

## Policy on the mark safety net

### 1. Introduction

As part of its package of measures to support students through the Covid-19 pandemic, the University has introduced a Mark Safety Net. The University recognises that students' performance after the Spring Term may have been adversely affected by the pandemic in various ways; it has therefore put in place a mark safety net which, subject to a number of important conditions, gives students the benefit of the better of their performance prior to the end of the Spring Term (i.e. shortly after the move to online teaching and library facilities) and their performance in the year as a whole. The mark safety net can only apply under certain conditions, detailed in section 4 below. These conditions are designed to protect the standard of the University's awards and ensure that students' degrees in 2020 have the same value as degrees awarded in previous years.

This policy applies only to module marks and overall results from the Summer Term examination period and the August/September resit examination period in the academic year 2019/20, and applies only in respect of modules taken in the academic year 2019/20.

### 2. Principles

The overarching principles guiding the University's response to the pandemic are:

- (a) To help to mitigate any potential academic disadvantage to students caused by the Covid-19 pandemic or by other extenuating circumstances
- (b) To ensure that awards achieved by students continue to meet sector and professional requirements and have the same value as degrees awarded in previous years
- (c) To help to reduce anxiety and uncertainty caused by the Covid-19 pandemic as much as possible for students.

Throughout its consideration of the mark safety net and its other emergency provisions, the University has been mindful of the University's commitments

under the conditions of registration with the Office for Students (<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/regulation/conditions-of-registration/initial-and-general-ongoing-conditions-of-registration/>), and, in particular, those conditions (B1-5) which relate to the quality of students' academic experience, the reliability of students' assessment, the value of qualifications, compliance with sector standards, and support for students' success. It has also taken account of sector guidance provided by the Office for Students and the Quality Assurance Agency.

The Mark Safety Net should be understood in the context of the wider measures put in place to mitigate the impact of Covid-19, including extensions to submission deadlines, take-home papers, the temporary removal of penalties for late submission, and the Circumstances Impact Process. These measures in combination are designed to support students in demonstrating their achievement of the learning outcomes for their award or for progression, and ensure that the standard of awards is maintained.

### 3. **What is the mark safety net?**

Given that students' performance after 27 March 2020 may have been adversely affected by the pandemic, the University has agreed that a student's academic achievement in a module to 27 March 2020 can be taken to indicate the student's performance unaffected by the current circumstances, subject to important restrictions which relate to:

- the proportion of the module assessment due on or before 27 March 2020 (see section 4(a) below)
- the requirements of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies which accredit some of the University's programmes (see 4(b) below)

The mark safety net is used only when determining progression and classification (see 4(c) below). In order to safeguard the standard of awards, a student's full module marks (rather than marks derived from the safety net) are used in determining whether a student qualifies for the award of a degree.

### 4. **Which modules are eligible for the mark safety net?**

The mark safety net provisions apply only to those modules which meet the following conditions:

- (a) Only those modules where 40% or more of the assessment for the module was due to be completed on or before 27 March 2020 are eligible for the mark safety net. The requirement that the mark safety net is based on at least 40% of the assessment for the module is designed to provide reasonable assurance that the assessment is based on sufficient evidence of achievement of learning outcomes to support decisions on progression and classification. If less than 40% of the assessment for the module was due to be completed in the Autumn and/or Spring term with an original submission deadline on or before 27 March 2020, the final agreed module mark will be based on the full assessment for the module.

A student who believes that their performance was affected on or before 27 March 2020 should submit a Circumstances Impact Process form to request consideration of their circumstances.

- (b) Where a student's programme (or a module taken by the student) is subject to accreditation by a Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB), the mark safety net can apply only if it is consistent with the PSRB's requirements. Different PSRBs have different requirements: in the case of some PSRB-accredited programmes, all the modules in a programme will be excluded from the safety net; in some, specified modules will be excluded; and in others there may be no restrictions on the application of the safety net.

The PSRB-related restrictions on the use of the marks safety net will normally depend on the programme on which a student is registered. In consequence, where the same module is taken by students on accredited programmes and on non-accredited programmes, it is possible that the module marks of students on the accredited programme are excluded from the mark safety net provisions while the module marks of those students on the non-accredited programme can be derived from the safety net because their programme does not prohibit its application.

In a few cases, a module itself may be accredited and subject to accreditation requirements whether or not the student taking the module is on an accredited programme; in such cases, the mark safety net can apply to that module only if it is consistent with the accreditation requirements.

In some PSRB-accredited modules or programmes, there may be some sub-modular assessments which need to be passed, and these requirements apply regardless of the safety net provisions.

