

Section 16B

Nottingham Trent University

Quality Handbook

Part E: Regulations

**Section 16B: Common
Assessment Regulations for
Foundation Degrees**

Results and classifications

Section 16B

Contents

1.	Introduction	1
2.	Changes to the regulations.....	2
3.	Grade based assessment scheme (GBA)	2
4.	Governance.....	2
Module outcomes		3
5.	Determining whether a module has been passed.....	3
6.	Pass or fail outcomes.....	3
7.	Compensation.....	4
8.	Late or no submission.....	4
9.	Failing	6
10.	Reassessment	6
11.	Passing after reassessment	7
12.	Capping of grades after failure.....	8
13.	The effects of extenuating circumstances	8
14.	The effects of academic irregularity	8
15.	Improvement of grades	8
Stage outcomes.....		8
16.	Stage result and progression to the next stage	8
17.	Termination of studies	9
Award outcomes		9
18.	Classification	9
19.	Failure at level 5	10
20.	Higher Certificate	11
Appendix		12

Section 16B

1. Introduction

- 1.1 These regulations set out the rules by which the University determines module results and award classifications for foundation degrees (including the higher certificate interim award) with effect from the 2018/19 academic year. This sits within the broader NTU assessment policy which is articulated in the following sections of the NTU Quality Handbook.
 - a. Section 16: Common Assessment Regulations: Awards and Registration Periods
 - b. Section 15: Assessment
 - c. Section 17A: Notification of Extenuating Circumstances (NEC) Policy and Process
 - d. Section 17B: Academic Appeals Procedure
 - e. Section 17C: Academic Irregularities
 - f. Section 9: External Examining
- 1.2 The principles and regulations of assessment set out in the Quality Handbook are designed to ensure that the University, its Schools and course teams have processes of assessment in place which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes of the award.
- 1.3 Assessment is always a matter of judgment, not simply of computation and regulation. Grades do not represent absolute values but symbols used to communicate examiners' judgments on different aspects of a student's learning. They provide information for a Board of Examiners' final decision on the student's fulfilment of the course outcomes and the achievement of the award standard. Course outcomes capture the learning and attributes developed by the course as a whole – which is normally more than the simple sum of its parts.
- 1.4 This set of regulations provides a framework within which to exercise this judgment so that students are treated with parity across the University's courses. However, boards have discretion to interpret the regulations flexibly for individual students with due consideration to the course outcomes and the award standard. The parameters within which this discretion can be applied are set out within the regulations.
- 1.5 Academic judgments cannot, in themselves, be questioned or overturned.
- 1.6 Unless specific mention is made, the regulations do not distinguish between students on different modes of attendance.
- 1.7 Where indicated, the Board of Examiners (hereafter referred to as the board) and students must refer to the course specific documents for further details of the regulations for the course.

Section 16B

2. Changes to the regulations

- 2.1 The regulations will be reviewed and updated periodically in line with developments in University policy and practice. There may be differences in regulations as they apply to different cohorts of students registered for the same award. Every effort will be made to inform students about proposed changes. Changes will not normally be introduced for implementation in the current year of study but would take effect in the following academic year.
- 2.2 Changes to the regulations are made after appropriate consultation. At University level, proposed changes will be discussed with staff who will be given the opportunity to comment on such changes. Students and external examiners will also have an opportunity to comment. Proposed changes may be modified in the light of feedback.
- 2.3 At course level, students and external examiners should be consulted on any proposed changes to the assessment regime which may affect progression and award requirements. Students must be kept fully informed as to any changes to the regime which affects them.
- 2.4 Where changes affect the material information provided to current and prospective students, the University will ensure appropriate and timely communication of these changes in line with Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) guidance.
- 2.5 The above processes apply to all award bearing courses.

3. Grade based assessment scheme (GBA)

- 3.1 All elements and sub-elements are marked according to the University's foundation degree grade based assessment scheme – see appendix.

Note

- The grade points used to aggregate student grades changed in 2017/18. Students who had already accrued credits that contribute to their final award by the beginning of 2017/18 will remain on the previous GBA scheme and their award will be calculated according to that scheme. Both schemes are provided in appendix 1 and specific regulations related to award classifications of this group of students are provided in appendix 3.

4. Governance

- 4.1 All award and module results (including referral results) are considered and agreed by a board. The terms of reference and operating principles of the board are articulated in the NTU Quality Handbook Section 15: Assessment.

