



Guidance Note on Compensation and Condonement

This Guidance Note should be read in conjunction with the Engineering Council's 'Compensation and Condonement Policy'. It supplements the information provided in the policy and illustrates how the limits on compensation apply in practice. This guidance does not replace or materially alter the 'Compensation and Condonement Policy', which was developed and reviewed by working groups comprising primarily engineering academics who are experienced accreditors from a number of professional engineering institutions (PEIs).

Most universities offer a broad range of qualifications, some of which are regulated by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) and some which are not. General University regulations are usually designed for the purpose of meeting the needs of the general student population, but do not necessarily account for specific needs of students entering regulated professions. Examples of other PSRBs include the General Medical Council, the Institute of Physics and the Architects Registration Board.

The Engineering Council has previously issued guidance to PEIs which required them to limit the practice of compensation and condonement in Universities to certain levels. However, there are a wide range of practices across the HE sector, with:

- inconsistent definitions of compensation and condonement;
- significant variations in the volume of failed credit that can be compensated; and
- variations in threshold performance in a failed module above which compensation is permissible.

Guidance has been replaced with policy to:

- ensure consistency in HEI and PEI practice
- maintain international recognition of UK degrees (the most recent Washington Accord review team required the Engineering Council to adopt consistent compensation guidelines across all PEIs)
- ensure engineering graduates have achieved the learning outcomes to underpin roles that have significant societal (including environmental, health and safety) impact.

Extracts from the policy are shown in bold.

The Engineering Council defines compensation as: “The practice of allowing marginal failure (ie not more than ten percentage points below the nominal pass mark) of one or more modules, often on the basis of good overall academic performance.”

The Engineering Council defines condonement as: “The practice of allowing students to fail one or more module(s) with a fail mark of more than ten percentage points below the nominal pass mark, yet still qualify for the award of the degree.”

The policy sets out the following requirements for the use of condonement and compensation. These limits are absolute and no discretion is permitted on the part of PEIs or accreditation visit panels.

- 1. Evidence that all Accreditation of Higher Education Programmes (AHEP) learning outcomes are met by all variants of each programme must be provided before accreditation can be granted.**

The mapping of modules against the prescribed learning outcomes for the level of accreditation sought must demonstrate that a graduate from an accredited degree will have met all of the required learning outcomes, irrespective of any optional modules selected. The AHEP learning outcomes must be summatively assessed.

- 2. No condonement of modules delivering AHEP learning outcomes is allowed.**

No condonement is allowed for core or optional modules that contribute to the achievement of AHEP learning outcomes. Hence condonement is allowed only for modules not directly related to the study of engineering, for example a modern foreign language.

- 3. A maximum of 30 credits in a Bachelors or integrated Masters degree programme can be compensated, and a maximum of 20 credits in a Masters degree other than the integrated Masters degree.**

The limits placed on the use of compensation are set out in the policy and apply to the programme of study presented for accreditation. The credit limits on compensation apply to all academic credit conferred by the degree provider as part of the programme of study, including any credit conferred through a partnership arrangement, dual award etc. Any compensation of academic credit awarded by a different provider but used to gain entry to the programme with advanced standing, for example direct entry to year two, does not count towards the limit.

For direct entry students, entering a later year of a Bachelors or integrated Masters degree programme, 30 credits of compensation is permitted. For MSc programmes carrying greater than 180 credits, 20 credits of compensation is permitted, regardless of the number of credits carried by the overall programme.

Note:

- Whilst the rules do not permit compensation of large modules, within larger modules there may be scope for a student to perform poorly in a learning outcome but still pass the module, amounting to ‘hidden compensation’. HEIs must ensure, and accrediting PEIs shall verify, that large modules are not used to enable hidden compensation.
- For degrees with international study contributing towards the accredited award, the HEI needs to cross reference to UK credit frameworks to calculate the level of permissible compensation.

Scotland

Level	Bachelors (Ordinary)	Bachelors (Honours)	Integrated Masters	Masters degree other than the Integrated Masters
7				
8	Maximum 30 credits of compensation allowed for the programme of study	Maximum 30 credits of compensation allowed for the programme of study	Maximum 30 credits of compensation allowed for the programme of study	
9				
10				
11				Maximum 20 credits of compensation allowed for the programme of study

Note

- Any compensation at Level 7 in Scotland is not included in the overall credit limit on compensation. This will help ensure the compensation limits placed on degree programmes in Scotland are proportionate to those in the rest of the UK. Also, students joining year two of a degree programme with Advanced Highers (or equivalent) will be treated no more or less favourably than students joining year one of the programme having completed Highers (or equivalent).
- Any compensation received on an Access or Foundation year/programme is not included in the overall credit limit on compensation.

England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Level	Foundation Degree/Top up Degree	Bachelors and Bachelors (Honours)	Integrated Masters	Masters degree other than the Integrated Masters
4	Maximum 20 credits of compensation allowed for the programme of study	Maximum 30 credits of compensation allowed for the programme of study	Maximum 30 credits of compensation allowed for the programme of study	
5				
6	Maximum 10 credits of compensation allowed for the programme of study			
7				Maximum 20 credits of compensation allowed for the programme of study

Note

- Any compensation received on an Access or Foundation year/programme is not included in the overall credit limit on compensation.

4. Major individual and group-based project modules must not be compensated.

Major projects are an important part of an engineering degree programme and typically make a significant contribution to the delivery of AHEP learning outcomes.

5. The minimum module mark for which compensation is allowed is no more than ten percentage points below the nominal module pass mark (or equivalent if a grade-based marking scheme is used).

