

Modular and Part-Time
Masters Programmes
In
The School of Computer Science
The University of Manchester

Supplement to the Handbook for MSc,
Postgraduate Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate

2020/21

Version of September 24, 2020

URL: <http://studentnet.cs.manchester.ac.uk/pgt/modular/>

This is the Supplement to the Handbook for the Taught Postgraduate Courses offered by the School of Computer Science in the University of Manchester for Modular and Part-Time Students. It contains important additional information relevant for the students taking one of our Masters Programmes on a modular or part-time basis. Please familiarise yourself with this document and the Handbook.

Although the information contained in this document is believed to be correct at the time of going to press, the School reserves the right to make appropriate changes without prior notice; however the School will endeavour to inform students of any substantial changes made affecting the programmes. This disclaimer does not affect any statutory rights which you may have under English law.

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Chapter 1

General Information

1.1 Who is Who?

The Modular/Part-Time Academic Advisor is Dr. Sandra Sampaio (Room 2.12 in Kilburn Building, Email: s.sampaio@manchester.ac.uk) who oversees the organisation of the Modular and Part-Time MSc Programmes in the Department.

She is assisted by the administrative staff in the Student Support Office and especially Chris Calland, who is Modular/Part-Time Administrator and helps looking after all modular and part-time students. Chris' contact details are:

Chris Calland
Student Support Office, Room LF21
Kilburn Building
Tel: +44 (0)161 275 6283
Email: christopher.calland@manchester.ac.uk.

Jake Latham and Teri Gosling in the External Affairs Office are the Admissions Officers.

1.2 Getting in Touch

Please get in touch anytime if you need clarification or if you have further questions about anything. We can always organise a telephone or Skype conversation if necessary.

1.3 Overview

The Study programme is designed to allow participation of industrial participants or those requiring a more flexible learning scheme. The aim is to allow students to approach their study in a way that suits them.

The course units are specially adapted to suit Modular/PT students and may be taken individually, or as part of a co-ordinated Modular/PT programme leading to an MSc, Diploma or Certificate by accumulation of the required credits over a longer period.

As a Modular or Part-time Students you are required to complete the same number of taught credits and credits for the MSc project as full-time students, but complete your degree over up to two years (if registered as a part-time student) or up to four years (if registered as a modular student). Compared to full-time students, there is a bit more flexibility in the selection of course units, as these do not need to fit the themes, unless you wish to complete an MSc degree with a specialisation (e.g., MSc in ACS with Specialisation in Artificial Intelligence, etc). In this case the requirements for the specialisation must be met.

Course units are delivered in an intensive teaching style to enable learning to take place by day-long release from work over a period of 5 consecutive weeks.

1.4 Registration

Technically you will be either registered as a Modular Student or a Part-time Student. The difference between the two is summarised in the following table.

Award	Mode of Study	Duration	Fee Model	PG Loan
MSc	Part-time	2 years	half of full fees per year	Eligible
MSc	Modular	2.5–4 years	per course element	Not eligible

The Modular MSc is not eligible for a PG Loan. This means if you have applied for a PG Loan or intend to apply for a PG Loan, you should register as a Part-Time student and must complete the degree within a maximum of two years.

The Modular MSc has the advantage that it provides flexibility to complete the degree over the maximum period possible (four years). **We therefore advise that you register as a Modular Degree Student, if you do not plan to apply for a PG Loan.**

For students in full-time employment the Modular MSc is the best option. Balancing the demands of your employer, your studies and your family and social life is difficult, and completing the study programme in two years is very intense if you are in employment.

Part-time students are charged half the full fees per year, while students on the modular programme are charged per course element (course unit, project).

Note that full-time students switching to part-time study will only be allowed to register as Part-Time students.

It is important to note that it is not possible to change your mode of study after you have first registered and paid the first fees. It is therefore crucial that you fully understand the differences and discuss the options with the Academic Advisor before you register and pay the fees in the first year of your study (typically in Welcome Week at the end of September).

