

Guide to August Take-Home Exams for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Students: General Information

The purpose of this Guide is to provide **General Information** about the **take-home exams** taking place in the August diet of examinations. The **Technical Guide** provides practical information about how to access the exam paper and how to submit your completed exam script. This Guide and all other Student Guides and FAQs on Exams are available at: <https://www.hw.ac.uk/uk/students/studies/examinations.htm>

For students, standard in-person exams for the August 2020 exam period have been replaced with timed **take-home exams**. This change has been made as part of the University's response to the Coronavirus.

What is a take-home exam?

A take-home exam is an exam which you take in your own space (e.g. at home), by downloading the paper and uploading your answers via the internet (a Technical Guide on how to do this is available at <https://www.hw.ac.uk/uk/students/studies/examinations.htm>). The exam is taken under 'open book' conditions, meaning that you have access to your notes, course material, the internet and any other resources you may wish to consult.

The exam will be time-limited, but rather than having, for example, two or three hours as for a standard exam, there will be 24 hours between the exam paper being made available to you, and the deadline for submitting your completed exam script. You aren't expected to spend 24 hours working on your answers, this time is provided to give you time to access the paper, write your answers, and submit your completed script. For some exams, there will be a maximum word limit for each question or the exam as a whole, to help you manage your time; numeracy-based questions will not have a specified word limit.

You do not need to wait until the deadline to submit your exam script and can submit at any point during the time period. Please refer to the [Technical Guide](#) for instructions on submitting.

Frequently Asked Questions

We understand that these arrangements may be unfamiliar and confusing for some students. Below is a set of FAQs. If you have a question that is not answered here, please get in touch with your School contact as early as possible.

- **Can I work with other students to do the exam?**
 - The exam script should be your own work. You are expected to undertake the exam on your own and without collusion, i.e. without assistance from other people; without collaborating or discussing with anyone else; without sharing answers (including on social media). Normal processes (e.g. Turnitin) will be used to check that submissions do not draw from other people's work in an inappropriate way.
 - If staff have reason to think that you have collaborated with other students, this will be treated as academic misconduct. Information about how the University responds to evidence of academic misconduct can be found here: <https://www.hw.ac.uk/students/studies/examinations/plagiarism.htm>
- **Will there be a maximum word count for my exam script?**
 - For some exam papers (e.g. essay-based exams) a maximum word count will be specified, either for the whole exam or per question. The maximum word count, if there is one, will be stated on the exam paper.
 - For numerical-type of exam papers, a word count would not be appropriate and so will not be specified on the exam paper.

- **Where should I take the exam?**
 - You should try and find a quiet space where you will not be disturbed. A bedroom or study is ideal, but a quiet space in a shared room may also be suitable. You may find headphones useful for blocking out external noise.

- **How long is the exam expected to take?**
 - Although 24 hours are provided for you to access the exam paper, complete the exam and submit your exam script, there is absolutely no expectation that you spend all that time on the exam. For an exam that was originally scheduled to be two or three hours long, it would not be anticipated that it would take more than one or two hours more than the original time to complete (this allows additional time for consulting notes, textbooks or for working on calculations).
 - The 24-hour assessment period is to allow time for you to access and download the exam paper, consult any reference material if that is appropriate to your type of exam, check your responses and prepare and upload your script (please remember to keep a copy of your submitted exam script for yourself). How long you spend on the exam is up to you, but for some exams there will be a maximum permitted word count which will help to guide time spent. For numerical-based questions, you are encouraged to spend no more than two hours in addition to the original time for the unseen exam.
 - You are not required to complete the exam in one sitting and you are free to take breaks as required. Please bear in mind that you may have more than one exam in a week, therefore you will need to manage your time accordingly to make time for sleep, meals, caring/family responsibilities, exercise etc.
 - You do not need to wait until the deadline to submit your exam script and can submit at any point during the time period. Please refer to the [Technical Guide](#) for instructions on submitting.

- **How should I prepare for the exam?**
 - You should prepare for the exam in the normal way, by revising the course material. In addition, you may want to prepare your notes, textbooks, handouts, website bookmarks etc. to make it easier to use them during the exam. You should also plan in advance to make sure that you have a quiet place to take the exam. Advisers in the Effective Learning Service are available to help with revision through online appointments and webinars, their contact details are [here](#). Tips and advice on revision can be found [here](#).

