

Master's Level Postgraduate Framework Guidance Note

1. In May 2010 Senate agreed a new Master's level postgraduate framework whereby two new award strands were created: a Postgraduate Certificate and a Postgraduate Diploma, both to be offered as free standing qualifications and/or linked to Master's programmes. Senate's decision was confirmed by Council in July 2010. As with Master's programmes, Certificate and Diploma programmes may be offered on a full or part-time basis.
2. From October 2010, the Postgraduate Certificate replaced the Certificate of Advanced Study (CAS). The Postgraduate Diploma was a new award, separate from the Diploma of Imperial College (DIC). The DIC remains as a post nominal award linked to success in the Master's degree [and the PhD]. The DIC will not be awarded in conjunction either with the Postgraduate Certificate or the Postgraduate Diploma.
3. **Postgraduate Certificate**
 - 3.1. The regulations define a Postgraduate Certificate as intended for the award on the satisfactory completion, including formal examination, of a prescribed programme of full-time study beyond the Bachelor's degree level of at least 3 months or the equivalent in part-time study such that the credit rating of the programme totals at least 30 ECTS. Normally, the maximum period allowed to complete a Postgraduate Certificate award is two years after initial registration.
4. **Postgraduate Diploma**
 - 4.1. The regulations define a Postgraduate Diploma as intended for the award on the satisfactory completion, including formal examination, of a prescribed programme of full-time study beyond the Bachelor's degree level of at least 6 months or the equivalent in part-time study such that the credit rating of the programme totals at least 60 ECTS. Full-time Postgraduate Diplomas should usually be completed between 6 months and 18 months and part-time Postgraduate Diplomas should usually be completed between one and three years. (See also **Progression and Award** below).
5. **Master's**
 - 5.1. The regulations define a Master's as intended for the award on the satisfactory completion, including formal examination, of a prescribed programme of full-time study beyond the Bachelor's degree level of at least one calendar year or

the equivalent in part-time study such that the credit rating of the programme totals at least 90 ECTS. The maximum period to complete a Master's award is, normally, five years.

6. Entry Requirements and APL

- 6.1. The entry requirements for Certificates, Diplomas and Master's programmes are identical, i.e. the requirements cannot be lower for admission to Certificates and Diplomas.
- 6.2. APL is not granted for entry to full-time Master's level programmes. The maximum APL which may be awarded for entry to a part-time Master's is 30 ECTS studied at Master's level or equivalent, i.e. 10 ECTS for Postgraduate Certificates and 20 ECTS for Postgraduate Diplomas (or exceptionally, no more than 30 ECTS for a Postgraduate Diploma if the candidate is presenting a College Postgraduate Certificate in the same field). In order to be eligible for an award of the College a student granted APL must also study for a minimum of two-thirds of the programme, under the direction of teachers in the College.
- 6.3. Programme Directors wishing to consider requests for APL for their part-time programme(s) must prepare a protocol for each programme of study which includes the maximum number and "age" of credits allowed and the existence of any pre-requisites.

7. Progression and Award

- 7.1. Senate has agreed specific progression rules for Certificates, Diplomas and Master's programmes. Ending with the 2016-17 entry cohort students must register initially for Certificate or Diploma awards and decide to progress to the next level of award where an award exists. On successful completion of the Postgraduate Certificate or the Postgraduate Diploma programme, a "virtual" award should be confirmed on the basis of the student having achieved the required pass mark for the award level. The student will carry the pass mark forward and will accumulate the credits towards the next level. Should they fail to achieve the requirements to pass at the next level, they will be awarded the qualification at the level successfully achieved. From 2017-18 entry students will be able to register for the award they wish to exit with.
- 7.2. Students who have progressed from the Postgraduate Certificate onto the Postgraduate Diploma normally have a maximum of four years from the date of the Postgraduate Certificate registration to complete the Postgraduate Diploma.
- 7.3. Students who have progressed from either the Postgraduate Certificate or Postgraduate Diploma onto the associated Master's programme normally have

a maximum of five years from the date of the initial registration for the first qualification to complete the Master's award.

