

A5: Force Majeure contingency regulatory arrangements for taught programmes

Academic year 2023/24

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Introduction

1. The University takes all reasonable steps to ensure that the integrity of its academic standards and regulations are protected. However, in cases where the academic business of the University is disrupted by Force Majeure it is necessary as a last resource to have contingency arrangements which can be invoked by the President and Vice-Chancellor to minimise the impact of these events/actions on students.
2. Force Majeure are acts, events or circumstances beyond the reasonable control of the University, such as (but not limited to) natural disaster, pandemic, acts of terrorism, fire, flood, industrial action, a major and prolonged Surrey system failure (SurreyLearn, etc).
3. In certain Force Majeure situations, additional Safety Net policies aimed at supporting student experience, may be proposed by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Academic to supplement these emergency arrangements. These additional policies will be submitted for consideration and approval at the next University Education Committee and Senate meetings.
4. Throughout these *Force Majeure contingency regulatory arrangements*, any references to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean of Faculty should be understood also to refer to any of their nominee(s) where relevant.
5. The purpose of these *contingency regulatory arrangements* is to mitigate the impact of a Force Majeure on student outcomes as far as is reasonably possible.

Key principles

6. Consideration shall be given to whether the learning outcomes for the programme as a whole, or the specific level of study, have been met.
7. Maintaining high quality academic standards and professional accreditation requirements will remain paramount.
8. Where a programme of study is accredited by Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Bodies (PSRBs), the PSRB requirements may take precedence over these *Force Majeure contingency regulatory arrangements*. In such cases, the relevant Programme Leader(s) is responsible for liaising with PSRBs and informing all affected students about PSRB exceptions.

Operation

9. Where there is Force Majeure which disrupts or is likely to disrupt the assessment process, academic Schools/Departments and/or central professional services should promptly notify the Academic Registrar.
10. Where this disruption is likely to significantly impact the University's academic business, the Academic Registrar or their nominee will liaise with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Academic to formally request that the *Force Majeure contingency regulatory arrangements* are invoked by the President and Vice-Chancellor for a specified period, which can be extended or shortened as is necessary. This request and the decision should be formally noted at the next University Education Committee and Senate meetings.

11. Once it is determined that the period of disruption has passed, the Academic Registrar or their nominee will liaise with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Academic to request that the President and Vice-Chancellor revokes these arrangements. The decision, together with an evaluation of impact on quality of academic standards and student outcomes should be considered at the next University Education Committee and Senate meetings and formally recorded.
12. These *Force Majeure contingency regulatory arrangements* may take precedence over the Quality Framework sections relating to student assessment, progression and awards, including but not limited to:
 - [Introduction to Quality Framework](#)
 - [A0 Regulations for the Foundation Year](#)
 - [A1 Regulations for taught programmes](#)
 - [Senate Governance](#), Appendix 19 (Board of Examiners)
 - Codes of practice for:
 - [Assessment and feedback](#)
 - [External examining: taught programmes](#)
 - [Scheduling of teaching and assessment](#)

Amendments to assessments

13. Where scheduled teaching and assessment activity has been significantly impacted by a Force Majeure, Faculty Extraordinary Boards of Studies may consider replacing the module assessment mechanism (which could include examination, oral, practical and other types of assessments) with alternative assessments as described below.
14. The specific changes to assessments will normally be proposed by the Module Leader. Module Leaders should ensure that the proposed alternative assessments allow students to meet all module learning outcomes and, if applicable, PSRB requirements. Alternative assessments should relate only to material that has been taught to students, and, where applicable, they should reflect limitations in access to resources.
15. Subject to regulation 27 below, external examiners should be informed of the amendments made to assessment papers and provided with an opportunity to comment.
16. In accordance with the [Senate Governance](#), Appendix 16 (Faculty Extraordinary Board of Studies), Chairs of Faculty Extraordinary Boards of Studies should liaise with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Academic and the Academic Registrar to discuss any necessary amendments to assessments, including examination papers and practical assessment briefs.
17. Following approval by Faculty Extraordinary Boards of Studies, the proposed amendments to assessments are subject to further consideration and approval by the University Education Committee.

Alternative assessment periods

18. In the case of more serious circumstances that have impacted, or are likely to impact, the academic business of the University for a lengthier period, the Academic Registrar may propose to the University Education Committee to revise the assessments timetable. This may include, but is not limited to, rescheduling the whole assessment period if it is feasible to do so within the published term time dates or deferring it to the next University-appointed (re)assessment period.

