

Postgraduate Taught Degree Regulations

Version 4.0

Effective from September 2026*

*This version of the Postgraduate Taught Degree Regulations applies to postgraduate taught students who commenced their programme of study on or after 1st September 2026. [Version 3.9 of the Degree Regulations remains](#) applicable to students who commenced their studies after September 2016 but prior to 1st September 2026.

The Postgraduate Taught Degree Regulations define the structure and requirements of the University's postgraduate taught awards. Students might wish to refer to these Degree Regulations to understand how their marks are taken into account and what happens when things don't go quite as planned (for example, how the compensation and reassessment rules work).

See [Undergraduate Degree Regulations](#) for regulations for Integrated Masters programmes.

Note: Faculty approved variances to the Degree Regulations will be described within the Programme Handbooks. Where they exist they will take precedence, for example, in order to comply with Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) or the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). All changes should be approved through the Variations to Degree Regulations process.

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A Credit and Award Framework

- All awards of the University of Manchester will be given on the basis of the accumulation of credit as mapped out in Table 1, which outlines the minimum credit required for an award, and the minimum credit required at the level of the qualification for an award. This table is based on the credit/awards and levels required by the national Framework of Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ):

Table 1: Postgraduate Credit and Award framework

Name of Award	Minimum credit for the award	ECTS Minimum credit for the award	Minimum credits at the level of qualification	ECTS Minimum credits at the level of qualification	FHEQ level
Masters (2 Year full-time)	360	180	240	120	7
Masters (1 Year full-time)	180	90	150	75	7
Postgraduate Diploma	120	60	90	45	7
Postgraduate Certificate	60	30	40	20	7
Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)	60	30	40	20	7

Note 1: The table refers to the levels as defined in the FHEQ ([The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies](#)). Level 7 of the FHEQ relates to a Masters programme.

Note 2: One ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) is equivalent to two UK credits

Note 3: Durations may differ for part-time courses, but the minimum credit for the award remains the same.

- On completion of study, students will receive an award based on the appropriate amount of credits accumulated, as specified in Table 1.
- The maximum period for completion of a Degree Programme is normally two years beyond the standard duration of the programme (see also [G23](#)).
- A student must accumulate the minimum amount of credit at the level of the qualification as specified in Table 1. In addition, students can take credit at a higher or lower level (up to a maximum of 30 credits) to accumulate the minimum credit for the level of the award, subject to the programme requirements.

B Title of Taught Awards

- A list of all titles of awards awarded by the University at all levels can be found in Regulation XI "Titles of Degrees and other Distinctions" in the University's General Regulations: [Title of Degrees and other Distinctions](#) .
- Degree titles will normally follow the conventions outlined below:
 - The title "X" signifies that at least two thirds of the credits of the programme relate directly to the subject X.
 - The title "X and Y" signifies that the distinct subjects X and Y each comprise of more than one third of the credits of the programme.

- c) The title "X with Y" signifies either:
 - i) that subject X comprises at least two thirds of the credits of the programme undertaken at the University of Manchester combined with a substantial period of study in subject Y (typically one academic year) away from the University; or
 - ii) that subject X is studied with subject Y, where Y is a distinct subject and comprises at least one quarter but no more than one third of the credits of the programme.
- d) The title "X (Y)" may be used to signify that subject X is studied with a related specialist subject (Y). The related specialist subject (Y) will comprise of at least one quarter of the credits of the programme. Titles of awards will not normally include more than two subjects, to which "with Z" may be added as a suffix for a substantial period of study (typically one academic year) away from the University where applicable.

C Accreditation of Prior (and Experiential) Learning (AP(E)L)

Note: 'AP(E)L' stands for the award of credits based on learning that has already taken place. AP(E)L credits can exempt a student from parts of their academic programme if they can show that their existing knowledge and skills meet the necessary requirements. This prior learning may have been formally assessed by an educational institution or gained through experience, such as paid or unpaid work. AP(E)L can only be approved for whole course units. For more details, see [Principles and Guidance for the Application of the Accreditation of Prior Learning \(AP\(E\)L\)](#).

