

Policy on Examinations and Other Forms of Assessment held in Different Timezones

As a global institution, Heriot-Watt University has extensive experience in holding examinations and other forms of assessment¹ across the world in different timezones, for on-campus programmes, online provision and programmes delivered through academic partnerships.

The University does not prescribe which types of assessment should be used for courses delivered in multiple locations or modes; however, this [Policy on Examinations and Other Forms of Assessment held in Different Timezones](#) has been in place since November 2006 in order to manage risk associated with assessments being across timezones and to assure quality, academic standards, equity and academic integrity.

The Policy has been updated to incorporate current approaches to managing assessments across different timezones.

This Policy is supported by the accompanying [Implementation Procedures](#).

Evaluation of Risk

It is the responsibility of Schools to decide upon the most appropriate type of assessment for courses delivered as multi-location/multi-mode and to evaluate the risk associated with these, taking into account quality, academic standards, equity and academic integrity. Schools should use the following categorisation to inform their decision:

• 'Some or considerable advantage'	Where advance knowledge of assessment content would give some or considerable advantage to students possessing such knowledge.
• 'No advantage'	Where advance knowledge of assessment content would give no advantage to students possessing such knowledge.

'Some or Considerable Advantage'

Where advance knowledge of assessment content (eg examination questions) would give some or considerable advantage to students possessing such knowledge:

- Identical examinations/assessments *must* be held at the same Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) worldwide.
- Where this is not possible (eg due to scheduling constraints or the timezones being unfavourable to particular students), different examinations/assessments must be set. In such cases, a robust moderation process must be followed, as per the University's [policy](#) and [procedures](#), to ensure equivalence and consistency of quality and standards.

'No Advantage'

Where advance knowledge of assessment content (eg Final Online Assessments which are defined as open book forms of coursework) would give no advantage to students possessing such knowledge:

- Identical assessments *may* be held at different times (GMT), normally within a single 24-hour period.
- Robust processes must be put in place to monitor and manage the conduct of the assessments to ensure their integrity is not compromised.

Arrangements for managing examinations and other forms of assessment across time zones will be the responsibility of Schools and Registry and Academic Support. Monitoring of the effectiveness of these arrangements will be the responsibility of the University Committee for Quality and Standards.

Responsibilities

The procedures which underpin the implementation of the above Policy are provided in a separate [Implementation Procedures](#) document. In terms of responsibilities, these are summarised below:

The School will:

- make a judgement based on the type of assessment, format and content, and the extent to which prior sight would advantage one group of students over another;

¹ "Examinations" are hand-written or computer-based invigilated, time-limited assessments held in an approved venue and scheduled during the Exam and Assessment Diet. They are arranged and timetabled centrally by Registry and Academic Support; see [Types of Assessment: Policy and Administrative Definitions](#) for all other forms of assessment, which are categorised as "Coursework".

- ii. decide upon the appropriate risk: either 'some or considerable advantage' or 'no advantage';
- iii. in light of a 'some or considerable advantage' decision, implement this Policy and its Procedures and the University's [Policy on Moderation of Assessment](#) and [associated School Implementation Procedures](#).

The University will:

- i. through the Learning and Teaching Academic Operations Committee, keep under review Implementation Procedures for Examinations and Other Forms of Assessment in Different Timezones;
- ii. through the University Committee for Quality and Standards,
 - keep under review the Policy on Examinations and Other Forms of Assessment in Different Timezones;
 - review annually the conduct of examinations and other forms of assessment held in different timezones
- iii. through the Registry and Academic Support Directorate, schedule examinations and other forms of assessment in timezones which minimise academic risk.

Original version, approved by the then Quality Committee, October 2006, and by the Senate, 22 November 2006. Last update; June 2019 (for factual accuracy only)

Revised version (incl. factual accuracy updates), Learning and Teaching Academic Operations Committee, 18 September 2024