Summary and Introduction

As part of the ongoing response to COVID and of Responsive Blended Learning (RBL), Schools have continued in 2021/22 to adopt a range of different assessment methods, many of which are hybrids of face-to-face types and are scheduled in the traditional exam diet periods. Consequently, there has been an ongoing need to revisit current assessment policies either to reaffirm or to adapt, particularly where there has been a lack of clarity about what is permitted or where existing policies do not cover specific points.

This paper provides a summary of the key issues, policy information and associated guidance related to assessment in 2021/22 and is intended to support Schools in designing and managing assessment.

The paper includes decisions related to assessment which have already been approved by the Learning and Teaching Academic Year 2020/21 Group (LTAYG) and by the Senate Committee for Interim Business and Effectiveness (SCIBE) on behalf of the Senate, and also reaffirms existing policies related to the management of assessment.

This Summary is an updated version of the Assessment Policy Information which was prepared for AY 2020/21 and endorsed by the LTAYG at its meeting on 3 November 2021. The following information is included:

- Changes to Assessment
- Types of Assessment
- Take-Home Open Book Exams
- Assessment Scheduling
- Submission of Coursework Policy
- Feedback on Assessment (Coursework and Take-Home Open Book Exams)

This Assessment 2021/22: Key Policy Information is a summary paper, consolidating in a single document, all key policy information related to assessment for AY2021/22. There is intentionally some repetition between the various sections, which reflects the fact that the key information has also, for ease of access, been separated into stand-alone sections, eg Assessment Types; Scheduling of Assessments; Submission of Coursework.

The consolidated document and the stand-alone sections are available on the Learning and Teaching Policy Bank.
Changes to Assessment: Policy on Approvals and School Decisions

In accordance with the University’s adapted approvals procedures, Schools are able to adapt their assessment methods for 2021/22 without going through their own internal full approval process and without updating assessment information on the Global Curriculum Management (GCM) (i.e., where these are temporary changes for 2021/22). Schools may set their own internal approvals for assessment changes in 2021/22, including via any specified School committees/groups.

There is no change to the current process, in that all changes to assessment:

- are managed and approved at School level in accordance with the standard approval procedures, the Academic Management Structures and the University’s Codes of Practice,
- are ultimately the responsibility of the Head of School, delegated to the Director of Learning and Teaching and overseen by the School Learning and Teaching Committee, and maybe delegated further to the Director of Academic Quality and the School Studies Committee;
- do not require approval by the University Studies Committee;
- are part of the roles of Course Leaders/Senior Course Leaders, Programme Directors of Studies/Senior Programme Directors of Studies and remits of Programme Boards of Studies and Global Course Teams;
- are undertaken by Course Leaders in consultation with all stakeholders as appropriate, such as the entire Global Course Team and Programme Directors of Studies;
- should meet any Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) and in-country accreditation requirements as appropriate.

Additionally, Learning and Teaching Academic Year Group (LTAYG) agreed that changes to assessment should be communicated to External Examiners and PSRBs. Requirements for External Examiners to review coursework briefs for courses contributing to the final award are set out in the External Examining Handbook, paragraph 3.1 (p.10).

If a Course Team wishes to make permanent any changes to assessment made temporarily for 2021/22, then the standard, School-based approval process must be followed. Assessment information provided in GCM and in other sources (such as student handbooks) must be updated.

Designing Assessment: Guidance from the Learning and Teaching Academy

The Learning and Teaching Academy has provided through Responsive Blended Learning (RBL), associated resources, training and sessions, a wide range of support for Schools in planning for and designing assessment in 2021/22. Additionally, there is a suite of Watt Works Quick Guides on Assessment and Feedback.