19. The University may also appoint an alternative assessment period, for example, in the early October or the end of March, where recommended and approved by the University Education Committee and Senate.

Substitution of markers/moderators/external examiners

20. Force Majeure may create circumstances in which assessment activity cannot take place as scheduled. Heads of School/Department, Directors of Learning and Teaching (DLTs) and Programme Leaders must make all reasonable efforts to ensure that assessed work can be set, marked and moderated in line with the University's [Code of practice for assessment and feedback](#).
21. In advance of taking on any marking or moderation of student work, members of teaching staff involved in the assessment process ("markers" and "moderators") should declare, where possible, if they are or are likely to be impacted by Force Majeure circumstances.
22. Where assessment activity has been significantly impacted, Heads of School/Department, in liaison with Associate Deans, Education (ADEs) and DLTs, may adjust standard marking and moderation procedures in line with these *Force Majeure contingency regulatory arrangements*. Any such adjustments must be reported to the Academic Registrar as a matter of urgency as well as to the relevant Board of Examiners for consideration and recommendation to the Senate Progression and Conferment Executive (SPACE).
23. Subject to the procedure for consideration and approval of emergency amendments to marking and moderation procedures as described in regulation¹⁷ above, academic Schools/Departments may designate substitutes as follows:
 - Where a member of staff declines or is unable to mark or moderate any type of summative assessment, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean of Faculty will designate a member of staff as an alternative internal examiner. If this is not possible, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean of Faculty will use appropriately qualified current or new Associate staff to mark or moderate. Consideration should also be given to employing appropriately trained postgraduate research students to mark or moderate marking in line with the [Code of practice for postgraduate researchers who support teaching](#);
 - Where a member of staff has marked/moderated a piece of summative assessment but has declined or is unable to release the mark, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean of Faculty will designate an alternative internal examiner/moderator, as described above;
 - Before or at the start of the assessment period, programme teams should organise pre-marking calibration events to help the substituted internal markers and moderators to develop a shared understanding of marking criteria, assessment standards and quality feedback¹.
 - In the event that an external examiner resigns or is unable to undertake their external examiner duties due to Force Majeure, including sampling of work and

¹ The procedure for the pre-calibration marking event is described in the [Code of practice for assessment and feedback](#), Appendix 10 - Assessment calibration workshops with programme teams

attending Boards of Examiners meetings, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean of Faculty will first decide whether it is possible and appropriate to extend the responsibilities of other existing external examiners. If this is not possible, a former external examiner or a new external examiner may be appointed to undertake the external examining duties. All cases where external examiners cannot be substituted for various reasons, should be reported to the University Education Committee for further scrutiny.

Force Majeure leading to missing marks and incomplete module results

24. The process of designating substitutes to manage the assessment process is designed to limit the possibility that students will complete their academic level of study with missing module credits and marks. In cases where none of the designated substitute internal markers or moderators are available, Chairs of Board of Examiners should liaise with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Academic and the Academic Registrar to consider which changes can be exceptionally applied to assessment processes and/or deadlines to mitigate the impact of disruption. Faculty Education Committees should ensure continuous monitoring and evaluation of any potential impact of these changes on the quality of academic standards of University of Surrey degrees, including student continuation and attainment, and regularly report to the University Education Committee on these matters.

Changes to the marking process

25. The University may exceptionally allow single-marked results for assessments, for which double marking is required under the [Code of practice for assessment and feedback](#), to be considered by the Board of Examiners.

Changes to the internal moderation process

26. The University may exceptionally allow module results which have not undergone the internal moderation process, as required by the [Code of practice for assessment and feedback](#), to be considered by the Board of Examiners.

Changes to the external examining process

27. The following emergency amendments to the external examining process may take precedence over the relevant sections of the [Code of practice for external examining: taught programmes](#), subject to specific PSRB requirements:
- External examiners should provide their comment on draft FHEQ levels 5, 6 and 7 assessment papers, where the unit of assessment contributes 25% or more to the overall module mark. Due to Force Majeure, it is not required for these draft assessment papers to be formally approved by an external examiner(s);
 - Due to Force Majeure, it is not required for external examiners to review samples of assessed work at FHEQ level 5. However, external examiners are still required to review samples of assessed student work at FHEQ level 6 and above, where the unit of assessment contributes 25% or more to the overall module mark. The representative sample size is determined in the [Code of practice for external examining: taught programmes](#) (see Section *Receiving mark sheets and representative samples of student work across the full ability range*).
28. External examiners' attendance at Board of Examiners meetings (see Appendix 19, [Senate Governance](#)) is required. In the case of a meeting to recommend the award of Degrees, Diplomas or Certificates, at least one external examiner must be present in

order to meet the quoracy requirement. External examiners can attend meetings either physically or via remote channels of communication (MS Teams, videocall, etc). The sheets of marks and awards agreed by the Board of Examiners can be signed by external examiners electronically (digital signature).

