No detriment – what does it mean?

The following is provided to colleagues to highlight how the principle of ‘no detriment’ is applied at the University of Dundee. If you are an External Examiner and you have any questions please contact the Chair of the relevant Board of Examiners, if you are a member of staff at the University of Dundee please contact your Associate Dean for Quality & Academic Standards. Students have been provided with this information via https://www.dundee.ac.uk/coronavirus and email.

Other sources of information include:

- Assessment Policy for taught provision
- Guidance on the conduct of Boards of Examiners
- Handbook for External Examiners

Introduction

Over the past two weeks as we have been working to adjust both the way we are teaching and the assessments we set we have also been planning how to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our students results.

We know that students will have been impacted by this pandemic in all sorts of different ways and that will have also been impacted by strike action taken earlier in the year. Students with specific needs and impacts will submit Mitigating Circumstances request as usual, however in light of the significant, combined, impact of these two factors the University will be taking a ‘no detriment’ approach when confirming grades and degree outcomes.

Also to be borne in mind is that for Undergraduate Honours degree candidates being considered for conferment of award this year we are also continuing the implementation of the new assessment policy, which changes the way we calculate our honours degrees. These students will have their awards calculated using both the current and previous award algorithm and will be awarded the better of the two, with the appropriate no detriment approaches applied as outlined below. This is the final year in which the dual calculation will take place.
**Why do we have it?**

The ‘no detriment’ approach is in place for Boards of Examiners to use whenever there is disruption to studies that is unavoidable and significant. Broadly, this means we consider the following points when we make award decisions:

- when the event(s) happened in relation to when/how students were being taught or assessed;
- the effect the event had on a student’s ability to study for, or take, an assessment;
- and the mark the student received in the assessment.

We then act to remove negative impacts students, in this case individually or in cohorts, and ensure our degrees are awarded fairly whilst maintaining our academic standards and the securing the value of our qualifications.

**Which modules does this apply to?**

The Boards of Examiners will be able to apply ‘no detriment’ to any modules that have been impacted by either strike action or Covid-19 in both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, when considering progression or award decisions. This approach will follow students to the end of their degree programmes. This means that if the student is not due to graduate this year (2019-20), we will take these circumstances into account, for relevant modules, by using the no detriment approach, in the year that they do.

**How do the Boards of Examiners do this?**

Boards of Examiners will be provided with:

- information regarding the overall outcome and results profiles for the previous 4 graduating classes for the programmes they are considering;
- the results for this year, and
- information confirming the impact on learning, teaching or assessment on the relevant modules and the changes already made.

The results information will be provided by Registry. They will use this information to help them make their academic judgements and confirm student progression and/or awards.

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1 This includes dissertation/project modules or equivalents in our undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes
2 Where a programme has run for fewer than 4 years all available data will be provided
What can the Boards of Examiners do?

For modules taken in 2019-20, that have been impacted by strike action and/or Covid-19, the Board of Examiners will consider module results and calculated degree outcomes in the context of the pattern of results of current and previous graduating years.

This means that Boards of Examiners will be able to see if groups of graduating students, or individual results, in impacted modules are anomalous, and lower, than they have been previously. If this is found to be the case, the Board of Examiners can then take a range of actions to mitigate this impact including:

- **Mark adjustment or ‘scaling’** – if a module mark in an impacted module is poor in comparison to unimpacted module marks, the mark in the impacted module can be raised (a module mark can only be made better, it cannot be lowered through this process). The new module mark will then be included in the calculation of the degree. For relevant modules taken in 2019-20 this may also be applied to all students in a module and not just individual students.

- **Mark excluded from further calculations** – if a student’s module mark in an impacted module is poor in comparison to other modules it can be excluded from the calculation of their overall degree classification. The credit will still be awarded, but the module mark is not changed.

- **Compensation and/or condonement** can be applied to individual modules if a student has failed the module. For relevant modules taken in 2019-20 only, this will apply to all grades of failure and not only for marginal failures. For this year (2019-20) only, the limit for the use of compensation and/or condonement has been raised from 25% to 50% for the years of study that contribute to the honours classification.

- **First attempt** – where a student has failed a module, and it cannot be compensated or condoned, they may be given another opportunity to take the assessment, as a first attempt with no penalty applied (i.e. the full range of grades are available and the module is not capped.)

- **Additional opportunity** – where a student has failed a module, and it cannot be compensated or condoned, or provided as a first attempt, they may be given another opportunity to take the assessment, but any normal penalties such as capping of components would apply.

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3 These are based on existing provisions for consideration of Mitigating Circumstances as outlined in the Assessment Policy.

4 Compensation is the process by which a Board of Examiners may decide that a strong performance by a student in one part of the curriculum may be used as the basis for the award of credit in respect of marginal failure elsewhere.

5 Condonement is the process by which a Board of Examiners, in consideration of the overall performance of a student, decides that without incurring a penalty, a part of the programme that has been failed need not be redeemed.

6 Some Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies will not allow the use of compensation and condonement, Boards of Examiners will be made aware of this to ensure compliance with regulatory frameworks.

7 Some Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies will not allow the use of resits, Boards of Examiners will be made aware of this to ensure compliance with regulatory frameworks.

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Where a student is provided with an additional opportunity or a first attempt, they will be provided with information about the form and timing of the assessment from the School following the Board of Examiners meeting.

It should be noted that the options above are mechanisms available to Boards of Examiners, for consideration for all modules impacted by strike action and/or Covid-19, in any year of study. Each Board will decide, based on their academic judgement, the best actions to take to mitigate the impact on students. This will be informed by the changes made to assessments, recommendations already made by the Mitigating Circumstances Committee, information from Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Bodies and individual disciplinary needs.