

Mitigating the Academic Impact of the Middle East Conflict (Dubai Campus) and Industrial Action (Scottish Campuses)

Guidance Note for Boards of Examiners, April 2026 (updated, May 2026)

This guidance note is designed to **provide information for academic and professional services staff involved in Boards of Examiners** regarding mitigation of the academic impact of the Middle East conflict at the Dubai Campus and of industrial action at the Scottish Campuses.

In response to the conflict in the Middle East and to industrial action on the Scottish Campuses, on 4 March 2026, the Senate Committee for Interim Business and Effectiveness (SCIBE), approved the enactment of Regulation A10: Authorities in Exceptional Circumstances (see Appendix 1). In conjunction with existing [policies/procedures](#) on academic decision-making, A10 enables the University and Boards of Examiners to take steps to ensure that whole cohorts of students are not academically disadvantaged by circumstances beyond their control in course assessment results, progression or final award.

Within the governance framework of Regulation A10, an Academic Continuity Group (ACG) has been established to ensure a consultative, prompt, equitable and effective approach to academic decision-making and action in relation to the academic impact of both the Middle East Conflict/Dubai Campus and Industrial Action at the Scottish Campuses.

A statement is provided in Appendix 2 for Chairs of Boards to communicate at the start of each meeting.

Dubai Campus - Teaching and Assessment-Related Decisions: Providing Context for Boards of Examiners

Actions and decisions related to Dubai have focused on [3 key areas](#): Teaching; Learning and Support; Assessment. Student and staff wellbeing as well as quality and academic standards have been paramount in decision-making. Guidance has been provided for [External Examiners](#) and Schools are engaging with [PSRBs](#) to gain their support for approaches taken. An expedited [approvals process](#) has ensured that all changes are progressed with appropriate oversight. Schools have completed a [checklist](#) to confirm the robustness of their approaches and completion of actions.

Teaching

1. Due to the Ministry's directive, teaching took place wholly online in w/c 2 March and no teaching took place in weeks of 9 and 16 March. Teaching resumed wholly online for the remaining two weeks of semester on Monday 23 March and continued to Saturday 4 April.
2. School leadership teams have discussed and agreed how best to use the remaining two weeks, using Programme and Course Learning Outcomes to prioritise content and activities to be covered.
3. Teaching sessions were not condensed nor extended to cover the 2 "missing" weeks; rather teaching was curtailed, a decision influenced by concerns about student and staff experiences.
4. For Schools with May Semester teaching, School leadership teams are developing plans for online and for hybrid delivery in case the Dubai Campus reopens, with arrangements made for students able to return to campus, while providing support for students not returning to campus to continue their learning online (As at 31 March, the Ministry has mandated online teaching until 17 April 2026).

Assessment Arrangements

5. Since many students have been repatriated or have returned home, in the interests of equity of experience and opportunity, there will be no in-person exams at the Dubai Campus in April/May. Dubai assessment has been decoupled from UK and Malaysia assessment and specifically (re)designed.

