



Marks and Standards Policy

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1. Purpose

This document specifies Atlantic Technological University's (ATU) policy for recording, aggregating and ratifying student performances in each academic year. We use this to determine student academic standing, eligibility for progression, eligibility for an award, and award classification. This policy forms part of our *Quality Assurance & Enhancement Framework* (QAEF) and should be read with other policies and documents within the framework.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all students registered on programmes approved by the University as an autonomous designated awarding body (DAB), as provided for in the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012 and the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Amendment Act 2019.

3. External Reference Documents

- Technological Universities Act 2018
- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012
- Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Amendment Act 2019

4. Policy

The sections that follow detail the *regulatory context* of assessment; their *general guiding principles*; the *assessment and examination process* at ATU; and the *roles and responsibilities* of individuals and university units / functions involved in assessment, examination and marking. This document also refers to *University procedures* in respect of examination and assessment. Procedures are documented separately and are accessible via the University staff and student portals.

4.1 Key Definitions

Programme: ATU provides programmes of study, the successful completion of which leads to a university award. Programmes are comprised of module(s) of study, which are organised into pathways for completion over the duration of the programme.

Approved Programme Schedule (APS): refers to the set of prescribed modules (together with their associated credits, teaching contact hours, pathway, and breakdown of assessment) that make up a full programme of study.

Stage: A stage entails a prescribed number of ECTS credits to be completed by a student. Programmes are organised into one or more stages delineated by academic year or calendar year.

Semester: A year may be further divided into two semesters.

Module: A module is a discrete unit of study. Each module carries a credit weighting in accordance with the European Credit Transfer & Accumulation System (ECTS). At ATU, all modules account for a minimum of 5 ECTS credits, or whole multiples thereof.

Exemption: Once the credits associated with a module have been awarded to a student, the student is exempt from any further assessment obligations in respect of that module.

Examination Board: refers to scheduled meetings of programme examiners which are independently chaired by a nominee of the Vice President for Academic Affairs & Registrar. The remit of the examination board is to consider and verify student performance in assessment and examination and to make decisions in respect of student progression and awards. Examination Board decisions are subsequently recommended to the Office of Academic Affairs before release of provisional or final results to students.

4.2 External Regulatory Framework

As part of the Bologna process, the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) was devised as a common reference framework to make qualifications more transferable and understandable across countries and systems.

Within this system, programmes are designed in accordance with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Irish Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) work within the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), which is aligned to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). Established in 2003, the NFQ is a 10-level system used to describe qualifications in the Irish education and training system. It describes what students need to know, understand and be able to do to achieve a qualification and it lists the main

qualifications awarded at each level. The NFQ also identifies pathways from one NFQ level to the next, promoting greater transparency and trust in qualifications.

Because of the formal alignment of the NFQ with the EQF, qualifications achieved in Ireland are internationally transferable. All awards made by Atlantic Technological University are included in the NFQ, and it is the responsibility of the University to ensure that students have acquired the standard of knowledge, skill and competence associated with the NFQ level of an award. ATU offers programmes of study leading to awards at Levels 6 to 10 of the National Framework of Qualifications.

Within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG 2015) is the benchmark for higher education quality assurance. ESG advocates that *'assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students, and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures'* (Standard 1.3). Within Ireland, Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is the state agency responsible for the external quality assurance of further and higher education and training. QQI issues quality assurance guidelines, approves providers' quality assurance procedures, and also monitors and reviews providers. Established through the Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) Act 2012, QQI requires institutions to establish quality assurance policies and procedures which are fair and consistent for the assessment of enrolled students, and which follow standards determined by QQI in the context of the NFQ.

4.3 Guiding Principles

The following principles underpin the assessment and examinations regulations detailed in later sections of this document:

- 1) Students are responsible for demonstrating their learning achievement.
- 2) Students will be provided with opportunities to demonstrate their learning which are fair, consistent, valid, and reliable.
- 3) Assessment should infer the level of attainment by the student of the module and programme learning outcomes. Assessment should also promote effective learning and teaching.
- 4) Examination Boards shall consider the totality of a student's overall performance in making decisions on progression, award eligibility and award classification.
- 5) All members of Examination Boards have a responsibility to ensure the integrity and success of the assessment process, and must always act in a fair, objective, and professional manner.

- 6) The conferring of all University major awards will be ratified by Academic Council.
- 7) Atlantic Technological University is committed to the review of this policy at least once during the lifecycle of each Academic Council.

4.4 Responsibilities of the Student

Students have obligations and standards of behaviour to observe in respect of registration, attendance, and assessment.

