1. **Guidance on Key Changes to Regulations for 2015/16**

The purpose of this guidance is to inform you about changes that the University is making to its regulations in three areas:

1. Changes to the terminology used to indicate the level of modules, programmes and the credits and awards associated with these;
2. A change in the Level 7 pass mark from 40 to 50;
3. A change to the formula for calculating the classification of undergraduate sub-degree programmes, such as certificates, diplomas, foundation degrees, graduate certificates and graduate diplomas, and for calculating the classification of taught postgraduate programmes, such as postgraduate certificates, postgraduate diplomas and master’s degrees.

This guidance will help you understand the nature of the changes, why they are happening and whether or not they will affect you.

2. **Changes in the terminology used to denote module and programme level**

The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (the FHEQ, as published by the Quality Assurance Agency) sets out the levels of various academic awards, beginning with the entry level undergraduate certificate through to doctoral awards such as the PhD. The previous version of the FHEQ used particular terms to indicate these different levels of academic achievement (Certificate, Intermediate, Honours, Master’s) which were commonly shortened to single letter abbreviations when attached to modules and programmes (‘C’, ‘I’, ‘H’, ‘M’), and you have probably seen these terms either in the full or shortened forms when used in the online module catalogue and in other relevant guidance. But we are advised that we cannot use this terminology anymore.

**What has changed?**

The FHEQ has abandoned the letter-based terminology and has replaced these with numeric terms. These new number-based terms map on to the previous alpha-based terminology as below:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Pre-certificate level</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>HNC\nCertificate of HE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>HND\nFoundation Degree\nDiploma of HE</td>
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<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree with Hons\nGraduate Diploma\nGraduate Certificate</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Master’s Degree\nPostgraduate Diploma\nPostgraduate Certificate</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Doctorates</td>
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From this point forwards the University must use the numeric-based indicators of level (second column) when referring to the level of its modules, programmes, credits and academic awards.

What else has changed?

Nothing else in this area has changed. The level descriptors attached to these labels, which set out the progressive levels of attainment required from students at each level, remain unaltered. No more is required of you than it has been in the past in order for you to be successful. The change is entirely presentational.

If you wish to view the level descriptors you can find them at http://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/credit-framework/creditinfoannex2.html.

When is it happening?

The University is planning to make the bulk of the changes over the summer vacation 2015. Centrally-held documentation, such as the Credit Framework, is relatively straightforward to amend. But the references to module and programme level in the old alpha-based terminology are widespread and can be found in all sorts of publications, such as module guides and student handbooks, as well as in other media such as the Student Data System (SDS) and the Online Module Catalogue. Steps are being taken in several areas to bring all of this information in line with the numeric-based terminology. Inevitably, some references may be missed. Should you come across any remaining alpha-based references to module or programme level, please feel free to let us know at QA@kent.ac.uk and we will look to have it updated.

3. **Change in the Level 7 Pass Mark from 40 to 50**

In 2004 the University standardised the pass mark for modules at all levels at 40. Since 2004, however, a significant groundswell of opinion has emerged in several quarters (in particular in the Humanities and Social Sciences and with support from many External Examiners) that in order to appear consistent with practice in some other UK universities and in Europe the University should set the pass mark at level 7 (formerly known as level ‘M’) at 50. This has now been agreed.

**When does the change in the pass mark at level 7 take place?**

The pass mark for all taught modules at level 7 will be 50 from the start of the 2015/16 academic year. This applies regardless of whether the level 7 module is taken as part of a taught postgraduate programme (PG Certificate, PG Diploma, Master’s degree) or an undergraduate programme (honours degree, four-year Integrated Master’s degree).

The key principle to remember is that level 7 modules taken in 2014/15 or earlier were marked to a pass mark of 40; whereas all level 7 modules taken in 2015/16 and thereafter will be marked to a pass mark of 50.

