

Academic Protocol 2 Taught Master's Degrees

Academic Year 2009-2010

Academic Protocol 2

Taught Master's Degrees

This document should be read in conjunction with the Academic Regulations approved for the taught Master's degree scheme of study in question.

Entry

- 1 The University provides in a separate Academic Protocol a list of approved universities/institutions whose initial degrees are recognised by the Academic Board as being of a standing equivalent to its own initial degrees, together with a list of those non-graduate qualifications which will permit entry to candidature for a higher degree of the University.

A special recommendation for the admission of a candidate who does not possess a recognised entry qualification must be made by the partner institution concerned to the University before the candidate's proposed scheme of study is due to begin.

Candidatures for taught Master's degrees and for the degree of MPhil may be approved on behalf of candidates who possess relevant and responsible work experience. Such candidatures must satisfy the University's Protocols for the Matriculation of Non-graduate entrants, and the University must be satisfied that the candidate is of the required academic standard to complete the scheme of study proposed.

Scheme Structure

- 2 Candidates may qualify for a Master's Degree by Examination and Dissertation after pursuing an approved taught scheme of study on a full or part-time basis. A scheme shall comprise two distinct parts: Part One, the taking of written examinations (or some alternative form of assessment) and Part Two, the submission of a dissertation (or approved equivalent), to the satisfaction of the examiners and the University.

Credit Transfer

- 3 Credit Transfer is permitted in respect of modular schemes of study up to overall limits established by Regulation. In some cases it may also be possible for the partner institution to seek approval from the University for limited Credit Transfer in respect of non-modular schemes. Further information on the credit transfer process under the modular system may be obtained from the University's separate CAT Scheme, copies of which are available upon request.

Assessment

- 4 Part One comprises assessments of an advanced nature set on the taught element of the scheme of study. Assessments may take the form of a series of unseen written examination papers or, with the agreement of the external examiner/s and the approval of the University, an alternative form of assessment such as set projects or prescribed coursework, or a combination of any of these. For Modular Master's schemes, Part One shall consist of a series of modules, which may be examined using various forms of assessment and in accordance with an examination timetable laid

down by the relevant Examining Board. Part Two will take the form of a dissertation (or an approved equivalent).

- 5 Candidates shall be assessed at the partner institution at which they have pursued the scheme of study save that, in exceptional circumstances, candidates may, with the approval of the Vice-Chancellor, sit for a written examination at another institution or, under approved conditions, at a place other than another institution. Approval may be given provided that satisfactory arrangements can be made for the examination by the Superintendent of Examinations concerned and that any expense incurred will be borne by the candidate. In no case may candidates take a practical examination at any institution other than the institution at which they have pursued the scheme of study. A practical examination for the purpose of this paragraph shall be deemed *not* to include teaching practice or similar placements.
- 6 All candidates - including those re-sitting examinations - shall be informed by the partner institution in writing at the beginning of the relevant session of the methods of assessment to be used for Part One of the degree, including deadlines for the submission of pieces of assessed work.
- 7 A student requiring adjustments for his/her assessments shall submit a written application, in the first instance, to the nominated officer in the institution concerned. The officer will consult the Superintendent of Examinations by a time-limit to be specified by the institution. The application must be supported by documentary evidence. The nominated officer, or Chair of the Examining Board may, in consultation with the Superintendent of Examinations, disregard requests for special provision if not supported by appropriate documentary evidence. Good practice guidelines on such provision are attached in the Appendix to this document.
- 8 Candidates with physical impairments which mean that they are unable to write may answer papers by means of an amanuensis or by other appropriate means. Any amanuensis or equipment shall be selected by the Superintendent of Examinations in consultation with the Head of Department. If a word processor or similar apparatus is to be used, a new disc should be issued at the start of each examination. The examination shall in any case be conducted in a separate room under the superintendence of a nominated invigilator.
- 9 If the nominated officer referred to above agrees that a student should receive an adjustment to his/her assessments, the application (supported by copies of the documentary evidence provided) shall be forwarded to the Superintendent by a time-limit to be specified by the Institution. In the case of candidates with dyslexia, a report which is dated within three years of the date of entry of the candidate to the scheme of study must be received from a qualified psychologist experienced in working with dyslexic adults or from someone with a qualification from a professional training course involving assessing adults with dyslexia.
- 10 Any candidate who is following a scheme of study of the University of Wales may choose – regardless of whether the main language of assessment of the scheme in question is Welsh or English – to submit examination scripts or assessed work in either Welsh or English. A candidate who wishes to be assessed in a language (ie. either Welsh or English) which is not the main language of tuition/assessment for the scheme concerned is required to notify the institution Registrar by the time-limit laid down by the Institution concerned.