Changes to Assessment: Guidance on Communicating to Students

If assessment has been changed from the official record on GCM, this should be communicated to students and should be correct on Canvas pages and other key information provided to students. Additionally, the three Student Representative Bodies have recommended that the following guidance on assessment is provided to students:

- advice and support on timed take-home open book exams;
- clarification on how assessments relate to learning outcomes;
- inclusion of descriptive criteria or a rubric each assessment;
- co-ordination of deadlines for assessments across the course and wider programme to ensure that they are reasonably spread out and students are not being over-assessed;
- clarification on submission methods and signposting to students of guidance on how to use these tools;
- promotion of academic integrity, through resources and integration into the curriculum, and availability of resources on how to properly use referencing;
- information and help on understanding assessment expectations, e.g., through providing exemplars or class discussion of marking criteria;
- information on feedback (date, type and method of availability) and how to engage with feedback to help with subsequent assessments. Students should be notified of coursework which will not be returned within 3 weeks.
RBL has encouraged a much greater diversity of assessment than traditional face-to-face formats and additional to the Take-Home Exams format (now known as Take-Home Open Book Exams) introduced as part of the emergency response to COVID in spring 2020. This diversity, including a blurring between take-home exams and coursework assessments, eg assignments scheduled for completion over a three-day period or coursework deadlines set in the weeks of the exam diet or unseen, timed class tests, has led to a lack of clarity over what is permitted and when in assessment. This was clarified in the previous iteration of this guidance and has been retained here.

Assessment Types in 2021/22: Existing Regulations and Policies

The University’s policies and Regulations for taught programmes (eg Regulation A4 Courses, Programmes and Assessment) do not prohibit diversity in form and timing, and the constraints are only as follows:

- All programmes of study shall contain a balance of written exams and other forms of assessment, unless specifically approved by the University Studies Committee;
- Exams shall be of two or three hours in duration, unless approved by the Global Academic Registrar;
- Written exams shall be held in a scheduled diet of exams;
- All courses shall provide opportunities for formative assessment;
- Assessments contributing to the overall final mark/grade shall assess the specified learning outcomes;
- The forms of assessment and weighting shall be specified in the Course Descriptor (this has been waived for 2021/22).

Therefore, there is scope for Schools to offer a much more diverse array of assessment through RBL without being constrained by institutional regulations or policies. For example, coursework assignments can be completed in a scheduled diet of exams; there is no restriction that stipulates that only coursework which is a substitute for a face-to-face exam can be included in the exam diet.

Assessment Types in 2021/22: Policy Definitions

Policy Statement on Assessment Types in 2021/22

For the purposes of clarity for students and for staff involved in the design and management of assessment, in 2021/22 assessment should be differentiated as one of two types: Coursework or Take-Home Open Book Exam. This terminology should be used consistently in all staff and student communications.

In 2021/22, all examinations are being run as Take-Home Open Book Exams (unless there are specific requirements from PSRBs or accreditation authorities), as approved by the Senate Committee for Interim Business and Effectiveness (SCIBE). The parameters for Take-Home Exams have likewise already been approved by SCIBE as follows:

- A Take-Home Open Book Exam is an exam taken remotely and alone by students in their own space (eg at home or a University PC lab, if arranged) using Canvas, the University’s VLE;
- Each exam is taken under “open book” conditions, meaning that students have access to notes, course material, and the internet to consult during the exam;
- In Semester 1, the majority of take-home open book exams are open for a 24-hr window (although the exam requires 2 or 3 hours of effort to complete) between the exam paper being made available via Canvas, and the deadline for submitting a completed exam script;
- In Semester 1, a small number of exams will have a much shorter time period, eg 2 hours to complete the answer and then 30 minutes for uploading; these are known as Timed Take-Home Open Book Exams;
- From Semester 2, all take-home open book exams will be timed as 2 or 3 hours in duration, with a short period for upload/download or logging on (see separate summary on Take-Home Open Book Exams);
- Take-Home Open Book Exams contribute to the final mark/grade for a course and are held in the scheduled diet of examinations and are timetabled centrally by Registry and Academic Support.
In 2021/22, coursework comprises assignments set during or at the end of a course to assess one or more of the learning outcomes. Coursework includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- written assignment, including essay or report;
- dissertation (an extended piece of written work, often the write-up of a final-year project);
- portfolio (a collection of work that relates to a given topic or theme, which has been produced over a period of time);
- project output (output from project work, often of a practical nature, other than a dissertation or written report);
- set exercise (questions or tasks designed to assess how knowledge is applied, and analytical, problem-solving or evaluative skills);
- class tests (written or computer-based) of knowledge or interpretation that are not carried out under take-home open book exam conditions (see below).