Compensation is permitted only when the overall module mark is ten percentage points below the nominal module pass mark. For example, in the case of a normal module pass mark of 40%, compensation is permitted only when the overall module mark is between 30% and 39%.

The key consideration in the rules above is to ensure that graduates of accredited engineering degree programmes have met all the programme learning outcomes specified in the Engineering Council's AHEP standard.

These requirements will apply to all students registering on year one of an accredited degree programme from September 2022, and all subsequent registrations. There is no requirement or expectation that assessment regulations will be changed for students who enrolled on an accredited degree programme before this date.

Case studies

The following examples illustrate the practical application of the Compensation and condonement policy:

Example 1 - A Bachelors (Honours) programme delivered by a provider in Scotland

The programme assessment regulations allow compensation as follows:
Level 7: Up to 40 credits
Level 8: Up to 20 credits
Level 9: No compensation
Level 10: No compensation
The normal module pass mark is 40% and a module can only be compensated if the overall module mark is 30 - 39%

This example conforms with Engineering Council policy as compensation at Level 7 does not count towards the overall limit of 30 credits for the programme. Total compensation is limited to 20 credits for the final three years of the degree programme and the minimum compensatable module mark is within 10 percentage points of the nominal module pass mark.

Example 2 - A Bachelors (Honours) programme delivered by a provider in England, Wales or Northern Ireland

The programme assessment regulations allow compensation as follows:
Level 4: Up to 15 credits
Level 5: Up to 15 credits
Level 6: No compensation
The normal module pass mark is 40% and a module can only be compensated if the overall module mark is 30 - 39%

This example conforms with Engineering Council policy as compensation is limited to 30 credits for the degree programme and the minimum compensatable module mark is within 10 percentage points of the nominal module pass mark.

Example 3 - A Bachelors (Honours) programme delivered by a provider in England, Wales or Northern Ireland

The programme assessment regulations allow compensation as follows:
Level 4: Up to 20 credits
Level 5: Up to 20 credits
Level 6: No compensation
The normal module pass mark is 40% and a module can only be compensated if the overall module mark is 35 - 39%

This example does not conform with Engineering Council policy (unless there are additional provisions in the regulations or programme specifications that ensure students do not exceed the 30 credit cumulative limit for compensation), as the allowable compensation of 40 credits is higher than the permitted use of compensation across the programme. The specification of a higher minimum module mark (35%) for compensation does not allow any increase to the 30 credit limit for the degree programme.

Example 4 - An Integrated Masters programme delivered by a provider in England, Wales or Northern Ireland

The programme assessment regulations allow compensation as follows:
Level 4: Up to 15 credits*
Level 5: Up to 15 credits*
Level 6: Up to 15 credits*
Level 7: Up to 15 credits*
*The regulations further state that a student can be compensated in a maximum of 30 credits during the course of their studies.
The normal module pass mark is 40% and a module can only be compensated if the overall module mark is 30 - 39%.

This example conforms with Engineering Council policy as compensation is limited to 30 credits for the degree programme and the minimum compensatable module mark is within 10 percentage points of the nominal module pass mark. However, it places a requirement on the degree provider to track any compensation applied to individual students across their programme of study.

Example 5 - An Integrated Masters programme delivered by a provider in England, Wales or Northern Ireland

The programme assessment regulations allow compensation as follows:
Level 4: No compensation
Level 5: No compensation
Level 6: No compensation
Level 7: Up to 30 credits
The normal module pass mark is 40% and a module can only be compensated if the overall module mark is 30 - 39%.

This example conforms with Engineering Council policy as compensation is limited to 30 credits for the degree programme and the minimum compensatable module mark is within 10 percentage points of the nominal module pass mark.

Example 6 - A Masters degree other than the Integrated Masters delivered by a provider in England, Wales or Northern Ireland

The programme assessment regulations allow compensation as follows:
Level 7: Up to 20 credits
The normal module pass mark is 50% and a module can only be compensated if the overall module mark is 40 - 49%.

This example conforms with Engineering Council policy as compensation is limited to 20 credits for the degree programme and the minimum compensatable module mark is within 10 percentage points of the nominal module pass mark.

Example 7 - A Foundation degree and top-up degree programme awarded by a single HEI in England, Wales or Northern Ireland

The programme assessment regulations allow compensation as follows:
Foundation degree:
Level 4: No compensation
Level 5: Up to 20 credits

Top-up degree:
Level 6: Up to 20 credits
In both awards, the normal module pass mark is 40% and a module can only be compensated if the overall module mark is 30 - 39%.

In this example, the Foundation degree conforms with Engineering Council policy as compensation is limited to 20 credits and the minimum compensatable module mark is 10 percentage points below the nominal module pass mark.

However, the top-up qualification does not conform to Engineering Council policy as the maximum compensatable credit for this qualification is limited to 10 credits.

Regardless of the HEIs awarding the qualifications, Foundation degrees and top-up degree awards are treated as separate qualifications and compensation credit cannot be carried forward.

Example 8 - An Integrated Masters programme delivered by a provider in Scotland.

The programme assessment regulations allow compensation as follows:
Level 7: Up to 20 credits
Level 8: Up to 20 credits
Level 9: Up to 20 credits
Level 10: Up to 20 credits
Level 11: Up to 20 credits

At the point of graduation students must have no more than 20 credits of compensation in total across all levels. The normal module pass mark is 40% and a module can only be compensated if the overall module mark is 30 - 39%.

This example conforms with Engineering Council policy as the overall limit is 20 credits, and the minimum compensatable module mark is within 10 percentage points of the nominal

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module pass mark. Note – the policy does not apply to level 7 in Scotland. However, it places a requirement on the degree provider to track any compensation applied to individual students across their programme of study