

Staff guide to the forthcoming amendments to the NTU GBA framework

This document provides an outline of the forthcoming amendments that are being made to aspects of the NTU GBA framework.

1. Background

NTU has been using a grade-based approach to assessment for all courses since 2013. The next phase of enhancements to the assessment framework is currently underway. These enhancements have been designed to:

- improve the **transparency** of assessment (for students, staff and external examiners);
- further support academic staff in placing emphasis on **assessment of learning outcomes**;
- ensure decisions about final degree classification reflect NTU values about student achievement.

2. Summary of the changes

The changes being implemented are as follows:

- a. Reinstatement of sub-elements of assessment into the University's regulations and the requirement to record these in Banner.
- b. Changing the GBA framework from the set of non-linear numerical equivalents that are based on the 0-100 percentage scale to a linear grade point scale with the same number of grade bands as is currently the case (and in so doing to discard the articulation of percentage ranges).
- c. Changing the algorithm used for the determination of final degree classification to reflect NTU's grade-based assessment framework.

3. Further details

3.1 Reinstatement of sub-elements of assessment

All assessment tasks and their associated grades will be recorded in Banner. This includes those smaller tasks that make up a single element of assessment. These will be known as 'sub-elements'. (You may have known these previously as 'components' of assessment).

Sub-elements are not used routinely because it is important not to over-assess students. Your School Standards and Quality Committee will approve any applications to use sub-elements, and the way in which the grades for the proposed sub-elements are intended to be aggregated (see also the staff guide on the use of sub-elements).

From January 2017, Student Data and Systems will be beginning to identify and update those modules that require sub-elements to be recorded in advance of the academic year 2017/18.

3.2 Changing to the linear scale

The current arrangements for aggregating element grades to module grades, module grades to stage/level grades and then to final classification rests on a 'behind the scenes' weighted average calculation which is done automatically by Banner. These calculations use a set of numerical equivalents which are attached to each grade band. The numerical equivalents are currently based on a scale of 0-100 and there is a non-linear relationship between numerical equivalents and the grades (for example the range of the numerical equivalents in the first class grade band is considerably greater than the range associated with any of the other bands, with the exception of the 'fail' category). The scale that will be implemented, however, is linear; the Banner calculations are based on 17 equally spaced grade points for undergraduate courses and 14 grade points for postgraduate courses.

There is no change to the way assessment of student work is carried out and no change to the number or description of grades available. The changes purely relate to the Banner calculations once the grades have been entered.

The new numerical equivalents (grade points) are provided in the tables at the end of this paper.

3.3 Changing the degree classification algorithm

Under the current regulations the weighted arithmetic mean of level 6 module grades and, in most cases, a contribution from level 5 module grades is used to calculate undergraduate students' final award classification. The new algorithm will provide for a student's final classification to be based on what grade they have achieved in the majority of their modules (irrespective of the weighted arithmetic mean). A student's final degree classification will be determined by either the weighted arithmetic mean of the contributing grade points (as now), or by the majority grade, whichever results in the higher outcome. The majority grade is determined by establishing the highest degree classification at which more than half the credits have been achieved. For example, for a student's majority grade to be a first class, then more than half the credits need to have been graded at a first; similarly for a student's majority grade to be an upper 2nd, then more than half the credits must have been graded at an upper 2nd or higher

For courses which require that level 5 credits contribute to the final degree classification, the overall level 5 arithmetic mean will be used to represent the equivalent of 20 level 5 credit points in a total of 140 credits. Therefore, for a student's majority grade to be first class, they need to have been awarded first class grades in over 70 credits (from a total of 120 credits from level 6 and 20 credits from level 5).

This approach to using the majority grade in the final degree calculation will also apply to foundation degrees, integrated master's degrees and taught postgraduate degrees.

4. Implementation dates

These changes will be implemented over 2017/18 and 2018/19 as specified in the table below. This timeframe has been agreed in order there are **no changes for cohorts of students during their period of study which contributes to the final award classification.**

	Cohorts affected in 2017/18	Cohorts affected in 2018/19
Sub-elements of assessment	All cohorts of students on courses where sub-elements have been agreed excluding final undergraduate year (L6 students).	All cohorts of all courses (where sub-elements have been agreed)
Linear grade point scale	Foundation degree courses: First year (L4) students Undergraduate degree courses: First year (L4) and second year (L5) students Integrated master's: First year (L4) and second year (L5) students Postgraduate degree courses: First year (L7) students	All cohorts of all courses.
Degree classification algorithm	No cohorts of students being awarded in summer 2018.	Postgraduate cohorts who started studies in 2017/18 (award boards from September 2018). All undergraduate cohorts who moved to linear grade in 2017/18.

4.1 Implications for students on part-time courses

Part-time students who have already accrued credits which contribute to their final degree outcome under the current system will not be impacted by the changes. The non-linear numerical equivalents and the current degree classification determination will continue to apply to these students. For part-time students who have not yet taken modules which contribute to their final award, then the changes will apply according to the timeframe outlined above.

4.2 Implications for students who are repeating modules.

The same principle holds for repeating students: if students have already been graded on modules that will count towards their final award classification, then they will not be impacted by the changes

4.3 Implications for students on placements

The changes will not apply to students on work placements in 2017/18 entering their final year (L6) in 2018/19 but will apply to second year students on work placements in 2018/19.

5. Further information

For further information regarding the planned changes, please email the Assessments Project Manager on sharanjit.rathbone@ntu.ac.uk.

Appendix: Revised grade scales

Grade point scale for undergraduate degrees

Class	Grade	Grade Point	Grade Point Ranges
First	Exceptional 1 st	16	15.5 – 16.0
	High 1 st	15	14.5 – 15.4
	Mid 1 st	14	13.5 – 14.4
	Low 1 st	13	12.5 – 13.4
Upper second	High 2.1	12	11.5 – 12.4
	Mid 2.1	11	10.5 – 11.4
	Low 2.1	10	9.5 – 10.4
Lower second	High 2.2	9	8.5 – 9.4
	Mid 2.2	8	7.5 – 8.4
	Low 2.2	7	6.5 – 7.4
Third	High 3 rd	6	5.5 – 6.4
	Mid 3 rd	5	4.5 – 5.4
	Low 3 rd	4	3.5 – 4.4
Fail	Marginal Fail	3	2.5 – 3.4
	Mid Fail	2	1.5 – 2.4
	Low Fail	1	0.5 – 1.4
Zero	Zero	0	0.0 - 0.4

Grade point scale for taught postgraduate degrees

Class	Grade	Grade Point	Grade Point Ranges
Distinction (excellent)	Exceptional Distinction	16	15.5 – 16.0
	High Distinction	15	14.5 – 15.4
	Mid Distinction	14	13.5 – 14.4
	Distinction	13	12.5 – 13.4
Commendation (very good)	High Commendation	12	11.5 – 12.4
	Mid Commendation	11	10.5 – 11.4
	Commendation	10	9.5 – 10.4
Pass (good)	High Pass	9	8.5 – 9.4
	Mid Pass	8	7.5 – 8.4
	Pass	7	6.5 – 7.4
Fail (insufficient) *	Marginal Fail	6	4.5 – 6.4
	Mid Fail	4	2.5 – 4.4
	Low Fail	2	1.5 – 2.4
Zero	Zero	0	0.0 – 1.4

* the grade points associated with the postgraduate mid fail and low fail grades are non-linear in order to accommodate the necessary integration of the undergraduate and postgraduate scales for some courses