

# Policy for the Exceptional Management of Academic Taught Awards and Student Progression (for Staffordshire University UG Awards, including those with a partner) (“The Exceptional Regulations”)

## 1. Scope

- 1.1. An exceptional event will be determined formally by the Chair of Academic Board. It could include, but not limited to:
  - the loss of buildings (such library, halls of residence, teaching building);
  - an epidemic or pandemic,
  - industrial action, and;
  - anything else that is likely to have a significant effect on student examinations, assessment and marking.
- 1.2. The common feature is that students are prevented from completing the assessment process, as a result of serious interruptions to the University’s business and through no fault of our own, within the normal timescales and in line with our Academic Regulations.
- 1.3. This policy sets out methods for managing the process of:
  - 1.3.1. determining awards for final year students;
  - 1.3.2. allowing students on undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses to continue their programme of study, in the standard timeframe, as far as possible, when such an event (defined hereafter as an “*interruption to normal timescales (INT)*”) occurs.
- 1.4. This policy applies to all taught awards of the University, including those delivered by partners. In the case of dual awards the Staffordshire award will be subject to this policy.
- 1.5. Annex A details the order in which decisions must be made as outlined in this policy.
- 1.6. Where the Chair of Academic Board determines that this policy is in place, it will be the responsibility of the Executive Dean or Director in agreement with the Executive Director of Students and Academic Services to determine which of each of the following sections applies within their School or Institute.

## 2. Students with Incomplete Assessment Components for Modules.

***It is expected that normally all students will complete all assessments components, though some may need alteration. In exceptional circumstances where students are unable to complete assessments, the following will apply.***

- 2.1. Where students have completed assessment components totalling at least 66% of the overall module mark, then an Award Board will treat this as a completed module. The overall module mark will be based on the weighted average of the completed assessments. For some courses, the PSRB<sup>1</sup> requirements may mean that this rule cannot be applied.
- 2.2. Where the student has not passed the module in accordance with 2.1, then they will be given an opportunity to complete the outstanding assessment components at the first appropriate opportunity in order to satisfy the 66% threshold, with appropriate support from the course team.
- 2.3. In cases where the assessment cannot take place within a reasonable timescale, an alternative assessment may be offered, according to the provisions set out in section 5 below. For professional courses, this change may need prior approval from the relevant PSRB. In some circumstances, the provisions of these regulations will not apply to apprenticeship courses.

### **3. Progression Decision-making Annexe B**

- 3.1. Where progression cannot be determined within the normal timescale, the formal date of progression will normally be deferred until the outcome of all assessments is known for study at levels 5 and 6 (to level 7 in the case of Integrated Masters).

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<sup>1</sup> Also including overseas regulatory bodies and government agencies

- 3.2. In cases where normal business is likely to be interrupted for a protracted period of time, the Chair of Academic Board may determine that students can progress to the next level of study having achieved 75 credits and having 45 credits condoned (credits awarded, but no summative mark) with classification based on the marks for 75 credits at that level by the Award Board. Students will be required to sign up to a Learning Agreement which details engagement and learning & support requirements. Agreements may include extension activity for the learning outcomes not demonstrated. Some may have been evidenced in year through learning activities and formative assessment and may not need to be revisited at the next level of study.
- 3.3. Students with fewer than 60 credits will not normally be able to progress but will be supported to complete learning activities in order to take the outstanding assessments to reach the 66% threshold (as set out in para. 2.1) at the first appropriate opportunity. Those who have been deemed to fail 15 credits may have an opportunity to restudy the module alongside the modules for following year whilst also participating in the extension activities.
- 3.4. In some exceptional circumstances, students studying at levels 3 and 4 may be progressed and awarded 120 credits unless there is evidence that they have failed to engage with the course. The applications of this rule will need to be approved by the Chair of Academic Board. Students may be advised that further supported learning is needed as part of their induction for the next level of study.
- 3.5. All existing arrangements relating to reassessment and exceptional circumstances as set out in the Academic Regulations still stand. In complex cases which require further consideration, the University Assessment Board for Exceptions (UABE) will determine the appropriate course of action.

#### **4. Award Decision-making (Undergraduate) - Annex C**

- 4.1. Where the Award cannot be determined within the normal timescale and where the employment/further studies of students will not be adversely affected, the formal date of award will normally be deferred until the outcome of all assessments is known.
- 4.2. In cases where normal business is likely to be interrupted for a protracted period of time, the Chair of Academic Board may determine that the following awarding standards apply:

##### **Foundation Degrees, Diplomas of Higher Education and HNDs**

- Students with 210 credits, may have 30 credits condoned to receive their award.