The Superintendent (or nominee) shall liaise appropriately regarding:

- the provision of question papers through the medium of Welsh;
- the necessary arrangements, which must be by the external examiner(s), for the translation and/or marking of scripts in time for the inclusion of candidates' results on the official Notification of Results form;
- the engagement of a suitable person or persons to act as advisory examiners or (at an approved fee) as translators.

Pass-marks/Distinctions

- 11 Examiners are asked to bear in mind, when awarding marks to candidates upon completion of Part One of a modular scheme, that the modular pass-mark is 40%. The overall pass-mark for Part One is also 40%; examiners will be aware that a mark of 40% at CQFW Level 7 (former HE Level M) will indicate a standard of work necessarily in excess of that indicated by a similar mark achieved at a less advanced Level.
- 12 When introducing the formula which regulates eligibility for the award of a degree with Distinction, the Academic Board was concerned to permit candidates who had been more successful in Part Two than in the examined component – Part One – to be eligible for a Distinction overall provided that the aggregate mark obtained is 70% or greater. It follows therefore that candidates achieving a mark of 70% or greater in Part One, but 69% or lower in Part Two cannot be considered eligible for a Distinction overall.

The following may be of assistance when considering eligibility of a candidate for the award of a Master's degree with Distinction:

Part One mark	Candidate is eligible for the award of Distinction:
65%	where the Part Two mark is 75% or greater;
66%	where the Part Two mark is 74% or greater;
67%	where the Part Two mark is 73% or greater;
68%	where the Part Two mark is 72% or greater;
69%	where the Part Two mark is 71% or greater;
70%	where the Part Two mark is 70% or greater;

Note: candidates who have failed the dissertation element at their first submission are not permitted to be eligible for the award of a Distinction subsequently.

- 13 The eligibility or otherwise of a candidate for an award with Distinction must be stipulated clearly on the examination result form (NoRF) for Part One of the scheme and on the result/report form for Part Two. Where a candidate has been reported as 'PE' in respect of Part One (see below) it may be necessary for his/her eligibility for a

Distinction overall to be calculated prior to the return of the examination result form to the University Registry.

Where a candidate has been granted exemption from part of the scheme under credit transfer arrangements, the Examining Board may, depending on the policy of the Institution concerned, obtain an assessment of the standard of the work completed by the candidate prior to his/her transfer, in order to arrive at an overall percentage mark or equivalent grade for the relevant part of the scheme.)

Time-limits

- 14 University time-limits for the completion of a Master's Degree are as prescribed in the Regulations. An institution may however set an earlier date for the submission of dissertations; any work submitted after this date shall not be examined and the candidate will be regarded as having failed by non-submission. Such a candidate may be permitted, on payment of a fee, to submit on one occasion only, within a period of twelve months from the original institutional deadline.

A candidate who is unlikely to be able to make a first submission within the deadline stipulated should not be advised to either fail to submit by the due date or to make an incomplete submission simply to obtain the 'additional' re-submission period. Instead, consideration may be given to the eligibility – or otherwise – of the candidate for a possible extension to the time-limits. The paragraph below describes this process in detail.