Chapter 2

Programme Structure

The programme structure, the regulations and requirements are the same as for full-time students except that modular/part-time students have a more flexible study plans depending on their requirements.

2.1 Teaching Periods

The taught course units are typically delivered in one of four periods that span the academic year. In particular, the teaching periods are:

Period 1 commencing: Last week of October for 6 weeks

Period 2 commencing: Second week of December for 6 weeks with Christmas break in-between

Period 3 commencing: Second week of February for 6 weeks

Period 4 commencing: Late March for 6 weeks with Easter break in-between

The exact dates vary slightly from year to year; please refer to the Handbook and/or the Timetable on the School website for the exact dates.

There are no taught activities in the summer. This is when full-time students complete their project and resit exams take place. In this document we refer to this period as Period 5.

Period 5 commencing: After the exams/beginning of June – beginning of September

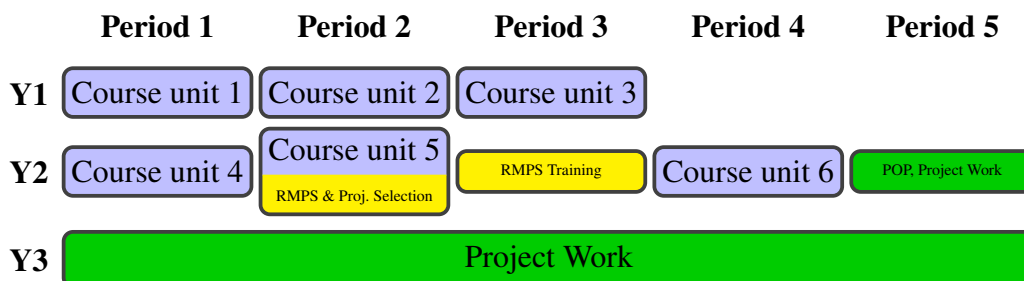
2.2 Modular Study Plans

This table gives a rough rule of thumb for completing the Modular MSc in three or four years. If you manage to complete four course units in year 1 and two course units in year 2, you may be able to complete the degree in 2.5 years. If you can, it is better to front-load your selection.

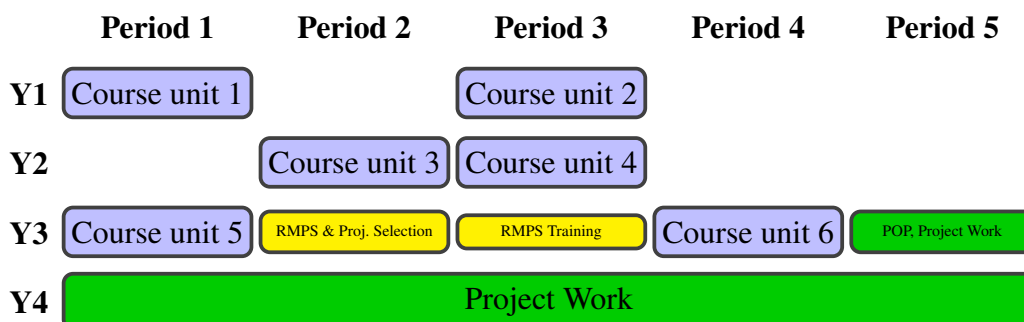
Duration	Study plan
3 years	3 course units in year 1 3 course units in year 2 project work in year 3; note: the Research Methods and Professional Skills Training will need to be completed in the previous year
4 years	2 course units in year 1 2 course units in year 2 2 course units in year 3 project work in year 4; note: the Research Methods and Professional Skills Training will need to be completed in the previous year

The following are sample study plans for the Modular MSc Programmes.

