

UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX
UNDERGRADUATE RULES OF ASSESSMENT
(Academic Year 2009-10)

1. Principles of the Rules of Assessment Framework

The Rules of Assessment operate from a framework of higher education qualifications, which work on fundamental underlying principles. These principles can be explained as follows:

1.1) Credit

Credit is an indicator of equivalence of workload. Credit value attaches to learning outcomes, and the achievement of these outcomes (evidenced by gaining at least a pass mark in the required assessments) allows the award of credit. For this reason, a credit rating is attached to each module, and these accumulate to allow awards (evidence of both volume and level of study) to be made. Credits are transportable and can be transferred between institutions, according to their rules of assessment.

Some modules have variations to the generic rules which must also be achieved to be awarded the credit. These variations could for example, take the form of a higher pass mark or have an additional requirement to pass individual parts of assessment such as an exam. In such cases, the additional requirement(s) must be met for credit to be awarded.

(Note that marks above a pass mark do not affect the award of credit, but do determine the award classification (e.g. 2.2, Merit etc.)

1.2) Learning Outcomes

These identify what a successful student is expected to know and understand, together with the skills that they should be able to demonstrate on successful completion of the award. Learning outcomes can be attached to both modules and awards. It is the achievement of the learning outcomes that is important for the award of credit, not how or where the learning took place, nor how it was assessed, nor how long it actually took.

1.3) Assessment

Students usually demonstrate that they have achieved the learning outcomes of a module, course or qualification by completing one or more pieces of assessed work. To be awarded the credits, a student must reach the minimum standard, known as the pass mark. The minimum standard expected for a pass is set out later in this document.

1.4) Levels of Study

Levels (defined in the National Qualifications Framework – see Glossary) are an expression of the intellectual demand placed on the learner at different Stages of study, or the difficulty of the concepts to be engaged with and skills required at each Stage. Level descriptors are guides that help identify the relative demand, complexity and depth of learning and learner autonomy expected at each level, and also indicate the differences between the levels.

If qualifications share the same level this means that they are broadly similar in terms of the demand they place on the learner. Information in Programme Specifications and modules will be expressed in terms of levels.

In general terms Level 4 equates to the University of Essex Stage (Year) 1, Level 5 equates to Stage Two, and Level 6 equates to Stage Three. Level 3 equates to the preliminary year.

1.5) **Components**

University of Essex courses are structured into *components*, which means that students are awarded credit having achieved the learning outcomes within the *component*. This may mean passing more than one module within the component, where for example, a 30 credit component consists of two 15 credit modules. In some cases, each 15 credit module comprises a component on its own.

1.6) **Exit Awards**

For students who register for an award above Stage One but have to withdraw from the University for any reason, the Examination Board may consider them for an intermediary award (e.g. if a student failed to pass the required number of credits in Stage Three, they could be considered for a Diploma of Higher Education). For details of intermediary awards please refer to the Progression and Eligibility sections.

1.7) **Professional Body Requirements**

On programmes which are subject to professional body regulations it should be noted that more stringent requirements may be imposed by the professional body for the purposes of professional qualification and accreditation.

1.8) **Examination Boards**

End of stage Examination Boards make the final decision on the results for modules, progression, awards and degree classification for all students of the University. Examination Board may also employ suitable methods within their powers to exercise discretion in view of a student's extenuating circumstances.

Interim Examination Boards may also be held for some courses, normally those which have variations based on professional, statutory and regulatory body requirements. Interim Boards will consider whether a student is meeting the rules for progression on the programme and if not, whether it is possible to offer any re-assessment opportunities or whether the student must withdraw.

1.9) **Reassessment for Part-time Programmes**

The decisions that Examination Boards can take in relation to students who have failed the stage are based on the volume of credit failed. For students studying on a part-time award the threshold volumes of credit affecting reassessment should normally be 50% of the total number of credits studied during the stage, increased to the nearest viable number of studied credits where necessary (e.g. 15 credits for 30 credits studied, 30 credits for 45 credits studied, 30 credits for 60 credits studied).

1.10) **Maximum Period of Study**

Examination Boards can only offer a repeat period of study if this does not cause the student to exceed his/her maximum period of study. See Table 1 in Section 2 of the Framework for University of Essex Undergraduate Awards for details of the maximum period for each award.