

### **5.2.1.2: Grading of Assessments**

The guidelines within section 5.2.1.2 of this document (and subsections) also refer to section 4.3 and its subsections (Moderating Assessment Instruments and Results) and section 4.4 and subsections (ICD's External Examination Policy).

In completion of grading/marking of any assessment (e.g. assignment, examination, coursework, presentation, continuous assessment) an Examiner or other member of staff may request further information from a student about their completion of the assessment. This information request may take the form of:

- Verbal discussions about the assessment
- Meeting(s)
- Emails
- Moodle messages
- Viva voce (see section 5.2.1.1.6)

If an examiner has concerns relating to plagiarism and/or academic misconduct (or any other breach of examination and assessment regulations), the examiner has the right to withhold the learner's grade (for the entire module and/or for a specific assignment) until the learner has communicated with the examiner to remove these concerns. In the event that these concerns persist, the examiner should refer to sections 5.2.1.1.2 and 5.2.1.6 (and its subsections) of the present document.

#### **5.2.1.2.1 Assessment Grading – QQI Honours Degrees (Level 8) & Masters (Level 9)**

Grading of Assessments at ICD follows QQI (2013b, section 3) guidelines regarding sectoral conventions for assessment: "the sectoral conventions for assessment comprise a set of regulations and benchmarks, which in the interest of fairness and consistency, are agreed at the sectoral level by QQI and all associated providers."

For every QQI module, assessment is designed to test the student's knowledge and understanding of the module outcomes. The module outcomes represent the knowledge and skills that the student is required to master to pass the module. QQI (the awarding body) provides a set of assessment

criteria designed to test the student’s competence regarding each outcome. Assessment is designed in such a way as to be transparent. This means that it should be clear to the student what is expected of him or her to achieve the various grades.

A module that is completed satisfactorily can be graded at Pass 40-49, a H2.2 50-59, a H2.1 60-69 or H1 70+ for level 8 Honours Degree programmes. See Table 5.2.1.2.1a.

Classification of Honours Bachelor's degrees (Level 8) and Higher Diplomas (Level 8)	GPA boundary values	PPA boundary values	Description 2009 - 2010 and following
First-class honours	3.25	70%	Indicative descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in most respects is significantly and consistently beyond this
Second-class honours Grade 1	3.0	60%	Indicative descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in many respects is significantly beyond this
Second-class honours Grade 2	2.5	50%	Indicative descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in some respects is significantly beyond this
Pass	2.0	40%	Definitive descriptor: Attains all the minimum intended programme learning outcomes

**Table 5.2.1.2.1a: Classification of Honours Bachelor’s Degrees (Level 8) and Higher Diplomas (Level 8)**

**Source: QQI 2013b Section 3**

A module that is completed satisfactorily can be graded at Pass 40-59, a Second-Class Honours 60-69, a First Class Honours 70+ for level 9 Masters programme. See Table 5.2.1.2.1b.

Classification of Taught Master's degrees (Level 9)	GPA boundary values	PPA boundary values	Description 2009 - 2010 and following
First-class honours	3.25	70%	Indicative descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in most respects is significantly and consistently beyond this
Second-class honours	3.0	60%	Indicative descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in many respects is significantly beyond this
Pass	2.0	40%	Definitive descriptor: Attains all the minimum intended programme learning outcomes

**Table 5.2.1.2.1b: Classification of Taught Master's Degrees (Level 9)**

**Source: QQI 2013b Section 3**

**Grading/assessing group (or team) based assessment tasks:**

As per QQI (2013b section 2.2.5) *Assessment and Standards* guidelines, all "individuals undertaking team-based assessment tasks are assessed [i.e. graded] as individuals" at ICD. Grading of group-work assessments takes account of the fact that not all learners may contribute equally to group work. Where practical, team-based assignments, at ICD, should, and do, incorporate peer evaluation whereby students report their evaluation of their own work/contribution to an assignment task and also evaluate the contribution of other team members. These evaluations should be used as evidence when making grading decisions. However, the assessor will seek further evidence, as and when appropriate and/or necessary.

**Determination of Award Classification:**

Following QQI (2013b) *Assessment and Standards* guidelines (Sectoral Convention 3 on Determination of Award Classification), at ICD, "calculation of the award classification shall be based on the credit-weighted mean value of the allowable grades (i.e. those that contribute to the classification) for modules...[undertaken by the student on] a specific programme which has been validated by QQI...for the purposes of making the award." The percentage point average (PPA) for a stage is defined at ICD as the credit-weighted mean of the percentage point values for the modules

at that stage, as recommended by QQI (2013b). No credit is allocated to a learner in respect of modules that are failed outright (by that learner) (QQI 2013b).

To achieve a Pass a student must have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of all the outcomes included in that particular module.

A grade above a pass (e.g. H2.2 (level 8), H2.1 (level 8), H2 (level 9), or H1 (level 8 or 9)) would indicate a level of achievement beyond what is required to pass the module. The module lecturer has the primary responsibility for grading students' work. However, all grades are subject to approval by an examination board meeting chaired by the Programme Director or Registrar and agreed by an External Examiner. Grades must also be internally verified (second marked).

#### **Outright fails:**

In line with QQI's (2013b) *Assessment and Standards* guidelines, at ICD, an outright fail (or fail outright) is defined as follows. An outright fail in a module occurs when a learner's combined assessment grade for that module is below 35%. If a learner receives 35% (or more), but less than 40%, they may qualify for a pass by compensation, as described later in the ICD QA policy, and pending reference to the programme document to ensure that pass by compensation can be applied to the specific module (or is not precluded from applying the pass by compensation rule).

