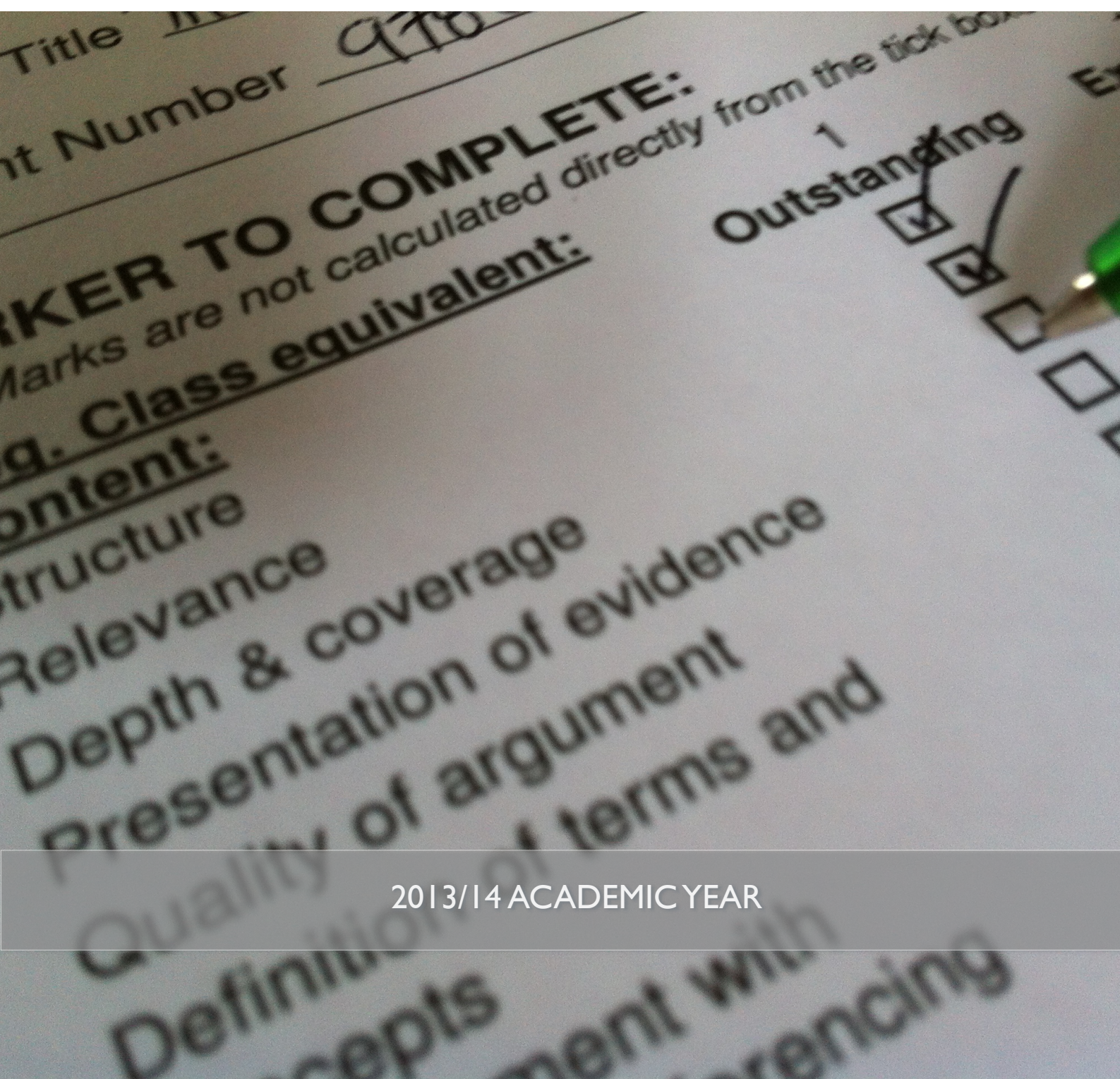


THE POLITICS GUIDE TO UNDERGRADUATE ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK



2013/14 ACADEMIC YEAR

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WELCOME TO THE POLITICS GUIDE TO FEEDBACK AND ASSESSMENT

Over the course of the three years you spend at Newcastle University you will learn a great deal about politics, including political systems, political theory and international politics. You will also develop new skills that will equip you well, not just for academic work, but also for life after university.

