ACADEMIC QUALITY

QUALITY ASSURANCE

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ACCREDITATION AND ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS

Learning and Teaching Policy

Types of Assessment: Policy + Administrative Definitions

As the University continues to update and adapt its types of assessments in response to the changing academic environment, there has been a need to clarify and define different types of assessment for administrative/management and central scheduling purposes. This guidance summarises the relevant sections within 2024/25 Assessment Guidance, as approved by the Learning and Teaching Academic Operations Committee (LTAOC) on 26 June 2024.

The information below should be read in conjunction with the **Heriot-Watt Assessment Platforms: Staff Guide** (see Appendix), as approved by the Learning and Teaching Academic Operations Committee on 26 June 2024, which outlines in full the University's approved coursework and exam platforms/approaches.

Assessment Types: Regulations and Policies

The University's policies and Regulations for taught programmes (eg Regulation A4 Courses, Programmes and Assessment) do not prohibit diversity in form and timing of assessment, and the constraints are only as follows:

- All programmes of study (including HW Online) shall contain a balance of various forms of assessment, unless specifically approved by the University Studies Committee;

- In-person, invigilated exams shall be of two hours (for 15 credit courses) or three hours in duration (for 30 credit courses), unless approved by the Global Director of Student Experience and Academic Registrar;

- Exams and Final Online Assessments shall be held only in a scheduled Exams and Assessment Diet;

- Class Tests cannot be scheduled during an Exam and Assessment Diet;

- All courses shall provide opportunities for formative assessment (not credit-bearing) and formative feedback to support learning (particularly critical when courses are assessed by a single, end-of-course assessment for credit);

- Assessments contributing to the overall final mark/grade shall assess the specified learning outcomes;

- The forms of assessment and weighting shall be specified in the Course Descriptor and as recorded in GCM.

Therefore, there is scope for Schools to continue to offer a diverse array of assessment without being constrained by institutional regulations or policies. For example, coursework assignments can be scheduled for submission in an Exams and Assessment Diet; however, coursework with a timed element, such as Class Tests or Final Online Assessments, are subject to specific constraints, as outlined in the see next section.

Assessment Types: Policy and Administrative/Management Definitions

Policy Statement on the Administrative/Management Definitions of Assessment Types

For the purposes of clarity for students and for staff involved in the management of assessment, **assessment should be differentiated as one of two types: Coursework or Examination**. This terminology should be used consistently in all staff and student communications and publications across all locations and modes, at institution, campus and School levels.

The approved definitions and scheduling of assessment (ie the practical arrangements for organising and managing assessments, and not the pedagogical definitions) on taught programmes, are as follows:

Assessment Type	Timing	Responsibility
Coursework	Can be scheduled throughout the semester and during Exams and Assessment Diets, with following exceptions: a) "Class Tests": must ***not*** be scheduled during an Exam and Assessment diet. (Exception: a class test is mandated to be	School a) School, with RAS support for students with disabilities

	reassessed as the outcome of an Award or Progression Board. This must be timetabled and supported centrally).	b) RAS
	b) "Final Online Assessments": must **only** be scheduled during Exam and Assessment Diets.	
Examination	Exclusively during Exam and Assessment Diets	RAS

Note: The type of coursework known as Timed Online Coursework (TOCs) was removed at the end of 2022/23 and the type of exam known as "Take Home Exam"/"Take Home Open Book Exam" was removed at the end of 2021/22. "Final Online Assessment" is the standard phraseology to be used for time-limited, open book coursework to be accessed and completed online during an Exam and Assessment Diet.

