

## Board of Examiners notes – Updates for 2019/20

### Impact of strike action

The Boards of Examiners should consider any actions taken by the Department during the year in relation to the strike action in Spring 2020 (and any cumulative impact in relation of strike action in 2017/2018) in line with the guidance provided previously.

Whilst it is likely that the decisions made at the time remain appropriate, Boards of Examiners should consider this in the light of the impact of the subsequent Covid-19 pandemic. In the rare occurrence that that the mitigation put in place at the time of the strike should be amended, this should be recorded in the minutes.

### Impact of Covid-19

The College has made several adjustments to policies and procedures to mitigate against the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic and the decision taken in March 2020 to move to remote delivery and to remote timed assessments for all students on taught programmes of study. We have updated this guidance note for Boards of Examiners where these adjustments are relevant to the work of the Board.

### Running the Boards during remote working

All Examinations Boards still to be held will need to run remotely for 2019/20. Where dates of Boards have been set and agreed with external examiners, these should be stuck to as far as possible.

At the time of producing this guidance it was noted that Teams is the only platform supported by ICT suitable for running Boards, and that they would not confirm the security/GDPR compliance of other platforms. Therefore, the Regulations and Policy Review Committee strongly recommend that this is the platform that is used to run remote Boards. Support for Teams can be found at <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/ict/self-service/connect-communicate/office-365/apps/microsoft-teams/>

There are a number of factors that need to be considered in preparing for the Boards this year which may impact on the decision of each Board as to how they wish to proceed. Support and guidance from ICT on secure remote working including distribution of files can be found at <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/ict/self-service/be-secure/>.

When ensuing compliance with data protection legislation (GDPR) in relation to Boards of Examiners there a number of factors that need to be considered.

In preparing for Boards decisions will need to be made with regards to:

- How will participants of the Board access the papers?
  - Using screen share in the meeting.
  - Secure sharing though SharePoint or meeting platform file sharing processes.
  - Visibility of Board sheets on screens (will this mean changing the format of existing Board paperwork to accommodate? Is this possible at this juncture?).
- Ensure security of student data
  - Deleting papers from email/drives/home systems.

- Papers as distributed are anonymous. This should also include any hidden meta data in the file.
- Where Board papers are not anonymous as exemption has been granted by the Registry that all those that receive the information are reminded of their responsibilities to delete from their systems (including the junk/delete folder).
- Using suitable encryption when sending papers or enabling access.
- Physical location of participants
  - All participants need to ensure that they are accessing the meeting as far as possible in a confidential space.
  - In addition to the physical location (country) that the participant of the meeting is, they must also consider where any data they are accessing is held or passing through. For example, the internet service provider's servers or email platform is utilised to access papers must also be compliant with GDPR as they are within the EU or covered by other agreements such as the EU-US privacy shield.
- How will participants be invited to join the meeting
  - What security is in place to ensure *only* those that are supposed to be present are able to join (password protection, meeting locking etc.)
  - Ensure that External Examiners and others external to the College network are invited, and have the capacity to participate in, the meeting.

Further information on GDPR can be found on the College webpages at <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/admin-services/secretariat/information-governance/data-protection/gdpr/>.

### **Covid-19 - Dealing with missing marks or not being able to access marked scripts which are locked on Campus**

Within each department/area a formal decision will needed to deal with issues in accessing scripts which are currently physically at the College. A local decision with regards to who and how this will take place should be made. Any access to the College will need to be granted by the relevant FOO.

Care should be taken to support the quality assurance mechanisms for marking and ratification of results. As circumstances will differ between areas, each should consult with their External Examiners as to how to proceed. It may be that these decisions may differ depending on the stage of the programme (progression or award).

### **Academic Regulations**

This year, Examination Boards will need to apply the relevant set of Academic regulations to students as below:

#### **Undergraduate Students:**

Undergraduate Students who commenced their studies in 2019/20 will be considered under the Single Set of Academic Regulations.

