

Academic Regulations: Pearson Higher Nationals

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Revision History

Version	New/Replacement	Summary of Changes
2	Replacement	<p>All: Removal of QCF from the Regulations.</p> <p>Section 5: Amendment of late penalty policy to submission within 5 working days from 24 hours.</p> <p>Section 9: Change of quoracy of Assessment Board from 50% of required attendees to at least 5 of the required attendees, at least two to be from curriculum departments.</p> <p>Section 10: Additional sub-section to clarify that compensation can be awarded after a re-assessment opportunity but only when there has been attendance and submission of assessment in the first assessment period.</p>
2.1	Replacement	Section 15 amended to reflect the amended Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure
2.2	Replacement	Section 2 amended articulating the normal UCEN Manchester expected registration periods for a qualification.

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1. Scope and Purpose

1.1. These regulations are made for the use of staff and students of the UCEN Manchester which is part of LTE Group.

1.2. The following assessment regulations apply to BTEC Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) offered at UCEN Manchester.

1.3. These regulations do not relate to students on a course leading to an award from Manchester Metropolitan University, Sheffield Hallam University or the University of Huddersfield.

1.4. All students should have access to these regulations and other assessment policies and procedures, including:

- Academic Misconduct Policy
- Mitigating Circumstances Process
- Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure
- Academic Appeals Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Programme and unit handbooks (including assessment planners and schemes of work)
- Programme specifications and unit descriptors
- Criteria relating to grading and marking schemes

1.5. The regulations in this document govern Higher National RQF programmes and are intended for UCEN Manchester staff and students. The Higher National assessment board is responsible for ensuring that these regulations are followed and adhered to.

1.6. Enrolling on a programme at UCEN Manchester is an agreement to be bound by the Student Terms and Conditions, which makes clear that in doing so, students agree to follow all relevant Policies and Procedures. This includes the assessment regulations prevailing at the time and any subsequent approved modifications during their registration period. Students will be notified of any changes to the assessment regulations during their studies.

2 Period of registration

2.1. Students are normally expected to complete the qualification within the programme registration period:

Qualification	UCEN Manchester full time registration period (years)	UCEN Manchester part time registration period (years)
HNC	1	2
HND	2	4

2.2. Periods of registration may formally be adjusted by the Assessment Board on reasonable grounds such as mitigating circumstances or a student satisfying the rules to repeat units in the subsequent academic year. Maximum periods of registration may be set out for students who enter with prior credits.

2.3. Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals carry a maximum registration period of five years from first registration. When a student is topped up from the HNC to the HND, the five-year period resets as a new Pearson registration number is generated.

3. Credit Composition and Awards

3.1. Higher National Certificates will normally be awarded to a student who has been credited with at least 120 credits at level 4.

3.2. Higher National Diplomas will normally be awarded to a student who has been credited with 120 credits at level 4 and 120 credits at level 5.

3.3. Where specified, students will be expected to have successfully completed the required work experience hours.

4. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

4.1. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a method of assessment that considers whether students can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess and so do not need to develop through a course of learning.

4.2. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is used for the award of credits on the basis of demonstrated learning that has occurred in the past. Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) is a process through which learning achieved outside of formal education or training is assessed and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes.

4.3. Students should be directed to the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure for details on how to complete applications.

5. Submission of coursework and attendance at examinations

5.1. In instances when no extension has been granted, and there are no approved deferred mitigating circumstances, then the following will apply:

- Late coursework submitted within 5 working days of the submission deadline will be capped at a pass. This applies to coursework only and applies to the first submission only. This includes a submission following a successful deferral of assessment claim.
- Refusal to accept submitted work, after 5 working days of the submission deadline, and a fail grade awarded (unless there is an approved mitigating circumstances claim for an extension)
- Failure to submit or complete coursework by the published deadline (or within 5 working days of the submission date) or not meeting the terms of any extensions granted will result in a Fail grade being awarded.