Registration:

As a student, you must:

- ensure that you are correctly registered on your programme of study,
- ensure that you are correctly registered on all mandatory modules and any elective modules you are pursuing, and
- ensure that you are correctly registered for examinations.

Attendance:

As a student, you should:

- attend all scheduled examinations (class tests, practical tests etc...),
- notify your Lecturer and the School / Faculty Office in writing of reasons for absence from class tests, practical tests etc. (supplying relevant documentary evidence, where appropriate),
- complete all assessment work as required, and
- comply with all requirements and instructions when submitting your work.

Assessment & Examination:

As a student, you must:

- familiarise yourself with the assessment plan for your programme of study,
- abide by any examination guidelines for an assessment or examination you are undertaking,
- familiarise yourself with the assessment criteria for each assessment / examination including attendance requirements, submission requirements, marking scheme(s) and any penalties relating to late submission and / or non-submission and /or non-attendance,

- abide by the procedure for notifying academic staff and / or administration staff for any impaired performance, as outlined in this document (section 4.11),
- abide by the University policies on plagiarism and academic integrity, and
- attend for a *verification of assessment* meeting if requested to do so.

4.5 Assessment

Assessment involves the application of processes and instruments to infer a level of student attainment. The goal of assessment is to provide opportunities to students to demonstrate their learning, particularly their achievement of the learning outcomes associated with a module or programme. The sub-sections that follow describe the examination regulations and standards for student assessment to ensure that these opportunities are valid and that they are administered fairly, consistently, and reliably.

4.5.1 Programme Assessment Plan

All programmes shall have an assessment plan for each stage of the programme.

With regard and reference to the approved programme schedule (APS), the assessment plan shall detail for each module of the programme:

- the number of assessments (assessment components or instances),
- the type of assessment (*e.g.*, written examination, practical examination, project, report, presentation, oral examination etc.),
- the nature of each assessment (*e.g.*, individual assessment or group assessment),
- the allocation of marks / weighting associated with each assessment component,
- the indicative dates for assessment, and
- the arrangements for repeat assessment.

The assessment plan for the stage / semester shall be agreed by the Programme Board in advance of the commencement of teaching and shall be communicated to all students within one week of commencement.

4.5.2 Form of Assessment

Student assessment is fundamentally concerned with validating and documenting student learning, and the extent to which programme and module learning outcomes have been

achieved. Standards for assessment prescribed in this document apply to all forms of assessment, regardless of when, where, or how it takes place.

There is merit in assessing students over the entire duration of a module's delivery period.

Coursework Assessment (CA) may take on a variety of forms and includes but is not limited to assessment of practical work, laboratory work, project work, reports, essays, dissertations, oral presentations, assignments, work practice, quizzes, and class tests. Coursework assessment takes place in tandem with the delivery of a module, oftentimes in a continuous fashion.

Final Examination (FE) often involves a time-limited invigilated examination after module delivery has concluded where a student may be required to answer questions and return a written or digital script / answer book for marking. Final exams can occur in person and / or virtually and may take several forms.

Repeat Assessment (RA) relates to assessment of a module, in whole or in part, at a time and date after the original schedule of assessment occurred.

4.5.3 Timing of Assessment

For coursework assessment, individual module lecturers, module delivery teams and the wider Programme Board should individually and collectively organise and schedule CA with due regard to the academic workload (teaching / learning and assessment) of the student from week to week. A Programme Chair and / or the year / stage coordinator may coordinate this activity, where necessary. The goal is to achieve a balanced CA schedule which is clearly recorded on the *Programme Assessment Plan* (see section 4.5.1) and communicated to students at the start of each module.

The range of dates for final examination sessions are set out in the Academic Calendar. The exact dates for each individual examination, including start time, duration and venue shall be published by the University Examination Office to the "Student Hub" web portal at least four weeks in advance of the start of each examination session.

Repeat assessment normally takes place immediately prior to the commencement of teaching in the new academic year. Where the 'repeat' is in respect of (previous) final examination, the repeat examination is organised and scheduled by the University Examinations Office. However, the 'repeat' of certain coursework assessment activity may be organised and scheduled by the module lecturer.

Programme Boards should be mindful of the practicalities of offering certain repeat / alternative assessment opportunities. For example, it may not be feasible for some

coursework assessment tasks to be repeated in the same format and / or timeframe as the original assessment. In such cases, through assessment re-design, it may be possible to offer an alternative 'repeat' assessment to students which is as reliable, fair, and valid as the original, notwithstanding that the original would be preferable if timing was not a constraint.

