

Awarding: Awards and Classification Thresholds Policy

1. Purpose

This policy outlines the thresholds required for the conferment of undergraduate awards to learners at Francis James. It ensures clarity and consistency in how academic performance is recognised, and aligns with the expectations of Richmond American University London (RAUL) and the Office for Students (OfS).

Francis James' undergraduate programmes are validated by RAUL. Learners who successfully complete their studies with Francis James receive a UK award from RAUL. It is the RAUL Examinations Board that holds the final decision as to which learners have met the relevant requirements, as recommended by the Francis James Assessment and Examinations Board.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all Francis James learners enrolled on any of the pathways in the BSc(Hons) Construction and the Built Environment. This includes learners who may exit the programme after completion of level 4 or level 5.

3. Exit awards

Learners may exit the programme at the end of level 4 or the end of level 5 with an award if they satisfy the relevant requirements. The following may be awarded:

- Undergraduate Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE) - level 4
- Undergraduate Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE) - level 5

Where a learner leaves Francis James with an exit award conferred by RAUL, they may reapply later to study to upgrade to a higher award on the same programme, subject to re-admission policies and only if the programme is still offered. Any learner who has withdrawn from a programme, or has exhausted all assessment attempts, will automatically be considered for an exit award where sufficient credit has been accrued.

3.1. CertHE (exit after level 4)

To exit the programme at the end of level 4, with CertHE, learners must:

- Successfully complete all programme requirements as set out in the programme specification
- Achieve a minimum aggregate mark of 40%

Learners achieving CertHE will be classified with Pass, Merit or Distinction. Learners who fail to complete all programme requirements at level 4, including minimum pass requirements, will be classified with a Fail. Awarding decisions are subject to the review of Francis James' Assessment and Exam Board, and the decision of the RAUL Examinations Board.

3.2. DipHE (exit after level 5)

To exit the programme at the end of level 5, with CertHE, learners must:

- Successfully complete all programme requirements as set out in the programme specification (including pre-requisites relating to achievement at level 4)
- Achieve a minimum aggregate mark of 40%

Learners achieving DipHE will be classified with Pass, Merit or Distinction. Learners who fail to complete all programme requirements at level 5, including minimum pass requirements, may be awarded a CertHE if they have met all relevant requirements at level 4. This is subject to the review of Francis James' Assessment and Exam Board, and the decision of the RAUL Examinations Board.

4. BSc (Hons)

Learners successfully completing the full programme of study at level 6 will be awarded:

- Bachelor of Science - BSc (Hons)

To be awarded BSc (Hons), learners must:

- Successfully complete all programme requirements (including pre-requisites relating to achievement at levels 4 and 5)
- Achieve a minimum average mark of 40%

Learners achieving BSc (Hons) will be classified with Third Class (3rd), Lower Second Class (2:2), Upper Second Class (2:1) or First Class (1st).

Learners who fail to complete all programme requirements at level 6, including minimum pass requirements, may be awarded a DipHE if they have met all relevant requirements at levels 4 and 5. This is subject to the review of Francis James' Assessment and Exam Board, and the decision of the RAUL Examinations Board.

5. Classification thresholds

Assessments within each course will be given a mark out of 100 which is then converted to a percentage outcome. These percentages are averaged once all courses for a level are complete. The credit value of each course and its FHEQ level determines its weighting in the aggregation of credit for an award. The generic mark scheme is available in Annex A. This is used to develop assessment criteria for each assessment.

Classification of BSc (Hons) degrees will be based on the mean average (aggregate) mark across all courses at FHEQ Level 6 (weighted at 60%) and Level 5 (weighted at 40%) respectively. Where learners have directly entered a Level 6 top-up award, the calculation for the honours classification will be based solely on all credits at Level 6.

For exit awards (CertHE, DipHE), performance in work for which an award of credit for prior learning has been made is not considered in the calculation of the final award.

