
SECTION 1: EXAMINATIONS**1.0 Introduction**

The planning and administration of examinations is a year-round function which includes the production and publication of University examination timetables for staff and ultimately personal examination timetables for students.

The University operates a semester system during the academic year with the autumn semester running from September to January and the spring semester running from February to June. Each semester comprises of twelve weeks teaching and two to three weeks of assessment.

Examinations are scheduled for a maximum of three weeks during January and May/June at the end of each semester. Supplementary examinations are held in August each academic year.

Within the main diets of examinations, around 600 modules are examined in January and 800 in May/June.

Other examination timetables operate during the academic year from October-December and April/early May.

The following examination venues are used during the main exam periods:

- Whitla Hall
- Students' Union Snack Bar
- South Dining Hall
- Physical Education Centre – Main and Minor Halls
- Elmwood Hall
- Elmwood Learning and Teaching Centre (ELTC)
- Medical Biology Centre
- Ashby Building

1.1 The Process

Preparation of examination timetables are heavily dependent on Schools ensuring that MODULE EXAMINATION ELEMENTS are correct at source, that is that all modules to be formally examined by written paper, computer examination or practical examination should be identified on the proforma as PAPER, COMPEXAM and PRACTICAL respectively. The EXAM SESSION should also be identified in QSIS.

Modules are then extracted from QSIS and imported into the examination timetabling software. The process of constructing examination timetables commences in early October for semester one examinations and early February for semester two examinations. Regular monitoring of module changes is performed to ensure that the data is as up-to-date as possible at the time of publication. However, where possible, changes to enrolments should be completed by academic areas early in the semester. The last date for changes of enrolment on QSIS (for timetabling purposes) is 31 October for first semester examinations, and 28 February for second semester examinations.

A draft departmental timetable is published in the first instance. This version should be checked thoroughly by Examination Liaison Officers as this will be the only opportunity to make changes or add new information. A final departmental version is then produced. Following this, student examination timetables are created and applied to the web. Students are informed in advance by email, the publication date of the timetables. They are asked to report inaccuracies to their advisor/School/department who will contact the Examinations Office for any amendments. The

student's examination timetable is then updated on the web where students can download a revised copy normally within two days of registering the corrections with the Examinations Office.

Publication of examination timetables associated with each diet of examinations is generally as follows:

First Semester – last Friday in November
April/Early May – mid March
Second Semester – third Friday in April
Supplementary – 31 July
October-December – mid October

1.2 **Anonymous Examining**

All formal written examinations in the University are carried out by anonymous methods.

The Examinations Office allocates each student a 5-digit code number. This number will change for each session of examinations (e.g. from first to second semester exams.)

Students' names do not appear anywhere on the examination stationery, other than on the invigilation list which can be used to provide the anonymous code and seat number in any case where a student arrives in an examination hall without an exam timetable.

Students are seated randomly in the examination hall, either by anonymous code number or by the student's name. The Examinations Office will decide which method to employ.

The Senior Invigilator is responsible for invigilation lists, and academic staff may only access these lists with his or her permission.

Invigilation lists are printed in 3-part sets, as follows:-

- Top copy, with anonymous codes, seat numbers and student names. This is the central reference copy which is returned to the Examinations Office after the examination.
- A second copy with the anonymous codes, seat numbers and student names. At the end of the examination this copy is put into an envelope marked 'confidential', sealed and returned to the Examinations Office to be collected directly by the Examination Liaison Officer.
- A third set – the marker's copy – which excludes student names and is inserted loose with the scripts.

The second copy is used to break anonymity, as close as possible to the Board of Examiners meeting.

Results are processed and published by Schools.

1.3 **Policy for Dealing with Interruptions to Examinations**

Where an examination running simultaneously in two or more venues is interrupted, the following policy applies only to the venue(s) affected by the interruption.

1. Interruptions to clinical or practical examinations, e.g. oral examinations for language students, will be dealt with according to guidelines available from the relevant Schools.
2. When an examination is interrupted due to an evacuation which lasts for 45 minutes or more, it will be terminated.

