



UCL Academic Manual 2016-17
Chapter 8: Derogations and Variations
UCL Institute of Education (IOE)

Rules for awarding Merits and Distinctions for UCL Institute of Education Postgraduate Taught programmes¹

1. Introduction and background

This paper outlines a proposal for rules awarding Merits and Distinctions in relation to Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma, PG Certificate, PG Diploma and Masters. It is a retrospective application to apply for 2016/17 only

Historically, IOE had rules for awarding Distinctions to Masters students. Following merger with UCL the derogated regulations were revised to allow for Merit and Distinction to be awarded at the level of Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma, PG Certificate, PG Diploma and Masters, but the regulations did not include the detail as to how students qualified for the awards.

The UCL Academic Manual information on awarding Merits and Distinctions is designed for programmes which have percentage results rather than letter grades. In 9.5.1 of the UCL Academic Manual (Non-Standard Taught Postgraduate Classification) there is a reference to approved variations and derogations from the standard UCL taught postgraduate classification regulations and a mention of IOE Postgraduate programmes. However, while the derogated IOE regulations do refer to the award of Merit and Distinction, they do not spell out how the classifications are arrived at, and so further interpretation is required for IOE.

¹ Note this paper and the proposed regulations were approved for immediate effect by the Academic Regulations and Quality Assurance Sub-Committee (ARQASC) at its meeting of Monday 13 March 2017 (*ARQASC 13.03.17 Minute 40*).

2. Current IOE rules (up to 2016/17)

UCL IOE rules for the award of Distinction in a Masters programme (until 2016/17) have been as follows:

2.1 Award of Distinctions

Distinctions are awarded for Masters' degrees on modules worth 120 credits, to include the dissertation or report, all of which must be graded A. The Board of Examiners makes the final decision regarding the award of a distinction.

(This information was contained within the IOE Student Handbook.)

2.2 Current UCL rules

UCL rules for the award of Distinction in a Masters programme are currently:

The award of Distinction must be given to students if they have satisfied all of the following criteria:

- a) The overall weighted average mark over 180 credits is 70% or higher; and
- b) The mark for the dissertation is 70% or higher; and
- c) There are no marks below 50%, no condoned marks, no re-sit marks, and all marks are first attempts.

2.3 Summary of the differences between IOE and UCL rules

The UCL rules for Merit and Distinction cannot apply to IOE in 2016/17 in the following respects:

- The calculation is made using an overall weighted average mark – UCL IOE uses grades to mark work and cannot therefore work out an average mark;
- There are no condoned marks. UCL IOE does not have a system which includes condoned marks so this does not apply;
- There are no resit marks and all marks are first attempts. UCL IOE allows resit marks to contribute to the marks and there is no capping of marks.

3. Summary of proposal

This is a retrospective application for 2016/17 only.

The general approach to be taken is as follows:

- The classification is calculated from the module grades;
- A Distinction must be given to students who have at least two thirds of their credits at Grade A and a Merit must be given to students who have at least two thirds of their credits at Grade B;
- There must be one grade per module;

4. Proposed rules for awarding Merit or Distinction

The majority of IOE modules are 30 credit modules so the requirements are summarised based on this.

4.1 Graduate Certificate (60 credits)

For a Merit, a student must pass a minimum of 40 credits at B grade (at A grade for Distinction). Unless students take any 15 credit modules, this will mean that they need to pass both their modules at B or above (at A for Distinction).

Graduate Certificate Level 6	Minimum total credits	Likely number of modules (most are 30 credits)	Minimum number of modules at appropriate grade to secure classification
For Merit	60 credits	2 (30 credit)	2 x 30 credit at Grade B
For Distinction	60 credits	2 (30 credits)	2 x 30 credit at Grade A

4.2 Graduate Diploma (120 credits)

For a Merit, a student must pass a minimum of 80 credits at B grade (at A grade for Distinction). Unless students take any 15 credit modules, this will mean that they need to pass 90 out of 120 credits at B or above (at A for Distinction).

