

# EIA Form

Heriot-Watt University: Equality Impact Assessment Form										
School	All Schools	Area	Academic Registry	Person responsible for the assessment	Academic Registrar	Date of EIA			Begins 17 June 2014	
Name of the Procedure/Process to be assessed.		Timing of Examinations			Is this a new or existing Procedure? (please circle)	NEW	EXISTING	Does the Procedure impact on people?	Y	N EIA not required
1. Briefly describe the aims, objectives and purpose of the Procedure.		<p>To formalise the timing of examinations across the University taking account of the international dimensions of Heriot-Watt University's operations to ensure the consistency and integrity of those examinations that are taking place across all campuses.</p> <p>The University has agreed the following as business critical issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The University, while international in focus, provides a Scottish/UK University experience to all those who study and work for Heriot-Watt University, regardless of campus location; this is what students who enrol with the University seek.</li> <li>▪ The University operates a single academic year, with a semester structure.</li> <li>▪ The security, integrity and quality of the examination process is paramount, as is the quality of the student learning experience and assessment across the whole University no matter where or how a student is studying.</li> </ul>								

<p>2. Are there any associated objectives of the Procedure, please explain.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To ensure well communicated and understood rationale for the processes for timing of examinations across all areas of the University.</li> <li>▪ To ensure that all relevant staff and students understand examination timetable requirements.</li> <li>▪ To ensure that the processes for setting examination times is fit for purpose.</li> <li>▪ To enhance the Student Learning Experience at Heriot-Watt University.</li> <li>▪ To ensure compliance with the <a href="#">Examinations and other assessment held around the world in different time-zones</a> policy.</li> <li>▪ To reduce any risks associated with examination security and quality of the examination process.</li> </ul>
<p>3. Which areas of operations are intended to benefit from the Procedure and in what way?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All staff associated with examination timetables in understanding the global dimension and constraints on the University.</li> <li>▪ All students who participate in the examination schedule in gaining a better understanding of the constraints involved.</li> <li>▪ The reputation of the University and its academic credibility, through reduction of risk associated with examination security and quality of the examination process.</li> </ul>
<p>4. Is any data available about the Procedure, e.g. feedback from users?</p>	<p>The University has a global presence, with the same examinations requiring to be run at UK, Dubai and Malaysia Campuses, as well as in a significant number of additional countries. Examinations must be managed to take place at the same time, within each of the time zones set up in accordance with the <a href="#">Examinations and other assessment held around the world in different time-zones</a> policy. Scheduling examinations at Heriot-Watt University is thus an extremely complex process.</p> <p>A number of policies are in place concerning assessment, including the requirement for standardisation to provide assurance on quality and robustness of the assessment process across all areas of the University. This relates in particular to moderation, delivery and marking of assessments. Relevant Policies and Procedures are highlighted in Appendix 1.</p> <p>The University operates a standard Monday to Friday working week, with the exception of our Dubai campus</p>

which operates from Sunday to Thursday, taking account of local custom. The University uses a Monday-Friday schedule for all examinations taking place across campuses. Examinations not common across all campuses may, by exception, take place at alternative times.

Discussions have taken place concerning effective timing of examinations in the Monday-Friday schedule. This has highlighted a number of issues for consideration including the overarching requirement relating to the quality of the student learning experience, the scale and international dimension of the University's operations, and accommodation of religious and/or cultural observance. Local circumstances at all campus locations are taken into account when setting the global examination timetable, [including local holidays](#).

Issues relating to mitigating circumstances and examinations have also been discussed, including the issue of students citing religious and/or cultural observance as 'mitigating circumstances'. Absence due to religious and/or cultural circumstances would not be considered as 'mitigating circumstances' under the [Policy on Mitigating Circumstances in relation to assessment](#).

