UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION

COMMISSION CIRCULAR NO. 04/2021

No. 20, Ward Place,
Colombo 07.

April 07, 2021

Vice Chancellors of Universities
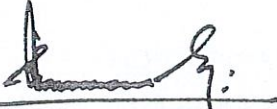Rectors of Campuses
Directors of Institutes

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

At its 1034th meeting held on 09.07.2020, the University Grants Commission, taking into consideration the recommendations made by the UGC Standing Committee on Quality Assurance, decided on the following, in relation to early exit or fall-back qualifications:

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 award of this lower qualification, and the Level Descriptors are clearly specified as per the SLQF guidelines and the award of such qualifications has received prior approval from the UGC. Early exit and fall-back qualifications differ in that while students may choose to leave with early exit qualifications before completion of the minimum period of study required for the full qualification. Fall-back qualifications are for students who have completed the minimum period of study required for the full qualification, but are unable to fulfill all the requirements for 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 several years of study 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 award of an early exit or fall-back qualification.

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 award of each qualification must be clearly specified.

3. Early exit pathways may be also created within the structure of an <u>existing postgraduate programme</u>, but again, the expected programme outcomes or

4. Graduate competencies, the course structure, and assessment strategy, including requirements for award of the qualification must be clearly specified.

5. Fall-back qualifications at SLQF Levels 3 or 4 may be made available to students registered for programmes of study leading to <u>Bachelor's degrees</u>, but who do not fulfill all the requirements for 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 award of each qualification, must be clearly specified.

6. Fall-back qualifications at SLQF Levels 3, 4 or 5 may be made available to students registered for programmes of study leading to <u>Bachelor's Honours degrees</u>, but who do not fulfill all the requirements for 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 award of each qualification, must be clearly specified.

7. Early exit pathways are not recommended for undergraduate degree programmes to which students are admitted through the UGC.

8. A fall-back qualification should be available to any undergraduate student only after completion of the minimum period of study of the programme for which that student has been registered.

9. A recommendation for award of a fall-back qualification to a student who applies for 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 award of such qualification.

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 award of the qualification, at the request of the student, and on the recommendation of the relevant Faculty Board.

11. Provisions for early exit and fall-back qualifications should be included in the University by-laws for the existing programme of study.

12. All early exit and fall-back qualifications should be approved by the Commission through the submission of an application to the QAC/relevant Standing Committees.

13. The application form to be used to obtain UGC approval for introduction of early exit or fall back qualifications, <u>for an existing degree programme previously approved by the UGC</u> is shown in Annex 1 of this circular.

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.

This Circular is effective from 12.03.2021. Please take necessary action accordingly.

Senior Professor Sampath Amaratunge
Chairman/ UGC

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

File No. UGC/QA/GEN

UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION
APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF AN EARLY EXIT OR FALL BACK QUALIFICATION
FOR AN EXISTING UNDERGRADUATE/POSTGRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMME
(Introduced in April 2021)

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 Minute Number:	Date: ....../....../.............	Evidence attached (please tick) ☐
	4.2	Council approval for proposed qualification	Meeting Minute Number:	Date: ....../....../.............	Evidence attached (please tick) ☐
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 ☐ Fall back qualification ☐ Both early exit and fall back ☐
5.3		Total credits required for award of the proposed qualification: ....

Undergraduate qualification:	Postgraduate qualification:
At SLQF Level 3: .... At SLQF Level 4: .... At SLQF Level 5:	At SLQF Level 7: .... At SLQF Level 8: .... At SLQF Level 9: ....

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

Semester	Course Code	Course Name	Credit Value	Status (Compulsory /Optional)	Existing / New
1					
2					
...					
...					
...					
...					

5.5 b Structure of proposed programme of study

Semester	Course Code	Course Name	Credit Value	Status (Compulsory /Optional)	Existing / New
1					
2					

5.6	**Programme Content** For each new course unit (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.