5.2. Students can make a claim for mitigating circumstances, which must be submitted with supporting evidence, if they feel that factors have affected the submission of assessments or attendance at examinations. Students can request an extension or request to repeat an assessment attempt. Claims will be considered by the Academic Services Panel. The UCEN Manchester Pearson Mitigating Circumstances Procedure provides further information.

6. Grading

6.1. Each successfully completed unit will be graded as a Pass, Merit or Distinction.

- A Pass is awarded for the achievement of all outcomes against the specified assessment criteria
- Merit and Distinction grades are awarded for higher level achievement

6.2. For Higher National (RQF) qualifications, Pearson has produced specific Merit and Distinction criteria that are linked to every Pass criterion.

6.3. Assessment decisions for Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals are based on the specific criteria given in each unit and set at each level of attainment in that unit and at the qualification level. The criteria for each unit have been defined according to a framework to ensure that standards are consistent in the qualification and across the suite as a whole. The way in which individual units are written provides a balance of assessment of understanding, practical skills and behavioural attributes appropriate to the purpose of the qualifications.

6.4. Assessors must show how they have reached their decisions using the criteria in the assessment records. When a student has completed all of the assessment for a unit then the assessment team will give a grade for the unit. This is given simply according to the highest level for which the student is judged to have met all the criteria.

RQF

6.5. When a student has completed all of the assessment for a unit then the course team will give a grade for the unit. This is given simply according to the highest level for which the student is judged to have met all the criteria. Therefore:

- To achieve a Pass, a student must have satisfied all the Pass criteria for the learning outcomes, showing coverage of the unit content and therefore attainment at Level 4 or 5 of the national framework.
- To achieve a Merit, a student must have satisfied all the Merit criteria (and therefore the Pass criteria) through high performance in each learning outcome.
- To achieve a Distinction, a student must have satisfied all the Distinction criteria (and therefore the Pass and Merit criteria), and these define outstanding performance across the unit as a whole.

6.6. The award of a Pass is a defined level of performance and cannot be given solely on the basis of a student completing assignments or coursework. Students who do not satisfy the Pass criteria should be reported as Unclassified.

Guidelines on Assessing Group Work

6.7. Group projects should be included in the assessment schedule for a unit only where one or more learning outcomes of the unit indicate that they might be appropriate.

6.8. A common group grade will not be assigned to all members of the group; individual contributions will be measured and graded against the learning outcomes, the assessment and grading criteria.

6.9. Evidence of observation of presentations and discussions (with peers, with Assessors etc.) will be detailed and mapped to criteria in order to provide evidence of achievement of individual contributions.

6.10. In some cases, presentations may provide evidence only sufficient for Pass criteria, for example where a presentation contained no corroborated detail of individual tasks undertaken by members of the group. In such cases, evidence for higher grades may be achieved through formalised questioning of individual students mapped to the assessment criteria, or having the students produce a supplementary report of their activities.

6.11. Feedback can be directed to the group with reference to individual contributions and achievement.

6.12. For graded programmes, the achievement of the Merit and Distinction grade descriptors should be measured against individual contributions and the method of measurement should be clear within the assignment brief.

7. Internal verification of assignment briefs

7.1. All assignment briefs, even those provided by published sources, must be internally verified every year, prior to issue to the student.

7.2. Internal verification of the assignments should be carried out by a staff member who is familiar with BTEC assessment at the appropriate level and has subject knowledge within the programme area. Internal verification should always be reported and recorded. If further actions are identified by the Internal Verifier, the Assessor is required to complete all actions and return it to the Internal Verifier for review and sign off. Once the assignment has been signed off as being fit for purpose by the Internal Verifier, it may be issued to the students.

7.3. The purpose of internal verification is to confirm that the brief is fit for purpose, by ensuring:

- the tasks and evidence will allow the student to address the targeted criteria
- the brief is written in clear and accessible language
- students' roles and tasks are vocationally relevant and appropriate to the level of the qualification
- timescales and deadlines are appropriate
- equal opportunities are incorporated.