### Assessment Types in 2021/22: Coursework and Tests

In 2021/22, coursework assignments can be completed in a scheduled diet of exams (weeks 13 + 14); this includes all types of coursework and is not restricted to coursework which is a substitute for a face-to-face exam (existing Regulation). In this instance, coursework will be arranged and managed exclusively by the School and not by Registry and Academic Support.

In 2021/22, coursework may be offered in a way that is very similar to a take-home open book exam, eg a class test/web test to be completed in a specific period of time and to be carried out using the University’s VLE.

If any such tests (which are not take-home open book exams*) involve large group assessment being delivered via the VLE, Information Services requires advance notification to ensure an appropriate capacity is in place.

*If a test of any sort is being held in the scheduled diet of exams during 2021/22, for the purposes of clarity, this should be arranged as a centrally timetabled take-home exam.

Schools should ensure that, in their management and scheduling of assessment, that coursework tests do not become de facto take-home open book exams. Examples have emerged of tests with a 24-hour or 48-hour window which have been released at inconsiderate times of the day and have resulted in students spending an excessive amount of time in comparison to the %weighting.

### Assessment Types in 2021/22: Guidance on Communicating Assessment Types to Students

As is standard practice, Schools should clearly communicate all assessment types to students (eg via the Programme Handbook or Course Descriptors or overviews on Canvas), but should pay particular attention to changed arrangements for 2021/22 which are different from the norm.

For example, students would reasonably expect the exam diet to be kept free of coursework assignment deadlines; however, with fewer exams than previously and more coursework-type assessments, it is more practical for Schools to use the full semester (including assessment weeks/exam diet) for spacing out assessment deadlines. However, Schools should take steps to ensure that any coursework assignments due for completion in an exam diet are scheduled in such a way as to minimise clashing and bunching of assessment deadlines (see separate summary on Assessment Scheduling in 2021/22).

### Timed Take-Home Open Book Exams

Many students are anxious about a return to timed exams, particularly in the take-home open book format, since the vast majority of students have experienced only the 24-hour window arrangement for exams taken remotely online. Following University communications about Timed Take-Home Open Book Exams being the format of examination from Semester 2, Schools should provide further information, guidance and support on what timed exams will be like in each discipline area.

### Volume of Assessment in 2021/22

Feedback from students and some External Examiners and anecdotal evidence at the LTAYG have highlighted that over-assessment continues to be an area of concern across Heriot-Watt generally. This is a long-standing issue for the University and so Schools should be mindful of the impact on both students and staff (the latter particularly in relation to workload and wellbeing given the volume of marking, Exam Boards etc). See separate summary on Assessment Scheduling 2021/22.
In 2021/22, all examinations are being run as Take-Home Open Book Exams (unless there are specific requirements from PSRBs or accreditation authorities for in-person exams), as approved by the Senate Committee for Interim Business and Effectiveness (SCIBE) on 21 April, 24 August and 3 September 2021.


The parameters for Take-Home Exams in 2021/22 have been approved by SCIBE as follows:

1) We recognise that AY 2021/22 is a transitional year as we emerge from the restrictions consequent on the Covid 19 pandemic.

2) We hold the wellbeing of students and staff at the forefront of our decision making; consequently, we are seeking to avoid abrupt changes and sharp discontinuities in our practice, particularly when we are: supporting staff and students in the process of transitioning to on-campus working and face-to-face delivery, moving to a new VLE, admitting students who have had no recent experience of sitting traditional timed examinations, welcoming back students whose learning with us has been disrupted.

3) Consequently, it has been agreed that:
   a) In Semester 1 only and until the end of December 2021, we will continue to use a 24-hour window in which students can complete Take Home Open Book examinations. This will apply across the University covering all our provision (including EBS and HW Online).
   b) From January 2022 and Semester 2 onwards, we will reinstate the practice of timed examinations and our time-zones policy.
   c) By the end of Consolidation Week of Semester 1 (week 6), we will have finalised, and will communicate to staff and students, full details of the Semester 2, Semester 3 and Resit examination diet arrangements.
   d) The only exception to the Semester 1 arrangements will be where these are mandated or strongly recommended by accrediting professional bodies.

