Annex H: Student Feedback on Classification
UCLU Education Conference February 2017

Students were asked to respond to a number of questions posted on walls around the room. In each case they were asked to ‘vote’ by putting an ‘x’ in the relevant box, and they could also leave comments if they wanted to. There were around 45-50 students present; students did not necessarily answer all questions. Hand-written comments have been transcribed as accurately as possible.

1: Marking Scales
At the moment, different UCL programmes use different marking scales (e.g. 1-100%, 1-80, A-D etc.).

Question 1: Do you think different marking scales have a significant impact on the Classification you receive?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
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Why?
- I think professors are more inclined to grade based on rubrics or specific criteria on number-based scales, leading to more exact but often arbitrary/non-comparative grades (e.g. one student getting 67 and another 68 for no reason). Letter-based grading looks more at the essay overall (in the social sciences, that’s better)
- It should be the same for everyone, it makes no sense to have different scales
- We students deserve to know the accurate marking (0-100%) instead of a letter (A-D) because it’s a bit confusing
- They stand for different things, it can get confusing for students.
- Percentages are more meaningful
- Standardise the whole assessment process - allows for inter-module comparison

Why?
- What distinguishes classification depends on the format (essay, exam, MCQ etc.). The scale is only part of the whole assessment process.

Question 2: Have different marking scales affected your choices around things like module options?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
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<tr>
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<td>7</td>
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</table>

Why?
- Courses with 1-100% make it easier to achieve a first overall
- If it was optional, I would have been as keen on it. We were told at the start "we don’t give above 80%"
- Marking scales make a huge difference in your average mark in the end. Is it 100%? A-C? The measurement system is not equal.

Why?
- Simply because I don’t have optional modules this year
- I didn’t, purely to pursue [actual] interests, but it’s unfair that language modules can be an easy way for people to score up to 100% whereas most modules here are capped at 80.
- Again, depends on context. Marking scales are superficial, compared to the things we learn in a module.
Grades using the same marking scales are not necessarily comparable, marks using different marking scales are almost impossible to compare.

I didn't even know different marking scales existed!

Same. But I feel like it would be better if every module had same marking scale

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**2: First Year Marks**

At the moment, some UCL programmes include marks from the First Year in the Classification but others don’t.

**Question 1: Should First Year marks be counted towards your Classification?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
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</table>

**Why?**

- [Should] Only counted if individual is getting a first?!
- Promotes working harder from the start. Also helps contribute to grades (as modules be easier).
- Reward the effort he/she has devoted
- Only 1 cu so student works hard still instead of having an excuse to goof
- Currently 1/9 of degree, good system, counted but not heavily-weighted.
- But at a low weighting (1st year modules are usually not too difficult)
- To give people motivation to study
- Puts pressure off later years
- Ensures students work hard from the beginning of degree
- It would help people focus more- maybe just 10% so it feels as if all the work we’re doing worthwhile. But there should more support Academic writing- we had none.
- Think about the international position, do other universities across the world do the same or is this rule positively increase the UCL student?
- Incentive to study to build a good solid foundation [built] for the next few years

- Students are able to drop some poorer modules enough, so there is already leeway
- Allows students a chance to settle into uni and experience the examination for the first time.
- Some students find the jump to UG very hard, and this can be an access issue. No first year counted seems fairer
- First year is time for students to familiarise with university, academic study. Trying should be encouraged but marks could discourage open mind/exploring

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**3: Fail Marks**

We want to think about whether we can allow students to ‘drop’ failed or condoned marks from the Classification in a limited number of credits.