- 15 The University of Wales expects that candidates will submit their Part Two work within the prescribed time-limit, and a candidature shall lapse where the submission has not been made within the University's time-limits. Notwithstanding, a candidature may be suspended, or a time-limit extended, on an exceptional basis, on compassionate grounds, or in case of illness, serious domestic difficulty or because of exceptional professional commitments which can be demonstrated to have affected the candidate adversely. A full and reasoned case, supported by appropriate, satisfactory, medical or other independent evidence, as detailed below, must be put together for consideration:

- in the case of candidates requesting an extension on compassionate grounds, satisfactory evidence must be made available in support of the case; a clear statement must also be supplied, showing that the department concerned has evaluated the candidate's situation that it considers the requested extension to be appropriate. Such a statement will, wherever possible, follow direct contact between candidate and department.
- in the case of candidates who cite exceptional professional commitments, the request must be accompanied by written confirmation and description by the employer of the exceptional workload borne by the candidate.
- in cases which arise as a result of illness:
 - (i) satisfactory medical evidence must be supplied. (The extent and nature of the illness as described in the certificate are invaluable in assessing the case.)

- (ii) a clear statement must be supplied, showing that the department concerned has evaluated the situation and that it considers the requested extension to be appropriate. Such a statement will, wherever possible, follow direct contact between candidate and department.

- 16 Applications for suspensions/extensions must be routed via the candidate's supervisor and Department to the institution Registry. Institutions are required to submit requests to the University in respect of all extensions sought, together with supporting evidence/reasons, in order that they may be considered for approval by the Academic Board.

Part One : Progression, Failure and Retrieval

- 17 The University will issue to Convenors an examination result form (NoRF). Using this form, and the appropriate codes, Convenors are asked to indicate alongside the name of each candidate whether he/she:

PP	has passed the examination (Part One) and may proceed to Part Two;
PD	has passed the examination (Part One) at Distinction level (if applicable) and may proceed to Part Two;
PE	has passed the examination (Part One) and may proceed to Part Two with a mark in excess of 65 % (i.e. eligibility for a Distinction remains if the mark gained subsequently in Part Two is sufficiently high – see paragraph 14 above.)
PN	may be awarded a University Postgraduate Diploma (if applicable) and may proceed to Part Two;
UD	may be awarded a University Postgraduate Diploma (if applicable);
CD	may be awarded an Institution Diploma (if applicable);
AB	was absent, or has further examinations or re-sits to take, including deferrals or referrals;
FA	has failed Part One outright (i.e. has no (further) opportunities to retrieve failure).

- 18 A meeting of the examiners shall be held to determine the results of candidates in the examination component of the degree (Part One) and, in particular, to decide which candidates may proceed to Part Two. For this purpose the Examining Board shall consist of the following:
- .1 A Chair, who will be appointed according to the policy of the Institution concerned. The Chair is required to chair any oral examination which may be held.

- .2 The external examiner appointed on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor to assess the candidate's dissertation.
 - .3 An internal examiner appointed by the Chair of the Examining Board.
 - .4 Advisory examiners (where appropriate).
- 19 The appointment of external examiners for taught Master's degree schemes is governed by the University's *Code of Practice for External Examiners*. Copies of this document are sent to all external examiners at the time of appointment but are available otherwise from the University or Institution Registry, or may be viewed via the University's website.
- 20 A candidate may, with the Institution's approval, begin supervised or unsupervised preparatory work on Part Two prior to completion of Part One, but may not submit work for examination unless and until Part One of the scheme has been passed.
- 21 A candidate following a non-modular scheme of study leading to the award of a Master's degree who is unable to proceed to Part Two may be awarded a University Postgraduate Diploma upon successful completion of Part One.

