Dear student,

As we start the summer term, I hope that you and your friends and families are safe and well. The University is immensely proud of all of our students, and how you are continuing to engage with your studies and your peers during these difficult times. I also want to pay tribute to academic and professional services colleagues for their hard work to deliver teaching, learning and assessment remotely.

I am writing to tell you more about how the University’s no detriment policy will work. I recognise that this is a long and complex communication and encourage you to discuss it with friends, family and your usual University staff contacts.

This communication describes how no detriment will work across the University. Your School will be in touch with you again by 15 May to confirm how no detriment will be applied for your particular course of study.

What does 'no detriment' mean?

The term ‘no detriment’ refers to a series of approaches that UK universities are taking to prevent students’ marks and award classifications from being adversely affected by the disruption to teaching, learning and assessment caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

There is no standard approach to no detriment across the higher education sector. Universities make their own arrangements, working within guidance published by the Office for Students and the Quality Assurance Agency. At Brighton we have also worked closely with the Brighton Students’ Union to help inform our approach.

At Brighton, our no detriment policy has two components: i. generic mitigation and ii. performance benchmarking. These are described below.

Generic mitigation

The University has agreed that generic mitigation will be applied for all students on all assessment completed after 5th March. Generic mitigation provides for the following:
• Variations to the planned assessment tasks to ensure they are able to be completed remotely and the extension of submission deadlines for tasks that have been varied in this way (you will have already received information from your School about the revised arrangements in place for your course).

• Where students fail modules, examination boards will automatically grant deferrals to be completed during the summer. A deferral is an uncapped further attempt at the assessment, meaning that your mark will not be capped at the pass mark and you will be able to achieve the full range of marks as though you were attempting the assessment for the first time.

• Where students are unable to submit work, examination boards will automatically grant deferrals (an uncapped attempt as if for the first time) to be completed during the summer.

• Where students are unable to complete deferral work during the summer, for example due to ill health, parenting or caring responsibilities, then the normal round of examination boards held in September will grant repeats (with or without attendance) which will also be uncapped (i.e. as if for the first time).

• The only exception is where a student is already at their second or third attempt. In this case, a deferral means that their next attempt will remain their second or third attempt.

• The University does not wish to apply penalties to work submitted late. However, we do require students to submit their work on time in order that we are able to confer awards and progress students to the next level at the normal rate.

• To avoid late penalties, you must make an extension request to your course leader, preferably before the assessment submission deadline. You also may request extensions retrospectively (i.e. after the submission deadline has passed) for up to two weeks after the submission deadline.

• Your course leader will not require you to produce evidence in support of your extension request. The University will, under the current difficult circumstances, accept computer failure or IT problems as a valid reason for an extension.

• As ever, we would encourage you to complete your work in good time, and to request extensions only where your ability to submit on time is affected by circumstances beyond your control.

Performance benchmarking
The University will use an individual performance benchmark to ensure that
students receive marks and awards that fairly reflect their performance. By performance benchmark we mean a reliable indication of each individual student’s performance prior to the Covid-19 disruption.

The performance benchmarking will be applied to module assessments completed after 5th March.

**What are the criteria for performance benchmarking to be applied?**

The University will apply performance benchmarking only to modules that students have passed. Where modules are failed or work is not submitted, then deferrals will be granted as described above.

This approach ensures that students, employers and the wider public can be confident that academic standards have been upheld.

The University will not be able to apply performance benchmarking where there are professional, statutory or regulatory body requirements that prevent this. Alternative arrangements will be made for such courses and Schools will advise students where this is the case.

The performance benchmarking approach applies to undergraduate and postgraduate taught degrees but not to doctoral research degrees.

**How will performance benchmarking work?**

1.) The University will calculate a performance benchmark for each student. This will be a secure indication of individual student performance pre-Covid-19.

2.) A student’s module marks in modules completed post-5 March 2020 will not be allowed to drop below the individual performance benchmark. For example

   - A student’s individual performance benchmark is 68%
   - The student achieves 58% for a module completed post 5 March.
   - The student’s mark for that module will be uplifted and the student will receive mark of 68% for the module

3.) If a student’s module mark for a post-5th March module exceeds their individual performance benchmark, then the higher mark will stand.

For example:

   - A student’s individual performance benchmark is 55%
The student achieves 65% for a module completed post 5 March

The student will receive the higher mark of 65%

4) Students marks, once adjusted in the manner described above, will be used to calculate degree classifications and make progression decisions in the normal manner.

**How will the individual performance benchmark be calculated?**

The University has diverse curriculum structures. Students on some courses will already have achieved a significant volume of academic credit. However, this will not be the case for courses where most assessment occurs at the end of the year.

In light of this, we will need to use different methods for calculating the individual performance benchmark depending on curriculum structure.

The majority of courses will use one of the two following methods:

**a) Individual performance benchmark**

Where students have accumulated a minimum of 40 credits at the stage of study through successful completion of assessment to date, the individual performance benchmark will be the student’s mean score across the completed credit.

**b) Moderated individual performance benchmark**

Where students have not yet accumulated 40 credits at their stage of study, the individual performance benchmark will be calculated using a combination of two elements:

1.) Moderation of 2019/20 cohort module marks compared to the marks for the previous three deliveries of the module (where such data is available)

2.) An individual student’s mean average for the previous stage of study (where available)

The University is also aware that there are some courses, for example single stage or part-time postgraduate taught courses, where neither of the above models will be able to be applied. In such cases, a small number of additional, robust methods for calculating the individual performance benchmark will be developed and approved by the University.
Further support and next steps

We recognise that the information above is complex and that you will want to understand in detail how the no detriment arrangements will apply to you personally.

You will be advised by your School which model of performance benchmarking is being used on your course by Friday 15 May.

In the meantime, we are also aware that some students are facing particularly challenging circumstances for example due to parenting or other caring responsibilities or personal or family illness.

There is no need for students facing these circumstances to make mitigating circumstances claims, since the full range of available outcomes (deferrals, repeats etc.) are available under the arrangements described above.

We do however encourage students facing difficulty to continue to seek advice from your usual student support contacts such as Student Support and Guidance Tutors and Course Leaders.

Finally, may I wish you every success in your upcoming assessments and assure you of the University’s commitment to supporting our students through these challenging times.

Warmest wishes,

Professor Ruth Whittaker,
Pro –Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience)