Principles and Policies for Modified Assessment


Following subsequent discussions, this document represents the principles and policies agreed and implemented for assessments for taught programmes in Easter Term 2020.

The following are referred to throughout the document and so are defined here.

Definitions

Second assessment period
For those students whose summative assessment is disrupted in Easter term, a further opportunity to sit the assessment will be available once the University is fully operational.

Students will, via their College, inform the University of the reason they were unable to take the assessment in Easter term\(^2\) and then arrangements will be made for the student to sit in the later assessment period.

Participation in the later assessment period by final year undergraduate students and postgraduate taught students will impact on the timing of their graduation.

Formative assessment
A student must undertake the assessment and will get feedback on it. A student does not have to pass formative assessments (e.g. essay, coursework, online assessment) to progress to the next year of study, but since these assessments are an extremely important part of a student’s education, students should treat them seriously. Any marks awarded for formative assessments will not link to a class and will not appear on the student’s University transcript - the formal record of achievement at Cambridge.

Formative exams will be scheduled and managed locally, as will any assessments which comprise coursework, submitted essays or other similar work which are not assessed within a defined short window. Faculties and Departments can ask the Student Registry to timetable formative online exams, where it is to be delivered online, for 24-hours or less.

Summative assessment
A student has to pass summative assessments to progress to the next year of study or to graduate (if in final year), and marks will be recorded on the student’s University transcript. Summative online exams, which are scheduled to be delivered online for 24-hours or less will be timetabled centrally by the Student Registry.

\(^1\)https://www.cam.ac.uk/coronavirus/news/message-from-the-senior-pro-vice-chancellor-education-on-the-principles-and-policies-for-modified

\(^2\)Special arrangements apply for the Mathematics Tripos and NST Part III Physics/Astrophysics.
Safety net

Final year undergraduate students must take the 2020 assessments that have been set, and must pass them (either in the first assessment period or the second assessment period) to be classed and awarded the degree. The marks awarded will be included on the student’s transcript. The class will be determined on the basis of the marks achieved, but the University will apply a ‘safety net’ for final year undergraduates. The ‘safety net’ means that, as long as a graduating undergraduate student passes their assessments, no graduating undergraduate student will receive a class lower than that awarded in their second year exams in the same or a different Tripos, or, if they are a fourth year, their third year exams if they took exams in their third year. The 2020 assessments will therefore only confirm the class awarded in their second (or third) year or improve it; the usual classifications being, 1st, 2i, 2ii, 3rd. Therefore, for example, if a third year finalist was awarded a 2.1 in their second year exams, they will not receive lower than a 2.1 in their final year exams.

The safety net will be applied regardless of whether the student was following the same Tripos, or transferred to a different Tripos for their final year.

Students who are unable to participate in the summative assessment in Easter term for reasons such as ill health, significant caring commitments, technical difficulties or similar disruption, will be given an opportunity to take the same method of assessment in a second assessment period when the University is back in full operation. Students may not re-sit the assessment in the second assessment period if they are able to sit it in the first period, unless they have been approved to do so via an application for an examination allowance. Students will be permitted to self-certify illness and caring commitments and similar disruptions.

If a student is eligible to be classed but was unable to take any assessment either in the first or second assessment period, or only some of the assessment, or were otherwise affected by ‘serious medical or other grave cause’ then they can apply to the Examination Access and Mitigation Committee (EAMC) or Board of Graduate Studies (BGS) for an alternative examination allowance, for example a ‘DDH’ (Deemed to Deserve Honours) or being classed on the marks received from a subset of the assessment that has taken place. The student’s College will advise students on this process.
Assessment Principles and Policies

1. There is an expectation that all students will be required to continue studying during Easter term, assuming good health and no significant caring commitments, either in preparation for the alternative summative assessments which replace examinations in Cambridge, or engaging in formative assessment where the Faculty or Department has chosen this as the alternative assessment method.

2. To ensure fairness, all students enrolled for the same paper will be required to undergo the same method of assessment. Exceptions will be made if necessary for students requiring alternative modes of assessments on medical or disability grounds.

Formative and Summative Assessments

3. Faculties and Departments have determined which of their assessments should be formative and which should be summative and should have informed their students.

Borrowed Papers

4. Where a Faculty or Department has adopted summative assessment and is borrowing papers from a Faculty or Department which is adopting formative assessment, the Faculty or Department borrowing the paper must contact the ‘parent’ Department to make arrangements for the assessments of their students to be treated as summative and to enable transfer of marks to allow those candidates to be classed. These summative marks will appear on the student’s University transcript.