Calculating module results where, due to Force Majeure, a minimum of 70% of summative marks for the module is available to the Board of Examiners

29. Where it has not been possible to set assessments or in instances where module cohorts have not been able to engage with assessments due to Force Majeure. Boards of Examiners will normally consider whether there is enough information available to determine module results. A module result can be agreed on the basis of not less than 70% of all summative assessment marks for the module. For example, if a student had a mark for the examination unit of assessment, which has a weighting of 70% of the overall module assessment mechanism, but the coursework mark was not available, the module result should be based on the examination mark only. Core modules are excluded from this emergency regulatory amendment as all elements of the core module must be passed in order for the module to be passed overall.
30. If the programme is subject to PSRB accreditation, the Programme Leader should liaise with the relevant PSRB(s) to seek their approval as to whether this course of action is acceptable. The PSRB's approval (in writing) should be forwarded to the Academic Policy and Governance section, the Office of Student Complaints, Appeals and Regulation (OSCAR), Academic Registry, for record keeping.

Incomplete module results where, due to Force Majeure, less than 70% of summative marks for the module is available to the Board of Examiners

31. If less than 70% of the module summative assessment was submitted for marking and/or marked due to Force Majeure, then the module result is deemed incomplete and module credit cannot be awarded. In such cases, the Board of Examiners should proceed as follows:
 - Where a student has incomplete module results for no more than 30 credits (per academic level/ year of study on a full-time basis), the Board of Examiners may produce provisional progression and award recommendations, subject to the progression and award rules described in regulations 32-40 below.
 - Where a student has more than 30 credits (per academic level/ year of study on a full-time basis) missing due to incomplete module results, the Board of Examiners is not able to recommend progression to the next level of study or awards.

Progression and reassessment arrangements for students with missing credits due to Force Majeure

32. Where a student is missing no more than 30 credits (per academic level/ year of study on a full-time basis) due to Force Majeure, they may trail missing credits (up to a maximum of 30 credits) into the next academic level/year of study.
33. In circumstances where a Board of Examiners has agreed that students can trail up to and including 30 credits, module outcomes should be reviewed once marks become available and students should be offered additional options/support where modules have not been passed. Subject to [A0. Regulations for the foundation year](#) and [A1. Regulations for taught programmes](#):

- where applicable, a student may have an opportunity to retake the failed assessment in the next University appointed (re)assessment period providing that there is at least a month between notification of the result and the start of the reassessment;
 - where applicable, a student may be considered eligible for compensation or a third assessment attempt.
34. Exceptionally, the University may appoint an alternative assessment period as described in regulations 18-19 above, where recommended and approved by the University Education Committee. Any assessment papers for the alternative (re)assessment period should be provided in accordance with normal timescales as determined by the Academic Registry.
35. Where relevant, PSRB requirements take precedence over these emergency regulatory arrangements. If the programme has progression requirements set by a PSRB(s) that certain modules need to be passed for progression, Programme Leaders must obtain a written confirmation from the PSRB(s) as to whether this course of action is acceptable. The approval should be confirmed to the Academic Policy and Governance section, OSCAR, Academic Registry for record keeping.

Calculating degree awards where a maximum of 30 credits is missing due to Force Majeure

36. Where a student taking a standard 3-year Bachelor's degree programme has achieved a minimum of 330 credits, of which at least 90 credits are at FHEQ Level 6, the missing module credits and marks should be allocated and the level average calculated by taking an average of the marks in other modules at FHEQ Level 6. If a student taking a standard 3-year Bachelor's programme has achieved less than 330 credits, no final award recommendation should be made until sufficient marks become available to enable an award.
37. By extension, for 4-year Bachelors' programmes and 4- or 5-year Integrated Masters' programmes the award is calculated as follows:
- For a Bachelor's degree including a year of integrated professional training year (PTY), where a student has a minimum of 450 credits, of which at least 90 credits are at FHEQ Level 6, the module credits and marks should be allocated and the level average calculated by taking an average of the marks in other modules at FHEQ Level 6;
 - For 4-year Integrated Masters programmes, where a student has a minimum of 450 credits, of which at least 90 credits are at FHEQ Level 7, the module credits and marks should be allocated and the level average calculated by taking an average of the marks in other modules at FHEQ Level 7.
 - For 5-year Integrated Masters, including a BVMS*Ci*, where a student has a minimum of 570 credits, of which at least 90 credits are at FHEQ Level 7, the missing module credits and marks should be allocated and the level average calculated by taking an average of the marks in other modules at FHEQ Level 7.
38. Where a student taking a standard one-year (FHEQ Level 7 180 credits) Master's degree programme has achieved a minimum of 150 credits, the missing module credits and marks should be allocated and the level average mark calculated by taking an average of the marks in other modules at FHEQ Level 7. If a student has achieved less than 150 credits, no final award recommendation should be made until sufficient credits become available to enable an award.