Assessment Type	Definition
Coursework	Coursework is undertaken and submitted throughout the semester, during Teaching Weeks and can be submitted during the Exam and Assessment Diets. There are two types of coursework which have a more precise definition due to the administrative arrangements they require: a) **Class Tests**: assessments typically sat in the teaching classroom. If invigilation is required, this is carried out by the Course Team. Class Tests are generally used for formative assessment, to inform and develop the students' understanding of their learning. Where summative, ie contributing to credit/final grade, Class Tests should be used for low-stakes assessments. For high-stakes assessments, an exam (open or closed book) is likely to be more appropriate. If the class includes students with timed assessment / exam adjustments, the Examinations Team will support the course team in making those arrangements and providing any extra invigilation or specialist exam support. If such support is required, Class tests should be notified to the Examinations Team at least 2 weeks in advance. https://forms.office.com/e/zuNbJPebBM. If specialist Information Services support is required, contact ishelp@hw.ac.uk b) **Final Online Assessment (FOA)** is an open-book, time-limited coursework scheduled during the Exam and Assessment Diet and designed to be accessed online and completed remotely. This type of assessment was originally designed for use by Heriot Watt Online students, and this remains its primary purpose. However, it is recognised that there may be some limited cases where adopting this approach may be relevant for other courses. The typical duration of an FOA is 2 or 3 hours to align with exam durations; but they can be completed within 2-, 3-, 24- or 48-hour windows. • the shorter windows include extra time for upload and download. • longer windows for completion are rarer as the assessment would begin to resemble a standard coursework assignment. FOA of 48 hours or less must be timetabled and supported centrally. FOAs are hosted on, and responses are submitted on completion via, the University's VLE. This assessment type is not suitable for closed-book assessments and is not invigilated nor digitally secured. If these controls are required, an invigilated exam in an exam hall/computer-based lab may be more appropriate. ["FOA" replaces "Timed Online Coursework", the use of which was discontinued at the end of 2022/23].
Examination	There are two types: a) **Hand-written Response:** Invigilated, time limited [2 or 3 hours], in-person, at an approved exam venue, open or closed book, hand-written response submitted to invigilator on completion; b) **Computer-Based:** Invigilated, time limited [2 or 3 hours], in-person [at an approved computer lab], open or closed book[1], conducted and submitted online via Canvas.

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[1] Closed book digital exams will be secured using the University's academic integrity security software.

Exam and Assessment Diet	From 2024/25, each Exam and Assessment Diet is now 2-weeks in duration and held as follows; [Dates for AY 2024/25 are here (list of dates) and here (calendar format)] • December Diet: Weeks 13 and 14; • April/May Diet: Weeks 13 and 14* (April break is not counted in number of weeks); • August Diet: Weeks 13 and 14* * reflecting the approved changes to the Structure of the Academic Year (there is scope to bring forward the August Diet into Teaching Week 12 if there is an early September start to the next academic year)

Assessment Types: Coursework

Coursework comprises assignments set during or at the end of a course (including assignments scheduled for submission or completion in the Exam and Assessment Diet) to assess one or more of the learning outcomes. Coursework includes, but is not limited to, the following:

• written assignment, including essay or report;
• dissertation (an extended piece of written work, often the write-up of a final-year project);
• portfolio (a collection of work that relates to a given topic or theme and has been produced over a period of time);
• project output (output from project work, often of a practical nature, other than a dissertation or written report);
• set exercise (questions or tasks designed to assess how knowledge is applied, and analytical, problem-solving or evaluative skills);
• class tests/quizzes (written or computer-based) of knowledge or interpretation.

All online coursework managed by Schools should be provided via Canvas or Gradescope. See the **Heriot-Watt Assessment Platforms: Staff Guide** provided in the Appendix to this paper for full details on coursework types and approved platforms.

If setting up assessments in the Global Curriculum Management system, Class Tests and Final Online Assessments should be placed along with other Coursework types as sub-components of the coursework component.

Schools should ensure that, in their management and scheduling of assessment, that coursework throughout the semester is proportionate and balanced. See *Policy on Coursework Scheduling and Submission.*

Assessment Types: Exams

As stated above, all forms of "Take-Home Exams"/Take Home Open Book Exams" which were used during the pandemic have been withdrawn.