These skills will be acquired and improved primarily through completing a range of different academic assessments. For example, you may be required to complete essays, examinations, presentations, project, dissertations and briefing papers. For all of these assessments you will receive both a formal grade and feedback comments. Feedback is an important part of the learning process, because it will help you to improve both your academic skills, and your marks. This booklet is aimed at helping you to make the most of the opportunities for feedback provided by Politics at Newcastle.

TYPES OF ASSESSMENT IN POLITICS

There is considerable variety in the assessments used in Politics modules. The main types of assessments are:

Essays that are written in answer to a single question and are usually between 1500 and 2500 words in length. The word limits which you are required to conform with will be specified in the module guide. Your essay must also be fully-referenced (see the Politics Style and Referencing Guide for further information).

Exams in Politics take a variety of formats but will usually take place during the university's examination periods. The most common form of examination is an unseen, timed, written examination which is taken in an examination room. You will usually be required to write essay-style answers to questions chosen from a number of options on the exam paper. Past exam papers for this kind of exam are usually available online at <https://crypt.ncl.ac.uk/exam.papers/>.

A number of modules are assessed by **'take home' exams**. These exams are completed at 'home' (or wherever you would like to complete the assessment) rather than in the examination room. You will be able to use books and articles to prepare your answers to the question(s) on the exam paper. The time you have to write your answers will be strictly limited, usually to 48 hours.

Multiple choice exams are used in a number of modules. Typically these are completed online in a computer cluster on campus. Usually each question will be followed by between three and five options, from which you will need to choose the correct answer.

The questions will usually be drawn across all the topics covered in the module.

Oral exams are used to examine a number of Stage 3 modules. The examination usually lasts for ten or fifteen minutes. Students provide a spoken response to an initial question. The examiner often poses supplementary questions which follow on from the student's answer.

Dissertations are 12,000 words in length and are completed across both semesters of your final year. They assess your ability to independently research and investigate a topic in depth. You will be assigned a supervisor who has research expertise in the topic who you will be able to call upon for advice.

Projects are 6,000 words in length and are completed in one semester of the final year. Like a dissertation they assess your ability to independently research and investigate a topic. A supervisor from amongst the Politics staff will provide advice on the project.

Posters test your ability to present your research findings in a succinct and attractive fashion. In addition you will usually also be expected to answer oral questions about your poster from the teaching staff on the module.

In **simulations** you will be allocated and briefed upon a particular role that you will play in a simulated exercise. You will be expected to research and then act in a way appropriate to your given role. Similar kinds of simulations are used by employers, including the Civil Service.

Several modules employ **group presentations and group projects** as part of their assessment. These assess team-working and communication skills in addition to subject knowledge and critical and theoretical awareness.

Briefing papers require students to demonstrate the same kind of in-depth subject knowledge, critical and theoretical awareness that is expected in essays but in a format which is much more similar to the kinds of reports and briefings which you might be expected to write in many types of employment.

Seminar participation seeks to encourage and reward students for their contributions in seminars. It assesses the ability of students to individually contribute to learning in seminars, for example, by raising important questions.

HOW DO UNIVERSITY ASSESSMENTS DIFFER FROM A-LEVEL ASSESSMENTS?

- A-levels are graded A*, A, B, C, D or E. University modules are marked on a numeric scale between 0 and 100. Ranges on this marking scale correspond to particular classifications. So, a mark of 70 or above is classified as first class. Marks between 60 and 69 are classified as upper second class (2:1). Marks between 50 and 59 are classified as lower second class (2:2). Marks between 40 and 49 are classified as third class. Marks below 40 are classified as fails.
- At A-level your assessments were marked according to a detailed and prescriptive marking scheme. Typically, marks are awarded for mentioning particular things, using relevant terms or employing a particular number of examples. At university, the criteria used to make your work are much broader and less formulaic. There is also a much greater emphasis on demonstrating your critical and analytical skills than in A-level work. You can find further details of our assessment criteria on page 11 of this guide.
- You probably relied heavily on a textbook or teachers' notes when preparing your A-level coursework and when revising for examinations. At university you are expected to demonstrate much wider and much more in-depth reading of the subject you are studying in your assessments.
- You may encounter some of the topics that you studied at A-level at points in your degree. You should not be tempted to

rely on your A-level notes and essays when preparing for assessments. You will require much more in-depth knowledge and critical insights for university level assessments than you needed to demonstrate during your A-levels.