##### **Bachelors' Degrees**

- Students with 330 credits may have 30 credits condoned to be awarded an Honours Degree.

##### **Postgraduate Masters**

- Students with 150 credits may have 30 credits condoned to receive their award.

- 4.3 The classification or grade of the award will be based on the modules that have been completed in accordance with the Academic Regulations. If students wish to improve their classification, they will be given appropriate support to undertake outstanding assessments, although this will increase the length of their studies. The revised classification will be compared to the initial classification and the highest classification will stand.

- 4.4 In very exceptional circumstances it may not be possible to apply the provisions in para. 4.2 and 4.3. For, example it may not be possible to conduct the original nor an alternative assessment to reach the award threshold. The School Academic Committee should determine whether the Programme Learning Outcomes have been met by a cohort, notwithstanding the incomplete modules, based on assessment conducted by the Course Team. If the Programme Learning Outcomes have been met, the degree will be awarded and classified or graded according to the provisions in para. 4.3. Where individual students

have outcomes that are different from the cohort, their cases will be reviewed by the University Assessment Board for Exceptions (UABE)

- 4.5 Where the Programme Learning Outcomes have not been met and cannot be assessed, and where undergraduate students have 300 credits, they will receive an Ordinary Degree in accordance with the Academic Regulations.
- 4.6 Students with 300 or 330 credits will be given the opportunity, with appropriate support, to undertake the outstanding assessments to complete 360 credits.
- 4.7 All students will however be issued with an interim transcript (HEAR) (signed by the Executive Director of Students and Academic Services) which will include the following information for prospective employers and other education institutions (for those applying for postgraduate study):
- The confirmed marks for modules taken at previous Levels of study
  - Those marks from Level 6 or 7, if applicable, that were confirmed by the Award Board.
  - Explanation of the circumstances affecting the assessment of students and steps that will be taken by the University once normal business resumes.

## **5. Alternative Assessment Arrangements if the interruption to delivery is for a protracted time**

- 5.1. The course team can identify alternative assessment arrangements<sup>2</sup>, providing the following principles are applied:
- The alternative assessment can determine that the learning outcomes for the module have been achieved.
  - Within the context of the module, no new technologies, learning and teaching platforms, nor new learning and teaching approaches are introduced. This is to ensure that students are not required to develop/extend their skills or access new resources to complete the alternative assessment.
  - No student will be disadvantaged by the change of assessment and all assessment must be inclusive, taking into account access to resources for all learners. Schools will conduct an equality impact assessment on the alternative assessments.
  - A review will be undertaken for all students with Learner Support Statements to ensure their needs are met.
  - Alternative assessment may normally be undertaken remotely.
  - No campus-based examinations will be held unless this is an explicit requirement of the PSRB. Examinations will only be held in order to satisfy these requirements at a time that is deemed safe and appropriate by the Chair of Academic Board. This may result in a delay to progression and award decision-making.
  - If any level learning outcomes cannot be assessed fully, then these need to be addressed at the next level of study with an amendment to the assessment of one or more core modules. These changes will be communicated to students in advance of them progressing to the next level of study.

During exceptional times the priority is to provide certainty to students and staff, therefore external examiners will not normally be involved in decision making on alternative assessments. However details will be provided to external examiners by the course team.

- 5.2 Where alternative assessments cannot be offered within a reasonable timeframe, the work of final year students will be reviewed by the School Academic Committee to determine whether the programme learning outcomes have been achieved, in accordance with the provisions in para. 4.4 above.
- 5.3 The Course Leader (or Head of Department in the case of partner courses<sup>3</sup> delivered off-campus) will coordinate and prepare proposals for all alternative assessment arrangements for their course. These will be reviewed and approved by: Chair of Quality Enhancement Committee, the Registrar and the [Executive Dean/Associate Dean Students](#). A summary of all assessment changes within one diet of assessments will be signed off by the Chair of Academic Board.
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<sup>2</sup> Which may need to be discussed with PSRBs as appropriate.

<sup>3</sup> Including franchise courses not delivered on-campus, validation and dual award arrangements.

5.4 The Registrar will communicate the approval of alternative arrangements, notifying the Head of Department and Course Leader. These will be copied to the Director of Collaborative Partnerships for Communication with partners as appropriate.