A candidate who has pursued a taught scheme of study for which a University Postgraduate Diploma may be awarded who subsequently either fails to submit a dissertation within the prescribed time-limit or submits a dissertation which is not approved by the examiners may also be recommended for the award of the relevant University Postgraduate Diploma. Such awards of Diplomas may be backdated to the date upon which the candidate completed Part One.

Part Two: Assessment, Failure and Retrieval

- 22 Part Two of a Master's degree scheme will take the form of a dissertation except where an alternative form of assessment has been approved by the University in respect of the scheme in question. Candidates who have qualified to submit for Part Two should be advised to follow the Notes of Guidance for Candidates issued by the University together with the Notice of Candidature form, and are required to comply with the relevant University Regulations.
- 23 Except where specified to the contrary, a dissertation or approved equivalent submission should not exceed 20,000 words (excluding Appendices and genuine footnotes).
- 24 The University Registry issues to Institutions formal result/report forms for completion by the Part Two Examining Board.
- 25 Although it is customary for the same external examiner to examine a candidate for Part One and for Part Two, an independent examiner may be appointed to examine the dissertation (or approved alternative) where specialist knowledge or expertise is required.
- 26 *Arbitrating External Examiner*

When a dispute arises between the external examiner and internal examiner(s) the usual Report and Result Form should be marked by the Examiners and Chair so as to indicate that the Board had been unable to agree upon a recommendation.

In such a case it is within the power of the University to resort to another external examiner who shall be asked to arbitrate.

When selecting an Arbitrating External Examiner the Vice-Chancellor may take into account any written reports submitted by the members of the Examining Board and may also take into account – but need not be bound by – any nomination made by the original Board.

Upon appointment by the Vice-Chancellor, an Arbitrating External Examiner shall be given by the University a copy of the candidate's work together with the reports of the original examiners and the 'Report and Result Form' and 'Notes for Arbitrating External Examiners' which the University Registry shall provide.

When considering the candidate's work, an Arbitrating External Examiner may choose whether or not to refer to the reports of the original examiners (and if so, when he/she might do so). He/she may also choose to conduct a further oral examination and, if so, whether or not the original examiners may be invited to attend.

When the Arbitrating External Examiner has concluded the consideration of the work, the outcome should be communicated to the Chair of the Examining Board, in the first instance. The Chair shall arrange for the 'Report and Result Form' to be completed, signed and returned to the University.

Admission to Degrees

- 27 The process through which candidates are admitted to degrees is detailed in full in University Regulations. In brief, however, candidates may be admitted to their degrees *in absentia*, by decree of the Vice-Chancellor. This is an administrative procedure carried out at frequent intervals throughout the year.

For the purpose of the qualification, the examination must have been completed and the Examining Board's recommendation for the award of the degree - on the Combined Notice of Candidature/ Report and Result form - must have been received by the University together with confirmation that all fees have been paid and that the candidate has matriculated, etc.

Appeals

- 28 Candidates who wish to appeal against a decision of the examiners are allowed to do so under the terms of the University's Verification and Appeals Procedure. (The Procedure is distributed to candidates for University examinations at registration.)

Unfair Practice

- 29 It is an unfair practice for any act to be committed through which a person may obtain an unpermitted advantage for himself/herself, or for another. Allegations of unfair practice will be dealt with under the University's 'Unfair Practice Procedure'.

Aegrotat/Posthumous Awards

- 30 The University has established Regulations under which awards of aegrotat or posthumous qualifications may be made.

Contact

Copies of any of the procedures, Regulations or other guidance mentioned in this Academic Protocol may be obtained from the institution or from the University of Wales (address below) or from the University's website: www.wales.ac.uk/validation

Postal address: The Validation Unit
University of Wales Registry
King Edward VII Avenue
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NS

Telephone: (02920) 376 999

Guidelines For Making Reasonable Adjustments to Examination/Assessment Arrangements

Introduction

1. The variation of assessment arrangements is intended to enable all students to have the same opportunity to demonstrate the achievement of specific learning outcomes:
 - without compromising academic standards or affecting prescribed standards of professional bodies,
 - and taking into account the guidance in the QAA Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, Section 3: Students with disabilities and relevant legislation (including the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001).
2. At the same time, institutions may choose to develop a more inclusive approach by, for example, considering the use of alternative methods of assessment.