- While studying for your A-levels you probably got used to submitting work to your teacher quite frequently, perhaps every fortnight or so. Usually, these assessments did not count towards your final A-level grade. At university you will submit essays and complete other assessments much less frequently. Typically most of the assessments will be submitted towards the end of the module and they will usually count towards your final module mark. Details of the assessments and the deadlines will always be provided in the module guide. This means that you will need to manage your time effectively and spend more time preparing your assessments. You will also need to take advantage of opportunities to consult staff such as dedicated surgery sessions and their office hours.
- During your A-levels you can often take units more than once. So, if you are unhappy with your marks you can sometimes resit units and try to improve your final A-level grade. At university you cannot make a second attempt at an assessment to try and improve your original mark. You will only retake a module if you fail that module overall. The maximum mark you can achieve if you retake a module is 40.
- As you will see from the preceding pages, you will encounter a greater variety of different kinds of assessments at university than you did during your A-levels. You will need to develop new skills and more independent styles of learning to succeed in these.

DIFFERENT FORMS OF FEEDBACK

Feedback is any information about your work that can be used to make improvements. Feedback can be provided in various ways.

Individual written feedback - the main way in which you will receive feedback in the course of your degree is written comments on work you have submitted. For example, essays submitted for assessment will have a feedback sheet attached to them. On this sheet your marker will have written comments about your essay, and he or she will often write further comments on the actual essay itself (this is why we ask students to double-space the typing in their essays, and to leave margins – your marker will need room to write comments). For some assessments written feedback may be provided electronically, for example, using 'Grademark' on Blackboard.

Generic written feedback – for most examinations and for some of your coursework you will receive general feedback relating to how all the students did in the assessment. For example, generic feedback on examinations will highlight common errors or omissions in student answers, and will indicate what a good answer to specific examination questions included. Generic feedback on examinations will usually be posted up on Blackboard for students.

Individual verbal feedback – this is usually in addition to the written feedback you will have received. If, after reading the feedback on an essay or other piece of coursework, you would like further elaboration or clarification of the comments, you are encouraged to contact your module leader for a face-to-face meeting. It is often useful to discuss your essay or piece of coursework with the marker to ensure you have fully understood any written comments, and know the best way to improve your work.

Generic verbal feedback – some staff will take time out of a class to discuss an assessment, highlighting those points that made for either a good or not so good answer. This may also be provided electronically, for example, using Personal Capture video.

Pre-submission feedback – an important form of feedback, that is sometimes overlooked, is feedback given before you submit a piece of assessment. For example, you can approach your seminar or module leader to ask for feedback on how you intend to approach your essay. Unfortunately staff don't have time to read through essay drafts, but they will discuss your ideas for an essay, and will usually read and comment on a short essay plan (no more than one side).

*Note that you can request to read your own exam scripts. University policy doesn't allow you to take the script away, but you can arrange with the module leader to read it, while he or she is there. You can also see any written comments made by the marker. These are usually on a separate sheet, and tend to be minimal, because they are not intended as formal feedback, but they may still be helpful.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Class	Mark Range %	Descriptive equivalent for unseen examinations	Descriptive equivalent for essays	Descriptive equivalent for projects and dissertations
FIRST	80-100	Outstanding answer displaying wide knowledge and understanding of the subject matter. Answer shows initiative, critical analysis, intellectual rigour and independence of mind.	Outstanding discussion, conveying deep knowledge and understanding of the question, plus critically aware engagement with current research. Some signs of original interpretation or makes a critical contribution or finding	Outstanding, demonstrating clear capacity to make an independent contribution to the topic.
	70-79	Excellent knowledge and understanding of the subject matter. Answers make critical, perceptive use of a good depth of material in well structured arguments, avoiding irrelevance. Strong evidence of additional independent study.	Excellent knowledge and understanding of the question. Well written, highly cogent, clearly structured discussion making discerning, critical and effective use of a good range of literature. Strong evidence of additional independent study.	Excellent perceptive analysis making thorough, critical, effective use of relevant literature and material. Well written and presented within a well-structured framework, conforming to style/referencing guidelines.