- (c) The mark safety net applies to: (i) classification, provided that the student has met the threshold requirement for an award based on their full module marks; and (ii) progression from one Part of a degree to the next. Please see sections 7 and 8 below for further information on the application of the mark safety net to classification and progression.

**5. How is the mark safety net applied?**

Under the mark safety net provision, the University will consider for each eligible module taken in 2019/20 the following marks:

- (a) the 'safety net mark', which is derived by taking the students' marks for coursework and other assessment with an original deadline in or by the end of the Spring Term (i.e. on or before 27 March 2020) and reweighting them to represent the full credit weighting of the module
- (b) the 'full module mark', which is the module mark calculated in the normal way from all the assessments for the module.

The University will take the better of these as

- (c) the 'adjusted final module mark', which is the final module mark to be used for the purposes of progression and classification.

**6. Exemptions and safety net marks**

Where a student has been granted an exemption for coursework during the period on or before 27 March 2020, they will not be disqualified from having the benefit of a safety net mark due to the exemption, even if, for the individual student, the proportion of assessment due by that date thereby falls below 40% of the total assessment of the module.

In the calculation of the safety net mark, exemptions will be managed through the proportional redistribution of weighting across all other pieces of assessment for the module which have an original due date on or before 27 March 2020, unless an exception has been agreed.

## 7. **Awarding and classification**

Awarding and classification is a two-stage process under the mark safety net provisions:

### (a) **Stage 1: Initial determination of eligibility for an award**

The first stage of the awarding and classification process determines whether a student has fulfilled the minimum requirements for an award (the threshold criteria). This uses the full module marks, and does not use safety net marks. If a student has fulfilled the minimum requirements for an award on the basis of their full module marks, they proceed to classification. If a student has not fulfilled these minimum requirements, they have failed and the safety net marks will not apply.

The threshold standard for the award is set at the minimum requirement for a Third Class in the case of Bachelor's and Integrated Master's degrees, and the Passed threshold for PGT awards (though in the case of PGT awards, there are minor variations to take account of variance between the types of criteria specified for the Passed, Merit and Distinction classifications). The specific criteria for the threshold standard for each award is given in Appendix 1.

The requirement to meet the normal minimum requirement for the award on the basis of the student's full, unadjusted marks is based on the University's commitment to maintain the academic standard of the degree and to ensure that the degrees awarded by the University in 2020 have the same value as the degrees awarded by the University in other years and are respected as such by employers and other stakeholders.

### (b) **Stage 2: Classification**

In the case of those students who have met the threshold standard for an award under Stage 1 and subject to the conditions specified in section 4 above, the full module mark and the safety net mark (where appropriate) are compared for each module, and the better of the two is recorded as the final adjusted module mark. The full classification rules are then applied to the final adjusted module marks (in the case of those modules eligible for the mark safety net) and the full module marks (for those modules which are not eligible for the marks safety net).

### (c) **Publication of results**

*Undergraduate programmes*

Undergraduate results, when published, will show the marks which were used to determine the results. Where the result is an Honours classification, the published marks will be the final adjusted mark or, where the mark is not eligible for consideration under the safety net provisions, the full module mark. Where the result is a Pass (as distinct from a classification) or a Fail, the marks shown will be the full module mark. Each mark will be accompanied by sufficient information to enable a student to understand the basis of their mark and to inform their decision whether or not to retake an assessment.

#### *Taught postgraduate programmes*

Students on taught postgraduate programmes will be notified of their module marks available to date not later than the end of July. In the majority of cases, results of taught postgraduate programmes will be determined at Programme Examiners' Meetings and University Awarding Boards in the period September to November 2020, and the publication of module marks in July will serve to indicate progress and to inform students' decisions about whether or not to retake (i.e. as a first attempt under the CIP policy) or re-sit (i.e. as a second attempt following failure at the first attempt) a module. To enable students to make an informed decision, both the full module mark and the safety net mark will be shown; students, however, should be aware that the final adjusted mark, derived from the safety net mark process will only be used, in due course, in the calculation of their award if they have fulfilled the threshold standards for the award (as outlined in 7(a) above).

### 8. Progression

- (a) Determination of progression from Part 0 to Part 1, Part 1 to Part 2, Part 2 to Part 3, and (in the case of Integrated Master's programmes) Part 3 to Part 4 uses the **final adjusted marks derived from the mark safety net process** (i.e. the better of the full module mark and the safety net mark) for those modules eligible for the marks safety net and the full module mark for other modules.
- (b) Using the marks specified in 5(a):
  - (i) For **Part 0** students, progression to Part 1 is determined on the basis of the normal Part 0 progression rules for the programme.
  - (ii) For **Part 1** students, progression to Part 2 is determined on the basis of the standard University-wide **Part 1 Threshold Performance** only,

subject to any exceptions arising from accreditation requirements. The standard University-wide Part 1 Threshold requires students to:

- achieve an overall average of 40% over 120 credits taken in Part 1, where all the credits are at Level 4 or above; and
- achieve a mark of at least 30% in individual modules amounting to not less than 100 credits taken in Part 1.