Section 16B

- 4.2 All of the assessed grades contributing to a module or an award remain provisional until confirmed by a board.

Module outcomes

5. Determining whether a module has been passed

- 5.1 The grade(s) awarded to the summative assessment piece(s), is / are used to determine whether or not the module learning outcomes have been achieved, and therefore whether the module credits have been attained.
- 5.2 Where a module has one assessment element, the grade associated with that element goes forward as the module grade and determines whether or not the module has been passed.
- 5.3 Where a module has more than one element of assessment, each individual element contributes to the demonstration of learning outcomes, so each must achieve at least the minimum pass grade. An exception to this is when a marginal fail grade is achieved in an element of a module, then providing at least a low 3rd grade has been achieved for the module as a whole, the student's performance is recorded as a pass for that module.
- 5.4 The minimum grade for a pass is a low 3rd.
- 5.5 The weighted arithmetic mean of the grade points associated with the relevant grades is calculated to arrive at the overall module grade (see also appendix 4).
- 5.6 Occasionally, several assessment tasks (sub-elements) contribute to a single element. Unlike elements, individual sub-elements themselves do not have to be passed. Module specifications describe the way in which sub-elements contribute to an element grade (for example, all grades are equally weighted, or the lowest grade is disregarded). Grade points are accordingly aggregated to arrive at the element grade. When determining whether a module has been passed and the credits attained, it is the element grade(s) that is / are considered.

Note

- The relative contribution of a sub-element of assessment to an overall element grade will have been agreed at approval. These arrangements should be clearly articulated for all stakeholders
- Specific details about how grades are aggregated are provided in appendix 4.

6. Pass or fail outcomes

- 6.1 A course may include competency-based elements that are assessed on a pass or fail basis. These elements are not used to determine the module grade, level result or award classification.

Section 16B

Note

- Competency-based refers to a practical, professional or work-based type of performance assessment that is normally measured as a personal competence against pass and fail criteria.

6.2 Where a student has been admitted on the basis of prior learning or has undertaken study at another institution as part of their course, the credits may be graded on a pass or fail basis. Such credits are not used to determine the module grade, level result or award classification.

7. Compensation

7.1 Because courses are designed such that course learning outcomes are assessed in more than one assessment, a student who has failed a module may be considered to have demonstrated the achievement of the same learning outcomes elsewhere. This can only be properly determined when students have completed an entire stage, although when extenuating circumstances apply, the board may need to use its discretion to determine the most appropriate outcome.

7.2 In acknowledgement of this, boards may decide to award a compensated pass to a failed module where the overall module grade is no lower than a marginal fail or to a failed element where the element has been graded no lower than a mid-fail. In both circumstances, there should be evidence that the student has achieved the minimum pass requirement or higher at the end of the stage, and in the case of a failed element, that all sub-elements have been completed. In cases of a marginal fail grade in an element for which the module has achieved a pass, a pass is recorded automatically without the need for compensation.

7.3 Compensation is restricted to a maximum of 20 credits in any one academic stage, unless extenuating circumstances apply, in which case compensation can be applied beyond 20 credits.

7.4 Where there are no extenuating circumstances but the board is satisfied that the course learning outcomes have been achieved it may exercise its discretion in cases of marginal and mid fail grades and compensate beyond 20 credits.

7.5 Once a module or element grade has been compensated, the grade must not be adjusted.

8. Late or no submission

8.1 A student must submit work for assessment in the required form(s) by a specified time on the dates indicated in the Assessment and Feedback Plan. When students submit work after the specified time, the following rules will apply.

8.2 Where a student is taking a first attempt at a module and submits assessed work after the submission date (and specified time) indicated in the Assessment and

Section 16B

Feedback Plan, the work will be marked if submitted within five working days of the submission date.

