



National College of Art and Design
A Recognised College of University College Dublin

UCD Academic Regulations 2019-2020

Things you should know

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1. Introduction

UCD has completed a major review of the Academic Regulations. As a recognised college of CD, NCAD is subject to the UCD Academic Regulations. Unless a derogation (an approved exemption from the regulations) has been given to NCAD, all programmes delivered at the College must conform to the UCD Academic Regulations.

The revised academic regulations will apply to all programmes from September (Semester/Trimester 1) 2019. The review involved wide consultation, and were approved by UCD's Academic Council on 22 November 2018.

1.1. Simpler language

One of the most significant and most positive changes to the regulations is the language used. The tone of the language has been revised to ensure students can easily understand the regulations. They are more user-friendly than previous editions.

Overall, the changes are very positive; this is the most significant review to the UCD Academic Regulations in many years. The new regulations allow more flexibility for learners and for staff, particularly in relation to non-traditional learning, which could be very significant for NCAD. Additionally, the flexibility of the regulations should mean the NCAD will no longer need to seek so many derogations.

Several changes in the Regulations will have implications for how we approach development, delivery and assessment of our programmes.

1.2. The objectives of the Review

The objectives of the UCD Academic Council Executive Committee in reviewing the Academic Regulations are as follows:

1. Ensure the fully modularised and semesterised nature of the (UCD) curriculum.
2. Enable capacity for flexibility and innovation in learning and assessment.
3. Offer students a fully outcomes-based curriculum.
4. Strengthen programme coherence.
5. Ensure clarity of responsibility for modules, assessment and programmes.
6. Provide more opportunities to learn outside the classroom.
7. Promote timely and flexible student progression.

This guide aims to let you know of some of the changes that will be introduced over the next year, to ensure the revised regulations can be implemented at NCAD in September 2019 with a minimum of stress.

2. Overall amendments

2.1. Role of Programme Director and Module Co-ordinator

Ref: 1.7 (Pg 9); 3.14 (Pg 16)

The current regulations refer to both a Programme Director and Programme Co-ordinator. The title has been clarified, and NCAD will adopt the title of Programme Director accordingly from September 2019.

Each module shall have a named Module Co-ordinator appointed by, and accountable to, the Head of School to oversee the design, delivery, assessment, and grading of the module on behalf of the School. The Module Co-ordinator also acts as the Principal Examiner of that module, a function that cannot be delegated.

2.2. Agreement of grades to Academic Council

Ref: 1.11 (Pg 10)

The Exam Board is now entitled to require a School to review any grades submitted.

Where the Exam Board and a School cannot agree on the grades submitted, provision is made to refer the matter to Academic Council. This formalises a dispute resolution mechanism in any case where the Exam Board and a School fail to agree on submitted grades.

2.3. Trimesters in place of semesters

Ref: 3.2 (Pg 15)

From September 2019, the academic sessions will be divided into three trimesters, to reflect the current practice whereby certain activities continue across three academic terms.

- Autumn Trimester
- Spring Trimester
- Summer Trimester

In addition, a derogation is no longer required to deliver a module over the summer trimester. However, delivery in the summer trimester must be detailed in the approved programme specifications.

2.4. Minimum credits for double-trimester modules

Ref: 3.5 (Pg 15)

Certain modules can be delivered over more than one trimester, with minimum credit limits as follows:

- 20 credits for research-related capstone modules (dissertation, research, or thesis).
- 10 credits for studio modules or professional work experience modules.

- The module is a clinical teaching module, where delivery over more than one trimester is necessary to achieve access to relevant facilities, support, or materials.

Delivery over more than one trimester **MUST** be detailed in the module descriptor.

2.5. Workload: Limit on credits per trimester

Ref: 3.7-3.9 (Pg 16)

While a student may choose to undertake more than 30 credits in a single trimester (up to a maximum workload of 40 credits per trimester), a programme cannot require a student to take more than 30 credits per trimester.

The School Board must monitor student workloads, and it may (following appropriate consultation with the student) reduce a student's workload if they consider it to be unsustainable. This monitoring is particularly important for students repeating a module, where they may choose to undertake more than 30 credits (but **CANNOT** undertake more than 40 credits).

2.6. Option and elective modules

Ref: 3.19-3.25 (Pg 18)

The new regulations have revised how UCD considers elective and option modules, but the changes don't really change the situation at NCAD.