The term "exams" refers exclusively to the pre-pandemic format of a 2-3 hour, in person, invigilated assessment held in an approved exam venue. The key difference from pre-pandemic is that the exam need not be restricted to hand-written format, but can be conducted online (in an invigilated, University approved computer lab) and can be open or closed book, hosted on Canvas[1]. Both types of exams will continue to be scheduled by RAS.

See the **Heriot-Watt Assessment Platforms: Staff Guide** provided in the Appendix to this paper for full details on exam types and approved platforms.

Timing and Duration of Exams; Submission of Exams Papers

1) The standard approach for both types of exams (hand-written or completed online) is 2 hours' duration for a 15-credit course or 3 hours for a 30-credit or larger course. Exceptions to these standard durations may be considered for courses with non-standard credit-ratings or if a case is accepted for pedagogical reasons. However, there will be no duration greater than 3 hours. As per the University Regulations, requests for different durations of exams should be made to the Global Director of Student Experience and Academic Registrar.

2) For students with a learning profile, arrangements will be made in conjunction with the Disability Service for additional time and/or specific venues. Student-related information on Exams (and Coursework) Adjustments is available on the Disability Service's webpages.

3) Following a temporary suspension during the pandemic, the University's Policies and Procedures for Examinations in Different Timezones were re-introduced from 2022/23. As a consequence, exams will be aligned to one of two time zones. For scheduling reasons (such as limited venue capacity), the timezone alignment could be formed as follows (provided here as an example): 1) *UK/Dubai (TZ1) and Malaysia (TZ2); 2) UK (TZ1), Dubai/Malaysia (TZ2); 3) UK/Malaysia (TZ1), Dubai (TZ2).*

4) A separate exam paper will normally be required for each timezone in order to mitigate risks related to academic misconduct. This requirement applies to all courses in all years, including qualifying years. If an identical exam paper is to be used (for example, if required by a PSRB), then there must be an identical start time for the exam across all locations, which will be 09.00 UK time and 17.00 Malaysia (16.00 BST).

5) Arrangements and dates for submission of exams papers will be specified by the Exams Team within Academic Operations. As per the University's policy, reassessment papers must be submitted at the same time as the December, April/May or August Diet exam paper (August Diet is a first assessment opportunity for the May Semester).

6) Arrangements for the collection and marking of exam papers and the processing of results will be specified by the Exams Team and the School Support Teams within the Academic Operations Division.

Access to Past Exam Papers and Solutions

This section is replicated across a number of related policies:

1) The Global Course Leader may release a sample of past examination papers for revision purposes and learning how to navigate examination questions (the format of which might differ year on year). Pedagogical reasons will determine whether papers are made available.

2) Solutions to past examination papers are not provided as standard practice. They may be provided if deemed pedagogically appropriate by the Global Course Leader. Solution notes may be provided for marking and moderation purposes, but these are not necessarily model answers.

3) In all cases, there should be comprehensive communication to students regarding the assessment strategies, including whether there are opportunities to practice past exam papers and whether solutions will be provided.

Assessment Types: Guidance on Communicating Assessment Types to Students

As is standard practice, Schools should clearly communicate all assessment types to students (eg via overviews on Canvas or the Programme Handbook or Course Descriptors on School sites), but should pay particular attention to any changed arrangements, particularly as Schools have been engaged in assessment review and redesign, due to the institutional *Transforming Assessment/Embedding Assessment for Learning* activity and the transition to shorter assessment diets as part of the revised Structure of the Academic Year. Schools should also ensure that students are aware of all assessment deadlines, including their own responsibilities and any penalties for late submission.

Students might reasonably expect the Exam and Assessment Diet to be kept free of coursework assignment deadlines or for no coursework to be set for completion in this period; however, with a move towards fewer in-person exams, it is more practical for Schools to use the full semester (including exam and assessment diets) for spacing out assessment deadlines. However, Schools should take steps to ensure that coursework is scheduled in such a way as to minimise clashing and bunching of assessment deadlines, taking into account the full range of coursework and exams across the programme. (see *Policy on Coursework Scheduling and Submission*).