## **6. Operation of Award Boards**

6.1. Award Boards will be undertaken at School level and may proceed providing the following membership is in place and when all moderation and recording of marks is completed:

- Chair (A Dean of School)
- Secretary (from the Registry)
- Department representative nominated by the Head of Department or School SMT
- Input from at least one external examiner that due process has been followed in the operation of the Board. Input can comprise written feedback, attendance via video conferencing, audio, ~~or~~ in person. Exceptionally, this can include retrospective review of a recording of meeting. Whilst it would be the expected norm, the external examiner does not necessarily need to be from the subject area under consideration provided they can ensure due process has taken place.

## **7. Internal and External Moderation**

7.1. Where it is not possible to carry out full internal or external moderation, the University will apply a focus on ensuring standards by prioritising moderation in the following order:-

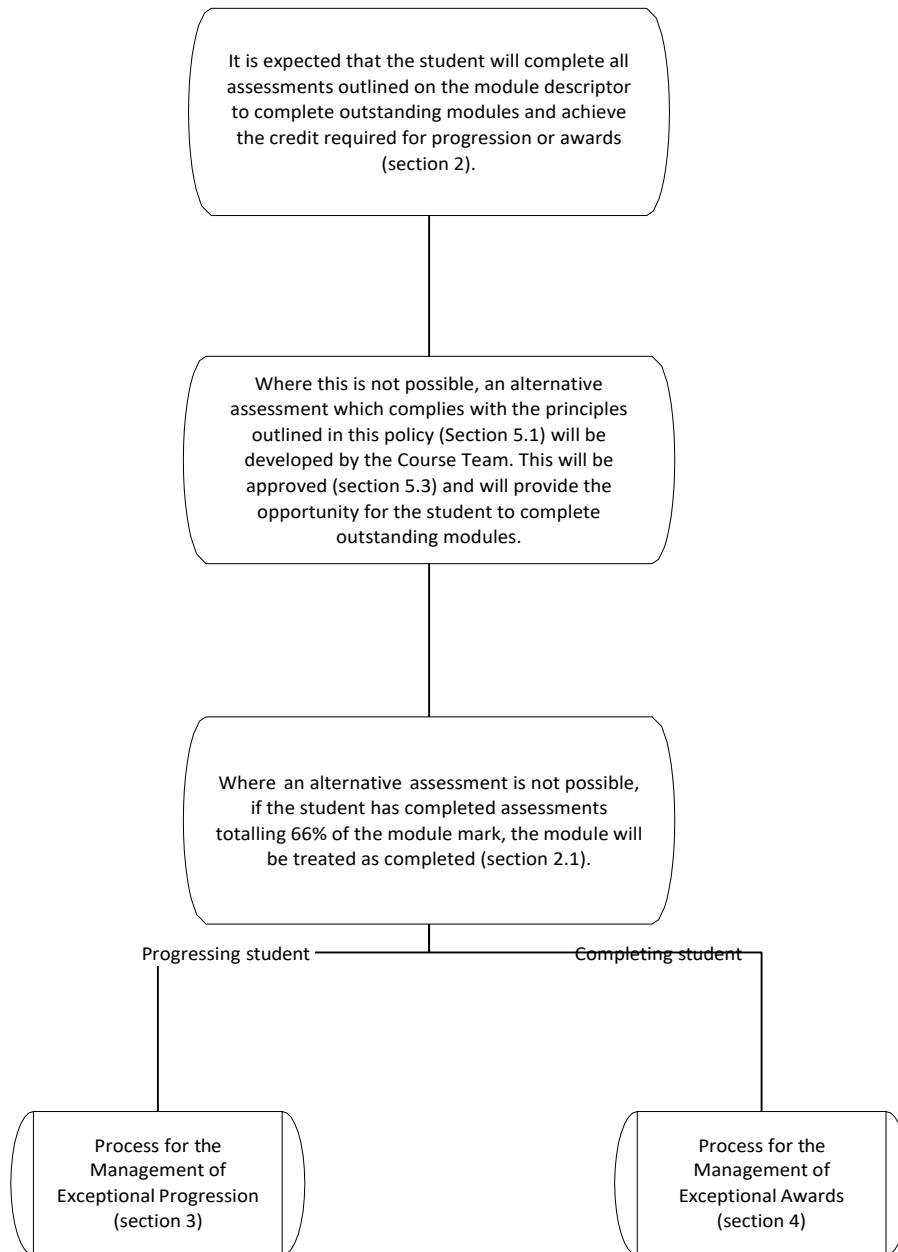
- Levels 6 and 7
- Level 5
- Levels 3 and 4

7.2. In relation to Levels 3 and 4, the University may decide that only those marks achieved within a band will be moderated. For example, marks that are near a borderline which may impact on the outcome of the assessment. The exact band to be moderated will be agreed by the Executive Dean or Director with a member of the University's Executive and the Executive Director of Students and Academic Services.