Students are 'entitled' to take elective modules. Students shall **NOT** take elective modules in their first trimester to enable them to negotiate and tailor their learning.

Where a student wishes to take an elective module, it needs to be shown that the module would contribute to the student meeting the Programme Outcomes.

2.7. Other learning experiences

Ref: 3.30-3.33 (Pg 20)

The new regulations include a new section on Other Learning Experiences. NCAD Academic Council is enabled to include learning opportunities other than modules as credit-bearing activities in the programme specifications. The Academic Council will also require assessment be undertaken to ensure that the activity achieves stated programme outcomes.

This development is to promote learning opportunities outside of the 'classroom', while ensuring that Academic Council may assess the contribution that such opportunities make towards programme outcomes. NCAD could make use of this development in Studio + and VC +. Examples would include work placements, independent learning or voluntary activities.

Learning opportunities outside of a programme

Furthermore, Academic Council can consider and approve (or not) a request from a student to recognise an activity outside of the programme as a credit-bearing activity, where the

Academic Council is satisfied that the activity will contribute appropriately to achieving the programme outcomes.

Do note, only Academic Council can approve these diversions to a programme. Where a student has applied for an external activity to be included in their credit accumulation, the Head of Department (through the Head of School as appropriate) should take it to Academic Council for approval before finalising anything with the student. NCAD will need to develop a brief process to ensure equity and efficiency (to ensure an outcome can be reached in a timely manner (rather than telling a student at the end of a trimester that actually their activity wasn't approved, and the student is left short of credits).

The Academic Council can also require an assessment of the activity to ensure the activity (and the student) has reached the stated Programme Outcomes.

3. Assessment

Ref: 4 (Pgs 22-32)

There are several changes to this section of the regulations. While some more significant changes are explained below, all examiners should read the Assessment section of the Academic Regulations.

The new academic regulations give more emphasis to assessing learning outcomes, and to recognising learning that contributes to the programme outcomes from a variety of learning activities, and not just from the standard modules in the programme.

3.1. Student awarded credit for achieving learning outcomes

Ref 4.3 (Pg 23)

A student is awarded credit for demonstrating the achievement of the learning outcomes associated with a module or combination of modules.

This clarifies that a student is deemed to pass a module on demonstration of the achievement of the learning outcomes of that module. The change reinforces the relationship between assessment and learning outcomes. Examiners (Module Co-ordinators) must ensure that the assessments clearly identify the students' demonstration of achieving the learning outcomes, and not on assessing students' understanding of specific elements of the curriculum.

Ref 4.4 (Pg 23)

In addition, this also enables integrated assessment, so that several modules can be assessed in a combined manner. This could be effective where one module progresses naturally to a second module and where an assessment, or one or some of several assessments, assesses learning outcomes from more than one module.

3.2. Progression of assessment

A variety of assessment methods and approaches should be used, so that:

- Inherent biases that may disadvantage particular student groups or individuals will be mitigated.
- There is not over reliance on specific methods of assessment.
- Assessment tasks assess both generic skills and subject-specific knowledge.
- There is clear progression in the complexity and demands of assessment requirements over the sequential levels of modules and stage programme outcomes.

3.3. Module descriptor to include statement on assessment weighting

Ref: 3.17 k) (Pg 17)

While NCAD already includes assessment weighting in each module descriptor, module co-ordinators should review the assessment weighting as it is carried out, and ensure it is appropriate, and is accurately and clearly described in the module descriptor.

Each module descriptor must specify how the achievement of learning outcomes will be assessed and, where there is more than one assessment, the specific weighting of each assessment. For example, where assessment involves a short essay explaining concepts, followed by a practical project, and culminating in a 5-10 minute presentation on the process of creating the project and challenges faced along the way, this may be explained as follows:

How will I be assessed?		
Assessment tool	% of final grade	Timing
Essay (1,000 words)	10%	At mid-trimester point
Project outcome	75%	Due in week 12 of trimester
Presentation	15%	Final week of trimester
Total	100%	

To demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes, students will need to demonstrate that they have explored and considered the theories and history included in the module, and how this has informed their practical work.

A short essay (approx 1,000 words) will illustrate the background of the proposed project, how the student has so far been influenced by their experience and their development during the trimester so far. The essay may be presented in hard copy or electronically, with or without models, templates, prototypes, illustrations etc (10% weighting).

The practical work should reflect something of themselves, as well as showing how their development during this module has shaped their work (75% weighting).