[https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/academic-governance/public/regulations/2019-20/SINGLE-SET-OF-TAUGHT-ACADEMIC-REGULATIONS-2019-20\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/academic-governance/public/regulations/2019-20/SINGLE-SET-OF-TAUGHT-ACADEMIC-REGULATIONS-2019-20_FINAL.pdf)

All other continuing undergraduate Students will be considered by the previous regulations:

[https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/academic-governance/public/regulations/2019-20/BSc-BEng-MSci-MEng\\_1920.pdf](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/academic-governance/public/regulations/2019-20/BSc-BEng-MSci-MEng_1920.pdf)

MBBS Students who commenced their Studies before 2019/20

[https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/academic-governance/public/regulations/2019-20/UG-Medicine\\_1920.pdf](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/academic-governance/public/regulations/2019-20/UG-Medicine_1920.pdf)

### **Postgraduate Students:**

Postgraduate students who are on programmes which have been through curriculum review are to be considered under the Single Set of Academic Regulations. A full list of these programmes can be found on the academic regulations webpages.

[https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/academic-governance/public/regulations/2019-20/SINGLE-SET-OF-TAUGHT-ACADEMIC-REGULATIONS-2019-20\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/academic-governance/public/regulations/2019-20/SINGLE-SET-OF-TAUGHT-ACADEMIC-REGULATIONS-2019-20_FINAL.pdf)

All students on other postgraduate taught programmes will be considered under the following regulations:

[https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/academic-governance/public/regulations/2019-20/Taught-Masters,-PG-Diplomas-and-PG-Certificates\\_1920.pdf](https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/administration-and-support-services/registry/academic-governance/public/regulations/2019-20/Taught-Masters,-PG-Diplomas-and-PG-Certificates_1920.pdf)

### **Mitigating Circumstances– Impact of Covid-19**

The College updated the guidance to Mitigation Boards and then reviewed that to take account of the changing circumstances that students were facing in response to the pandemic.

Regardless of the reason for any claim for mitigation, Boards of Examiners are required to follow the regulations with regards to any specific actions that they take in respect of the claim, such as offering a deferral, uncap of a late submission etc.

### **Continuing Advice for the application of Mitigating Circumstances decisions.**

Board of Examiners will need to consider students that may have been granted Mitigating Circumstances under the previous policy and/or under the updated procedure, which was introduced in October 2018. This is likely to be those Boards considering a student in their third or subsequent year of their programme but may relate to students that have repeated a year of study. This guidance is provided to support members of Boards in their decision-making process.

Examinations Boards will need to consider the recommendations made from Mitigating Circumstances Boards for **accepted** claims in accordance with paragraph 8.6 of the Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedure, as follows.

- 1) **Defer:** Where the student has failed the assessment(s), the Board of Examiners can consider offering the student:
  - a) a further opportunity to attempt the assessment(s) at the next available assessment point. If relating to a first attempt at the assessment this will receive an uncapped mark.
  - b) to take an uncapped Supplementary Qualifying Test(s) (SQT, Faculty of Engineering only) to retrieve outstanding modules
  - c) to be permitted to take an SQT(s) (Faculty of Engineering only) to enable progression
  - d) to be offered an opportunity to retake the year as a first attempt

Where the assessment(s) has/have been passed or the module overall is a pass, and therefore a) to d) are not applicable, the Board of Examiners may consider:

- e) extended consideration at the borderline for an uplift in classification in accordance with the regulations
- f) consideration at the borderline where a qualifying mark is required for continued progression

Whilst the above options would normally be sufficient the Mitigating Circumstances Board may make a recommendation in the light of the information that it holds for a particular action. However, it is ultimately the decision of the Board of Examiners in the knowledge that the student has an accepted claim for mitigation to consider the appropriate 'mitigation' to be offered, subject to the regulations and any programmes specific requirements.

- 2) **Allow Late.** Where the claim was submitted to mitigate for the late submission of a piece of assessment, (either coursework or a timed remote assessment) it would now be accepted as though 'on time' and receive an uncapped mark.

