Framework for Assessment for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programmes 2022-2023

BACKGROUND

1. The COVID pandemic necessitated a move away from traditional in-person exams to alternative methods of assessment, such as coursework and online examinations in Easter Term 2020. Due to the ongoing uncertainty caused by the pandemic, this continued during 2020/21. Some Faculties and Departments indicated a desire to move permanently away from the traditional 3-hour written examination.

2. On 20 July 2021, a Framework for Assessment for 2021/22 was circulated via the key issues bulletin. The framework confirmed that 2021/22 was considered a transition year and provided Faculties and Departments with a pre-approved list of assessment methods from which they could select as appropriate without the need for formal approval via the usual governance processes. Regulations were set aside to accommodate this [https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2021-22/weekly/6630/6630-public.pdf].

3. In January 2022, the Council and General Board published a joint report on extending the transition period to 30 September 2025 on the understanding that a Framework for Assessment will be provided for each year, which would include a list of pre-approved methods of assessment. The extension offers Faculties and Departments the opportunity to adjust assessment for educational rather than emergency reasons. Regulations would be set aside to accommodate this.

4. During the extended transition period, further work will be carried out to review alternative methods of assessment against assessment and degree outcome data and staff and student feedback. This work will inform future frameworks. Consideration will be given to the connections between summative assessment and formative assessment and feedback process and practices, including clear communication of intended learning outcomes, assessment and marking expectations among course coordinators, supervisors and students, for instance in the development of specific marking criteria and, given the centrality of supervision to undergraduate students' education, support for supervisors in preparing formative assessment and feedback. The Examinations and Assessment Committee will also continue to work with Faculties and Departments to close awarding gaps, in particular for Black British students and those with declared mental health conditions, as committed to the Office for Students (OfS) in the University's Access and Participation Plan.

5. In February 2022, the General Board Education Committee (GBEC) approved for Easter Term 2022 only, the ongoing use of ProctorExam for remote proctoring as a contingency plan for certain subjects that allows assessments intended to be held in-person to move online where circumstances require.

6. For 2021-22, GBEC approved a pilot in the School of Biological Sciences of Inspera an online examination system. GBEC will consider the results of the pilot, which are expected in summer 2022. Whilst the outcomes of the pilot are too late to enable Faculties and Departments to plan provision for 2022-23, GBEC recognises that there is much interest in this system and so invites Faculties and

Departments to express interest in this mode of assessment when confirming their mode of assessment for 2022-23 in the annual course data collection exercise. Such expressions do not guarantee any further roll out in 2022-23 but will help inform need and develop requirements.

ASSUMPTIONS

7. Examinations and assessments will occur throughout the academic year, within the established Term dates (except for those whose assessment that have traditionally fallen outside of Term).

8. The examination enrolment period will open on 1 October and close on 2 November 2022.

9. The Examinations Team in the Student Registry will schedule and oversee all in-person and online examinations.

10. Moodle will remain the standard platform for submission of online assessments.

11. All students will be in residence and therefore taking examinations and assessments in Cambridge.

THE FRAMEWORK 2022-2023

12. Assessment has a major influence on students' learning, affecting both what they learn and how they learn. There is also evidence that assessment design and assessment practices, including formative assessment and feedback, can contribute positively and negatively to differential assessment outcomes which are experienced by particular groups of students and which cannot be attributed to factors such as prior educational attainment ('awarding gaps').

13. The framework:

   a) Both allows reversion to usual modes of examinations (e.g., written in-person exams in an invigilated exam hall) and also supports those Faculties and Departments that do not wish to return to their established modes and methods of assessment, preferring to continue with the transition to more diverse and permanent changes where appropriate.

   b) For the most part, re-provides what was offered in 2021-22, **the only exceptions being**

      - removal of the 24-hour window. The previous framework allowed, as an emergency measure, a 24-hour window during which students would take a 3-hour or 4-hour examination. Based on feedback received and reported concerns about the impact on student wellbeing, the 24-hour window is no longer an option except as part of an approved examination adjustment for a disabled student. The Disability Resource Centre supports this decision

      - extending the use of Moodle Quiz functionality for certain subjects on application

      - offering departments the opportunity to express interest for in person, invigilated, typed exams (bring your own device), pending the outcome of the pilots run by the School of Biological Sciences and the Clinical School.

      - removing the requirement to offer contingency plans for in person exams, which means removal of the use of ProctorExam as a contingency[1]. In March 2022, GBEC supported some

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[1] This assumes a complete reversion to pre-pandemic modes of operating for examinations. This will be reviewed should another emergency situation arise.

investigation into whether ProctorExam might be used for students sitting exams in College; noting this was a change in use, and terms of ProctorExam and would require different operational support.

c) Provides options that are deliverable within the systems and infrastructures currently available to and supported by the University. (Whilst work is underway to consider what other systems and infrastructure are required to support future diversification of assessment, this will take time, as the work needs to be better informed about what assessment looks like in the future.)

