

PROCEDURES FOR PREPARING AND CONDUCTING EXAMINATIONS

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Version 1.0

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1. INTRODUCTION

This document provides guidance for staff on developing a consistent approach on the preparation and delivery of exams. These form part of the University regulations. This document should be read in conjunction with other relevant documents. The [University website](#) contains policies and procedures on a range of assessment related matters, including: the Assessment and Feedback Policy, Procedures for Returning Marks and Disseminating Results, Timetabling Policy, Exam Timetabling Procedure and Guidance, Policy on Invigilation of Examinations, Student Exam Guidance, and Guidance on Exam Arrangements is available from the Disability and Wellbeing Service.

2. EXAMINATION ARRANGEMENTS

2.1 Undergraduate Examinations

- 2.1.1 There are two main formal assessment periods where examinations are centrally scheduled, at the end of Semester 1 and end of Semester 2, with a resit period prior to the commencement of the new academic year. The timetable and arrangements for undergraduate examinations are organised by the Exams Admin team (Students Awards and Graduations) after the Departmental/School Exam Coordinators (DECs) have checked, updated and returned the examination requirements information to the Exams Admin Team.
- 2.1.2 The Exams Admin team will timetable all examinations that have been confirmed by the DECs by the specified deadline. Exams Admin team have a pool of central rooms available for standard written examinations. Activities requiring specialist accommodation can be timetabled to avoid clashes, however the Department/School is responsible for identifying and booking their location (see [2.2 Department Examinations](#)). Examination arrangements for students with disabilities are made by Department Disability Coordinators (DDCs) after publication of the main timetable (see [2.5 Examination requirements for students with disabilities](#)).
- 2.1.3 The Exams Admin team generate the timetable according to a set of guidelines detailed in the Examination Timetabling Guidelines (section 11) designed to create the most effective timetable possible, including:
 - a. Where possible avoiding the scheduling of two exams within a 23 hour period.
Note: the wide range of undergraduate curriculum choices, the length of assessment period or availability of suitable rooms may preclude this and students at all levels should expect that they may have consecutive slot or consecutive day examinations; and
 - b. Where possible, in the Semester 2 diet schedule, Honours examinations are scheduled in the earlier part of the assessment period to facilitate marking ahead of Boards of Examiner meetings and expedite the process of return of marks to enable students to make appropriate graduation arrangements before the published deadline date.
- 2.1.4 All written examinations shall normally take place at the University of Strathclyde, or, in the case of a class taught elsewhere, at the appropriate learning centre. Only for examinations conducted online or in exceptional circumstances may an examination

- be held elsewhere (see [2.5 Examinations outwith the University](#) and [2.6 for examinations conducted online](#)).
- 2.1.5 Where possible, the Exams Admin team aims to publish a draft timetable approximately six weeks before the formal assessment periods in Semesters 1 and 2 (currently December and April/May respectively), approximately four weeks before the resit assessment period (currently in August)¹.
- 2.1.6 Written examinations for undergraduate classes take place at the time and place published by the Exams Admin team, except where special provision is made for those registered with the University as having individual academic or physical needs in relation to examination provision, or in exceptional cases otherwise. The times and places for all other examinations shall be published by the appropriate Departmental Disability Coordinator (DDC) or nominee to the students concerned.
- 2.1.7 The stages of the timetabling process are detailed in the Examination Timetabling Procedure and Guidance. The key stages are development of: the Draft timetable, Approved timetable, then Final timetable. The 'Draft' timetable is generated by Exams Admin and is circulated to Departments/Schools for review. Departments/Schools should review the Draft timetable to check its suitability, including checking for exam bunching, and request any changes to Exams Admin. Changes are made, if required, following the draft review and an 'Approved' exam timetable is released to students for comment via their Departments/Schools (student see this version as 'draft'). Following the deadline for comments and any changes have been applied to the Approved version, a 'Final' timetable is published for students and Departments/Schools. Changes after the final timetable has been published are only permitted in exceptional circumstances.
- 2.1.8 Whilst every effort will be made to avoid scheduling consecutive slot or consecutive day examinations, in some cases it will be unavoidable. This is due to the wide range of curriculum choice in the undergraduate programme, often compounded by other constraints such as availability of suitable accommodation and the availability of clash free slots.
- 2.1.9 In instances where consecutive slot examinations are unavoidable, the University will make reasonable adjustments to accommodate students with disabilities who may find the schedule disadvantageous for disability-related reasons.
- 2.1.10 In the event that an examination has to be cancelled or changed at short notice due to an emergency situation e.g. severe adverse weather, structural issues with the venue, students will be contacted in accordance with the Emergency Response and Business Continuity Management Policy² and the University's Severe Weather Guidance Note³. It will be the decision of the affected Departments/Schools whether to re-schedule or to use an alternative form of assessment.
- 2.1.11 In the event that a student contacts the University to advise that they have contracted a contagious disease (for example, chickenpox, measles, shingles etc.), the student should be advised NOT to attend their examination, even in a sole occupancy room, as doing so would put other students and staff at risk. In such cases, students should be

¹ See Exam Timetabling Procedure section 14 for detailed breakdown of publication stages and timelines.