## **8. Raising concerns**

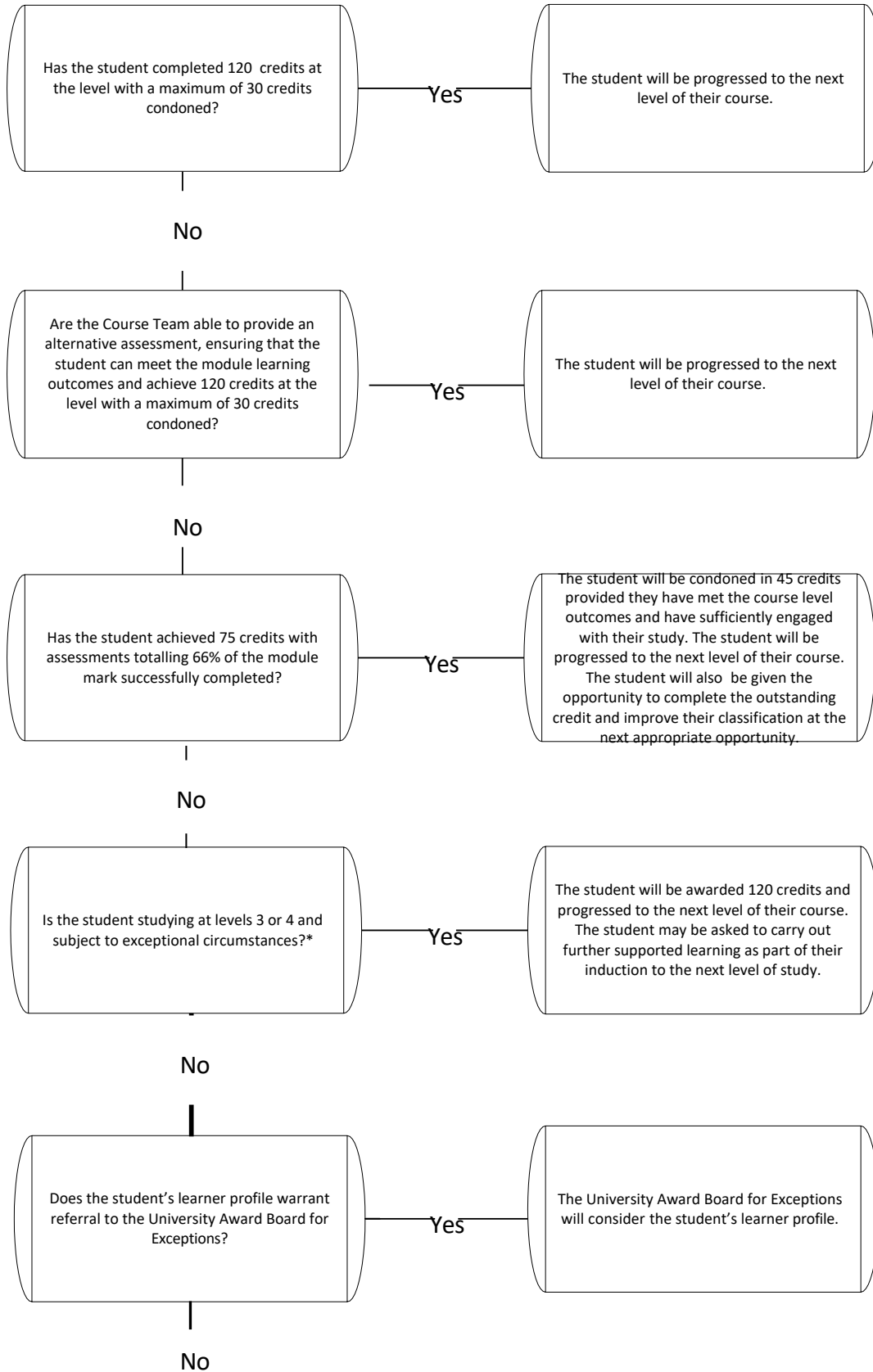
8.1. Students are entitled to raise concerns through the normal internal complaints and appeals channels as provided for in the Academic Regulations. However, they would not be entitled to appeal on the grounds of procedural irregularity based solely on the operation of this policy

