

Missing Mark Guidelines

1. Context

- 1.1 From time to time, a Board of Examiners may have to consider reaching decisions based on an incomplete set of marks. This may apply to an individual student who has missed assessment through illness, etc., in which case it will be processed through a Special Considerations Board. Alternatively, it can occur when a set of assignments, marks or scripts are not available or have been lost due to fire, theft, accident, absence of examiner, loss, industrial action, or other possible similar causes. Considerations then apply to a group of students, and will be processed through the main Board of Examiners.

2. Principles

- 2.1 The approach which should be used is essentially the same in either case, and is based on a small number of fundamental principles:
- 2.1.1 Decisions should be based on the evidence available only. Marks cannot be invented.
 - 2.1.2 Consideration should be focussed on the learning outcomes of the programme as a whole, rather than those of individual modules. This is the approach taken already in allowing compensation against failed modules.
 - 2.1.3 Decisions reached should be consistent – all students affected in the same way should be treated in the same way (this does not necessarily imply the same outcome for them all).
 - 2.1.4 Decisions should be fair to the students affected, and also fair to students who are not affected.
 - 2.1.5 Academic standards and professional requirements should be maintained.
- 2.2 So far as possible, programme assessment regulations as published to students should be followed. Where this is not possible, the School may propose modifications to the regulations which will allow the same learning outcomes to be demonstrated by other means. Such modifications should be submitted to the School Programmes Committee (SPC) for approval.
- 2.3 It is assumed that, for cases not involving special circumstances for one student, the marks will eventually become available. How this happens will depend on the circumstances, but may require the setting of special examinations, assignments or other alternative forms of assessment, as determined by the School and approved by SPC.

3. Procedure

- 3.1 Directors of Programmes should inform the Faculty Academic Registrar as soon as they are aware that marks are missing, and should then involve a Deputy Head of School (Education) in discussions as to the approach to be taken, ahead of the formal Board of Examiners. The outcome of these discussions will be reported to the Board of Examiners before recommendations are considered for individual candidates. The Deputy Head of School (Education) (or nominee) should be present in an advisory capacity at the Board of Examiners, and will provide formal approval of the arrangements proposed by the Board. The subsequent decisions will then be ratified by the SPC and recommended to Senate in the normal manner.
- 3.2 Detailed records of all decisions taken should be kept by the SPC in the Minutes of that Committee.
- 3.3 It is recommended that external examiners are briefed ahead of the Board of Examiners.
- 3.4 When results and marks are released, candidates should be informed if they have been treated in a non-standard manner. Marks released at this stage should consist of those actually available. Marks listed on a transcript or Diploma Supplement will include those available at the stage it is issued.

4. Suggested Approach to Making Decisions

4.1 Below are some suggested guidelines as to systematic and rational ways of dealing with missing marks. These are not definitive or exclusive. All cases must be considered on a student by student basis, within the general arrangements agreed for the programme or module, and if these suggestions do not seem to produce a satisfactory outcome, other routes can be taken. Anything other than standard procedure (including the following) must be proposed by the Board of Examiners and approved by the SPC, normally by action of the Chair of the Board of Examiners and Deputy Head of School (Education) as Chair of SPC, with formal reporting through Board of Examiners and SPC minutes.

4.1.1 General Principles (these should be treated in parallel):

- i. In the programme as a whole, what proportion of total marks are missing for the year (progression) or award (finals)? If it is a small proportion (normally up to 15-20%), a decision should be possible. For a large proportion, it may not be. The University will allow 15 ECTS points of failed non-core subjects to be compensated in any one year. This could give a guideline as to what is considered an acceptable proportion.
- ii. In any given module, what proportion of total marks is missing? If it is a small proportion (normally up to 15-20%), then the remainder may be scaled up (i.e. the final module mark will be based on the available module mark expressed as a proportion of the total marks which could be achieved for that proportion of the module and the marks treated as complete (but this is still a change in assessment structure which requires School approval). Another element of a module (e.g. a 50% piece of assessed course work) could be used as evidence to help make a judgement about the overall degree classification in the absence of an overall mark for the module.
- iii. How sensitive is the overall outcome (year pass/fail or degree class) to the missing marks? If any mark cannot affect this, a decision can be reached. If extreme marks could affect it, but realistic marks would not, it should also be possible to make at least an interim decision.