²https://www.strath.ac.uk/media/ps/safetyservices/campusonly/guidancenotes/BCM_001_ERandBCM_Policy_Rev_2_May2016_docx.pdf

³ http://www.strath.ac.uk/media/ps/humanresources/policies/Severe_Weather_Guidance_Note_for_Staff.pdf

advised to seek a medical certificate as soon as possible and submit using the [Personal Circumstances and Academic Appeals Procedure](#).⁴

2.2 Postgraduate Examinations

- 2.2.1 The timetable and arrangements for postgraduate degree examinations are organised by the Programme Directors and Departments/Schools concerned.
- 2.2.2 Where the timing falls within one of the formal assessment periods, postgraduate examinations should be included in the central exam timetable for the purpose of checking for clashes with other exams, as some postgraduate students may also be taking undergraduate classes, and for fair allocation of exam accommodation.

2.3 Department/School Based Examinations

- 2.3.1 Departments/Schools may wish to hold examinations in a room other than a central pool room as the activity, for example, may require specialist equipment, be presentation based, require a particular room configuration or may be computer-based. These activities should be included in the timetabling process for checking clashes with other scheduled exams, for avoiding exam bunching, and for visibility in the timetable for students. The responsibility for arranging the location of these examinations and activities remains with the Department/School.
- 2.3.2 To arrange this the DEC's should update the examination requirement information to indicate that a central pool room is not required. This enables the Exams Admin team to schedule a date and time only and ensure that it does not clash for any students.
- 2.3.3 The DEC's will receive the date and time when the draft timetable is released. The DEC is responsible for booking a suitable room and communicating this to students. The DEC shall advise Exams Admin of the room booked to enable the timetable to be updated to display the room details for students.
- 2.3.4 Departments/Schools are responsible for production, printing and delivery of their own examination papers for examinations/activities held in Departmental/School locations, including for students with disabilities where customised examination paper questions and answer scripts may be required. Standard examination answer scripts may be obtained by contacting Exam Admin.

2.4 Examination arrangements for students with disabilities

- 2.4.1 The University's [Disability Policy](#) outlines the requirements on staff to consider the needs of students with a disability in all assessments and examinations at the course design stage, and to make any necessary and reasonable adjustments to ensure the accessibility of assessments for all students.

⁴ This is consistent with the University Regulations 2016-2017 6.4.12 Students who contract an infectious or contagious disease, or who live in a house in which such disease occurs must absent themselves from the University and notify the University immediately. They must not resume attendance until they have presented a medical certificate that it is safe for them to do so.

- 2.4.2 The DEC and course teams are responsible for making the necessary arrangements for students with disabilities to undertake formal examinations, class tests, project work or continuous assessment except where a Department/School has a designated person to co-ordinate examination arrangements for students with recommended adjustments. In which case, that individual is responsible.
- 2.4.3 Assessment of the needs of students with disabilities is carried out by the Disability Service, where evidence of a student's needs is held and discussed prior to recommendations being made to Departments/Schools about any necessary adjustments to assessments and examinations. Departments/Schools are advised to discuss these adjustments with the Disability Service and the student concerned if they feel that they can be improved on. Once agreed, these adjustments must be implemented. This ensures equity in treatment among students across the institution.
- 2.4.4 Staff in the Disability Service are available to discuss individual student's examination and assessment needs with colleagues in Departments/Schools who have responsibility for setting and administering assessments and examinations. It is expected that Departments/Schools should have the capacity to produce non-standard examination booklets. The Disability Service only supports the provision of specialist examination software when the student's technological requirements are complex and need substantial individual configuration, or, the software licensing is restricted.
- 2.4.5 Where a student has requirements that mean they do not sit an examination with the main cohort, their examination should overlap and where possible encompass the entire duration of the main cohort examination, although it may vary in start and end time or duration according to the reasonable adjustments agreed for a student. Every care must be taken to ensure that students from either exam cannot communicate for the duration of both examinations.
- 2.4.6 DECs should make any necessary arrangements as early as possible. Where a student becomes disabled (for example as the result of an accident) or only approaches the Department/School or the Disability Service to request support late on in the academic year, Departments/Schools retain an obligation to make any recommended reasonable adjustments. What may be reasonable may be linked to the available time prior to the examination taking place, but ensuring the student is not disadvantaged remains essential.