The total credits at each FHEQ level and their weighting in the aggregate mark for each award at the University are detailed as follows:

Award title	FHEQ level	Total credits	Minimum credits at each level	Level weighting in aggregate mark	Aggregate mark and classifications
CertHE	4	120	120 at Level 4	Level 4 - 100%	Pass: 40-49.999% Merit: 50-59.000% Distinction: 60%+
DipHE	5	240	120 at Level 5 120 at Level 4	Level 5 - 50% Level 4 - 50%	Pass: 40-49.999% Merit: 50-59.000% Distinction: 60%+
BSc (Hons)	6	360	120 at Level 6 120 at Level 5 120 at Level 4	Level 6 - 60% Level 5 - 40%	3rd: 40-49.999% 2:2: 50-59.000% 2:1: 60-69.999% 1st: 70%+

These classifications are set in line with RAUL's '[Academic Regulations for Validated Awards](#)', recognising that the RAUL Examinations Board holds the final decision as to which learners have met the relevant requirements.

5.1. Borderline classifications

There may be some cases where learners can be awarded a higher class of degree:

- If a learner's total mean average result is 1% below the higher classification boundary and at least half the credits that contribute to the award are in the higher class, and no course grades have been capped in line with Francis James policies for assessments, the learner can be awarded the higher classification.
- If a learner's total mean average result is 1% below the higher classification boundary but the learner has fewer than half the credits in the higher class, they may still be awarded the higher class, subject to the review of Francis James' Assessment and Exam Board, and the decision of the RAUL Examinations Board.

5.2. Compensation

Compensation is the practice of awarding credit for a limited number of courses where a pass mark (40%) has not been achieved. It is based on overall satisfactory academic performance.

Compensation can be applied to enable progression from one level to the next, and to gain an award. Compensation can only be recommended once all courses in a level are complete and cannot be used for courses where group assessment contributes to the final mark. Where a learner has an average at the end of a level of 40% or more, but has achieved a mark of 36%-39% in a course, there is a potential to progress using compensation.

No more than 15 credits can be compensated at any one level, and no more than 30 credits can be compensated overall across the degree programme. A decision to allow compensation for a failed course is subject to the review of Francis James' Assessment and Exam Board, and the decision of the RAUL Examinations Board.

6. Aegrotat Awards

Should a learner be prevented by illness, or other circumstances, from completing all programme requirements, the Francis James Assessment and Exam Board may consider relevant evidence and make a recommendation to the RAUL Examinations Board that an aegrotat award be made.

Considerations for aegrotat awards are limited to learners who are permanently unable to continue their studies and who have less than 60 credits remaining of their level of study. The Assessment and Exam Board must be satisfied that the learner's prior performance shows beyond reasonable doubt that they would have passed but for illness or other circumstances. This means that the learner must not have received any fail grades in courses at the current level of study. A learner may be awarded a full degree, where sufficient credit at level 6 has been accrued and other considerations are met, or an exit award at level 4 or 5, depending on individual circumstances including the credit that has been accrued.

The Programme lead, or a designee, will make a recommendation to the appropriate Assessment and Exam Board on each case. The recommendation shall include:

- details of the academic standing of the learner
- details on the causes that prevented the learner from completing the programme/level
- details of medical evidence or other appropriate documentation relating to the circumstances of non-completion
- a signed statement from the learner indicating that they are willing to accept an Aegrotat degree or exit award

It should be noted that an aegrotat award may not necessarily entitle the holder to registration with a professional body or to be exempt from the requirements of any professional qualification. This is a decision for the relevant professional body.

7. Posthumous Awards

Programme leaders may make recommendations to the Francis James Assessment and Exam Board for a posthumous award to be given to a learner who is deceased. Posthumous awards are permitted for all degree programmes and exit awards.

The classification for posthumous awards is generally based on past performance. Boards can award an unclassified Honours degree in cases where there is evidence that the learner would have achieved a degree, as long as the amount of study the learner carried out is greater than the amount normally associated with the Diploma of Higher Education.

The decision by the Francis James Assessment and Exam Board to recommend a posthumous award to the RAUL Examinations Board is made at their discretion. The Francis James Assessment and Exam Board can recommend that any outstanding academic requirements are waived, or that a lower award should be given, if this is the most appropriate option. Francis James can also recommend to the Finance Department to disregard and clear any debt where the deceased learner owes fees.

