



UCL Academic Manual 2021-22

Chapter 6: Student Casework Framework

Annex 6.6.2

# Managing the Impact of Industrial Action on Assessment, Progression, and Award

## Guidance

---

This annex has been prepared for Faculty Tutors and Heads of Department to provide guidance on managing the impact of industrial action on assessment, progression, and award. The impact of industrial action varies across UCL; therefore, each situation will need to be considered on its individual merits in line with the regulations set out in the UCL Academic Manual. The key principles that inform the approach are fairness to students and maintenance of academic standards.

## 1 General Principles

1. In the event of industrial action that impacts assessment, progression, and award, Education Committee may establish an Examinations and Assessments Contingency Panel (EACP).
2. Assessments and examinations should go ahead as planned.
3. UCL should not take actions that undermine our academic standards.
4. UCL should send clear messages to students to let them know that UCL will ensure that students are not disadvantaged in assessments and examinations by industrial action. Frequently asked questions will be published on the UCL website.
5. Students wishing to complain about industrial action should refer to Chapter 6, Section 10: Student Complaints Procedure.
6. The Material Irregularities procedure will be used (Chapter 6, Section 6) to deal with any impact on assessment; **students should not be asked to submit extenuating circumstances requests.**

## 2 Cancelled Classes and Student Attendance Requirements

### 2.1 All Students

1. Programme Administrators are expected to keep clear records of classes that are cancelled.
2. Student attendance requirements do not apply to cancelled teaching events as students cannot be penalised for not attending classes that did not take place.
3. Where teaching has not been affected by industrial action, it is expected that students will attend. If students have chosen not to attend teaching events, including in-class tests or other departmentally scheduled assessments, then they are not entitled to any mitigation for assessment.

### 2.2 Students on a Student Visa

1. Those responsible for monitoring student engagement should mark the student as engaged for classes affected by industrial action. This ensures that students are not penalised due to cancelled classes and reduces the burden on administrative colleagues.

## 3 Applying Mitigation

### 3.1 General Principles

1. Where it is clear that a module has been affected by industrial action, the material irregularities procedure set out in the Academic Manual (Chapter 6, Section 6) should be followed. The Faculty Board of Examiners may then make adjustments in line with the procedure. The Faculty Board of Examiners may agree a delegation framework, but it is critical that oversight of decision making is maintained. All mark exclusions must be signed off by the Faculty Board of Examiners. **Students should not be asked to submit Extenuating Circumstances Forms to seek adjustments** - the Material Irregularities procedure gives an opportunity to make and communicate pro-active decisions about the impact of industrial action.
2. Module and Programme Leaders are best placed to reach a judgement as to whether their modules have been sufficiently affected by industrial action to require mitigation; it is not possible to make a single institutional judgement about the consequences of missing a single lecture, lab or seminar.
3. Programme Boards of Examiners should review the mark profiles of students carefully to ascertain whether industrial action has had a material impact on the performance of students despite mitigation, they should compare student profiles against unaffected modules and the performance of previous cohorts. Where further mitigation is required, the Faculty Board of Examiners should be consulted.
4. Faculty Boards of Examiners are responsible for the application of the Material Irregularity procedure. They may delegate responsibility to individuals or bodies at Department level if appropriate. However, a clear allocation of delegated authority must be reported to the Task Group, for the record, and clear guidance must be provided to the individuals or bodies with delegated authority so that the procedure is applied consistently. Particular care must be taken where mark exclusions are being considered.
5. Due to the varying magnitude of impact on students it is considered that an impact of up to 30 credits can be mitigated without significantly affecting decisions on progression, awarding, and

classification; this is because the remaining credits will provide sufficient evidence of students' academic achievements for a Programme Board of Examiners to make a decision.

6. Should the impact on students on a module vary, mitigation should be applied consistently to all students regardless of whether they were directly affected; this is to ensure parity of treatment for all students.
7. Students undertaking research projects/dissertations may be affected differently depending on their supervision and support arrangements. As with other modules, mitigation should be applied consistently to all students in a cohort but there may need to be different forms of mitigation applied to students in the same cohort e.g. some might require extensions where others do not depend on the extent of industrial action in a particular department.
8. Students must be informed proactively and as soon as possible about the mitigation that has been applied and the rationale for applying that mitigation.
9. Students who wish to complain about the mitigation applied should do so when they are advised of the mitigation and before they have received their marks. In accordance with Paragraph 2.6 of the Student Complaints Procedure, all complaints must be received by the Casework Team within two calendar months of the event giving rise to the complaint (this would be taken as the day when students were informed of the decision).

