

'Take home' exams (summer 2020)

Frequently Asked Questions

Section 1: Overview of 'take home' exams

Why is the University of Reading running exams? I have friends at other UK universities where exams have been cancelled.

Our aim is to give as many students as possible the chance to complete the academic year and achieve the academic credit they deserve so that they can smoothly progress their studies or complete their degrees on schedule.

To develop our approach to exams and assessments this summer, we have been guided by the following principles:

1. to be fair to all students, providing a full opportunity for students to consolidate their learning, demonstrate their academic achievement and gain the full benefit of their studies;
2. to ensure that all students are reliably assessed, and that awards achieved by students meet sector and professional requirements, are respected by employers, accrediting bodies and other stakeholders, and have the same value as degrees awarded in previous years;
3. to support students to complete the academic year and undertake their assessments, allowing flexibility and reflecting the diverse needs of our students and the different circumstances that they find themselves in as a result of the current situation;
4. to enable students to achieve their degree or to progress to the following year in accordance with the normal schedule, as far as reasonably possible.

In line with these principles, we believe that assessment should go ahead, although in an adapted format, and **we expect all students to take these alternative assessments wherever possible**. This will enable as many students as possible to complete the academic year according to their programme's planned schedule while making reasonable changes to original programme assessments to manage the impact of the coronavirus outbreak.

We understand that not everyone will be able to complete the 'take home' exams in a way that accurately reflects their academic progress. For example, some students may be affected by illness, internet restrictions, access to learning materials, or caring responsibilities. These circumstances will vary significantly for different students, which is why we are introducing a new, flexible Circumstances Impact Process (to be published w/c 6 April) for students to use if they feel they have been disadvantaged.

What is a 'take home' exam, when will the papers be released and how can I prepare?

A 'take home' exam is an open-book, time-limited exam that you can take in your own environment. Some important elements are built in to account for the current circumstances.

- It can be done at home with access to lecture notes, internet and other resources.
- It will be released at 10am (UK time) on Blackboard, to take best account of time differences.
- The 'take home' exam will normally remain open for 23 hours, to allow for things like time differences, caring arrangements and any interruptions or technical difficulties. You are not

expected to spend 23 hours actually doing the exam and suggested timings for completion will be provided.

- You will not have more than one take home exam in a day.

There is no time for research or learning new topics and students are therefore **strongly advised** to revise as they would do for an exam taken under standard exam conditions.

Your exam papers will be released in accordance with your exam timetable which is published on RISIS.

Question papers will be downloaded from Blackboard, with answers written in Word and uploaded via Turnitin as per usual coursework submissions. 'Multiple Choice Question' exams will be delivered as a Blackboard test where possible. Alternative submission methods are available for those needing to submit calculations or photographs, for example. The practice paper (see more information below) will allow you to test a range of submission options.

We have published specific advice about how to prepare for 'take home' exams [here](#).

Will there be an opportunity to practice?

Yes, we will make a practice paper available on Blackboard during the week commencing 14 April. This will give you an opportunity to test accessing, downloading and uploading a 'take home' exam. We will contact you by email soon with further information.

The process for submission of your answers will be the same as any other submission via Blackboard/Turnitin. However, the practice is an opportunity to test making a submission using your current internet connection and equipment, helping to identify and resolve any technical issues before your first exam.

We strongly recommend that you take the opportunity to do this practice, to help ensure you are as prepared as possible.

How long should I spend writing my answers and will there be a word limit?

You will be advised to spend a similar amount of time on your answers as you would have done if the exam was being undertaken in standard exam conditions. This time will be indicated on the exam paper.

Word counts will be present on most papers and it is important that these are not exceeded.

Word limits have been introduced because 'take home' exam papers remain open for a much longer period than an invigilated exam. We do not expect or want students to be writing answers for the duration of the opening time. It will also not be possible for academic staff to mark submissions where students exceed the word count.

What happens if I am taking an accredited exam which must be sat under specific conditions?

There are a small number of accredited exams that can only be completed under invigilated exam conditions. Those students affected will be notified about what arrangements we have made for these exams. If you feel you are affected by this and have not been notified about these arrangements please email take-home-exam@reading.ac.uk using your University email address and quoting your candidate number (found on your exam timetable) and the module codes for your accredited exam(s).

Section 2: Resolving possible issues

I don't have access to Blackboard, what should I do?

If you do not have access to Blackboard please email take-home-exam@reading.ac.uk using your University email address and quoting your candidate number (found on your exam timetable) and the module codes for your exam(s).

Your Support Centre or HBS Programme Teams will be in touch with you to see whether alternative arrangements for downloading and submission can be put in place.

I will be revising for, and sitting, my exams in a country where there are some internet restrictions in place. I am not able to access the full range of websites and online learning materials that are available to students in the UK. Can I have access to a VPN connection to the University of Reading system so that I can study on the same basis as European students?