8. Internal verification of assessment decisions

8.1. Internal Verifiers must sample assessed work for each assignment to check the accuracy of assessment decisions. Internal verification of assessment decisions should be carried out by a staff member who is familiar with BTEC assessment at the appropriate level and has subject knowledge of the programme area.

8.2. Feedback from the Internal Verifier to the Assessor should comment on the quality of their feedback to the student and the effective completion of documentation. The Internal Verifier should also give developmental feedback to the Assessor telling them what could be improved e.g. annotation of assessment evidence to show where grades are achieved. Internal verification of assessed work should be clearly recorded. If the Internal Verifier requires action, the Assessor should complete this and return it to the Internal Verifier for their review and sign off.

8.3. Internal verification of assessment decisions must not be end-loaded. It is important that it is undertaken as soon as possible after assessment as this will improve the quality of assessment practice and not disadvantage students. Internal Verification must be undertaken before work is returned to the students.

8.4. During the course of the programme, internal verification sampling should cover the following:

- Every Assessor
- Every unit
- Work from every assignment
- Every assessment site (for multi-site centres)
- Pass, Merit and Distinction achievement (a student who has not yet achieved or a referred student is also a valid selection).

9. Assessment Boards

Terms of Reference

9.1. UCEN Manchester operates single tier Assessment Boards which are authorised to:

- determine the standard of student module assessment outcomes
- note any instance of cheating, plagiarism and other forms of unfair practice from the Academic Misconduct Panel
- receive and note decisions relating to deferrals and mitigating circumstances from the Academic Services Panel
- confirm unit grades and classifications
- make decisions regarding compensation for failed units.
- make decisions on reassessment/repeat opportunities
- determine progression of students on to the next stage of the programme
- determine awards to be made to students
- Receive comments and reports from External Examiners

9.2. The membership of the Assessment Boards shall be as follows:

- Director of Quality & Standards or nominee (Chair)
- Head of Academic Services
- Relevant Head of Department/Director of Curriculum
- Relevant Department Team Leader
- Programme Leader

- Unit Leaders
- Academic Services Officer (minutes)
- Relevant External Examiner or confirmation of visit

9.3. It is expected that members of the Assessment Board will make every reasonable attempt to attend the meeting. Where appropriate, a nominee will be proposed to the Chair.

9.4. The meeting will be quorate when there at least 5 of the required attendees present, two of which are from curriculum departments.

9.5. Where not quorate, the Assessment Board will proceed informally with the minutes being shared with the membership as soon as possible. Absent members of the Board should review the minutes and respond confirming the Board's decisions are appropriate and reflect the terms of reference.

9.6. These boards will normally be held twice a year for each Pearson programme; one to consider end of year first sits and one to consider re-assessments/deferrals. Although, if programmes are operated on a semester system, there may be intermediate boards at the end of semester one.

9.7. Whilst the majority of Assessment Board activity will be enacted at the Board itself, there may be rare occasions where this is not possible.

9.8. The Chair of the Assessment Board has delegated powers to act between scheduled meetings on:

- Items of routine business that would not normally merit discussion at the meeting;
- Matters relating to the implementation of decisions which have already been approved at previous meetings;
- Issues which arise that, in the view of the Chair, are too urgent and important for consideration to be deferred until the next scheduled meeting.

9.9. In such cases, the Chair will have delegated authority to take action, which may take the form of:

- Calling a special meeting of the Board;
- Consulting with members of the committee by correspondence.

9.10. In all cases the Chair will exercise care before taking action on behalf of the board member and if appropriate, may consult with senior colleagues.

9.11. The Chair may take action on matters of importance where the delaying of a decision would disadvantage the College or the student.

9.12. Where the Chair has exercised delegated authority, a written report of the action taken will be presented to the next scheduled meeting which shall give its formal endorsement or otherwise to the actions.