- 7 AP(E)L will be allowed up to half of the total credits needed for the programme at the point of application for accreditation. On completion of the programme, at least half of the credits must have been awarded by the University of Manchester, this also applies to exit awards. Only credits gained at the University of Manchester will be used when determining compensation and reassessment maximums (see [section H](#)), and Degree Classification (outlined in [section K](#)). To apply for AP(E)L, evidence of prior learning must date from within 5 years of the application.
- 8 Students with AP(E)L credits can receive an exit award if: their performance at the University of Manchester satisfies the award requirements in [Table 1](#); and at least half of the credits have been awarded by the University of Manchester.
- 9 Schools can stipulate when AP(E)L is not allowed due to Professional Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements.

D Rescinding Awards

- 10 Students exiting with a Postgraduate Diploma (or Postgraduate Certificate) may be permitted to rescind this award and complete a Masters (or Postgraduate Diploma) by achieving the appropriate further component(s) of the programme providing the following conditions are met:
 - a) The rescinding occurs within five years of the award, subject to the original content remaining current and the programme still being available.
 - b) An overall pass was obtained for the Postgraduate Diploma (or Postgraduate Certificate) including any capped or compensated grades, at the appropriate standard, to assure admission to the Masters programme.

- c) The award the student wishes to rescind was not received as the result of academic failure as they have exhausted all assessment opportunities on the higher award previously.
- d) The award the student wishes to rescind was not received as the result of academic misconduct.

For further guidance on rescinding awards, please see the University's Principles on Rescinding (see Appendix to the [Guidance on Examination Boards](#)).

E Assessment and Credit Accumulation

Note: The pass mark for a postgraduate taught programme is 50.

- 11 If a student has exceeded the maximum credits allowed within the compensation zone (see [F17](#)), the Examination Board must specify which units will be compensated and which will be referred. For full time students, compensation can only be awarded when the full range of marks for taught units are available for the level of study. For part time students, compensation can only be awarded when the full range of marks for taught units are available for the year of study. Normally, higher scoring units will be compensated, and lower scoring units will be referred.
- 12 Where a student has not passed the required number of credits after compensation, referrals, or consideration of mitigation, the Examination Board has the following option at its discretion:
 - a) Award an Exit Award if criteria are met in accordance with Table 1.
- 13 The Examination Board has the right to refuse assessment or reassessment/referred assessment and exit a student from the programme if the Board has documented evidence that, (a) a student's work, attendance or engagement has been unsatisfactory, as outlined in the Programme Handbook, and (b) the student has been formally warned of the unsatisfactory work, attendance or engagement but has not shown significant improvement acceptable to the Board. *See Regulation XX – Work and Attendance of Students and the Policy on Recording and Monitoring Attendance (<https://documents.manchester.ac.uk/DocuInfo.aspx?DocID=20846>).*
- 14 Schools may have alternative assessment regulations where these are required by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) or the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). However, should students fail to meet PSRB standards, but have succeeded in achieving University standards then a 'non-accredited' alternative award must be awarded by an Examination Board (see [J34](#)).
- 15 With the exception of mitigating circumstances, all students will be given the opportunity to undertake the taught and research elements within the advertised programme duration, including the opportunity to undertake reassessment of taught elements. Reassessment of research elements may take place outside of the advertised programme duration.

F Compensation

Note: 'Compensation' is when an Examination Board awards the credit for a unit that is below the pass mark providing the mark falls within the Compensation Zone (known as a 'compensated pass', see [F17](#)), to allow the student to exit with an award without retaking the unit. This is known as a unit being 'compensable'.