- 8.3 Where a student is making a first attempt and submits assessed work by this second deadline (i.e. five working days after the submission date), the maximum grade awarded will be a *low 3rd*. Where the quality of the assessed work falls below the minimum acceptable level (i.e. below a *low 3rd*) a lower grade will be awarded as appropriate.
- 8.4 Students who have been granted a 'time extension' (see below and QH Section 17A) for the first attempt will have the same second deadline (i.e. five working days after the agreed extended deadline).
- 8.5 Where a student is making a first attempt at a module and submits work after the second deadline (i.e. five working days after the official deadline), a *zero* grade will be awarded and examiners must only comment on the work for learning purposes and return it to the student with a *zero* grade.
- 8.6 A course may adopt a shorter timescale than five working days. This should be agreed with ASQC and indicated in the course handbook and other appropriate documentation provided to students.
- 8.7 Where a student is making a referred or repeat attempt at a module (see section 10 below) they must submit work by the submission date and they will not be allowed a second deadline. Work received after the submission date without a 'time extension' will be awarded a *zero* grade. Examiners must only comment on the work for learning purposes and return it to the student with a *zero* grade.
- 8.8 A student who has upheld extenuating circumstances may be granted a 'time extension' to submit work either five or ten days after the submission date. Where a student is authorised to submit work after the submission date, they will not be penalised provided it was submitted within the authorised time extension (see also QH Section 17A).
- 8.9 For modules that are marked on a pass and fail basis, a 'Late Pass' should be recorded by the board for successful work that is submitted after the submission date and without a time extension.
- 8.10 For assessment events (for example examinations) rather than coursework, where a student fails to attend an assessment event and does not have upheld extenuating circumstances, a *zero* grade will be awarded.
- 8.11 Where an upheld extenuating circumstance explains the lack of attendance at an assessment event the University may allow the opportunity for the student to be assessed at the next most appropriate opportunity. Such a decision by the University must be ratified by the relevant board.

Note

- For specific details of the outcomes of claims of extenuating circumstances see Section 17A: Notification of Extenuating Circumstances (NEC) Policy and Process.

Section 16B

9. Failing

- 9.1 A student who has not achieved the minimum module pass grade, and who has not been granted a compensated pass, has failed the module.
- 9.2 Where individual elements do not reach the minimum pass grade, then a decision must be made about how to provide the opportunity for the student to have another attempt (see below) unless the failed element has been awarded a marginal fail and the overall module aggregate is calculated to be at least a low 3rd. In this case, it is considered that the student has demonstrated just enough evidence not to be reassessed and the module grade goes forward.
- 9.3 Where a professional practice placement has been failed, a board can rule that a student may not be eligible to retake that placement.

10. Reassessment

- 10.1 Following a failure of a module, a student has the right to be reassessed on one further occasion.
- 10.2 At level 5, students will not be offered the opportunity to be reassessed until a board has confirmed the decision.
- 10.3 For reassessment in a module, the examination board will decide whether a student should:
 - a. undertake a **referral** in the same academic year; or
 - b. **repeat** the assessment in the following academic year with or without further attendance.
- 10.4 The maximum permitted number of attempts normally allowed for a student to pass a module is two – first attempt and then referral or repeat. At level 4, a board has discretion to authorise a third attempt in appropriate circumstances.
- 10.5 A student may not demand reassessment in a module that is no longer offered in the course. A board may, at its discretion, make special arrangements where it is not practicable for students to be reassessed in the same modules and by the same methods as at the first attempt.
- 10.6 Referral is the normal form of reassessment since it is linked to the student's original module studies and normally will not involve further attendance. As it is linked to the student's original module studies it should take place in the same academic calendar (e.g. August or September for year-long modules) unless there are sound academic reasons for not doing so. If a student fails the referred work, they may be offered the opportunity to repeat the module (with or without attendance). This would be considered a discretionary third attempt (see reg. 10.4 above).
- 10.7 In the case of some failures, it may be appropriate for a board to decide to forego the initial referral opportunity and require a student to repeat the module with or without attendance. Without attendance means that the student is not required to attend classes except those, if any, during which assessment is conducted. If a

Section 16B

student fails the repeat, they may be offered a referral opportunity. This would be considered a discretionary third attempt (see reg. 10.4 above).

- 10.8 In all circumstances of reassessment, where a student has passed other elements, the grades associated with these elements should go forward and the student should not be reassessed in them.
- 10.9 Where a student has a number of failures, which include one or several element(s) within a module for which some elements have been passed, the student should be given a referral in the failed element(s), even when the board has decided that the student should repeat the remaining failed modules. Ideally, this referred element should be reassessed in the same academic year. Where this cannot happen, the referral can take place in the following academic year alongside the modules being repeated. In this situation, the maximum grade that is recorded for this element is a low 3rd. The result for any element(s) passed at the first attempt in the previous year is then used in determining the overall module grade.
- 10.10 The decision about the *type* of reassessment task is made in advance of the examination board by the course team and ratified at the board. Reassessments may take the form of the same kind of assessment(s) or the completion of a different kind of assessment. It may also be that one task is set to assess two or more assessment elements if this is considered fair and valid. If the decision is made that the reassessment should be a rework of an already completed assessment task, the board may decide that the pass grade is higher than a low 3rd. In this case, if the student meets the board's requirement in their reassessment attempt, the student is awarded a low 3rd grade irrespective of the actual grade assigned by the marker. A fail grade should be factored down appropriately.