10 Reassessment and repeating units

10.1. Students will normally be required to make good a failure before progressing to the next level of the programme.

10.2. A student who, for the first assessment opportunity, has failed to achieve a Pass for that unit specification shall be expected to undertake a reassessment which will be authorised by the Assessment Board.

- Only one opportunity for reassessment of the unit will be permitted.
- Reassessment for course work, project or portfolio-based assessments shall normally involve the reworking of the original task.
- For examinations, reassessment shall involve completion of a new task.
- A student who undertakes a reassessment will have their grade capped at a Pass for that unit.
- A student will not be entitled to be reassessed in any component of assessment for which a Pass grade or higher has already been awarded.

10.3. The following applies to a student who, for the first assessment opportunity and resubmission opportunity, still failed to achieve a Pass for that unit specification:

- The Assessment Board can permit a student to repeat a unit if the student has attempted resubmission opportunities.
- The student must study the unit again with full attendance and payment of the unit fee.
- The overall unit grade for a successfully completed repeat unit is capped at a Pass for that unit.
- Units can only be repeated once.

10.4. If a student repeats an RQF unit and still does not achieve a Pass, they will be required to either complete a different unit in full or take the unit as compensation in accordance with relevant Pearson rules and requirements. The External Examiner is likely to want to include assessments that have been re-submitted as part of the sample they will review.

10.5. Compensation (see section 14) can only be granted once the grade decisions have been processed and approved by the Assessment Board. The student must have been given the opportunity of resubmission in the first instance and processed accordingly at the next board. If the student has failed to pass the unit at that stage they can either repeat the unit or take it as compensation. If a student accepts compensation this should be evidenced in writing and confirmation kept in student records and updated on the Assessment Board minutes and action log.

10.6. Compensation can only be awarded if the student has completed the unit. This requires reasonable attendance and submission of all the assessment work for the unit in the first opportunity.

11. Students with mitigating circumstances

11.1. Students who are unable to submit work due to mitigating circumstances should be directed to the Programme Handbook and the Mitigating Circumstances process/form

11.2. Where mitigation circumstances claim for a deferral has been approved by the Academic Services Panel, a student may be reassessed as a first attempt in the elements the student has requested the deferral in.

11.3. If an assessment affected by illness was a reassessment attempt, the student will be permitted to be reassessed as if for the second time. Where a student has passed a unit at a first attempt but his/her performance has been affected by mitigation, the Assessment Board may allow the student an opportunity to be assessed as for the first time. In such cases the second mark will stand.

12. Academic Misconduct

12.1. All cases of academic misconduct are reported and investigated under the Academic Misconduct Policy for Pearson HNC/D's.

12.2. Section 1 of the Academic Misconduct Policy makes reference to the various forms of academic misconduct that fall within the purview of the policy.

12.3. Any sanctions which are imposed by the Academic Misconduct Panel will be reported to the Assessment Board.

13. Progression

13.1. To proceed to Level 5, students must **normally** complete and achieve at least 120 Level 4 credits as specified for Level 4 of the programme concerned and where specified, students will be expected to have successfully completed the required work experience hours.

13.2. Where a student is enrolled on a HND, a student would need to achieve at least 90 credits at Level 4 before progressing to Level 5 units. This allows for the students to submit the remaining 30 credits at Level 4 while undertaking their Level 5 study, by approval of the Assessment Board.

13.3. Students undertaking an HND who fail to successfully complete the full qualification may be awarded an HNC, if their credit achievement permits.

14. Calculation of final award and compensation

14.1. To achieve an RQF BTEC Higher National Certificate qualification a student must have:

- Completed units equivalent to 120 credits at level 4, and;
- Achieved at least a Pass in 105 credits at level 4.

14.2. Compensation provisions for the HNC

Students can still be awarded an HNC if they have not achieved a Pass in one of the 15 credit units completed, but have completed and passed the remaining units.