Further Information
- The Student Exams and Assessment Website provide comprehensive information for staff and students on examinations, including timetables.
- The LTA has produced several student-focused guides as part of its Assessment and Feedback Resources, eg:
  - Helping students prepare for exams;
  - Supporting international students in assessment;
  - Helping students appreciate what's expected of them in assessment.
- The Skills Hub provides extensive assessment-related advice for students.

Volume of Assessment and Assessment Review/Redesign

Feedback from students and from some External Examiners, as well as anecdotal evidence at various committees, have highlighted that overassessment continues to be an area of concern across Heriot-Watt generally. This is a long-standing issue for the University and so Schools should be mindful of the impact on both students and staff (the latter particularly in relation to workload and wellbeing, given the volume of marking, Exam Boards etc).

Volume of assessment should be given particular consideration, as the University moves to a 2-week Diet in April from 2024/25 (as part of the revised Structure of the Academic Year). In an effort to reduce, the number of in-person exams in this period, there could be an unintended, consequential increase in the volume of coursework forms of assessment.

The University's strategic *Transforming Assessment/Embedding Assessment for Learning* initiative is designed to assist Schools in redesigning assessment, including addressing issues related to overassessment. The Learning and Teaching Academy continues to provide wide range of support for Schools in planning for and designing assessment, including designing an appropriate balance of assessment and designing assessment at the programme level. Teaching teams refreshing course and assessment design are encouraged to make use of these resources:

- Curriculum and Assessment Design Toolkit: Assessment
- Assessment and Feedback
- LTA Support for Schools

The LTA updates this information each academic year, providing a suite of resources and support for teaching teams in preparation of the start of the session; see the latest "Get Set for the Academic Year" here. Check out the LTA SharePoint Hub for current information. Further support and guidance are available from the LTA: LTAcademy@hw.ac.uk

Legibility of Handwriting in Assessment (Coursework and Exams)

This section is replicated across a number of related policies:

1) Students are responsible for ensuring that handwritten assessment work submitted is legible (including handwritten exams), and, where relevant, they should seek the appropriate support and guidance from Disability Services or the Student Advisor/Personal Tutor.

2) Where a new student has previously received support prior to joining Heriot-Watt University they must arrange to meet Disability Services as soon as possible to seek guidance and determine what level of support or adjustment is appropriate.

3) If the main marker finds any part of the completed handwritten assessment illegible, a second marker (the moderator of the marking) will attempt to mark the work (or part thereof). If there are issues with the legibility of the work, irrespective of whether it was possible to mark the work in whole or part, the Global Course Leader will, after the release of marks, inform the student and recommend they discuss with the Student Advisor/Personal Tutor, possible actions to avoid recurrence in the future.

Alternative Assessment Formats for Students with Disabilities

Occasionally, students with disabilities may require an alternative format of assessment (for both coursework and exams) to ensure equitable access and fair evaluation of their knowledge and skills. The Disability Service will liaise with schools on assessment types before finalising any adjustments. Requests for such accommodations will be considered on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with relevant disability support services, institutional guidelines, and PSRB requirements.

Guidance on Alternative Assessment Requests for Disabled Students is available from the Disability Service.

Heriot-Watt Assessment Platforms: Staff Guide

This guide outlines the coursework and exam platforms that are approved for use at Heriot-Watt from AY24-25 onwards.

Assessment type definitions

- For details on approved assessments and their administration see [Types of Assessment: Policy and Administrative Definitions](#)

In summary:

- Exams are scheduled during the assessment diet, administered by Registry and Academic Support (RAS) and must be:
  - Time-limited (2 or 3 hours – with some exceptions),
  - Invigilated
  - In-person
- Coursework is all other assessments which are not an exam. The following types of coursework have administrative support:
  - Class tests – support for students with assessment adjustments.
  - Final Online Assessments (primarily Heriot Watt Online): also scheduled and administered by RAS.