3. When the interruption occurs before 75% of the time allocated has passed, it will be rescheduled within the original examinations cycle.
4. When the interruption occurs after 75% or more of the time allocated has passed, it is the decision of the Chair of the relevant Board of Examiners, in consultation with appropriate colleagues and taking into account the nature of the paper, to assess the candidates on the basis of the work completed in the examination. Where this option is not available due to the requirements of an external accrediting body, a re-examination may have to be scheduled within the original examination cycle.

It is the responsibility of the Chair of the Board of Examiners to communicate the decision to students via email within 48 hours of the terminated examination. Candidates are responsible for checking the Student Records and Examinations Website to confirm the date and the venue for a rescheduled examination. Candidates are required to be available for rescheduled examinations.

1.4 Regulations for the Examination of Undergraduate Courses

Regulations for the examination of undergraduate courses can be found in the General Regulations of the University Calendar. The regulations cover: Boards of Examiners, Appointment of Examiners, Conduct of Students, Late Submission, Marking Scales and Honours Classifications, Special Examination Arrangements and Cases of Illness or Emergency/ Extenuating Circumstances.

1.5 Results and Publications Times

(i) Return of Examination Marks

The Student Services and Systems Office will set and publicise a deadline by which examination results for each semester must be published.

(ii) Release of Marks to Students

First semester marks are released in the first instance as provisional marks, subject to confirmation by the Board of Examiners at the end of the second semester.

Provisional first semester marks will be released to students at the end of the first semester. They will be re-issued as confirmed marks, along with confirmed semester two marks, at the end of the second semester.

The external examiner need not normally visit at the end of the first semester (except in the last year of office) but should confirm results following appropriate consultation (eg. by fax or by email).

The only marks to be released to a student are those which have been agreed by the appropriate Subject Board of Examiners and signed by the Chair and Secretary and, if applicable, the external examiner.

Marks will not be released to any third party without a student's permission.

1.6 Special Arrangements and Disability

(i) Special Examinations

Special examinations are those involving any change from normal procedures, including changes in the date, time or place of sitting an examination.

Where special arrangements are made, the University reserves the right to make a charge to the candidate to cover any additional expenses involved.

A student may request a special examination by applying to the Head of School, who will consult the Chair of the Board of Examiners and the Examinations Office. If permission for a special examination is granted, the Head of School and the Examinations Office will arrange the dates, the time and venue of the examination and notify the student of the arrangements.

A Board of Examiners may recommend to the Head of School that a student who has been prevented by illness or emergency from taking an examination may be required to take a special examination. The Head of School will consult with the Examinations Office: if they decide that there should be a special examination, they will arrange the date, the time and venue of the examination and notify the candidate.

(ii) Special arrangements for students with disabilities

Note: the Disability Services Co-ordinator should be contacted for advice about disabled students who may have special examinations needs.¹

The University is very aware of its responsibilities to disabled students and aims to ensure that all students, including those with disabilities, have equality of opportunity in examinations. The University endeavours to ensure that examination procedures are effective in assessing knowledge and abilities of such students, while at the same time ensuring the maintenance of academic standards. Special arrangements will be made where necessary (see below).

In order for special arrangements to be made, the student must have his/her disability assessed by Disability Services/University Health Officer. It is therefore important that students with disabilities register with Disability Services as soon as possible. Full information (i.e. including an assessment of the disability) has to be provided to the Examinations Office by 15 November for the first semester examinations or by 15 April for the second semester examinations. This is to allow time for the necessary arrangements to be put in place.

Where recommended by Disability Services/University Health Officer, a range of facilities are available as follows:

a) Time allowance

Students may be given additional time to complete an examination. The amount of additional time will be based on a student's individual requirements. Examples of circumstances where additional time might be granted include:

- where the candidate's average speed of communication is significantly below that of candidates without a disability;
- where a candidate's communication is affected because he/she tires easily or has limited strength or flexibility;
- where the disability worsens due to stress and/or climate variation;
- where a candidate experiences pain and/or muscular spasm;
- where a candidate's reading speed is slow;
- where the candidate's disability delays the completion of practical tasks.

