UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

CODE OF PRACTICE ON THE CONDUCT OF CENTRALLY CO-ORDINATED FORMAL WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS

Index of points

1. Introduction

2. The examination question paper

3. Mitigating circumstances

4. Students with additional requirements

5. Alternative forms of assessment

6. Examination timetables

7. Arrangements for examination sittings

8. Overseas and off-campus examination sittings

1. Introduction

1.1 This Policy should be interpreted and applied in conjunction with the following documents:

1.1 .1 Academic Regulations: Assessment, Progression and Awards Chapter.

1.1 .2 Invigilation Handbook.

1.1 .3 Policies for Assessment.

1.2 This Policy is intended to apply only to formal, written examinations of the University organised by the University's central Examinations Office. It covers both undergraduate and postgraduate examining.

1.3 A formal written examination is defined for the purposes of this Policy as a time-limited assessment undertaken by a student at a previously specified time, date and venue and based upon written responses to a question paper.

1.4 The Policy also covers examinations which are conducted away from the University campuses, including examinations conducted abroad by agents or partners of the University.

1.5 The Policy does not apply to any form of assessment which does not contribute to the overall mark for the module.

1.6 Provided that sufficient notice is given, the University will ensure wherever possible that the requirements of individual religious observation are taken into account when drawing up examination timetables.

2. The examination question paper

2.1 Production of the examination question paper, which shall be of the duration and format specified in the module description and the course handbook is the responsibility of the College which provides the module.

2.2 Where relevant, the contribution of each examination paper to the determination of Final degree classifications will be notified to all registered students in advance of the examination sitting. The headings of all such examination papers will include either the words "Final Examination" or a statement that the result of the examination will, or may, contribute to the Final degree classification.

2.3 The rubric of each examination question paper must comply with the Guidance provided by Academic Services:

2.4 Any other information necessary for the guidance of students must also be stated in the rubric.

2.5 Colleges must review each question paper to ensure that the final version is not subject to textual error or is drafted in a way which is likely to require clarification during the sitting. A single member of staff for each module will be nominated within each college to be responsible for the production of the examination question paper(s) associated with that module.

2.6 Any changes to the format of the examination by the College, including changes to duration and type of questions, should be notified to the students before the examination.

3. Mitigating circumstances

Colleges must inform students about how and when they might submit evidence of mitigating circumstances so as to ensure that Boards of Examiners have full access to all relevant information. In particular, the importance of medical certificates where illness is being cited as a factor which has materially affected student performance must be stressed.

4. Students with additional requirements

4.1 The Disability, Learning Support and Counselling and Guidance Services (DLSS) will administer the identification of all registered students who require extra time or other resources in examinations, and will confirm this fact to the student's personal or welfare tutor and the Examinations Office.

4.2 It is the responsibility of the Reasonable Adjustments Contacts and Welfare Tutors to notify the College Administration Staff and Examinations Officers of any extra requirements that a student has been permitted. During examinations, under the Data Protection Act, the Examinations Office and the Disability, Learning Support and Counselling and Guidance Services are not permitted to forward lists of students who have been granted extra time to College Administration Staff and Examinations Officers. The Examinations Office will provide a summary of registered students requiring examination accommodations to the Welfare Tutor in each College prior to the start of each examination session.

4.3 The extra examination time allowance that can be granted shall be standardised at fifteen minutes per hour. No time allowance additional to this will be granted except by prior arrangement.

4.4 The arrangements for students with additional support requirements beyond the time allowance will continue to be dealt with on an individual basis.

5. Alternative forms of assessment

In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary to consider an alternative form of assessment to examinations for some students with disabilities. Alternatives to examinations should be considered where all possible accommodations have been explored but where the student is still unable to undertake examinations due to a disability. Before implementing any alternative form of assessment, advice should be sought from the Disability, Learning Support and Mental Health Advisory Services and the Examinations Office.

6. Examination timetables

6.1 Students are responsible for notifying their colleges and Taught Student Administration of any changes to their module registrations to facilitate the production of stable examination timetables.

6.2 Once the provisional examination timetable for an examination session has

been compiled, this information will be made available on the Examinations Office website and on the Student Portal in the form of a personal examination timetable for those students registered for assessment. Draft personal examination timetables for the main summer examinations will be published before the start of the Easter vacation.

6.3 The summer timetable will be finalised and published before the beginning of the summer term and accessible on the Student Portal.