### **What can't a Board do?**

Boards cannot increase the marks or overall weighted average of a student on the basis of accepted claim for mitigating circumstances. The transcript must show the marks and credits as actually achieved.

Percentage marks can only be increased where following the moderation of work upward scaling had been found to be necessary, or part of an assessment had to be excluded and as such the percentage mark for the work increases. Where this has occurred, it should be reported to the Board.

## **Covid-19 - Applying the Safety Net Policy**

For Undergraduate Programmes of Study, [a College wide Safety-Net Policy](#) has been agreed. The safety net augments, where possible and appropriate, practices already approved for special situations in our regulations.

Boards of Examiners will need to satisfy themselves that the following practices have been adhered to:

- The processes and methods for marking assessments have been conducted in the normal way.
- That students have satisfied the usual requirements for progression or award, i.e. a student must pass modules as specified for their programme for the safety net to be considered.
- Students who do not meet these requirements will retain the right to resit opportunities, as set out in the regulations.

**We are developing policy to take into account the impact of COVID-19 on resits. This document will be updated once this is confirmed.**

- Students' 2019/20 academic year marks will be initially calculated on the basis of marks awarded for all assessments (pre- and post- COVID-19, defined as 13th Mar 2020).
- Exam boards will apply comprehensive analytics (e.g. comparison across years, against performance in previous years and across mark ranges within year) to check that these provisional marks, at the cohort level, are consistent with expected performance. Our usual departmental cohort marking and moderation processes, including the use of mark adjustments and/or scaling, if appropriate and justified, will then be applied in consultation with our external examiners. In the event that the performance of an individual student suggests that there is an issue with academic integrity, the Board will investigate this, in accordance with the normal policy.

**This document will be updated to include the agreed guidance on analytics when approved.**

- The outcomes of the comprehensive analytics will result in a set of module marks for the 2019-20 academic year which are combined to give the unmitigated 2019-20 academic year average mark.
- These marks will be those that are recorded on the transcript. The transcript will not specify whether the safety net has been applied, in line with the practice on mitigating circumstances.
- The unmitigated 2019-20 academic year average mark is then combined with the degree weighted marks from prior years of study (if applicable) to calculate an unmitigated degree weighted average mark.

EPAB's will then be able to apply safety net at the individual student level, as follows:

- **For final year undergraduate students (not MBBS or iBSc).** The degree classification will be determined by the greater of: the degree weighted average mark across all assessments to 13th Mar 2020, or the unmitigated degree weighted average mark, calculated as described above. Where there is a substantial coursework component this academic year, and where a significant amount of the work was completed prior to 13th Mar 2020, the mark for this component will count towards the degree weighted average mark across all assessments to 13th Mar 2020. Where a significant amount of the work was completed after 13th Mar 2020, the mark for this component will count towards the degree weighted average mark across all assessments after 13th Mar 2020. Departments will clarify what is determined as substantial and where work spans these periods.
- **For first year undergraduate students (not MBBS or iBSc).** Year 1 is worth 7.5% across all programmes in College. The unmitigated 2019-20 academic year average mark is recorded as confirmed. At the end of the degree, the degree classification will be determined by the better outcome of: zero weighting or 7.5 percent weighting of year 1.
- **For other (continuing) undergraduate students (not MBBS or iBSc).** The confirmed 2019-20 academic year average mark will be the greater of: the degree weighted average mark across all assessments up until 13th Mar 2020, or the unmitigated 2019-20 academic year average mark, calculated as described above. This confirmed 2019-20 academic year average mark will be combined with your prior and future marks, as normal, to determine the degree classification at the end of the degree. o For MBBS undergraduate students The MBBS programme needs to satisfy its regulator, the GMC, in order to ensure the highest standards of patient safety. Therefore, the safety net policy cannot directly apply to MBBS students. The Medical School is however aware of the potential effect on performance caused by the COVID19 pandemic and will take these into account in any mitigating circumstances.
- **For postgraduate taught and iBSc students.** For postgraduate taught and iBSc students, the exact policy will be different on a programme-by-programme basis and these will have been developed and made available prior to the meeting of the Examination Board. If there is not sufficient pre-COVID19 evidence to compare against, which will be the case for many of our 1-year research intensive programmes, the 2019/20 academic year average awarded will, if possible, be the mark obtained through the comprehensive analytics process as described above. Where this is not possible or appropriate, there are a number of additional options that we are exploring. We are working with your Departments to find alternative methods of delivery for coursework, both teaching and assessment. This applies in particular to project work, field trips and placements undertaken in the summer term and over the summer. We are exploring what options we have to extend the length of the programme to allow for a return to campus. For students who may wish to take an earlier exit award, such as a PG Diploma and PG Certificate, we are actively