It may be the case that a learner must pass specific assessment elements in a module in order to pass a module. If this is the case, then the learner must:

- Pass all assessment elements in the module that they are required to pass (as described in the specific module descriptor)
- **Also** receive 40% or greater as their combined grade for the module

Whether or not learners can fail some assessment elements but still pass a module (provided they achieve an overall grade of 40% or greater in the module) will be indicated in the programme manual and module descriptors. In cases where this is not specified, the rule is that the learner's overall grade for the module must be 40% or greater (to pass), **but** they can fail any assessment elements (within a module) and still pass the module overall (again, provided their overall grade for the module is 40% or greater).

### **Repeat Strategy:**

Students who fail an end of semester examination or a phased test have a right to repeat. Students also have a right to resubmit coursework which is considered below Pass standard. The grade for a second sitting or resubmitted coursework will be limited to a Pass grade. In the case of repeat assessments, a student will incur a repeat fee of €150.

Learners who fail a module will typically be offered three repeat attempts. Following QQI (2013b section 2.2.5) guidelines, "for an unseen examination (e.g. an examination paper which is not seen by learners until handed out at the time of examination), the repeat tasks" will not be the same as the original task.

### **Repeat for Honours:**

ICD follows QQI (2013b) *Assessment and Standards* guidelines (Sectoral Convention 3 on Determination of Award Classification) with regard to its repeat for honours strategy: "the existing approach to repeat for honours...[is that] it is not to be offered." However, recent External Examiner feedback has advised that this practice may be unfair, and we are aware of a similar perspective at another institution under the auspices of QQI. Despite this, while the point is one we may consult QQI on again in future, at the direction of our External Examiner, for the immediate future, ICD intends to follow QQI (2013b) guidance that repeating for honours is not to be offered.

### **Honours Classification:**

Following QQI (2013b) *Assessment and Standards* guidelines (Sectoral Convention 3 on Determination of Award Classification), at ICD, “honours classification, or any classification higher than ‘Pass’, shall be made based on first-attempt grades. Necessary procedures to allow consistent treatment of a repeat grade as a first-attempt grade, where exceptional mitigating circumstances exist, shall not compromise this principle.” A learner who repeats a module during the award stage of a programme will not be eligible for an award classification higher than a pass classification (unless that learner is repeating with approved extenuating circumstances).

### **Pass by Compensation:**

Procedure and policy to apply compensation to pass modules is supervised and coordinated at ICD by the Registrar. ICD policies on this matter follow QQI (2013b e.g. section 4.4.1) *Assessment and Standards* guidelines: “a module can be passed by compensation (using passes in other modules from the same stage) unless this is specifically precluded in the programme assessment strategy.”

Passing by compensation requires a learner to achieve 35% in the respective module where compensation is being applied. Passing a module by compensation enables a learner to pass a stage on the respective programme. Passing by compensation is applicable (where relevant in modules that are not precluded from pass by compensation rule applications) when a learner’s grade in a module is “greater than or equal to 35% but less than 40% in the percentage system” used at ICD (QQI 2013b section 4.4.1). A grade of 35% or more, but less than 40%, indicates that “a learner has nearly (but not quite) demonstrated attainment of the relevant minimum intended learning outcomes” (ibid). For a pass by compensation to be applied, “the results of all modules in the stage...[must be] from first attempts” (ibid). “Performance at the first attempt [that receives a grade of 40% or higher] in modules in a given stage ([a stage] of at least 30 credits) may be used to compensate [for other modules] in the same stage, provided no module in the stage has been failed outright [which means a module grade of below 35%]” (ibid). If a student passes a module by compensation, their grade is classified as a pass by compensation and is credit bearing.

For pass by compensation to be applied, at ICD, QQI (2013b section 4.4.1) guidelines require that:

The overall...stage-aggregate of credit-weighted excesses of percentage marks (over 40) is greater than or equal to twice the stage-aggregate of credit-weighted deficits of marks (under 40) and the potentially compensatable results account for no more than one-third of the credit for the stage: i.e. 20 credits in a 60-credit stage or 10 credits in a 30-credit stage.

Learners who pass a module by compensation remain eligible for honours at the award stage, as per QQI (2013b) guidelines. However, compensation (where applied) does not change the result of the module (e.g. 35%) that has been passed by compensation. If a learner has passed a module by compensation, at ICD, they are offered the opportunity to repeat the module assessment(s), if they so wish, in order to improve their grade to a pass, rather than a pass by compensation. If the learner's repeat grades are lower than the first attempt grades, the first attempt grades will still stand. Where a learner's module grade is 35-39% and they pass by compensation, their transcript of results (and the Diploma Supplement) will show the actual result (e.g. 35%) along with an indication that the module has been passed by/with compensation applied. All students who qualify for a pass by compensation will receive a pass by compensation automatically, pending their receipt of an offer to reattempt the assessments as a repeat in the hope of improving their grade to a pass. If compensation cannot be applied in a specific module, this will be identified in the respective programme module. Decisions to preclude modules from qualifying for pass by compensation, at ICD, are based on reference to the minimum intended programme learning outcomes (MIPLOs) and ensuring that these MIPLOs are achieved for a candidate to receive an award. Examination board meetings and the Registrar are the primary parties/processes responsible at ICD for overseeing this procedure.

## REFERENCES

QQI (2013b) *Assessment and Standards, Revised 2013*. Quality and Qualifications Ireland, Dublin.

Available

from:

[https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Assessment\\_and\\_Standards%20Revised%202013.pdf](https://www.qqi.ie/Publications/Publications/Assessment_and_Standards%20Revised%202013.pdf)