Note

- All students who are required to undertake referred work during the summer vacation will be given a common date to return work to the University. This will normally be the first day of the referral examination period.

11. Passing after reassessment

- 11.1 The same rules apply to reassessments (referrals or repeats) as they do to first attempts when determining whether an assessment has been passed: students need to achieve at least a low 3rd. When this has not been achieved, a board can consider compensation according to the parameters set out above.
- 11.2 Where a student is referred in more than one element, a low 3rd in each of the referred element(s) is required unless the board sets out an alternative minimum as part of the referral conditions.

Section 16B

12. Capping of grades after failure

- 12.1 The maximum grade for reassessment of a module (both referrals and repeats) where no elements have already achieved above a pass grade is a low 3rd.
- 12.2 When a student has already passed at the first attempt one or more of the elements within a module that was referred or required to be repeated, the student retains their grade(s) for that (those) elements. In these circumstances the student may achieve a maximum overall module grade for a referred or repeated module which is higher than a low 3rd.

13. The effects of extenuating circumstances

- 13.1 When a student has upheld extenuating circumstances and has been given an extension to complete the assessment, the delayed assessment submission is graded as normal and no further compensatory measures are required.
- 13.2 When the extenuating circumstances have resulted in the offer of a first attempt at the assessment at the next available opportunity, the outcome of this attempt will be decided in the same way as if there had been no extenuating circumstances.

14. The effects of academic irregularity

- 14.1 A student who has committed an academic irregularity may be referred in a module or element in order to provide them with the opportunity to meet the learning outcomes. If a student subsequently demonstrates those outcomes, a pass should be recorded, the module is not compensated and the module grade remains zero.

15. Improvement of grades

- 15.1 No reassessment is permitted for a student to improve upon a grade above the pass level required for the award. This includes situations where a student has an upheld case of extenuating circumstances and has a module grade above a pass grade.

Stage outcomes

16. Stage result and progression to the next stage

- 16.1 At the completion of a stage, a stage result for each student is determined by averaging (with appropriate weighting as necessary) the grades of the modules that comprise that stage of study.
- 16.2 When all modules have reached a pass grade, the student is progressed onto the next stage.

Section 16B

- 16.3 A board may use its discretion to allow a student to enter stage 2 carrying a deficiency from a previous stage, normally of up to 20 credits. In some circumstances, a board may exercise discretion and allow a student to progress carrying more than 20 credits provided it is reasonable to allow a student to do so given their overall academic record and the extent of the deficiencies to be retrieved.
- 16.4 At the discretion of a board, a student who is allowed to proceed to the next academic stage carrying a failure(s) in an optional module may be allowed to make good the deficiency in either the same failed module or an approved alternative module of at least the same level and credit value. An alternative module should be treated the same as if it was a repeat module.
- 16.5 Where a student has credits assessed on a pass/fail basis, those credits should be discounted for the purposes of determining the stage result.
- 16.6 Where a course is made up of half-year modules and a progression board is held after the first half-year, this board may allow a student to make good a failure(s) during the second half-year provided it would not overburden the student. Where a student's module grade is a low fail or below, the failure will normally be made good after the end of the academic year.
- 16.7 Course Leaders have authority to inform students of their provisional module result and any approved remedial action to be undertaken during the second half-year.

17. Termination of studies

- 17.1 A board is authorised to terminate a student's studies for the following reasons:
- the student has exhausted the total number of attempts as set out in section 10 above;
 - the student has an overall poor record of performance, attendance, participation or commitment on the course and the board judges that there are no grounds to permit the undertaking of further remedial or repeat modules;
 - major academic irregularities.
- 17.2 A member of the course team should formally counsel a student who has failed modules at the end of the half-year or where progress is giving cause for concern.

Award outcomes

18. Classification

- 18.1 The foundation degree classification is based upon the stage result for level 5, or may include a contribution of no more than a third from the stage result for level 4 as agreed at approval.

