

# ACADEMIC QUALITY

## Learning and Teaching Policy

### Policy on Scheduling and Submission of Coursework (incl. Late Submission)



## Purpose and Summary of Policy on Scheduling and (Late) Submission of Coursework

This document provides the policy framework for the University's [Submission and Scheduling of Coursework Policy](#), which has been in place since 2018/19. A revised version was introduced from 2022/23.

This policy applies to all forms of coursework, including projects and dissertations. The key policy aspects are:

- 1) 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;
- 2) No individual extensions are permitted under any circumstances<sup>1 2</sup>;
- 3) A standard **30% deduction** from the mark awarded will be applied up to a maximum of **five working days**. For example, if the awarded mark for coursework is 65, and is submitted late, then the following deduction will be applied:  
 $65 \times 0.7 = 45.5$ . Mark for that piece of coursework would be 45.5;
- 4) 0 F will be awarded for coursework submitted after five working days, unless there are approved mitigating circumstances, and no formative feedback will be provided;
- 5) Coursework submitted late will be flagged to those involved in the marking and grading process.

This policy is intended to ensure equity and fairness for all students on taught programmes across all modes and locations.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the University's [Feedback on Coursework Policy](#).

## Scope

The policy applies to all Heriot-Watt University taught students (undergraduate and postgraduate) across all modes and locations from the start of academic year 2018/19; this revised version is applicable from AY 2022/23.

Coursework is defined as *work carried out by students which either constitutes, or contributes towards, their overall grade/credit for a course (summative) or is provided and marked for learning purposes, but does not contribute to the overall grade/credit (formative). Coursework is assessed separately from written examinations. Coursework includes undergraduate and postgraduate taught dissertations and projects and also includes Final Online Assessments.*

Examples of coursework are provided in [Types of Assessment: Policy and Administrative Definitions](#).

*The following procedures support the implementation of the Policy Statement provided in the opening section. The first section focuses on coursework scheduling; the second on late submission of coursework.*

<sup>1</sup> Individual reasonable adjustments (coursework) must be considered in collaboration with Disability Services within Student Wellbeing Services. 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. Course Teams should ensure that such extensions are not set during student vacation periods. Students are discouraged from continually requesting extensions; rather, the Disability Advisors will work with students on developing their organisational and time management skills.

<sup>2</sup> There is an exemption for Course Leaders who may opt to give an extension to an entire class in exceptional circumstances; this includes circumstances in which the University has invoked Regulation A10: Authorities in Exceptional Circumstances.

## Scheduling Coursework

### Assessment Information on Canvas and Calendar of Assessment Deadlines

It is the responsibility of the School to document, prior to the start of teaching, the following on the Canvas Course page, and elsewhere as appropriate, for both formative (not credit-rated) and summative (contributes to the final mark/grade) coursework:

Date issued	Assessment submission deadline	Format of Submission	When and how feedback will be returned	Format of feedback
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Schools should ensure that all students receive/have access to a published calendar of assessment deadlines for all their courses each semester.

### Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibilities relating to coursework scheduling are specified in [Assessment: School Roles and Responsibilities](#).

### Key Procedures for Coursework Scheduling

Coursework can be scheduled throughout Teaching Weeks (Schools' responsibility) and for submission during the Exam and Assessment Diets (Schools' responsibility), except:

- Class Tests cannot be scheduled during an Exam and Assessment Diet (Schools' responsibility, with RAS support for students with individual reasonable adjustments);
- Final Online Assessments must be scheduled only during an Exam and Assessment Diet (RAS' responsibility)

See [Types of Assessment: Policy and Administrative Definitions](#) for further detail on these two types of coursework.