4) We recognise the importance of supporting students and staff in assessment practice and will prioritise this work, a key partnership priority for the University and Student bodies.

Take-Home Open Book Exams from January 2022

In accordance with the policy approved by SCIBE, further parameters for take-home open book exams from January 2022 for the remainder of AY 2021/22 were approved by the Learning and Teaching Academic Year Group (LTAYG) at its meeting on 20 October 2021 and communicated to staff via Staff News on 28 October 2021.

Key Principles

1) All examinations from January 2022, with the exception only of programmes delivered wholly online as the usual mode of delivery (see below), will be time-limited and aligned to two time zones (Edinburgh and Malaysia). Dubai may use either time zone.

2) All examinations from January 2022 will continue to be in a take-home format, which refers to a centrally timetabled exam which students take in a location of their choosing with access to Canvas, online materials, notes and revision material. Students without adequate home/personal technology will be able to take their exam in a moderated IT location on campus.

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1 In its approval of examination arrangements in April 2021, SCIBE has already agreed to the possibility of a small subset of in-person exams from Semester 2, ie in two cases only: i) where required by relevant PSRBs; ii) where deemed by Schools to be educationally essential. The ongoing impact of the pandemic will be a key determinant in realising this.

2 The LTAYG considered and endorsed a proposal for Semester 2 and Semester 3/Resit arrangements at its meeting on 20 October 2021; this is set out in the section below.
3) The format of exams will be either “download-complete-upload” or “Canvas-based digital”. Exams of both types will be released through a dedicated Canvas course site. Guidance and advice will be provided in due course for staff and students.

4) Face-to-face exams, including invigilated face-to-face exams, will be supported on a case-by-case basis and will be considered only if it can be demonstrated that this is a mandatory requirement of a PSRB. Such exams will be held in IT/PC spaces at the relevant campus and will retain the PC-based “download-complete-upload” format.

### Duration of Timed Exams

5) All timed exams will be 2 hours duration for a 15-credit course or 3 hours for a 30-credit or larger course. Exceptions to these standard durations may be considered for courses with non-standard credit-ratings or if a case is accepted for pedagogical reasons. However, no exam will be greater in duration than 3 hours. As per the University Regulations, requests for exams of different duration should be made to the Global Academic Registrar.

6) “Download-complete-upload” exams will have +1 hour window (ie one hour additional to the duration) timetabled for download and upload. This additional one hour does not apply to Canvas-based digital exams, which will include an additional 15-minute window at start for students to log on and prepare for exam opening.

7) For students with a learning profile and who have been allocated extra time, this extra time allocation will apply only to the 2 hour or 3-hour duration, not the +1 hour.

8) No additional grace periods will be included. The University’s Late Coursework Policy does not apply to timed exams.

### Number of Papers and Timezones

9) A separate exam paper will be prepared for each timezone and for online programmes if a course is offered on campus and as part of an online programme. This requirement applies to all courses in all years, including qualifying years.

10) Exceptions to the above will be permitted only if required by PSRBs. In such cases, the start times for single paper exams will be 09.00 UK time and 17.00 Malaysia.

### Online Programmes Only

11) For the remainder of AY2021/22 only, the 24-hour format of exams will be retained only for online programmes, reflecting the variety of timezones in which online programmes operate.

12) A single exam paper will be used for each online course and for each exam diet.

13) For online courses which are also offered on-campus, a separate exam paper will be prepared for the on-campus version and for the online version. On-campus students will follow the timed format as outlined above; online students will follow the 24-hour format.

14) For online 24-hour exams, there will be no formal requirement for a +1 hour for download and upload, but the 1 hour grace period in operation for 24-hour exams in Semester 1 will remain in place. As per Semester 1, there will be no need to add extra time for students with learning profiles.

### Take-Home Exams in 2021/22: Advice and Guidance

#### Designing Take-Home Exams
- The Learning and Teaching Academy has produced a range of resources on designing Take-Home Open Book Exams, including adapting traditional exams to the take-home open book format;
- The guides include advice on what to think about when designing a take-home open book exam, such as assessing deeper knowledge and more complex skills; limiting the possibility of academic misconduct; providing access to supplementary material; software requirements; referencing; word counts;
- Examples used at HWU are provided to illustrate a range of different approaches;
- Information on the student perspective of take-home open book exams is included;
- Tips on getting feedback on draft exam papers are provided.