Section 16B

- 18.2 Consideration of a student's final award takes place after the student has completed all modules comprising level 5 of the course.
- 18.3 The following classification bands are adopted for foundation degrees and Higher Certificates:

Foundation degree	Minimum grade
Distinction	Low 1st
Commendation	Low 2.1
Pass	Low 3rd

- 18.4 A course may base its award classification on less than 120 credits at a level where it includes a professional practice module assessed on a pass / fail basis (see reg. 6.1). This arrangement must be approved.
- 18.5 The classification calculation for different awards is provided in appendix 2. From September 2018, award board discretion must not be used to alter the classification determined by the calculation¹.
- 18.6 A board may also exercise additional discretion for students who have extenuating circumstances.

19. Failure at level 5

- 19.1 Where a student fails a module(s) at level 5, or has a failure(s) in a trailing module(s), a board may agree one of the following (a - e):
- Allow the student's overall performance to compensate for module failure and award a foundation degree and classification provided the board is confident that the course learning outcomes have been satisfactorily achieved. In this case, a board may apply compensation to a maximum of 20 credits. Where there are no extenuating circumstances but the board is satisfied that the course learning outcomes have been achieved, it may exercise discretion in cases of marginal and mid fail grades, and compensate beyond 20 credits. Where there are extenuating circumstances, a board may ascribe a grade for a module. This would normally have the effect of raising the student's award result.
 - Offer the option of either being re-assessed for a foundation degree on one further occasion in the failed modules or accepting a Higher Certificate (provided the student has achieved sufficient credits). If a student opts for reassessment for a foundation degree, a board may specify a maximum classification that the student can achieve. If a student fails some or all of these reassessed modules, the student may be offered a Higher Certificate.
 - Award a Higher Certificate or allow a student to be reassessed in the failed modules on one further occasion in order to qualify for the award of a Higher

¹ Exceptions to this will be where the board is considering students who continue to be on the previous non-linear percentage-based GBA scheme (see Appendix 1b). In these cases, examination board discretion should follow the principles provided in Appendix 3.

Section 16B

Certificate. A student may be awarded a distinction or commendation provided the student has achieved the appropriate grade. A board may award a named Higher Certificate where the student has not met the precise requirements set out in course documentation (see QH Section 16 reg. 11.2). If a student fails in his / her reassessment for a Higher Certificate they may be offered one further attempt at the discretion of the board.

- d. Require the student to withdraw from the course with no further attempts.
- e. Offer the award of an Aegrotat foundation degree (or Higher Certificate as appropriate). Aegrotat awards do not carry a classification. A student who declines an Aegrotat and instead elects to be reassessed as if for the first time, may not subsequently claim the Aegrotat award if they fail, but may be reassessed for the award.

20. Higher Certificate

- 20.1 A student awarded a Higher Certificate may be awarded a distinction or commendation provided they achieve the appropriate grade.

Section 16B

Appendix

a. GBA grades and grade points for academic year 2018/2019*.

Class	Grade	Grade point	Grade point range
Distinction	Exceptional 1st	16	15.5 – 16.0
	High 1st	15	14.5 – 15.4
	Mid 1st	14	13.5 – 14.4
	Low 1st	13	12.5 – 13.4
Commendation	High 2.1	12	11.5 – 12.4
	Mid 2.1	11	10.5 – 11.4
	Low 2.1	10	9.5 – 10.4
Pass	High 2.2	9	8.5 – 9.4
	Mid 2.2	8	7.5 – 8.4
	Low 2.2	7	6.5 – 7.4
	High 3rd	6	5.5 – 6.4
	Mid 3rd	5	4.5 – 5.4
	Low 3rd	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 - 0.4

* Students who had, by the beginning of 2017/18, already accrued credits that contribute to their final award will remain on the previous GBA scheme as provided in appendix 1b. See also Appendix 3 for specific regulations relating to these students.

Section 16B

- b. GBA grades and numerical equivalents for students who remain on the previous GBA scheme (award credits accrued prior to start of academic year 2017/18).

Class	Grade	Numerical equivalent	Mark range
Distinction	Exceptional 1st	96	100 – 93
	High 1st	89	92 – 85
	Mid 1st	81	84 – 78
	Low 1st	74	77 – 70
Commendation	High 2.1	68	69 – 67
	Mid 2.1	65	66 – 64
	Low 2.1	62	63 – 60
Pass	High 2.2	58	59 – 57
	Mid 2.2	55	56 – 54
	Low 2.2	52	53 – 50
	High 3rd	48	49 – 47
	Mid 3rd	45	46 – 44
	Low 3rd	42	43 – 40
Fail	Marginal fail	38	39 – 35
	Mid fail	32	34 – 30
	Low fail	18	29 – 1
Zero	Zero	0	0

Section 16B

Appendix 2: Calculation of award classification

A student's final degree classification is determined by **either** the weighted arithmetic mean of the contributing grade points or by the majority grade, whichever results in the higher outcome.

