

Framework for Assessment for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programmes 2023-24

Background

1. Since the COVID pandemic necessitated a move away from the traditional in-person examinations to alternative methods of assessment, the University has adopted an annual Framework for Assessment that has 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>].
2. 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.

Introduction to the Framework

3. The Framework allows reversion to usual modes of examinations (e.g., written in-person examinations in an invigilated exam hall) and supports those Faculties and Departments that do not wish to return to their established modes and methods of assessment¹, preferring to continue with the transition to more diverse and permanent changes where appropriate.
4. For the most part, this Framework re-provides what was offered in 2022-23 and continues to provide options that are deliverable within the systems and infrastructures currently available to and supported by the University.
5. Inspira is being assessed as a viable platform to support in-person, invigilated, typed examinations (bring your own device). The pilot of Inspira continues and its future is under scrutiny by the Programme Board who will oversee the continued limited pilot for 2023-24.
6. The Framework assumes the following.
 - a. 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).
 - b. The examination enrolment period will open on 1 October and close on 2 November 2023.
 - c. The Examinations Team in the Student Registry will schedule and oversee all in-person and online examinations.
 - d. Moodle will remain the standard platform for submission of online assessments.
 - e. All full-time matriculated students will be in residence and therefore taking examinations and assessments in Cambridge. In addition, part-time students who have in-person assessments are required to attend in- person, no remote assessment options are available.

¹ This document refers to 'modes of assessment' (i.e., examinations, essays, vivas – the term used by UK QAA) and 'methods' of assessment' (i.e., online, open book, invigilated, proctored).

The Framework 2023-24

7. 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').

8. The approved framework for 2023-24 includes the following options.

8.1. Coursework

- For these purposes, coursework is defined as a set assignment of work that is undertaken over a period of time.
- Parameters for coursework include a fixed date for submission (with a possibility of extension on a case-by-case basis) and sometimes also 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.

8.2. 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 sometimes also a fixed word limit.

8.3. Examinations

a. In-person examinations

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.

b. In-person, invigilated, typed examinations, which is currently limited to (for the reasons specified in paragraph 4):

- 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 examinations. Examinations will be standard length for these examinations and will be invigilated in person; and
- The continued use of Inspira in pilot phase for those subjects approved by the Digital Assessment Programme Board.

c. Online examinations

- 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.

- Subject to successful implementation and pilot of the Turnitin plug into Moodle in 2022-23, this functionality will be available to Faculties and Departments in 2023-24. You will be asked to confirm if you wish to use the Turnitin plugin in the annual course data collection exercise.
- 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 of varying lengths but should be up to a maximum of 5-hours. The most common lengths are:
 - 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 can 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.
- Online examinations might be 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 2023-24. 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 examinations.
- Faculties and Departments will need to have measures to identify academic misconduct online examinations. This might include the use of Turnitin.
- Indicative word counts should apply to all examinations 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 examinations 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. Punitive measures might apply where the specified word count is clearly stated as a competency standard² (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.

8.4. **Practical work (organised within a Faculty/Department)**

8.5. **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.

8.6. **Project work (which might be individual, or group based)**

8.7. **Recital/performance**

8.8. **Oral examinations**

IMPLEMENTING THE FRAMEWORK

9. Teaching, including supervision, may need to be adapted to ensure that students are adequately prepared for any new modes and methods of assessment chosen.
10. Marking criteria should be appropriate to and adapt where necessary 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.
11. 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 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 than the whole examination), the mode of assessment can be different if needed.
12. Faculties and Departments that adopt any of these approved modes and methods of assessment are not required to seek permission from General Board Education Committee (GBEC) for course changes but will need to provide details of their planned assessments for 2023-24 through the annual course information exercise run by the Examinations Team (detailed in Summary table, p6).

² 'A requirement or condition only amounts to a competence standard if its purpose is to demonstrate a particular level of a relevant competence or ability such as a requirement that a person has a particular level of relevant knowledge of a subject.'

13. 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.
14. 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 2023-24. 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) cctleng@admin.cam.ac.uk.
15. If the desired mode of assessment is not listed in the Framework, Faculties and Departments should liaise with the Examinations Team to discuss whether their proposal is deliverable within the systems and infrastructures available and supported by the University. If this is deemed possible, Faculties and Departments must then liaise with the representative of their School that is a member of the General Board's Education Committee to make a case to GBEC.
16. The University will use standard processes for managing applications for coursework and dissertation extensions.
17. 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.
18. The Examination Access and Mitigation Committee (EAMC) will continue to approve examination adjustments that would apply to all the assessment methods listed in paragraph 8, and the Examinations Team in the Student Registry will manage these.
19. It is strongly recommended that Faculties and Departments use Turnitin 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. In previous years, Turnitin could not be used at the point of submission for examinations due to stability concerns. During Michaelmas 2022, and Lent 2023, and following changes with Moodle & Turnitin, the Examinations Office and UIS are running a pilot to evaluate the feasibility of supporting a new method of using Turnitin. This will facilitate automatic checks, whilst maintaining stability and integrity. A conclusion to this pilot is yet to be established. Should it be successful the pilot will be made available to all online Moodle exams.
20. Now that the University has moved away from emergency measures, those Faculties and Departments which 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

21. Faculties and Departments should:
- a. Determine which of the options listed in paragraph 8 they wish to adopt for each Paper.
 - b. 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.
 - c. Inform all current and incoming students of any confirmed changes in published assessment methods. This includes information that is available online, in course handbooks and within Tripos or programme regulations.
 - d. Provide details of their planned assessments for 2023-24 through the annual course information exercise run by the Examinations Office, which is open throughout July-August 2023.
 - e. Queries about the data collection exercise (detailed below) should be directed to the Examinations Team via email to examops@admin.cam.ac.uk

Summary of steps and timeframe for action

<p>From March – point submit assessment plans (deadline 31 August 2023)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Faculties and Departments determine the assessment modes and methods of assessment for 2023-24 in 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 the Examinations Team to determine whether the proposal is feasible within the systems and infrastructures available and supported by the University. 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. They should contact the representative of their School that is a member of the General Board’s Education Committee to make a case to GBEC. 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.
<p>From 3 July-31 August 2023</p>	<p>During this window, Faculties and Departments submit assessment plans via annual course information exercise.</p>