Finally, in some cases, it may not be possible for module or programme learning outcomes to be achieved without the student reattending a module. In such cases, the Examination Board may recommend that the student 'repeat-attend' the module to achieve the module learning outcomes. A student may not repeat an examination and / or coursework assessment in the scheduled 'repeat sitting' (usually Autumn) if a requirement of 'repeat-attend' has been stipulated as part of programme validation and included on the APS.

4.5.4 Verification of Assessment

Students are responsible for demonstrating the veracity of their learning. With respect to assessment tasks which are not invigilated, if a lecturer or examiner is of the opinion that work submitted does not demonstrate the student's own learning, or if further evidence is required to make a determination, they may postpone marking of such work and seek to verify it through an additional verification assessment. This may be an oral examination, or an alternative assessment, as determined by the examiner(s).

If a student is unwilling to cooperate with a verification assessment(s), no mark will be awarded for the work under query, and the matter may be referred for further consideration under the *AQAE006 Student Code* and / or other University policies.

4.6 Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Reasonable accommodation will be made to allow students with disabilities the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and competencies on an equal basis with their peers.

4.7 Student Performance in Assessment

The following sections outline University policy on student performance in assessment, and related outcomes.

4.7.1 Attempt (Assessment / Examination Attempt)

An attempt is defined as an examination sitting and / or submission of assessment components for a module for which a student is registered. If a student does not attend an examination or submit required assessment for a module for which they are registered, they will have forfeited an attempt.

4.7.2 Minimum Pass Mark

Unless otherwise provided for in the module descriptor and APS, the passing mark required to earn the credits associated with a module is 40%.

When the minimum pass mark is obtained in a module for which a student is registered, the student will be eligible to be awarded the credits associated with that module. The final mark for the module in the most recent attempt will be recorded in the student's academic record.

4.7.3 Pass by Compensation

Students not achieving the minimum pass mark in a module may be eligible to earn a 'pass by compensation' subject to the following conditions:

- 1) the marks of all modules in the stage are from first attempts,
- 2) no module mark is more than five percentage points below the minimum pass mark (Minimum Pass Mark *minus* 5% = Compensating Pass Mark)
- 3) double the deficiency of marks is available within the remaining passed modules (*i.e.* the sum of the marks in the passed modules must cover twice the shortfall of marks in the failed modules), and,
- 4) the number of modules that fall within five percentage points below the minimum pass mark cannot exceed one-third of the ECTS credits for the stage, or a total of 20 ECTS credits—whichever is less.
- 5) the application of rules 1, 2, 3 and 4 above enable the student to pass the stage in its entirety.

Example: In a stage comprising 60 ECTS credits, a maximum of 20 ECTS credits can be compensated, provided rules 1, 2 and 3 are met. Similarly, a maximum limit of 20 ECTS may be compensated in a 90 ECTS credits stage.

Unless otherwise provided for in the approved programme schedule (APS), a student meeting the above criteria will be deemed to have passed the stage "by compensation". Pass by compensation does not impact eligibility for an award.

Compensation rules will be applied automatically where student performances meet the eligibility conditions specified above.

4.7.4 Successful Completion of a Module

A student cannot reattempt a module or a stage for the purposes of earning a higher passing mark or a higher award classification. For the purpose of professional body membership and / or to satisfy professional exemption requirements, a student who has obtained an exemption in a module may be permitted one further attempt at a final examination in order to obtain a required threshold mark. The marks from qualifier examinations are not entered into the student record system and the award classification is unchanged.

4.7.5 'Must Pass' and Minimum Threshold Assessment Components

A module may contain several assessment components. Students are expected to attempt all components of a module. Failure to attempt a component will result in a mark of zero for that component. The overall mark for the module is calculated from the sum of the weighted marks awarded in each component of assessment and examination (based on the weighting in the APS). The final grade on the *Broadsheet of Results* is the numerical percentage achieved.

Some modules contain a component in which the student must obtain a specific mark in the individual component to pass the module overall. This may be the *minimum pass mark* (for example, 40%), a *minimum threshold score* (for example, 30%) or a *higher pass mark* (for example, 50% for professional accreditation in that module / component). Such condition(s) must be clearly stated in the module descriptor and in the special regulations of the APS. The module is failed if the required minimum threshold for any component is not achieved.

Where modules are failed, the marks for all assessment components should be available to the Examination Board.

Minimum thresholds and 'must pass' components should only be used in exceptional circumstances, *e.g.*, health and safety concerns. In accordance with the University's *AQAE003 Developing and Validating New Taught Programmes Policy*, where possible, modules should be designed using learning outcomes and assessment methodologies that minimise or negate a 'must pass' or 'threshold' or other restrictive requirements for individual assessment components.