The University has considered evidence of good practice elsewhere and has taken account of the scale of its examination commitments, together with the requirements for the same examinations to be taken in each location of operation to ensure equivalence of the quality of the student learning experience. In view of this, it has been agreed that the University will continue to use the definition of 'mitigating circumstances' as outlined in the Policy on Mitigating Circumstances in relation to assessment.

The policy clearly sets out acceptable circumstances for consideration of 'mitigating circumstances':

- Significant illness or accident affecting the student
- Bereavement – death of a close relative or significant other
- Significant adverse personal or family circumstances
- Other significant exceptional factors that are outside the student's control (e.g. Jury Service, although student assessments would normally be a reason for a student to be permitted to stand down), or for which there is evidence of stress caused

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Circumstances affecting the University's ability to schedule, set or deliver courses and/or assessments, including marking of assessments, e.g. staff participation in industrial action, or problems affecting infrastructure or IT systems</li> <li>▪ Severe adverse weather, political unrest or natural disaster.</li> </ul> <p>Agreed business critical issues have been highlighted in question 1.</p> <p>An outline of the academic year (2013/4) is included at Appendix 2 for information.</p>
<p><b>5. What outcomes are wanted from this Procedure?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All staff and students are aware of the University's Policy and Procedures in the timing of examinations within the annual schedule.</li> <li>▪ Quality, security and integrity of the examinations process is preserved.</li> <li>▪ All staff and students are aware that non-attendance of examinations can be sanctioned on the basis of those circumstances outlined in the <a href="#">Policy on Mitigating Circumstances in relation to assessment</a>.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. What factors/forces could contribute/detract from the outcomes?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A lack consistency in taking forward examination scheduling or a lack of awareness in our approach to the timing of examinations could detract from our aims.</li> <li>▪ Lack of clear articulation and understanding of the University's approach to management of the examinations' process.</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. The Equality Act 2010 includes a requirement to give 'due regard' to the public sector equality duty (PSED) in all functions. There is a specific duty to assess the impact of proposed new or revised policies and practices against three needs of the general duty. Use this section to outline relevant issues.</b></p>	
<p><b>SPECIFIC DUTIES OF THE EQUALITY ACT 2010</b></p>	

Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation	Advance equality of opportunity between people of different groups	Foster good relations between people of different groups		
No group is unlawfully discriminated against in the process for the timetabling of examinations.	All students have the same access to examinations and other forms of assessment. Where 'special circumstances' exist the appropriate response is governed by the <a href="#">Procedure on Mitigating Circumstances in relation to assessment</a>	All students have the same access to examinations and other forms of assessment. Where 'special circumstances' exist the appropriate response is governed by the <a href="#">Procedure on Mitigating Circumstances in relation to assessment</a>		
8. Do you have any concerns that the Procedure <b>could</b> have a differential impact on any of the Protected Characteristic groups*? Detail any relevant information.	Some concerns have been raised that the scheduling of examinations over Monday-Friday could have a differential impact on those that participate in religious observance during those days. The University acknowledges this dilemma. It has determined that it is business critical that the exam diet takes place in accordance with the current schedule.  The University proposes to work with those who could be affected by provision of guidance and support on how to meet the assessment requirements to the best of their ability.			
9. What are the risks associated with the Procedure in relation to differential impact?	Our approach to examination timetabling and any consideration of special circumstances in relation to assessment must be consistent across the whole University, in line with the <a href="#">Procedure on Mitigating Circumstances in relation to assessment</a> .			
10. Could the differential impact identified in 6-11 amount to there being the potential for adverse impact in this Procedure? If no, outline why and go to question 12.	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	Please Explain	There may be adverse impact on those that undertake religious and/or cultural observance during the Monday-Friday exam timetable where examinations are common across campuses.