looking to offer these where possible and where the requirements for these have been met.

### **Advice for Consideration at the Borderline**

The College regulations permit consideration of borderline candidates for an uplift in classification. Undergraduate Students graduating this year will still be considered under the continuing student [regulations](#).

It is important to ensure that the official minutes of the Board of Examiners meeting detail any discussions, particularly with regard to exceptional circumstances where decisions outside the 'norms' are made.

These minutes are necessary to ensure:

- The College is able to review individual exceptional decisions to ensure that they are made in a clear and rationale way, with due consideration of all factors.
- An accurate record of the decision is available in the event of an appeal, complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education or through civil action.
- Informed advice or guidance is available to students of the deliberation of the Board, if requested
- The College can identify trends and take action as needed.

The requirement to record the decisions does not necessarily mean that each decision will need significant detail. For example, where there is a clear algorithm to consider students in the borderline zone for an uplift in classification (where there is no mitigation to consider) this can simply state that

candidate X was considered in the classification borderline and the decision was to *uplift/not uplift* as the criteria was *met/ not met* due to...

Where a student has an approved claim for mitigating circumstances, which have not been taken into consideration already such as with an uncapped resit, the Board may extend the normal borderline percentage in line with the College and any programme specific regulation. Care should be taken to ensure that the mitigation is taken into account fully, without double counting or providing an undue advantage to the student. When designing any form of algorithm for consideration at borderline, the Board should carefully consider how the design can or should be adapted in cases of approved mitigation, so as to avoid putting in place impossible requirements or to "double count" mitigation.

Boards are reminded that appeals made on the basis of mitigating circumstances are dealt with as late mitigating circumstances claims by Boards, rather than as appeals via Registry.

### **Academic Misconduct**

The previous *Cheating Offences Policy* was replaced with the [Academic Misconduct procedures](#) from September 2018. The changes to the updated procedures mainly relate to the processing of allegations and the consideration of sanctions in relation to allegations of academic misconduct.

Minor, first time cases of plagiarism continue to be considered by the Chair of the Board and must be reported to the Board of Examiners. All other cases will be managed by the Student Casework team in Registry. Where this relates to an examination offence that

could be considered to be technical in nature, with the agreement of Chair of the Board, the case may be referred back to be considered in the “minor” process and reported to the Board. The outcomes of cases managed by the Student Casework team will be reported back to the Board and should be reported and formally recorded at the Board.

### **Potential sanctions in the Academic misconduct process**

The potential sanctions are as follows. (N.B. all penalties from b-g include a formal reprimand):

- a) Informal reprimand but no further action is required
- b) Assessment is marked on its merits
- c) Assessment is awarded zero, with re-submission for an uncapped mark
- d) Assessment is awarded zero, with re-submission capped at the pass mark.
- e) Module is awarded zero, with the re-submission as required by the Board of Examiners, capped at the pass mark.
- f) Module is awarded zero, with resubmission required. The mark for resubmission of the module will be zero, though credit will be awarded should it be of a pass standard.
- g) Zero is recorded for the performance of the candidate in all assessments they sat in the academic year the offence occurred and where eligible, that the candidate not be permitted to retake all the assessments until the next academic year. The retake marks will be capped at the pass mark.
- h) Zero is recorded for the module, no retake opportunities will be given and no award of the institution will be given (expulsion).
- i) Zero is recorded for candidate in all assessments. No award will be given and no credits will be recorded for the student (expulsion).