Modular Masters over 3 years



Modular MSc Programme over 4 years

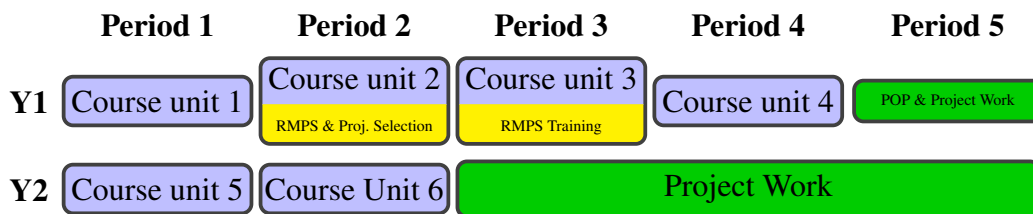


2.3 Part-Time Study Plans

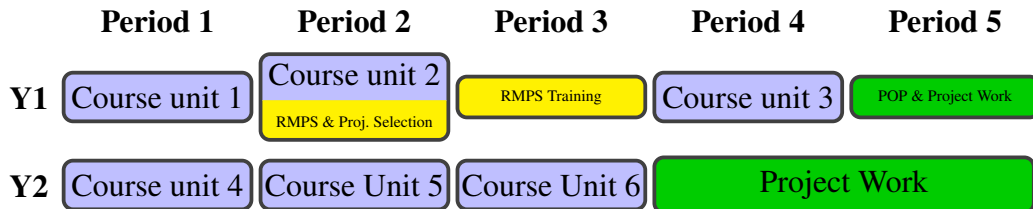
There is less flexibility for the Part-Time MSc, as the study programme has to be completed in two years. It is therefore advisable that you aim to complete three to four course units plus the RMPS Training in year 1, and the remaining course units and the Project Work (Project Overview & Plan Report, and Dissertation) in year 2. If you can, it is better to front-load your selection.

The following are sample study plans for the Part-Time MSc Programmes. Expect to work on the project also during the Christmas break in year 2 (which is not displayed).

Part-time Masters over 2 years



Part-time Masters over 2 years



2.4 Welcome Week

The first week of the academic year, before the start of teaching, consists of an introduction to the Department, to the computer facilities, a series of introductory talks by the Head of Department, the Head of Postgraduate Taught Programmes, meeting your Academic Advisor, and various other activities. There will be a series of introductory talks, one for each theme of MSc course units on offer. You are encouraged to attend these introductions to the course units in order to choose course units that you will take in the present academic year and also in order to learn about the topics of themes on offer.

During Welcome Week, every new modular/part-time student must:

1. Register with the University (online, please follow the instructions in the letter you have received from the University with information of how to sign up for the IT account and register with the University).
2. Meet your Academic Advisor.
3. Register with the Department of Computer Science (in person, see below).
4. Complete the Malpractice course (see below).
5. Make a study plan and discuss with the Academic Advisor.
6. Make the course unit selection for the current academic year **by contacting Chris Calland** (deadline: end of Welcome Week, i.e., 23 October 2020); you do **not** need to do this via Campus Solutions like full-time students. You also do **not** need to complete the paper form and print out your study plan.
7. Collect student registration card. Note: It is important to select the course units first by contacting Chris and only then collect the student registration card. A good time for collection the student registration card would be the first day of the first course you are taking, or the next opportunity after welcome week when you are attending the University.

During Welcome Week, every returning modular/part-time student must:

1. Make a study plan and make the course unit selection for the current academic year (deadline: end of Welcome Week, i.e., 23 October 2020).

As a returning student you are also encouraged to make arrangements during Welcome Week in order to

- discuss your study plan with the Academic Advisor, and if you wish, attend introductory talks to themes to help you make the course unit selection. It is not compulsory for you to come in to meet with the Academic Advisor during Welcome Week, but if you would like to do so this is possible. A telephone or skype meeting can also be organised.

You are of course most welcome to attend any of the other Welcome Week activities.