4.8 Module Exemption

Once the credits associated with a module have been awarded to a student, the student is exempt from any further assessment obligations for that module. An exemption can be earned through successful completion of a module in one or more attempts. Additionally,

module exemption(s) may be granted to a student under the University's *AQAE009 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Policy*.

4.9 Progression

A student who has successfully earned all the credits in a programme stage is eligible to *progress* to the next stage of the programme. There are no pre-requisites or barriers to progression within a stage.

4.9.1 Progression Carrying Failed Module(s)

Within a programme, a student may be eligible for consideration to carry up to a maximum of 10 ECTS credits into the next stage if the student has:

- (i) successfully completed all other credit bearing modules (typically 50 credits) for the (current) stage under consideration,
- (ii) passed any pre-requisite modules in the current stage that lead to modules on the subsequent stage, and
- (iii) registered for the repeat attempt opportunity provided in that academic year.

If an Examination Board permits 'progress and carry' for a student, further progression is not possible until the failed modules have been passed (for example, a student cannot carry a failed module at stage 1 beyond stage 2).

Furthermore, failed modules cannot be "carried" from one award to another.

4.10 Borderline Performance

Borderline performance arises when a student's mark in a module lies close to the pass mark, or when the student's overall result lies close to the transition point between pass and fail or between award classification levels.

Following the confirmation of marks for each module in the stage, the Examination Board will have discretion to consider the totality of the student's overall performance in the stage, and on this basis to recommend that a borderline mark(s) be amended to allow the student to pass the stage or to re-classify an award.

Guiding criteria for the Examination Board in respect of borderline performance are as follows:

- (a) The overriding criterion to be applied by the Examination Board is that there is evidence that the student has demonstrated beyond reasonable doubt an entitlement to the result under consideration.
- (b) The Examination Board should exercise its discretion with prudence.
- (c) The Examination Board meeting should allow for full and frank discussion of all borderline cases prior to any decision being made. The Board should treat each case fairly and consistently.
- (d) In reviewing the totality of student performance for the purpose of determining an award classification, the Examination Board will exercise its discretion and consider either of the following guidelines:
 - (i) The student's overall average score is within one percentage point of the next graded award classification.
 - (ii) The student has marks at the next higher award classification in at least 50% of the credits contributing to the award.

4.11 Extension to a Deadline

Students encountering temporary difficulties during the academic year may request an extension to their coursework deadlines if certain circumstances impair their timely submission. Eligibility grounds and the procedure for applying for an extension to a coursework deadline are detailed in *AQAE031 Procedure for Requesting Extension to Deadlines*.

If an extension is not requested or not approved, a penalty will be applied to late submissions.

The *standard penalty rate* for unapproved late submissions of coursework is a 3% (minimum) to 5% (maximum) decrease in the grade multiplier for each calendar day the submission is late. For example, in respect of a 5% penalty, if a submission is one day late, the grade awarded is multiplied by 0.95; if two days late, by 0.90, and so on.

Programme Boards have the authority to set their own late submission penalties within the range. This must be approved by the Programme Board and clearly communicated to students in advance of commencement of teaching.

4.12 Impaired Performance

Students can request that certain matters which have impaired their performance be considered by the Examinations Board.

Impaired performance refers to circumstances which may have adversely affected a student's performance in an examination or assessment. It may arise, for example, due to bereavement, accident or injury, illness, or other unavoidable personal circumstances, but not because of personal culpability. The Examination Board shall have the discretion to consider impaired performance. The Board shall consider such cases in a fair, equitable, consistent, and reasonable manner.

The Board may decide to take no action, to increase the student's marks, or to *void* the student's marks and the attempt and to award a defer result.

It is the student's responsibility to apply for consideration of an impaired performance in advance of the Examination Board Meeting. The procedure for this is detailed in *AQAE026 Procedure for Highlighting Impaired Performance*. In addition to this, a member of the Examination Board can raise issues of impaired performance where they are aware of same.

4.13 Deferral of Assessment / Examination

A student may occasionally be faced with a circumstance over which they have no control, and which prevents them from completing a coursework assessment or a project, attending the final examination centre, or attending a placement practice. In such situations, the student may apply for a *module deferral* for the affected modules. If a module deferral is approved, an examination attempt is not used or recorded in respect of the deferred module(s).

The procedure, application details and eligibility grounds for applying for a module deferral is detailed in *AQAE032 Procedure for Requesting a Deferral of a Module or Programme*.