6. In recognition of the staff time required to redesign teaching and assessment, for Year 1 and Year 2 students, all assessments in progress and all forthcoming assessments were cancelled (coursework and exams) and all students will be given a “P” pass grade for January Semester’s Level 7/8 courses (the P Grade will also be used where Level 8 courses are being taken by Y3 students) [already added to students’ records, pre-Boards]. However, Global College students will continue to use the HAPS grading system to inform articulation into degree programmes.
- Year 1 and 2 students will be given a “pass-proceed” decision to proceed to the next stage unless they have reassessments from September semester.
 - If professional bodies are not satisfied that course learning outcomes have been met and require Y1 and Y2 students to undertake an in-person exam for accreditation or exemption purposes, this will be arranged at a later date.
7. For UG Years 3-5 and Postgraduate taught provision, School leadership teams reviewed and specified alternative assessment arrangements per course:
- Decision-making on assessment was shaped by
 - a. Programme and Course Learning Outcomes;
 - b. Maintaining quality and academic standards;
 - c. Ensuring no academic disadvantage;
 - d. Recognising that students will be undertaking assessments in different environments;
 - e. Ensuring the needs of students of determination are considered.
 - Options include: time-limited Final Online Assessment as replacement for exam; continuing with coursework as planned (adjusted deadlines); adapting or cancelling coursework; using significant amount of coursework already completed as a basis for determining final mark/grade;
 - Dissertations/Projects will continue to be submitted, as planned, in view of the credit-weighting, albeit with adjustments such as extended deadlines. Students will be invited to complete an Impact Statement to record any disruption.
 - School teams are being fully supported in assessment redesign, including considerations related to academic integrity and GenAI.
 - Where change of assessment has resulted in a rebalancing of weightings, this rebalancing has been agreed by School leadership teams and has already been undertaken by Academic Operations, ensuring that the Marks and Grades system is accurate and ready for marks input.
8. To date, professional bodies have been supportive of decisions taken: two PSRBs have asked for FOAs to be reviewed by External Examiners in advance of issuing to students; another PSRB has asked for individual vivas to ensure academic integrity of FOAs. If professional bodies require graduating or continuing UGY3-5 or PGT students to undertake an in-person exam for accreditation or exemption purposes, this should be confirmed in writing and will be arranged at a later date.
9. There has been ongoing engagement and regular communication with the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA), the federal accreditation authority in Dubai, on the University’s actions.

Industrial Action at the Scottish Campuses: Providing Context for Boards of Examiners

10. Academic actions and decisions related to Industrial Action at the Scottish Campuses have been shaped by [HR Guidance](#) and by the University’s prior experience of managing the impact on teaching, learning and assessment.

11. School leadership teams have been provided with FAQs to assist with communications and with gathering information on impacted courses.
12. The academic impact was variable across and within Schools, with reports highlighting cancelled sessions, including class-tests and final year supervision.
13. As the impact has varied across Schools and since information on participation is still being submitted, the ACG has agreed that, at the present time, there is no need for “a standard mitigation response”. School leadership teams have been recording the local impact and using that information to propose academic mitigation for Boards of Examiners to consider.
14. Boards of Examiners should, as per existing [Academic Decision-Making: Guidelines for Boards of Examiners on Maintaining Academic Standards \(for Staff\)](#), use the information referred to in No16 above and review extent of disruption, discuss and agree proposed mitigation for course results, progression and award.
15. The [Scenarios for Boards of Examiners: Mitigating the Impact of Industrial Action on Assessment, Progression and Award \(2025/2026version\)](#) provides every scenario relating to impacted assessment and can be used, if required, by CABs, Progression Boards and Award Boards to guide decision-making.
16. The Scenarios for Boards of Examiners outlines the minimum membership for the operation of Boards of Examiners to ensure the validity of academic decision-making:
 - Head of the Primary Academic Unit (Executive Dean) as Chair (or nominee/deputy, who must be approved by UCQS to chair Boards of Examiners – see [list of approved Chairs](#)) and must have completed the requisite training);
 - A member of the teaching team for each programme (Award and Progression Boards) or for each course (Course Assessment Board). The member of the programme or course teaching team can be a member of HWU staff from any campus location or mode of delivery;
 - Anyone else at the discretion of the Head of the Primary Academic Unit;
 - Award Boards must include a Dean or Deans Rep and the External Examiner(s). If an External Examiner is absent (including due to their own participation in industrial action), another External Examiner must be present.

Robustness of Alternative Arrangements, Academic Decision-Making and Reporting

17. The University has a well-defined set of regulations and policies to ensure, in exceptional circumstances, maintenance of an equitable, transparent and effective approach to decisions related to assessment, progression and award. These include Regulation A10: Authorities in Exceptional Circumstances (see appendix) and a range of Academic Decision-Making [Policies](#) and [Procedures](#) (including [Student Guides](#)).
18. A [PPT briefing](#) has been provided for External Examiners on the actions taken to mitigate both the Middle East Conflict and Industrial Action.
19. A robust framework remains in place for: maintaining academic standards and the value of HWU awards; retaining academic decision-making in full; assessing all learning outcomes and securing academic integrity.
20. Degree algorithms will be unaltered, ensuring that awards made are comparable with preceding years and academic standards are maintained.