A presentation to the class at the end of the trimester should provide a context to their practical work, demonstrating the links between what they have learned and experienced in the trimester, and how this has informed their product (15% weighting).

Students can expect to receive feedback on the first essay within two weeks of submission. Informal feedback will be shared during the trimester, with final grading being given to students at the end of trimester.

Information for students on assessments must be:

- Explicit;
- Transparent;
- Targeted towards students;
- Up to date;
- Readily available;
- Explained and emphasised at the beginning of a module delivery to guide students' learning.

NCAD assessments should reinforce the standards of the College, promote fairness, opportunity and consistency. Assessment processes and requirements must align with natural justice, must not inadvertently or advertently discriminate or cause bias.

3.4. Participation can be assessed

Ref: 4.9 (Pg 24)

Module Co-ordinators can specify engagement or participation in module activity as an assessable component. **Attendance alone is explicitly ruled out as an assessable component.** This has two positive implications: we cannot fail a student for simply not turning up (assuming they pass their assessments), and if we want to assess turning up, it must be in terms of participation, and not merely turning up. The onus is really on the student if participation is included in assessment, to get involved.

Inclusion of participation in modules must be included in the (revised) module descriptor, specifying the weighting of course. The Programmes Board will closely monitor any changes to modules to incorporate participation as part of the assessment. It should also be included in the Programme Specifications, as part of the assessment strategies and assessment philosophy.

3.5. Moderation a requirement

Ref: 4.16 (Pg 25)

Moderation of assessment is the process used to ensure the quality of assessment and its outcomes; it ensures that the judgments of students' performance are consistent and have the same 'meaning' irrespective of time, place or marker.

To promote consistency, fairness and good practice, assessment processes will include internal moderation processes, including second grading. While some departments have existing moderation processes in place, they are not consistent across the College. All assessments should have some form of moderation, so that we can stand by the fairness, consistency, and transparency of all our assessments.

To ensure assessments are consistent, fair and transparent, the moderation process deals with the whole assessment process: development, performance, marking and grading.

While the Extern Examiner process forms part of the moderation process, it's not sufficient. An internal process must be in place to ensure the assessment process and the students' results are fair, consistent and transparent.

Moderation of assessment development

Have the assessments been designed to ensure the students are fairly judged on their attainment of the learning outcomes? Is the weighting appropriate? Have the students received clear information at the beginning of the module delivery of the whole assessment process, including weighting, grade descriptors, expectations (word count, size or depth of project, presentation expectations), marking schemes? Is the module descriptor accurate and correct?

Moderation of assessment performance

Were all students treated equitably? Was personalisation kept to a minimum? Is there any bias in the process? How does the assessment process fare for students with learning, physical, mental or emotional challenges?

Does the process compare well with last year? Did we learn anything from previous performances?

What have we learned this year about the assessment of this module? Can you recommend any changes for assessing the next cohort?

Moderation of marking, grading

Is there a fair distribution of grades? Does the grading clearly reflect the students' achievement of the learning outcomes? How do the grades compare to last year?

3.6. Assessment by approved examiners

Ref: 4.19 (Pg 25)

Members of faculty, who are generally involved in assessment, must be approved as 'approved examiners'. Generally, to be approved, a proposed examiner should be qualified to a level above that of the level being assessed. It is up to the Academic Council to approve all examiners.

3.7. Grading

Ref: 4.14-4.31 (Pgs 25-31)

There are several changes to grading, in particular the use of WL, WX, I, and IP, as well as the introduction of ABS (absent). All examiners, markers, moderators, module and programme developers, as well as Programme Directors and Module Co-ordinators should have a comprehensive understanding of this section of the regulations.

Must pass components

Ref: 4.15 (Pg 25)

If there is a 'must pass' assessment element in a module, the component must be substantive, and contribute at least 20% to the overall grade for the module. In addition, opportunities for remediation of this component must be provided prior to confirmation of the grade by the Exam Board. This puts considerable onus on including a must pass element, and they should only be employed where there is a sound pedagogical rationale. All must pass components will be explained in the module descriptor.

3.8. Feedback within 20 days

Ref: 4.35 (Pg 31)

Students can expect to receive feedback within 20 working days of the submission deadline for assessed work, excepting work submitted late or submitted as part of a terminal assessment.

