



Assessment Commitments 2021-22

for University of Manchester students and those enrolled on the Spurgeon's Award or Spurgeon's Diploma in Ministerial Formation

1. Introduction

The University has published its [Assessment](#) Commitments for 2021-22 in light of the ongoing COVID pandemic. This document sets out how the Commitments will be adapted, applied and implemented to meet the circumstances of Spurgeon's College. It does not overrule the University Regulations and Policies except where explicitly stated.

Though we are gradually returning to a greater degree of normality, we recognise that the pandemic is not over. To continue supporting students, the University and College are making a series of "assessment commitments" for the 2021-22 academic year. These additional measures will ensure we account for any ongoing effects of the pandemic.

The Assessment Commitments are designed to support students in this year's circumstances, rather than those of last year. The University and Spurgeon's College will keep it under review, continue to monitor how it is working, and take advice from our Examination Boards and External Examiners. However, as things stand we feel these measures are fair to students and satisfy both our need to protect students' interests and to protect the quality and standards of our awards.

2. Assessment Commitments

The University has announced a series of assessment commitments for the 2021-22 academic year. This covers the following points, which are explained in further detail in the remainder of this document:

- **Enhanced moderation** (where appropriate)

- **Extended boundary zones** where students are considered for higher degree classifications (e.g. for raising borderline students from a 2:1 to a 1st class degree)
- Accepting **mitigating circumstances** for a wide range of COVID-related and other issues, and broadening the range of evidence we accept to support these requests

3. Key Information about the Assessment Commitments

- The assessment pledge applies to all students on the BA, MA and MTh programmes, the Spurgeon's Award and the Diploma in Ministerial Formation.
- The provision for simplifying mitigating circumstances will apply between 1st November 2021 and 30th August 2022 inclusive.
- Average unit marks for 2021-22 will be compared with the average unit mark from the three available pre-COVID years. Where the 2021-22 average differs markedly from that of these previous years, the unit will be referred by the Pre-Progression and Awards Board for enhanced moderation, and scaling-up if this is considered appropriate.

4. Mitigating Circumstances changes

Students are still facing mitigating circumstances – both related to the pandemic and for other reasons. We know there are still pressures on the NHS and students may find it very challenging to obtain evidence that was previously required for some mitigating circumstances requests (such as GP letters).

We are continuing to allow mitigating circumstances requests for a variety of COVID-related and other issues, but are now broadening the range of evidence we will accept.

You may include any evidence that supports your request, such as:

- Extracts from your medical notes (you can request these from your GP practice)
- Copy of prescription or photo of name label on prescribed medication
- Photo of labelled positive COVID-19 test result
- Appointment cards from medical unit or hospital admissions letter
- Confirmation text of medical appointment
- Communications from a school or care facility confirming that they are closed or the person you care for is unable to attend
- An obituary or letter from a family member, in the case of bereavement
- Police, security or insurance report
- Press or media report

For medical conditions we do **not** require a specific letter from your GP or healthcare provider, and in cases of bereavement we do **not** require a death certificate. However, you can still include either of these as supporting evidence if you wish.

Students are encouraged to talk to a member of staff such as their Pastoral Tutor, Learning Support worker (if applicable), the Programme Director or Chaplain before submitting a mitigating circumstances application, to seek appropriate support and advice.

5. Moderation in line with previous years

We will continue with robust moderation processes for course units. The Pre-Progression and Awards Board will review and, where appropriate, refer units for enhanced moderation.

- The provision for comparison of marks with those of previous years will apply to all work submitted in the 2021-22 academic year, in both semesters, for review at the June and September 2022 Progression and Awards Board.
- The normal initial marking and moderation processes will take place.
- After the normal marking and moderation processes have taken place, we will provide an extra layer of scrutiny. For each course unit, we will compare cohort marks from 2021-22 to those from previous years in which the course unit has run. Using the most recent three available full years from the four immediately prior to COVID (2015/6, 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19), we will note cases where student performance is lower overall this year relative to that in pre-pandemic years.
- In cases where the 2021-22 average differs markedly from that of previous years, the unit will be referred for a further moderation process. This may lead to a scaling-up of marks if it is considered appropriate.
- The College's Pre-Progression and Awards Board will exercise their discretion in deciding which units to refer for this process of enhanced scrutiny.

6. Regulation Changes

Every year we look carefully at students who have just missed out on a higher classification. So, for example, if your degree mark is between 68% and 70%, we would look further at the profile of your marks to considered whether or not you should be awarded a first or a distinction (and the same at other boundaries).

Last year, the boundary zones in which students were considered for a higher degree classification were extended by 1%. Any student with 67% or above for a first/distinction and 57% for 2:1/merit etc. will be considered for the higher classification. This will remain in place for 2021-22.

- This provision for regulation changes will be applied at the Progression and Awards Board meetings in June and September 2022.
- Undergraduate students in the boundary zone will still need to have 2/3 of their credits at Level 6 in the higher classification to qualify for automatic raising to that classification. Postgraduate taught students will still need to have 2/3 of their credits in the higher classification to qualify for automatic raising to that classification (this does not have to include the dissertation).
- In addition, for postgraduate taught students, the requirement for the award of distinction that all course units must have been passed at the first attempt and without any compensation has been removed.
- All other aspects of Classification Review remain unchanged.