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 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.