HW Approved Exam platforms

Exam platform	Options	Most effective for the following exam types
Handwritten exams conducted in an 'exam hall' and invigilated by a person(s). Students complete the questions by hand in an answer booklet during the exam time. Invigilators oversee the delivery of the exam, including assessment security and student wellbeing.	• **Closed book**	• Unseen exam questions. • Long answer written questions e.g. essays, evaluations, reflection, reports. • Questions requiring application of skills to provided content e.g. data analysis, textual analysis, translation.
	• **Provided information only** e.g. formulae	• Unseen exam questions. • Long answer written questions e.g. essays, data analysis. • More detailed exam questions which rely on information which students wouldn't be expected to remember. • Questions testing application of skills or knowledge to information provided e.g. case studies.
	• **Open notes** (i.e. can bring own notes but not textbooks etc).	• Previously seen / prepared exam questions. • Unseen exam questions. • Questions testing application of skills to data provided / permitted.
	• **Open book** (i.e. nominated textbooks only, or wholly open-book can bring any book or notes they choose)	• Previously seen / prepared exam questions. • Questions focused on retrieval of information from the permitted sources. • Questions testing application of skills to data retrieved. • Unseen exam questions.
	• **Gradescope-marked exam**	• Questions requiring scientific notation or workings e.g. chemical structure diagrams, mathematical formulae.

Exam platform	Options	Most effective for the following exam types
Online exam hosted on Canvas quizzes and conducted in an 'exam hall', invigilated by a person(s). Students complete the questions online in the quiz during the exam time. Students access to the internet can be restricted whilst undertaking the exam. Invigilators oversee the delivery of the exam, including assessment security (checking that the students are not accessing inappropriate content on the computer) and student wellbeing.	Respondus: to restrict student access to the internet for the duration of the Exam.	• Questions which require the use of a computer and / or specific software. • Questions which require submission of a typed document.
Viva Interview / verbal assessment of knowledge, understanding and skills by viva panel.	NA	• PhD or dissertation defence • Assessment of work which is on the borderline of degree classification. • Reassessment where required e.g. due to plagiarism being proven in original assessment.

HW Approved coursework assessment platforms

Assessment platform	Likely to be most effective for the following assessment types	Supports similarity checking (Turnitin)	Supports self or Peer assessment	Supports group submission	Suitable for a class test	Supports a time limit
Canvas assignments	- Used to host **Final Online Assessment**s for on-campus or non-EBS distance learning students. **Long answer written questions** e.g. case studies, essays, evaluations, reflections, reports, reviews, summaries. **Dissertations and theses**. **Assessment of writing skills**. **Media submissions / recordings (video or audio)** e.g. presentations, demonstrations, case studies. **File upload**, including **multiple file uploads** in single assignment[1] e.g. Excel spreadsheets, image files, student project files, posters.	Yes. **Note** this is only applicable to text-based submissions.	Peer assessment.	Yes. Assign grades collectively to the group or individually to each group member. **Note** this is only applicable to text-based submissions.	No	Optional – can set: - due date, - time assignment becomes visible to students and - time it closes to students.

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[1] File types can be restricted to only those appropriate for the assignment when setting it up.

Assessment platform	Likely to be most effective for the following assessment types	Supports similarity checking (Turnitin)	Supports self or Peer assessment	Supports group submission	Suitable for a class test	Supports a time limit
	• **Document annotation** e.g. annotated bibliography, labelling a diagram. • **URL submission** e.g. link to a blog / vlog, eportfolio, wiki, website.					
Canvas graded quizzes	• **Mixed questions assessment.** • **Providing immediate feedback via automated answers or moderated feedback from course team.** • **Testing recall of information** e.g. via closed questions such as true / false, fill in the blank • **Classification of information questions** e.g. matching, ordering, categorisation. • **Comprehension and application of information** e.g. Multiple choice questions, multiple answer questions. • **Short answer questions** e.g. Problem-solving, evaluative and reflective questions.	No	Self-assessment – if the questions and answers are designed to enable this.	No	Yes Optional - can set: • Open book • Closed book • Computer lab • Respondus: to restrict student access to the internet for the duration of the assessment	Optional – can set: • due date, • time assignment becomes visible to students and • time it closes to students.