- 7.4. Students will not be granted credit towards the award of a Master's degree, Postgraduate Diploma or Postgraduate Certificate for work s/he choose to undertake for continuing professional development purposes whilst registered for a Master's degree, Postgraduate Diploma or Certificate award of the College, whether undertaken in the College or elsewhere. Programme Directors must ensure all students are aware of this.
- 7.5. Where associated programmes (Certificates or Diplomas) exist, students who are unsuccessful on a Master's or Diploma programme may be awarded the qualification for which they have satisfied the outcomes and assessment criteria.
- 7.6. Unlike Master's programmes, the classifications of Merit and Distinction are not available on Certificate and Diploma programmes.
- 7.7. Persons awarded the Postgraduate Certificate or Postgraduate Diploma will not be invited to the Postgraduate Awards ceremony.

8. Board of Examiners' Meetings

- 8.1. It is normally expected that departments will hold separate meetings of the Board of Examiners during the year to confirm the Certificate and Diploma awards. If a programme wishes to hold one meeting of the Final Board, then students must be advised that the outcome of Certificate and/or Diploma/Master's awards will not be known until then.

9. Fees

- 9.1. Students who incrementally follow a Certificate then Diploma then Master's should pay at least the same as the fee for the whole Master's degree.
- 9.2. When setting fees, departments should have regard for the HEFCE policy on ELQ [Equivalent or Lower Qualifications]. From 2009-10 the government has withdrawn automatic funding for UK and EU students who are studying for a qualification that is at an equivalent or lower level to one that they have already been awarded - these are referred to as ELQs. In particular, students enrolling on a Postgraduate Certificate, who already hold another Postgraduate Certificate, would be ineligible for funding. Similarly, students enrolling on a Postgraduate Diploma, who already hold another Postgraduate Diploma, would be ineligible for funding. Some subjects, including many at Imperial, are exempt: science, technology, engineering, mathematics. However, the funding

associated with these exempt students is received via a separate funding stream outside of core teaching grant, and may be vulnerable. Additionally Humanities and Business subjects are not exempt. The change means that institutions may charge fees at a higher rate for such students. For the present the College is not electing to charge higher fees to any ELQs, since the financial impact on the College is currently small. This may however be reviewed should the situation change.

- 9.3. In all cases, fees should be discussed and agreed with the Strategic Planning Division.

10. Academic and Examination Regulations

- 10.1. The current academic and examination regulations can be found at:
<http://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/regulations/>

11. Information for departments seeking to add a Postgraduate Certificate and/or Postgraduate Diploma to an existing Master's programme.

- 11.1. There is no obligation on departments to offer Certificates or Diplomas on any of their Master's programmes. Moreover it is envisaged that Certificates and Diplomas will not be linked to any MRes programmes because of the nature of the latter programmes. Where a department wishes to offer one or both of the new awards linked to an existing Master's award they should submit a proposal covering the issues listed below and should include comments from their existing external examiners and a letter of support from their Head of Department.

- Rationale for the programme(s)
- Short description of the programme(s): including the intended learning outcomes for each award
- Start date (month and year)
- Timetable
- ECTS & Bologna template
- Arrangements for re-sits and Final Board of Examiners' meetings
- APL arrangements
- Fees (for information only)
- Proposed student numbers
- Confirmation that there is sufficient space and facilities within the department to cope with the increased student numbers.

- 11.2. Proposals must be approved at department/Faculty level and then sent to the relevant Programmes Committee (PC) secretary at least 10 days before the

meeting. If approved by the PC, QAEC will be asked to approve the establishment of the new award(s).

12. Information for departments seeking to extend an existing Postgraduate Certificate in to Postgraduate Diploma and/or Master's Programme or seeking to extend an existing Postgraduate Diploma into a Master's programme.

12.1. QAEC approval following external review and consideration by the Programmes Committee is required and therefore normal procedures for creating a new Master's level programme should be followed:

<http://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/programme-design>

13. Information for departments seeking to introduce a new Postgraduate Certificate and/or Postgraduate Diploma

13.1. QAEC approval following external review and consideration by the Programmes Committee is required and therefore normal procedures for creating a new Master's level programme should be followed:

<http://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/programme-design>

14. Committee dates and secretaries can be found at:

<http://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/senate-subcommittees>

15. Further Information

Programme Director may find the following documents helpful:

- Master's Level Modules offered as CPD Short Courses - A Guidance Note for Programme Directors

<http://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/short-courses/>

- Guidelines for the use of accreditation for prior learning

<http://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/governance/academic-governance/academic-policy/admissions/>

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