- 16 Decisions on compensation for eligible units are made by Examination Boards (see [E11](#)). Schools can specify when a unit is not compensable or when PSRB/ESFA rules take precedence. Compulsory units cannot be compensated. This must be made clear to students in advance of commencing the unit, in the Programme and Unit Specifications.
- 17 The compensation zone for postgraduate taught programmes is defined as marks between 40 and 49.
- 18 Postgraduate programmes can be compensated up to 40 credits for Postgraduate Diploma/Masters and 20 credits for a Postgraduate Certificate (subject to the credit limitations set out in [H31](#)). This applies to any credits that have been taken at a lower FHEQ level.
- 19 Compensated units will keep the original mark which is used in the weighted average for the calculation of the final classification/ award.
- 20 Referred assessment is compensable provided the number of compensated credits allowed has not been exceeded (see [G22](#) for details of referred assessment).
- 21 Compensation can only be applied up to the maximum amount specified in [F18](#). Beyond this maximum, the Examination Board will decide on which reassessment can be taken.

G Reassessment

Note: Reassessment as a result of a fail is known as a 'Referral'. Reassessment on the original attempt as a result of approved and verified mitigating circumstances is known as a 'Deferral'. Deferrals may also be referred to as a 'first sit'.

- 22 When compensation cannot be applied to a failed unit, either because the overall unit mark is below the compensation zone, or the maximum amount of compensation has been exceeded, reassessment may be taken, within the credit limitations set out in [H30 to H32](#).
 - a) As a minimum, the reassessment must be designed to assess the achievement of the same intended learning outcomes as the original failed assessment, but does not need to be the same format as the original assessment. The reassessment will normally take place in the same academic year as the original assessment to enable the students to progress as originally intended. Schools are responsible for publishing dates of reassessment periods to students in an accessible place.
- 23 In their academic judgement, if the Examination Board deems that reassessment is not in the student's best interests, based on academic grounds, the Board has the right to refuse reassessment if it will cause a student's registration to exceed the maximum period for completion of a Degree Programme (see also [A3](#)).
- 24 An Examination Board may allow a student one attempt at reassessment per unit (for exceptions to this see [G27](#)). This principle does not apply to attempts with approved and verified mitigating circumstances. Deferrals are considered a first attempt and no cap is applied to the unit mark (see [section I](#)).
- 25 Referral pass marks will be capped at the lowest compensable mark for Postgraduate Taught students according to their programme or award, unless the previous mark was within the

compensation zone, in which case the original mark will stand. The capped mark is applied to the unit level mark, not the failed element.

- 26 When a student is referred and fails the referral, if the unit cannot be compensated, the first mark stands.
- 27 At the discretion of the Examination Board and in exceptional circumstances, students may be allowed to repeat whole units or the entire programme, as a third attempt, subject to teaching capacity not being exceeded.
- 28 When the referred assessment for a postgraduate student includes independent work such as a dissertation or project resubmission, they should be permitted a reasonable amount of time to resubmit up to a maximum of 6 calendar months from the date of the Examination Board. Students will be **entitled** to one supervisory session per calendar month during the resubmission period. The nature of supervision must be made clear to all students in advance of the resubmission period. This reassessment of a research/dissertation element does not contribute to the credit limitations set out in [H30](#).
- 29 Unless there are approved and verified mitigating circumstances, students achieving a mark of less than 30 for their dissertation or project submission are not permitted to resubmit and will be given an exit award in accordance with [Table 1](#).

H Compensation and Reassessment Maximums

- 30 Postgraduate programmes can be referred in up to half of the taught credits (see also [H31](#)); this includes credits on a Postgraduate Certificate or Postgraduate Diploma award. In addition to this, students may also resubmit the dissertation (or equivalent, see [H28](#)) on one occasion, subject to the mark restrictions set out in [G29](#). The combined number of credits referred and those compensated cannot exceed half the taught credits in total.
- 31 The total number of credits allowable for referral for a Postgraduate Diploma/Masters is 60, of which 40 can be compensated. For a Postgraduate Certificate, the total number of credits allowable for referral is 30 credits, of which 20 can be compensated.
- 32 For MRes programmes (with 90 credits of taught content and 90 credits dissertation or equivalent), the total number of credits allowable for referral and compensation combined is 45.