- **Can I consult the internet when I'm doing the exam?**
 - Yes. You can consult any notes you've made on the course, any course material, any previous assignments you have completed, any books or articles, any internet source, and anything else you find useful. When using internet sources, it is important to think critically about the information you are using, e.g. the reliability of the author, and the validity of the claims being made. As with any assessment, plagiarism – passing other people's work off as your own – is strictly forbidden.
 - For essay-based questions, you must reference material as you would for coursework (but you don't need to reference lecture/tutorial notes and accompanying slides etc). If in doubt about referencing you can find guides [here](#) and resources from the Power Hours [here](#). Normal processes (e.g. Turnitin) will be used to check that submissions do not draw from published work in an inappropriate way. The University's standard procedures for dealing with academic misconduct will still apply in the case of take home exams. Guidance on plagiarism, and information about how the University responds to evidence of plagiarism, can be found here: <https://www.hw.ac.uk/students/studies/examinations/plagiarism.htm>
 - For numerical-based questions, referencing is not applicable and therefore not required for completing your exam.

- **Will the exam paper look different to a normal exam paper?**
 - No. The exam paper was designed well in advance of the decision to convert these exams to take-home exams, and no major changes have been made.

- **Will the exam be marked differently from a standard exam?**
 - The exam will be marked according to the marking scheme prepared in advance and approved by the course's External Examiners. See *enclosed University-wide grades descriptors*

- For essay type questions, you will have access to your notes and course material etc., therefore it will be marked more like a piece of coursework rather than a normal 'closed-book' exam. For example, for essay-based questions, you should provide references where appropriate (but you don't need to reference lecture/tutorial notes and accompanying slides etc).
- For numerical-types of exam questions, your completed script will look more like a standard exam response, since, for example, referencing is not appropriate for calculation-based questions.

- **What happens if I can't take the exam?**
 - We expect all students to take their exams. If due to exceptional circumstances you are not able to take the exam, you will be able to submit a case for mitigating circumstances. If you have reason in advance to think you won't be able to take the exam, please get in touch with your School contact. There will be a dedicated exam support service available during the exam period, and you should contact them if you have any problems during the exam period, for example problems accessing the exam paper. Contact details for the exam support service are provided in the [Technical Guide](#).

- **How will the Mitigating Circumstances policy apply for these exams?**
 - The difficult context for these exams will be taken into account for all students by Boards of Examiners in reaching their decisions and you do not need to apply for individual Mitigating Circumstances due to the current disruption. If however, you have any reason to think that your ability to undertake the exam will be affected by other factors outside your control (eg your own ill-health), you can apply for individual Mitigating Circumstances (MC) online through Student Self-Service. Please refer to the [MC Guide to Online Applications, Procedure and Form](#) (the Form should be used if you're not able to submit online).

- **What happens if I submit my completed exam script after the deadline?**
 - Late submissions due to problems with technology (e.g. internet access) or other legitimate mitigating circumstances (e.g. illness) will not be penalised. Guidance on applying for mitigating circumstances is provided in previous section. The Technical Guide provides contact details if you are experiencing IT problems which are likely to result in late submission.
 - Late submissions that are not due to problems with technology or accepted mitigating circumstances will be treated as non-submissions, and no marks will be awarded. If you think that you will have difficulty submitting your completed script on time, you should get in touch with your School contact as soon as possible.

- **Will I get feedback on my exam script?**
 - The University's [policy on feedback on exams](#) applies also to take home exam scripts: there is no individual feedback, but generic, whole-course feedback may be provided in due course.

- **Who should I contact if I have any queries or difficulties?**
 - If you have any queries about your take-home exam or any problems in accessing your take home exam area in Vision or submitting your take-home exam, please log an enquiry using the "Ask HWU" tile on the [Student Portal](#). Specific contact details for each campus can be found in the [Technical Guide](#)