<p><b>11.</b> Can this adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group? Or any other reason.</p>	<p><b>YES</b></p>	<p><b>NO</b></p>	<p>Please Explain</p>	<p>The University clearly states that the examination timetable runs from Monday – Friday of any given year. This is justified on the grounds of business critical activity over the academic year underpinning the integrity, consistency and security of examinations.</p> <p>Steps will be taken to ensure that all relevant University literature clearly states that the University operates a Monday-Friday exam diet.</p>
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<p>12. Demonstrate how you have involved stakeholders in the EIA.</p>	<p><b>To-date:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>March 2014:</b> Information/documentation presented to Reasonable Adjustment Advisory Group</li> <li>▪ <b>March 2014:</b> Discussion at Equality and Diversity Advisory Group</li> <li>▪ <b>March-June 2014:</b> Service Area discussions March-June 2014</li> <li>▪ <b>June 2014:</b> Initial meeting with Academic Registry, Learning and Teaching, Equality and Diversity, Student Support and Accommodation, Governance and Legal Services and University Deans</li> <li>▪ <b>June 2014:</b> Discussions held with Senior Management</li> <li>▪ <b>July 2014:</b> Meeting with student representatives from the Muslim Society</li> <li>▪ <b>July-August 2014:</b> Correspondence consultation across stakeholders</li> <li>▪ <b>October 2014:</b> Senior Management consultation</li> <li>▪ <b>October 2014:</b> Further stakeholder input</li> </ul> <p><b>Next Steps:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>November 2014:</b> Approval from Student Learning Experience Committee</li> <li>▪ <b>December 2014 onward:</b> Ensure all relevant literature outlines the University's position on examination timetabling</li> <li>▪ <b>December 2014-February 2015:</b> Meetings and involvement activities with Muslim Society and other relevant groups to produce guidelines and supporting materials for those undertaking any period of fasting.</li> </ul>	
<p>13. Date EIA Completed.</p>	<p>14. Date for future review of Procedure/function.</p>	<p>3 years from the end date – or at such time before that date if events warrant</p>

\* It may be beneficial to give particular consideration to the Protected Characteristic groups in your impact assessment. The Protected Characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010 are: Age, Disability, Race, Religion and Belief (including no belief), Sex, Sexual Orientation, Pregnancy and Maternity, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership

**NO PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESSMENT REQUIRED**

## APPENDIX 1: Relevant Policies and Procedures:

- [Procedure on Mitigating Circumstances in relation to assessment](#)
- [Procedure on Management of Examination Scripts \(on and off-campus\)](#)
- [Code of Practice for the Management of Multi Location, Multi Mode Programmes](#)
- [Religious and Cultural Observance Statement](#)
- [Examinations and other assessment held around the world in different time-zones](#)

### Additional Useful Information

- [Quality Assurance Briefing Paper 8](#): Examinations and other assessments held around the world in different time-zones
- [Quality Assurance Briefing Paper 9](#): Code of Practice for the management of Multi-Location, Multi-Mode Programmes
- [Learning and Teaching Briefing Paper 3](#): Structure of the Academic Year
- [Learning and Teaching Briefing Paper 4](#): Quality enhancement framework in Scotland
- [Learning and Teaching Briefing Paper 8](#): Academic structures at multiple campuses
- [Learning and Teaching Briefing Paper 10](#): Quality at HWU: Enhancing learning and teaching, and the Student Learning Experience

**APPENDIX 2:** Outline of the academic calendar for academic year 2013/14 is included below for information.

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Activity</b>
16 September 2013 – 6 December 2013	Semester 1 teaching
9 December 2013 – 20 December 2013	Semester 1 exams
23 December 2013 – 10 January 2014	Semester 1 break
13 January 2014 – 4 April 2014	Semester 2 teaching
7 April 2014 – 25 April 2014 (Easter: 20 April 2014)	Semester 2 break
28 April 2014 – 23 May 2014	Semester 2 exams
20 June 2014 (Scottish Borders Campus)	Graduations
24 June 2014 – 27 June 2014 (Edinburgh Campus)	Graduations
7 August 2014 – 15 August 2014	Resits
20 November 2014 – 21 November 2014	Graduations