21. All qualifying assessments (ie those which contribute to a final award) will continue to be moderated and reviewed by External Examiners as per the University's standard processes. The Academic Deans of the University or their representatives will continue to attend all Award Boards of Examiners to ensure equitable and transparent decision-making across Schools.
22. External Examiners and the Academic Deans of the University will have the opportunity during, or at the end of, the Board meeting to comment on such matters as: FOA and exam questions, student performance, the assessment process and schemes for marking and classification. In view of the current situation, External Examiners and the Academic Deans of the University will be invited to comment (both verbally at the Board and in writing in their reports) in particular on the Board's actions taken to mitigate the impact of the conflict and/or industrial action.
23. University awards will not be made with fewer than the specified credits as required by both HWU Regulations and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, enabling students to demonstrate, through their transcript, that they have achieved in their award the full complement of credits and to satisfy all accrediting authorities that the quality and standards of awards remain secure.
24. Specific guidance for [Boards of Examiners](#) and [tailored briefing sessions for Chairs of Boards of Examiners and Deans Reps](#) have been provided on mitigating the impact of the conflict and industrial action. Boards of Examiners will be asked to consider carefully the impact of any disruptions and to be fair and equitable in deciding on assessment results, progression decisions and degree awards. Each Board will be asked to review performance in previous years to ensure comparability.
25. The paperwork for CABs includes the signed-off forms which confirmed changes in weightings due to revised approaches to assessment.
26. The University has comprehensive sets of resources and support related to designing assessment for academic integrity and to using alternatives to exams (all on the institutional SharePoint sites). These resources have been revised to support reviewing and redesigning assessment approaches in the current situation.
27. The Annual Review of the Operation of Boards of Examiners will include a specific evaluation of the effectiveness of approaches to academic mitigation. Specific sections on academic mitigation in relation to the Middle East Conflict and Industrial Action have been added to External Examiner and Academic Deans/Reps Report proformas and to the School AMR Report proforma.
28. The Annual Summary Reports will include a summative overview for each key process; these reports will be considered by UCQS at its September 2026 and reported in the University's Annual Quality Report to the Scottish Funding Council and to the Quality Assurance Agency Scotland. A separate report was made to QAAS on 31 March 2026, and the University's approaches were endorsed as robust by QAAS at the University's Annual Institutional Liaison Meeting with QAAS on 21 April 2026.

Regulation A10: Authorities in Exceptional Circumstances

Terminology in this Regulation

“Examiners” shall mean, “the Head of Primary Academic Unit (PAU) supported by the relevant External Examiner(s) carrying out their normal duties, a member of the teaching team representing each Programme of Study for which a decision is being made and, at the discretion of the Head of PAU, suitably qualified members of Staff of the University”.

This Regulation is made in pursuance of paragraphs 2 ii and iii of Statute 5 and Ordinances P1 and P7.

2. General

- 2.1. The purpose of this Regulation is to clarify authorities in exceptional circumstances.
- 2.2. ‘Exceptional circumstances’ shall be defined as those in which:
 - 2.2.1. the full range of information normally taken into account in academic decision making, is not available; and/or
 - 2.2.2. the circumstances have affected the ability to deliver the planned learning and teaching and/or assessment and requires immediate adjustments.
- 2.3. The Regulation shall not apply where the full range of information normally taken into account is available.
- 2.4. When the circumstances of paragraph 2.2 of this Regulation apply, it is the responsibility of the Senate Committee for Interim Business and Effectiveness (SCIBE), acting with the delegated authority of the Senate, to bring into effect the arrangements and conditions set out in this Regulation and to determine the duration for which they should be applied. When deciding to bring into effect the arrangements and conditions set out in this Regulation, it will be for the SCIBE to decide whether the circumstances of paragraph 2.2 apply.
- 2.5. A nominee appointed to act in place of a Head of a PAU shall be subject to approval by the SCIBE.
- 2.6. For a Student who is not enrolled with a particular PAU, the SCIBE will assign a Head of PAU.