The meeting with the Academic Advisor is very important for both new and returning students, as it is an opportunity to:

- Discuss and understand the Programme structure, what is possible, what is not possible.
- Discuss and understand the difference between Modular and Part-Time Mode of study.
- Ensure that timetabling, the choices on offer, course unit requirements, project selection, etc are fully understood.
- Discuss any changes to the Programme Structure (especially for returning students); as you will be with us for several years and changes do happen.
- Discuss/review your study plans for the coming academic year and the remaining study programme.
- Understand the concept of talking deadlines through with the course unit lecturers and how these can be extended specifically to fit with your work schedules.
- The meeting also helps the Academic Advisor to get to know you better and understand your situation.

For the schedule of talks and events, in Welcome Week as well as PGT teaching timetable please refer to: <http://studentnet.cs.manchester.ac.uk/pgt/timetable/>. You should attempt to attend most of the activities, if this is possible.

- Registration with the Department and several welcome and introductory talks take place on Monday. Alternatively, on other days in Welcome Week, registration in the Department can be completed by going to the Student Support Office in Rm LF21 on the lower first floor.
- The times when you can make an appointment for a Zoom meeting with the Academic Advisor are as follows. To make the appointment, use the following link:
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/11diSZStkRVNg6kCR57K5Bhn2nqbkPC9LrYXPMA7Ls_g/edit?usp=sharing

Tuesday	12:00–12:20; 12:20–12:40; 12:40–13:00; 13:00–13:20; 13:20–13:40; 13:40–14:00
Wednesday	12:00–12:20; 12:20–12:40; 12:40–13:00; 13:00–13:20; 13:20–13:40; 13:40–14:00
Thursday	12:00–12:20; 12:20–12:40; 12:40–13:00

- The introductory talks about the themes take place on Tuesday.¹
- We advise that you attempt to attend the introductory lab session on Wednesday morning.¹
- The compulsory Malpractice and Plagiarism course can be taken on-line. The course is on Blackboard and can be accessed at any time from the start of the academic year.

You will find material and slides that were used in Welcome Week via the Current PGT webpage:

<http://studentnet.cs.manchester.ac.uk/pgt/>.

If you have missed part of the Welcome Week or want to remind yourself of some of it, please check the information provided there, in addition to the MSc Handbook.

2.5 Taught Course Units

For the taught course units university attendance is required for one day a week over 5 weeks. For the assessed coursework approximately 10 days will be needed throughout the 5 week period, though attendance is not required.

Course Units on offer can be found here:

<http://studentnet.cs.manchester.ac.uk/pgt/syllabus.php>

This includes links to course syllabi and support materials.

Course units are worth 15 credits each and you need to take 90 credits of taught units for an MSc (i.e., 6 course units).²

All course units provided by the School of Computer Science (and some provided by other Schools) are taught in the following format:

Each course unit is allocated a day a week in a particular period (see timetable). These 5 days are the taught days of the course unit and typically consist of a mix of activities including lectures, supervised practical work, seminars, and discussion sessions.

In addition, each course unit has coursework to be undertaken outside these taught days amounting to one-and-a-half days per week in the period of the course unit and 2.5 days of week 6 (i.e., 10 days work in all). This coursework is likely to be assessed work.

¹Please confirm dates, times and venue in <http://studentnet.cs.manchester.ac.uk/pgt/timetable/>.

²Foundation Route students complete 5 course units, i.e., 75 credits.

Deadlines for assessed work will be set in individual course units. For most course units there will be weekly assessed coursework to be completed by the next teaching day, or by the end of week 6. Most coursework in a period will be expected to be completed by the end of the relevant week 6. Extensions to the deadlines can be requested by modular/part-time students.

2.6 Research Project Procedures

The research project is an important part of the programme: in terms of assessment it is equal to the taught component and is worth 90 credits. The project work not only introduces students to scientific research, they are offered the opportunity to gain a deep understanding of a specialist area of study.

Projects are either:

- Designed by a member of the academic staff and published on the Project web-page, or
- Designed by the company employing or sponsoring the student, or
- Designed by the student in collaboration with an academic member of staff.

In all cases the project work will enable the student to develop Research & Development skills and gain practical experience of applying the techniques covered during the taught part of the programme to realistic situations. Projects relate to current R&D areas, and are undertaken in the School of Computer Science or in an industrial setting.