**Do I have to achieve at a higher level for a pass at level 7?**

No, the requirements for achieving a pass are unchanged. Students must achieve the same threshold learning outcomes for a module as were required before the change was implemented. The only change has been in the notional figure that the University has now agreed as representing achievement at the threshold pass level. This is now 50. The change is being implemented entirely for presentational reasons. It does not constitute a raise in academic standards.
I'm a postgraduate student. Will the change in the pass mark at level 7 affect my classification?

No. The requirements for achieving a merit or a distinction on a PGT programme of study (i.e. PG Cert, PG Dip or Master’s degree) are not impacted by the change in the level 7 pass mark. The grade criteria for achieving at the upper end of the pass range will not be any less demanding than at present, so the level of performance required for a merit award will be no different than it was prior to the introduction of the higher pass mark.

I'm an undergraduate student. Will the change in the pass mark at level 7 affect my classification?

Yes, if you take and pass a level 7 module as part of an undergraduate degree (i.e. BA/BSc (Hons) or an Integrated Master’s degree) it will make a greater contribution to the classification of that award than would a pass at level 6. This is because the new pass mark of 50 at level 7 maps on to the undergraduate honours degree classification scale in the Lower Second Class award band, whereas a minimum pass at 40 at level 6 would be placed in the Third Class band.

I am a taught postgraduate student (PGT) and have previously been awarded marks at level 7 under the old pass mark of 40 and am carrying these forward into a taught stage of my programme in 2015/16. Will I be disadvantaged in the classification of my award by not having had the opportunity to pass these for a mark of at least 50?

No. The University is alert to the position faced by some 500 or so PGT students¹ who were either registered part-time or who had commenced studying on a full-time two-year Master’s degree programme in 2014/15 (or sooner). These students had, therefore, commenced their programmes under a level 7 pass mark of 40, but the awards for their Master’s degree or postgraduate diploma or postgraduate certificate will not be classified until they have completed a further full year of study in 2015/16, by which time the pass mark will since have become 50.

It is clear that without intervention such students would be disadvantaged, in that work marked in the 40-49 range in 2014/15 for a pass would attract a higher mark of at least 50+ if marked in 2015/16. ‘Legacy’ marks in the 40-49 range would make a lesser contribution to the classification of an academic award in 2015/16 than work of the same standard that has been marked under the new 50 pass mark, which would clearly be unfair.

The University has, therefore, devised an algorithm for converting marks for modules at level 7 so that they map on to the 50+ marking scale in all cases where these marks had been awarded prior to 2015/16, but will not make a contribution to the classification of an award until 2015/16 or thereafter. This conversion algorithm is set out below:

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All component assessment marks recorded in SDS for a module will be scaled using the following rules:

Any mark as awarded on the basis of 40% pass, between 0% and 60% will be translated as follows:

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¹ Nb. PGT students include those students studying for a postgraduate certificate, postgraduate diploma or master’s degree. For the purpose of this exercise students studying on the two-stage M.Arch programme, which is classified on the same basis as PGT programmes of study, will be treated as PGT students.
An original mark in the range 0 to 40 will map to 0 to 50, the intermediate replacement mark will be calculated as the original mark x 5/4

An original mark in the range 40+ to 60 will map to 50+ to 60, the intermediate replacement mark will be calculated as the (original mark)/2 + 30

The rounding rule in Annex 6, paragraph 15 of the Credit Framework will be applied to the intermediate replacement mark to produce the final replacement mark.

Final overall marks for a module that fell into the compensatable range when originally marked to a pass mark of 40 (i.e. 30-39) will remain compensatable after the conversion above has been applied, even where the recalculated final replacement mark does not fall into the range 40-49. This is to ensure that no student is disadvantaged by the introduction of the higher pass mark of 50 at level 7.

This algorithm will be applied to relevant marks recorded on SDS in January 2016. This will be an automatic process and individual students need not take any action to ensure that it happens. In this way the University plans to ensure that no PGT student in this position is disadvantaged by the introduction of the higher pass mark of 50 at level 7.

I am an undergraduate student studying on a four-year integrated Master's degree. Will the marks for any level 7 modules that I studied prior to 2015/16 be rescaled according to the algorithm set out above?