Unfortunately, for legal and security reasons, we are unable to provide access to a VPN.

We would recommend **that you attempt your exam(s) if at all possible**. Our 'safety net' arrangements mean that, subject to certain important exceptions, **completing the remainder of your assessments can only have a positive impact on your marks**.

However, if you feel unable to do this, you can use the new Circumstances Impact Policy (CIP) (to be published w/c 6 April) to request a deferral.

I don't have a suitable space in which to take my exams (due to lack of privacy, noise etc.). What should I do?

We recognise that some students may be affected by the lack of a suitable space to undertake their work during the exam period and we don't want you to be disadvantaged because of this.

It is important to note that most exam papers will be open for 23 hours which should allow you some flexibility to try to identify a quieter time or to negotiate some space with family or sharers.

We would recommend **that you attempt your exam(s) if at all possible**. Our 'safety net' arrangements mean that, subject to certain important exceptions, **completing the remainder of your assessments can only have a positive impact on your marks**.

However, if you feel unable to do this, you can use the new Circumstances Impact Policy (CIP) (to be published w/c 6 April) to request a deferral.

I don't have access to a PC or laptop, or it has broken. Is there any financial support available for IT equipment?

If you don't have access to a computer please contact us as soon as possible at take-home-exams@reading.ac.uk to discuss your options. This may be a loan computer if you are staying on in Halls of Residence, or a short-term financial loan for you to purchase a computer if you qualify for student support funding.

If needed, you can apply for a short-term loan [here](#) (you will need to enter your UoR Office 365 details to access the form) or email studentfunding@reading.ac.uk to request an application form.

If none of these are possible you can request to defer your exam until August/September when we hope to be able to run in-person examinations, although this will depend on the UK government restrictions having been lifted by then.

I have no access to the internet in my accommodation (where I will need to sit my exams). How will I be able to access exam papers? What happens if I'm not able to sit my exams at all through no fault of my own?

We recognise that some students may be affected by the lack of internet access during the exam period and we don't want you to be disadvantaged because of this.

We are introducing a new Circumstance Impact Policy (CIP) (to be published w/c 6 April) for this period which includes issues relating to IT and internet access.

I have very limited / unreliable access to the internet. I'm concerned that I will not be able to access material while sitting my exams that will be available to other students. Is this going to put me at a disadvantage? What happens if I am not able to submit my answers by the deadline because of my unreliable connection?

We know that some students may be affected by the lack of access to a reliable internet connection or limits on access to certain materials and we don't want you to be disadvantaged because of this. We are introducing a new Circumstances Impact Process (CIP) (to be published w/c 6 April) for this period which includes issues relating to IT and internet access.

For most exams and alternative assessments, you will be able to download the question paper from Blackboard, work on it offline and then upload your answers via Turnitin when you've finished. This means that you won't need to have the internet available the whole time you are doing the exam. The exception to this will be multiple choice exams.

We will be making a practice exam available from the week of the 14 April 2020 via Blackboard so that you can test downloading and submitting documents and check your connection.

If you know that you will not be able to access your exam, you can request to defer until August/September. We hope by this time we will be able to run in-person exams, although this will depend on the UK government position.

What if I have technical problems on the day? What should I do if I am unable to access Blackboard or an internet connection?

A practice exam paper will be available on Blackboard from the week commencing 14 April. This will give you the chance to test downloading and uploading documents in advance of your exam.

Our 'Take Home Exam Helpline' will provide technical and academic support throughout the exam season and will open on 15 April 2020.

We will contact you with full details of the practice exam and this helpline after Easter. In the meantime, you can contact us by email at take-home-exam@reading.ac.uk or via [DTS Self Service Portal](#). Please note that the 'live' support hours are 08.00 – 18.00 UK time Monday to Friday. If you contact us outside these hours, we will respond as soon as possible once 'live' support starts.

My discipline requires diagrams, equations, sketches etc. in my answers. How will I cope with that?

We recommend drawing these items by hand. You can then scan or take a photo of them (for example, using a smartphone) and insert the picture files into your submissions. Please be mindful of file sizes. Further advice will accompany the practice paper release during the week of 14 April.

Section 3: On exam day

What time will exams be available?

Exam papers will be available at 10.00am UK time. There are no exams scheduled to start in the afternoon.

How long will exams be available for? What is the submission deadline?

The vast majority of exams will be open on Blackboard for 23 hours from 10.00am UK time to 09.00am UK time the following day. Your School will be in touch with you if there is any variation to this.

There will be some occasions where the paper will be open for a shorter period (language modules and Blackboard tests primarily). In these cases your School will be in touch with you to clarify details, even if the length is currently specified as 23 hours on your exam timetable.

How should I submit my answers?

The majority of answers will be submitted through Turnitin, as you would normally for your assessments throughout the year.