6.4 Students who have been permitted extra entitlement to time and provision on their assessments will be able to see their personal timetables on the Student Portal with the alternative exam venues, they will not be able to see the provision they are entitled to as this should be reflected in the Student Support Advice memo that they are given by DLSS.

6.5 The Final timetable for the Supplementary Assessments held in late August/early September will be made available on the Examinations Office web pages and on the Student Portal.

6.6 It will be the responsibility of each individual student to make sure that they are aware of the finalised date, time, duration and venue of each of their examination papers and to arrive in good time for each sitting.

6.7 Where it is necessary to make a change to the arrangements for an examination after the Final timetable has been published, those students registered for the assessment will be notified in writing and via University e-mail accounts. This notification will be done in sufficient time to allow any necessary adjustment to patterns of revision, travel arrangements etc.

7. Arrangements for examination sittings

7.1 The University will provide suitable examination conditions for registered students sitting formal written examinations:

7.1 .1 Each examination venue will be laid out with desks arranged in a manner which will ensure that each student's work cannot be read by other students.

7.1 .2 The possibility of external noise disturbance will be minimised through appropriate liaison between the Examinations Office and the relevant parties.

7.2 The Examinations Office will administer a central alternative examination venue for students with extra time where possible.

7.3 The Examinations Office will arrange for an amanuensis, scribe or reader for students who require it where possible. Students on taught programmes cannot act as amanuenses, nor can someone known to the student.

7.4 The University will appoint to each examination venue a team of invigilators to ensure that the examination session is conducted in a proper manner and in accordance with the published guidelines. Venues will be normally invigilated by mixed-gender teams where possible. In standard examination venues on campus the Senior Invigilator will always be a member of the academic staff. In alternative examination venues and standard University

examination venues away from the University campus the Senior Invigilator will have undergone specialised training for the role.

7.5 Where a School is not represented through the Senior Invigilator in a venue, or where the appointed Senior Invigilator could not reasonably be expected to resolve any student queries which may arise in connection with the School paper(s), the School will arrange for a competent person to attend the examination venue for the initial fifteen minutes of the sitting for the purpose of resolving any queries. If a query arises after the initial fifteen minutes the School should arrange for a competent person to attend the venue to resolve the query. Where a number of different examinations from a School are taking place in a single venue, this duty may involve more than one person. This requirement does not apply to overseas sittings.

7.6 Each student will be provided with the appropriate materials on which to answer examination questions. This includes anonymous answer booklets and multiple choice answer sheets (if applicable) when the student is not expected to answer the question on the question paper. No other materials other than those provided may be used.

7.7 Students are required to answer all questions in pen except for exams that nee answered in pencil e.g. multiple choice answer sheets.

7.8 The complex nature of examination scheduling, together with the limited time available for examinations, may lead to students having two examinations scheduled on the same day. This cannot be avoided and no adjustment of the timetable will be undertaken.

7.9 All registered students shall follow all written and oral instructions during the examination. Failure to do so shall constitute an Examination Irregularity as in Regulation 7.2.3 (d) (iv), which may be treated as a misconduct or fitness to practise offence under Section 8 of the Regulations.

7.10 All registered students will be required to provide evidence of their identity during the sitting. This will usually be done by displaying their Student Identity Card on the desk. Where there is uncertainty over the identity of a student during the sitting, the student will be permitted to finish the examination before any enquiries relating to their identity are made. Repeated failure to present valid evidence of the student's identity in different examination sittings will constitute an Examination Irregularity.

7.11 Each examination session will begin promptly. Where an examination is also being held overseas in a different time-zone, the Examinations Office will ask the host organisation to schedule the examination sitting at a time which will minimise the possibility of a breach of the security of the examination.

7.12 All registered students must listen carefully to the Senior Invigilator's announce at the start, during and at the end of the examination and act upon these. Befor session begins students should ensure they have left all non-permitted items ir area designated within the examination venue including but not limited to the following:

(i) All papers

(ii) Notes

(iii) Textbooks

(iv) Bags

(v) Coats

(vi) Correction/removal fluids or tape

(vii) Communication devices and other unauthorised electronic, mobile, technical or computer equipment which are capable of accessing the internet/email and/or storing data (including notes and photographs)

7.13 Failure to comply with these instructions will constitute an Examination Irregularity. Unauthorised items may be confiscated, inspected and retained as evidence until disciplinary proceedings and any related appeals are completed.

