

# WHAT'S NEW IN GENERAL REGULATIONS FOR PROGRAMMES IN 2010?

## Aston Credit and Qualifications Framework

Regulatory information on modules, level and credits which is common to all General Regulations for programmes is now included in the Aston Credit and Qualification Framework having been deleted from other General Regulations to reduce duplication.

## General Regulations for all programmes

- Change of name from 'Extenuating Circumstances' to "Exceptional Circumstances" and inclusion of a formal definition in all general regulations

**'Exceptional Circumstances'** are circumstances which cause the student to:

- a perform less well in coursework or examinations than might have been expected on the basis of other work, or
- b fail to meet submission deadlines.

In general, **exceptional circumstances** will be of a medical or personal nature affecting the student for any significant period of time and/or during the examination period and which can normally be corroborated by independent evidence.'

- Guidance on a shared system of penalties for late submission of coursework (Student Guide)
- Provision of a guide to exceptional circumstances for students

## General Regulations for Undergraduate Taught Programmes

Amendments to increase the volume of Assessed Prior Learning permitted for **individual** undergraduate students, which would now read as follows.

- 2.2 The relevant Associate Dean may exempt from part of a programme of study individual students who has satisfactorily pursued a previous programme of study of an appropriate nature and standard. The Associate Dean may award credit to a maximum of two thirds of the total credit required for an Aston award. The extent of the credit awarded must be recorded by the Board of Examiners.
- 2.3 Cohorts of students that have satisfactorily pursued a previous programme of study of an appropriate nature and standard may be exempted from more than one-third of the total credit required for an Aston award subject to approval of the volume and nature of the certificated prior learning by the Programme Approval Sub-Committee (PASC).
- 2.4 An Aston undergraduate degree may only be awarded to students who successfully complete the final academic Stage of study at Aston University.

## General Regulations for Graduate Diploma Programmes

- That the formula defining the thresholds for awards 'with Merit' and 'with Distinction' for awards be amended to remove the requirement that '*students who have been condoned or referred in a module shall not be eligible for an award with distinction or merit*'.
- That the formula for the awards would thus now be "*to achieve the award of distinction students must achieve an average mark of 70% over all modules*" and '*to achieve the award of merit students must achieve an average mark of 60% over all modules*'. The formula for Postgraduate Certificate awards would be identical.

## General Regulations for Postgraduate Taught Programmes

### Criteria for the Awards of Merit and Distinction

- That the formula defining the thresholds for awards 'with Merit' and 'with Distinction' for Master's, Postgraduate Certificate and Postgraduate Diploma awards be amended to remove the requirement

that 'students who have been condoned or referred in a module shall not be eligible for an award with distinction or merit'.

- That the formula for the awards would thus now be "to achieve the award of distinction students must achieve an average mark of 70% over all modules, including a mark of at least 70% in the dissertation" and 'to achieve the award of merit students must achieve an average mark of 60% over all modules, including a mark of at least 60% in the dissertation'. The formula for Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma awards would be identical (amended to remove the requirement regarding dissertations).

#### Other amendments

- a fixed week for postgraduate referred examinations (agreed by all Schools and already in place);
- increase the volume of resits and APL permitted as follows (in response to the increased prevalence of 30 credit modules and internal requests for greater flexibility):  
PgC 30 credits (currently 20)  
PgD 60 credits (currently 40)  
Master's 60 credits (currently 40)
- Increased flexibility in the size of Master's dissertations as follows: MA/MSc/MBA dissertation should not normally be larger than 80 credits or smaller than 60 credits. If a dissertation is worth greater than 60 credits adequate provision must be made for students to exit with a Postgraduate Diploma.
- Schools had agreed a number of minor up-dates to General Regulations for Postgraduate Taught Programmes including: i) A definition of the 'dissertation module' has been introduced (R1.13) replacing the term 'Project Report or Dissertation'. The change allowed greater flexibility for the small number of programmes that wished to offer a multi-component dissertation e.g. some professionally-focused programmes. Other programmes were not affected; and ii) detailed requirements for the format of dissertations (R6.3).

### General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis

Senate approved proposed changes to the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis (all changes had been supported by the Research Degrees Committee and Research Committee):

- that the duration of the part-time MSc By Research be extended to two years;
- that the minimum number of words for the Qualifying Report be changed from 'about 3,000 words or as specified by the School Research Committee' to 'about 6,000 words'; (R8.3a);
- minor change to wording to emphasise further that a Supervisor's participation at the viva voce examination should be limited 'The Supervisor may be invited by the that Examiners or the Independent Chair' (R17b);
- that the Supervisor may nominate an Associate Supervisor to attend the viva voce examination in his or her place.' (R17c)
- that the number of research students a Supervisor may supervise be increased to 9 research students (and a maximum of 6 FTEs) to take account of the increasing number of part-time (including professional doctorate) and distance learning research students;
- for full-time students, an extension of 12 months be permitted (currently a maximum of six months in the first instance, R14.2d);
- for part-time students, an extension of 12 months be permitted (currently up to two years, R14.2.d);
- that the Research Degrees Committee should take responsibility for the approval of waivers of regulations specifically in respect of extensions beyond 4 years for full-time students and 7 years for part-time.
- Every research student must be supervised by a Supervisor who is a member of the Academic Staff, as defined in Section 1 of the Statutes or by an appropriately qualified and experienced senior Research Fellow. Research Fellows may only be appointed as Supervisor when their contract exceeds the expected thesis submission date of the student.
- Where the Supervisor is a Research Fellow a member of the Academic staff must be appointed as Associate Supervisor.