Guidelines

3. The Superintendent of Examinations may permit reasonable adjustments to the arrangements for the conduct of examinations for disabled students.
4. The Institution is responsible for taking all reasonable steps to identify the support needs of disabled students and shall publish clear information on the procedure and time limits for requesting reasonable adjustments. It is the student's responsibility to inform the Institution if he/she expects to have additional specific needs.
5. An application for reasonable adjustment shall be supported by appropriate documentary evidence. The disability may remain constant but the type of adjustment may vary over time. Requests shall normally be disregarded if not supported by appropriate documentary evidence. In the case of students with dyslexia, a report must be received from a qualified psychologist experienced in working with dyslexic adults or from someone with a qualification from a professional training course involving assessing adults with dyslexia.
6. The procedure and time-limit for making an application for reasonable adjustment shall be specified by the institution concerned. The student should be made aware that it may not be possible to process an application outside the specified deadline in time for an examination which has already been scheduled. The procedure shall direct the student to the first point of contact. Where a student's circumstances are known to be prolonged or permanent, the identification of specific needs may be initiated prior to the start of the session.
7. A range of reasonable adjustments may be considered at the discretion of the institution. These may be technical, for example, use of a PC, or may require a change in the location

of the examination or may be facilitated by the use of an appropriate Support Worker (allocated by the Institution). More than one adjustment may be required. In some cases, an appropriate reasonable adjustment may be to change the method of assessment in order to allow the students to demonstrate their ability; this will need to be agreed with the relevant academic staff to ensure comparability.

8. The adjustment shall depend on the nature of the disability and shall take into account the advice of Disability Services and relevant specialists, the student's preference and the nature of the assessment. Where there is professional body accreditation, these adjustments will need to be undertaken in consultation with that body.
9. The choice of adjustment may be limited by the available technical, physical and human resources.
10. The adjustment shall comply with the requirements for invigilation and security to ensure the effective conduct of the examination.
11. The Institution, on receipt of a recommendation for reasonable adjustments, shall decide whether or not to approve the application and the provision which shall be made available to the student. The decision of the Institution shall be final.
12. The institution shall indicate how and by whom the student will be informed of the adjustment which has been approved. The range of adjustments can be amended subsequently, where this is required to meet the changing needs of the individual student.
13. Depending on the adjustment provided, students shall be advised to familiarise themselves with its use before the examinations take place.
14. Students shall inform the Superintendent in good time if the adjustment needs to be modified or is no longer required.
15. The School/Department shall be notified of the adjustment which has been approved. The Examining Board shall receive a list of students with approved adjustments and no further allowance shall be made in reaching a decision on the performance of the student in the examination.
16. The student may request a review of the case if he/she feels that the agreed adjustment does not meet his/her individual needs. The procedure for requesting a review shall be specified by the institution.

Temporary Illness or Disability

17. A student who has submitted to the Superintendent of Examinations a medical certificate that he or she is unable through illness or accident to attend at the examination room but is fit to undergo examination may be examined in a special room if the Superintendent is able to make satisfactory arrangements for the examination and with the support of the School/Department. Other adjustments may be made at the discretion of the Superintendent.

Students whose first language is not English or Welsh

18. The use of foreign language bilingual dictionaries in examinations shall be determined at the discretion of the Institution.

19. Arrangements for the use of a British Sign Language (BSL) communicator and other adjustments shall be made in consultation with Disability Services or other specialised staff.

University of Wales Registry
King Edward VII Avenue
Cathays Park
CARDIFF
CF10 3NS

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