39. Where the final award recommendation cannot be made due to insufficient credits, students should take the missing credits at the next available assessment period. Additionally, subject to the [A1. Regulations for taught degrees](#), where a student has achieved less than the minimum required credits as described in regulations 36-38 above to enable an award, they have the option to choose a lower exit award instead.
40. Where relevant, PSRB requirements take precedence over these emergency regulatory arrangements. For PSRB-accredited programmes, Programme Leaders must obtain a written confirmation from their PSRBs as to whether this course of action is acceptable. This approval should be confirmed to the Academic Policy and Governance section, OSCAR, Academic Registry. Boards of Examiners may then recommend the degree award on the basis that a student is missing no more than 30 credits. Where PSRBs do not accept such alternative provision, students should take the missing credits at the next available assessment period.

Declaration of results

41. Students, who have award results calculated in accordance with regulations 36-40 above, will be informed of an option to provisionally rescind the award and that subsequent full marking may produce a different result, but that their degree classification/grade will not be downgraded in such an event, but could be improved.
42. When the outstanding mark is available and in the event that a student has failed the outstanding module, this mark would not be recorded.
43. Passed marks for units of assessment will be recorded and used for calculating the module mark. However, as mentioned in regulation 41 above, the previously awarded degree classification/final grade cannot be downgraded but could be improved.
44. The Academic Registry will notify students of the final result via Self-Service. Students will be issued with information on their HEAR that explains the reasons for the absent module results/credits and/or any inconsistencies between the awarded degree classification/final grade and the actual marks.

Students seeking to decline an award issued with missing credits due to Force Majeure

45. Where a student who has achieved their final award requests the University to provisionally rescind it so that they may apply to re-register in order to improve their degree classification or grade, the University will accommodate this request on the basis that it was issued with missing credits due to Force Majeure.
46. Students should apply to the University with the request to rescind the award within three months of receiving their results by HEAR award letter. Requests to rescind awards should be sent to the Academic Registry Assessment Teams (fass-assessments@surrey.ac.uk, feps-assessments@surrey.ac.uk, fhms-assessments@surrey.ac.uk)

Appendix 1

Changes to the Senate Governance, Appendix 19 - Boards of Examiners

Quoracy requirements

Boards of Examiners will be required to have a least four internal examiners and at least one external examiner present at the meeting to be quorate where awards are being made. Internal members are as defined in the [Senate Governance](#), Appendix 19.

Boards of Examiners will meet in accordance with their previously agreed schedule. The attendance can be via either online, in person, or in a “hybrid” format (a combination of physical and remote attendance). Members should review recommendations for progression and/or for awards, including those cases in which a recommendation for award has been deferred, and should confirm honours classifications or other final gradings as appropriate in the usual way to SPACE.

All recommendations for confirmation of awards should be accompanied by confirmation by at least one of the appointed external examiners either by countersignature of the recommendation lists/ marks or by other forms of written confirmation (e.g. email).

Appendix 2

Changes to the minimum number of hours required for Professional Training Year (PTY) placements

In certain Force Majeure situations, for example due to the pandemic, in order to protect the interests of PTY students, the University may invoke the following Force Majeure emergency regulatory amendment to the relevant section of the [A1 Regulations for taught programmes](#)² :

(New text is shown in **bold**, deletions in ~~strikethrough~~)

The minimum aggregate period of Professional Training is 1125 hours, excluding local annual holiday entitlement but including any return period(s) to the University. Where there are valid extenuating circumstances a student may be able to complete their period of Professional Training in ~~900~~ **750** hours (or pro-rata where the work placement component is less than the full academic year). Students who cannot complete a minimum of ~~900~~ **750** hours will **normally** be unable to complete level P **and this will be considered on a case-by-case basis.**

² The process for invoking and revoking this emergency regulatory amendment is described in regulations 9-12 above, see section *Operation*.