| Grade | The Heriot-Watt Assessment and Progression System Grades Descriptors | |
|----------|--|---|
| A | Excellent | |
| | <i>Knowledge, understanding, application</i> A comprehensive, highly structured, focused and concise response to the assessment task(s), consistently demonstrating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an extensive and detailed knowledge of the subject matter • a highly-developed ability to apply this knowledge to the task set • evidence of extensive background reading • clear, fluent, stimulating and original expression • excellent presentation (spelling, grammar, graphical) with minimal or no presentation errors | <i>Analysis, synthesis and evaluation</i> A deep and systematic engagement with the assessment task(s), with consistently impressive demonstration of a comprehensive mastery of the subject matter, reflecting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a deep and broad knowledge and critical insight as well as extensive reading • a critical and comprehensive appreciation of the relevant literature or theoretical, technical or professional framework • an exceptional ability to organise, analyse and present arguments fluently and lucidly with a high level of critical analysis, amply supported by evidence, citation or quotation • a highly-developed capacity for original, creative and logical thinking |
| B | Very Good | |
| | <i>Knowledge, understanding, application</i> A thorough and well-organised response to the assessment task(s), demonstrating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a broad knowledge of the subject matter • considerable strength in applying that knowledge to the task set • evidence of substantial background reading • clear and fluent expression quality presentation with few presentation errors | <i>Analysis, synthesis and evaluation</i> A substantial engagement with the assessment task(s), demonstrating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a thorough familiarity with the relevant literature or theoretical, technical or professional framework • well-developed capacity to analyse issues, organise material, present arguments clearly and cogently well supported by evidence, citation or quotation • some original insights and capacity for creative and logical thinking |

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| C | Good | |
| | <i>Knowledge, understanding, application</i> | <i>Analysis, synthesis and evaluation</i> |
| | <p>A competent response to the assessment task(s), demonstrating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> adequate but not complete knowledge of the subject matter omission of some important subject matter or the appearance of a few minor errors capacity to apply knowledge appropriately to the task albeit with some errors evidence of some background reading clear expression with few areas of confusion writing of sufficient quality to convey meaning but some lack of fluency and command of suitable vocabulary good presentation with some presentation errors | <p>An intellectually competent engagement with the assessment task(s), marked by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> evidence of a reasonable familiarity with the relevant literature or theoretical, technical or professional framework good developed arguments, but more statements of ideas arguments or statements adequately but not well supported by evidence, citation or quotation some critical awareness and analytical qualities some evidence of capacity for original and logical thinking |
| D | Satisfactory | |
| | <i>Knowledge, understanding, application</i> | <i>Analysis, synthesis and evaluation</i> |
| | <p>An acceptable response to the assessment task(s) with</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> basic grasp of subject matter, but somewhat lacking in focus and structure main points covered but insufficient detail some effort to apply knowledge to the task but only a basic capacity or understanding displayed little evidence of background reading several minor errors satisfactory presentation with an acceptable level of presentation errors | <p>An acceptable level of intellectual engagement with the assessment task(s), showing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> some familiarity with the relevant literature or theoretical, technical or professional framework mostly statements of ideas, with limited development of argument limited use of evidence, citation or quotation limited critical awareness displayed limited evidence of capacity for original and logical thinking |

| | | |
|----------|---|---|
| E | Adequate | |
| | <i>Knowledge, understanding, application</i> | <i>Analysis, synthesis and evaluation</i> |
| | The minimum acceptable standard of response to the assessment task(s) for the award of credit points which | The minimum acceptable level of intellectual engagement with the assessment task(s) for the award of credit points showing |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shows a basic grasp of subject matter but may be poorly focussed or badly structured or contain irrelevant material • has one major error and some minor errors • demonstrates the capacity to complete only moderately difficult tasks related to the subject material • very little or no evidence of background reading • displays the minimum acceptable standard of presentation (spelling, grammar, graphical) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the minimum acceptable appreciation of the relevant literature or theoretical, technical or professional framework • ideas largely expressed as statements, with little or no developed or structured argument • minimum acceptable use of evidence, citation or quotation • little or no analysis or critical awareness displayed or is only partially successful • little or no demonstrated capacity for original and logical thinking |
| F | Inadequate | |
| | <i>Knowledge, understanding, application</i> | <i>Analysis, synthesis and evaluation</i> |
| | A response to the assessment task(s) which is unacceptable, with | No intellectual engagement with the assessment task(s) or an unacceptable level of intellectual engagement with the assessment task(s), with |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a failure to address the question resulting in a largely irrelevant or entirely irrelevant answer or material of marginal relevance predominating • a display of little or no relevant knowledge or some knowledge of material relevant to the question posed, but with very serious omissions/errors and/or major inaccuracies included in answer • solutions offered to none of, or a very limited portion of, the problem set • an answer unacceptably incomplete • a random and undisciplined development, layout or presentation unacceptable standards of presentation, such as grammar, spelling or graphical presentation • evidence of substantial plagiarism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no appreciation of the relevant literature or theoretical, technical or professional framework • no developed or structured argument • no use of evidence, citation or quotation • no analysis or critical awareness displayed or is only partially successful • no demonstrated capacity for original and logical thinking |