### **3.2 Rescheduling In-class Tests**

1. Where in-class assessments have not taken place because of industrial action the assessment should be rescheduled. If it is impossible to reschedule the assessment, then the component should be excluded and this applied to the entire cohort.

### **3.3 Adjusting Exam Papers and Assessments**

1. Chapter 6, Section 6, paragraph 6.d) of the UCL Academic Manual includes adjustment of an existing exam paper or assessment. This may involve adjusting a question, removing certain questions, removing entire sections or adjusting the rubric. Where it is agreed that the most appropriate mitigation for missed teaching is to adjust questions or tasks in an assessment/examination, this should be applied consistently to the whole cohort of students to ensure that the assessment is equitable to all students.
2. When adjusting an existing exam paper or assessment, external examiners only need to be informed, UCL will not require external examiner approval for the change.
3. In the event of industrial action affecting the Central Assessment Period, the deadline for the submission of assessment papers to the Central Assessment Team will not change. Please ensure that assessment papers are submitted by the deadline as normal.
4. Ideally, any adjustments that may be required to assessment papers should be made before they are submitted. However, if there is a paper where it is expected there may need to be a change due to industrial action, the Programme Administrator or Examination Liaison Officer responsible should flag this to the Central Assessment Team when the assessment paper is submitted by emailing [examinations@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:examinations@ucl.ac.uk) indicating the affected modules.
5. If a replacement paper is required this must be submitted to the Central Assessment Team no later than three weeks before the start of the Central Assessment Period. If a replacement paper is not submitted by this date the original paper that has been submitted will be used.
6. When submitting a revised paper this must be indicated by stating 'Revised Paper' on the coversheet. This is to ensure that the correct version is presented to students for their assessment.
7. Any assessment papers delivered after this date risk being cancelled, and not run during the Central Assessment Period. Any assessments that are cancelled will need to be run in the department.

8. Please note that corrections on the day of assessment are not permitted (because of the number of complaints from students about disruption to their assessment in previous years).
9. The Central Assessment Team can only accept a replacement paper where it is a consequence of industrial action.

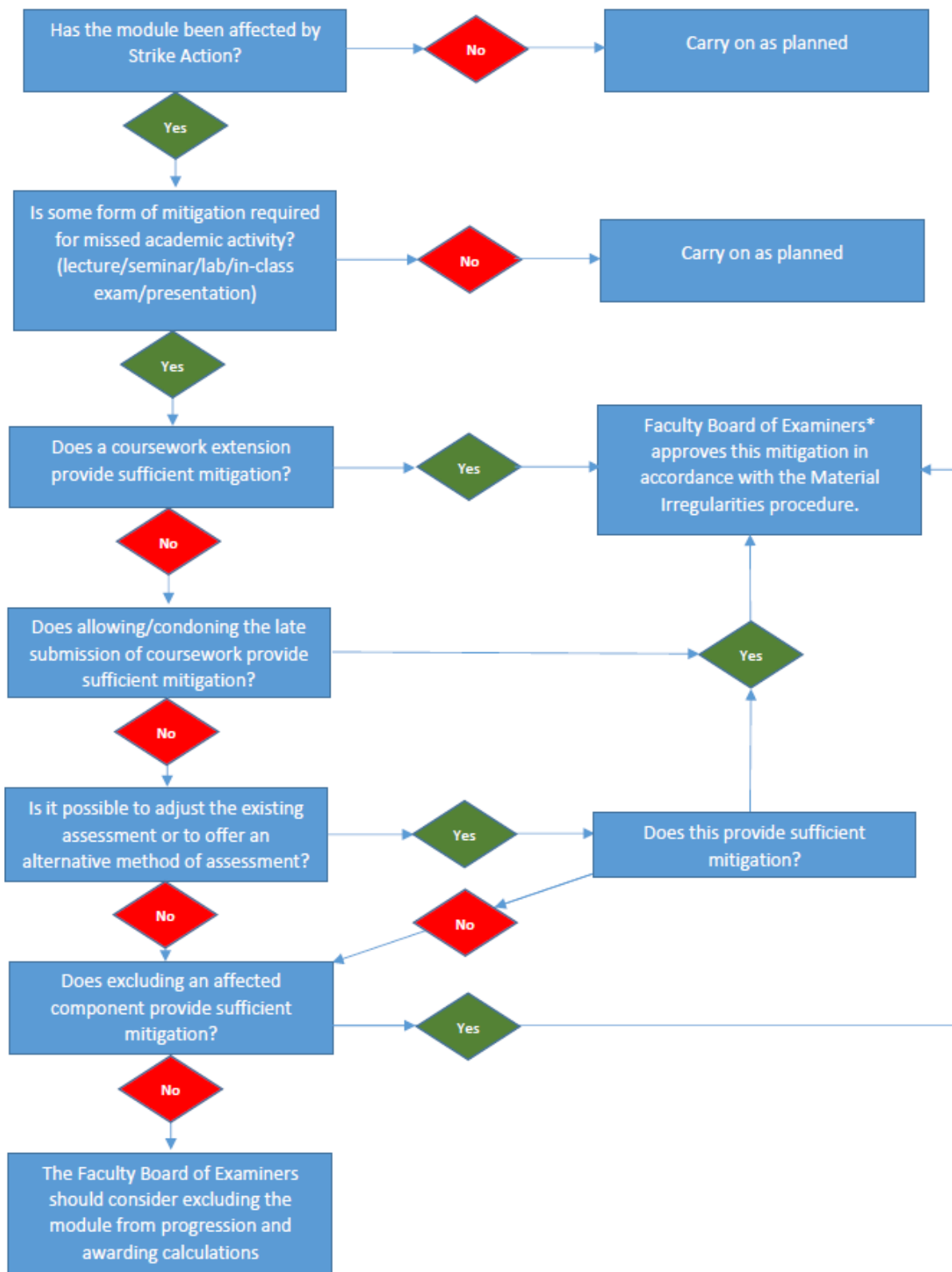
### **3.4 Changing the Method of Assessment**