I Treatment of Deferral Marks

- 33 Where a student has taken a deferral (a resit as a first attempt, or 'first sit', due to approved mitigating circumstances), their original mark is annulled. The mark gained at the subsequent deferral is the mark that is taken forward, whether that is lower or higher than the original mark, unless:
 - a) The student fails the deferral and the original mark was a pass, in which case the mark will be capped at the pass mark for postgraduate taught students.
 - b) The student fails the deferral and the original mark was in the compensation zone, in which case the original mark will stand.

Deferrals are to be treated in the same way as any other 'first sit' and the Regulations applied accordingly.

J Exit Awards

- 34 Once a student has exhausted all the opportunities for referred assessment, they will be given an exit award in accordance with [Table 1](#), [A3](#), and as defined in the Programme Specification.
- 35 If a student decides to withdraw, they will automatically be awarded the relevant exit award in accordance with [Table 1](#) and as defined in the Programme Specification.
- 36 All programmes must have approved exit awards.

K Classification of Postgraduate Taught Programmes

Note: 'Borderline' classifications refer to when a student's overall weighted average for the degree falls within the boundary zone. See [Appendix A](#) for further details.

- 37 Decisions with regards to 'borderline' classifications for individual students should be resolved using the mechanisms outlined in [Appendix A](#).
- 38 Classifications for merit and distinction will be calculated using an average mark, based on the weighted programme as a whole (See [Appendix A](#), [Table A1](#)) (for exceptions see [K40](#)).
- 39 In order to achieve the award of pass, merit or distinction, a student must have accumulated the required minimum credits listed in [Table 1](#), and as specified in the Unit/Programme Specifications.
- 40 In addition, Schools may decide to add a further requirement to gain the award of Distinction: students must achieve an average of 70% or above in both the taught element and the dissertation (or equivalent). This should be agreed and applied consistently across a School. Approval should be sought at School and Faculty level and carefully articulated to the students within that School in programme handbooks. For joint programmes, the admitting School's rules will apply.
- 41 Students with credit awarded through referral or a compensated mark are eligible for the award of distinction, unless the programme has specific accreditation requirements which do not allow this.

L Posthumous and Aegrotat Awards

- 42 Information about the award of posthumous or aegrotat degrees can be found in the [Procedures for the Award of Posthumous and Aegrotat Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Degrees](#).

M Examination Board Arrangements

- 43 Within each academic year there are normally three available assessment opportunities: January, May/June, and August/September. It is expected that all reassessment of taught elements will take place in the academic year in which the assessment was first attempted. Exceptions can be made for research elements of a programme and programmes with 'non-standard' admissions cycles. Details of assessment opportunities for programmes with 'non-standard' admissions cycles must be published in the programme handbook.

- 44 There must be an opportunity at the end of every assessment period to make decisions regarding students' attainment on completed units. This is usually known as a Moderation Board (see [Guidance on Examination Boards](#) for further details).
- 45 Examination Boards will take place at appropriate points in each academic year, overseen by an External Examiner. Exceptions can be made for programmes with 'non-standard' assessment cycles.

Appendix A: Postgraduate Degree Classification Scheme

This scheme should be used in conjunction with 'Table 1 of the Postgraduate Taught Degree Regulations' (see [section A](#)). Table 1 has been extracted from the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, and students must meet the credit requirements of Table 1, prior to the classification being calculated, using the thresholds and boundaries below:

Weightings

Postgraduate degree classification for the award of merit and distinction are based on the weighted average mark across the programme calculated to one decimal place, where marks for individual course units are recorded as whole numbers (see [section K](#)).

Stage 1: Classification Thresholds and Boundaries

The following boundaries inform classification when the total points fall below a classification threshold.

