



Policy on Grade approval process at UCD

Approved by Academic Council on 12th December 2008

1 Introduction and Context

- 1.1 The introduction of semesterisation has imposed significant challenges in delivering modularised teaching, assessment and reporting. The full benefits of this teaching approach require programmes and students to be able to adapt to the pace of a students' learning. This can only be fully realised if the semester is a discrete self contained teaching and administrative block where students understand their position within a programme before they are required to move on in their studies.

2 Purpose:

- 2.1 The purpose of the policy is to clearly articulate the processes involved in grading students' assessments and identify the responsibilities of each party within the University in delivering that process.

3 Definition:

- 3.1 The grading process constitutes the period between the end of a terminal assessment in a module and the publication of the final grades for that module to students. Where a module does not include a terminal assessment component, this period may be defined as the period between the end of the teaching semester and the publication of grades for that module to students.
- 3.2 The process includes the grading, grade entry, School review and Programme review of the individual grades and modules, and the School and Programme review of compensation, stage completion, progression, award of degree and honours classification and the post-examination board processing and final publication of grades.

4 Statements

- 4.1 The University recognises the importance of the accurate and timely delivery of the assessment and grading process.
- 4.2 The development of appropriate assessment strategies that are aligned with the learning outcomes of modules and the programme(s) in which they are delivered validates module delivery.
- 4.3 The nature, timing and extent of these assessments directly impacts on the ability of Module Coordinators, Schools, Programmes and Assessment, UCD Registry to deliver an efficient grading process.
- 4.4 This policy does not attempt to address the nature or appropriateness of the assessments but rather outlines the logistics involved in the timely delivery of accurate and validated grades and other indicators of performance to students.
- 4.5 In order to properly implement an effective and timely grading process, aspects of the role of Module Coordinators (as internal examiners), Schools, Programmes and Programme Examination Boards in delivering and assessing modules and programmes have been stated. However, this policy is not intended to fully define these roles or to identify all of the responsibilities associated with delivering modules and programmes to students.

5 Principles

- 5.1 The recommended procedures for finalisation of grades in a modular curriculum should ensure that
- a) students are treated fairly and equitably
 - b) academic standards are maintained
 - c) decisions are made by the most competent body
 - d) accuracy of the student record
 - e) grades are normally available to students before the start of the next semester.

6 Summary of the Grading Process

- 6.1 Academic Council has overall responsibility for Assessment in the University.
- 6.2 The grading process is delivered by the coordinated efforts of several groups (Section 6.4), where each group recognises their responsibility in the process, acting to ensure that they fulfil their duties and responsibilities in a manner that permits others to fulfil their duties and responsibilities within the time frames established by Academic Council.
- 6.3 The grading process formally occurs in two phases;
- a) In the first phase, Module Coordinators, Schools and Programmes ensure the accuracy, and validity of module grades (including, where practical, consideration of extenuating circumstances). At the completion of this stage, and prior to the start of the next semester, module grades are rolled to Academic History and provisional module grades and associated indicators of performance (Semester and Stage GPA) are published to students.
 - b) In the second phase, the formal Examination Board is held. Following Post-examination Board processing, Final grades, Grade Points Credits achieved, Stage GPA, Degree GPA, and Degree Classification are published.
- 6.4 The grading process requires coordination across six different groups within the University.
- a) **The Module Coordinator**, as the primary Internal Examiner is central to the University Examination System. S/he is responsible for ensuring the grading of modules is completed and accurately reflects the performance of students measured against the stated learning outcomes of the module. (Section 7)
 - b) **The School** is the competent body to make decisions on the assessment of students. The School is the fundamental unit within the University responsible for the delivery of modules that combine to create majors, minors, structured electives and graduate programmes leading to awards. It has the primary responsibility for the assurance of the appropriateness, quality and assessment of its teaching portfolio and for oversight of the module coordinator in delivering and assessing modules. (Section 8)
 - c) **The Programme Board** or **Graduate School Board** is responsible for the design, delivery and quality assurance of the overall programme, oversight of assessment and progression within the programme, and the academic welfare of the students registered to the programme. The Board ensures that the modules contributing to the programme support the academic coherence of the programme and oversees the academic quality of the programme and the student learning experience. (Section 9)
 - d) **The Programme Examination Board** is responsible for the award of grades, compensation, progression and graduation of students registered to the programme and for ensuring that students with extenuating circumstances are reviewed and treated fairly and equitably. (Section 9.6)
 - e) **Assessment, UCD Registry** is responsible for provision of appropriate and accurate reports of entered student grades and associated grade points. In addition, the Assessment, UCD Registry provide calculations of Semester, Compensation, Stage and Degree GPA (Grade Point Average), application of compensation rules, and calculation of credits achieved to support Schools and Programme Examination Boards in their review of modules and students' performance. (Section 10)

