

## Frequently Asked Questions: Safety Net

**V2, updated 27 April 2020**

These questions answer indicative queries about the way the safety net operates with regard to coursework and alternative assessments for examinations. You may be provided with further information by your School to supplement these FAQs. We will also update this list in response to common questions, so please continue to check here.

We have grouped our FAQs under the following headings:

**All students:**

- background to the safety net
- extenuating circumstances
- assessment
- marking
- your mark and transcript
- resits/failed modules

**Undergraduate students:**

- progression
- your mark
- resits

**Postgraduate students:**

- my dissertation

## BACKGROUND TO THE SAFETY NET

***What does a 'safety net' mean and what is it used for?***

The 'safety net' is a way of calculating your year average to ensure you are not disadvantaged by your semester 2 experiences. Boards of Examiners, which meet in June (UG) or October/November (PG), will determine whether individual assessments have been affected or unaffected. Unless you are explicitly informed by your Department to the contrary, work submitted after 15 March will normally be considered to be affected by COVID-19 disruption, with the exception of some Masters dissertations. Some of your work prior to this date may be classed as affected by industrial action, depending on the level of disruption your Department(s) experienced and where Boards of Examiners consider that satisfactory mitigations have not been possible.

Providing you attain a pass in all mandatory modules, achieve an overall average of 40% (if you are an undergraduate student) and meet the intended learning outcomes for the year, then we will calculate two overall marks for you as follows:

1. Your overall average for all your assessments in 2019/20, and
2. Your overall average for assessments Boards of Examiners designated as unaffected by the move to online teaching or unmitigated industrial action.

The **higher** of these two averages will be used for progression and degree classification purposes.

### ***How will my degree be affected if it has professional exemptions or accreditation?***

The principles of the 'safety net' apply to most programmes, with the exception of a number of programmes in the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences where professional body accreditation applies. This includes:

- All Programmes in School of Health Sciences
- All Programmes in School of Medicine
- All Programmes in School of Veterinary Sciences
- All Programmes in School of Dentistry
- All Programmes in Psychology except the MSc in Research Methods in Psychology

Students on these programmes have already been informed by their School.

### ***I am a part-time student. How will the safety net apply to me?***

Part time students who have completed modules in 2019/20 will have the safety net applied when they have completed the full assessment for their year (level) of study.

## **EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES**

### ***Do I need to apply for Extenuating Circumstances due to the disruption of COVID-19 on my ability to study?***

There is automatic recognition of disruption to studies caused by COVID-19 and it will only be necessary to apply for Extenuating Circumstances if, sadly, you have faced significant additional circumstances, such as bereavement, illness or accident. For illness- and bereavement-related extenuating circumstances, the usual requirement for evidence will be waived during this period.

### ***My Semester 1 assessments were affected by other extenuating circumstances so how this will affect my overall average?***

Any extenuating circumstances prior to Semester 2 this year will be taken into consideration in the usual way. This includes Semester 1 and also (if you are in your final year) any Year 2 marks that have been flagged for potential under-performance because of prior extenuating circumstances. Those marks will not change, as is usual, but your classification (and progression in the case of Years 1 and 2) will take these extenuating circumstances into consideration.

### ***I had extenuating circumstances for the Semester 1 examinations this year. What will be the format of my examinations?***

Resits for Semester 1 (as for Semester 2) will be in the form of alternative assessments submitted remotely.

## **ASSESSMENT**

### ***What happens if I am unable to submit my alternative assessment (i.e. replacement for examination) within the designated time frame due to personal difficulties such as sickness, caring responsibilities, or difficulties accessing IT?***

The alternative assessments are not coursework and are designed to be completed within short timeframes, as your exam would have been. However, we know that you may face a range of

challenges submitting your work during the assessment period and we want to support you in this. Deadlines for submissions of alternative assessments have therefore deliberately been set to ensure you can pace your work while balancing your personal circumstances. Wherever possible we have designed a window of five working days for you to submit alternative assessments. In some subject areas this will not be possible due to professional body requirements; if this is the case, your department will let you know and there may be a requirement to complete this assessment at a later date.

***What happens if I have a learning support plan which allows me extra time to complete my assessments?***

Open-book assessments will be available over a longer period than your normal examination(s). This inclusive approach should give you the opportunity to complete assessments at a time that is appropriate to your individual circumstances, therefore removing the need for any further adjustments.

## **MARKING**

***Will markers take into consideration the fact that I have not had access to the normal resources during this period, and this will have affected my performance?***

Yes. Markers will be sensitive to the level of disruption to your studies. The Board of Examiners will consider carefully all the assessments which have been affected during the affected period (both coursework and alternatives to examinations). The safety net calculation will ensure that you are not disadvantaged by the circumstances you have faced.

***I believe my module in Semester 1 was affected by industrial action so my mark for that module is not a true reflection of my abilities. How will this be taken into consideration?***

All modules were considered at Module Boards in Semester 1. The impact of industrial action was taken into consideration in the setting of the assessments and/or in the marking (marks released in Semester 1 were provisional). The Board of Examiners will consider Semester 2 assessments in the same light.