Class	Mark Range %	Descriptive equivalent for unseen examinations	Descriptive equivalent for essays	Descriptive equivalent for projects and dissertations
SECOND UPPER	60-69	Very Good, well organised, detailed and logical answer, demonstrating understanding of the subject matter in a coherent treatment. No significant deficiencies of competence, though some points may not be argued through fully.	Very Good, an organised treatment, showing clear understanding of relevant arguments and issues raised by the question. Makes critical and effective use of literature and material, with some evidence of additional independent study.	Very Good, a clearly competent and well organised investigation, cogently argued, the problem placed in appropriate context and the analysis supported by thorough, critical and effective use of relevant literature and material.
SECOND LOWER	50-59	Good answer showing sound understanding of the question, the argument adequately presented though largely based on lecture material. Limited evidence of additional, independent study. May contain errors or irrelevant material.	Good treatment, but limited by insufficient discussion of issues raised by the question and/or lacking critical insight or awareness. May contain errors or irrelevant material.	Good investigation showing solid effort, knowledge and understanding but limited evidence of insight, critical ability imagination or ability to set work in a wider context.

Class	Mark Range %	Descriptive equivalent for unseen examinations	Descriptive equivalent for essays	Descriptive equivalent for projects and dissertations
THIRD	40-49	Basic, showing comprehension only of basic facts and information. Largely descriptive, or offering unsupported assertions. Answer may contain significant errors, considerable irrelevance and limited development of arguments.	Basic, demonstrating only a basic understanding of the topic. Discussion is superficial and arguments may contain significant flaws. Treatment reflects a narrow or misguided selection of material, or background knowledge may be evidently lacking.	Basic investigation, probably reflecting limited effort, so arguments are poorly developed and supporting evidence likely to be weak. Undue reliance on secondary literature, with little evidence of analytical depth or critical ability
FAIL	35-39	Poor, showing only partial understanding of the question and basic facts and principles of the subject, but including significant errors, irrelevance, serious deficiencies of expression, poorly constructed argument and shortage of material	Poor, with little or no adherence to project/essay outline or title. Shows very limited understanding of the question, with significant errors, irrelevance, poorly constructed arguments and lack of supporting material.	Poor, through misguided or inadequate effort, conveying no results of significance. Problem definition may be unclear and discussion inchoate or disordered. Material may be over-descriptive, or arguments over-assertive and unsupported by evidence.

Class	Mark Range %	Descriptive equivalent for unseen examinations	Descriptive equivalent for essays	Descriptive equivalent for projects and dissertations
FAIL	0-35	Very poor, showing serious lack of knowledge and understanding of facts and principles of the subject, resulting in severe inability to engage with the question set. Answer may also have serious deficiencies of expression, organisation, substantial omissions and irrelevance.	Very poor, showing very limited knowledge and understanding, and severe inability to engage with the essay. Indicates that grasp of the subject matter is minimal or non-existent. Badly written and/or presented.	Very poor, showing seriously inadequate effort reflected in severe inability to engage with the topic, or to apply subject knowledge and thinking skills to it. Often contains serious errors. Likely to reflect failure to obtain supervision.

The descriptions given for awarding a piece of work a certain grade classification refer to a variety of criteria, such as knowledge, understanding, relevance and quality of argument. So, a first class piece of work will be focused, show a breadth of knowledge of the topic, including of the academic literature on it, a depth of understanding, and it will contain a coherent and cogent argument, that includes a critical perspective on the topic.

Phrases such as ‘strong evidence of additional independent study’ mean that the student has gone beyond the material provided in classes, and has researched and read other relevant sources. At the other end of the spectrum, a fail will be characterised by a failure to answer the question (‘a severe inability to engage with the question set/essay/topic’), a very limited knowledge and understanding of the topic, poor writing (‘serious deficiencies of expression’), and may well involve a number of errors, or a lack of material. Your module leader or personal tutor will be able to explain these criteria more fully.

The expectations of markers will differ slightly depending on the type of assessment. So, for example, essay-style answers written under examination conditions will not be expected to be as lengthy as answers written outside the examination room. Particular modules may also require you to fulfil other specific criteria. For example, some modules include an oral examination or team project as part of their assessment, and there will be more specific things that the marker will be looking for in these cases. For presentations and group work each module has its own assessment criteria.

You should also be aware that modules outside of Politics may have very different assessment criteria, for example the Career Development Module run by the Careers Service, has very specific assessment criteria that differ from those found in most Politics modules.

HOW YOUR WORK IS MARKED

All marking is carried out by the module leader, seminar leader or a teaching assistant. Where the marking is done by someone other than the module leader, agreed criteria are used, and the module leader will ensure that the marking is accurate and consistent.

