

GENERAL REGULATIONS INFORMATION PAPER: JULY 2016

Revisions to the General Regulations: University Calendar for Undergraduate Students for 2016-17

These revisions were approved by Education Committee on 23 May 2016 and Academic Council on 8 June 2016.

III Regulations for Students

The most significant changes to the regulations are summarised below:

(i) Regulations for Students 1.10

This regulation has been amended to clarify that dissertation modules on Integrated Master's programmes may also equate to 60 CATS. The amended regulation reads:

Module value: *allowed module values are 0.5 (half module); 1.0 (module); 1.5; 2.0 (double module). Dissertations on ~~taught postgraduate~~ Master's programmes may, ~~and normally will~~, have a value of 3.0 or greater. In the regulations, references to a 'module' or 'modules' mean modules with a value of 1.0.*

(ii) Regulations for Students 1.20 xviii

This regulation has been clarified to ensure it is clearly understood that a graduand is not considered a registered student of the University. The regulation has been amended to read:

A graduand is ~~a student who~~ an individual who has successfully completed a programme of study and is qualified to graduate. A graduand is not a registered student.

IV Study Regulations

The most significant changes to the regulations are summarised below:

(i) IV Study Regulations 1.1.2

The following has been added to this regulation to provide clarification on credit and notional hours and the maximum total of credits that a student may register onto per stage:

Completion of a stage will require a notional 1200 hours of student engagement. This includes timetabled sessions, independent study, directed learning and assessment. It also includes time allocated to personal, academic and career development. Students will not normally be permitted to register on modules totalling more than 120 credit points in one stage.

(ii) IV Study Regulations 1.3.13

This regulation has been amended to clarify the process for exceptional circumstances during the assessment period and during the teaching period. The amended regulation reads:

Evidence of exceptional circumstances and their impact on academic performance presented during the Assessment period will be considered by the School Exceptional Circumstances Committee which meets prior to the Board of Examiners and makes recommendations to the Board regarding concessions on the basis of exceptional circumstances. Evidence of exceptional circumstances and their impact on academic performance presented during the Teaching period, in relation to continuous assessment, will be considered by the School Exceptional Circumstances Committee, except where a decision is required before the next scheduled meeting of the Committee, in which case the evidence will be considered by the Chair of the School Exceptional Circumstances Committee plus one other appropriately qualified person within the School and reported to the next meeting of the Committee.

(iii) IV Study Regulations 1.4.63-65

This regulation has been amended to introduce further clarity on resit examinations and assessment. The amended regulation reads:

Where a student has failed to pass a module at any level, all Schools should provide an opportunity for students at all levels to resit, or exceptionally take as a first sitting, an assessment which contributes to the requirements for passing the module at or before the designated resit period before the end of the academic year. It is accepted that it may not be possible to arrange this where a student is required to retake elements of assessment for which achievement of the learning outcomes cannot be satisfactorily assessed by a resit opportunity within the same academic year (for example, placements, major projects, some forms of group work and compulsory practical elements). In such instances, the reassessment will take place at the earliest possible opportunity, under the appropriate conditions. ~~Where a student is required to retake a placement it is accepted that it may not be possible to arrange this before the end of the academic year.~~ Where there is more than one element of assessment for a module, Regulations 1.3.2-1.3.4 provide the framework for identifying which assessments students should be permitted and required to undertake.

Where a ~~resit module~~ will be capped at the pass mark the student may be permitted to provide an alternative piece of coursework for assessment to demonstrate that s/he has met the required learning outcomes. This is subject to the discretion of the Board of Examiners and will take into account the level of failure.

Where a ~~resit module~~ will not be capped at the pass mark, the student will be required to sit a resit examination or submit an alternative piece of coursework which demonstrates that s/he has met the required learning outcomes.

The University Policy on the Management of Resit Examinations or Assessment will be updated to reflect the changes to Study Regulations 1.4.63-65.

(iv) IV Study Regulations 1.4.69

The following regulation has been added to address an omission in the regulations:

Revocation of Awards

In accordance with the Charter and the Statutes, the authority to revoke a degree or other award of the University rests with the Vice-Chancellor and President, following a recommendation by the Education Committee.