14. The approved framework for 2022-2023.

a) **Coursework**

- For these purposes, coursework is defined as a set assignment of work that is undertaken over a period of time, which is longer than 24 hours.

- Parameters for coursework include a fixed date for submission (with a possibility of extension on a case-by-case basis) and/or a fixed word limit.

- Coursework may encompass a range of discipline-specific, innovative and inclusive assessment modes and methods.

- Coursework could take the form of a portfolio of essays or assignments, or a single piece of work.

b) **Dissertation**

- Submission of a defined piece of work.

- Parameters for dissertation include a fixed date for submission (with a possibility of extension on a case-by-case basis) and/or a fixed word limit.

c) **Examinations**

i) **In-person exams**

The assumption is that, where a department chooses to return to in-person examinations, they will revert to same format as pre-COVID, i.e., hand-written, invigilated in an exam hall.

ii) **In-person, invigilated, typed exams**

Currently this provision is limited to:

- the School of Clinical Medicine who will run online examinations for their Clinical Medicine examinations through the NowCE platform (for internal examinations) and through the appropriate external platforms for national exams. Exams will be standard length for these exams and will be invigilated in person; and

- the School of Biological Sciences for continued use of Inspera in pilot phase.

iii) **Online exams**

- These assume the use of the standard assessment functionality in Moodle, where candidates are not required to be invigilated/in an exam hall but instead to submit their work remotely at the conclusion of the exam period.

- All candidates have the same start and end time (exceptions being those candidates with approved additional time for writing or rest breaks).

- Examinations may be one of the following lengths:
    - 90-minutes;
    - 2-hours;
    - 3-hour window;
    - 5-hour window.

- The time windows shown are the length of the examination. Students with approved extra time (written or rest) as a reasonable adjustment would have that time added to the window.

- Where the 5-hour window is selected, students are able to use the entire 5 hours, but may of course, factor in rest breaks. It is likely that 5-hour examinations will be scheduled on consecutive days.

- Examinations timed at 90 minutes, 2 hours and 3 hours are subject to penalties where work is submitted late. Submission times will be monitored by the Examinations Team[2] and any perceived anomalies will first be reported to the student's College (who might confirm legitimate reasons, such as technology failures). Only where anomalies are not appropriately explained, will it be passed to the Chair of Examiners to apply the penalty.

- Most online examinations are open book. Open book allows candidates to access their own textbooks, notes and other resources whilst sitting the exam. Clear instructions about referencing/citing expectations should be provided to students.

- There is limited availability for quiz functionality in Moodle in 2022-23. Those subjects that have papers that are better suited to that functionality should contact the Examinations Team to discuss what might be possible.

- Clear marking criteria should continue to be published to students and supervisors and will require review and adjustment for open book as distinct to closed book exams.

- Indicative word counts should apply to all exams with predominantly essay format answers.
    - Word counts for 5-hour examinations are normally required, to communicate clearly to students that they are not expected to produce more material or longer scripts and, or to work for longer than they would in an in-person 3-hour exam.
    - Word counts in 3-hour exams are not advised as they are unlikely to act effectively as proxy time limits for disabled students. Rather, for many disabled students the addition of a word count in a 3-hour exam confers an additional time cost.
    - Faculties and Departments should communicate these word counts to students and supervisors and advise that whilst punitive measures for exceeding them would not normally apply, Examiners will stop reading after the word count has been reached.

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[2] Also considering those students who have approved extra time

Punitive measures might apply where the specified word count is clearly stated as a competency (i.e. that is what the assessment is seeking to measure).

▫ In imposing word counts, Faculties and Departments should be mindful that, for disabled students, this adds another cognitive task (e.g. editing and revising down), which might disadvantage disabled students with processing or working memory issues. Therefore, the consideration of the use of any word count should consider the difficulties that some disabled students may experience with written expression, literacy skills and editing by being generous enough not to add an additional cognitive burden or time cost. Faculties and Departments should not assume that additional time would counter this disadvantage.

d) **Practical work (organised within a Faculty/Department)**

e) **Presentations** might include individual and group (where group, clear advice about marking practices should be shared with students), online or in-person, recorded or live.

f) **Project work (which might be individual or group based)**

g) **Recital/performance**

h) **Oral exams**

IMPLEMENTING THE FRAMEWORK

15. Faculties and Departments that adopt any of these approved modes and methods of assessment are not required to seek permission from GBEC for changes, but will need to provide details of their planned assessments for 2022-2023 through the annual course information exercise run by the Examinations Team (detailed in paragraphs 34-39).

16. Faculties and Departments may wish to develop other discipline-specific or creative assessment modes or methods, which are not captured in the approved framework for 2022-23.[3] This diversification of assessment is encouraged, while needing to be carefully designed to be inclusive and to align with a course or a paper's learning outcomes. Faculties and Departments may also wish to explore options with colleagues in Cambridge Centre for Teaching and Learning (CCTL) (enquiries@cctl.cam.ac.uk). If Faculties and Departments wish to assess in a way that is not covered in the approved framework, then they must liaise with their Education Quality and Policy Office (EQPO) Liaison Officer in the first instance to determine whether the proposal is appropriate and also whether it is feasible within the systems and infrastructures available and supported by the University.