Scheduling of coursework is subject to the requirements below:

- 1) Schools should ensure that coursework deadlines are set during weekdays only and at a time which is fair and equitable for each campus/timezone (eg 0900-1700 local time) and not advantageous only for UK-based students. For multi-campus coursework, a deadline of midday should be adopted. Submission timings should be set up on Canvas as appropriate.
- 2) Schools should not schedule a coursework deadline and an exam (either hand-written or computer-based) on the same day within the same course.
- 3) Schools should take into account the full suite of assessment which students will be undertaking when scheduling coursework, providing sufficient time for preparation for both coursework and exams, and being mindful of assessment bunching within and across courses. A programme-level approach to scheduling is recommended, as per School Leadership roles and responsibilities in [Global Academic Management Structures](#), where it is stated, for example, that the (Global) Programme Director is responsible for ensuring the co-ordination of assessment deadlines.
- 4) Schools should set coursework deadlines which allow the "up to five working days" principle to be applied. In such circumstances, consideration should be given to coursework deadlines being set in the final week of the Exams and Assessment Diets, eg will the School permit the coursework to be submitted late in the first week of teaching after the associated break? In revising this policy for implementation from 2022/23, the Learning and Teaching Academic Year Group (now the Learning and Teaching Academic Operations Committee) recommended that coursework deadlines be set at least six working days before the end of the Exams and Assessment Diet to allow the "up to five working days" concession (part of the 30% deduction specified in this Submission of Coursework Policy) to be applied in full before the end of the last day of the diet and thereby avoid any consequent impact on marking, results processing, Course Assessment Boards and results release. However, the need to avoid bunching and clashing of deadlines was also recognised and it was agreed that Schools should seek to manage this in an appropriate way.

- 5) Schools should ensure that students are made fully aware of instances when there are multiple forms of assessment in the Exams and Assessment Diet, eg deadlines for coursework and in-person exams.
- 6) 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 to enable them to submit coursework by the specified deadlines.
- 7) Each School will ensure that coursework deadlines are coordinated and the volume of assessment is appropriate to the course learning outcomes and to the notional student effort hours so that workloads and deadlines are manageable for students. Thereafter, it is then the responsibility of the student to work professionally and plan their time accordingly to ensure that all assessed coursework is submitted by the submission deadline. Schools should ensure that students are made fully aware of their responsibilities in this respect.

***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 and Assessment Review/Redesign**

Feedback from students and from some External Examiners, as well as anecdotal evidence at various committees, have highlighted that overassessment 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). The University’s strategic *Transforming Assessment* initiative is designed to assist Schools in redesigning assessment, including addressing issues related to overassessment and adopting a programme-level approach to assessment.

The Learning and Teaching Academy continues to provide a wide range of support for Schools in planning for and designing assessment, including designing an appropriate balance of assessment and designing assessment at the programme level. Teaching teams refreshing course and assessment design are encouraged to make use of these resources:

- [Curriculum and Assessment Design Toolkit: Assessment](#)
- [Assessment and Feedback](#)
- [LTA Support for Schools](#)

The LTA updates this information each academic year, providing a suite of resources and support for teaching teams in preparation of the start of the session; see the latest “Get Set for the Academic Year” [here](#). Check out the LTA SharePoint Hub for [current information](#). Further support and guidance are available from the LTA: [LTAcademy@hw.ac.uk](mailto:LTAcademy@hw.ac.uk)

## **Late Submission of Coursework**

Key procedures in support of the University’s policy on late submission of coursework are set out below.

- 1) In the case where a student submits coursework up to five working days late, and the student has valid mitigating circumstances, the mitigating circumstances policy will apply and appropriate mitigation will be applied. Students are encouraged to apply for mitigating circumstances if they think that they will be late in submitting their coursework due to circumstances beyond 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](#).
- 2) Feedback will be provided on all coursework submitted up to five working days late and on any coursework where mitigating circumstances have been approved. Any coursework submitted after five working days, including where mitigating circumstances have not been approved, of the set submission date shall be automatically awarded a *0 F*, with no feedback provided. Schools should emphasise to students the importance of being able to manage their workload to avoid being in this situation.