Assessment platform	Likely to be most effective for the following assessment types	Supports similarity checking (Turnitin)	Supports self or Peer assessment	Supports group submission	Suitable for a class test	Supports a time limit
	• **Identification of visual information** e.g. hotspot questions. • **Simple numerical questions**. • <u>Single</u> file upload e.g. image, PDF.					
Canvas graded discussions	• **Debates**. • **Discussions**.	No	Peer-assessment.	Yes - Group discussion.	No	Optional – can set: • due date, • time assignment becomes visible to students and • time it closes to students.
Gradescope assignments	• **Detailed numerical questions**. • **Questions requiring LaTeX notation**. • **Questions requiring handwritten notation** e.g. chemical structure diagrams.	No	No	Partly – relies on one student submitting and adding other group members to	Contact LTES to discuss suitability	Optional

Assessment platform	Likely to be most effective for the following assessment types	Supports similarity checking (Turnitin)	Supports self or Peer assessment	Supports group submission	Suitable for a class test	Supports a time limit
	• **Paper-based assignments in STEM**[2].			the submission.		
In-person assessment e.g. practicals, vivas.	• **In-person demonstration of skills** e.g. practical lab skills, use of tools / machines, computer skills, simulations. • **In-person demonstration or exploration of understanding** e.g. presentations, viva, debates, discussions. • **In-person application of knowledge and skills** e.g. solving a problem.	No	Varies depending on assessment.	Varies depending on assessment.	No	NA
EBS Student Portal (Turnitin)	• Only available for assessments for Heriot-Watt Online courses that are hosted in the EBS Student Portal. • Used to host **Final Online Assessments** for those courses.	Yes. **Note** this is only applicable to text-based submissions.	No	No	No	Optional

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[2] These must then be scanned and uploaded to Gradescope either by the student or by the course team.

Key Assessment Policies

- [Types of Assessment: Policy and Administrative Definitions](#)

Further Guidance on Assessment Methods

Sambell, K. and Brown, S. (2022) [Choosing and using fit-for-purpose assessment methods](#), Edinburgh, HWU Learning and Teaching Academy.

Further support

Technological support

- [IS training hub](#)
- Contact Information Services for advice from the Learning Technology Enhancement Service (LTES) via the [IS Self Service Portal](#) Teaching support

- [Curriculum and assessment design toolkit](#)
- Contact the Learning and Teaching Academy via their [teaching consultancy hub](#). Assessment Administrative Support

- [Academic Operations Support](#)
- Examination and Assessment Support: ras-examinations@hw.ac.uk

Appendix 1: Summary of HW approved assessment platforms and coursework types.

	Canvas assignments	Canvas graded quizzes	Canvas graded discussions	EBS Student Portal (Turnitin)	Gradescope assignments	In-person assessment e.g. practicals, vivas.
Annotated bibliographies	Y					
Article for publication	Y					
Blogs and Vlogs	Y					
Case studies	Y					
Class Tests		Y			Y[3]	
Critical incident accounts	Y					Y
Debates and Moots			Y			Y
'Design a product' assignments	Y					Y
Dissertations / thesis	Y				Y	
Essays	Y					
e-Portfolios	Y	Y				
Evaluations	Y				Y	Y
Executive Summaries	Y					
FOA (EBS)				Y		
FOA non-EBS	Y					
Glossaries	Y					
In-tray exercises	Y					Y
Live brief (or triple jump)	Y					
Open book or open note exams		Y				
Oral assessments/Vivas						Y
Patchwork assignments	Y				Y	
Posters	Y					Y
Presentations	Y					Y
Quizzes / tests		Y			Y	
Reflective journals	Y		Y			
Reports / reviews	Y					
Simulations	Y					Y
STEM assessments[4]					Y	
Teaching packages	Y					
Two-stage exams		Y				

[3] Contact IS to discuss suitability
[4] STEM assessments requiring detailed numerical calculations, LaTex or scientific notation.