



UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION

COMMISSION CIRCULAR NO. 02/2024

No. 20, Ward Place,
Colombo 07.

January 03, 2024

Vice Chancellors of Universities
Rectors of Campuses
Directors of Institutes

Introduction of Early Exit or Fall-back Qualifications for an Existing Undergraduate / Postgraduate Programme of Study

Your attention is invited to the Commission Circular No. 04/2021 of April 07, 2021, on the above matter.

2. The University Grants Commission at its 1103rd meeting held on June 08, 2023, drew its attention to the following

- I. Introducing fallback options for state-funded degree programs for which students are selected by the UGC could encourage students to abandon their studies halfway.
- II. As per the above circular on fallback options university students should be able to get fallback options only after the student has followed the degree program during the normal duration of the course and also the maximum period has been given for the students to complete the degree programs.

3. Accordingly, the following provisions are applicable in relation to early exit or fall-back qualifications:

- 3.1 Both early exit and fall-back qualifications provide pathways for students registered for a programme of study leading to a particular qualification, to leave with a different qualification at a lower SLQF level. Such pathways must be designed so that the lower qualification to be awarded, the volume of work that must be completed for the award of this lower qualification, and the Level Descriptors are clearly specified as per the SLQF guidelines. Early exit and fall-back qualifications differ in that while students may choose to leave with early exit qualifications before completion of the maximum period of study required for the full qualification, fall-back qualifications are for students who have completed the maximum period of study that has been given for the students to complete the degree programs, but are unable to fulfill all the requirements for the award of that full qualification. Fall-back qualifications are meant to avoid the unfortunate situation where a student is compelled to leave a programme of study without any qualification despite spending the maximum period and some significant

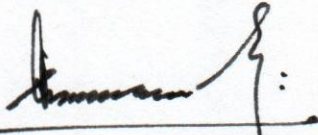
level of achievement. However, if a student is expelled from the university on disciplinary grounds, then such a student may not be eligible for the award of an early exit or fall-back qualification.

- 3.2 Early exit qualifications may be built into the design of new postgraduate programmes. E.g. a Level 10 MSc programme may have provision for exit with a Level 9 Masters, or a Level 8 Postgraduate Diploma. In designing such exit pathways, the expected programme outcomes or graduate competencies, the course structure, and the assessment strategy, including requirements for the award of each qualification must be clearly specified.
- 3.3 Early exit pathways may be also created within the structure of an existing postgraduate programme, but again, the expected programme outcomes or graduate competencies, the course structure, and assessment strategy, including requirements for the award of the qualification must be clearly specified.
- 3.4 The universities and higher educational institutes are permitted to award Fall-back qualifications below the SLQF Levels 5 on a case-by-case basis by the institution itself for the students registered for programmes of study leading to Bachelor's degrees and Bachelor's Honours degrees, but who do not fulfill all the requirements for the award of the degree. For such fall-back qualifications too, the expected programme outcomes or graduate competencies, the course structure, and the assessment strategy, including requirements for the award of each qualification, must be clearly specified.
- 3.5 Fall-back qualifications at SLQF Level 5 may be made available to students registered for programmes of study leading to Bachelor's Honours degrees, but who do not fulfill all the requirements for the award of the degree. For such fall-back qualifications too, the expected programme outcomes or graduate competencies, the course structure, and the assessment strategy, including requirements for the award of each qualification, must be clearly specified.
- 3.6 Early exit pathways are not permitted for undergraduate degree programmes to which students are admitted through the UGC.
- 3.7 A fall-back qualification may be awarded to an undergraduate student only after completion of the maximum period of study of the programme for which that student has been registered. However, students who are admitted through the UGC with possibility of following an SLQF Level 5 Bachelors degree or SLQF Level 6 Bachelors Honours degree and selected for SLQF Level 6 Bachelors Honours degree by the respective HEI may be allowed to request fall-back option to leave with the SLQF Level 5 Bachelors degree after completing all requirement for the SLQF Level 5 Bachelors degree as well as completing the minimum period of SLQF Level 5 Bachelors degree.
- 3.8 In a circumstance where a maximum period of study of the programme, for which the student has been registered, is unable to be met due to a barrier exam in which the student has utilized the full privilege of maximum attempts, then a fall-back qualification may be awarded provided that the student has to meet the expected programme outcomes or graduate competencies, the course structure, and the assessment strategy, including requirements for the award of a defined specified qualification which is below the registered SLQF level.
- 3.9 A recommendation for the award of a fall-back qualification to a student who applies for the award of such a qualification, should be made by the relevant Faculty Board, to

the Senate of the University, after an exit interview to judge the suitability of the student for the award of such qualification.