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If the on-campus version is delivered in two timezones, then two papers will need to be prepared, as per point 9), for the on-campus versions and the online version will require a third exam paper.
Supporting Students in Preparing for Take-Home Exams

• The LTA Guide to Creating a Take-Home Exam highlights the need to clarify with students expectations of take-home open book exams and how they will be marked; clarifying student expectations will be particularly important in preparing for timed take-home open book exams from Semester 2;

• The Student Take-Home Open Book Exam Guides provide comprehensive information for staff and students on preparing for take-home exams, including the need to revise just as for a conventional exam and how to arrange a suitable set-up for taking the exam (location and technology);

• The Skills Hub includes advice for students on how to deal with some specific challenges of take-home open-book exams;

• There are references in the Student Take-Home Open Book Exam Guides to a range of support services and resources, such as Student Success Advisors, Effective Learning Service Advisors and Student Wellbeing Services;

• Students should be notified of the format of the exam, such as typed-up response, hand-written with photo/scan upload and whether it is download/upload or Canvas-based;

• Students are advised to practise proper academic and professional conduct, and act with integrity and honestly. A summary of advice and guidance on types of academic misconduct, how to avoid it and penalties are contained in the Student Take-Home Open Book Exam Guides;

• The Effective Learning Services’ Skills Hub features a large range of resources and support for students in areas such as academic integrity and take-home open book exams.

• A planned timetable of weekly student communications is in place for the four weeks prior to the start of exams, featuring key information such as: timetable; availability of Canvas practice area; avoiding academic misconduct; academic safety net.

Academic Integrity

• The Academic Integrity Working Group (of the LTAYG) has undertaken a major review and revision of previous academic integrity information, providing a suite of resources for staff and for students:
  • Academic rigour in assessed work policy
  • Avoiding academic misconduct in take home open book exams: student guide
  • Contract cheating: a guide for students
  • Course statement on contract cheating
  • Guidance on academic integrity
  • SoSS guidance for staff on detecting and reporting academic misconduct

• The LTA has produced three Watt Works Quick Guides on Academic Integrity
• The Effective Learning Service has information for students on Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Individual Student Circumstances

• Advice and guidance is provided in the Student Take-Home Open Book Exam Guides on managing individual student circumstances such as: reasonable adjustments; mitigating circumstances in advance of, or during, the exam; dealing with technical difficulties impacting on the ability to undertake, complete or upload the exam.

• Student information on mitigating circumstances, including how to apply, is available on the learning and teaching policy bank.

Feedback on Take-Home Exams

• The University has Guidance on Feedback on Exams Performance, which includes feedback on take-home open book exams. The LTA has a range of Watt Works Quick Guides on Feedback on Assessment.
The University has existing policies related to the scheduling and publishing of assessment deadlines to ensure a manageable workload for students.

However, as larger pieces of coursework have been introduced and many exams have been substituted by an increased number of shorter assignments as part of RBL, the issue of clashing deadlines and bunching of assessments has previously been highlighted by students. There have also previously been instances of timed coursework (i.e., where students have a specific period of time, e.g., 48 hours or 36 hours, to complete an assignment) being released at times in the day which are disadvantageous to some timezones (e.g., 11 pm). Additionally, it has emerged that not all students have received a clear schedule of assessment deadlines for the semester.

Assessment Scheduling: Existing Policy

At the Student Learning Experience Committee in November 2017 (Minute 114), it was agreed, in response to a proposal submitted by the three Student Presidents on Coursework Deadline Mapping, that all coursework should be scheduled by Schools so as to minimise clashing deadlines or bunching of assessment in order to provide a more manageable workload for students. It was agreed that all Schools should undertake a coursework deadline mapping exercise and communicate this to students, and that this should be introduced with immediate effect in 2017/18. It was determined that a policy was not needed as most Schools were already doing this mapping.