Where an award has already been made:

- j) Award zero for module/assessment undertaken (where appropriate withdraw credit), rescind the award of a degree/diploma/certificate of the College, but retain any other credits awarded (where appropriate).
- k) Award zero for all assessment (and credit where appropriate) and rescind the award of a degree/diploma/certificate of the College

When the panel considers a proven case of academic misconduct, they do not have the full details of the student’s programme of study, such as year marks, previous repeated assessment or programme specific regulations. Therefore, there may be occasions in which the given penalty would have an undue impact on the student, such as preventing course completion where this was not intended. This is most likely with penalty ‘F’, if the remainder of the student’s profile means that they fail to achieve a minimum overall percentage mark for completion of the stage or final classification. The intension of the penalty is to reduce the final overall weighted average of the student and potentially lowering the classification. It is not intended to be a *de facto* expulsion. The Board should therefore take this into account and modify the penalty accordingly. Any modifications must be clearly identified, the reasoning and actions recording in the minutes of the Board of Examiners and provided to the Student Casework team for the official record of the offence.



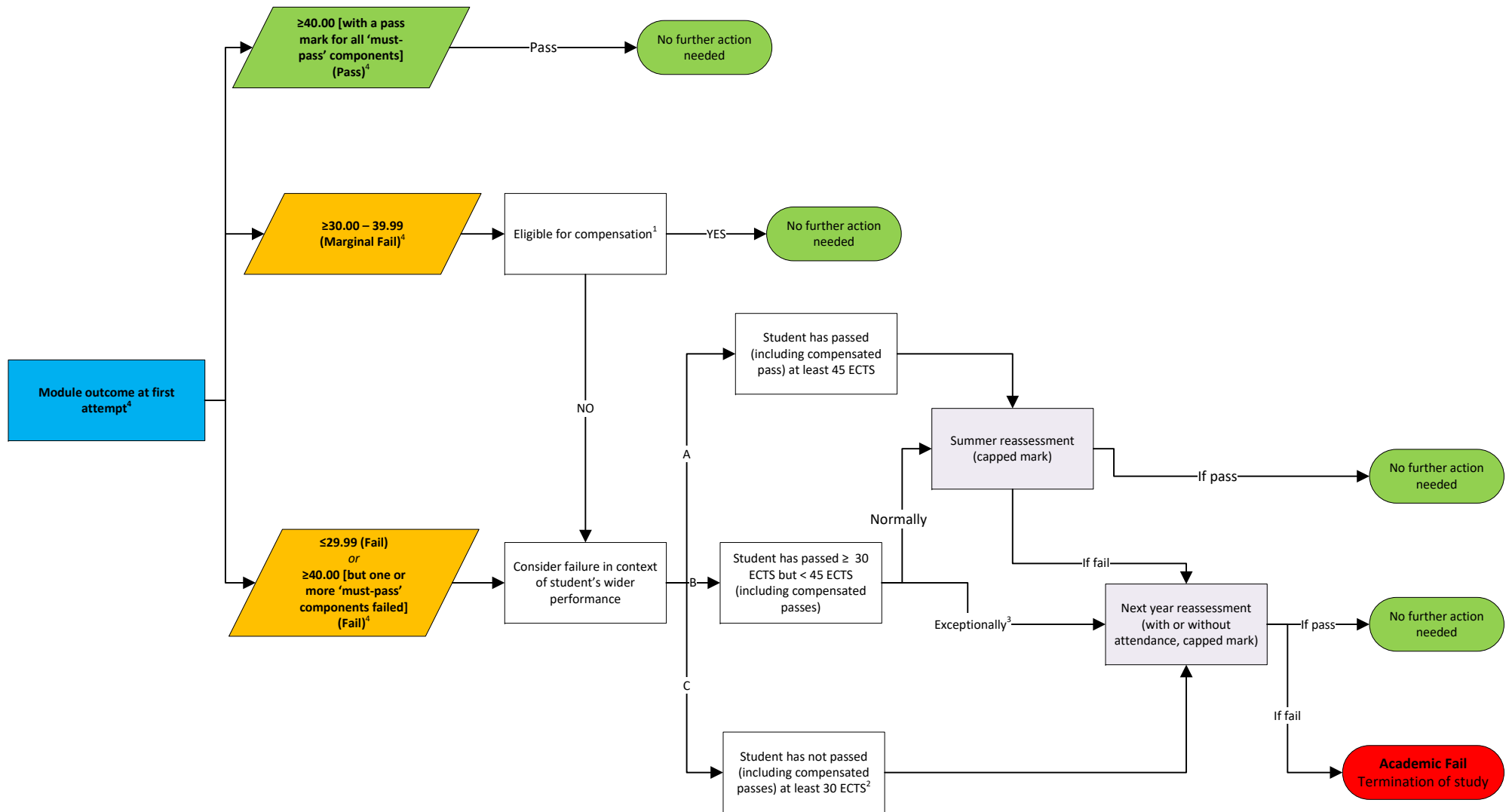
## **Ongoing Impact of Curriculum Review**