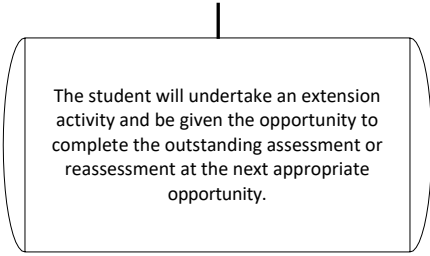
## Annexe A Outline of the Order of Decision Making





## Annexe B Worked Example for the Management of Exceptional Progression

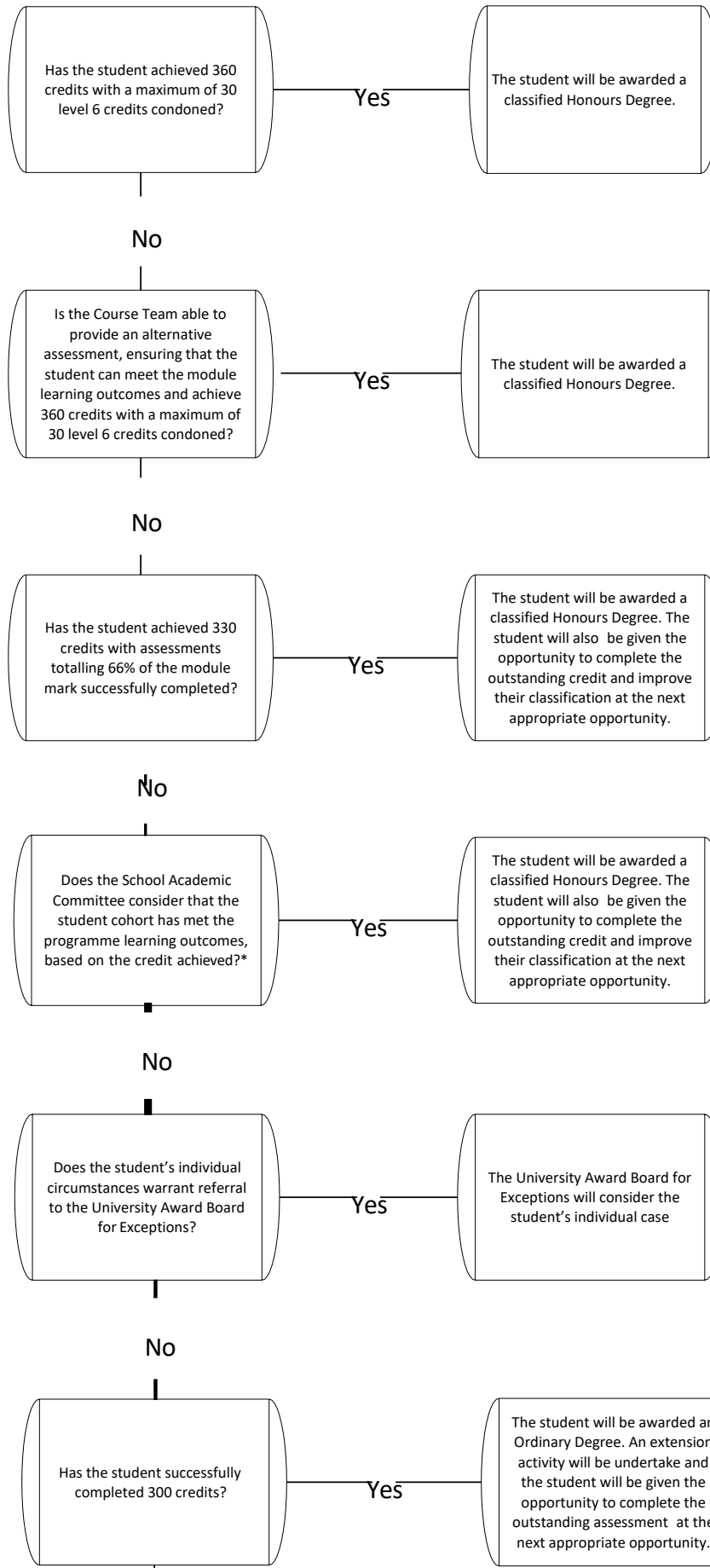




The student will undertake an extension activity and be given the opportunity to complete the outstanding assessment or reassessment at the next appropriate opportunity.

\* the applications of this rule requires the approval of the Chair of Academic Board.

## Annexe C Worked Example for the Management of Exceptional Awards: Honours Degrees



No

The student will undertake an extension activity and be given the opportunity to complete the outstanding assessment or reassessment at the next appropriate opportunity.

\* this does not apply to students completing a top-up course.