All assessed work that is worth 25% or more of the overall mark for the module goes through a process of moderation. What this means is that around 15% of all marked essays/coursework and examination scripts will be given to a second member of staff (the moderator) to read and check the standard of marking. The moderator will compare the marking against the assessment criteria, and will also compare the different pieces of work to ensure the marking is consistent. After the moderator has checked the standard of marking, a selection of the assessed work is sent to an academic at another university (the external examiner) as a further check on the standard of marking. If either the moderator or the external examiner think the marking is unsatisfactory, they can recommend a re-mark of the work.

This process of moderation applies to all kinds of assessments. So arrangements will be made, for example, for oral examinations to be recorded and reviewed by a second member of staff.

Dissertations and final year projects are treated slightly differently. All dissertations and final year projects are marked independently by two members of staff. They will then meet, discuss the dissertation or project, and agree a final mark between them. In the event that they cannot agree a mark, they will pass the dissertation to a third staff member who will resolve the disputed mark. A sample of 15% of dissertations and projects are also sent to our external examiners.

Essays and other coursework

You will receive your marks and feedback for any essays and coursework within twenty working days of it being submitted (note this means that weekends and public holidays, such as bank holidays, Christmas, Easter, etc. are not included in the twenty days allowed for marking). If we can, we return your work before the twenty working days deadline, but other work commitments and the number of essays for marking mean we often need the full twenty days to complete them. Marking accurately, consistently and fairly and providing helpful feedback all takes time. Nevertheless, we do prioritise marking and try to complete it as quickly as possible without compromising the standard of marking and quality of feedback.

Examinations

In practice examination marks are returned to students around one month after the end of assessment period. The moderation process for all modules has to be completed before marks are confirmed and made available to students. You will be e-mailed when the marks are ready to view on the S3P system.

GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR FEEDBACK

Ask your marker/module leader to explain their feedback on your work.

You are strongly encouraged to see staff about feedback they have provided on your work if you have any queries about it, or just want to discuss it.

Get feedback early on - talk to your seminar/module leader about the assignment before you complete it.

Before you write an essay or complete an assessed piece of work, talk to the seminar or module leader about your understanding of the question, and how you are thinking about approaching it. This is one of the earliest pieces of feedback you will receive.

Think about feedback comments on previous pieces of work.

Did previous feedback refer to specific points, such as the structure of your essay, or the supporting evidence you provided? Always look to improve those aspects of your work noted in feedback comments.

Talk to your personal tutor about feedback you've received.

Once you've had feedback on several assignments it may be useful to talk to your personal tutor to see what advice he or she can offer to help you improve.

Remember that your feedback is not just the mark.

Some students don't pick up their essays from the GPS office, so they never read the comments. Feedback is much more than just the mark; you'll learn more from the written and verbal comments you are given by those assessing your work.

Contact the Writing Development Centre.

Located in the Robinson library there is the Writing Development Centre, which can help you with your academic writing, and which specifically offers help with "learning from feedback on previous assignments". Visit their webpage at: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/wdc>

FEEDBACK RETURN DATES 2013-14

Stage I Modules

Module Code	Module Title	Assessment	Hand in date	Feedback due
POL1000	Introduction to Politics and History	Document Analysis	13/11/13	12/12/13
POL1000	Introduction to Politics and History	Essay	8/1/14	6/2/14
POL1017	Governing under Pressure	Essay	21/3/14	23/4/14
POL1022	Introduction to Political Philosophy	Essay	26/3/14	28/4/14
POL1032	Introduction to International Politics	Essay	20/3/14	22/4/14
POL1045	Truth, Lies and Politics	Essay	4/11/13	2/12/13
POL1046	Order and Disorder	Essay	13/11/13	12/12/13
POL1047	Power, Participation and Democracy	Essay	18/11/13	17/12/13
POL1131	Studying Political Economy	Essay	8/1/14	6/2/14

Stage 2 Modules

Module Code	Module Title	Assessment	Hand in date	Feedback due
POL2012	Politics of the Middle East	Essay	6/12/13	15/1/14
POL2022	Government and Politics of the USA	Essay	27/3/14	30/4/14
POL2034	The Politics and Policy of the European Union	Group briefing paper	12/12/13	21/1/14
POL2078	Critical International Politics	Essay	22/11/13	2/1/14
POL2079	Political Thought: Hobbes to Marx	Essay	Either 13/12/13 or 9/1/14	22/1/14 or 7/2/14
POL2080	Political Thought: Conservatism, Nationalism and Fascism	Essay	Either 24/3/14 or 2/5/14 or 9/5/14	24/4/14 or 4/6/14 or 10/6/14
POL2081	Research Methods in Politics	Portfolio	28/3/14	30/4/14
POL2081	Research Methods in Politics	Report	16/5/14	17/6/14
POL2082	Political Violence and the Modern State	Essay	13/3/14	11/4/14
POL2087	Contemporary Russian Politics	Essay	20/3/14	22/4/14
POL2088	Politics of Africa: Africa's Place in Global Politics	Case Study Report	29/10/13	27/11/13
POL2088	Politics of Africa: Africa's Place in Global Politics	Essay	5/12/13	14/1/13

