As Heriot-Watt University has expanded its provision, assessment and progression processes have become more complex and challenging. Assessment deadline dates - once achievable when multi-location/mode activity was relatively small scale or managed as a separate business - have become increasingly difficult to meet, resulting in significant pressures for staff involved. Common issues include:

- progressing resit students in time for the start of the academic year;
- marking and moderating exam scripts from overseas, at the same time as UK programmes, in time for results processing deadlines;
- tight turnaround time between Semester 1 assessment and Semester 2 teaching;
- workarounds to manage programmes with different start dates.

The session's early September start has also been highlighted as a recruitment barrier, eg for PGT students. Various process improvements have been introduced, eg online results and discontinuation of resit applications. A more systematic process and timing review is, however, required.

The Academic Year - Issues

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Continuation of Current Structure

The Deputy Principal (Learning and Teaching) and the Secretary of the University have confirmed that the current 2-semester structure - with semester 1 assessment concluded prior to end of December - remains fit for purpose. Processes and timings should, however, be reviewed.

Review of Processes and Timings

On behalf of the Learning and Teaching Board and in conjunction with the Secretary's Board, the Student Learning Experience Committee will review processes and timings associated with the academic year in order to alleviate pressure points and improve the student experience. Some areas to be considered include:

- Dates: start of semester 1 & 2; programmes on different start dates; Semester 2 break; Semester 2 assessment period.
- Assessment: different forms in semester 1 (to reduce marking burden); e-systems for managing overseas exam scripts.

Consultation and engagement of staff and students in all locations will be central to the review.

Contacts, References and Further Information

Contact: qualityenhancement@hw.ac.uk Structure of the Academic Year: http://www.hw.ac.uk/committees/ltb/AcademicStructure.htm Learning and Teaching Policies and Procedures: http://www.hw.ac.uk/committees/ltb/ltb-policies.htm

Learning and Teaching Briefing Papers

This briefing paper has been produced by the Academic Registry and is one of a series related to Learning and Teaching. The briefing papers aim to provide a concise, informative overview of key policies, and include links to relevant procedures and templates.