- 3.10 The effective date of award of an early exit or fall-back qualification should be the 1st day of the month after which the Senate of the University has approved the award of the qualification, at the request of the student, and on the recommendation of the relevant Faculty Board.
- 3.11 Provisions for early exit and fall-back qualifications should be included in the university by-laws for the existing programme of study.
- 3.12 All early exit and fall-back qualifications at the SLQF Level 5 or above should be approved by the Commission through the submission of an application to the QAC/relevant Standing Committees.
- 3.13 The application form to be used to obtain UGC approval for introduction of early exit or fall-back qualifications, for an existing degree programme previously approved by the UGC is shown in Annex 1 of this circular.
- 3.14 The effective date for the early exit or fall-back qualifications of a degree programme will be the date of the Commission approval received.
- 3.15 This Circular is effective from January 1, 2024, and the Commission Circular No. 04/2021 dated April 07, 2021 is hereby rescinded.

Please take necessary action accordingly.



Senior Professor Sampath Amaratunge
Chairman

- Copies:
1. Secretary / Ministry of Education
 2. Chairman's Office / UGC
 3. Vice- Chairman / UGC
 4. Members of the UGC
 5. Secretary / UGC
 6. Registrars of Universities
 7. Deans of Faculties
 8. Accountant / UGC
 9. Bursars of Universities
 10. Librarian / SAL / AL of the Higher Educational Institutions / Institutes
 11. Deputy Registrars / Snr. Asst. Registrars/ Asst. Registrars
of Campuses / Institutes
 12. Deputy Bursars / Snr. Asst. Bursars / Asst. Bursars of Campuses / Institutes
 13. Internal Auditor / UGC
 14. Govt. Audit Superintendents of Universities
 15. Snr. Asst. Int. Auditor / Asst. Int. Auditors of HEIs
 16. Secretaries of Trade Unions
 17. Auditor General

File No. UGC/QA/GEN

Annex 1

UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION
APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF AN EARLY EXIT OR FALL-BACK
QUALIFICATION
FOR AN EXISTING UNDERGRADUATE/POSTGRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMME
(Introduced in January 2024)

This application form is meant to be used when an early exit pathway or a fall-back option is to be introduced for an existing degree programme previously approved by the UGC. A separate application form should be completed for each such early exit or fall-back qualification.

1	Previously approved qualification				
	1.1	Name of degree programme			
	1.2	SLQF Level			
	1.3	Dates of approval by Senate, Council and UGC (attach evidence as Annex 1)			
2	Proposed qualification				
	2.1	Name	English		
			Sinhala		
			Tamil		
2.2	SLQF Level				
3	Entity offering proposed qualification				
	3.1	University			
	3.2	Faculty/ Institute			
	3.3	Department(s) (if applicable)			
4	Mandate for award of proposed qualification Attach all supporting evidence as Annex 2, certified by the Registrar, and with the rubber stamp				
	4.1	Senate approval for proposed qualification	Meeting Number:	Minute Date:/...../...	Evidence attached (please tick) <input type="checkbox"/>
	4.2	Council approval for proposed qualification	Meeting Number:	Minute Date:/...../...	Evidence attached (please tick) <input type="checkbox"/>