Stage 3 Modules

Module Code	Module Title	Assessment	Hand in date	Feedback due
POL3046	Dissertation in Politics	Proposal	15/11/13	16/12/13
POL3046	Dissertation in Politics	Dissertation	29/4/14	N/A
POL3047	Project in Politics: Semester 1	Project	10/1/14	10/2/14
POL3048	Project in Politics: Semester 2	Project	8/5/14	9/6/14
POL3059	Democracy and the Constitution	Essay	25/11/13	3/1/14
POL3063	European Union: Decision Making Simulation	Team Research Paper	10/3/14	8/4/14
POL3063	European Union: Decision Making Simulation	Individual Simulation Report	16/5/14	17/6/14
POL3077	Global Poverty and Global Politics	Essay	9/5/14	10/6/14
POL3078	Britain and the European Union	Essay	2/12/13	9/1/14
POL3079	Government and Politics of Italy	Essay	27/3/14	30/4/14
POL3081	International Political Thought	Essay 1	18/11/13	17/12/13
POL3081	International Political Thought	Essay 2	8/1/14	6/2/14
POL3082	Feminist Political Theory	Essay	12/12/13	21/1/14

Module Code	Module Title	Assessment	Hand in date	Feedback due
POL3090	The Rise and Fall of New Labour	Essay 1	Either 29/11/13 or 13/12/13	8/1/14 or 22/1/14
POL3090	The Rise and Fall of New Labour	Essay 2	10/1/14	10/2/14
POL3092	Political Parties and Elections in the UK	Essay	20/11/13	19/12/13
POL3095	The United Nations in a Global World	Essay	11/12/13	20/1/14
POL3098	War, Genocide, Terror: Understanding Organised Violence	Essay 1	27/3/14	30/4/14
POL3098	War, Genocide, Terror: Understanding Organised Violence	Essay 2	15/5/14	16/6/14
POL3099	Power, Security and Protest in the Middle East	Essay	28/3/14	30/4/14
POL3100	History of World Political Thought	Research paper	10/1/14	10/2/14
POL3101	Postcolonial Politics	Essay 1	27/2/14	28/3/14
POL3101	Postcolonial Politics	Research proposal	11/3/14	9/4/14
POL3101	Postcolonial Politics	Essay 2	6/5/14	5/6/14

PROGRESSION AND DEGREE CLASSIFICATIONS

Decisions on progression and degree classifications are made by the Board of Examiners. This is composed of academic staff who have taught on the programme and the external examiners. The Board of Examiners meet and consider all students' marks at the end of Stages 1, 2 and 3.

Stage 1 and Stage 2

At the end of Stage 1 and 2 of your degree the Board of Examiners will make decisions about whether you can proceed to the next stage of your degree. If you have successfully completed all of your modules by achieving a mark of 40 or above, then you will proceed automatically.

If, however, you have failed any of your modules then the Board of Examiners will make decisions about whether you will need to resit the failed modules.

If you fail a non-core module with a mark of 35-39 then the fail will be 'compensated' as long as your average mark is 40 or over and you have no other marks below 35. You will not be required to resit the module and for the purposes of the calculation of the average mark for the stage the mark will be increased to 40. However, your transcript will still show the original mark and the fact that it has been compensated. A maximum of 40 credits can be compensated at Stages 1 and 2 of your degree.

If the failed module is not compensated you will need to resit it. If you have only failed one non-core 20 credit module then you can

'carry' the fail. You can proceed to the next stage, but must successfully resit the module in the next academic year.

In all other circumstances failed modules must be successfully passed before the student can proceed to the next stage of their degree. Students who started their degree before 2013-14 have two resit attempts. Students who began their degree in the 2013-14 academic year only have one resit attempt at failed modules.

Where a module has been successfully resat, a mark of 40 will be recorded on your transcript and will be used to calculate your stage average.

