

Policy and Procedure: Translation of Marks from Non-UK HEIs

Policy

The following Policy was approved in 2013 to be used for the translation of marks from non-UK HEIs, for example for students on Erasmus exchange programmes and joint awards. Translating marks is an academic responsibility and all marks require ratification by the relevant Board of Examiners. Where possible, advice should be given to outgoing students before they participate in study abroad in order that students study an appropriate level, volume and subject during their time away from Southampton.

For study abroad which has a direct contribution to a final award, the number and proportion of marks awarded during a period of study abroad should be translated and adjusted to accommodate the Southampton credit model. All study abroad should be listed under a module code in Banner which will contribute to a student's transcript at the end of their programme of study.

1. Incoming students (including students visiting Southampton on exchange programmes, and independent non-graduating students):

Decisions concerning the award of credit and conversion of marks clearly rest with the student's home institution. Having said that, in order to assist the home institution in assessing the performance of its students at Southampton, they (both the home institution and the student) should receive from the University (a) the student's Southampton marks, (b) anonymised mark-sheets from the modules they have taken, and (c) in cases where we have a conversion scale (see table under 4 below), a suggested mark in the home institution's currency.

2. Erasmus Mundus PGT programme students (where the coordinating institution is in Europe):

Each partner provides marks of modules to the co-ordinating institution, so for example Southampton would provide marks each semester for each student with the raw marks locally and also an ECTS score based on the translation table, with the appropriate number of ECTS credits.

ECTS Scale	Definition	Southampton Marks
A	Outstanding performance with only minor errors	80 or over
B	Above the average standard but with some errors	70-79
C	Generally sound work with a number of notable errors	60-69
D	Fair but with significant shortcomings	55-59
E	Performance meets the minimum criteria	50-54
FX	Fail - some more work required before the credit can be awarded	40-49
F	Fail - considerable further work is required	Below 40

With regard to overseas programmes that do not have classification schemes, Faculties should ask UPC for an 'opt-out' from the practice of awarding PGT degrees with merit / distinction.

3. Outgoing UG students (including those participating in exchange programmes and independent study abroad programmes):

The following conversion scale will be used:

ECTS	North America	GPA Range	Southampton Equivalent Mark Range
A	A / A+	3.7 – 4.0 +	70 or over
B	B+ / A-	3.2 – 3.6	60-70
C	B- / B	2.5 – 3.1	55-60

D	C / C+	1.9 – 2.4	50-55
E	D / C-	0.9 – 1.8	40-50
FX	F D-	0.5 – 0.8	25-40
F	F	0.0 – 0.4	Below 25

As new arrangements are set up with institutions abroad, we anticipate that further columns will be added to the left of the table (ideally this should be done at validation stage). Faculties are responsible for the grade equivalencies in any new column; the master table is maintained by the QSA team in the University's Quality Handbook. Should it arise that different Faculties submit different conversion systems for the same institution, the QSA team should highlight this as an issue.

Procedure

In order to determine the precise Southampton mark, the following procedure is used (based on practice at Lancaster University):

- i. Construct a grid with four columns and as many rows as there are overseas marks for a student.
- ii. In the first column list the overseas grades in descending order.
- iii. In the second column enter the appropriate Southampton equivalent mark range from the conversion table above.
- iv. In the third column list in descending order the student's actual Southampton marks for either the semester before or the semester after their period of study abroad, whichever set of marks is stronger.
- v. For each row, reading across, compare the Southampton equivalent mark range to the corresponding actual Southampton mark. Then there are 3 possibilities:
 - if the actual Southampton mark is within the grade range, translate the grade into that mark;
 - if the actual Southampton mark is below the grade range, translate the grade as the lowest mark in the grade range;
 - if the actual Southampton mark is above the grade range, translate the mark as the highest mark in the grade range.
- vi. Enter the mark translations in the fourth column, and use them for determining the Southampton degree class in the normal way.

NB if the student has an F grade, further investigation will be necessary to determine whether it was based on poor performance, or failure to submit work, or academic malpractice.

Worked Example:

Student's ECTS Grades	Southampton Equivalent Mark Range	Southampton Marks from semester pre / post period abroad	ECTS Grade Converted to Southampton Mark
A	70 or over	75	75
B	60-70	71	70
B	60-70	67	67
D	50-55	48	50

Where the procedure followed above leads to a spread of marks significantly out of kilter with a student's Southampton marks, Board of Examiners, including the external examiner, be authorized to set the translated overseas marks aside, and base the student's average (and hence degree classification) on marks earned at Southampton. To encourage students to take their work during their period of study abroad seriously, however, we recommend that the translated overseas marks be recorded on the student's transcript.

We recognise that some overseas institutions provide comprehensive information about a student's performance on their transcripts (including e.g. the total number of students enrolled in the course, the average grade awarded in the course and the percentage of students receiving grades clearly defined in bands). Where this information is provided, it may allow for a more nuanced translation than would be given by the procedure recommended above; in such cases, we recommend that Boards of Examiners be authorised to set aside the procedure suggested above, and translate marks on the basis of the detailed information provided by the overseas institution.

In the case of outgoing students who receive more marks than would have been awarded during the same period of study at Southampton (i.e. four per semester), the best four marks will be taken and other marks ignored. In the case of outgoing students who receive fewer marks than would have been awarded during the same period of study at Southampton, a mark will be extrapolated from the marks. For a semester, if a student returned with three marks, a fourth would be made from the average of the three given; two marks would be doubled, and one mark would be applied four times.

4. Outgoing PGT students.

At present, this represents a vanishingly small cohort; in 2011-12 the University sent 4 such students abroad on Erasmus exchanges. The conversion of marks in such cases is at the discretion of Board of Examiners, following the spirit of the principles specified above.

5. Implementation and review

This translation of marks scheme is effective for all students from the academic year 2013/14.

The scheme should be kept under review to ensure that it works effectively in practice. Faculties should keep the scheme under regular review, reporting any issues to the Quality, Standards and Accreditation Team.

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