Students may propose their own projects as long as the project is suitable for the award of an MSc and that it can be accommodated by the School.

The 90 credits for the research project has two components of work.

1. The first part is the *Research Methods and Professional Skills (RMPS) training*, which is necessary to develop the skills needed for the project. This will require university attendance for half a day each week over 6 weeks in Period 3 (February to mid-March), before the Project Work can start.
2. The second part is the *Project Work* and is assessed through:
 - (a) a *Project Overview and Plan (POP)* (a short report reflecting topics covered in the Research Methods and Professional Skills training), worth 10% of the MSc project mark, and
 - (b) a *dissertation*, worth 90% of the MSc project mark.

Industrially based students have a choice of carrying out a work-based project or selecting one of the individual projects designed by members of staff. Students wishing to carry out work-based projects will work on the project with both an industrial and an academic supervisor.

In conjunction with their supervisor each student will develop their own study programme to fit the time commitment they are able to allocate.

- Please negotiate deadlines for the Project Overview and Plan document and the Dissertation with your supervisor. Discuss them if needed with the Academic Advisor.
- Once hand-in dates have been agreed then please notify the Modular/PT Administrator so that they know when you are expected to submit.

Modular/part-time students should allow a minimum of 1 year to complete the project. The following table summarises the assessment elements and the submission deadlines you should aim towards, but we understand modular/part-time students need more flexibility.

Report	Submission deadline aims
Project Overview and Plan	Middle to end of June, assuming end on March start.
Dissertation	Beginning of September to beginning of October for December graduation, within the maximum time-frame of the MSc Programme (2 years part-time programme, 4 years modular programme)

We recommend to submit the Project Overview and Plan and the Dissertation by the respective dates for full-time students, which are a bit earlier than the deadlines given in the table. This allows support staff and markers to carry out necessary tasks and processes in sync with the other normal submissions. This is however not a strict requirement.

2.6.1 The Research Methods and Professional Skills training

The Research Methods and Professional Skills training takes place mainly in Period 3 with some activities in Semester 1 which are focused on project selection. This includes an introductory lecture at the beginning of period 2 and a **Research Project Open House day in December** when students can meet potential project supervisors. The exact date can be confirmed with the course unit leader. If this date is not convenient for you, please feel free to approach staff directly to discuss potential projects and introduce yourself to them.

In Period 3 there are two 3 hour teaching activities each week with students attending one of the sessions. In each session, the private study work of the previous week will first be discussed, followed by the introduction of the topic for the current week—see timetable and the course unit webpage for a schedule and details.

Important note:

1. **You must register for COMP66090 (the Masters project) BEFORE starting the project.** This can be done when you make the course unit selection at the beginning of the academic year.
2. We recommend that all modular/part-time student contact the course unit leader (who is also the MSc Project Coordinator) to work through a plan of what is expected of you, specifically for the RMPS training.

Details and a timetable for the RMPS training can be found on the COMP66090 Masters Project syllabus page:

<http://studentnet.cs.manchester.ac.uk/syllabus/index.php?code=COMP66090>

Please also refer to the MSc Handbook and the Blackboard area of COMP66090.

2.6.2 Project Selection and Allocation Procedure

School Project taken from the Project Webpage. This process is the same for both full and part-time students. The Project selection website is available to students, typically from the first week of November, at which point there is an introductory lecture to the selection process. This is followed by a Research Project Open House in December to discuss projects offered with the named project academic, if after a discussion they would like to be considered for that project the student asks the academic to sign a form to prove that they have discussed the work.

Students can then rank their selected projects in order of preference and submit their list via the website. The deadline for handing in these forms is given in the Handbook.

An allocation process then takes place which takes into account the students' preferences as well as staff input. Obviously some projects are more popular than others and there may be several students competing for their first choice. The allocation of projects adheres to a best-fit process that tries to give as many students as possible their preferred project.