No, any marks awarded at level 7 to continuing undergraduate students prior to 2015/16 will not be rescaled. This is because the parameters for the classification of undergraduate honours degrees remain unaltered and a mark of 50 at level 7 maps on to the undergraduate honours degree classification scale in the Lower Second Class award band, rather than in the Third Class range, as would a pass at 40. To rescale all such marks would make an unwarranted inflationary effect on the degree outcome. Any level 7 modules taken in 2015/16, however, will be marked to the new pass mark of 50.

I am a Master's degree student who had completed all of my taught modules by 2014/15 and had submitted my dissertation for marking in the summer of 2015 or autumn 2015. Will the pass mark for my dissertation be 50?

No. You are part of the completing 2014/15 cohort of students and the pass mark for all of your work will remain 40.

I am an undergraduate student who failed one or more level 7 modules in 2014/15 and am taking re-sits for those modules in August/September 2015. Will the pass mark for my level 7 resits be 50?

No. You are part of the completing 2014/15 cohort of students and the pass mark for all of your work will remain 40.

I am an undergraduate student who failed one or more level 7 modules in 2014/15 and am taking re-sits for those modules in May/June 2016 (either first or second attempt). Will the pass mark for my level 7 resits be 50?

Yes, the pass mark for all taught modules at level 7 will be 50 from the start of the 2015/16 academic year. It should not be any more difficult to pass at 50 than at 40, however, as the change in the pass mark does not represent a change in the standard
of work required for a pass. Any marks awarded at level 7 prior to 2015/16 will not be rescaled. This is because the parameters for the classification of undergraduate honours degrees remain unaltered and a mark of 50 at level 7 maps on to the undergraduate honours degree classification scale in the Lower Second Class award band, rather than in the Third Class range, as would a pass at 40. To rescale all such marks would make an unwarranted inflationary contribution to the degree outcome.

I am an undergraduate student who failed one or more level 7 modules in 2014/15 and will be repeating the year in attendance in 2015/16. Will the pass mark for my level 7 resits be 50?

Yes, the pass mark for all taught modules at level 7 will be 50 from the start of the 2015/16 academic year. It should not be any more difficult to pass at 50 than at 40, however, as the change in the pass mark does not represent a change in the standard of work required for a pass. Any marks awarded at level 7 to continuing undergraduate students prior to 2015/16 will not be rescaled. This is because the parameters for the classification of undergraduate honours degrees remain unaltered and a mark of 50 at level 7 maps on to the undergraduate honours degree classification scale in the Lower Second Class award band, rather than in the Third Class range, as would a pass at 40. To rescale all such marks would make an unwarranted inflationary contribution to the degree outcome.

I am an undergraduate student returning from a period of intermission in 2015/16 to complete my studies. I have some marks awarded at level 7 under the 40 pass mark scale. Will these be converted to the 50+ scale prior to the classification of my award?

No, any marks awarded at level 7 to continuing undergraduate students prior to 2015/16 will not be rescaled. This is because the parameters for the classification of undergraduate honours degrees remain unaltered and a mark of 50 at level 7 maps on to the undergraduate honours degree classification scale in the Lower Second Class award band, rather than in the Third Class range, as would a pass at 40. To rescale all such marks would make an unwarranted inflationary effect on the degree outcome. Any level 7 modules taken in 2015/16, however, will be marked to the new pass mark of 50.

I am a postgraduate student who failed one or more level 7 modules in 2014/15 and will be taking re-sits for those modules in May/June 2016. Will the pass mark for my level 7 modules be 50?

Yes, as the classification of your award will take place in 2016 or thereafter, all of the marks involved will be subject to the rescaling algorithm set out above.

I am a postgraduate student returning from a period of intermission in 2015/16 to complete my studies. I have some marks awarded at level 7 under the 40 pass mark scale. Will these be converted to the 50+ scale prior to the classification of my award?

Yes, they will.

4. Classification of Awards other than Honours Degrees for Students Commencing in 2015/16

What is the change?