4.14 Student Consultation, Recheck, Review and Appeal

4.14.1 Consultation

After each examination session, Academic Units shall arrange at least one consultation day, on dates as set out in the *Academic Calendar*. Academic Units will notify students of the dates and arrangements for consultation days. All staff who had students undertaking an assessment must participate in the consultation days.

At the consultations, examination scripts and other assessed material will be available for inspection by students under the supervision of the lecturer. The responsibility for availing

of the opportunity to attend a consultation lies with the student. During consultation, assessment material may not be annotated or altered in any way and students may not remove items from the meeting room. Further information is detailed in *AQAE033 Procedure for Recheck, Review and Appeal*.

4.14.2 Recheck

As part of the consultation process, a *Recheck* shall be completed by the lecturer. Recheck entails the administrative procedure of checking and ensuring that all parts of all assessments have been marked and that no error occurred in the recording, collating or calculation of the final module mark. A student not availing of a consultation with a lecturer may separately request a recheck within 3 days of formal notification of final results as set out in *AQAE033 Procedure for Recheck, Review and Appeal*.

4.14.3 Review

During or following student consultation, a student can request a *Review*. Review involves the re-marking of all relevant assessment material (as determined by the nature of the review request) by an External Examiner or by another suitably qualified person. Review may be relevant when a student is not satisfied with the outcome of a recheck, or directly following inspection of scripts at the consultation session. A student may request a *review* within 4 days of formal notification of results as per current procedure, and in line with the grounds and deadlines set out in *AQAE033 Procedure for Recheck, Review and Appeal*.

4.14.4 Appeal

Appeal involves the consideration of exceptional circumstances relating to assessment excluding the content and marking of assessment(s). A student may submit an *Appeal* within 4 days of formal notification of final results, as per current procedure, and in line with the grounds and deadlines set out in *AQAE033 Procedure for Recheck, Review and Appeal*.

4.14.5 Ombudsman and the Ombudsman for Children

Anyone who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the procedures or processes of the University has the right to recourse to the Ombudsman and/or the Ombudsman for Children. The Ombudsman provides an impartial, independent, and free dispute resolution service.

The Ombudsman and the Ombudsman for Children Office function to protect the rights of individuals or groups by independently and impartially investigating complaints made about public bodies.

Normally, engagement with the Office of the Ombudsman and/or the Ombudsman for Children Office will only occur after the internal processes have been exhausted. The Office of the Ombudsman and the Ombudsman for Children Office typically expect any person making an allegation to have first taken reasonable steps to seek redress through the standard University procedures before being contacted. Additionally, the Ombudsman will typically, only deal with complaints once all existing internal procedures have been exhausted. The Ombudsman does not consider matters of academic judgment.

4.15 Repeat Assessment / Examination

Where practicable, in advance of the commencement of the new academic year, a repeat opportunity will be provided in respect of the assessment / examination of each module – see also section 4.5.3 of this document, Timing of Assessment.

4.15.1 Maximum Number of Repeat Opportunities

All students will have a repeat opportunity in respect of any module for which they were registered, and for which the module credits were not earned.

Unless otherwise provided for, the maximum number of repeat opportunities for a module is normally *three* further attempts.

The initial and repeat attempts must be taken within a timeframe of three academic years, after which the student does not have an entitlement to a repeat paper / assessment.

An equivalent module may be used if the original module no longer exists. The Head of Department will inform a student who applies to repeat a module no longer available, if such a limitation arises.

4.15.2 Repeating at the Award Stage

For classified awards at the award stage, a student who has gained exemptions but has failed a maximum of 10 ECTS credits will be permitted to repeat the failed modules (including modules in the compensation range), without adversely impacting the award classification subject to the following conditions:

- (i) the honours classification can be obtained following one (only) further opportunity to repeat and pass the failed modules.
- (ii) for award classification purposes, in respect of the module(s) that need to be repeated, the maximum achievable grade shall be capped at *PASS* for the repeat attempt and the capped grade shall be used in the determination of GPA and award classification.

then,

- (iii) where the GPA from (i) and (ii) above meets the minimum threshold for an honours classification, the relevant honours classification can be awarded. The transcript of results will reflect the capped grade(s) of the repeated module(s).
- (iv) where the GPA from (i) and (ii) above does not meet the minimum threshold for an honours classification, a *PASS* award classification is the outcome, with the results transcript recording the capped grades of the repeated modules.

Note:

- As the award classification is considered at the *end* of a stage, it may result in the capping of a previously advised provisional grade (for example, from a repeat examination sitting earlier in the stage).
- If a student has failed more than 10 ECTS credits, repeat marks exceeding the pass mark threshold are not capped, and the award is classification as a *PASS*.