However, as this practice hadn’t yet become embedded, in the introduction of the Submission of Coursework Policy in 2018/19, the following was stated:

*It is the responsibility of the School to document, prior to the start of teaching, the following on the Vision (now Canvas) Course Homepage: Date issued; Assessment submission deadline; When feedback will be issued.*

*Each School will ensure that coursework deadlines are coordinated to ensure workloads are manageable for students. In light of this, it is therefore the responsibility of the student to work professionally and work towards submitting all assessed coursework by the submission deadline.*

Additionally, in the Academic Management Structures, it is stated, in the remit of the Year Co-ordinator (approved for implementation with effect from 2018/19), that it is the responsibility of the Year Co-ordinator, working with the programme teaching team, to coordinate assignment submission dates across courses. For PGT programmes, this role should be undertaken by the Programme Director of Studies.

Therefore, there already exist policies on assessment scheduling and provision of this information to students.

Assessment Scheduling in 2021/22: Restatement of Existing Policy

At its meeting on 2 December 2020, the LTAYG agreed that a separate policy statement should be introduced as a means of supporting the management and communication of assessment scheduling during 2020/21. The following policy statement, which is a confirmation of existing policies, was reaffirmed by the LTAYG on 16 December 2020:

- As per the existing policy, coursework deadlines should be coordinated to ensure workloads are manageable for students;
- As per the existing policy, *it is the responsibility of the student to work professionally and work towards submitting all assessed coursework by the submission deadline*;
- As per the Academic Management Structures, it is the responsibility of the Year Co-ordinator, *working with the programme teaching team, to coordinate assignment submission dates across courses*;
- As per the existing policy, the following should be undertaken by Schools:
  - assessment schedules are presented on Canvas;
  - deadlines are presented as part of an overall schedule for the semester;
  - all students receive/have access to a published calendar of assessment deadlines for all their courses each semester.
Assessment Scheduling in 2021/22: Guidance for Schools

As a means of facilitating the mapping out of assessment deadlines, the School of Engineering and Physical Sciences has introduced a School-wide assessment scheduling tool. This tool, or variants of it, was subsequently adopted by other Schools, as a temporary measure prior to the implementation of the assessment scheduling function within the Global Curriculum Management system (GCM replaced PAMS from September 2021). Other Schools may wish to contact EPS (via the Director of Learning and Teaching) regarding use of this assessment scheduling tool.

Schools can determine the most appropriate means of managing assessment scheduling across a semester or programme. The only University requirement is that the Year Co-ordinator is responsible for the co-ordination of assessment deadlines across a particular year group/stage of study. The LTA has produced a Watt Works Quick Guide on taking a programme-level approach to assessment and feedback.

In scheduling assessment deadlines, Schools should pay particular attention to any coursework assignments due for completion in an exam diet and minimise clashing or bunching around dates of take-home exams.

The following guidance has been produced by the Student Representative Bodies:
Well-planned assessment scheduling allows both staff and students to undertake their work and studies more effectively. When assessments are spread out across the full semester, key pinch points are removed and student effort can be distributed more evenly across all important topics. Concentration of student effort around bunched assessment deadlines impacts overall learning, as students prioritise some work, and therefore some learning outcomes, over others. Assessment throughout the entire semester enables students to reinforce their understanding of a greater range of topics rather than a small selection.

Conversely, “assessment bunching” can have a detrimental effect on student attainment: with too many assignments to complete simultaneously, students cannot concentrate sufficient effort on each one in addition to continuing their studies.

Volume of Assessment in 2021/22

Feedback from students and some External Examiners and anecdotal evidence at the LTAYG have highlighted that over-assessment continues to be an area of concern across Heriot-Watt generally. This is a long-standing issue for the University and so Schools should be mindful of the impact on both students and staff (the latter particularly in relation to workload and wellbeing given the volume of marking, Exam Boards etc). See separate summary on Assessment Scheduling 2021/22.

Assessment Scheduling in 2021/22: Guidance on Communicating to Students

As is standard practice, Schools should continue to communicate assessment deadlines to students and, in line with the existing policies above, should ensure that: this information is presented on Canvas; deadlines are presented as part of an overall schedule for the semester; all students receive/have access to a published calendar of assessment deadlines for all their courses each semester.