***Will the moderation and Board of Examiners process operate as usual?***

During this period of disruption, the university has discretion to vary the process for moderation, for example to compensate for the unavailability of markers, but will ensure that robust processes are in place to guarantee the quality and standards of awards.

## **YOUR MARK AND TRANSCRIPT**

***Who can I go to with questions about my own marks?***

Schools will have limited capacity to deal with queries about marking for work submitted since March 15<sup>th</sup>. Queries will be responded to but within a longer time period than in normal circumstances. Queries regarding individual marks can only be made following the release of overall marks in summer. You may also like to check [this calculator](#) to help clarify the operation of the

safety net for you. Please note, however, that this will only provide indicative information as it is the Board of Examiners which confirms the results of all assessments.

***How will module marks be calculated where one assessment component is designated as affected, but others are not?***

Each component will count for its proportion of the mark for the module in either the unaffected or affected average. Please refer to [this calculator](#) which will give you a clearer indication of how your mark will be calculated. **Please note, however, that this will only provide indicative information as it is the Board of Examiners which confirms the results of all assessments.**

***Which marks will appear on my transcript of studies?***

As is normal practice, your transcript will include the marks you achieve in your assessments. Year averages are not included on your transcript so application of the safety net has no impact on this. There are discussions in progress across higher education to agree whether transcripts will include a reference to COVID-19 and/or safety nets and we will inform you when a decision has been taken on this.

## **RESITS/FAILED MODULES**

***If I am unable to sit or I fail an alternative assessment in Semester 2, will I need to resit this? Will the marks be capped?***

If not sitting or failing the assessment means that you then fail the module, you will have to resit at the next opportunity. The sitting will be classed as the same as the opportunity you have missed or failed, i.e. first or second attempt. If it is a first attempt, marks will not be capped.

***How many credits can I fail and still be awarded a degree?***

Normal regulations will apply, for undergraduate students you can fail up to 30 credits and still be awarded your degree, but only if the Board of Examiners consider that you have met all the learning outcomes.

For postgraduate students, normal regulations will apply and you can fail up to 20 credits and be awarded your degree, but only if the Board of Examiners consider that you have met all the learning outcomes.

***I have been mobilised as a member of the armed forces and so will not be able to complete the replacement examinations during the May/June assessment period. When can I take the assessments?***

You will have the opportunity to take the assessments when you are released. For example in August 2020 or May 2021.

## **UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS**

### **PROGRESSION**

***What do I need to achieve to progress to the next year of my undergraduate programme?***

The usual regulations apply. If you are an undergraduate you need to achieve the intended learning outcomes for the year, and gain an overall year average of 40% with a pass in all mandatory modules.

***I am an undergraduate and I failed a Semester 1 module (or more). Can I progress straight to the next year or do I have to resit that assessment in the summer?***

Normal progression regulations apply. You will need to complete replacement assessment activities during the resit period for any semester 1 module for which you scored less than 35% or which was not compensatable.

***I am registered for an integrated Masters degree. What average mark do I need to achieve to progress to my next year of study?***

Normal progression regulations apply so you will need to achieve the required average to progress to year 3 or year 4 of an integrated Masters degree.

## **YOUR MARK**

***Will the safety net averages include my work from years 2 and 3 (or 2, 3 and 4 for Year in Industry or my integrated Masters degree)?***

The average referred to is for 2019-20 assessments only. Your marks from previous years remain the same and will not change.

***I have applied for Study Abroad next year and need a mark of 60%+. How will this be calculated?***

Through application of the safety net and alongside normal Study Abroad requirements, if you pass all of your modules and your final average mark for the year is 60% or above, then you will qualify for Study Abroad. The Study Abroad Team will give final confirmation of offers in July, following the release of your results.

***Will grade weighting be affected (for example, 30% in year 2, 70% in year 3)?***

Pre-existing grade weighting principles will not be affected by the 'safety net' approach.

***How will you apply the profiling approach (where students are on grade boundaries) under this 'safety net' system?***

A: If the higher average mark you receive is within the profiling boundary of 39, 49, 59 or 69, normal profiling regulations will apply.

## **RESITS**

***If my average/classification is not what I expected despite the Board of Examiners having taken COVID-19/Industrial Action into account, can I re-sit to improve my marks either in August or the next ordinary sitting of the module(s)?***

If you believe you have been disadvantaged by having your degree classified on the basis of the safety net, you will have the option to resit all your affected assessments (and defer your graduation if appropriate) as a first sit candidate, normally within one calendar year in the assessment format which applies to that academic year. The Safety Net approach will not apply to these resits.

## **POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS**

***Q.24. I am a Masters student. What happens if I have been unable to complete my dissertation?***

A: In many cases it has been possible to adjust the content and methodology for the dissertation, and it will be possible to complete the work to the award under the safety net. In cases where this has not been possible or if you do not wish to take up the adjustment e.g. where a project involved laboratory work where the proposal is to replace it with theoretical work, Boards of Examiners will have the discretion to grant extensions for an appropriate period of time.