5. Where the parent Department has opted not to set an assessment for the paper for their own students, they will still be expected to set an assessment for any students who have borrowed it, and who need to take it for summative purposes.

Time spent on an assessment/word count

6. For those online exams that are set within either a 5- or 24-hour window, it will be generally expected that students do not work for longer than the usual length of the standard Cambridge examination. The extended time window will allow for those students taking the examination in different time zones, provide for those students who are permitted extra time and/or rest breaks, and will offer flexibility to those who encounter technical difficulties.

7. In order to emphasize that all students should only work for the usual amount of time they would have in a timed physical exam, and to ensure parity between non-disabled and disabled students, it is expected (where appropriate) that Faculties and Departments set word limits and communicate these to students.

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3 There will be some instances with borrowed papers where some, but not all, students will be required to take the paper. In such situations, the method of assessment will be consistent.
First and second year undergraduate students

8. First- and second-year undergraduate students will undertake modified assessments. Most are formative, but some are summative. However, no first- or second-year undergraduate assessment will be classed.

9. If first- or second-year undergraduate students are unable to take their modified assessment at the scheduled time in the Easter term, for example for reasons of illness, caring responsibilities or technical difficulties, the following will happen:

   a) if the assessment is a formative piece of coursework (e.g. an extended essay), the student can seek an extension to the deadline for submission of their work from their Faculty/Department. Discretion on how long to extend the deadline sits with the Faculty/Department. This temporary change in process (which moves responsibility from the Exams and Assessment and Mitigation Committee for Easter term only) also allows a lowering/removal of the usual supporting evidence threshold for extensions to submission deadlines, given that access to medical or other independent evidence might be limited.

   Faculties and Departments will determine their own rules regarding extensions, but being mindful that no student should be disadvantaged, and to enable parity between students, should consider:

   - if the student has been unwell or caring for someone who has been unwell, but is now able to work, then an extension should be offered; no supporting evidence is needed
   - if the student does not have access to facilities/internet for work, whether the student should be offered an opportunity to complete the coursework at a later date.

   For summative course work, Faculties and Departments will record the criteria for extensions and keep a record of cases where an extension has been granted.

   b) if the formative assessment is by timed online assessment, then the Faculty/Department might offer an alternative opportunity to take the assessment. However, being formative, there is no requirement for this assessment to be taken and a formal second assessment period will not be offered for any formative assessment.

   c) if the assessment is a summative piece of coursework, the student must seek an extension to the deadline from their Faculty/Department. Discretion on how long to extend the deadline sits with the Faculty/Department, but must not extend into the Michaelmas Term.
d) if the student cannot take the online summative assessment they are required to undertake the assessment in a second assessment period. The assessments in the second period will be delivered in the same way as those delivered in Easter term.

e) students who are unable to take any summative assessment either in the first or second assessment period, or only some of the summative assessment, will need to apply for consideration by the Examination Access and Mitigation Committee (EAMC) for the award of an examination allowance that would allow them to proceed to the next year, or to complete and graduate. Applications for allowances will not generally be considered where the second assessment period is available and a viable possibility. If, however, there are cases where a student is unable to undertake assessments in the first sitting, and will continue to be unable to undertake the assessments in the second assessment period, applications for an allowance can be made.

**Finalist undergraduate students and students on integrated Master’s programmes**

10. All final year undergraduate students and fourth year students on integrated Master’s programmes will have the opportunity to receive a classed degree. Most third year students on integrated Master’s programmes will have the opportunity to receive a classed degree via the alternative assessments proposed, if it is necessary for their progression to the fourth year of study or if they intend to graduate after their third year.

11. The University will provide a ‘safety net’ for final year undergraduates and some integrated Master’s programmes.

12. Following release of the ‘Assessment Principles and Policies’ document to Faculties and Departments on 30 March 2020, some discussions on the safety net and final classification occurred which resulted in the following specific agreements:

a) For **Integrated Master’s courses**

   Category A

   The safety net will apply to Category A courses, where the fourth year of the course is fully integrated into the undergraduate portion of the course and the modified assessment which has been arranged will provide a student with the opportunity to be classed. These courses are: Chemical Engineering, Manufacturing Engineering, Natural Science Tripos (except Astrophysics).

