University of Strathclyde Glasgow

FORMAL ASSESSMENT PERIOD: GUIDANCE IN THE EVENT OF SIGNIFICANT, WIDESPREAD DISRUPTION

Version No.	Description	Author	Approval	Effective Date
1.0	University Guidance for the Formal Assessment Period in the Event of Industrial Action	SEES/Convener of Quality Assurance Committee	Industrial Action Planning Group	April 2018
1.1	Minor refresh of document	Education Enhancement	Industrial Action Planning Group	November 2019
1.2	Minor revisions to document	Education Enhancement	Industrial Action Planning Group	February 2020
2.1	Updated version to take into account disruption caused by Covid-19	Education Enhancement	Academic Business Continuity Planning Group	April 2020
3	Revisions to make the Guidance a standing document applicable to various types of disruption	Education Enhancement	Senate	April 2023
4	Revisions made taking into account the new Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure and the change in name from the Personal Circumstances Procedure to the Procedure for Consideration of Academic Mitigation by a BoE. References to Schools removed.	Education Enhancement	Quality Assurance Committee	August 2026

Version 4

the place of useful learning
The University of Strathclyde is a charitable body, registered in Scotland, number SC015263

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS **2**

INTRODUCTION 3

GUIDANCE FOR FACULTIES 3

SETTING OF EXAMINATION PAPERS 4

Table 1 5

SETTING ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENTS 7

Table 2 8

INTRODUCTION

1. This Guidance covers expectations relating to all duties within the Formal Assessment Period during periods of widespread, significant disruption, incorporating:

    a. Setting of examination papers: ensuring consistent practice for assessing impact and mitigating actions for forthcoming examinations;
    b. Replace some forms of assessment that cannot take place to enable Intended Learning Outcomes to be assessed;
    c. Managing appropriate alternative assessment activities in cases where disruption impacts on the ability to deliver scheduled teaching sessions and/or complete placement activities.

2. It should be read alongside the Procedure for Markers & Boards of Examiners During Periods of Widespread, Significant Disruption. Paragraph 2 of that Procedure provides examples of widespread, significant disruption.

GUIDANCE FOR FACULTIES

3. In the event that widespread, significant disruption occurs during or leading up to the University's Formal Assessment Period, faculties are asked to note the following guidance to support the successful completion of duties in support of examinations and other forms of assessment.

4. It is expected that staff will take a pragmatic, supportive and sympathetic approach to managing student concerns around the assessment schedule, particularly in the event of extraordinary circumstances.

5. The University's position is that every effort will be made to ensure all teaching, assessment and examination activities proceed as normal, with students being able to progress to the next stage of their programme, or, being awarded their degree, as appropriate. In the event of severe widespread, significant disruption, it may be necessary to take extraordinary steps to ensure students' progression and make awards.

6. Under the Ordinances of the University of Strathclyde, Ordinance 3.4 sets out the provisions for the operation of examiners and examinations within the University. Senate delegates authority for examinations and external examiners to Boards of Examiners, under the authority of the relevant Faculty Board of Study, within the parameters for examinations and assessment set out within the University's General Academic Regulations for each level of study.

7. In the event of disruption, it is expected that these duties will be conducted to ensure consistency of practice and experience for our students, to minimise concern and to support appropriate mitigating actions under the auspices of the academic governance processes of the University.

8. As outlined in the Procedure for Markers and Boards of Examiners During Periods of Widespread, Significant Disruption, Examination Boards, at the direction of Senate, have the discretion to exercise academic judgement and to award a result that they deem best

reflects the student's academic performance, based upon the evidence and performance profile available to them. Boards of Examiners will be instructed by Senate to consider the impact of disruption on students and to take this into consideration when making decisions.

9. In addition to the aforementioned guidance for Boards of Examiners, the Procedure for the Consideration of Academic Mitigation by a Board of Examiners can also be highlighted to students across all Faculties along with clarification that it is their responsibility to record on Pegasus any personal circumstances as soon as they are aware of these circumstances, in line with paragraph 18 of the Procedure for the Consideration of Academic Mitigation by a Board of Examiners, in order for them to be considered. It is important to note however, that the Procedure may not be possible to enforce during extraordinary periods of disruption. To properly inform Boards of Examiners decisions, in the absence of submitted personal circumstances, a detailed note of available information on the effects of disruption on teaching schedules and the marking of examinations or assessment should be made available.

SETTING OF EXAMINATION PAPERS

10. Staff acting in the capacity of the Programme Leader should, with agreement within the Department, consider the level of mitigation to be applied to the setting of examination papers for topics impacted by disruption.

11. A sliding scale of proposed mitigation is provided to support consistency in practice across the University. This includes the definition of the appropriate threshold(s) for removing questions from examinations, depending upon the level of impact that disruption has on individual modules and topics. Table 1 provides an overview of proposed mitigations.

Table 1

Circumstance	Proposed Mitigation	Action
Session cancelled; nothing delivered to students or insufficient materials and/or limited support provided.	Associated topic(s) cannot be examined or assessed	Topics missed will not be examined during the Formal Assessment Period. Consideration should be given to whether the Intended Learning Outcomes for the module have already been met through previous assessments, in which case it may be appropriate to remove this examination from the assessment schedule. Where topics have been missed, materials and support could be made available at a later date and consolidated during the next Development Week activities to ensure that pre-requisites for continuing sessions are covered.
Session cancelled with appropriate materials and adequate support provided.	Associated topic(s) can be examined or assessed and results would be looked at sensitively by Boards of Examiners.	Module Leaders, in conjunction with Programme Leaders and Directors of Teaching, are empowered to adjust examination papers independently (i.e. without prior consultation with External Examiners) at the direction of Senate. This process will ensure that any amendments have been reviewed to ascertain whether thresholds have been met before examination papers and assessment submissions are adjusted.
Teaching sessions take place, however a significant number of students are unable to attend.	Consideration given to how this will impact examination papers.	Content could be captured through video-based events and made available to students. Online resource support and directed reading can also be made available to students. Examination questions could be added to papers to give students more choice and ensure they do not have to answer questions on missed materials Additional lectures/tutorials could be scheduled for when students return