Table A1 Postgraduate Masters degree classification and boundary zone using total points 0-100 mark range:

PG Degree classification- Masters based on 180 credits	Classification thresholds: average mark (mark range 0 to 100)	Boundary zone average	Boundary Zone K40 (separating the average for taught and research elements)
Distinction	70.0	68.0 to 69.9	Either taught or research is 70.0 or above, while the other is between 68.0 to 69.9
Merit	60.0	58.0 to 59.9	NA
Pass	59.9 (or less if the student has compensated credit and providing the credit requirements of Table 1 in the 'Credit and Award Framework' have been met.)	NA	NA

Consideration of postgraduate masters students within the boundary zone by mark distribution

The following process applies to reach decisions on borderline cases:

After allowances have been made for mitigating circumstances, a student whose total mark at the first assessment is within the boundary zone specified in Table A1, must be awarded the higher degree classification as long as the following criterion is satisfied (see also notes on AP(E)L):

- two thirds of the credits are equal to/ or higher than the final award¹

Where Schools have decided to implement [K40](#), after allowances have been made for mitigating circumstances, decisions at the boundary of a 'Distinction', should be made as long as all the following criteria are satisfied (see also notes on AP(E)L, [section C](#)):

- For consideration of a student in the boundary zone for the award of distinction, the student should have passed either the 'taught' **or** 'research' element at the level of a 'distinction' and the other element must be in the boundary zone, as defined in Table A1 (see Stage 1: Classification Thresholds and Boundaries above).
- Either the overall average is equal to or above 70.0; or two thirds of the credits are equal to or above 70.0.

Please also see [K40](#) for details of arrangements for programmes with specific accreditation requirements.

Stage 2: Classification Review

Note: Classification review is a process that introduces a level of academic judgement to determine a student's final degree classification when their weighted average at the first assessment falls within the boundary zone, but they do not automatically meet the criteria to be awarded the higher classification. Guidance and examples for applying classification review appropriately can be found in the Guide to the Taught Degree Regulations.

If a student is in the boundary zone, or higher*, and does not satisfy the additional criteria, Schools may apply a further stage of 'Classification Review', with decisions supported by an External Examiner. The process of 'Classification Review' should not change unit marks and can only influence the classification awarded.

* Examination Boards may use Classification Review to consider a programme average which is higher than the boundary average, but where the student has not met the requirements for classification outlined in [section K](#) of the Regulations.

Further guidance on Classification Review can be found in the [Guide to the Taught Degree Regulations](#).

Taught Masters Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate degree classification scheme using 0-100 mark range

Award of Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate certificate degree is based upon credit accumulation using a pass mark of 50% (see Table 1 for credit requirements – [section A](#)) for which there is no classification other than pass/fail.

¹ Excluding AP(E)L and non-numeric pass/fail units; where there are AP(E)L or non-numeric pass/fail courses, mark distribution should be calculated based on two thirds of the remaining credits.

Version amendment history: Postgraduate Taught Degree Regulations		
Version	Date	Reason for change
3.0	May 2012	Creation of 'New Degree Regulations'.
3.1	February 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removal of wording from paragraph 26 "When a student is referred and fails a unit <i>that was previously in the compensated zone</i>, the first mark stands."
3.2	April 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New paragraph regarding the use of Aegrotat degrees. Additional wording to paragraph C7: ""The rescinding occurs within five years of the student's initial registration on their original programme, subject to the programme still being available". Removal of the word 'just' from paragraph F25: "The capped mark is applied to the unit level mark, not (just) the failed element." Amending of wording under 'Consideration of postgraduate masters students within the boundary zone by mark distribution'. The original wording that students whose "total mark at the first assessment is within the boundary zone specified...must be considered for the higher award." was amended to state that students must be "awarded the higher degree classification" as long as the specified requirements are satisfied.
3.4	September 2016	<p>Version 3.3 was approved by Senate in February 2016 but superseded by version 3.4 before they were implemented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insertion of a new paragraph (F25) to specify that a student achieving a mark of less than 30 for a dissertation will not be permitted to resubmit. Changing of the term 'mark review' to 'classification review'. Insertion of additional details relating to rescinding of awards (in a renamed section C: Accreditation of Prior Learning – AP(E)L / Rescinding, page 3). In order to match up timescales with those found in current APEL guidance, rescinding of PGT awards can now take place if the rescinding occurs within five years of the award (rather than within five years of the student's initial registration on their original programme).
3.5	September 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refusing assessment/referred assessment, paragraphs D11 and F22: clarification that Examination Boards can refuse assessment, as well as referred assessment, on the grounds of a student's work and attendance. Use of 20 credit units, paragraph E16: the maximum number of credits which can be compensated is up to 40 credits at Masters level (rather than up to 30 credits) and up to 20 credits for a PG Certificate. Section I on Aegrotat Degrees was updated to reference both 'Aegrotat' and 'posthumous' degrees.
3.6	February 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update to the maximum number of credits for AP(E)L onto PG Cert programmes for 20 credit units for UMW programmes. New section combining Compensation and Reassessment maximums. Confirmation that, when considering students within the boundary zone by mark distribution, AP(E)L and non-numeric pass/fail units should not be included in the two thirds of the remaining credits. An addition was made to the disclaimer printed in the footnote of all pages to state that Degree Regulations