The University is making a change to the rules for the classification of undergraduate Certificates and Diplomas, Foundation Degrees, Postgraduate Certificates and Postgraduate Diplomas and for Master’s Degrees (PGT). The change affects the parameters for classification of these awards by ‘preponderance’. All of the University’s
awards can be awarded by both the ‘average’ and ‘preponderance’ methods. The ‘preponderance’ method requires that students should achieve a specified qualifying mark and a specified minimum volume of credit in a particular class band in order for their award to be classified in that band. The University is adjusting the qualifying mark and the volume of credit required in each band so that they are set an equivalent requirement (at the appropriate level) for all awards.

The pre-change classification rules for these awards look like this:

Average' Method of Classification
‘with Merit’: an average mark of 60 or above but less than 70.

‘with Distinction’: an average mark of 70 or above.

Preponderance’ Method of Classification
‘with Merit’:
an average mark over all contributing modules of 57 or above and
a mark of 60 or above for 55% or more of the credits obtained

‘with Distinction’:
an average mark over all contributing modules of 65 or above and
a mark of 70 or above for 50% or more of the credits obtained

The post-change classification rules for these awards look like this:

Average' Method of Classification
‘with Merit’: an average mark of 60 or above but less than 70.

‘with Distinction’: an average mark of 70 or above.

Preponderance’ Method of Classification
‘with Merit’:
an average mark over all contributing modules of 57 or above and
a mark of 60 or above for 50% or more of the credits obtained

‘with Distinction’:
an average mark over all contributing modules of 67 or above and
a mark of 70 or above for 50% or more of the credits obtained

Why is the change happening?
In 2011/12 the University agreed several amendments to the classification rubric for undergraduate degree programmes, which included the measures of the compulsory use of preponderance and the equalisation of the requirement for making awards under preponderance under each class band. It has since been agreed by the Learning and Teaching Board and the Graduate School Board that the 2011/12 measures should be rolled out in full for other taught programme awards. This approach was endorsed in Kent’s recent Higher Education Review (March 2015), in which it was affirmed by the QAA that the University should continue to “take steps to ensure the consistency of implementation across all provision” of these changes.
Details of the full set of amendments to classification implemented for UG degree programmes in 2011/12 can be found at [http://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/guidance/changesclassificationug.html](http://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/guidance/changesclassificationug.html) and [http://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/guidance/classchangess1.html](http://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/guidance/classchangess1.html).

With the amendment to the preponderance rules for the awards under discussion as outlined here, the implementation will be complete for all taught programmes of study.

**When is the change happening?**

The change to the preponderance rules for these programmes will apply to any student commencing an undergraduate Certificate or Diploma, a Foundation Degree (stage 1), or a Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma or a Master’s Degrees (PGT) in 2015/16 or thereafter. This is likely to include the following cohorts:

- Students who commence an undergraduate certificate or Stage 1 of a two stage diploma programme in 2015/16 (full-time or part-time);
- Students who commence Stage 1 of a Foundation Degree in 2015/16 (full-time or part-time);
- Students who commence a postgraduate certificate, postgraduate diploma or Master’s degree programme in 2015/16 (full-time or part-time).

**Students who enrolled on a programme of study prior to 2015/16 are not affected.**

**Students who enter direct into Stage 2 of a Foundation Degree or Stage 2 of a two stage undergraduate Diploma in 2015/16 are not affected.**

**Where can I find out more?**

Full details of the University’s classification and marking procedures, which include the revisions outlined, are set out in the University of Kent’s Credit Framework, which can be found online at [http://www.kent.ac.uk/uel/teaching/qa/credit-framework/creditinfo.html](http://www.kent.ac.uk/uel/teaching/qa/credit-framework/creditinfo.html) and Credit Framework Annex 6: *Marking* at [http://www.kent.ac.uk/uel/teaching/qa/credit-framework/creditinfoannex6.html](http://www.kent.ac.uk/uel/teaching/qa/credit-framework/creditinfoannex6.html).

If you have any questions about the new system please feel free to contact either the Faculties Support Office at fso@kent.ac.uk or the Quality Assurance Office at qa@kent.ac.uk.