In communicating assessment schedules to students, Schools should make students aware that, although assessment schedules will have been carefully planned, there will be occasions when deadlines might conflict or be close together and that exams be held on consecutive days.

It should be highlighted to students that it is part of their professional and personal development, and a key time management skill, to be able to manage conflicting deadlines, and that they should accordingly plan and prioritise their time and workload.

Schools should also bring to students’ attention the resources and support available to them (from Student Wellbeing Services, the Effective Learning Service and the Student Union Advice Hub) in areas such as assessment, time management and dealing with exam anxiety.

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4 It is envisaged that the assessment scheduling function within GCM will be recommended for use once the assessment information is updated following the two-year exemption from recording assessment changes on the central system due to the major and temporary changes to assessment introduced in response to the pandemic.
As part of the University’s response to COVID in 2019/20, it was agreed that the standard Submission of Coursework Policy should apply to late submissions for all assessments, irrespective of the format (including take-home exams and coursework being submitted electronically) and mode of submission (L+T COVID Group, final record of decisions, 22 May 2020). This was a change of policy, as take-home exams were explicitly included.

However, there was a variety of practice across Schools regarding late submission of take-home exams, resulting in different decisions for students: no action taken and marked as per scripts submitted on time; requesting students to submit mitigating circumstances; implementation of the penalties outlined in the Submission of Coursework policy.

Submission of Coursework Policy: Current Policy (pre-COVID)

The University’s Submission of Coursework Policy was introduced in 2018/19. In a step change from previous, related policies, the scope for extensions has been removed (unless an extension has been agreed as part of reasonable adjustments arrangements1). Students have up to five working days after the published deadline to submit, but receiving a 30% penalty. Any coursework submitted after five working days of the set submission date will automatically be awarded a “no grade”, with no formative feedback provided.

Coursework submitted late is flagged to those involved in the marking/grading process. Students are encouraged to apply for mitigating circumstances if they think that they will be late in submitting their coursework due to circumstances outwith their control. Where circumstances will result, or have resulted, in a deadline being missed, students should apply for this to be considered under the Mitigating Circumstances Policy.

Exams and webtests/class tests are explicitly excluded from the Submission of Coursework Policy.

Submission of Coursework Policy in 2021/22: Restatement of Current Policy

As stated above, the inclusion of take-home exams in the late submission process, as outlined in the Submission of Coursework Policy, during 2019/20 led to variability in practice across Schools and so variability in treatment of students. The Learning and Teaching Academic Year Group, therefore, agreed to revert in 2020/21 to the original policy, which excludes take-home exams and class tests/web tests. This arrangement will remain in place for 2021/22.

The following sections, which confirm existing policies, were endorsed by the LTAYG on 16 December 2020:

For the purposes of clarity and equity of treatment of students, from January 2021, the Submission of Coursework Policy will apply to late submissions for all assessments (including coursework substitutes for face-to-face exams), with the exception of class tests/web tests and take-home open exams.

If a student has missed a class test/web test or a take-home open book exam (ie there is no submission by the end of the time-limited period and there are no mitigating circumstances), then an ABS is given, as per standard, approved (ie pre-COVID) arrangements.

If technology or other circumstances prevent or delay a student from submitting a take-home open book exam or completing a class test/web test within the specified period of time, then the student should apply under the Mitigating Circumstances Policy for this to be taken into consideration. This course of action accords with the advice given to students in the Student Guides to Take-Home Exams.

As per the existing policy, it is the responsibility of the student to work professionally and work towards submitting all assessed coursework by the submission deadline. Students are encouraged to manage their time and workload to enable them to submit coursework by the specified deadlines.

1. Extensions are not automatically applied for all students with reasonable adjustments. Following a discussion between a student and the Disability Advisor, an “extension to deadlines justification” will be added to their record, indicating that an extension might be required. The student will then request an extension with justification on a case-by-case basis with each lecturer. One week is the recommended extension timeframe. Students are discouraged from continually requesting extensions; rather, the Disability Advisors will work with students on developing their organisational and time management skills.
There were no particular issues identified with feedback which required discussion by the Learning and Teaching Academic Year 2020/21 Group (LTAYG). However, there had been some lack of clarity earlier in 2020 regarding feedback turnaround times and feedback on exams submitted electronically; both matters were clarified by the LTAYG. The section below summarises the agreed position on both.