4.16 Recording, Reporting and Withholding of Results.

Results shall be released to students in a data protection compliant manner. Results will not be issued to students who are not in good financial standing with the University.

Additionally, the University reserves the right to withhold results from students in the event of an unresolved dispute such as a disciplinary action or legal action.

4.17 Required Standard for a University Award

To be eligible for a university award, a student must satisfy all assessment requirements of the programme as outlined on the Approved Programme Schedule (APS).

4.18 Standard for Classification of a University Award

Taught programmes which lead to a major award are classified based on average overall weighted Grade Point Average (GPA percentage) achieved in the **final stage** of the award, or

as otherwise provided for on the Approved Programme Schedule (APS). A student who is deemed eligible for a major award will be eligible for consideration for the award classifications as outlined in the following table (subject to the conditions outlined in section 4.15.2 above, *Repeating at the Award Stage*, where relevant).

A student who has initially failed (but subsequently passed) more than 10 ECTS at the award stage of a major award is eligible for PASS award only.

		NFQ Level				
		6	7	8	9	
Minimum Threshold GPA	Award Classification					
				Postgraduate Diploma	Taught Masters	
	70.0%	Distinction (DT)	Distinction (DT)	First Class Honours (H1)	First Class Honours (H1)	First Class Honours (H1)
	60.0%	Merit Grade 1 (M1)	Merit Grade 1 (M1)	Second Class Honours Grade 1 (H2.1)	Second Class Honours Grade 1 (H2.1)	Second Class Honours Grade 1 (H2.1)
	50.0%	Merit Grade 2 (M2)	Merit Grade 2 (M2)	Second Class Honours Grade 2 (H2.2)	Second Class Honours Grade 2 (H2.2)	Second Class Honours Grade 2 (H2.2)
40.0%	Pass (PS)	Pass (PS)	Pass (PS)	Pass (PS)	Pass (PS)	

Table 1 – Classification of University Major Awards (Taught Programmes)

Research programmes leading to major awards at levels 9 and 10 of the NFQ may be either classified or not classified, as follows:

		NFQ Level			
		9	9	10	10
Minimum Threshold GPA	Award Classification				
		Structured Masters	Research Masters	Structured Doctorate	Research Doctorate
	70.0%	First Class Honours (H1)	Not Classified	Not Classified	Not Classified
	60.0%	Second Class Honours Grade 1 (H2.1)			
	50.0%	Second Class Honours Grade 2 (H2.2)			
40.0%	Pass (PS)				

Table 2 – Classification of University Major Awards (Research Programmes)

All other non-major awards of less than 60 ECTS are unclassified. See AQAE004 Programme Design Policy for additional information regarding types of awards.

4.19 Examination and Assessment Regulations

Approved regulations and procedures apply to all University staff and students and to any external third party involved in student assessment and examination. Detail on these regulations and procedures is available in *AQAE042 Procedure for Examination and Assessment Regulations*.

4.19.1 Breaches of Examination and Assessment Regulations

The University's 'Student Code' (AQAE006) is underpinned by the three fundamental principles: *Fair Treatment; Honesty and Transparency; Personal Responsibility*. Each of these principles outline what students can expect of the University. *The Student Code* likewise outlines what is expected of students. Breaches of assessment regulations are dealt with under the relevant University policy (including, where applicable, the *AQAE006 Student Code*, and the *AQAE022 Academic Integrity Policy* and related procedure documents.

4.20 Conflict of Interest in the Assessment Process

A conflict of interest (perceived or actual) exists when a student is a close relative of a staff member and / or in a close personal relationship with a staff member. In such cases, the staff member must complete and return *AQAE005_001 Conflict of Interest Assessment Form*. The form lists all relationships which constitute conflicts of interest in student assessment.

While staff members may teach relatives / close friends undertaking modules or learning delivered by that staff member, another member of academic staff must grade all work submitted by that student for academic credit and assign a final mark for the module. A member of staff must also recuse themselves from any Examination Board discussion or decision relating to that person. This obligation also extends to professional, management and support staff involved in any part of the assessment process or the administration of student records.

Research students are not permitted to conduct research for credit under the direct or indirect supervision of a relative.

4.21 Revocation of a University Award

If a concern about the authenticity of work submitted for assessment arises after an award has been approved or conferred, the University may examine the concern, and if there is

sufficient evidence that the integrity of the award is compromised, Academic Council may approve revocation of the award.

4.22 Responsibilities

The following outlines the roles and responsibilities of various individuals, academic units, and University functional areas involved in the assessment and examination process.