The formal, on campus, examination diet cannot take place due to disruption, for all or some students	Consideration given to alternative methods of delivery of examinations, or alternative assessments The University may take a decision to entirely cancel examinations for some students, i.e. first and second year undergraduate students where programmes do not include examinations required for professional accreditation	Examinations to move from closed book to open book and take place online (important to be assured that all students have access to hardware and broadband). Alternative coursework assignments could be set to replace examinations. Consider whether other assessments already undertaken earlier in the module, or coursework that is due in on topics already covered, can be re-weighted to cover the module's learning outcomes.

12. In cases where it is decided by the Senate that progression to the next year of studies can take place without final examination, excluding those programmes that require examinations for professional accreditation, communications to the students on this matter will take place at a University-level.

13. Programme Leaders are responsible for overseeing the process and communicating the decision on the removal of content from an examination in mitigation to students. Communications should be copied to Head of Department, Vice-Dean (Academic) and the relevant Executive Dean(s) to ensure appropriate Faculty oversight.

14. In cases where an academic member of staff has been absent from scheduled teaching sessions (lectures, seminars, tutorials etc) due to disruption, or where significant numbers of students have been unable to attend, Departments/Faculty Offices should give careful thought to the impact on students in relation to coursework and/or examinations, (including vivas), both formal and informal. For example, if an examination question has been set that reflects content within a missed lecture, it may be necessary to instruct students not to attempt this examination question or replace with an alternative question.

15. Where hall-based examinations are possible, students should be informed, in writing, and ahead of the examination, of any questions they should not attempt. The examination invigilator should also provide this information to students prior to the examination starting on the day. In cases where it is not possible to identify questions that should not be attempted in time to inform students, Boards of Examiners should receive details of the impact of disruption on examinations and ensure this is considered when reaching their decisions.

16. In relation to missed in-session tests or other types of informal examinations, it may be appropriate to consider whether other assessments within the module could be more heavily weighted to compensate for missed informal examinations. When considering any examination adjustments, it is important to reflect on the module's Intended Learning Outcomes, to ensure that these will be still be met. Proposals for re-weighting assessment components should be submitted to Faculty Academic Committee, following Department scrutiny, for approval.

17. Students should be advised that Boards of Examiners will be made aware of all scheduled sessions impacted by disruption and the mitigation actions taken.

18. Student Lifecycle Services should be informed of changes to examination scripts by Departments within the published deadlines.

SETTING ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENTS

19. When considering alternative assessment arrangements in times of disruption and as directed by Senate, the broad principles established below should be followed.

20. In amending assessment activities, staff should do all that is possible to maintain academic standards and ensure alignment with the learning outcomes that have been delivered in a module. Staff should be aware that alternative online assessments may not be accessible to every student and altered assessments for individuals may exceptionally be required.

21. Programme teams should discuss locally and agree all assessment amendments at modular level.

22. All assessment alterations should be recorded in detail, by the Department, to ensure Programme and Faculty oversight. These records will support decision making by Boards of Examiners and Appeals Committees.

23. Decisions regarding alternative assessments will be shared with VDAs for oversight but not for approval as this can be taken at a local level. In the case of uncertainty, advice can be sought from the VDAs.

24. In making amendments to assessment(s) staff should try to stay as close as possible to the original assessment brief so as to manage student expectations and staff and student workloads.

25. Where possible, the original submission dates for coursework and published examination dates should be maintained.

26. Alterations to assessment activities should not increase the marking load for staff nor increase student effort (for example, word limits should not be increased).

27. There is no expectation that staff provide individual feedback on assessment activities that were originally designed as closed-book exams, where students would normally receive whole cohort general feedback.

28. In communications to students about assessments, staff should remind students of expectations regarding academic honesty and integrity.

29. Staff will be sympathetic to student requests for extensions for the submission of coursework and projects. Extensions will not be given for online examinations, however students may submit personal circumstances for missed examinations.

30. Table 2 provides an overview of potential assessment alternatives.

Table 2

Existing Assessment	Reasonable Alternative
Examination	Online Examination
	Open book exam from home
Oral exam	Skype, Zoom or equivalent platform
Languages reading, speaking, listening exams	Skype, Zoom or equivalent platform
Viva	Skype, Zoom or equivalent platform[1]
Presentation - group or individual	Submit materials for assessment
	Skype, Zoom or equivalent platform discussion
	Recorded voice over for a PowerPoint
	Upload their presentations with a transcript
	Recorded video presentations
Dissertation	Submit online
	Post hard copy
Online test, multiple choice, quiz	Open book online test
Tests with symbolic notation	Photo/scan and submitted online
Assignment, Case Study, Report, Review, critical review	Submitted online
Credit-bearing Placement	Suspended, in consultation with professional bodies
Group Work, Project	Submit materials for assessment
	Interactive online unless it involves a physical object for classroom use for example
Portfolio (weekly diary, reflective log, screenplay)	Online
Logic Test	Online
Resources preparation	Online where possible. Where using specialist software not available through Pegasus, mode of assessment may be suspended.
Tradeshow/showcase/demo	Online, where students are able to demonstrate portable systems (partially) developed throughout the academic year, prior to disruption.

[1] See the University's Guidance on the Operation of Hybrid or Virtual Oral Examinations