NB. The Grad Dip Specialist Qualification in Habilitation and Disabilities of Sight (Children and Young People) consists of 180 credits so students would be required to pass a minimum of 120 credits at B (for Merit) and A (for Distinction).

Graduate Diploma Level 6	Minimum total credits	Likely number of modules (most are 30 credits)	Minimum number of modules at appropriate grade to secure classification
For Merit	120 credits	4 (30 credit)	3 x 30 credit at Grade B
For Distinction	120 credits	4 (30 credits)	3 x 30 credit at Grade A

4.3 PG Certificate (60 credits)

For a Merit, a student must pass a minimum of 40 credits at B grade (at A grade for Distinction). Unless students take any 15 credit modules this will mean that they need to pass both their modules at B or above (at A for Distinction).

PG Certificate Level 7	Minimum total credits	Likely number of modules (most are 30 credits)	Minimum number of modules at appropriate grade to secure classification
For Merit	60 credits	2 (30 credit)	2 x 30 credit at Grade B
For Distinction	60 credits	2 (30 credits)	2 x 30 credit at Grade A

4.4 PG Diploma (120 credits)

For a Merit, a student must pass a minimum of 80 credits at B grade (at A grade for Distinction). This will mean that they need to pass 90 out of 120 credits at B or above (at A for Distinction).

PG Diploma Level 7	Minimum total credits	Likely number of modules (most are 30 credits)	Minimum number of modules at appropriate grade to secure classification
For Merit	120 credits	4 (30 credit)	3 x 30 credit at Grade B
For Distinction	120 credits	4 (30 credits)	3 x 30 credit at Grade A

4.5 Taught Masters (180 credits)

For a Merit, a student must pass a minimum of 120 credits at B grade (at A grade for Distinction). In addition, the dissertation (60 credits) or report (30 credits) must be at B grade (at A grade for Distinction).

Taught Masters Level 7	Minimum total credits	Likely number of modules (most are 30 credits except for dissertation)	Minimum number of modules at appropriate grade to secure classification
For Merit	180 credits	6 (30 credit)	4 x 30 credit (or Dissertation plus 2 x 30 credit) at Grade B
For Distinction	180 credits	6 (30 credits)	4 x 30 credit (or Dissertation plus 2 x 30 credit) at Grade A

5. Credits awarded via Accredited Prior Learning

It should be noted that as per section 6.4.7 of UCL Academic Manual, credits imported via the Accredited Prior Learning (APL) process from any institution other than UCL should be counted as part of the qualification requirements but should be excluded from the calculation of the classification.

Conversely, credits accrued at UCL and awarded via APL should be counted as part of the qualification requirements and included in the calculation of the classification.

NB. At the time of admission with APL, the student should be advised of the number of credits which they are required to pass in order to be eligible for an award, and the algorithm which will be used to calculate their classification. (See 1.6.3 RPL for Entry to Taught Postgraduate Programmes).

6. Students taking a module with a numeric marking scale

Where a student takes a module from a Faculty or Department operating a numeric marking scale, the Parent and Teaching Faculties must agree, in advance of the module teaching, the marking scale which will be used for the student/s concerned.

7. Eligibility for Merit and Distinction

The award of Merit and Distinction can be given at PGCert, PGDip and Masters level. Classification at Merit and Distinction level can be given if a student exits at the PG Cert or PG Dip level but is not intended for those who, for instance, fail their Masters and are eligible for a PG Dip.

Any student studying for a Graduate Certificate or Diploma, or for a taught Postgraduate programme is eligible for a Merit or Distinction if the regulations allow. NB. The PGCE does not allow for a Merit or Distinction category and neither do its exit awards.

Students who are assessed for their final award in 2016/17 (and in subsequent years) are eligible for a Merit or Distinction. Any changes which apply in 2016/17 do not apply to students who have already been made an award in previous years.