   Category B

   The safety net will not apply to Computer Science because Part III is not fully integrated with Part II and is effectively a stand-alone Master’s course.
Category C

The safety net will not apply to Category C courses because there will be a pass/fail assessment in the summer and students will be given the opportunity to return to Cambridge when the University is operational again to sit exams to obtain a class. These courses are: Maths, Astrophysics and Engineering.

b) For the Management Studies Tripos

A fourth year undergraduate has the safety net from their third year result and not the second year.

c) For fourth year undergraduates who were not classed in their third year

Where a fourth year undergraduate was not classed in their third year but was classed in their second year, it will be possible to rely on their second year class as their safety net. This includes students who were on a Year-abroad in their third year, or those taking a Part II with a prelim.

d) For Maths BA or MMaths

Students studying for a Maths BA or MMaths will be given online exams that will enable the Faculty to make a pass/fail decision. If students wish to receive a classed degree result, they will be required to take further exams that will not be online and which will probably require them to return to Cambridge.

e) For those who received an allowance in their second year and were not classed

We recognise that some students received an allowance in their second year and so the safety net, which relies on the second year result, cannot apply. Since we do not believe it would be fair to rely on the first year result as a proxy for the

Such students should take their assessments and if their final year classification is lower than their first year result, they can apply via their College to the Examination and Assessment Mitigation Committee for a review. This review will have regard to the student’s first year result and marks; any marks in their second year, and marks in their third year (assuming that there may already have been some summative assessment) including the distribution of marks in the modified assessment; and any other evidence of the quality of their work during the second and third year such as supervision reports. In the light of this evidence, if the EAMC concludes that there is a case to support the student being capable of achieving a higher class than that awarded, the EAMC will make a recommendation to the Chair of Examiners that they reconsider the class. This recommendation will be considered by the Chair of Examiners and up to (any) two examiners. If approved, the higher class will appear on the transcript.
**Postgraduate taught students**

13. Postgraduate Taught Students (e.g. MPhil, MBA, LLM and MST) will be given the opportunity to receive a classed degree via the alternative assessments which have been approved.

14. Students who are unable to participate in the assessment in Easter term for reasons such as ill health, significant caring commitments, technical difficulties or similar disruption, will be given an opportunity to take the same method of assessment in the second assessment period. Students may not re-sit the assessment in the second assessment period if they sat it in the first period, unless they have been approved to do so via an application for an examination allowance. Students will be permitted to self-certify illness and caring commitments and similar disruptions.

15. Students who are eligible to be classed but who are unable to take any assessment either in the first or second assessment period, or only some of the assessment, or students who are otherwise affected by serious medical or other grave cause will be considered by either the Examination Access and Mitigation Committee (EAMC) or Board of Graduate Studies (BGS) for an alternative examination allowance, for example a ‘DDH’ (Deemed to Deserve Honours), or will be classed on the marks received from a subset of the summative assessment that has taken place.

**Disabled students**

16. The modified assessments have been designed in such a way that they should not disadvantage disabled students. It is anticipated that the nature of the modified assessments will be inclusive as far as possible, meaning that in many cases the examination access adjustments (such as extra time, rest breaks or use of a computer) will naturally apply. Once a disabled student has received their assessment plan and timetable, they should discuss the need for any new examination access adjustment, or adjustments to existing arrangements, with their College in the usual way.

**Assessment Timetable**

17. The Faculty/Department will schedule, and inform their students of all formative assessments, except those where they have requested the Examinations Team to schedule.

18. The Examinations Team in the Student Registry will schedule all summative assessments that are run through Moodle for a timed session, usually 5- or 24-hours. These assessments will be released at midday (to allow for students accessing via different time zones) and will be scheduled not to end on a Saturday (when support would not be available).

19. The assessments scheduled by the Examinations Team will be released to students via their CamSIS self-service and made available online [here](#) as usual.
**Transcripts**

20. Transcripts will be annotated to explain the extraordinary circumstances in which assessments this year have been taken and the nature of the safety net policy.

**Complaints**

21. Once students have received summative results, they will have 28 days to request a review on the basis of the grounds outlined in the Examination Review Procedure (procedural irregularities, bias, or withdrawal of academic provision). Students will not be eligible to use the Examination Review Procedure to review the results of any formative assessment.

22. Students may raise complaints at any time if they are dissatisfied with the action or inaction of the University, but the University will need to be able to assess the full impact of rescheduled teaching and assessment or other mitigating actions while considering a complaint about the impact of industrial action or COVID-19. As a result, the investigation of any complaint submitted prior to a student’s assessment taking place may be suspended until after the assessment has taken place. The deadline for raising complaints relating to industrial action and COVID-19 will be extended past the normal 28 day deadline of a matter arising.

23. All students will be informed in Easter term of procedures and deadlines for raising complaints relating to industrial action and COVID-19 and the impact either on their learning experience or assessment results.