14.3. To achieve an RQF BTEC Higher National Diploma qualification a student must have:

- Completed units equivalent to 120 credits at level 5,
- Achieved at least a Pass in 105 credits at level 5,
- Completed units equivalent to 120 credits at level 4,
- Achieved at least a Pass in 105 credits at level 4.

14.4. Compensation provisions for HND

Students can still be awarded a HND if they have attempted but not achieved a Pass in one of the 15 credit units completed at level 4 and similarly if they have attempted but not achieved one of the 15 credit units at level 5. However they must complete and pass the remaining units for a HNC or HND as per the unit rules of combination of the required qualification.

14.5. Calculation of the overall qualification grade

- The calculation of the overall qualification grade is based on the student's performance in all units. Students are awarded a Pass, Merit or Distinction qualification grade using the points gained through all 120 credits, at Level 4 for the HNC or Level 5 for the HND, based on unit achievement. The overall qualification grade is calculated in the same way for the HNC and for the HND.
- All units in valid combination must have been attempted for each qualification. The conditions of award and the compensation provisions will apply as outlined above. All 120 credits count in calculating the grade (at each level, as applicable).
- The overall qualification grade for the HND will be calculated based on student performance in Level 5 units only.
- Units that have been attempted but not achieved, and subsequently granted compensation, will appear as 'Unclassified'; i.e. a 'U' grade, on the student's *Notification of Performance*, that is issued with the student certificate.

	Points per credit		Point boundaries
Pass	4	Pass	420 - 599
Merit	6	Merit	600 - 839
Distinction	8	Distinction	840+

15. Appeals

15.1. Grounds for Appeal

An academic appeal can only be based on the following grounds:

- a material error has occurred in the conduct of their assessment, or that the examinations or assessments or the proceedings of the Assessment Board or other relevant body were not conducted in accordance with the relevant regulations or that some other material irregularity in the conduct of their assessment had occurred and that the error, conduct or irregularity was of such a nature as to cause reasonable doubt as to whether their result might have been different had it not occurred. (Material Irregularity)
- the decision of a mitigating circumstances claim decision on either or both the following grounds:
 - i) that the decision of the mitigating circumstances claim was not reasonable (including any decision that the claim or supporting evidence was submitted too late to be considered). If the student's academic achievement or progression was affected by incapacity which clearly prevented the student from submitting a 'Mitigating Circumstances' application in time for due consideration by the Academic Services Panel, or where the student was unable, for valid and evidenced reasons, to divulge information before the Assessment Board reached its decision. The request must be supported by a clear statement detailing the 'incapacity' and/or explaining why the student was 'unable' to submit mitigating circumstances at the appropriate time, together with medical certificates or other documentary evidence acceptable to the Review Panel.
 - ii) that the correct procedures were not followed in the consideration of the claim.

If students wish to submit additional evidence to support a mitigating circumstances claim they should submit this through the mitigating circumstances process in the first instance.

- The decision of an Academic Misconduct Panel on the following grounds:
 - i) there is significant and new evidence which could not have been made available to the original hearing;

- ii) that the original hearing was not conducted fairly;
- iii) that a decision of guilt or the penalty imposed was manifestly unreasonable; in this context, unreasonable shall be taken to mean perverse: i.e. that the decision was not a possible conclusion which a similar hearing might have reached.

The Procedure may not be used:

- i) to challenge the academic judgment of UCEN Manchester staff or to challenge Assessment Boards in reaching a decision on progression or on the final level of award, based on the marks, grades and other information relating to a student's performance. Any such cases will be rejected.
- ii) to challenge the academic judgment of Assessment Boards to express dissatisfaction with results where a case cannot be made under section 15.1 above;
- iii) to pursue allegations that poor teaching, supervision or guidance affected performance. These matters should normally be progressed through the Student Complaints Procedure.

15.2. Students should be directed to the Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure for more information.