- f) The **Supervisor of Examinations** with assistance from the Director of Assessment, and the Academic Council Standing Committee on Examinations, takes an overview of results, and makes recommendations to Schools, Programmes and Programme Examination Boards as appropriate. (Section 11)
- 6.5 Normally, provisional grades published to students will not be adjusted to the detriment of the student and such a change shall require approval of the Supervisor of Examinations and/or the Academic Council Standing Committee on Examinations.

7 The Roles and Responsibility of the Module Coordinator

- 7.1 The Module Coordinator, as the primary Internal Examiner of a module is responsible for ensuring the timely grading of modules.
- 7.2 The Module Coordinator shall ensure that
 - a) normally, all assessment components with the exception of the terminal examination are completed, reviewed and the component grades entered into Gradebook¹ prior to the commencement of the semester examination session. This includes grading, component grade entry, and review for accuracy
 - b) where relevant, terminal assessment component grades are entered into Gradebook within the time frame agreed with the Head of School (8.1)
 - c) the aggregate grade for each student is reviewed to ensure that the calculated module grade awarded to the student reflects the students' overall performance in achieving the stated learning outcomes of the module
 - d) where students' grades have taken account of notified and accepted extenuating circumstances, these students shall be highlighted to the Head of School (or nominee) and/or the School Modular Examination Board
 - e) the Head of School (or nominee) is informed of the completion of the grading of a module at the earliest opportunity.
- 7.3 The Module Coordinator shall be responsible for ensuring that changes in provisional grades confirmed by the School are made and reviewed.

8 The Roles and Responsibility of the School

- 8.1 The Head of School, in consultation with the School and in agreement with the University shall establish a date by which all module coordinators should complete the provisional grading of their modules.
- 8.2 The Head of School (or nominee) shall ensure that the School completes its responsibilities within the time frame laid down by Academic Council.
- 8.3 The Head of School (or nominee) shall ensure that module coordinators have been notified of decisions in respect of students with extenuating circumstances. Normally, such notification should occur prior to the commencement of the grading of the terminal examination where relevant.
- 8.4 The Head of School shall establish a Modular Examination Committee, which will review and agree the grades for the modules co-ordinated by that School. Where a School co-ordinates modules in different subject areas, or co-ordinates a large number of modules, the Head of School may convene a number of separate Modular Examination Committees.
- 8.5 The composition of Modular Examination Committees is a matter for the School, subject to review by Academic Council, where in the opinion of the Registrar or the Principal of the College such review is necessary. A Modular Examination Committee must have the range of expertise required to properly examine all modules considered by the Committee.

¹ There are two University supported platforms using different forms of software called "Gradebook", Blackboard, the elearning platform and the Assessment and Logistics Unit grade management software, Banner-Gradebook. The use of Gradebook in this policy relates only to the ALU Gradebook Software.

- 8.6 Normally, the Head of School shall Chair the Modular Examinations Committee. In Schools with multiple Modular Examinations Committees, this function may be delegated to Heads of Subject, Heads of Section or Heads of Teaching and Learning, as appropriate.
- 8.7 The School Modular Examination Committee shall ensure
- a) the validity of the grades entered by the module coordinator
 - b) that the grades for the modules co-ordinated by that School are reviewed and agreed
 - c) the grade distributions for modules co-ordinated by that School are reviewed, anomalies identified and addressed appropriately
 - d) module grades for students with notified and approved extenuating circumstances have been reviewed and addressed appropriately
 - e) that recommendations made by the Programme Examination Review Committee, are reviewed and addressed in a timely and appropriate fashion (Section 9.3)
- 8.8 The Head of School (or nominee) shall ensure that the requirements of the Policy on Extern Examination have been fulfilled.
- 8.9 The Head of School (or nominee) shall ensure that changes to grades agreed during the grading process are implemented and validated.
- 8.10 The Head of School (or nominee) shall ensure that on completion of the School review process and on or before the date specified by the University, module grades are rolled to Academic History.