*Assessment Handbook*, section

15.2.1 [http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/qualitysupport/15\\_Progression.pdf](http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/qualitysupport/15_Progression.pdf))

Programme-specific progression rules will not apply, except where they are required by PSRB accreditation requirements.

- (iii) For **Part 2** students, progression to Part 3 is determined on the basis of the **normal Part 2 progression rules** for the programme, i.e. the University-wide Part 2 Threshold Performance and programme-specific progression rules and, in the case of Integrated Master's programmes, the requirement to achieve an overall average of 50% at Part 2. The University's Part 2 progression rules are set out in the Assessment Handbook, section 15.3 [http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/qualitysupport/15\\_Progression.pdf](http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/qualitysupport/15_Progression.pdf) and programme-specific rules are specified in the relevant programme specification (<http://www.reading.ac.uk/progspeccs/index.aspx>).

- (iv) For **Part 3** students on Integrated Master's programmes, progression to Part 4 is determined on the basis of the **normal Part 3 progression rules for the programme**, i.e. both the requirement to achieve an overall average of 40% at Part 3 and programme-specific progression rules. The University's Part 3 progression rules are set out in the Assessment Handbook, section 15.4 [http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/qualitysupport/15\\_Progression.pdf](http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/qualitysupport/15_Progression.pdf) and programme-specific rules are specified in the relevant programme specification (<http://www.reading.ac.uk/progspeccs/index.aspx>).

(c) In the case of Part 2 and (in the case of Integrated Master's programmes) Part 3, the final adjusted marks will also contribute to the calculation of the student's classification in a subsequent year.

9. **Mark safety net and academic misconduct**

In modules where Academic Misconduct has been committed the Safety Net will not be applied.

10. **Circumstances Impact Process (CIP)**

If a student believes that their performance, as reflected in the progression result/classification, has been adversely affected by their circumstances, they can submit a CIP form to request a retake (or other permissible remedy) within five days of the publication of their result. For information on the CIP process, see: [https://student.reading.ac.uk/essentials/\\_support-and-wellbeing/medical-and-general-health/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-and-support/exams-guidance/safety-net-and-extenuating-circumstances.aspx](https://student.reading.ac.uk/essentials/_support-and-wellbeing/medical-and-general-health/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-and-support/exams-guidance/safety-net-and-extenuating-circumstances.aspx)

If a student wishes to appeal their result for a Part or Finals result, information on the process is available

at: <http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/Policies/exa-appeal.aspx>.

11. **Transcripts and Diploma Supplements**

The marks recorded on the transcript and Diploma Supplement will be the marks used in the determination of progression or Final degree result. Where the mark safety net has been applied, the recorded mark will be the final adjusted mark derived from the mark safety net provisions.

12. **Frequently asked questions**

Responses to frequently asked questions on the mark safety net can be found at: [http://student.reading.ac.uk/essentials/\\_support-and-wellbeing/medical-and-general-health/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-and-support/exams-guidance/safety-net-faqs.aspx](http://student.reading.ac.uk/essentials/_support-and-wellbeing/medical-and-general-health/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-and-support/exams-guidance/safety-net-faqs.aspx)

Version	Keeper	To be reviewed	Approved by	Approval Date	Effective From
1	CQSD	To be discontinued on completion of	UBTLSE	20 July 2020	21 July 2020



		the 2019/20 examination cycle			
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## **Appendix 1 Threshold requirements for awards (2019/20)**

The standard threshold requirements for awards are given below; where a programme is accredited by a public, statutory or regulatory body (generally those in a professional area, including, but not limited to Pharmacy, initial teacher education, architecture), there may be additional programme-specific requirements.

### **Bachelor's degree (excluding the BA in Children's Development and Learning)**

For a Bachelor's degree, you will meet the threshold requirement provided that you have met the normal threshold requirements for Third Class based on your full, unadjusted marks, namely: (a) 80 credits in your Final Part with marks of at least 40% and (b) an overall weighted average of at least 40% (or 38% subject to certain conditions as set out below) with the weighting of Part 2 and Part 3 as specified for your degree in your programme specification.