- 3) There will be no extensions granted to coursework (this includes projects and dissertations on both undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes).
- 4) Coursework which is submitted late shall be flagged as being late by appropriate colleagues involved in the assessment and recording of marks and grades.
- 5) It is important that students have appropriate information on how to apply for the following if they are unable to submit their coursework on time:
  - Temporary Suspension of Studies
  - Mitigating Circumstances

## Implementation

It is the responsibility of each School to:

- Ensure that coursework submission deadlines are co-ordinated and available to students at the start of each academic semester (in the [Global Academic Management Structures](#), the (Global) Programme Director is responsible for ensuring the co-ordination of assessment deadlines)<sup>3</sup>. These deadlines must, wherever possible, remain fixed and only altered with the permission of the Director of Learning and Teaching (to be known as the Associate Executive Dean (Education and Student Life) from 2024/25). Such changes must be clearly communicated to students in line with the expectations of this policy;
- Emphasise implications of the submission of coursework policy, particularly the consequences of late submission, at all campuses and across all modes;
- Flag coursework which has been submitted late to colleagues involved in the assessment and recording of marks and grades;
- Offer guidance and support to students on all available options should they be unable to submit their coursework on time, notably:
  - Temporary Suspension of Studies;
  - Mitigating Circumstances.

It is the responsibility of the Registry and Academic Support Directorate to:

- Emphasise implications of the late submission of coursework policy and other available options to students clearly through a variety of communication channels across all campuses, partnerships and online provision.

It is the responsibility of the Learning and Teaching Academic Operations Committee to:

- Monitor annually the effectiveness of the policy and process by reviewing statistics, engaging with student representatives and colleagues and to take forward any enhancements to the process;
- Review the policy on a five-yearly basis;
- Submit any changes to the policy for consideration and approval to the University Committee for Learning and Teaching.

## Time-Limited Coursework

Mid-term class tests, web tests, presentations, coursework to be completed within a specific timeframe (including Final Online Assessments, which are used primarily and normally only for Heriot-Watt Online courses) and other-time limited activities are exempt from the policy on late submission of coursework. The following arrangements apply to time-limited coursework:

### **Student has missed the Timed Assignment and No Mitigating Circumstances**

If a student has missed a class test/web test or other time-limited coursework (ie there is no submission by the end of the specified time period and there are no mitigating circumstances), then an ABS is given for this component, as per standard, approved arrangements (see section 8.7 of [UG and PG Assessment Procedures](#) document to differentiate between partial and entire assessment being missed).

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<sup>3</sup> See [Assessment: School Roles and Responsibilities](#) for an overview of responsibilities for assessment within Schools.

## Mitigating Circumstances

If particular circumstances prevent or delay a student from completing or submitting a time-limited coursework, then the student should apply, as advised, under the [Mitigating Circumstances Policy](#) for this to be taken into consideration. The normal processes will then follow depending on whether or not the mitigating circumstances are approved.

## Late Submission of All Timed Assignments

As explained above, the University's Submission of Coursework Policy does not apply to timed-limited coursework of any form, which are specifically exempt from the "30%/5 working days" concession. As a consequence, assignments submitted after the allocated duration will be regarded as late and will not be marked, receiving 0 F (unless there are valid MCs which have been approved).

## Examinations

Examinations for taught programmes are centrally scheduled and invigilated: they can be either hand-written in a University approved exam venue or completed online in a University approved Computer Lab/Test Centre. The submission of both types of examinations does not need a specific policy relating to late submission, as invigilators will gather in all hand-written scripts in the case of hand-written exams, and, in the case of exams being completed online in an approved Computer Lab/Test Centre, there will be an automatic cut-off at the end of the allocated time period for these invigilated online exams

## Guidance on Communicating to Students

Schools should communicate assessment deadlines to students and 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 in-person exams might be held on consecutive days, and that coursework might also be scheduled for submission in the Exam and Assessment Diets.

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 incl [Student Success Advisors](#), the [Skills Hub](#) and the [Student Union Advice Hub](#)) in areas such as assessment, time management and dealing with exam anxiety. See also [Supporting Our Students SharePoint site](#).

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