**Question 1: Should all failed or condoned marks be included in the Classification?**

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<thead>
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<th>Yes</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>13</td>
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</table>
Why?
- It would reduce the fairness of marking – it has to be the same for everyone
- It has to be fair for everyone

Why?
- I think there should be opportunity for 1 grade replacement after a resit, maybe upon request and filling out a form by the student (like extenuating circumstances form)
- Especially first year, most degree requires us to take a wide range of modules and specialise later on. Some of the modules therefore are not what we’re interested in and can't do well. The modules we are allowed to drop may be optional on the transcript because we shouldn't be bound by modules we didn't do well in & can affect future applications.
- We all have bad days
- There may be unforeseen circumstances
- Not if these are ‘dropped’ modules (i.e. 1st year 1.0 cu dropped)

Question 2: How many marks should students be able to drop?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Year 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.5</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1cu</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>1cu</td>
<td>0.5cu</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1cu</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>1cu</td>
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<td>2cu</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3cu</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.5cu</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0 cu dropped</td>
<td>0cu or 0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1cu</td>
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Why?
- Students should be given the opportunity to explore different subjects and modules in the first year
- First year should be a year of trial with no mark pressure
- We don’t know how university work in our 1st year
- 1.0cu - particularly in case whole first year counts a certain amount.

Why?
- Train students to plan their work properly not just have an easy way out
- Students should be specialised in the field and choose modules they will do well at.
4: Borderline Marks

If your final weighted average was 69%, i.e. within 1% of a First, which of the following would you prefer?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Exam Board should have the discretion to raise my classification to a First based on whatever criteria it feels are appropriate.</th>
<th>There should be a set formula which is applied to all students (e.g. if 50% of final year marks are at 70% or above, the classification should be raised to a First).</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
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</table>

**Why?**

- Not set, what if you got high 70's for 3/8 and the remaining 5/8 brought you down to 69
- Not all students know about how exams etc. are marked- more extensive feedback needed
- If we have to appeal the mark, how would this be done?
- The marks are can be very [situative?], sometimes students didn’t get the mark because of external factors, they should be given opportunity to get + 1%
- If you had certain work that was of excellent quality (e.g. over 75%) that proves you are deserving of a first
- Everyone has bad days r exams
- It varies in individual cases and effort and career choice should be taken into account too.

- Standardisation across degrees
- There should be some form of standardisation. There will always be borderline cases, leaving to the Exam Board’s discretions introduces many uncertain variables.
- If one leaves it to the decision of the exam Board, it could lead to an unfair grading. Set criteria rather "individual" grading
- Most objective method
- Students should know about their grades will be before exam board decisions - important for grad school apps. It's also unfair to have it arbitrary and not have student be able to appeal the decision.
- It will encourage students knowing that they have succeeded in 50% of their modules
- Less subjective

5: Masters Dissertations

At the moment, Masters students have to undertake a minimum 60 credit Dissertation. They have to get a final weighted average of at least 70% and a Dissertation mark of at least 70% in order to get a Distinction.

**Question 1: Should all Masters programmes include a Dissertation worth at least 60 credits?**

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<td>5</td>
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</table>

**Why?**

- I feel like these issues are linked in how much emphasis should be placed on a dissertation. I think a dissertation should be key part of the masters but not a huge stress should be placed on the mark. It would be more of a compromise
- Part of the academic rigour of UCL programmes vs private unis/technical courses elsewhere
- Research and skills acquired through writing

- 60 credit means time, dissertation needs time
- 30 or less than 60 could also be a good option, A lot of MA's other countries have dissertations less than 60. It’s about learning how to do/conduct research. This doesn't have to take a whole year of fulltime
- Some students may not be as well equipped for research- may not need it until later in the career.
- 60 credits or more, the dissertation should be replaced or offered as an alternative, e.g. with
Question 2: Should the Classification include a specific mark for the Dissertation or should it just be based on the final weighted average?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dissertation and Final Weighted Average</th>
<th>Final Weighted Average only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
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</table>

**Why?**
- Because it is not fair to get a 2.1, if you do not manage to get a 70% in your dissertation somehow. For example if I get 72% in Final Weighted Average and 68% in dissertation, my hard work would not pay 'fairly'.
- Otherwise, it doesn't seem to take into account how the dissertation is worth quite a large amount of the program, and students will spend an uneven amount of time on both and to be expected to excel at both is difficult especially if other universities deem this method obsolete.