The threshold requirements are:

80 credits in the Final Part with marks of at least 40

AND

[An overall weighted average of at least 40

or

An overall weighted average of at least 38, provided that half or more of the weighted credits have a mark of 40 or more

or

An overall weighted average of at least 38, provided that the average for modules taken in Part 3 is 40 or more]

*The overall weighted average includes Parts 2 and 3, normally weighted 1:2 (but check the programme specification for your programme)*

### **BA in Children's Development and Learning**

For the BA in Children's Development and Learning, you will meet the threshold requirement provided that you have met the following conditions based on your full, unadjusted marks, namely: (a) 80 credits in Part 3 with marks of at least 40%, (b) an overall weighted average of 40% (or 38% subject to certain conditions as set out below), and (c) a mark of at least 40% in the module BA3FCD Child Development.

The threshold requirements are:

80 credits in Part 3 with marks of at least 40

AND

[An overall weighted average of at least 40

or

An overall weighted average of at least 38, provided that half or more of the weighted credits have a mark of 40 or more]

AND

A mark of at least 40% in the module BA3FCD Child Development

*The award is based on Part 3 only.*

### **Foundation Degree in Children's Development and Learning**

For the Foundation Degree in Children's Development and Learning, you will meet the threshold requirement provided that you have met the following conditions based on your full, unadjusted marks, namely: (a) 80 credits in Part 2 with marks of at least 40%, (b) 120 credits in Part 2 with marks of at least 30%, and (c) an overall weighted average of 40% (or 38% subject to certain conditions as set out below).

The threshold requirements are:

80 credits in Part 2 with marks of at least 40

AND

120 credits in Part 2 with marks of at least 30

AND

[An overall weighted average of at least 40 in Part 2

or

An overall weighted average of at least 38 in Part 2, provided that half or more of the weighted credits have a mark of 40 or more]

*The award is based on Part 2 only.*

### **Integrated Master's**

For an Integrated Master's degree, you will meet the threshold requirement provided that you have met the normal requirements for a Third Class based on your full, unadjusted marks, namely: (a) 80 credits in your Final Part with marks of at least 50% and (b) an overall weighted average of at least 40% (or 38% subject to certain conditions as set out below) in accordance with the weighting of Parts 2, 3 and 4 specified for your degree in your programme specification.

The threshold requirements are:

80 credits in the Final Part with marks of at least 50

AND

[An overall weighted average of at least 40

or

An overall weighted average of at least 38, provided that half or more of the weighted credits have a mark of 40 or more

or

An overall weighted average of at least 38, provided that the average for modules taken in Part 3 is 40 or more]

*The overall weighted average includes Parts 2, 3 and 4, weighted in accordance with the programme specification for your programme.*

### **Postgraduate taught Master's**

For postgraduate taught Master's degrees, you will meet the threshold requirement provided that you have met the following conditions based on your full, unadjusted marks: (a) an overall weighted average of at least 50% (or 48% subject to certain conditions as set out below), (b) a mark of at least 50% in the dissertation, and (c) not more than 30 credits with marks below 40%.

The threshold requirements are:

[A weighted average mark of 50 or more over 180 credits

and

a mark of 50 or more for the dissertation

and

the total credit value summed for all modules marked below 40 does not exceed 30 credits]

**OR**

[A weighted average mark of 48 or more over 180 credits

and

a mark of 50 or more in 90 credits<sup>^</sup>

and

a mark of 50 or more for the dissertation

and

the total credit value summed for all modules marked below 40 does not exceed 30 credits]

### **Postgraduate Diploma**

For the Postgraduate Diploma, you will meet the threshold requirement provided that you have met the following conditions based on your full, unadjusted marks: (a) an overall weighted average of at least 50% (or 48% subject to certain conditions as set out below), and (b) not more than 30 credits with marks below 40%.

The threshold requirements are:

[A weighted average mark of 50 or more over 120 credits

and

the total credit value summed for all modules marked below 40 does not exceed 30 credits]

OR

[A weighted average mark of 48 or more over 120 credits

and

a mark of 50 or more in 60 credits^^

and

the total credit value summed for all modules marked below 40 does not exceed 30 credits]

### **Postgraduate Certificate**

For the Postgraduate Certificate, you will meet the threshold requirement provided that you have met the following conditions based on your full, unadjusted marks: (a) an overall weighted average of at least 50% (or 48% subject to certain conditions as set out below), and (b) not more than 10 credits with marks below 40%.

The threshold requirements are:

[A weighted average mark of 50 or more over 60 credits

and

the total credit value summed for all modules marked below 40 does not exceed 10 credits]

OR

[A weighted average mark of 48 or more over 60 credits

and

mark of 50 or more in 30 credits^^^

and

the total credit value summed for all modules marked below 40 does not exceed 10 credits]

### **PGCE**

The normal threshold requirements as they appear in your programme specification apply for the award.