Due to the introduction of new or revised curricula from 2019/20 following the Curriculum Review process, Boards of Examiners need to continue to consider the wider implications of any decision to require a student to undertake a retake. Clear guidance will need to be provided to students who may need to transfer over to the new curricula either as a result of going straight to retake year under the new curricula or following unsuccessful resits.

## **Guidance with regards to referral limits and compensation under the Single Set of Taught Academic Regulations**

The attached flowcharts providing supporting guidance to consider students that have completed their first year under the [Single Set of Taught Academic Regulations](#). Additional support can be requested from the Quality Assurance team. Please email [quality@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:quality@imperial.ac.uk) in the first instance.

**Taught Undergraduate Programmes**  
(BSc, BEng, MSc, MEng)



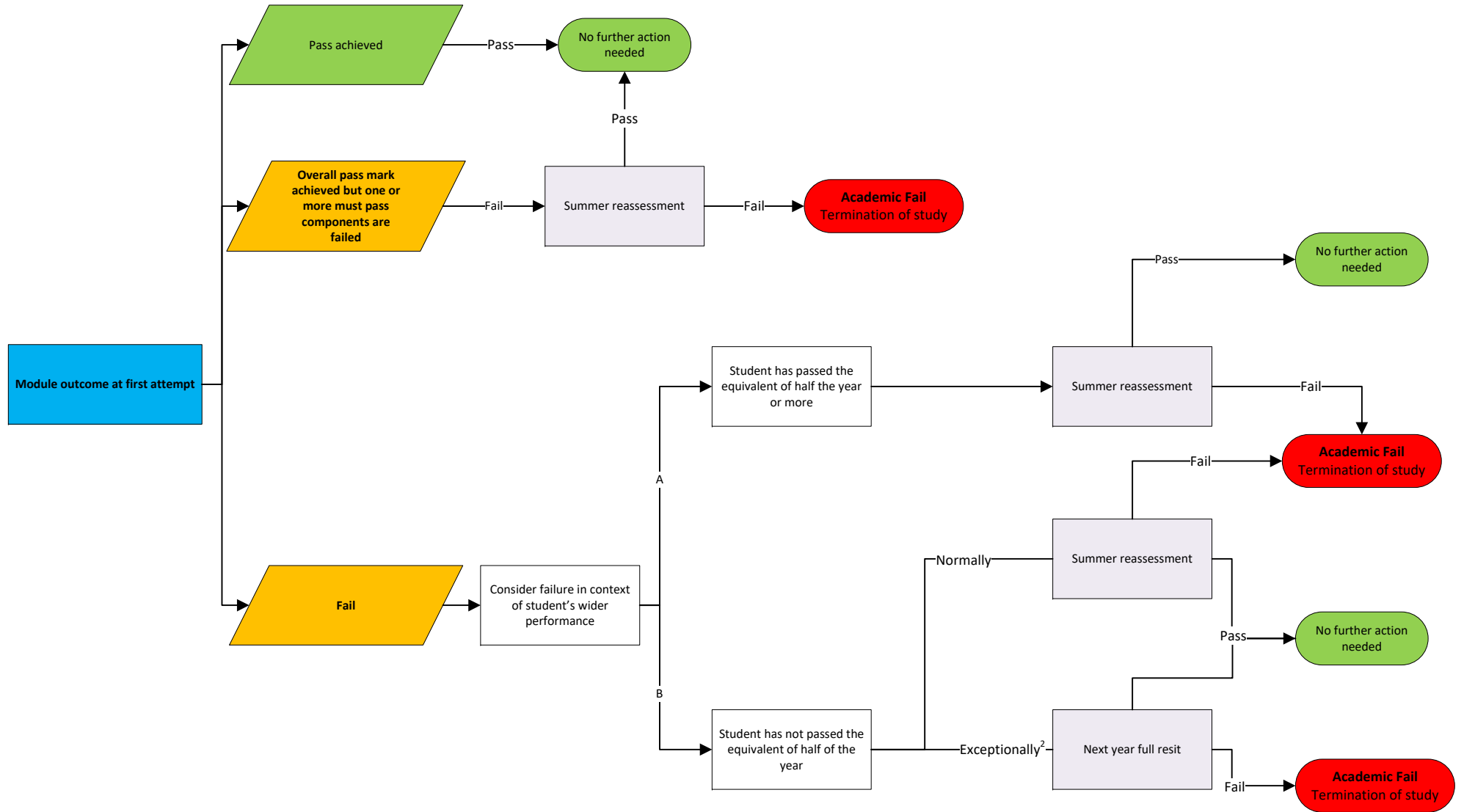
<sup>1</sup>To be eligible for compensation the module must be designated compulsory or elective, have a module score of 30.00 -39.99, and all 'must pass' assessment elements have been passed. Boards must also take into account the maximum level of compensation per level and programme.

<sup>2</sup>If a student has accumulated significant failure in the first year (Level 4) or year 2 (level 5), the Board may exceptionally consider offering a fresh start for that year of the programme (full retake of all modules, uncapped, no module marks carried over) on one occasion. i.e. not for year 1 and then year 2.

<sup>3</sup>This will be dependent on the type of module (for example lab based) and the overall mark for the module and year.

<sup>4</sup>The pass mark for level 7 modules will be 50%, regardless of the programme of study. Therefore in the chart above, when considering a level 7 module the mark boundaries should be adjusted accordingly.