1. If changing the method of assessment is proposed (e.g. replacing an exam with an essay), the external examiner needs to be consulted and approve the change.
2. If the mode of assessment is changed from exam to another form of assessment the SRS Central Assessment Team must be notified so that the assessment can be removed from the timetable. It will be the responsibility of the department to notify students of this change.
3. If the preferred option is "Offering the student another opportunity to take the assessment as if for the first time and without penalty (deferral)", this must be agreed before students submit assessments or sit an exam.

### **3.5 Component and Module Exclusions**

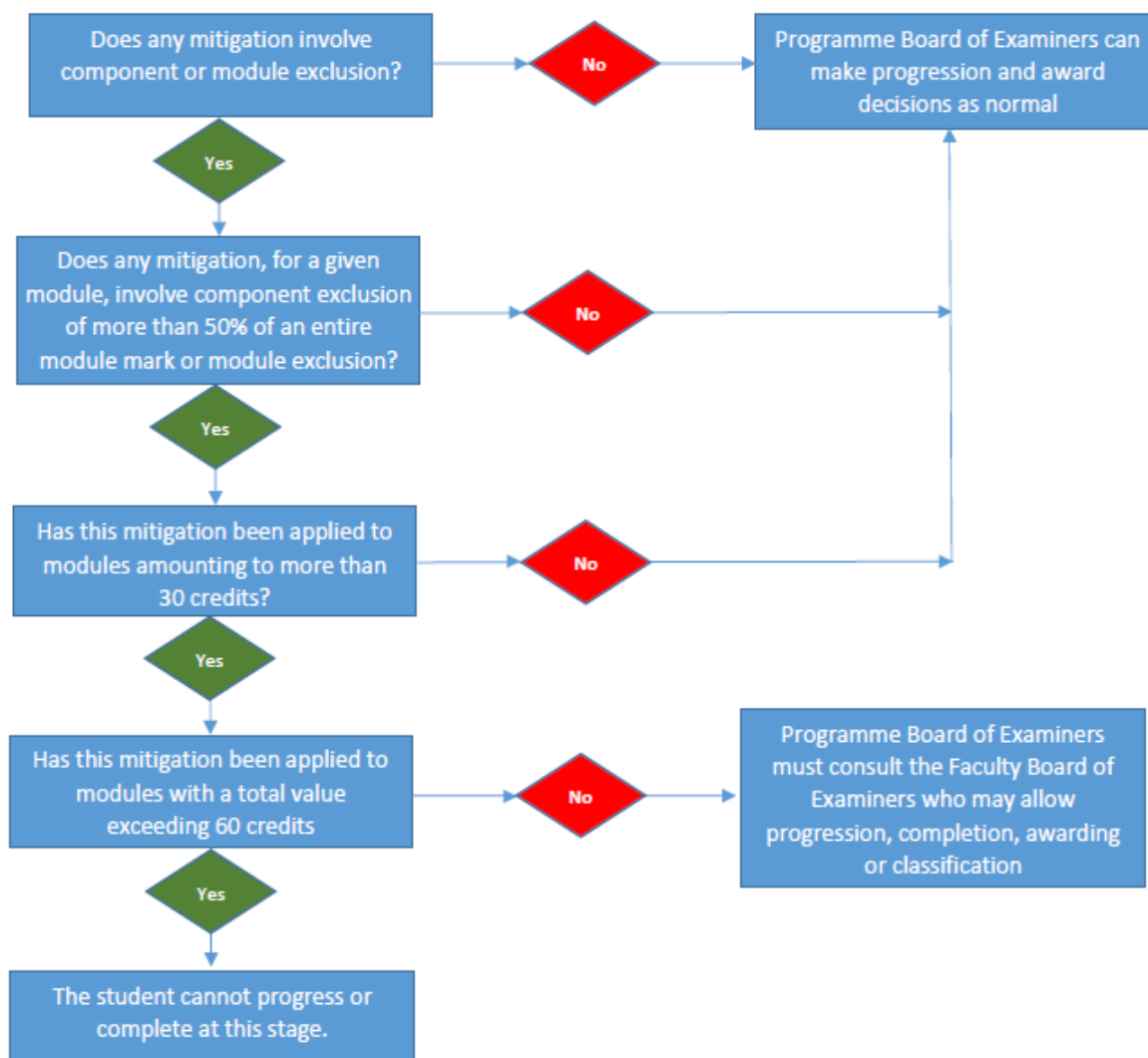
1. Where the impact on assessment involves fewer than 30 credits, Faculty Boards of Examiners can take appropriate action in accordance with Material Irregularity procedures. Advice can be sought from EACP if required.
2. Where more than 30 credits are affected, the options in the Material Irregularity procedure under Chapter 6, Section 6, paragraph 6 a)-f) can be applied to any number of credits, as these mitigating actions do not directly affect academic standards and still allow students to sufficiently demonstrate their academic ability.
3. In exceptional circumstances where option g) is required (Exclusion of the affected component/module from completion, progression, award or classification decisions), the following approach should be followed:
  - a) a component(s) exclusion of up to and including 50% of the module mark can be applied to any number of credits and still provide an Exam Board with sufficient evidence to make a decision about progression, awarding and classification;
  - b) where a component(s) exclusion amounts to more than 50% of the module mark, this is allowable in up to and including 30 credits and can be approved by the Faculty Board of Examiners;
  - c) where a component exclusion amounts to more than 50% of the module marks in more than 30 credits up to and including 60 credits, this will need to be considered by the Programme Board of Examiners and approved by the Faculty Board of Examiners - this decision cannot be delegated;
  - d) where a module exclusion is applied, this is allowable in up to 30 credits and can be approved by the Faculty Board of Examiners;
  - e) where a module exclusion is applied in more than 30 credits, up to and including 60 credits, this will need to be considered by the Programme Board of Examiners and approved by the Faculty Board of Examiners, this decision cannot be delegated;