7.14 All registered students must ensure that they take note of the rubric at the top of each examination question paper; failure to comply with these instructions is likely to constitute an Examination Irregularity.

7.15 All registered students must ensure that they do not engage in any form of cheating in connection with the examination. The University treats any form of cheating under examination conditions as an extremely serious matter (as it does the related offence of plagiarism). It will instigate Examination Irregularity procedures against an individual student where there is sufficient evidence of cheating based upon the Senior Invigilator's report.

7.16 All registered students must ensure that they write legibly in their examination answer books. If it is necessary because of illegibility to arrange for a transcription of the script to be produced in advance of marking, the student will be liable to the School for the direct costs involved in this work (see Regulation 7.2.3 (d) (vi)).

7.17 All registered students whose first language is not English will be permitted to use a standard, un-annotated and unmarked dictionary during their examinations unless the question paper rubric specifically prohibits their use. This may be either solely English-based or cover English and the student's first language. Technical, annotated or electronic dictionaries will not be permitted. Any student wishing to make use of this concession must obtain a letter of authorisation from Enquiry Services and bring this to every examination attended. Failure to produce the letter during an examination sitting may constitute an Examination Irregularity.

7.18 All containers left on a desk during an examination sitting, including pencil cases and drinks bottles, must be transparent. Failure to comply with this requirement will constitute an Examination Irregularity.

7.19 All registered students will be allowed to consume sweets, mints and similar items, as well as non-alcoholic, bottled drinks during an examination session, provided no disturbance is caused to other students and provided that any container is transparent and any labels are removed. Other types of food are not permitted. Failure to comply with these requirements will constitute an Examination Irregularity.

7.20 All registered students must leave all question sheets and answer books provic during an examination sitting in the examination venue when the student leave venue. Students who remove, or attempt to remove any part of the question sl answer sheet or answer book, may be subject to an Examination Irregularity investigation under the disciplinary procedures.

8. Overseas and off-campus examination sittings

8.1 A student who is classified as overseas for fee purposes will, where possible, be allowed to undertake any necessary supplementary assessment (usually in late August/early September) in their home country. This concession also covers EU students normally domiciled outside the UK. Examination sittings will be arranged through the British Council. Where there is no local British Council representation, alternative arrangements will be made where possible, providing that the security of the University's examination procedures is not compromised. To make use of this facility, students must pay the overseas re-sit fee no later than the advertised deadline.

8.2 Overseas sittings are not available to students going on holiday or students attending the University as part of the Erasmus scheme.

8.3 Host organisations running overseas or off-campus examination sittings must be able to:

8.3 .1 Arrange the examinations concerned in the time period required.

8.3 .2 Conduct the examinations in accordance with this Policy.

8.4 The University Examinations Office will provide the host organisation with the details of the examinations required, including date and time of the UK sittings and the names and contact details of the student.

8.5 Where a time difference exists between the University of Birmingham and the host organisation, the University will require the timing of any off-campus examination to be as close as possible to the UK sitting to ensure the security of the University examination procedures are not breached.

8.6 If a student has two examinations on the same day they should, where possible, be allowed the same period of time between sittings as would apply at the University.

Duration of Morning Examination	Time Between Sittings
1 hour	3.5 hours
1.5 hours	3 hours
2 hours	2.5 hours
3 hours	1.5 hours

8.7 The University Examinations Office will provide the student with details of the host organisation. It is the responsibility of the student to contact the host organisation for information about the examination arrangements.

8.8 Any charges levied by the host organisation to cover administrative costs, room and invigilation hire and courier costs for the return of completed examination scripts are payable by the student. These charges must be notified to the student in advance of the sitting and paid prior to the

commencement of the examination by the host organisation. The host organisation has the right to refuse to conduct an examination sitting if the charge has not been paid. The host organisation will be responsible for notifying the University Examinations Office of any exams they have cancelled as a result of any unpaid charges.

8.9 The University Examinations Office will forward to the host organisation by courier the relevant question papers together with University examination stationery in time for the examinations.

8.10 After the examination sitting the host organisation will be required to collect the completed answer books and question papers and return these, along with any unused material. These must be scanned and emailed to the University's Examinations Office within twenty-four hours of the sitting. However, if the host organisation is holding a number of University examinations a bulk despatch may be returned within twenty-four hours of the final examination sitting.