3. Authorities

- 3.1. SCIBE, acting with the delegated authority of the Senate (after consulting with Heads of PAUs and relevant Provosts) shall authorise:
 - 3.1.1. Variations in admissions requirements, their arrangements and conditions, and the duration of those arrangements and conditions.
 - 3.1.2. The arrangements and conditions for the delivery of Programmes of Study, and the duration of those arrangements and conditions.
 - 3.1.3. The appropriate mitigations to be applied at Assessment, Progression and Awards Boards, and the duration of those mitigations.

4. Boards of Examiners

- 4.1. This paragraph 4 shall apply equally to assessments of any Course for progression and award of the University.
- 4.2. A Board of Examiners shall include the Examiners, as defined above, and the Dean or their nominee.
- 4.3. The Examiners are authorised to make judgements and decisions on the basis of such information as is available to them at the time a judgement or decision is required to be made.
- 4.4. The Examiners shall have the authority to:

4.4.1. make recommendations to the Senate for the award of degrees and other awards;

4.4.2. make decisions about progression;

4.4.3. award credit for individual courses; and

4.4.4. defer making a decision if it is agreed that there is insufficient information available to recommend awards or allow progression.

5. Appeals

5.1. A candidate who is dissatisfied with the decision of the Examiners shall be entitled to appeal to under the terms of Regulation A12, Student Academic Appeals.

Statement for Chairs of Boards of Examiners and Template Text for Minutes

Regulation A10: Authorities in Exceptional Circumstances and Mitigating the Impact of the Middle East Conflict and Industrial Action

Statement for Chairs

If a Course Assessment Board, a Progression Board or an Award Board is considering assessment results and decisions impacted by the Middle East Conflict or Industrial Action, the Chair of the Board is encouraged to communicate the following statement at the start of the meeting.

This Board is meeting under the provisions of Regulation A10: Authorities in Exceptional Circumstances, which was enacted on 4 March 2026 by the Senate Committee for Interim Business and Effectiveness (SCIBE) to manage the academic impact of the Middle East conflict affecting the Dubai Campus and of industrial action at the Scottish Campuses.

In conjunction with existing policies and procedures on academic decision-making, A10 enables the University and Boards of Examiners to take steps to ensure that whole cohorts of students are not academically disadvantaged by circumstances beyond their control in course assessment results, progression or final award.

Within the governance framework of Regulation A10, an Academic Continuity Group (ACG) was established to ensure a consultative, prompt, equitable and effective approach to academic decision-making and action.

For the Dubai Campus, teaching was curtailed by 2 weeks. In terms of assessment, for all Years 1 and 2, January semester assessments were cancelled and a 'P' grade has been applied to all Level 7 and 8 courses, with pass-and-proceed decisions for students without September semester reassessments. A 'P' grade has also been applied to all Level 7 or 8 courses being taken by Year 3 students. For Years 3–5 and postgraduate taught students, alternative assessments were approved at School level, aligned to learning outcomes and professional body requirements.

For the Scottish Campuses, the impact of industrial action has been variable across and within Schools, and Boards are therefore asked to consider locally evidenced disruption and agree appropriate mitigation in line with the University's existing policies and procedures and using the industrial action scenarios for guidance.

Degree algorithms remain unchanged, full credit requirements for award will remain, and all qualifying assessments will continue to be subject to external examination. The Board is asked to take this context into account when making fair, equitable, and transparent decisions on assessment outcomes, progression and awards.

Suggested Text for Exam Board Minutes

As a means of ensuring consistency in recording decisions of Boards under A10, the following template text is suggested for Exam Board Minutes:

The Board noted that the impact of the Middle East Conflict/Industrial action was XXXX and, as a consequence, having considered student performance and in the context of fair, equitable and transparent decision-making, the Board has agreed that the following mitigation should be applied: XXXX