This Student Guide summarises HWU’s approach in 2022/23 to academic decision-making and maintaining academic standards in relation to assessment, progression and award. The full Policy document is available on the Learning and Teaching Policy Bank here.

These are the University's standard procedures. However, as the University transitions out of the pandemic, it is recognised that there might need to be some continuing whole cohort mitigation, as students experience particular forms of assessment for the first time, eg in-person, invigilated exams. (Note: the University has in place its Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedures for individual circumstances).

The University's approach is in line with that of other universities across the UK.

The messages to all students prior to December 2022 Exams highlighted the University's Academic-Decision Making Approach and the Student Guide to What Happens after Exams (and after other end-of-semester assessment). This summary is designed to provide students with further detail on academic decision-making. It is also available on the Supporting Our Students site here.

Three-Stage Approach

Whatever the circumstances, all students (campus, partner, online) are always treated fairly in assessment; this was true of HWU practices before the pandemic and remains in place whatever the external circumstances. In academic year 2022/23, there continues to be a three-stage approach in place support those students who might otherwise be disadvantaged in their studies for reasons beyond their control.

Stage One: Fair and Equitable Assessment

The key principle of fair and equitable assessment is that no student, irrespective of programme, degree, location or mode of study, will be academically disadvantaged or penalised under the University's assessment (coursework and examination) arrangements due to circumstances outwith their control.

Stage Two: Supportive Arrangements

Across the University, supportive arrangements are in place in relation to assessment:

- Assessments (both coursework and in-person exams) have been specifically designed for 2022/23, taking account of the different and changing environments in which students are continuing to learn this academic year, including a return to campus.

- Academic staff take into account the impact of any disruption on all students when marking assessments (eg the continuing impact of the pandemic, industrial action in the UK*, November 2022 elections in Malaysia). Additionally, if any specific issues have affected students individually, these can be reported quickly through the streamlined mitigating circumstances process.

- Student Guides on In-Person Exams and Timed, Online Coursework include information on preparing for time-limited assessments. There are versions for each exam diet and for tailored groups of students. The AskHWU tile on the Student Portal provides access to over 50 FAQs on exams.

- There is widespread support, advice and guidance on different forms of assessment, particularly in-person exams, as this will be a new form of assessment for most HWU students, for example, through the Exams, website, Skills Hub and the Advice Hub. From w/c 28 November 2022, the Student Success Advisors will provide drop-in sessions and also produce guidance via their Instagram and Success and Wellbeing Youtube channel.

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1 The University has in place a Policy on Mitigating the Impact of Industrial Action on Assessment, Progression and Award.
Schools have provided their own specific information for students on topics such as types of assessment, assessment scheduling and feedback on assessment; specifically for 2022/23 there has been specific guidance on helping students to prepare for in-person, invigilated exams. School information is aligned with University policies and guidance.

Each academic year, the University has continued to review, and adapt where necessary, its assessment policies, ensuring that these are fair and equitable:

- **Clarification on types of assessment**: in-person exams and coursework
- **Support for students in preparing for in-person exams and timed, online coursework**
- **Co-ordinated approach to coursework scheduling**
- **Academic Integrity** guidance and advice for students revised and extended, including Canvas module
- **Mitigating Circumstances** for individual situations, with revised student guides and procedures
- **Submission of Coursework Policy**, including late submission process
- **Return of Feedback on Assessment Policy** for both coursework and exams, including timescales
- **Continuation of Consolidation Week** in Week 6 in each Semester, with no new material introduced and no assessment submissions

### Stage Three: Decisions by Boards of Examiners

Boards of Examiners are responsible for making decisions on course assessments and also on progression and award based on course assessment results. For awards, Boards include an External Examiner and a representative from another School to confirm that decision-making is fair, reliable and transparent. Boards of Examiners also make sure that the quality and academic standards of all awards are maintained.

Boards of Examiners will take into account the circumstances under which assessments were taken and any disruption to students’ studies. They will not simply look at individual marks or even just the average, but will use all available information to reach fair decisions on grades, progression and final degree classification. The Board will then act to remove any negative impact on students and ensure degrees are awarded fairly, while maintaining academic standards and the value of Heriot-Watt qualifications.

Boards of Examiners will use the following information to help them make their academic judgements and confirm assessment results, progression decisions and awards:

- information regarding the overall outcome and results profiles for the previous years, including pre-pandemic and during the pandemic, of each course and the programme as a whole;
- the results for students on each course and the programme this academic year;
- information confirming any ongoing impact of the pandemic or other disruption to learning, teaching or assessment on the relevant courses and information on changes already made in response to the pandemic or other disruption.

This information enables the Board to reach decisions which are fair, consistent and reliable and which ensure the value, quality and academic standards of all qualifications over time.

### Contacts

If there is any aspect of this three-stage process which students have queries or concerns about, the Student Representative Bodies have recommended that students should contact their Class Rep or a member of staff such as the Course Leader/Lecturer, Personal Tutor or Year Co-ordinator.

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*Academic Decision-Making 2022/23: Student Guide (produced in collaboration with the three Student Representative Bodies)*