9 The Roles and Responsibility of the Programme

The Programme Board or Graduate School Board, acting through the Programme Examination Board, is formally responsible for (i) the award of grades, progression and graduation of students registered to the programme and (ii) the review of students with extenuating circumstances.

The Programme Board or Graduate School Board

- 9.1 The Programme Board or Graduate School Board shall ensure that students with notified extenuating circumstances are identified and considered and that Schools are informed of the ensuing recommendation.
- 9.2 The Programme Board or Graduate School Board shall establish a Programme Examination Review Committee, chaired by the Programme Dean or Graduate School Director (or nominee) and composed of appropriate representatives of the Programme Examination Board and Programme Office or Graduate School Administration.
- 9.3 The Programme Examination Review Committee, shall ensure
- a) that a preliminary review of students' grade distributions across all modules contributing to the programme assessed during the semester under consideration is completed
 - b) there is effective communication with Schools concerning queries identified by Schools and/or the Programme Examination Review Committee during this review
- 9.4 Where a programme resides within a School, the School and Programme Review process may be combined. The School Modular Examination Committee and the Programme Examination Review Committee may be combined but all of the functions and responsibilities of both Committees should be completed.

The Programme Examination Board

- 9.5 The Programme Examination Board shall meet at least once in an examination session.
- 9.6 The Programme Examination Board has responsibility for
- a) confirming that Schools have fulfilled their responsibilities (Section.8)
 - b) confirming that reviews of grade distributions for modules contributing to the programme occur, and identified anomalies are addressed

- c) reviewing the overall performance of students in the programme
- d) finalising grades awarded in modules
- e) compensation, stage completion and progression
- f) determining degree completion, degree GPA and honours classification.

10 The Roles and Responsibility of Assessment, UCD Registry

- 10.1 Assessment, UCD Registry is responsible for publication of students' provisional and final grades and other indicators of performance.
- 10.2 In supporting the grading process, Assessment, UCD Registry is responsible for:
 - a) provision of appropriate and accurate reports suitable for each step in the process
 - b) calculation of GPAs and degree classification
 - c) application of compensation rules
 - d) logistical support
- 10.3 Assessment, UCD Registry is responsible for entering or changing grades once module grades have been rolled to Academic History.

11 The Roles and Responsibility of the Supervisor of Examinations

- 11.1 The Supervisor of Examinations with assistance from the Director of Assessment, and the Academic Council Standing Committee on Examinations takes an overview of results, and makes recommendations to Schools and Programme Examination Boards as appropriate
- 11.2 The Supervisor of Examinations with assistance from the Director of Assessment and Assessment, UCD Registry shall provide a summary report on the extent and nature of Post-examination Board changes (Section 12) made by Schools. This report will be presented for consideration to the Academic Council Standing Committee of Examinations and College Executives prior to the commencement of the next examination session.

12 Post-Examination Board Changes

Following completion of the grading process and approval of grades by Programme Examination Boards, changes to grades should only be required in exceptional circumstances such as administrative error or a serious extenuating circumstance that was not identified prior to the Programme Examination Board. Any other change requires approval by the Supervisor of Examinations, the Academic Council Standing Committee on Examinations or the recommendation of the Assessment Appeals Committee.

- 12.1 Post- examination Board changes to student grades shall be approved by the Head of School, and Programme Dean, or Graduate School Director.
- 12.2 Post-examination Board changes to grades that are to the detriment of a student shall require approval of the Supervisor of Examinations and/or the Academic Council Standing Committee on Examinations.
- 12.3 Relevant Programme Boards or Graduate School Boards shall be notified of Post-examination Board changes of grade.

Members of the Advisory Group

Name	Role/position
Mark Rogers (Chair)	Dean of Science
Karen O'Shea	Interim Director of Assessment
Kevin Griffin	Director of Registry
Padraig Dunne	Director of Graduate School - Engineering, Mathematical & Physical Sciences
Jason Last	Director Of Pre-Clinical Studies
Joe Brady	Dean of Arts
Aileen Pierce	Director, Quinn School of Business
Bríd Reason	Programme Office Director representative
Felicity McGovern	Graduate School Manager representative
Joe McMahon	Interim Dean of Law
Alan Keenan	Vice Principal for T&L, Life Sciences
Niamh Moore	Lecturer, School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Policy