V Academic Appeal Regulations (Taught Programmes) (previously Central Student Appeals Committee)

From October 2016 the University will come under the jurisdiction of the Northern Ireland Ombudsman. This means that at the conclusion of academic appeals, the student must be made aware that they have further recourse to the NI Ombudsman. This will replace the Board of Visitors.

The Ombudsman has also indicated that a two stage appeals process would be expected of the University's internal procedures prior to referral to the Ombudsman. The significant change to the regulations introduces a Faculty Student Appeals Committee (FSAC) which would consider the appeal and School response on paper and have the authority to uphold or dismiss the appeal. The central sifting stage of the process will remain in place and the FSAC would meet after sifting has been completed, therefore will only consider those appeals that have raised a *prima facie* case. If the student does not accept the outcome of the FSAC, they can then appeal to the Central Student Appeals Committee (CSAC). The full administration of this process would remain with Academic Affairs.

The structure of the regulations has also been substantially revised to make common principles for each stage explicit and limit duplication of information.

VI Conduct Regulations

The substantive amendments include:

(i) Regulation 3.7

An additional offence of 'Fabrication / falsification of evidence provided to the University' has been added to cover cases of medical evidence or other documentation submitted to the University which is found to have been fabricated or falsified (for example, fabricated medical evidence submitted in support of an exceptional circumstances application to obtain an extension to a deadline for submission of a piece of assessed work).

(ii) Regulations 7.1 and 7.2

The membership of the Committee of Discipline has been amended to include a Director of Education, in line with the current membership of the Student Discipline Appeals Committee. In certain instances, where it is not possible to obtain the appropriate availability, the academic member may be replaced by a second Disciplinary Officer.

The structure of the regulations has also been substantially revised to make common principles across the stages explicit and limit duplication of information.

VIII Procedures

1. Procedures for Dealing with Academic Offences

Following a number of allegations of research misconduct involving postgraduate research students, it was agreed in principle that any academic offences which relate to postgraduate research students be considered using the Regulations Governing the Allegation and Investigation of Misconduct in Research, which currently applies to University staff only. Therefore, the major change is to exclude investigations involving postgraduate research students from the Procedures for Dealing with Academic Offences.

The Research Governance and Integrity Committee considered this recommendation and the revised Regulations Governing the Allegation and Investigation of Misconduct in Research on 18 May 2016. The Committee agreed, subject to minor revisions, to endorse the Regulations Governing the Allegation and Investigation of Misconduct in Research to the Research and Postgraduate Committee for consideration. The revised Regulations Governing the Allegation and Investigation of Misconduct in Research will be published upon approval and will be referenced within the Procedures for Dealing with Academic Offences.

The structure of the regulations has also been substantially revised to make common principles across the stages explicit and limit duplication of information.

2. Fitness to Practise Procedure

A comprehensive review of the Fitness to Practise (FtP) Procedure was carried out in 2016 to take account of the Draft Guidance from the General Medical Council and Medical Schools Council which was published in August 2015.

The FtP procedure applies to all accredited courses across the University. Consultation was carried out with the appropriate Schools, Institutes and University Colleges and regulatory bodies were also contacted in relation to specific queries.

The substantive amendments include:

- (i) 'General Principles', many of which are common to all University procedures, have been stripped out of the procedure and set out in a section at the beginning of the Procedure (e.g. the right to be accompanied).
- (ii) Some 'General Principles' have been added (e.g. Duty of Candour, Disclosure of investigations into criminal activity or criminal convictions, Confidentiality, Transfer of Information).
- (iii) The following amendments were inserted following guidance issued by the General Medical Council and General Dental Council:
 - (a) Regulation 1.13 now explicitly states that the FtP test used by the regulatory body may differ from the test used by the University or a particular School; acceptance onto a programme of study does not necessarily mean that the relevant regulatory body will agree to register a student.
 - (b) Regulations 1.31-1.32 Excluded Student Database – at present this applies solely to Medicine, Dentistry and Pharmacy. The Excluded

Student Database is a protocol which was developed by the Medical Schools Council, the Dental Schools Council and the Pharmacy Schools Council to prevent students who have been expelled by one university being admitted onto an accredited programme at another university or students who have been expelled from a programme of study being admitted to another accredited programme within the same university.