¹ The Disability Services Co-ordinator can be contacted through extension 2727 or in the Student Guidance Centre.

b) Rest Breaks

Supervised rest breaks may be granted as appropriate. Where an examination is interrupted to enable a candidate to receive medical or other treatment, the duration of the break will be deducted from the time allowed to complete the examination paper.

c) Separate Examination Venues

Some candidates may need to complete their examination in a room on their own either for physical or psychological reasons.

d) Specialised Furniture

This could include, for example: a fully adjustable chair with armrests; a double width desk; a flat desk; or a footstool.

e) Non Medical Helper

A non-medical helper will carry out practical tasks for a candidate whose disability prevents him/her from doing the task. The helper is not permitted to give factual information or advise the candidate on how to structure responses. Examples of helpers might include personal assistant; reader; interpreter; or amanuensis to scribe.

f) Alternative Presentation of Exam Papers

Depending on the candidate's disability, he/she may require an exam paper to be produced in one of the following formats:

- different coloured exam paper;
- exam paper in large print;
- exam paper on audio cassette;
- Braille exam paper.

g) Technological Aids

The use of technological aids may be the most effective means of communication for some candidates with disabilities. If a candidate chooses to use a personal computer with assistive software it will be the candidate's responsibility to ensure that he/she is proficient in the chosen tool.

Any agreement about special arrangements will apply for all future examinations during the student's course, although the situation may be reviewed at any time at the request of either the student or a University representative.

The Examinations Office will publish the student an examination timetable in the normal way, confirming the day, date, time and venue of their examinations.

The Examinations Office will advise the invigilators of any special arrangements.

Any student granted the use of a scribe will be asked to confirm that the script submitted is the final version for assessment.

The Examinations Office welcomes suggestions from disabled students which may assist in improving their examination arrangements.

In the event of an appeal, the Examinations Office will provide those investigating with information about the special arrangements made.

1.7 Requirements from Schools

The Examination Liaison Officer within each School assumes a central role in:

- providing information critical to examination timetabling processes;
- preparing examination papers for transmission and print;
- co-ordinating arrangements for examination boards within each School;
- preparing examination results for transmission and publication via QSIS.

Table 1 provides an overview of examinations scheduled throughout a typical academic year.

Table 1

Examination Diet	Scheduled	Examinations	Level	Duration
First Semester	January	First semester modules	UG / PG	14 days
Spring	April /May	Postgraduate modules / resits	UG / PG	15 days (not consecutive)
Second Semester	May / June	Second semester modules	UG / PG	15 days
Supplementary	August	All resits	UG / PG	12 days
Autumn	Oct – Dec	IPLS, Architecture / Nursing / Medicine / Dentistry / Pharmacy	UG / PG	15 days (not consecutive)

A summary of their role is as follows:

- to act as a contact in the School on all matters to do with the administration and conduct of examinations;
- to provide scheduling information to the Examinations Office;
- to check draft examination timetables;
- to co-ordinate arrangements for School Examination Boards;
- to oversee the preparation and transmission of examination papers;
- to oversee the preparation and transmission of examination results.

Examination Liaison Officers are asked to input details of all modules running within an academic year into Gradebook. They are asked to confirm the method of assessment for each module. The details they provide are used as the basis for scheduling University examinations throughout the examination periods listed in Table 1 above. It is expected that Examination Liaison Officers will consult with staff colleagues before returning scheduling information to the Examinations Office.

Examinations, specific to the periods mentioned above, are scheduled and distributed to Examination Liaison Officers via the web for action. Their role then involves:

- checking that all examinations associated with their academic area have been scheduled;
- checking the duration of each examination is correct;
- checking the groupings are correct (modules with common questions held same time);
- checking the number of students for each examination is accurate;
- reporting back to Examinations Office if student numbers are incorrect;
- to report any other discrepancies;
- to sign-off the timetable.

Schools should note the deadline for upload of examination papers is generally as follows:

First Semester Examinations – third week in November

Second Semester Examinations – third week in April

Supplementary Examinations – second week in July

The deadline for the publication of examination results by Schools for first and second semesters and further information on student administrative support processes can be found at the following website: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/sgc>