**Feedback on Coursework in 2021/22: Restatement of Current Policy**

The University’s Feedback on Coursework Policy was introduced in 2015/16, which states:

*This document provides the policy framework for Schools, which should be used in the delivery of formative feedback on assessed coursework. The policy applies to students studying on all Heriot-Watt University programmes of study. This policy does not cover examinations.*

*The University is committed to providing identical academic standards for students and fostering a learning environment which delivers timely formative feedback to students. This is viewed as essential in supporting learning and improvement.*

*In order to realise this aim, a maximum 3-week turnaround for the return of formative feedback on assessed coursework will be in place by the start of the Academic Year 2015/2016. For some pieces of assessment, such as large-scale projects and dissertations, this policy may not apply. This is to ensure that the quality of feedback is not compromised.*

*It is the responsibility of each School to implement the policy.*

At its meeting on 3 November 2021, the LTAYG agreed to retain the current policy of a 3-week turnaround for coursework in 2021/22. However, it was agreed that this should be interpreted and actioned at School level in a flexible way during 2021/22 in light of the impact of COVID-19, the pressures on staff and students and the increase in coursework elements (including as substitutes for in-person exams).

**Feedback on Coursework in 2021/22: Final Summative Coursework**

At its meeting on 3 November 2021, the LTAYG agreed, in response to requests from Schools, that, in addition to largescale assignments (projects and dissertations) exempted in the current policy, the exemption from the 3-week turnaround should apply for 2021/22 to the final piece of summative coursework assessment (ie those which contribute to the overall mark/grade) in courses assessed entirely by coursework.

In such cases, feedback will be returned later with final coursework marks after the publication of course results by RAS. In this way, Course Assessment Boards can undertake any moderation prior to release of results, which would be problematic if coursework results and feedback had been released to students in advance of the Course Assessment Board. It was also noted that there was no immediate formative benefit in providing feedback for final pieces of coursework.

If this exemption from the 3-week turnaround time is being applied, it is critical that information on feedback return dates for final summative coursework assignments should be communicated to students.

It was agreed to revisit, prior to AY 2022/23, the 3-week turnaround policy as part of a review of the Feedback on Coursework Policy to be undertaken by the University Committee for Learning and Teaching.

**Feedback on Take-Home Open Book Exams in 2021/22: Restatement of Current Guidance**

At its meeting on 23 September 2020, the LTAYG approved a revised Guidance Note on Access to Exam Scripts and Feedback to Students on Exam Performance, which had been updated to include take-home open book exams, ie the provision of feedback on exams completed electronically. The key principle in relation to feedback is as follows:

*Students should be given the opportunity to receive feedback on examination performance (except final year undergraduate or final diet postgraduate taught programme students); this applies to students across all locations and*
modes of study. Each School can determine the most appropriate method of providing feedback on examination performance, depending on the discipline, cohort size, level and mode of study.

Examples of methods used to provide access to examination scripts and feedback, as provided in the above Guidance Note, include the following:

- Examination workshops timetabled in the next semester to go through examination performance and overall learning points; this is particularly relevant for core courses.
- Provision of feedback through generic commentary for all students, highlighting learning points, posted on the University’s VLE or other University-approved means of communicating with students, or where relevant members of academic staff have an opportunity to provide group feedback. In the case of electronic exams, as students will have their own copy of their submitted script, generic feedback could be a more practical approach.
- Individual student feedback sheets relating to examination scripts, detailing how a student performed; this could also be used to assist off-campus students.
- One-to-one feedback provided by Personal Tutors or members of the Course team.

Each School should inform students (eg handbook, statement on Course VLE site) of the methods used to provide exam performance feedback.

There is no University policy or guidance on return times for feedback on take-home open book exams.

The LTA has produced a Watt Works Quick Guide on helping students to benefit from feedback on exams. Additionally, there are other LTA Watt Works Quick Guides on Feedback, including a guide for students on feedback.