2.5 Examinations outwith the University

- 2.5.1 Students are required to attend examinations, including resits, in person on the University campus. However, in exceptional cases, a student who is based on the Strathclyde campus may be allowed to take an examination off campus with the approval of the Head of Department/School or their appointed nominee.
- 2.5.2 Following a request by a student to take an examination outwith the University, the Course Director/DEC should consider the case put forward by the student to warrant permission. Examples of exceptional circumstances that may be considered include if they have left the UK to return to their home country and would incur major costs in travelling to the UK for a re-sit, or who may have problems obtaining a visa in time for the re-sit exam. Other circumstances, such as personal illness, illness in the immediate family or the death of a close family member may also be taken into account. See Personal Circumstances and Academic Appeals Procedure.

- 2.5.3 If the Department/School permits the student to take an examination outwith the University, a number of requirements must be fulfilled to ensure compliance with the University's quality assurance procedures and equity in treatment for all students:
- a. An appropriate venue for the exam needs to be identified, typically at either a recognised university or British Council Office;
 - b. Appropriate invigilation must be organised as for similar examinations held in the UK. Invigilation must be independent, i.e. friends or family cannot carry out invigilation;
 - c. Where a single examination paper is used, the examination must take place at exactly the same time as the UK equivalent even where this means that the student must sit the examination late at night or early in the morning;
 - d. Arrangements must be in place for the safe and confidential transportation and storage of the examination paper and script;
 - e. The candidate must bear **all** necessary costs associated with taking the examination outwith the University of Strathclyde (including but not limited to the secure transportation of the script, examination accommodation costs and costs associated with invigilation); and
 - f. The formal approval of the Head of Department/ School or their appointed nominee must be obtained.
- 2.5.4 Once the request has been assessed and the necessary arrangements have been made, notification shall be sent to the Exams Admin Team exams-admin@strath.ac.uk.

2.6 Examinations for online courses

- 2.6.1 The responsibility for organisation and administration of examinations for online courses remains with the Department/School responsible for delivery and administration of the online course.
- 2.6.2 Where a specific slot is required and the timing of these falls within a main assessment period they should be included as a Departmental/School exam for the purpose of central timetabling and clash checking.
- 2.6.3 Where the examination is taken online (usually MyPlace) and on the University campus, enhanced support arrangements are available to help the examination run smoothly. DEC's should alert the MyPlace team once the date, time and location of the examination is known. Staff should refer to the Guidance on the Use of Computers in Examinations.

3. SETTING OF EXAMINATION PAPERS

3.1 Formal examinations

- 3.1.1 Module Coordinators/Teams are responsible for preparing any formal examination paper(s) for their classes.
- 3.1.2 The front page shall include clear statements about:
- a. Any information/materials (if any) that may be taken into the room (authorised material); and

- b. The use of calculators (if permitted) during the examination (authorised use). The information in section 3.1.a shall also be made known to the students by departments **prior** to the examination.
- 3.1.3 For examinations in a central pool room, the finalised examination papers shall be submitted to Exams Admin team via the specified process prior to the published deadlines. The Exams Admin team will then arrange for the appropriate number of copies to be printed.
- 3.1.4 At all stages of this process the contents of the examination paper are strictly confidential to the Internal and External Examiner(s). Only named individuals have access to upload papers for printing for their own Departments/Schools and are not permitted to view papers for any other Departments/Schools.
- 3.1.5 DEC's are finally responsible for the paper that is submitted for printing. DEC's should proof-read papers thoroughly before submission, including checking content i.e. correct representation of symbols in documents, date and time of the exam, and number of papers to be printed. Papers will **not** be checked again after submission for printing.
- 3.1.6 The Exams Admin team shall manage the process of examination paper submission for printing for central locations and ensure any special printing requirements included with the submission are conveyed to the Print Unit.
- 3.1.7 Departments/Schools are responsible for the production and delivery of examination question papers for examinations not held in central pool rooms (see section [2.2.iv](#)).