4.22.1 Vice President for Academic Affairs & Registrar

The Vice President for Academic Affairs & Registrar has overall responsibility for the academic governance and integrity of the assessment, and will ensure the following:

- (i) External Examiners are appointed on a timely basis.
- (ii) The official examination timetable is communicated to students 4 weeks in advance of the commencement of the examination session.
- (iii) Students are informed of the University's regulations in respect of the conduct of examinations.
- (iv) Accommodation arrangements are made for holding the examinations, including arrangements for students requiring reasonable accommodations, in accordance with the University policy for this area.
- (v) Examination papers are printed in sufficient time and securely stored to enable other organisational arrangements associated with holding the examinations to be carried out on schedule and in an orderly manner.
- (vi) An examination register is provided as the official record of the attendance of each student registered for a scheduled terminal examination.
- (vii) Invigilators are provided during each scheduled terminal examination and at each examination centre.
- (viii) Arrangements are made for chairing meetings of Examination Boards.
- (ix) Arrangements are made to issue provisional and final results of examinations to students in a data protection complaint manner.

4.22.2 Head of Faculty / School and Head of Department

The Heads of School / Faculty and Heads of Department play an important role in the governance and integrity of assessment within their functional area, and will ensure that:

- (i) Upon appointment, external examiners are provided with access to programme and module documentation, which includes the indicative

programme assessment plan, and subsequently with any changes and amendments relating to the programme or module documentation, if changes arise.

- (ii) Arrangements are made for holding and chairing Examination Pre-Board (preparatory) meetings for the purpose of completing records of student assessment in advance of the Examination Board meeting(s).
- (iii) Arrangements are made for holding meetings of Examination Boards including the provision of Broadsheet of Results or other reports.
- (iv) Arrangements are in place for the secure storage of all documents and other examination material for the required period after the Examination Board meeting, as per university arrangements, and with due regard to data retention and GDPR requirements.
- (v) Arrangements are in place for *examination reviews* and *appeals* as and when they arise.

4.22.3 Internal Examiner

Assessment is a principal responsibility of an Internal Examiner (usually the module Lecturer). In discharging this responsibility, the Internal Examiner / Lecturer will have overall responsibility for the assessment of modules and shall:

- (i) have a duty of care in the preparation of assessments and in the compilation of accurate marks,
- (ii) apply high ethical standards including fairness, objectivity, and consistency in the communication of assessment criteria, and in student assessment and feedback,
- (iii) prepare reliable and valid assessments as a basis for inferring the standards of knowledge, skill or competence achieved by students relative to module and programme intended learning outcome,
- (iv) ensure that all assessments are outlined on the programme assessment plan, that they comply with the provisions of the approved programme schedule (APS), and that details of how assessments will be marked is communicated to student,
- (v) draft examination papers, continuous assessments, marking schemes etc as per the agreed deadlines for review by the External Examiner(s) and engage constructively with the External Examiner(s) in the revision of same,
- (vi) communicate provisional coursework results and relevant feedback to students in a timely manner. Where a module contains both coursework and final examination components, the provisional coursework results shall be

communicated to students by a target timeline of one week in advance of the final examination.

- (vii) be familiar with the provisions of all relevant academic policies and procedures relating to student assessment and shall individually and collectively ensure and promote the integrity of the assessments and examination process,
- (viii) attend Pre-Board and Examination Board meetings and participate in the decision-making process, and
- (ix) make arrangements for student consultations and rechecks and ensure assessed material is available in the event of a review being requested.

In discharging these duties, an Internal Examiner must inform their Head of Department or Head of Academic Unit of any conflict of interest (perceived or actual) that may arise in the assessment of a student(s) – see section 4.20.

4.22.4 External Examiner

External examining is a quality assurance mechanism employed by the University and is designed to ensure independence and external governance in the assessment and grading of student performance.

External Examiners have a responsibility to assure standards in the modules to which they are appointed, as well as in the overall programme and award to which they are appointed, subject to the requirements of the *University's Quality Assurance & Enhancement Framework (QAEF)*.

- An appointed external examiner should be an independent person of demonstrated academic or professional excellence, whose association with a particular programme(s) is considered to enhance the academic integrity of the programme(s).
- The criteria for appointment including the number of examiners per programme or set of modules, qualification level, term of appointment and any restrictions shall be set out by the university. The programme name and modules shall be identified at the time of nomination but may be amended during the term of the contract as per the needs of the university.
- The process for nomination and approval of an external examiner shall be set out by the university.
- External examiner appointments require approval by the Academic Standards and Policy committee of Academic Council.

