Dear PGT Students

I hope that you are well. In recent weeks, your School Education and Programme Directors and colleagues across our faculty and the University have been working to anticipate some key challenges you may face in your MSc studies and identifying how we can best support you for the remainder of your programme.

I am writing to inform you how the “no detriment” policy, described in the letter from the Associate Pro Vice Chancellor; Professor Sally Heslop on 08 April 2020, will help your MSc study in the Faculty of Engineering. In the light of COVID-19, we have revised our University Regulations to minimise the impacts on your studies. When deciding on the new Regulations, and how these will contribute to the “no detriment” policy for Engineering PGT students, we have been guided by two important principles:

1. To maintain the integrity of your studies and your degree at Bristol. A Bristol degree is highly valued because of our high academic standards and we want to ensure that you benefit from that reputation, which will help in your future studies and career; and,
2. To take into account the serious impact that the COVID-19 crisis has had on your well-being and on your ability to study at the level to which you are capable. We are very mindful of the fact that for many of you this has been an extremely stressful and worrying time, especially for those who may be far from home or are now far from the University and feeling isolated.

We have aimed to balance these two principles, whilst also ensuring they are fair and consistent to all PGT students across the Faculty. It is important that you read through and understand the following five components of the Faculty of Engineering’s “no detriment” policy for PGT students. These are based on the new University Regulations and apply from now.

Part 1: The Quantitative Safety Net (QSN)
The QSN mark will identify your programme performance based on assessments that were completed before 27th March 2020. Each PGT programme in the Faculty of Engineering will have a QSN mark for the taught component, although the QSN mark will be derived differently for different programmes, due to the diversity of programme structures and timetabled assessments completed prior to 27th March 2020. The QSN mark will then be held until the Progression Exam Board, where it may be used to determine your Final Taught Component (FTC) mark for Progression (see Part 3, below).

Your Programme Directors will write to inform you how the QSN mark will be calculated for your programme.

Part 2: Completion of the Taught Component
To help you complete the remainder of the taught component of your MSc, you have already been advised that:

- We have modified summer assessments for your taught programme to take account of the COVID-19 disruptions (see PGT letter 8th April, 3a-3e);
- You can ask for extensions of up to 14 days for any coursework (see PGT letter 8th April, 3f);
- If necessary, because of COVID-19, you may need to defer some or all of your taught assessment from the first summer assessment period (May/June) to the second summer period (normally August) (see PGT letter 8th April, 3g); and,
- If you fail a taught assessment (e.g. coursework or exam) we will allow you a no-penalty second attempt (see PGT letter 8th April, 3h).

Part 3: Progression from the Taught Component to the Dissertation/Research Project
To progress from the taught component and start the Dissertation/Research Project, you must have achieved:

- a pass in at least 60 credits; and,
- a Taught Component Average (TCA) of at least 50%.

If you achieve this you will not be required to re-sit any failed units, and marks for such units will be disregarded for the purpose of degree classification. At this stage we will compare your TCA and your QSN marks. Whichever is higher will be taken as your Final Taught Component (FTC) mark. If you have not yet reached the above standard, we will normally allow you to start your Dissertation/Research Project. However, you will need to re-sit sufficient units to meet the above standard, in order to complete the taught component. We will allow each student up to three attempts on each unit. Full information is provided in the revised Regulations linked above. The date of the Progression Exam Board is yet to be confirmed but will likely be in early July 2020.

Part 4: Completion of the Research Dissertation
The due date is now 14th September 2020 (see PGT letter 8th April, 3.i.3). If you fail your Dissertation/Research Project, we will allow you to re-submit it, regardless of the mark you achieve at the first attempt, without penalty (see PGT letter 8th April, 3.i.4).

Part 5: Final Degree Outcome and Classification
(See the University Revised Classification in Taught Postgraduate Programmes Regulations; http://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/academic-quality/documents/taught-code/pgt-classification-amended-regulations.pdf)

To graduate, students are required to have:
- an overall Taught Component Mark (TCM) of at least 50%;
- passed at least 60 credit points of taught component units; and,
- passed the Dissertation/Research Project.

The degree classification for the student will be based on their Final Taught Component (FTC) mark, and the mark obtained for the Dissertation/Research Project.

Degrees will be classified according to the following:
- Distinction: At least 70/100 for the dissertation and at least 70/100 for the taught component;
- Merit: At least 60/100 for the dissertation and at least 60/100 for the taught component;
- Pass: At least 50/100 for the dissertation and at least 50/100 for the taught component; and,
- Fail: 49/100 or below for the dissertation or 49/100 or below for the taught component.

Extenuating Circumstances (a reminder)
(See the University Revised Policy for Extenuating Circumstances; http://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/academic-quality/documents/taught-code/extenuating-circumstances-revised-policy.pdf)

We have designed these measures to mitigate the effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has had in affecting changes in teaching and assessment for your programme. If you feel if you have other extenuating circumstances (EC), you can still submit an EC application in the usual way. These will be assessed on a case by case basis according to both the pre-existing and revised regulations.

The pre-existing University Regulations for taught postgraduate students already provided some flexibility to cope with unusual situations and the Faculty Exam Boards is empowered to use a variety of evidence to reach decisions for each student. Supplementing this robust framework with the additional measures of our “no detriment” policy will allow us to mitigate the disruption being caused to your MSc study by COVID-19.
Please keep yourself updated on the latest developments, including a list of frequently asked questions through the University’s Coronavirus Advice Webpage, and by regularly checking your emails which is now our main mode of communication with you. In the meantime, if you have any Faculty specific questions or concerns you can email engf-fem@bristol.ac.uk.

Nicholas Howden (Graduate Education Director) on behalf of the COVID-19 Faculty Education Group.