If you are having difficulty submitting your answer, you can contact us by email at take-home-exam@reading.ac.uk, via DTS Self Service Portal or, from 15 April, via the 'take home' exams helpline. Please note that the 'live' support hours are 08.00 – 18.00 UK time Monday to Friday. If you contact us outside these hours, we will respond as soon as possible once 'live' support starts.

We are also introducing a new Circumstances Impact Process (CIP) (to be published w/c 6 April) for this period which includes issues relating to IT and internet access.

How will the University ensure that there is no cheating?

Please note the University's regulations on plagiarism still apply to 'take home' exams. The submission process will involve following the usual guidelines with regard to Turnitin.

The academic misconduct regulations, which include reference to cheating via plagiarism, can be found [here](#). Submissions should be your own work and you should not seek to work collaboratively with others.

The University will investigate instances where plagiarism is suspected, and any proven instances of cheating will be dealt with firmly in accordance with our processes.

What if I have technical problems on the day? What should I do if I am unable to access Blackboard or an internet connection?

A practice exam paper will be available on Blackboard from the week commencing 14 April. This will give you the chance to test downloading and uploading documents in advance of your exam.

Our 'Take Home Exam Helpline' will provide technical and academic support throughout the exam season and will open on 15 April 2020.

We will contact you with full details of the practice exam and this helpline after Easter. In the meantime, you can contact us by email at take-home-exam@reading.ac.uk or via [DTS Self Service Portal](#). Please note that the 'live' support hours are 08.00 – 18.00 UK time Monday to Friday. If you contact us outside these hours, we will respond as soon as possible once 'live' support starts.

If I have a query, require clarification or spot an error in my examination, who do I contact?

If you have a non-technical query on the day please email take-home-exam@reading.ac.uk using your University email address and quoting your candidate number (found on your exam timetable) and the module code for the take home exam affected.

For technical queries please refer to the answer above.

Section 4: Students with special arrangements

Will extra time be given for students who need it? How does it work if I take medication, or need rest breaks during my exams?

The extended 23-hour window to complete an exam allows those who would usually have special timing arrangements to take any extra time or rest breaks they need.

You will also be able to use your assistive technology at home and, if you normally have the aid of a scribe, reader or Oral Language Modifier (OLM), your family or members of your household can perform this role for you.

If you normally have a scribe, reader or OLM, your Disability Adviser will be in touch to check if you are able to access this support at home.

If you have other needs that cannot be met, please contact your Support Centre in the first instance.

What should I do if I normally have a coloured sticker to attach to my coursework?

As all assessment submission is online, you will not receive the 'yellow sticker' as you would normally for exams. Please use the 'green sticker' that you would attach to your online submissions.

You will already have been sent an electronic copy of your 'green sticker' in the email from the Exams Team confirming your University exam arrangements. If you are unable to locate this email, please contact the [Exams Team](#) who will be able to send you a copy of your sticker.

More information about how to download and insert your 'green sticker' into your work can be found [here](#).

I require access to specialist equipment/software in order to sit my exams. Please can I be granted access to University IT equipment in order to study and sit my exams?

As you are able to use your own computer to complete your exam, any software that you would use normally for coursework (such as speech-to-text software), can be used during your exam.

If you require coloured exam paper or the use of a coloured overlay, you may be able to alter the exam paper colour online or print out the exam and use your own overlay.

If you believe that you will not be able to complete your online exams with the equipment available to you, you should contact us using your University email address at take-home-exam@reading.ac.uk.

What happens if I normally have a scribe, reader, prompter or oral language modifier in my written exams?

You will also be able to use your assistive technology at home and, if you normally have the aid of a scribe, reader or Oral Language Modifier (OLM), your family or members of your household can perform this role for you.

If you normally have a scribe, reader or OLM, your Disability Adviser will be in touch to check if you are able to access this support at home.

If you have other needs that cannot be met, please contact your Support Centre in the first instance.

What happens if I'm diagnosed during the exam period with a condition that might lead to reasonable adjustments in my exam arrangements?

Please contact us, using your University email address, at take-home-exam@reading.ac.uk for advice.

What happens if I have an accident or illness during the exam period that affects my ability to complete my online exams?

Please contact us, using your University email address, at take-home-exam@reading.ac.uk for advice.

We would recommend that you attempt your exam(s) if at all possible. However, if you feel unable to do this, you can use the new Circumstances Impact Process (CIP) (to be published w/c 6 April) to request a deferral.

The situation has caused me anxiety and I'm worried I won't be able to prepare effectively for 'take home' exams.

We recognise that the combination of the COVID-19 pandemic and end of year assessment is a very difficult, however we would nevertheless strongly recommend that you continue to prepare for your examinations, if you possibly can.