		<p>variances may be in place in order to comply with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), in cases relating to Degree Apprenticeships (in addition to PSRBs).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June 2020 – updated link to General Regulation in paragraph B4.
3.7	October 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates to section J: Posthumous and Aegrotat Degrees, to refer to new Procedures for the Award of Posthumous and Aegrotat Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Degrees.
3.8	October 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of a new section H: Treatment of deferral marks. • Amendment of paragraph I38 (new J39 in this version, relating to students being able to be awarded a distinction) if they have credits awarded as a result of referrals or compensation, unless there are programme specific accreditation requirements which do not allow this
3.9	April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates to Appendix A: Postgraduate Degree Classification Scheme under the section on 'Consideration of postgraduate masters students within the boundary zone by mark distribution' to remove references to all course units having to have been passed at first attempt, when considering students in the boundary zone for the award of Distinction. This was to tie in with the update made in October 2022 in paragraph J37
4.0	October 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprehensive review and restructure. • Introduction of a maximum period of registration of two years beyond the standard programme duration- see A3 and G23. • Introduction of a new Section B, Title of Taught Awards'. This information was previously held in the Guide to the Taught Degree Regulations. • C7 outlines an increase from one-third to up to half of the number of credits for the award that can be considered for Accreditation of Prior (and Experiential) Learning. • Standardisation of pass marks at level 7. The pass mark for all postgraduate taught programmes is now 50 (see Section E note). This will apply to new entrants from September 2026 only. • Introduction of D11 that states when a student exceeds the compensation allowance, the Examination Board must determine which units will be compensated and which will be referred. • Update to E14 to stipulate that students who do not meet the requirements of a professionally accredited degree but do meet University standards must be awarded a non-accredited degree. • Clarification added to E15 to confirm that students must be given the opportunity to commence all credits within the specified programme duration. • Stipulation added to J36 that all programmes must have approved exit awards. • Addition to G28 to set out the minimum requirements for supervision during the resubmission period of the research component.
4.1	March 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Minor amendment to clarify I33, the treatment of deferral marks, and to bring in line with the treatment of referral marks. Students who originally passed the assessment but subsequently fail the deferral will have their mark capped at the lowest compensable mark. For students who fail the deferral, but the original mark was in the compensation zone, the original mark will stand.</u>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minor amendments to Section B, Title of Taught Awards, to clarify that the award title "X with Y" should be used for distinct subjects, and "X(Y)" should be used when Y is a related specialist subject of X. In addition, a minor amendment to B6cii to remove the stipulation that the distinct subject must be reflected in the dissertation component and one taught unit. Minor amendment to B6d to remove the upper credit threshold for the specialist subject and retain only a minimum of one quarter of the programme.
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Policy owner:	Head of Student and Academic Services
Lead contact:	Teaching and Learning Manager Taught Programme Enhancement, Division of SAS <i>For any queries or questions relating to this document, please direct your email to teaching-policy@manchester.ac.uk</i>