Stage 3

At the end of Stage 3 the Board of Examiners will meet to decide on your final degree classification. The Board will have before them anonymised marks for each student. All marks are rounded up to the nearest whole number with marks ending in .5 or above being rounded up.

The Board of Examiners will only consider your Stage 2 and Stage 3 marks. First year marks do not count at all towards your final degree classification. However, your Stage 2 and 3 marks contribute a different amount to your final degree classification. Your Stage 3 marks are double weighted - they count for double the value of your Stage 2 marks. This is because Stage 3 represents higher demands and it is the culmination of your achievements and abilities. An example of how this works is shown on the next page.

The weighted average of marks is key to the decision of the Board of Examiners. In most circumstances a student will be awarded the degree classification corresponding to the weighted average. So, in the example on the following page, the student would be awarded a 2:1 degree.

Stage 2	POL2345 - 20 credits Mark = 55 POL2456 - 20 credits Mark = 62 POL2567 - 20 credits Mark = 67 POL2678 - 20 credits Mark = 66 POL2789 - 20 credits Mark = 67 POL2890 - 20 credits Mark = 64	Stage 3	POL3456 -20 Credits Mark = 66 POL3567 - 20 Credits Mark = 71 POL3678 -20 Credits Mark = 60 POL3789 - 20 Credits Mark = 63 POL3890 - 40 credits Mark = $66 \times 2 = 132$ [a 40 credit module is worth twice that of a 20 credit module]
Stage average	$381 \div 6 = 63.5$		$392 \div 6 = 65.3$
Weighting the stages	$63.5 \times 0.33 = 21.0$		$65.3 \times 0.66 = 43.1$ [Stage 3 marks are double weighted]
Final rounded average			$21.0 + 43.1 = 64$

However, the Board may also exercise discretion. All candidates whose weighted average mark is within 2 marks of the class boundary (e.g. 58 or 68) will be considered for the award of the higher class of degree. In such cases the Board will consider the profile of marks. If half, or more, of a student's credits after

weighting are in the higher degree class then they will be awarded the higher degree.

Stage 2	POL2345 - 20 credits Mark = 62 POL2456 - 20 credits Mark = 69 POL2567 - 20 credits Mark = 72 POL2678 - 20 credits Mark = 66 POL2789 - 20 credits Mark = 71 POL2890 - 20 credits Mark = 64	Stage 3	POL3456 -20 Credits Mark = 70 POL3567 - 20 Credits Mark = 64 POL3678 -20 Credits Mark = 71 POL3789 - 20 Credits Mark = 71 POL3890 - 40 credits Mark = 71 × 2 = 142
Stage average	$404 \div 6 = 67.3$		$418 \div 6 = 69.7$
Weighting the stages	$67.3 \times 0.33 = 22.2$		$69.7 \times 0.66 = 46.0$
Final rounded average			$22.2 + 46.0 = 68$
2:1 and 1st credits	80 × 2:1 credits 40 × 1st class credits		40 × 2:1 credits 200 × 1st class credits [Stage 3 credits are double weighted]

The student on the previous page has a final average mark of 68. But they also have, after weighting, 240 credits of first class marks compared to 120 credits of second class marks. In this case, the student would be awarded a first class degree.

In general, there are two other circumstances in which the Board of Examiners may exercise discretion. Firstly, where a candidate has a final average mark within 2 marks of the class boundary and they have a particularly strong performance in a research-based module (e.g. a dissertation or a research project) then the Board of Examiners may choose to exercise discretion.

The other occasion where the Board of Examiners typically exercises discretion is where there were personal circumstances which are regarded to have significantly affected the degree classification. Such discretion will only be exercised where the student concerned has submitted a personal extenuating circumstances (PEC) form.

SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What should I do if something happens which disrupts my studies and affects my ability to complete an assessment or affects my performance in an assessment in some way?

A: If you are ill or have personal problems which affect your performance or mean that you can't meet a deadline for an assessment then you will need to submit a PEC (Personal Extenuating Circumstances) form to the GPS office. The details of your problem and any supporting evidence will be reviewed by the Senior Tutor for Politics and, if appropriate, a suitable adjustment will be made to account for the difficulties you have encountered. The adjustment made will depend on the circumstances but may be an extension to a deadline or permission to sit a special examination, for example. You can find the PEC form and guidance at: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/student-resources/help/>. Your personal tutor will be able to help you complete the form and answer any questions that you might have.

