

UNIVERSITY OF ESSEX

Postgraduate Taught Course Credit Framework Academic Year 2015-2016

1. *What courses are covered by the Postgraduate Taught Course Credit Framework?*

The Postgraduate Taught Course Credit Framework covers the following awards: Masters degrees, PG Diplomas, PG Certificates, Integrated Masters degrees (Final Stage only).

It also covers the Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate which take place subsequent to undergraduate study but are not postgraduate in level.

2. *Principles of the Credit Framework*

The Rules of Assessment operate from a framework of higher education qualifications, which work on fundamental underlying principles. These principles can be explained as follows:

2.1) *Levels of Study*

Levels (defined in the National Qualifications Framework) are an expression of the intellectual demand placed on the learner at different Stages of study, or the difficulty of the concepts to be engaged with and skills required at each Stage. Level descriptors are guides that help identify the relative demand, complexity and depth of learning and learner autonomy expected at each level, and also indicate the differences between the levels.

If qualifications share the same level this means that they are broadly similar in terms of the demand they place on the learner. Information in Programme Specifications and modules will be expressed in terms of levels.

Level 7 equates to Masters' Level outcomes.

Level 6 and level 5 equate to the modules offered as part of a Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate.

2.2) *Learning Outcomes and Assessment*

These identify what a successful student is expected to know and understand, together with the skills that they should be able to demonstrate on successful completion of the award. Learning outcomes can be attached to both modules and awards. It is the achievement of the learning outcomes that is important for the award of credit, not how or where the learning took place, nor how it was assessed, nor how long it actually took. Students usually demonstrate that they have achieved the learning outcomes of a module, course or qualification by completing one or more pieces of assessed work. To be awarded the credits, a student must reach the minimum standard, known as the pass mark. The pass mark is published in the Rules of Assessment for the award.

2.3) **Credit**

Credit is an indicator of equivalence of workload. Credit value attaches to learning outcomes, and the achievement of these outcomes (evidenced by gaining at least a pass mark in the required assessments) allows the award of credit. For this reason, a credit rating is attached to each module, and these accumulate to allow awards (evidence of both volume and level of study) to be made. Credits are transportable and can be transferred between institutions, according to their rules of assessment.

Some modules have variations to the generic rules which must also be achieved to be awarded the credit. These variations could for example, take the form of a higher pass mark or have an additional requirement to pass individual parts of assessment such as an exam. In such cases, the additional requirement(s) must be met for credit to be awarded.

Students usually demonstrate that they have achieved the learning outcomes of a module, course or qualification by completing one or more pieces of assessed work. To be awarded the credits, a student must reach the minimum standard, known as the pass mark. The pass mark is normally 50 at level 7, but any variations will be set out in the Rules of Assessment for the course. The pass mark for level 5 and 6 modules on the Graduate Diploma and Certificate is 40, as these awards are not at masters' level. Any variations will need to be approved and will be published in the Rules of Assessment for the course.

2.4) **The amount of credit which is required for Postgraduate Qualifications**

Courses must comprise the following number of credits. Any variations would need approval:

Masters' degree:	180 level 7 credits Where students are taking courses which include modules with different credit weightings (see 2.5 below), an upper level of 185/190 level 7 credit credits will be permitted)
Integrated Masters (4 years)	120 level 7 credits (and 360 credits at Undergraduate levels – see Undergraduate Credit Framework)
Integrated Masters (5 years)	120 level 7 credits (and 480 credits at Undergraduate levels – see Undergraduate Credit Framework)
PG Diploma:	120 level 7 credits
PG Cert:	60 level 7 credits
Graduate Diploma:	120 credits which comprise 90 level 6 credits and 30 level 5 credits.
Graduate Certificate:	60 credits which comprise 45 level 6 credits and 15 level 5 credits.

The University has also approved courses at masters' level which comprise the following number of credits:

MRES degree¹: 360 level 7 credits

MFA degree²: 300 level 7 credits

Details of the permitted amount of condonement of failed credits are stated in the Rules of Assessment.

A full-time Masters programme comprising 180 credits is normally 12 months long (ie. not an academic year of only three terms)³ Variations would need approval.

2.5) Credit Weightings of modules

The University's preferred model is:

Full-year courses: 30 credits

Half-year courses: 15 credits

When the Credit Framework was introduced in 2007/08 departments were permitted to opt for an alternative model which had to be applied to all courses run by the department:

Full-year courses: 40 credits

Half-year courses: 20 credits

The workload for a 40 credit course must be greater than for a 30 credit course (the same applies for 20 and 15 credit courses).

Variations have been approved for MBA courses where 10 credit modules are permitted. A variation would need approval to include 10-credit modules on any other courses.

Departments running 20/40 credit modules must ensure that if a course structure permits students to take an option from another department with 30/15 credit modules, a minimum of 180 credits will still be undertaken.

2.6) Credit Weighting of the Dissertation

All Masters' courses must comprise a dissertation or equivalent element which must be passed. Dissertation credit weightings must normally be between 60 credits (one third of the total) and 90 credits (one half).⁴ Variations would need approval.

2.7) Exit Awards

Students who register for an award but have to withdraw from the University, or who do not meet the requirements for the main award, may be considered by the Examination Board for an exit award. Depending on the structure of the course, and

¹ This is an example of a course approved in Government.

² This is an example of a course approved in East 15.

³ Full-time professional Masters' courses in Health and Human Sciences are 24 months long.

⁴ Variations have been permitted for Economics where the dissertation is 40 credits and Health and Human Sciences where the equivalent to the dissertation element is 30 credits.

the elements they have passed, the student might be eligible for a PG Diploma or a PG Certificate if they are enrolled on a Masters course. If they are enrolled on a PG Diploma, or in the Final Stage of an Integrated Masters' course, they might be eligible for a PG Certificate. If they are enrolled on a Graduate Diploma they might be eligible for a Graduate Certificate.

The title of the exit award will be the same as for the main course, unless a different title has been approved in order to meet Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body requirements.

2.8) **Professional Body Requirements**

On programmes which are subject to professional body regulations it should be noted that more stringent requirements may be imposed by the professional body for the purposes of professional qualification and accreditation.

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