  - f) if component exclusions amounting to more than 50% of module marks or module exclusions of more than 60 credits have been applied, then a decision about progression, awarding and classification cannot be made; the Faculty Board of Examiners must consult with EACP to identify suitable options to support students to complete their programme.

### 3.6 Industrial Action Mitigation flowchart



### 3.7 Industrial Action Mitigation Cumulative Effect flowchart

In order to reassure students and manage the assessment process effectively, mitigation will need to be applied before a Board of Examiners meets to make decisions about progression, completion, awarding and classification. In order to safeguard academic standards, a Board of Examiners will need to assure itself that the cumulative impact of any mitigation does not undermine academic standards.



## 4 External Examiner Resignations

1. The University and College Union (UCU) has previously called on External Examiners to resign their duties as part of industrial action. UCU has previously advised them to fulfil all contractual obligations, including notice period and this is UCL's expectation too. In the event of External Examiner resignations, the following approach should be followed:
2. All EEs appointed from Autumn 2017 will have received an appointment letter specifying a notice period of 3 months. In addition, UCL's regulations were updated in 2016 to specify a 3-month notice period. UCU have previously advised External Examiners to complete their notice periods, and UCL would expect them to do so.
3. If the Programme Board of Examiners falls outside the notice period, Departments are encouraged to seek and appoint a replacement to cover the Board meeting following the procedures in the UCL Academic Manual, Chapter 4, Annex 4.3.6 Boards of Examiners Emergency Procedures.

4. Should a strike be called off before the Board, the External Examiner's resignation can be rescinded if no replacement has been found; Departments are encouraged to err on the side of caution, not to hope that a strike will have been called off.

## 5 Further Questions

1. Please contact [academicregulations@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:academicregulations@ucl.ac.uk) if you have further questions about industrial action and its impact on assessment, progression, and award.