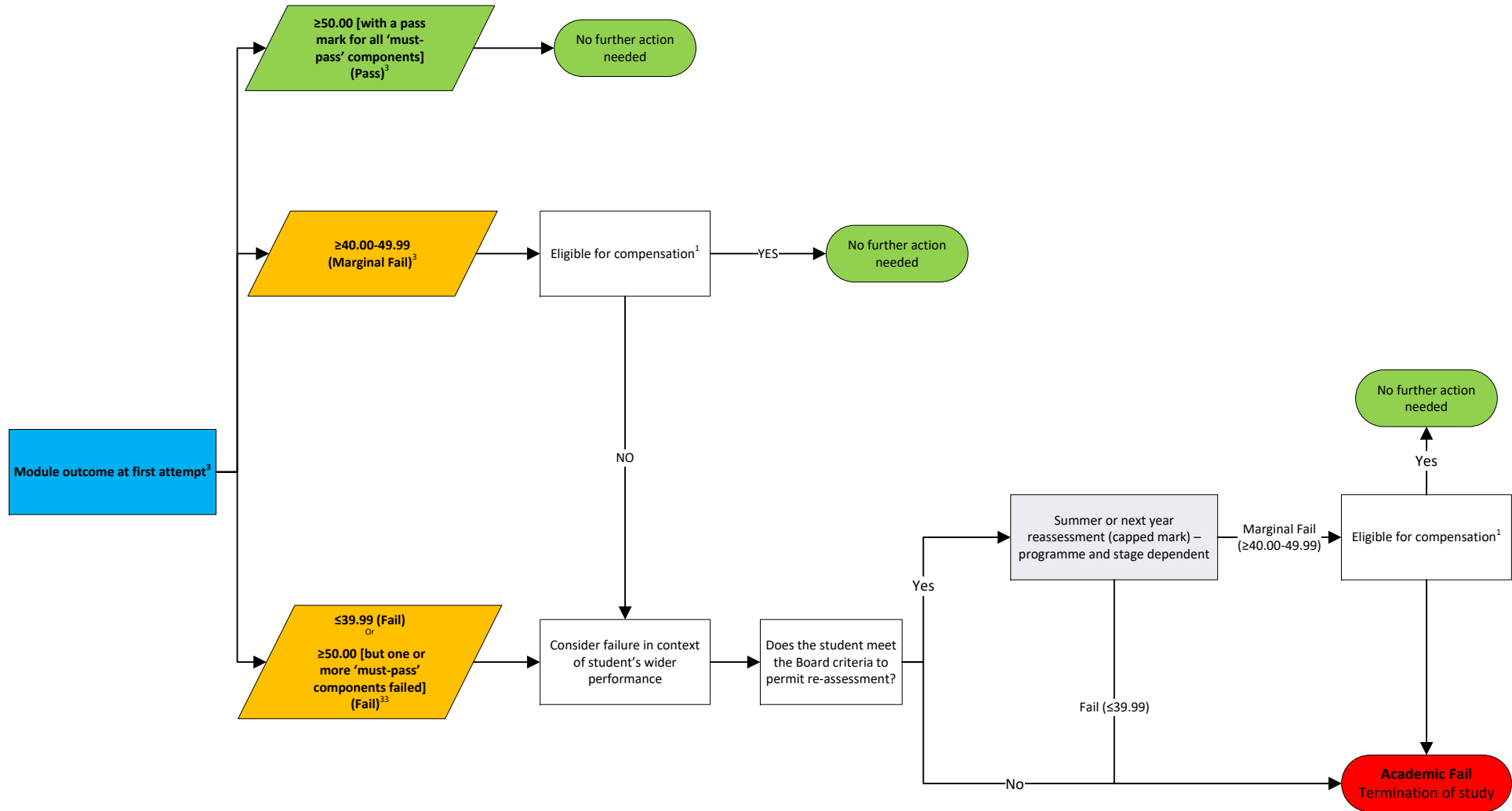
Taught Undergraduate - MBBS



<sup>1</sup>To be eligible for compensation the module must be designated compulsory or elective, to be no more than 1 SEM from the pass mark, and all 'must pass' assessment elements have been passed. Boards must also take into account the maximum level of compensation per level and programme.

<sup>2</sup>If a student has accumulated significant failure in the first year (Level 4) the Board may exceptionally consider offering a fresh start for that year of the programme (full retake of all modules, uncapped, no module marks carried over) on one occasion. In addition, if a student has significant failure across the year (outside of level 4) the Board may advise a student that they should resit in the next year (full year retake), as in their academic opinion the amount of work outstanding is unachievable over the summer.

## Taught Postgraduate



<sup>1</sup>To be eligible for compensation the module must be designated compulsory or elective, have a module score of 40.00 -49.99, and all 'must pass' assessment elements have been passed. Boards must also take into account the maximum level of compensation per level and programme.

<sup>2</sup>The Board will make consistent decisions based on overall performance (overall average for programme and credits passed to date), amount of compensation that may be offered in the programme any other particular factors relevant to the programme.

<sup>3</sup>Where a level 6 module has been taken as part of a Postgraduate taught programme (normal pass mark at level 7 is 50%), the mark boundaries in the chart above should be adjusted accordingly.