While this may seem like a short time, 20 working days is four weeks, almost a third of a trimester. It is reasonable that students should receive feedback within a third of a trimester. The limit doesn't apply where the work being submitted is the final assessment at the end of a year. It does apply though to all other mid-trimester assessments, and assessments at the end of trimester 1 (and trimester 2 in the case of programmes that run over three trimesters).

3.9. Remediation within a module

Ref: 6.2 (Pg 36)

The change allows a module co-ordinator to provide opportunities for students to remediate either individual assessment components or a full module prior to confirmation of the grade by the Exam Board. This should make it easier for students to progress.

4. Programme and Module Specifications

4.1. Programme Specification approval

Ref: 1.13 (Pg 10)

Academic Council will approve a programme specification for each programme, and will ensure that each programme is reviewed on a regular basis.

This requires Academic Council, and not just the School Board, to be responsible for the approval of all Programme Specifications.

When a new or amended programme is submitted to the Academic Council for approval, the Academic Council will require submission of a completed Programme Specification Form, including a Module Descriptor for each module in the programme (regardless of the programme of origin).

Where UCD approval is required, a completed PDARF must be submitted to the Academic Council for approval before the Academic Council can recommend the new or revised programme be submitted to UCD's University Programmes Board for approval.

As a result, each Programme Specification must be reviewed and updated annually, and the changes and the resulting programme must be submitted to the Academic Council for approval on an annual basis. This is a new but welcome process. While each programme should already have a programme specification form, this revised process ensures that each form is reviewed by other faculties prior to approval. This will improve our processes of ensuring our programmes are fit for purpose and our documentation is an accurate record of our programmes.

NCAD is currently reviewing our programme development and approval processes. The current proposals would align very well with those being proposed by UCD.

4.2. Programme Specification details

Ref: 1.14 (Pg 10)

Each Programme Specification must include:

- a) the purpose, vision and values of the programme;
- b) the programme outcomes;
- c) a statement of how the programme is to be structured;
- d) mode or programme delivery;
- e) how credit may be accumulated to achieve the award;
- f) opportunities for taking elective modules (if applicable);
- g) continuation and/or admission criteria;
- h) progression requirements (if applicable);
- i) assessment and feedback strategies;

- j) the award GPA rule (if applicable);
- k) careers and skills statements;
- l) programme accreditation by a professional, statutory or regulator body (such as the Teaching Council);
- m) Programme Student Fitness to Practice statement (if applicable);
- n) Garda vetting requirements;
- o) available exit strategies.

The NCAD Programme Specification and Module Descriptor templates have been updated to reflect the additional requirements.

4.3. Module Descriptor approval

Ref: 3.16 (Pg 17)

A School Board will approve and review as necessary a module descriptor for each module, according to the requirements set down by the Academic Council.

4.4. Module descriptor details

Ref: 3.17 (Pg 17)

Each module descriptor must detail:

- a) the School Board responsible for the module;
- b) the Module Co-ordinator responsible for the module;
- c) the purpose and overarching content of the module;
- d) the identity of staff that teach on the module;
- e) the UCD level of the module;
- f) the credit value of the module;
- g) the learning outcomes of the module;
- h) the indicative curricular content;
- i) mode of delivery;
- j) approaches to learning;
- k) assessment and feedback activity and timing, including the weighting of assessment components, any must pass components, and whether examinations (if applicable) are open or closed book examinations;
- l) whether the module is grade neutral or not;
- m) the mark-to-grade conversion scale (if applicable);
- n) expected types and quantity of student activity (for example lectures, seminars, specified learning activities, and autonomous student learning);

- o) any module dependencies, exclusions, or requisites that may apply;
- p) remediation opportunities, to include information on whether passing component grades are carried forward into subsequent remediation attempts;
- q) the number of student places available on the module.

4.5. Other learning experiences

The revised regulations allow students more flexibility in how they attain the outcomes and credits of a programme.

Subject to Academic Council approval, student achievements may possibly include:

- learning opportunities, other than modules, as credit-bearing learning activities;
- learning activities outside of the programme specification as a credit-bearing activity;
- achievement of learning outcomes not included in the programme specification as recognition of prior learning or concurrent learning.

The Academic Council can require specific assessment activities to ensure the credit-bearing learning activity achieves the stated programme outcomes. Approval by Academic Council will be required to include non-module-based learning activities in a programme.

This flexibility will require some discussion and guidance from the Academic Council prior to implementation. Programme Directors should seek advice from Academic Affairs before considering any of the above initiatives.