Q: What happens if I hand in work late?

A: Late submission of work after a deadline will lead to a **maximum** mark of 40 for all work that is handed in within seven calendar days of the deadline. Work that is submitted more than seven calendar days after the deadline will receive a mark of zero. If you fail to submit a piece of work you will also receive a mark of zero.

Q: I have a specific learning difficulty, e.g. dyslexia, what should I do?

A: If you disclosed a special learning difficulty during the admissions process (e.g. on your UCAS form) then the Student Wellbeing Service and Exams Office will contact you with information on appropriate adjustments (e.g. additional time in examinations or use of a scribe). If you did not disclose a special learning difficulty then you should arrange an appointment with the Student Wellbeing Service well in advance of the deadlines for any assessments.

Q: I have a temporary problem (e.g. a sprained wrist) which will affect my ability to take an examination. What should I do?

A: You should submit a PEC form at least two days before the examination is due to take place. In such cases the Exams Office will try to accommodate reasonable requirements. If the problem is reported within two days then you may need to request to take the exam concerned at the next examination period.

Q: Where do I get my examination timetable from?

A: There are three exams periods during the academic year. One at the end of each semester and a further one during August for resits. You can find the dates of these at: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/exams/exams/ExaminationDates.htm>. The schedule for exams in each of these periods is available at: <https://crypt.ncl.ac.uk/exam-timetable/>

Q: I don't think my marks are correct. Is there a way to get them checked?

A: In such circumstances you should contact the appropriate module leader. If the module leader is unable to help you should contact your degree programme director.

Q: I disagree with the mark that I have been given for a module. Can I have my work marked again or appeal against the decision?

A: You cannot appeal or have an assessment re-marked on the grounds that you disagree with the mark. If you have queries about the mark, you should contact the module leader of the module concerned. Appeals on individual module marks can only be made on very limited grounds. You can find the appeals procedure here: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/Regulations/SPS/appeals.htm>. It is advisable to seek the guidance of your personal tutor if you wish to pursue an appeal. You can also get advice from the Student Advice Centre (<http://www.nusu.co.uk/sac>).

Q: I have passed a module but I am not happy with the mark. Can I retake the assessments and try and get a better mark?

A: No. If you have passed a module you are not permitted to retake the assessments.

Q: I have failed one assessment in a module, does this mean I have failed the module overall?

A: Not necessarily. Most modules are assessed by several assessments and the final mark for a module is determined by the weighted average of the component marks. For example, if you were assessed by two essays, each weighted at 50% of the final mark, and you received 30 for one and 60 for the other, you would receive an overall pass mark of 45 for the module.

Q: What happens if I fail one or more of my modules?

A: In general, you will be required to resit the modules concerned although there are some circumstances in which the failed module may be compensated (see pages 24 and 25). Undergraduates who started in the 2013/14 academic year are only allowed one resit

attempt. All undergraduates who started their degree programmes before 2103/14 are permitted two rest attempts.

Q: What happens if I fail a module during Stage 3 of my degree programme?

A: Failure of 20 credits in the final stage will not affect the award of an honours degree. You will not be permitted to resit the module and the failing mark will be used in the calculation of your stage average.

However, if you fail more than 20 credits at Stage 3 then you will only be entitled to a Pass degree. You may elect to resit the failed modules. Following the resit(s) the maximum degree classification you will be entitled to is a Third Class degree.

Q: I am not happy with my final degree classification. What can I do to change this?

A: There are very limited circumstances in which you can appeal your final degree classification. The appeals process is detailed at: <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/Regulations/SPS/appeals.htm>. Your personal tutor or degree programme director can advise you on the appeals process.

Q: How can I get a transcript of my results?

A: You can access a transcript of your results via the S3P portal. This will be available two days after the Board of Examiners meeting. The GPS office will be able to provide you with the exact date.

Q: How can I improve my academic writing skills?

A: The Writing Development Centre (located in the Robinson Library) can offer support on all aspects of academic writing including planning and structuring assignments, writing analytically and critically, and using grammar and punctuation accurately. Politics

students who have used the centre report that the advice given is very useful.

Q: What help can I get from academic staff when preparing for assessments?

A: You can approach your seminar or module leader to ask for feedback on how you intend to answer your essay or approach any other kind of assessment. Staff will not be able to read through full essay drafts, but they will discuss your ideas for an essay, and will usually read and comment on a short essay plan (no more than one side).