

Assessment Framework for Postgraduate Taught Students: Academic Year 2021-22

1. What is the Assessment Framework 2021-22?

Postgraduate Taught students graduating in the academic year 2021-22 may have faced Covid-related disruption to their studies in 2019-20 and 2020-21. At the point of writing this assessment framework, fewer disruptions to this academic year are anticipated. We will, however, keep the framework under active review as the year unfolds and we will take further steps to address any issues that arise as a result of Covid-related or any other disruption to studies.

This assessment framework comprises a package of measures and mitigations designed to ensure fair outcomes for the 2021-22 graduating cohorts, taking into account challenges faced over the last two years for those who were in education. The aim is to ensure students are not disadvantaged in comparison to previous cohorts and to students graduating from other institutions.

2. What is our aim?

In every decision we take about assessment and degree outcomes, we have to balance two things: the need to ensure our students are not disadvantaged by Covid, and the imperative to protect academic standards and the integrity of a University of Birmingham degree. Preserving academic standards ensures that your degree can never be questioned in the future by an employer, professional accrediting body or – if you choose further study – another university.

The package of measures and mitigations outlined below is specific to the 2021-22 graduating cohort. Note, there is additional information available for undergraduate students.

3. Mitigations applying to all Postgraduate Taught Graduating Cohorts in 2021-22

This year's graduating cohorts are in a different position to those of last year and the year previous to that. For continuing part-time students, this means that as long as marks are accrued as expected in this final year of study, we will have a full profile available upon which to consider further mitigations and base final degree classifications. For full time students, if the year proceeds without disruption, we will be able to graduate students on a full set of marks. It's important to remember that some mitigations have to be tailored to meet the requirements of external accrediting bodies, and this will be communicated locally if it applies to your programme.

Mitigations for the final examination boards for 2021-22 (summer and autumn 2022)

- Exam boards will consider the total marks profile of individual students, particularly in the case of borderline classifications, to ensure that any Covid-related disruption is taken into account. In each case, the Exam Board will assure itself that each student has met their programme learning outcomes and gained any core competencies required for professional accreditation.
- The impact of extenuating circumstances (ECs) will be considered as usual at Exam Boards; students are required to submit their reasons for requesting ECs and extensions as usual, and as much supporting evidence as possible should be supplied for extensions beyond 5 days. NOTE: If students wish to request a deferral of any assessments, they are also required to submit their reasons and as much supporting evidence as possible. Deferred assessments for taught modules will be scheduled for the Supplementary Period in August and they will take the same format as the original assessments.
- We will compare the module marks achieved by this year's graduating cohort with that of the last three years' cohorts to ensure you are not disadvantaged. If we find a variation beyond the normal variation between years, we are able to scale marks accordingly at the summer exam boards. In order to do this we would need the support of our External Examiners and in each programme we have to be certain we are in alignment with the requirements of individual professional bodies

4. Additional information for part-time students entering their final year in 2021-2022

- For students now in the final year of a multi-year part-time postgraduate taught programme, (for example, year three of a three year programme), the marks you have carried forward from each year relate to the Regulations in place at the time. The Regulations in place in each year of study will be taken into account at final award Boards when calculating the student's degree. This refers to (where applicable, depending on the cohort), the Policy on Fair Outcomes and Fair Assessments for PGT students "Fair Assessment Policy") published in January 2021, and (where applicable, depending on the cohort) the Framework for Assessment and Progression of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Graduating Cohorts ("the Emergency Framework") developed in spring 2020. This will be communicated locally if it applies to your programme. For PGT students graduating in 2021/22, if they were also studying in 2019/20 and/or 2020/21 the requirement to have achieved a mark of 40 or more in all taught modules does not apply for credits attempted in those years; the requirement to pass all taught modules to be awarded a

degree with Merit or Distinction also does not apply for credits attempted in those years.

5. Further measures and mitigations applying to all postgraduate students

- The majority of assessments have been designed and scheduled to be taken online, although some subjects will set in-person exams for pedagogic reasons and where particular assessments are required by professional bodies. Assessments will vary depending on the subject, type of programme and whether there are specific professional body requirements.
- Regular online group tutorials were introduced for all taught students for the first time last academic year and were appreciated by students. These will be continued in 2021-22, although the frequency varies by year. The aim is to ensure each student has quick and regular access to a tutor and a small group of peers. The tutorials are a forum in which you can discuss academic matters as determined by the programme running in your School and also any raise any issues that you feel should be communicated to your Department or School.
- We have retained the policy whereby no external evidence is required for a short extension to assignments of up to five days. Note, however, that all extensions and extenuating circumstances require a reason and students are required to produce external supporting evidence if the request is for longer than five days. For any students who are completing a major project or dissertation that would normally require lab access or in-person data collection, Covid-adapted project pathways have already been put in place if required. This will ensure you can progress and/or graduate successfully if we encounter further disruption.
- Your Student Reps continue to work closely with your Schools and Departments to ensure that any issues raised are addressed. Please make sure you know your local Student Reps. Remember, your Reps can also discuss issues with the Guild who have a remit to work with the University on your behalf. We have also introduced College level 'Student Forums' to offer another route for your voice to be heard.