Projects designed by the company employing or sponsoring the student. This type of project must have an Academic Supervisor and also an Industrial Supervisor. The student should produce a one page (A4) outline of the project (project proposal) and send this to the Modular/Part-time Academic Advisor, and at the same time they should make an appointment to meet to discuss the proposal. After discussion the project proposal will be forwarded to the member of staff responsible for MSc project allocation. They in turn will select a member of the academic staff who has the relevant skills in that research area to act as Academic Supervisor.

Project designed by the student in collaboration with an academic staff member. The normal process would be that a short description of the project including three high quality references, together with an agreement to supervise from the collaborating academic member of staff should be passed to the academic member of staff responsible for MSc project allocation.

2.6.3 Submission of Project Overview & Plan, and the Dissertation

The Project Overview & Plan report and the Dissertation form part of the assessment of the MSc project COMP66090. These should be submitted as follows in accordance with the study plan agreed with your supervisor and approved by the Academic Advisor.

- Project Overview & Plan to the Modular/PT Administrator (email on p. 4)
- Dissertation to the Modular/PT Administrator (email on p. 4)

They will then ensure the work is passed on to the examiners for marking.

2.6.4 School and Student Commitments

Modular and part-time students are usually highly motivated and would not get to the project phase of study otherwise. During the project phase however it is very easy for them to switch off for long periods, especially when they are under heavy work pressures.

Student. The student needs to maintain contact with their Academic Supervisor throughout the project period, attend agreed meetings and use telephone, Skype and email contact to keep the supervisor up to date with their progress. The student has an equal responsibility with the School to maintain the communication whilst the project is in progress.

Modular/Part-Time Academic Advisor. The Academic Advisor will be available to offer initial counselling to the student whilst choosing the type of project, the subject area, and composition of their project proposal.

Academic Supervisor. The Academic Supervisor has to maintain regular contact with the student however when students are not based close to Manchester it would be inappropriate to set specific time periods. Therefore, the Academic Supervisor will usually reach an agreement with the student at the commencement of the project work to establish the minimum level of communication between them, e.g., once a month.

Industrial Supervisor. Companies or sponsors who have designed the project are expected to appoint an Industrial Supervisor. This is to ensure that the student is given sufficient time to work on the project and that the project is moving towards the expected outcomes. Industrial Supervisors are involved in the scientific development work but not the academic requirements of the project.

Chapter 3

Changes to Study Plans and Degree Programmes

Because modular/part-time students are normally balancing full time work, family life and study, changes in their work and family situation can have a far reaching effect on their study plans during every year of study. We therefore aim to be as flexible as we possibly can to ensure that these typically highly motivated individuals are supported to enable their ultimate success in obtaining a good result at the end of their study.

3.1 Deadline Extensions for Modular/Part-Time Students

Often modular/part-time students manage to work with the normal weekly deadlines, and this solution is easiest for everyone. Course unit leaders are however encouraged to make allowances with deadlines or project meetings out of hours, via Skype, and other aspects as they may arise for modular/part-time students.

As only students know their time constraints, and equally the course unit leader may also have constraints (such as being away from Manchester, leave of absence, illness), modular/part-time students should contact the course unit leader at the beginning of the course unit (and in advance of relevant deadlines), to discuss their constraints and come to a mutually acceptable way forward.

The extension to deadlines may be subject to the following constraints: Coursework may be essential preparation for a firmly scheduled activity (e.g., a specific lecture in the next week). The deadlines for modular/part-time students cannot be at a date that is after feedback on the relevant coursework has been given to the class. It is therefore important that students identify themselves as modular/part-time students to the relevant lecturers and if needed, agree a mutually convenient submission plan with them.

3.2 Mitigating Circumstances

If there are serious mitigating circumstances that prevents you from studying as normal, extensions to deadlines can be requested by completing a mitigating circumstances form. This mechanism can also be used to ask the School for mitigating circumstances affecting exam performance, for example. Please refer to the Handbook for full details and/or discuss the circumstances with the relevant Course lecturer, the Modular/Part-Time Administrator or the Academic Advisor. The form can be obtained from the Student Support Office or the Modular/Part-Time Administrator.

