FAQs about reasonable adjustments in online coursework assessments and exams, and advice for studying at home

Coursework assessment:

You may have an assessment, test or exam that is in a different format to what you are used to. This might be a multiple-choice fixed time exam, a viva or oral exam, or a series of short essays. Individual lecturers will decide how to assess their students.

You will continue to receive adjustments, such as extra time in short, fixed-time exams or assessments. It will not be possible, however, to provide you with some adjustments, such as a scribe/reader. You may not need this because you are able to type your answers at home and will have access to spell-checking software. If you would like to discuss assistive software alternatives, such as text to speech or speech to text, please contact disability@hw.ac.uk.

Your School will ensure that you have appropriate adjustments. If you need to discuss the adjustments for an assessment, please contact your lecturer/school in advance. You can also contact disability@hw.ac.uk for advice.

End of semester exams:

Q: I usually have extra time in exams. Do I get extra time for the online exams?

A: If the exam is a take home, open book exam in a 24-hour window, this is inclusive of extra time. 24 hours allows everyone enough time to complete the exam.

If you are being asked to sit an exam or piece of coursework assessment expected to take an hour or less but it is open for a reasonably longer duration, for example in excess of 6 hours, extra time will not be added. If you usually receive extra time as an adjustment, this format still allows plenty of time to complete the assessment and we suggest that you start the exam/coursework at the beginning of the time window to allow the most possible working time.

If an exam or piece of coursework assessment is time limited with the expectation that this time limit be the full duration of the exam or assessment effort, you are entitled to the full-time adjustments as in any traditional exam/assessment. This would usually apply to time limited coursework or exams in the 1–3-hour duration, not including the added upload time.
If you are a student with an exam on an F10 or F11 course code and the exam is a 4-hour duration on the timetable (inclusive of upload time), you will get extra time on the expected exam duration not including the upload time. F10 exams are expected to be 2-hour duration and F11 is a 3-hour duration, the extra time will be added to these durations not the full 4 hour as this is inclusive of upload timings.

However, if, despite the additional time given, you feel that you have been disadvantaged in any way, please complete a mitigating circumstances (MC) application: Guidance on MC is published here: Mitigating circumstances - Heriot-Watt University (hw.ac.uk)

Q. I usually have a **disregard spelling and grammar errors** adjustment. Can I still use a sticker?

A: A **disregard spelling and grammar errors** sticker is only applicable to timed, handwritten exams. If you type your answers, you will have access to a spell checker.

Q: I usually have access to a **Scribe**. Is there an alternative?

A: You will not be expected to hand write your exam answers, you will type your answers and you will have access to spell checking software, either your own, or see Home Study Support Technology Suggestions link* below.

However, if you do have any handwritten submissions or if you feel that you will be disadvantaged in any way especially due to time constraints, please alert the Disability Service in advance.

There is information on completing a mitigating circumstances (MC) application: here: Mitigating circumstances - Heriot-Watt University (hw.ac.uk)

Q: I usually have access to a **Reader**. Is there an alternative?

A: You can use text to speech software to listen to the assessment questions as well as your answers.

However, if you feel that you will be disadvantaged in any way, please alert the Disability Service in advance.

There is information on completing a mitigating circumstances (MC) application: here: Mitigating circumstances - Heriot-Watt University (hw.ac.uk)

Q: I usually have access to a **Prompter**. Is there an alternative?

A: Depending on the exam style, you may have 24 hours to complete the online exam so you are not under the same time pressures that you would be in a time limited exam.
It may be that having longer to complete the exam means that you may become distracted or that you procrastinate. Ensure that you are well prepared and have a time plan prepared in advance for completing your revision, preparation and exam on the day.

You could work with your study tutor/support worker in advance to prepare for the exams and design a time-managed plan for the day of your exam.

It may be that someone at home can help with prompting or time management.

If you feel that you have been disadvantaged in any way, please complete a mitigating circumstances application. Guidance on MC is here: Mitigating circumstances - Heriot-Watt University (hw.ac.uk)

Q: I usually have access to a separate room or quiet room for my exams and this is not possible in my shared home?

A: Let those you share a home with know in advance that you will need IT equipment and quiet surroundings on the day of an exam. Have a timetable for working and share this with those you live with. Build in breaks and share these too.

If you feel that you really need to have a study space on campus to sit your exam, please alert the Disability Service and we can try to accommodate this.

If you feel that you have been disadvantaged in any way, please complete a mitigating circumstances application. Guidance on MC is here: Mitigating circumstances - Heriot-Watt University (hw.ac.uk).

Let us know if you have any questions or feel that you will need further support disability@hw.ac.uk

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Studying at home - Preparing for online assessments/exams

Ensure that you understand how you will be assessed for each course and prepare as fully as possible.

Study smartly tips:

• The following study advice may be helpful: Take-home open-book exams: Revision and time management (sharepoint.com)

• Revise and study in advance for all types of assessments, prepare well in advance.

• Find a place to work where you are comfortable and productive.
• Be organised. Make sure that you know what you need to study, then prepare and follow a study plan. Ensure that you include time to sleep, eat and take breaks. You may find useful advice on getting a good night’s sleep at The Sleep Scotland Web Site.

• Make sure you have gathered all the resources you need, e.g. VLE resources, coursework information, notes, reading lists, past papers, etc., well in advance of your exam dates.

• Think about how you will organise your time. There are many effective methods available. Map your time to your study plan and include eating, sleeping, taking breaks and revising and preparing for assessments and exams.

• Make sure you divide your revision time appropriately and effectively across all your exam subjects.

• Use a range of tools and strategies that suit your learning style.

• Summarise and sort your notes and other resources.

• Save your references.

• Try to be selective and learn what you really need to learn.

The following technology advice may be helpful: Download PDF: Home Study Support Technology Suggestions. Make sure you access this well in advance of your exams to allow you to trial any of the recommendations.

If anything does go wrong on the day of an online assessment, try to evidence this, and complete a mitigating circumstances application. Guidance on MC is here: Mitigating circumstances - Heriot-Watt University (hw.ac.uk)

This video shows you how to access campus networked assistive and course software via ‘key server’:

https://web.microsoftstream.com/video/0ba130da-7ff4-422b-bfe1-07fa7ff157c

Contact Disability@hw.ac.uk if you’d like to discuss exam adjustments.