

A BRIEF STUDENT GUIDE TO ASSESSMENT and DEGREE CLASSIFICATION *(For students joining undergraduate honours degree programmes from 2021-22 onwards)*

Approved by Education Committee, 2 March 2022

This guide explains, in overview form, some of the key features of the University's approach to assessment, the validation of assessment marks, and the awarding and classification of honours degrees¹.

1. Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria

- a. The academic attainments of your programme of study are expressed on the programme specification through programme learning outcomes (<https://programmes.bolton.ac.uk/>). The learning outcomes specify what you are expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate to complete the programme successfully and be awarded your degree.
- b. The modules on your programme also have intended learning outcomes (<https://modules.bolton.ac.uk/>), which aggregate to make up the programme learning outcomes. How well you meet the module learning outcomes is judged from your performance in module assessment tasks, against published assessment criteria and normally using a 0-100 marking scale (with no decimals) spread over several distinct bands, each with its own descriptor. If the final weighted average module mark results in a decimal, then 0.5 and above is rounded up whilst 0.4 and below is rounded down.
- c. The final mark for your programme is also expressed on a 0-100 scale, to two decimal places, and it is that mark, calculated as explained in section 2 below, that determines your final degree classification.
- d. The assessment tasks you are given, and the marking of your assessed work are both subject to internal and external moderation. This means that samples of assessed work submitted by you and your peers, covering the range of marks obtained, are reviewed by other members of staff and by an external examiner from another institution to ensure comparability of standards. In some cases, e.g., for projects and dissertations, all the assessments may initially be second-marked internally. The external examiner also ensures that the overall assessment process is rigorous and fair, so that the marks awarded both to you and your peers are a true reflection of your capabilities.
- e. You must normally achieve an average pass mark for a module to be awarded the credits for it, although there may be cases where all the assessment components for a module must be passed, in addition. A pass on undergraduate programmes is typically – but not

¹ The content of this guide is extracted and summarised from a range of regulatory, policy and procedural documents, notably the *Assessment and Moderation Procedures and the Assessment Regulations for Undergraduate Programmes*, which are published in full in the [Student Policy Zone](#). Although accurate, this guide neither reflects all the potential situations that might arise, nor includes the details contained in the full versions of the procedures and regulations. Therefore, it should not be relied upon to make important decisions and, especially in cases of conflict or doubt, the full documents must always be referred to for the definitive position and will always take precedence.

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universally – 40 percent. If you do not pass, you must normally take the failed assessment/s again (a 'refer') and, if you pass, the University will record a mark capped at the pass mark, either for the individual assessment(s) or for the whole module, whichever gives the better outcome for you. A maximum of two attempts is normally allowed to pass a module, although assessment boards may permit a third attempt under certain circumstances, e.g., for core modules.

- f. You will need to achieve a total of 360 credits to be awarded a bachelor's degree with honours. The three years of a full-time degree typically entail 120 credits each, corresponding successively to Levels 4, 5 and 6 in terms of intellectual demand and complexity². For part-time students these credits are typically distributed across 4.5 years.
- g. You must accumulate enough credit to progress from Level to Level and to be eligible for your degree. This is described in the *Assessment Regulations for Undergraduate Programmes*, but, with some exceptions, you cannot normally progress from Level 4 to Level 5 without passing at least 80 credits at Level 4, nor progress from Level 5 to Level 6 unless you have passed 120 credits at Level 4 and at least 80 credits at Level 5.
- h. The University convenes meetings of staff who teach and assess on your programme (known as 'Data Reconciliation Meetings') to consider and ratify your detailed module results. These meetings are followed by formal Assessment Boards, with external examiner input, to determine a recommended decision on your progression, or your degree award and honours classification. These boards scrutinise the complete assessment process from start to finish and can make justifiable and equitable adjustments to outcomes to take account of any approved mitigating circumstances you might present.
- i. if you do not obtain sufficient credit to progress or qualify for your intended award the University can make an 'Exit Award'. This is a lower award attached to each degree programme, as detailed in your programme specification. Exit awards can also be made should you decide to withdraw from your studies having obtained sufficient credits.

2. Degree classification

- a. The University has a single method for determining degree classification for most of its undergraduate degree programmes. This method applies to two-, three- and four-year degrees (but not to integrated Master's degrees, which have their own classification system).

² If you are on a four-year full-time degree incorporating a Foundation Year (or the part-time equivalent), the 120 credits for the first, foundation year (i.e. Level 3) do not contribute. If you are on a Level 6 'Top-up' degree programme you will be studying the final stage only and require 120 credits at Level 6.

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- b. In common with many institutions, your first year (Level 4) marks³ in a three-year degree programme do not contribute to your honours classification. This recognises that for most students Level 4 entails a period of transition and adjustment to the demands of higher education and independent study, allowing you to come to terms with it without concern that potential variations in your performance will adversely influence your final honours classification.
- c. Your final honours classification is calculated using a weighted average of your marks from modules worth a total of 180 credits at Levels 5 and 6 combined⁴, including your marks from modules normally worth 60 credits at Level 5 (weighted 33 percent) and your marks from modules worth at least 120 credits at Level 6 (weighted 67 percent), which represent the best marks you achieved at those Levels⁵. This calculation discards the 60 credits with the lowest marks at Level 5 and uses an 'exit velocity' approach, which reflects the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.
- d. The University uses the classification bands for honours degrees that are standard across the higher education sector, i.e.: First Class 70-100%; Second Class Division I 60-69%; Second Class Division II 50-59%; Third Class 40-49%. You will be awarded an honours degree in the classification category one higher than that indicated by your average if:
 - i. your final weighted average mark average falls unequivocally into one of the following bands: 48.00 - 49.49, 58.00 - 59.49, 68.00 - 69.49; and
 - ii. you have achieved marks clearly in an honours classification category higher than your average for modules worth at least 120 credits, drawn from Levels 5 and/or 6 (or, for level 6 'top-up' programmes, at least 60 credits).
- e. Apart from the level 6 'top-up' degrees described above, other exceptions may arise to the standard approaches to honours classification, e.g.: where professional body requirements dictate otherwise; for integrated Master's degrees which are classified pass, merit, or distinction; or in other circumstances – for example where there are atypical credit requirements for an award – in which case the degree algorithm is modified to account for the differences.

³ First year (Level 3) and second year (Level 4) marks in a four-year programme)

⁴ Normally years 2 and 3 for a full-time student on a three-year degree programme

⁵ For level 6 'top-up' degrees your final honours classification is calculated from a simple average of your equally weighted marks from modules worth 120 credits at Level 6 which represent your best marks at that Level.