following sections of the NTU Quality Handbook and also the published Pearson specification.
  - a. Section 16: Common Assessment Regulations: Awards and Registration Periods
  - b. Section 15: Assessment
  - c. Section 17A: Notification of Extenuating Circumstances (NEC) Policy and Process
  - d. Section 17B: Academic Appeals Procedure
  - e. Section 17C: Academic Integrity Policy
  - f. Section 9: External Examining
  - g. Pearson specification relevant to the course (refer to Pearson website for award specifications)
- 1.2 The principles and regulations of assessment set out in the Quality Handbook and Pearson specification are designed to ensure that the University, its Schools and course teams have processes of assessment in place which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes of the award.
- 1.3 Assessment is always a matter of judgment, not simply of computation and regulation. Grades do not represent absolute values but symbols used to communicate examiners' judgments on different aspects of a student's learning. They provide information for a Board of Examiners' final decision on the student's fulfilment of the course outcomes and the achievement of the award standard. Course outcomes capture the learning and attributes developed by the course as a whole – which is normally more than the simple sum of its parts.
- 1.4 This set of regulations provides a framework within which to exercise this judgment so that students are treated with parity across the University's courses. However, boards have discretion to interpret the regulations flexibly for individual students with due consideration to the course outcomes and the award standard. The parameters within which this discretion can be applied are set out within the regulations.
- 1.5 Academic judgments cannot, in themselves, be questioned or overturned.

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- 1.6 Unless specific mention is made, the regulations do not distinguish between students on different modes of attendance.
- 1.7 Where indicated, the Board of Examiners (hereafter referred to as the board) and students must refer to the course specific documents for further details of the regulations for the course.
- 1.8 HNs are designed to promote a holistic approach to learning, teaching and assessment. Holistic assessment is when the academic evaluates student achievement as a 'whole', rather than breaking things down into separate components. For the HNs, this means that academics should not set and assess work only to consider Pass, then assess other work for Merit, etc. Rather, assessment activities should be designed that will allow the assessment of a student's achievement at Pass, Merit or Distinction using the learning outcomes as scaffold.
- 1.9 A good assessment will:
  - a. make clear what evidence the student must submit and the format, word count, length of the individual elements;
  - b. present a vocational scenario that provides a professional context in which the student will produce work;
  - c. use language that is clear and precise, both in defining the vocational scenario and in describing the evidence required;
  - d. make clear the range of levels of achievement (Pass, Merit, Distinction) through the use of the same or similar command verbs found in the assessment criteria;
  - e. clearly indicate the learning outcomes and assessment criteria that are covered by the assignment;
  - f. allow a student to achieve a learning outcome (or multiple learning outcomes) at any of the levels defined by the assessment criteria.

## Note

- For all aspects of this QH section, the Pearson specification should also be consulted in conjunction.
- All Pearson HN learning outcomes must be included and not amended.

## 2. Changes to the regulations

- 2.1 The regulations will be reviewed and updated periodically in line with developments in University policy and practice. There may be differences in regulations as they apply to different cohorts of students registered for the same award. Every effort will be made to inform students about proposed changes. Changes will not

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normally be introduced for implementation in the current year of study but would take effect in the following academic year.

- 2.2 Pearson periodically review the Higher National specifications and publish online. The University will be consulted with on updates to ensure of appropriate consultation.
- 2.3 Changes to the regulations are made after appropriate consultation. At University level, proposed changes will be discussed with staff who will be given the opportunity to comment on such changes. Students and external examiners will also have an opportunity to comment. Proposed changes may be modified in the light of feedback.
- 2.4 At course level, students and external examiners should be consulted on any proposed changes to the assessment regime which may affect progression and award requirements. Students must be kept fully informed as to any changes to the regime which affects them.
- 2.5 Where changes affect the material information provided to current and prospective students, the University will ensure appropriate and timely communication of these changes in line with Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) guidance.
- 2.6 The above processes apply to all award bearing courses.

## 3. Grading of award

- 3.1 All units are marked according to the Pearson specification grading system.

### Note

- For further details of the Pearson grading system please refer to the discipline specific Pearson specification.
- Student details and grade will also be recorded on Edexcel Online.
- The Pearson grading framework for HNs is built into the Student Record System which supports the board's decision-making in the normal way.

## 4. Governance

- 4.1 All award and unit results (including referral results) are considered and agreed by the board. The terms of reference and operating principles of the board are articulated in the NTU Quality Handbook Section 15: Assessment.
- 4.2 All of the assessed grades contributing to a unit or an award remain provisional until confirmed by a board.