4.1.2 Dealing with Core Subjects (subjects which must be passed):

- iv. Is there enough evidence (other marks, formative assessments during the year, etc.) to demonstrate that elements of the module that are not assessed elsewhere in the programme as completed to date have been assessed, and that the module objectives relating to those elements have been achieved; and also that other Learning Outcomes have been adequately assessed elsewhere in the programme to date? If the answer to these questions is positive, then it will be possible to make a decision about the student's achievement in the core module in question. If it is *not* possible to answer both these questions positively, then it may not be possible to recommend an outcome for the module in question and the course of action recommended in 4.1.4 (continuing students) or 4.1.5 (finalists) below will apply.
- v. To what extent are the objectives achieved by participation (i.e. a process learning objective) as opposed to assignments? An example of this would be "the ability to plan a project", when the project has been completed but the marks are not available.

4.1.3 Dealing with Non-core Subjects:

- vi. University regulations allow up to 15 ECTS points of non-core subjects to be compensated. This implies that the programme learning outcomes are met, even if one or more modules have been failed.

4.1.4 Issues specific to Continuing Students:

- vii. In considering progression, where missing marks have been disregarded the benefit of the doubt should be given to the student and a subject pass assumed. The boundaries for compensation/referral should be based on the aggregate of available marks, and the normal rules applied.
- viii. In the case of level two of undergraduate programmes or level two/level three of integrated Masters programmes, calculation of a mark to be carried forward should await the availability of the missing marks.

- ix. If a student has failed more than the maximum number of fully marked modules allowed for them to progress into the following part of the programme, they should be required to take referrals/repeats in the normal manner.
- x. If a student is allowed to progress, then once the marks are available and it turns out that they have failed, and this would have resulted in a referral, the student should be given the option to take a referral. This will give the student the chance of raising the mark in that module in the normal way. Informal remedial work might also be advisable, and the School should provide tutorial support for this. Academic counselling should be provided.
- xi. Any student allowed to proceed on the basis of an incomplete set of marks should be informed of the circumstances.

4.1.5 Issues specific to Finalists:

- xii. The same considerations apply to students in their final part as for continuing students. In addition there will be issues relating to degree outcomes.
- xiii. Where there is a significant chance that the missing marks would move the student on the borderline of two degree classifications to a higher classification, this should be recommended. Such a student will not be moved back to the lower classification whatever the marks eventually are. Where there is a possibility, but not a strong likelihood, of the higher classification, the lower one should be recommended, with a possibility of later change of classification.
- xiv. Where it has been possible to determine a degree classification despite missing marks, candidates' names will appear on the pass list in the usual way. Schools should use two footnotes on pass lists to distinguish between:
 - those students for whom there are marks missing, but where the availability of the missing mark cannot affect the final classification; and
 - those students where the availability of marks could result in a higher classification. They will receive a certificate for the lower classification but will be issued with an updated certificate should the eventual marks indicate the higher classification.
- xv. It must be made clear that no student will be given a lower classification once the marks are available.
- xvi. Academic counselling should be provided to clarify the situation to the students concerned.
- xvii. If it is already clear that a student has failed their award, he/she should be omitted from the pass list and notified in the usual way.
- xviii. Where the number of marks missing is such that it is not possible to assess whether core module or programme learning outcomes are met, or there are Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) ('fitness to practice') requirements, it may not be possible to recommend an award. Such students should appear on a separate list recorded as 'decision pending' or similar. They will be provided with as much information as possible on their academic attainment, with an explanatory letter.
- xix. Transcripts and Diploma Supplements should include the marks available at the time they are issued, which will not necessarily be those on which decisions were based. This should be made clear to students at the time of issue.

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