17. Where a Faculty or Department have determined permanent changes to their modes of assessment, they should liaise with their liaison officer in the Education Quality and Policy Office to discuss permanent changes to their regulations.

18. Faculties and Departments can continue to borrow papers but must communicate with other parties in the 'parent' and 'child' arrangement. Faculties that have students that rely on 'child' papers need

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[3] Faculties and Departments may also wish to consult with the Cambridge Centre for Teaching and Learning about the inclusivity of their assessment design and the development of formative assessment and feedback tools and practices.

to be assured that the papers are running and that they are satisfied that their students should sit them. It is expected that the mode of assessment matches between 'parent' and 'child' where the teaching has been identical. In those instances where subjects only share some questions (rather that the whole examination), the mode of assessment can be different if needed.

19. The University will use standard processes for managing applications for coursework and dissertation extensions.

20. The Examination Access and Mitigation Committee (EAMC) will continue to approve examination adjustments that would apply to all the assessment methods listed in paragraph 23, and the Examinations Team in the Student Registry will manage these.

21. Turnitin is recommended for use for assessments where a student may have accessed other sources of information, to check the academic integrity of the work. Turnitin can be used at the point of submission for coursework as normal. It is however, not currently considered stable enough to be used at the point of submissions for exams. At peak times, there is a risk that if it struggles to cope with volume, students work will not be saved and students will receive error messages causing them anxiety, and will also have a knock on impact on Moodle load.

22. For in-person examinations, provision for disabled students requiring use of a PC and /or extra written time or rest breaks within an invigilated setting, will be provided.

EMERGENCY MEASURES

23. Now that the University has moved away from emergency measures, those departments who select in-person examinations are not required to provide a contingency plan; the University will retain the risk on the Examinations Risk Register at Institutional level.

ACTION FOR FACULTIES AND DEPARTMENTS

24. Paragraph 14 lists the approved modes and methods of assessment at Cambridge. Faculties and Departments will need to determine which of the options listed they wish to adopt for each Paper.

25. Teaching, including supervision, may need to be adapted to ensure that students are adequately prepared for any new modes and methods of assessment chosen.

26. Marking criteria should be appropriate to the assessment method and mode. These marking criteria should be communicated clearly to students and to staff who develop formative assessment tasks and provide formative feedback, for example supervisors.

27. Diversification of assessment is encouraged.

28. Faculties and Departments who draw from the approved modes and methods of assessment are not required to apply for changes.

29. Faculties and Departments wishing to diversify beyond the methods and modes included in the Framework must liaise with their EQPO Liaison Officer in the first instance to determine whether the proposal is appropriate and also whether it is feasible within the systems and infrastructures available and supported by the University.

30. All Faculties and Departments are required to provide details of their planned assessments for 2022-2023 through the annual course information exercise run by the Exams Office, which is open throughout July-August 2022.

31. If desired and prior to submitting these details, Faculties and Departments can direct queries about the methods of assessment to their EQPO Liaison Officer, contact details linked here: https://www.educationalpolicy.admin.cam.ac.uk/contact-us/who-contact-institutions-and-projects . Queries about the data collection exercise (detailed below) should be directed to the Exams Team [examops@admin.cam.ac.uk].

32. **Faculties and Departments should consult with their student representatives about their mode of assessment plans, irrespective of whether they are choosing from this published framework or requesting an alternative mode of assessment not in this framework.**
All current and incoming students must be informed of any confirmed changes in published assessment methods. This includes information that is available online, in course handbooks and within Tripos or programme regulations.

Summary of steps and timeframe for action

From March – point submit assessment plans (deadline 31 August 2022)	1. Faculties and Departments determine the assessment modes and methods of assessment for 2022-23 (including contingency plans) including consultation with students.
	2. Diversification of assessment is encouraged. Faculties and Departments may wish to consult with CCTL when considering assessment modes.
	3. Faculties and Departments wishing to diversify beyond the methods and modes included in the Framework must liaise with their EQPO Liaison Officer in the first instance to determine whether the proposal is appropriate and also whether it is feasible within the systems and infrastructures available and supported by the University. This step is also required for contingency plans that deviate from the framework.
	4. Assessment modes or methods which are not included in the framework will need GBEC approval. Faculties and Departments must build this into their timetable for decisions to meet the deadlines stated below.
	5. Those which draw from the approved the modes and methods of assessment, are not required to apply for changes.
	6. Faculties and Departments inform current and incoming students of any changes to assessment modes.
From 4 July-31 August 2022	During this window, Faculties and Departments submit assessment plans via annual course information exercise. Those departments who are interested in in-person, typed, invigilated examinations should express interest in this mode with their return.