- (c) Regulations 1.27-1.28 – the requirement to disclose any involvement in the Fitness to Practise Procedure (even where the case is dismissed following investigation). The General Dental Council has confirmed that this is required, although it is not required by most other regulatory bodies, including the General Medical Council.
- (d) Regulation 1.59 ii and iii – the Head of School, in consultation with the Director of Academic and Student Affairs, may now impose a warning or require a student to give an undertaking at the investigation stage.
- (e) Regulation 1.68 the University reserves the right to proceed with a Fitness to Practise Panel hearing even where a student withdraws from the University/Institute/College. This is to prevent a student who was facing expulsion from withdrawing and thereby avoiding being registered on the Excluded Student Database.

3. Student Complaints Procedure

The procedure has been extended to include complaints against a registered student of bullying or harassment. (6.ii and 6.iii). Complaints of bullying and harassment had previously been managed through a different process which had led to confusion for both staff and students using the procedure.

4. Guidelines on Fitness to Study on the Grounds of Health and/or Safety

The substantive amendments include:

- (i) Amendment to the name of guidelines to 'Guidelines on Fitness to Continue in Study on the Grounds of Health and/or Safety'
- (ii) The document has been amended throughout to reflect changes to staff supporting the procedure, particularly with the introduction of the Resilience & Wellbeing Service.
- (iii) The following has been added to the introductory text to emphasise the focus of the process on supporting students to remain in study where possible, noting reasonable limitations, and reduce the perception of the process as a punitive measure. This reads as:

These Guidelines aim to support students to remain on their programme of study wherever possible; however, it is acknowledged that there are occasions where all options of support have been exhausted (Informal Stage), and the student is not well enough to continue. In such instances this process may recommend or require temporary withdrawal from studies.

- (iv) Paragraph 1.2 has been added to encompass the range of activities which may be impacted by a deterioration in student wellbeing or mental health, clarifying that the process may also apply to other elements of the University environment outside of studies, and to include a student's ability to engage with responsibilities established by the University's regulations and procedures.

Fitness to continue in study includes a student's ability to cope with University life and remain in the study environment. This includes being able to take the responsibility expected of all students in upholding the University's regulations and engaging with relevant procedures as outlined in the Student Charter (see Section II: Student Charter).

- (v) Paragraph 1.6 has been added to clarify existing process concerning students undertaking a placement or period of study abroad.

These guidelines apply to any person currently enrolled as a student at Queen's University Belfast. However, if undertaking a placement or period of study abroad, the relevant organisation or institution may have their own policies and procedures which need to be followed.

4. Guidelines for Schools on Exceptional Circumstances

The substantive amendments include:

- (i) The content has been re-arranged to set out General Principles at the beginning of the Procedure.
- (ii) Within Section 3 'General Principles', the following has been added to place a greater emphasis on the need to consider the impact any exceptional circumstances may have had on a student's ability to study or to perform academically:

Although evidence will be required of the exceptional circumstances which the student claims have affected his/her academic performance (eg the death of a family member), it is evidence of the impact that the exceptional circumstances have had on the student's ability to study or perform academically (rather than the exceptional circumstances themselves) that the School Exceptional Circumstances Committee (SECC) should consider. In certain circumstances, it may not be possible or appropriate for the student to provide detailed evidence (eg confidentiality surrounding the serious illness of a family member). In such circumstances, the student should provide confirmation of the relative's illness from a GP (without details) and medical evidence of the impact this has had on the student.

- (iii) Section 5. 'Forged or falsified evidence' has been added to clarify where a student has submitted evidence in support of an application for exceptional circumstances and it is suspected that that evidence may have been fabricated or falsified, the matter should be investigated in accordance with the Conduct Regulations.

- (iv) Section 6. 'Procedure' has been amended to reflect changes to the Study Regulations.

5. Student Disability Policy and Guidelines

The substantive amendments include:

- (i) The document has been amended throughout, to make the support as inclusive as possible for all students with additional needs. This includes changes to the following terminology:

~~disabled~~ students with a disability or long term condition

- (ii) Section 5 'Admission to the University' has been updated to reflect the current Admissions Policy.