5	Details of the proposed qualification																																																				
5.1	5.1 a Programme outcomes / Graduate profile for <u>previously approved</u> qualification > > >																																																				
	5.1 b Programme Outcomes / Graduate profile for <u>proposed</u> qualification This should be stated in terms of the desired competencies / characteristics of a graduate of the proposed programme, using the 12 characteristics described in SLQF 2015, as a guide for the appropriate level. > > >																																																				
5.2	Is this qualification to be offered as an early exit or as a fall back qualification or both? <u>Tick only one box</u> Early exit qualification <input type="checkbox"/> Fall-back qualification <input type="checkbox"/> Both early exit and fall back <input type="checkbox"/>																																																				
5.3	Total credits required for award of the proposed qualification: <table border="1" data-bbox="310 1144 1450 1335"> <tr> <td data-bbox="310 1144 848 1189">Undergraduate qualification:</td> <td data-bbox="852 1144 1450 1189">Postgraduate qualification:</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="310 1196 848 1335">At SLQF Level 5:</td> <td data-bbox="852 1196 1450 1335"> At SLQF Level 7: At SLQF Level 8: At SLQF Level 9: </td> </tr> </table>					Undergraduate qualification:	Postgraduate qualification:	At SLQF Level 5:	At SLQF Level 7: At SLQF Level 8: At SLQF Level 9:																																												
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5.4	Duration of proposed programme: For an early exit qualification: Minimum of academic years For a fall-back qualification: At the end of academic years																																																				
5.5	5.5 a Structure of <u>previously approved</u> programme of study This should give details as below <table border="1" data-bbox="315 1644 1450 2085"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="315 1644 456 1749">Semester</th> <th data-bbox="460 1644 573 1749">Course Code</th> <th data-bbox="578 1644 1020 1749">Course Name</th> <th data-bbox="1025 1644 1125 1749">Credit Value</th> <th data-bbox="1130 1644 1303 1749">Status (Compulsory /Optional)</th> <th data-bbox="1307 1644 1450 1749">Existing / New</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="315 1756 456 1800">1</td> <td data-bbox="460 1756 573 1800"></td> <td data-bbox="578 1756 1020 1800"></td> <td data-bbox="1025 1756 1125 1800"></td> <td data-bbox="1130 1756 1303 1800"></td> <td data-bbox="1307 1756 1450 1800"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="315 1807 456 1852">2</td> <td data-bbox="460 1807 573 1852"></td> <td data-bbox="578 1807 1020 1852"></td> <td data-bbox="1025 1807 1125 1852"></td> <td data-bbox="1130 1807 1303 1852"></td> <td data-bbox="1307 1807 1450 1852"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="315 1859 456 1904">...</td> <td data-bbox="460 1859 573 1904"></td> <td data-bbox="578 1859 1020 1904"></td> <td data-bbox="1025 1859 1125 1904"></td> <td data-bbox="1130 1859 1303 1904"></td> <td data-bbox="1307 1859 1450 1904"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="315 1910 456 1955">...</td> <td data-bbox="460 1910 573 1955"></td> <td data-bbox="578 1910 1020 1955"></td> <td data-bbox="1025 1910 1125 1955"></td> <td data-bbox="1130 1910 1303 1955"></td> <td data-bbox="1307 1910 1450 1955"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="315 1962 456 2007">...</td> <td data-bbox="460 1962 573 2007"></td> <td data-bbox="578 1962 1020 2007"></td> <td data-bbox="1025 1962 1125 2007"></td> <td data-bbox="1130 1962 1303 2007"></td> <td data-bbox="1307 1962 1450 2007"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="315 2013 456 2058">...</td> <td data-bbox="460 2013 573 2058"></td> <td data-bbox="578 2013 1020 2058"></td> <td data-bbox="1025 2013 1125 2058"></td> <td data-bbox="1130 2013 1303 2058"></td> <td data-bbox="1307 2013 1450 2058"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="315 2065 456 2085"></td> <td data-bbox="460 2065 573 2085"></td> <td data-bbox="578 2065 1020 2085"></td> <td data-bbox="1025 2065 1125 2085"></td> <td data-bbox="1130 2065 1303 2085"></td> <td data-bbox="1307 2065 1450 2085"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>					Semester	Course Code	Course Name	Credit Value	Status (Compulsory /Optional)	Existing / New	1						2																
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5.5 b Structure of <u>proposed</u> programme of study					
Semester	Course Code	Course Name	Credit Value	Status (Compulsory /Optional)	Existing / New
1					
2					
5.6 Programme Content For <u>each new course unit</u> (if any) in the proposed programme, provide details as indicated in the format given in Annex 3.					
5.7 Programme Assessment Strategy / Rules Describe the Programme Assessment Strategy /Rules in detail, as indicated in the format given in Annex 4.					
6	Any other relevant information not stated above				
7	Recommendation and signature of the University's Director CQA, with official stamp				
8	Signature of Dean of the Faculty / Director of Institute and official stamp				
9	Signature of Vice Chancellor and official stamp				
10	Date of Vice-Chancellor's signature	/...../.....		

Please email the completed application with all signatures and required annexures to dqac@ugc.ac.lk, and with one hard copy to the following address.

Director, Quality Assurance Council of the UGC
94/10, Ananda Rajakaruna Mawatha, Colombo 08

After receiving clearance from the QAC by email, the university will be required to submit the final version of the amended proposal, in hard copy, to the Director QAC, so that it can be forwarded to the Academic Affairs division of the UGC, with a hard copy of the final QAC summary report granting clearance.

Annex 1: Evidence of UGC approval for existing degree programme

Annex 2: Evidence of mandate to offer proposed qualification (Senate and Council approval)

Annex 3: Content of each new course unit to be offered (if any)
Each new course unit should be described in the format given below

Semester:			
Course Code:			
Course Name:			
Credit Value:			
Compulsory /Optional:			
Hourly Breakdown	Theory	Practical	Independent Learning
Course Aim/Intended Learning Outcomes: (how to write ILOs: At the completion of this course student will be able to - in action verbs)			
> > > >			
Course Content: (Main topics, Sub topics)			
Teaching /Learning Activities:			
Assessment Strategy: Indicate how marks will be allocated for each assessment component			
Continuous Assessment:%		Final Assessment:%	
Details: quizzes %, mid-term %, other % (specify)		Theory (%)	Practical (%)
..... %%%		Other (%) (specify)
Recommended Reading:			
> > > >			

Annex 4 a: Programme Assessment Strategy / Rules

Provide details of the following

Formative and summative examinations in the program

Scheme of Grading (Grades/Grade Points/ Marks ranges)

Calculation of Grade Point Average (GPA)

Contribution by each semester to final GPA

Contribution by in-plant training etc. to final GPA

Repeat examinations

Requirements for award of the previously approved qualification

Requirements for award of the proposed qualification

Requirements for award of classes (if relevant)