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## Unit outcomes

### 5. Determining whether a unit has been passed

- 5.1 The grade(s) awarded to the summative assessment piece(s), is / are used to determine whether or not the unit learning outcomes have been achieved, and therefore whether the unit credits have been attained.
- 5.2 HN units and awards are graded Pass, Merit and Distinction, and overall unit grades are based on mastery of the criteria and are therefore not weighted.
- 5.3 Each unit has a set of learning outcomes articulated in the Pearson specification in a hierarchical way:
  - a. To achieve a Pass, a student must have satisfied all the Pass criteria for the learning outcomes, showing coverage of the unit content and therefore attainment at Level 4 or 5 of the national framework.
  - b. To achieve a Merit, a student must have satisfied all the Merit criteria (and therefore the Pass criteria) through high performance in each learning outcome.
  - c. To achieve a Distinction, a student must have satisfied all the Distinction criteria (and therefore the Pass and Merit criteria), and these define outstanding performance across the unit as a whole.
- 5.4 If a student does not satisfy the Pass criteria they will be reported as unclassified.

### 6. Compensation

- 6.1 Because courses are designed such that course learning outcomes are assessed in more than one assessment, a student who has failed a unit may be considered to have demonstrated the achievement of the same learning outcomes elsewhere. This can only be properly determined when students have completed an entire stage, although when extenuating circumstances apply, the board may need to use its discretion to determine the most appropriate outcome.
- 6.2 Compensation is restricted to a maximum of one 15 credit unit in any one academic stage.

#### Note

- Stages of HNs are defined by the level. The HNC is one stage at level 4. The HND has two stages, one at level 4 and one at level 5.

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## 7. Late or no submission

- 7.1 A student must submit work for assessment in the required form(s) by a specified time on the dates indicated in the Assessment and Feedback Plan. When students submit work after the specified time, the following rules will apply.
- 7.2 Where a student is taking a first attempt at a unit and submits assessed work after the submission date (and specified time) indicated in the Assessment and Feedback Plan, the work will be marked if submitted within five working days of the submission date.
- 7.3 Where a student is making a first attempt and submits assessed work by this second deadline (i.e. five working days after the submission date), the maximum grade awarded will be a Pass. Where the quality of the assessed work fails to satisfy the Pass criteria the unit will be reported as unclassified.
- 7.4 Students who have been granted a 'time extension' (see below and QH Section 17A) for the first attempt will have the same second deadline (i.e. five working days after the agreed extended deadline).
- 7.5 Where a student is making a first attempt at a unit and submits work after the second deadline (i.e. five working days after the official deadline), an unclassified grade will be awarded and examiners must only comment on the work for learning purposes and return it to the student with an unclassified grade.
- 7.6 A course may adopt a shorter timescale than five working days. This should be agreed with ASQC and indicated in the course handbook and other appropriate documentation provided to students.
- 7.7 Where a student is making a referred or repeat attempt at a unit (see section 10 below), they must submit work by the submission date and they will not be allowed a second deadline. Work received after the submission date without a 'time extension' will be awarded an unclassified grade. Examiners must only comment on the work for learning purposes and return it to the student with an unclassified grade.
- 7.8 A student who has upheld extenuating circumstances may be granted a 'time extension' to submit work between seven and, up to, fourteen calendar days after the submission date. Where a student is authorised to submit work after the submission date, they will not be penalised provided it was submitted within the authorised time extension (see also QH Section 17A).
- 7.9 For assessment events (for example examinations, including 'take and do' examinations) rather than coursework, where a student fails to attend an assessment event and does not have upheld extenuating circumstances, an unclassified grade will be awarded.
- 7.10 Where an upheld extenuating circumstance explains the lack of attendance at an assessment event, the University may allow the opportunity for the student to be assessed at the next most appropriate opportunity. Such a decision by the University must be ratified by the relevant board.

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## Note

- For specific details of the outcomes of claims of extenuating circumstances, see Section 17A: Notification of Extenuating Circumstances (NEC) Policy and Process.

## 8. Failing

- 8.1 A student who has not satisfied the minimum unit pass criteria, and who has not been granted a compensated pass, has failed the unit.

## 9. Reassessment

- 9.1 Following a failure of a unit, a student has the right to be reassessed on one further occasion.
- 9.2 For reassessment in a unit, the board will decide whether a student should:
- a. undertake a **referral** in the same academic year; or
  - b. **repeat** the assessment in the following academic year with full attendance and unit payment.
- 9.3 The maximum permitted number of attempts normally allowed for a student to pass a unit is two – first attempt and then reassessment.
- 9.4 A student may not demand reassessment in a unit that is no longer offered in the course. A board may, at its discretion, make special arrangements where it is not practicable for students to be reassessed in the same units and by the same methods as at the first attempt.
- 9.5 Referral is the normal form of reassessment since it is linked to the student's original unit studies and normally will not involve further attendance. As it is linked to the student's original unit studies it should take place in the same academic calendar unless there are sound academic reasons for not doing so. If a student fails the referred work, they may be offered the opportunity to repeat the unit with full attendance and payment of the unit fee.

## Note

- Module Assessment Panels (MAP) (see QHS 15B) will convene when necessary (e.g. when a student has not passed) to make timely referral recommendations for student progression.



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## 10. Passing after reassessment

- 10.1 The same rules apply to reassessments (referrals or repeats) as they do to first attempts when determining whether an assessment has been passed: students need to achieve as a minimum all the Pass criteria for the unit. When this has not been achieved, a board can consider compensation according to the parameters set out above.

## 11. Capping of grades after failure

- 11.1 The maximum grade for reassessment of a unit (both referrals and repeats) is a Pass.

## 12. The effects of extenuating circumstances

- 12.1 When a student has upheld extenuating circumstances and has been given an extension to complete the assessment, the delayed assessment submission is graded as normal and no further compensatory measures are required.
- 12.2 When the extenuating circumstances have resulted in the offer of a first attempt at the assessment at the next available opportunity, the outcome of this attempt will be decided in the same way as if there had been no extenuating circumstances.

## 13. The effects of academic misconduct

- 13.1 A student who has committed an academic misconduct may be referred in a unit in order to provide them with the opportunity to meet the learning outcomes. If a student subsequently demonstrates those outcomes, a Pass should be recorded.

## 14. Improvement of grades

- 14.1 No reassessment is permitted for a student to improve upon a grade above the Pass level required for the award. This includes situations where a student has an upheld case of extenuating circumstances and has a unit grade above a Pass grade.

## Stage outcomes

## 15. Stage result and progression to the next stage

- 15.1 When all units have reached a pass grade, the student is progressed onto the next stage.
- 15.2 A board may use its discretion to allow a student to enter stage 2 carrying a deficiency from a previous stage, normally of up to 15 credits. In some circumstances, a board may exercise discretion and allow a student to progress carrying more than 15 credits, provided it is reasonable to allow a student to do so

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given their overall academic record and the extent of the deficiencies to be retrieved.

- 15.3 At the discretion of a board, a student who is allowed to proceed to the next academic stage carrying a failure(s) in a unit may be allowed to make good the deficiency in the same failed unit but this should be treated the same as if it was a repeat unit.
- 15.4 Where a course follows a block delivery approach, then a progression board should be held on a quarterly basis, this board may allow a student to make good a failure(s) before the next progression board provided it would not overburden the student.
- 15.5 Where a course is made up of half-year units and a progression board is held after the first half-year, this board may allow a student to make good a failure(s) during the second half-year provided it would not overburden the student.
- 15.6 Course Leaders have authority to inform students of their provisional unit result and any approved remedial action to be undertaken during the second half-year.

## 16. Termination of studies

- 16.1 A Board of Examiners is authorised to terminate a student's studies for the following reasons:
  - a. the student has exhausted the total number of attempts, as set out in section 9 above;
  - b. the student has an overall poor record of performance, attendance, participation or commitment on the course and the board judges that there are no grounds to permit the undertaking of further remedial or repeat units;
  - c. major academic irregularities.
- 16.2 A member of the course team should formally counsel a student who has failed units where progress is giving cause for concern.

## Award outcomes

### 17. Classification

- 17.1 The Higher National award classification is graded the same as units as Pass, Merit and Distinction.
- 17.2 The following classification bands are adopted for Higher National awards:

Higher National (HNC and HND) Grade	Criteria
<b>Distinction</b>	All Distinction criteria for the learning outcomes are satisfied
<b>Merit</b>	All Merit criteria for the learning outcomes are

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	satisfied
<b>Pass</b>	All Pass criteria for the learning outcomes are satisfied

17.3 A board may exercise discretion for students who have extenuating circumstances.

## 18. Failure at level 4 or 5

18.1 Where a student fails a unit at level 4 or 5 they may still qualify for the award. A board may agree one of the following:

- a. Award a Higher National Diploma if a student has attempted but not achieved a Pass in one of the 15 credit units completed at level 4, and similarly if they have attempted but not achieved a Pass in one of the 15 credit units at level 5. Students in this case must have completed and passed the remaining units at level 4 and 5.
- b. Offer the option of either being re-assessed for a Higher National Diploma on one further occasion in the failed units or accepting a Higher National Certificate (provided the student has achieved sufficient credits and alignment to the Higher National Certificate unit specification). If a student opts for reassessment for a Higher National Diploma, the student will be capped for the failed units at a Pass. If a student fails some or all of these reassessed units, the student may be offered a Higher National Certificate (provided the student has achieved sufficient credits and alignment to the Higher National Certificate unit specification).
- c. Award a Higher National Certificate if a student has attempted but not achieved a Pass in one of the 15 credit units completed at level 4. Students in this case must have completed and passed the remaining units at level 4.
- d. Offer the option to be re-assessed for a Higher National Certificate Diploma on one further occasion in the failed units. ). If a student opts for reassessment for a Higher National Certificate, the student will be capped for the failed units at a Pass.
- e. Require the student to withdraw from the course with no further attempts.

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<b>Policy owner</b>
CADQ

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