6. Student Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy

The substantive amendments include:

- (i) The separate procedure which was followed under this policy has been removed. Complaints of bullying and harassment will now be dealt with initially under the Student Complaints Procedure. Where appropriate, the Conduct Regulations may then be invoked and the complaint dealt with as an allegation of misconduct.
- (ii) The definition of 'harassment' has been clarified and now explicitly includes all forms of harassment over and above those set out in the Equality legislation.

Revisions to the General Regulations: University Calendar for Postgraduate Students for 2016-17

In addition to the amendments noted above for undergraduate students which may also apply to postgraduate students and will therefore be reflected in the University Calendar for Postgraduate Students, the most significant changes to the University Calendar for Postgraduate Students are summarised below.

These revisions were approved by Research and Postgraduate Committee on 18 May 2016 and Academic Council on 8 June 2016.

VI Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes

The most significant changes to the regulations are summarised below:

- (i) Study Regulation 3.4

Rewording of the minimum residency requirement for external/distance learning students, specifying an annual visit for the duration of the programme.

- (ii) Study Regulations 4.3 and 7.2.3

Removal of withdrawn programmes, and an amendment to the description of the first year of an Integrated PhD programme.

- (iii) Study Regulations 5.3.5, 6.5.7 and 7.7.9

Rewording in line with the proposed changes to Study Regulation 8.

- (iv) Study Regulations 6.1.6 and 6.1.7

These regulations have been amended to permit, on an exceptional basis, individual staff to be approved as a principal supervisor following consideration of relevant experience.

- (v) Study Regulation 6.6.1

This regulation has been amended to specify that the School Postgraduate Research Committee should be chaired by the Head of School (or nominee of senior lecturer or above), in order to provide an appropriate level of experience to the role.

- (vi) Study Regulation 7.3.3

The following has been amended in line with the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications, 2014:

7.3.3 Holders will have:

- i. The qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:*
a. The exercise of initiative and personal responsibility.

- (vii) Study Regulations 7.6.5 – 7.6.7

These regulations have been amended to specify the criteria for the appointment of external examiners, and to permit those who have been appointed as a principal supervisor under regulation 6.1.6 to be nominated as an internal examiner.

- (viii) Study Regulation 7.7.5

Some examiners have reported confusion regarding the terms minor corrections and minor revisions. Following a discussion with the Deans of Postgraduates (or equivalent titles) simpler, time-bound categories have been agreed.

- (ix) Study Regulation 7.7.8

This regulation has been amended to bring the Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes in line with those for undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes.

- (x) Study Regulation 7.9.2

This regulation has been added to support the electronic deposit and storage of postgraduate research theses, enabling Open Access as mandated by RCUK.

- (xi) Study Regulation 8

From October 2016 the University will come under the jurisdiction of the Northern Ireland Ombudsman. This means that at the conclusion of academic appeals, including appeals by research degree students, the student must be made aware that they have further recourse to the NI Ombudsman. This will replace the Board of Visitors.

The Ombudsman has also indicated that a two stage appeals process would be expected of the University's internal procedures prior to referral to the Ombudsman. The significant change to the regulations introduces a Faculty Student Research Appeal Committee (FSRAC) which would appoint an investigating officer to carry out an initial investigation of the appeal and, upon consideration of the investigation report, have the authority to uphold or dismiss the appeal. If the student does not accept the outcome of the FSRAC, they can then appeal to the Central Student Research Appeals Committee (CSRAC). The administration of this process would remain with Academic Affairs.

The structure of the regulations has also been substantially revised to make common principles for each stage explicit and limit duplication of information.

VII Study Regulations for Higher Doctorates

The most significant change to the regulations is summarised below:

- (i) Study Regulation 3.3.5 and 5.6.5

Rewording in line with the proposed changes to the Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes, regulation 8.

- (ii) Study Regulation 4

This regulation has been added to specify the criteria for the appointment of an adviser to support a student registered for a Higher Doctorate.

- (iii) Study Regulation 5.5.1, 5.5.4 and 5.5.5

These regulations have been amended to clarify the required number of examiners; and to specify the criteria for appointment, and appropriate level of experience, of examiners for Higher Doctorates.

- (iv) Study Regulation 5.6.4

This regulation has been amended to bring the Study Regulations for Higher Doctorates in line with those for undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes.

- (v) Study Regulation 5.8.2

This regulation has been added to support the electronic deposit and storage of postgraduate research theses, enabling Open Access as mandated by RCUK.