3.3 Problems with Work Load and Interruption of Studies

If at anytime during your studies you have problems with your workload, please do not hesitate to contact the Modular/Part-Time Administrator or Academic Advisor. If for any reason you need to take some time out from your studies due to some unforeseen difficulties or external pressures, we can arrange this. Taking an interruption of studies means that your clock on fees and deadlines is stopped and resumed once you are able to start studying again.

Requests for interruptions of studies can be made by completing an appropriate form available from the Modular/Part-Time Administrator. These should be made immediately as the University does not normally accept retrospective applications. The form can be obtained from the Student Support Office or the Modular/Part-Time Administrator.

3.4 Changing or Dropping Course Units

If you feel you want to change a course unit selection to another one in the same period this is possible up to *one week* into the delivery of a course unit. If you feel you want to drop a course unit selection and do one in another period this is possible up to *two weeks* into the delivery of a course unit. Please simply contact the Modular/Part-Time Administrator in each case. Any request for a course unit change after one week into a course, or dropping a course after two weeks into a course, should be discussed with the Academic Advisor.

3.5 Changing Degree Programme

Changes in MSc Degree Programme/Specialisation within the School are permitted at any time as long as the requirements of the programme/specialisation changed to

are met. Please contact the Modular/PT Administrator, if you consider changing programme or specialisation.

When students have accumulated enough credits to fulfil the requirements for the Postgraduate Certificate or Postgraduate Diploma they may exit with such an award. In this case again the Modular/PT Administrator needs to be consulted.

Award	Required course units
CPD Certificate ²	1 x 15 credit postgraduate course unit (15 credits)
Postgraduate Certificate	4 x 15 credit postgraduate course units (60 credits)
Postgraduate Diploma	6 x 15 credit postgraduate course units (90 credits) 1 x mini-project (30 credits) (Total 120 credits)
MSc	6 x 15 credit postgraduate course units (90 credits) 1 x Research Project (90 credits) (Total 180 credits)

Students can also upgrade the qualifications for which they are registered in consultation with the Modular/PT Administrator and Academic Advisor. In particular, upgrading from a Certificate or Diploma to a Modular Masters degree is permitted for Home/EU students as long as the final award is achieved within a four year period from first registering for the lower qualification. Note, the University rules do not normally allow resumption of studies, if more than 5 years have elapsed since the last completion of credits.

3.6 Changing Mode of Study

Changing from Modular MSc to Part-Time MSc, or vice versa, are possible until the first formal registration with the School and the first payment of fees. This means if you have applied for a Part-Time MSc, you can switch to a Modular MSc, before you formally register, but **after the first payment has been made changes are no longer possible.**

Note that full-time students switching to part-time study will only be allowed to register as Part-Time students.

3.7 Changing Organisation and Regulations

From time to time the organisation of some aspect of the study programme changes, or the course units on offer change.

Generally once a student has registered for the first year then the regulations that are in effect at the date are the regulations that they work to until completion. In rare

²CPD = Continuing Professional Development

cases the University insist on a change in which cases students will be advised in the start-of-year meetings on what needs to be done.

If you find that there have been changes that have an adverse affect on your study plan, do discuss these with the Academic Advisor.

Appendix A

Additional resources

MSc Webpages:	http://studentnet.cs.manchester.ac.uk/pgt/
MSc Modular/part-time webpages:	http://studentnet.cs.manchester.ac.uk/pgt/modular/
MSc Handbook:	http://studentnet.cs.manchester.ac.uk/pgt/study-curriculum.php
Timetable:	http://studentnet.cs.manchester.ac.uk/pgt/timetable/
Course unit list with syllabi & materials:	http://studentnet.cs.manchester.ac.uk/pgt/syllabus.php
MSc Project Syllabus:	http://studentnet.cs.manchester.ac.uk/syllabus/index.php?code=COMP66090

Bibliography