Final classification of the award is determined by the **better** of either:

- a. the weighted arithmetic mean of level 4 and level 5 modules, or where level 4 is not specified as contributing to the final award, the weighted arithmetic mean of level 5 modules
- or**
- b. the majority grade of level 4 (if level 5 is specified as contributing to the final award) and level 5 modules, where the majority grade is calculated on the basis of more than half of the credits which contribute to the award achieving a particular classification or higher. The level 4 contribution to this majority calculation is detailed below.

For courses which require that level 4 credits contribute to the final degree classification, the overall level 4 arithmetic mean is used to represent the equivalent of 20 level 4 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 more than 70 credits (from a total of 120 credits from level 5 and 20 credits from level 4).

Section 16B

Appendix 3: Specific regulations associated with previous GBA scheme

The numerical equivalents used to aggregate student grades changed in 2017/8. Students who, by the beginning of 2017/18, had already accrued credits that contribute to their final award, remain on the previous GBA scheme (see appendix 1b above) and their award will be calculated according to that scheme.

In these instances, the classification calculation is based on the numerical equivalents of the grades awarded for all contributing modules, weighted appropriately.

A higher classification may be awarded than that determined by the classification calculation. In order to ensure consistency of decision making, the parameters within which the board may award a higher classification must have been discussed and agreed prior to the start of the board

This discretion must be used only to raise and not lower a student's classification.

In deciding whether to award a higher honours classification, a board should take into account:

- a. the strength of the student's profile of grades across the stage, i.e. whether an acceptable proportion of module grades for a particular student are in a higher honours classification;
- b. information about a student's performance other than the raw module grades achieved, e.g. their particular strengths in important outcomes or curriculum areas, or their special graduate attributes, capabilities or skills.

Section 16B

Appendix 4: Specific information relating to aggregations

For the purposes of calculating overall module, level and award outcomes, grades need to be aggregated. This is achieved by calculating appropriately weighted arithmetic means of associated grade points (see appendix 1).

Whenever grades are aggregated these aggregations are rounded to one decimal place and the student is awarded the corresponding grade. For illustration: (a) if the weighted mean of three elements of a module is 8.44 this is rounded to 8.4 and the student is awarded a mid 2:2 for the module; (b) if the weighted mean of module grades at the end of level 5 is 12.45, this is rounded to 12.5 and the level 5 outcome for the student is first class.

Where such aggregations occur, the actual rounded number that results from the above calculation (and not the associated grade point) is used in the next stage of calculation.

Section 16B

Policy owner
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Change history			
<i>Version:</i>	<i>Approval date:</i>	<i>Implementation date:</i>	<i>Nature of significant revisions:</i>
Sept 2016	30.09.16	01.10.16	Change of reference to 'extenuating circumstances' Additional guidance on sub-elements and minimum pass grades Additional requirement for conventions to be agreed before the examination board Change of nomenclature 'intercalation' to 'leave of absence'
Sept 2016	15.11.16	15.11.16	Clarification of maximum grade for retake modules Removal of reference to the possibility that sub-elements might have to be passed (guidance note 36.6)
Sept 2017	12.09.17	01.10.17	Removal of information about awards and registration periods to new Section 16. Removal of repeated information about Boards of Examiners (already in Section 15) Removal of guidance notes – provided now either as a paragraph note, or, where a requirement, included as part of the formal regulations. Amendments to ensure consistent use of the term refer and repeat. Regulation about examination board discretion amended to reflect forthcoming change to classification algorithm. Additional appendix: GBA grade points from 2017/18.
Feb 2018	15.02.18	15.02.18	Erroneous paragraph removed (previously para. 7.3) referencing previous NEC policy
Sept 2018	12.09.18	01.10.18	Inclusion of information relating to award classifications and grade aggregation (appendices 2 and 4).

Equality Impact Assessment		
<i>Version:</i>	<i>EIA date:</i>	<i>Completed by:</i>
Sept 2015	16.11.15	CADQ