- The duties of the external examiner shall be clearly defined and communicated to the external examiner on appointment.
- External examiners will be required to store all Records securely and in compliance with data protection laws and regulations.
- The procedure detailing all aspects of the appointment, function, and duties of the External Examiner are set out in *AQAE014 Procedure for External Examination*.

4.22.5 Programme Board

The Programme Board is responsible for the design, development and monitoring of a programme leading to a named award. The Board is additionally responsible for the modules that constitute a programme, the module intended learning outcomes, and the programme learning outcomes. Programme Board members involved in curriculum delivery and student assessment are additionally members of the relevant Examination Board when convened.

The Programme Board shall prepare an indicative *programme assessment plan* (refer to section 4.5.1 of this document), by stage, in advance of the stage delivery, and communicate same to all registered students within one week of teaching commencing.

The policy providing for the operation of Programme Boards is documented in *AQAE020 Monitoring, Evaluation and Enhancement of Programmes Policy*.

4.22.6 Examination Board

Decisions in respect of student marks are the responsibility of the Examination Board. The Examination Board comprises the Head of Department, and all examiners involved in student assessment for a programme and / or programme stage, plus an Independent Chair nominated by the Vice President for Academic Affairs & Registrar. Additionally, a Head of Department serves in the role of secretary to the Examination Board meeting. The remit of the Examination Board is to consider and verify student performance in assessment and examination and to make decisions in respect of student progression and awards. Examination Board decisions in regard to conferring of major awards are ratified by Academic Council.

4.22.7 Examination Pre-board / Preparatory Meeting

Decisions in respect of student marks are the responsibility of the Examination Board (see referring section, 4.21.6). Notwithstanding, where time allows, preparatory meetings (frequently referred to as “Exam Pre-boards”) for the purposes of completing records in

respect of student assessment and to discuss potential recommendations to Examination Boards take place in advance of Examination Board meeting(s). Exam Pre-boards may be organised by the Head of Department and / or the Programme or Year Chair; further detail is provided in *AQAE041 Procedure for Recording Results and Operation of Examination Boards*.

4.22.8 Frequency of Examination Board Meetings:

Examination Boards shall normally meet after every examination session in accordance with a schedule of dates advised by the Vice President for Academic Affairs & Registrar. A meeting of an Examination Board can be convened by the Vice President for Academic Affairs & Registrar outside of examination sessions, where required, with notice (normally three days) given to members for preparation.

4.22.9 Academic Council

The Vice President for Academic Affairs & Registrar shall seek the formal ratification of the conferring of all major awards by Academic Council before each conferring session.

Students will be notified of provisional and final results through the student record system after each examination session following confirmation by the Chairperson of the Examination Board that:

- the Examination Boards have been properly convened,
- the Broadsheet of Results were reviewed for each stage and programme,
- each student was given due and fair consideration and,
- the *AQAE005 Marks and Standards Policy* and associated examination and assessment regulations have been fairly and consistently applied.

Any general issues or concerns from the Examination Board will be forwarded by the Chairperson of the Examination Board to Academic Council through a summary report prepared by the Assistant Registrar.

5. Associated Documents Generated by this Policy

AQAE005_001 Conflict of Interest Assessment Form

AQAE014 Procedure for External Examination

AQAE026 Procedure for Highlighting Impaired Performance

AQAE031 Procedure for Requesting Extension to Deadlines

AQAE032 Procedure for Requesting a Deferral of a Module or Programme

AQAE033 Procedure for Recheck, Review and Appeal

AQAE041 Procedure for Recording Results and Operation of Examination Boards

AQAE042 Procedure for Examination and Assessment Regulations

6. Revision History

Revision No	Description of Change	Approval Date
Ver 1	ATU Marks and Standard version 1.0	01/Apr/2022
002	Revision of ATU Marks and Standard version 1.0 issued for academic year 22-23. Further detail and clarification added.	Academic Council Approval 17 /Feb/2023
003	Revision of section 4.21.4 to provide more detail on policy related to External examination.	Academic Council Approval 27/10/2023
004	Update to cross reference procedures, additional information in relation to extension to deadlines, penalties, ratification of results, repeating for honours, timescale for requesting review and appeal following examinations, timescale for repeat opportunities, and release of results.	Academic Council Approval 17/06/2024

Appendix 1 Glossary of Acronyms Used in this Policy

APS – Approved Programme Schedule

CA – Coursework Assessment

DAB – Designated Awarding Body

ECTS – European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

EHEA – European Higher Education Area

EQF – European Qualifications Framework

ESG – European Standards and Guidelines

FE – Final Examination

HEI – Higher Education Institution

QAEF – Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework

QQI – Quality and Qualifications Ireland

RPL – Recognition of Prior Learning