Posthumous degrees will be awarded in the name of the deceased learner and may be announced at the next relevant graduation ceremony, if their next of kin so desires. The degree certificate may be presented to the learner's next of kin as part of a private meeting by the Head of School/Department or alternative, or sent by

post as soon as possible, if this is their wish.

8. Oversight

The final decisions relating to classifications and awarding rest with the RAUL Examinations Board. Recommendations for awarding and classification are made to the RAUL Examinations Board by Francis James' Assessment and Exam Board.

The Francis James Assessment and Exam Board will provide a report after each meeting to the Academic Quality and Standards Committee, which they will consider alongside other feedback gathered on teaching, learning and assessment to monitor performance of the degree programme.

9. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by Francis James to ensure:

- Fairness and academic integrity in award decisions
- Consistency with broader institutional assessment regulations
- Ongoing alignment with RAUL requirements, relevant OfS criteria and any professional body requirements that become relevant at time of accreditation

ANNEX A - Generic Mark Descriptors

The generic mark descriptors set out below act as a framework for informing individual assessment criteria. They can be applied across levels 4, 5 and 6.

Assessments within the degree programme are designed to assess quality of research, understanding, analysis and insight, rather than having specific right/wrong answers.

Class	Mark range	Descriptor
First - BSc (Hons)	70%-100%	To achieve the top end of the mark scale, learners must produce exceptional work of the highest quality in most or every respect. A mark of 70% or above shows that the learner has produced an excellent demonstration of the learning outcomes in most respects. Work will demonstrate: - Wide, appropriate and focused knowledge, with critical understanding. - Outstanding/excellent standard of evaluation, showing insightful, critical and/or original analysis - Evidence of comprehensive reading, well beyond course materials, with highly effective and relevant use of references and exemplars. - Outstanding/excellent standard of presentation, organisation and communication, demonstrating clear and logical structure.
Upper Second (2:1) - BSc (Hons)	60-69%	A mark between 60% and 69% shows that the learner has produced work of very good quality. Work will demonstrate: - Very good level of appropriate knowledge, with critical understanding with only occasional lapses in detail. - Very good standard of evaluation, showing critical and insightful analysis - Evidence of reading beyond course materials, with effective and relevant use of references and exemplars. - Very good standard of presentation, organisation and communication, demonstrating clear and logical structure.

Lower Second (2:2) - BSc (Hons)	50-59%	A mark between 50% and 59% reflects good work, with competent achievement of the expected outcomes. Work will demonstrate: - Good level of appropriate knowledge, particularly the essential material, showing reasonable understanding with only occasional lapses in detail. - Some evaluation and analysis, providing a level of insight, although much work may be more descriptive in nature. - Some evidence of reading beyond course materials, with satisfactory use of references and exemplars. - Good standard of presentation, organisation and communication
Third - BSc (Hons)	40-49%	A learner achieving a mark between 40% and 49% has produced work of satisfactory quality, demonstrating some relevant knowledge and understanding, with limited analysis and some organisation and relevance. Work will demonstrate: - Satisfactory level of appropriate knowledge, likely to relate only to the essential material, showing basic understanding with only some lapses in detail. - Attempts at evaluation and analysis, providing a minimum level of insight; much work will be descriptive in nature. - Limited evidence of reading beyond course materials, with some relevant use of references and exemplars. - Satisfactory standard of presentation, organisation and communication, though there will be flaws in aspects such as referencing technique.
Fail	36%-39% (marginal fail)	A marginal fail score (between 36% and 39%) can be awarded where a learner produces evidence of some study demonstrated through presentation of limited knowledge and some basic understanding of relevant concepts and techniques. However, work receiving between 36% and 39% is also usually deemed to have some significant omissions and/or errors.
	35% and below	A mark of 36% or lower demonstrates that the learner has produced work of quality that is significantly below the standard required. They will have presented very limited evidence of study and little knowledge and evidence of understanding demonstrated. Work graded this way is usually subject to numerous and serious omissions and errors.
Zero	Zero	Work of no merit OR Absent, work not submitted. Penalty for some misconduct cases

Approval and Review

Written By	Revision Date	Revision Number	Approved By	Review Date
Karen Tucker	31/12/2024	1	 S Graham	31/12/2025
Helen Barratt	03/06/2025	2	 S Graham	03/06/2026