We would recommend **that you attempt your exam(s) if at all possible**. Our 'safety net' arrangements mean that, subject to certain important exceptions, **completing the remainder of your assessments can only have a positive impact on your marks**.

However, if you are unable to prepare for exams you may choose to wait and see your 'safety net' results before you make a request to defer/retake.

Alternatively, you may request that your exams are deferred until August/September. The exams taken in August/September will then be your first attempt and there will be no penalties or capping of marks. We hope by this time we will be able to run in-person exams, although it is possible that may need to continue with 'take home' exams or another form of exam that can also be done at a distance, depending on the UK government position at the time.

I have a special arrangement not covered by these FAQs

Please contact us at take-home-exam@reading.ac.uk as soon as possible, via your University email address, and we will do all we can to assist you.

Section 5: Extenuating circumstances

I am ill at the time of the exam, what should I do?

You should make a request to defer your exams until August/September by completing our new Circumstances Impact Process (CIP) (to be published w/c 6 April).

The exams taken in August/September will then be your first attempt and there will be no penalties or capping of marks. We hope by this time we will be able to run in-person exams, although it is possible that may need to continue with 'take home exams' or another form of examination that can also be done at a distance, depending on the UK government position at the time.

I am self-isolating at the time of the exam, what should I do?

If you are self-isolating but well and have access to the examination, we would recommend **that you attempt your exam(s) if at all possible**. Our 'safety net' arrangements mean that, subject to certain important exceptions, **completing the remainder of your assessments can only have a positive impact on your marks**.

However, if you feel unable to do this, you can use the new Circumstances Impact Policy (CIP) (to be published w/c 6 April) to request a deferral.

I am caring for someone who is ill at the time of the exam, what should I do?

Exams are open for 23 hours and therefore you may be able to make arrangements to undertake the exams. We would recommend **that you attempt your exam(s) if at all possible**. Our 'safety

net' arrangements mean that, subject to certain important exceptions, **completing the remainder of your assessments can only have a positive impact on your marks.**

If you are unable to take your exam you should request to defer/retake your examinations by completing our new Circumstances Impact Process (CIP) (to be published w/c 6 April). The exams taken in August/September will then be your first attempt and there will be no penalties or capping of marks.

We hope by this time we will be able to run in-person exams, although it is possible that may need to continue with 'take home exams' or another form of examination that can also be done at a distance, depending on the UK government position at the time.

[I am self-isolating and do not have access to learning materials to prepare for the exams](#)

If you have been able to do some preparation it would be worth trying the examination **as this puts you in the strongest possible position.** Our 'safety net' arrangements mean that, subject to certain important exceptions, **completing the remainder of your assessments can only have a positive impact on your marks.**

If you are unable to prepare for the exam you should request to defer/retake your examinations by completing our new Circumstances Impact Process (CIP) (to be published w/c 6 April). The exams taken in August/September will then be your first attempt and there will be no penalties or capping of marks.

We hope by this time we will be able to run in-person exams, although it is possible that may need to continue with 'take home exams' or another form of examination that can also be done at a distance, depending on the UK government position at the time.

[I cannot access the internet or Blackboard, what should I do?](#)

Guidance to help you solve common IT and Blackboard/Turnitin issues will be available 24/7 via Blackboard. If you know in advance that you won't be able to access Blackboard we will ask you to get in touch so we can discuss potential alternative options

If you know that you will not be able to access your exam you can request to defer your exams until August/September by completing our new Circumstances Impact Process (CIP) (to be published w/c 6 April). The exams taken in August/September will then be your first attempt and there will be no penalties or capping of marks.

We hope by this time we will be able to run in-person exams, although it is possible that may need to continue with 'take home' exams or another form of examination that can also be done at a distance, depending on the UK government position at the time.

If you had IT issues on the day of your exams you can request to retake your exams in August/September by completing our new Circumstances Impact Process (CIP) (to be published w/c 6 April).

I have other extenuating circumstances, what should I do?

Please use the Circumstances Impact Process (CIP) (to be published w/c 6 April) to bring these to our attention.

The situation has caused me anxiety and I'm worried I won't be able to prepare effectively for 'take home' exams.

We recognise that the combination of the COVID-19 pandemic and end of year assessment is a very difficult, however we would nevertheless strongly recommend that you continue to prepare for your examinations, if you possibly can.

We would recommend **that you attempt your exam(s) if at all possible**. Our 'safety net' arrangements mean that, subject to certain important exceptions, **completing the remainder of your assessments can only have a positive impact on your marks**.

However, if you feel unable to prepare for or take your exams, you should use the new Circumstances Impact Policy (CIP) (to be published w/c 6 April) to request a deferral.

The exams taken in August/September will then be your first attempt and there will be no penalties or capping of marks. We hope by this time we will be able to run in-person exams, although it is possible that may need to continue with 'take home' exams or another form of examination that can also be done at a distance, depending on the UK government position at the time.