3.2 Assessment outwith the main assessment periods

- 3.2.1 Module Coordinators/Team are also responsible for the organisation and arrangements to be made for any assessment outwith the formal assessment periods, including the preparation and printing of any paper(s) for class tests. These must be kept confidential throughout their preparation and submission.
- 3.2.2 Module Coordinators should note any recommendations on Pegasus with respect to the needs of students with disabilities in setting assessments, class tests or project work, but should be aware that recommendations may not always appear on Pegasus in advance of the first piece of assessed work. In this case, organisers should coordinate with Disability Services regarding students' needs.
- 3.2.3 Departmental/School staff are responsible for informing students of the outcome of any assessment that are not examinations taking place during the formal assessment periods. However, Departments/Schools should note that all final summative marks should be forwarded to Student Business for release to students.

3.3 INVIGILATION

For guidance relating to invigilation for examinations, refer to the [Policy on Invigilation](#).

4. DISRUPTIONS TO ASSESSMENTS

- 4.1 Students will not be disadvantaged in the event of a significant disruption to an assessment that is outside the control of students or staff.

- 4.2 Where an invigilator considers an assessment to have been significantly disrupted, staff may provide students with the opportunity to take a replacement assessment. Refer to the Policy on Invigilation for guidance relating to disruption of examinations. These guidelines apply to all examination activities.
- 4.3 Section 5 of the Policy on Invigilation provides procedural guidance in the event of disturbance, cancellation or change at short notice due to an emergency situation e.g. severe adverse weather, structural issues with the venue, power outage.

5. MARKING AND RETENTION OF EXAM SCRIPTS

5.1 Anonymous marking scheme

- 5.1.1 The marking of examination scripts must be conducted anonymously, in line with the Assessment and Feedback Policy.
- 5.1.2 Only once marking of an examination is complete can the identities of students be revealed on the examination scripts.
- 5.1.3 Following completion of marking, the Module/Class Coordinator is responsible for calculating the composite mark obtained by each student for the class, and for returning the marks to the DEC for transmission to Student Business by electronic transfer, as outlined in the Procedures for the Recording of Marks and Dissemination of Results.

5.2 Examiners

- 5.2.1 The member(s) of staff involved with each class are responsible for the marking of the examination scripts i.e. they are the Internal Examiners.
- 5.2.2 A sample of students' work will be provided to the External Examiners. Refer to [University external examiner webpages](#) for further guidance.

5.3 Return of marks to Student Business

A deadline for the return of marks is set for each assessment period and is printed in the Calendar of Dates. Marks must be returned to Student Business by electronic transfer by the published deadline.

5.4 Processing of marks

The procedure for the preparation of Assessment Schedules is detailed in the Procedures for Returning Marks and Disseminating Results.

5.5 Retention of examination scripts

Senate requires exam scripts on which decisions have been taken by the appropriate Board of Examiners to be retained until after the end of the first semester of the following academic year.

5.6 Student access to examination scripts

In line with the Assessment and Feedback Policy, students may make a request to view their examination scripts. Staff should facilitate access under supervision.

6. UNIVERSITY MONITORING OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE IN EXAMINATIONS

6.1 Quality Assurance Committee (QAC)

The terms of reference for QAC are set out in [Regulations of the University of Strathclyde](#) section 1.3.12. In particular, QAC is responsible for monitoring and reporting on student progression.

6.2 Boards of examiners

6.2.1 The constitution and procedure of Boards of Examiners for First Degrees is as set out in the [Regulations of the University of Strathclyde](#) Section 1.10 and Section 3.4 of the University Ordinances.

6.2.2 For further detail regarding the Boards of Examiners including membership and main decision types please refer to the Procedure for Returning Marks and Disseminating Results.

7. THE ROLE OF DEPARTMENT EXAM CO-ORDINATORS (DEC)

Each Department/School or Course Director appoints an Exams Coordinator who is named in the relevant Course Handbooks and whose responsibilities will normally include but may not be limited to:

- a. Co-ordinating undergraduate and PGT exams (where relevant) for a Department /School or Course in liaison with Exams Admin Team;
- b. Providing complete and accurate exam requirement information to the Exams Admin team by the required deadline(s);
- c. Reviewing the Draft Exam Timetable and alerting the Exams Admin Team to any potential issues for their Department(s)/School, including requesting changes to the timetable to avoid the bunching of examinations;
- d. Co-ordinating the preparation of exam papers within the Department/School or Course.
- e. Ensure that exam papers are proof read and submitted to the Exams Admin team via the agreed process, prior to the specified deadline;
- f. Liaising with Programme Leaders/Team within the Department/School or Course about any arrangements to be made for students with disabilities;
- g. Allocating appropriate invigilators for each exam; and
- h. Ensure that individual invigilators are fully aware of their responsibilities, including the content of the Policy on Invigilation of Examinations.