Guide to Assessment for Taught Postgraduate Students

Session 2015-16

This guide contains important information about the rules and procedures relating to assessment. For example, it tells you:

- General informal advice on assessment;
- What to do if illness or other circumstances have affected your performance in an exam or in coursework;
- How to ask for an extension to a deadline for submission of coursework on the grounds of illness or other circumstances;
- What happens if you fail your exams;
- How your degree will be classified;
- How to appeal against a result;
- Information on academic misconduct.

Please take time to read this guide and keep it for future reference.

Programmes offered at the Greenlands campus of the Henley Business School are governed by regulations specific to Greenlands programmes (available on the Henley Business School website and in the Programme Information) and are not subject to the regulations outlined in this guide.

Integrated Masters programmes are not subject to the provisions specified in this guide, but are subject to the provisions in the Guide to Undergraduate Assessment.

The notes that follow are for your guidance, but should any statement conflict with the provisions of the Charter, Statutes, Ordinances and Syllabuses or Programme Specifications as set out in the University Calendar or the University website, then the latter shall prevail.
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Other sources of information

Further information about exam and assessment methods used in your programme are provided in your programme or School handbook (which will be issued by your School), in the programme specification (which is available at www.reading.ac.uk/progspecs) and in module descriptions (which are available at www.reading.ac.uk/module).

The examination and assessment of taught programmes are governed by the relevant Ordinances contained in the University Calendar, by the University’s Code of Practice on the Assessment of Taught Programmes, and by the University’s Code of Practice on the External Examining of Taught Programmes. The University Calendar is available online at www.reading.ac.uk/Calendar; the Codes of Practice are available on the Exams Office website: www.reading.ac.uk/exams. You may wish to consult the Exams Office website for further information on exam matters.

Examination arrangements for some programmes, particularly in the Institute of Education may differ from the standard arrangements in a number of areas. Please refer to your programme handbook for detailed information.
1. Principal Policies

Note: These are the policies we think you most need to know. You should be aware that there are others, for example those on re-examinations and appeals.

Coursework

Submission of coursework

Coursework should be submitted by the due date in accordance with the arrangements specified by the lecturer who has set the work, usually online via Blackboard or Turnitin. Failure to submit the work by the due date will mean that a penalty is applied, except where, due to illness or other extenuating circumstance (e.g. death or severe illness of close relative or partner, physical attack, or other events of comparable effect), an extension to the date for submission has been granted or approval is given for setting aside the normal penalty. For information on applying for an extension, please see the section on ‘Medical and other extenuating circumstances’ below.

Penalties for late submission

The following penalties will be applied to coursework which is submitted after the deadline for submission:

- where the piece of work is submitted after the original deadline (or any formally agreed extension to the deadline): 10% of the total marks available for that piece of work will be deducted from the mark for each working day (or part thereof) following the deadline up to a total of five working days;

- where the piece of work is submitted more than five working days after the original deadline (or any formally agreed extension to the deadline): a mark of zero will be recorded.

You are strongly advised to ensure that coursework is submitted by the relevant deadline. You should note that it is advisable to submit work in an unfinished state rather than to fail to submit any work.

Formative assessment

You may be set coursework as a formative assessment, which allows you to benefit from feedback but does not contribute to the mark for the module. If you fail to submit such work by the deadline for submission, you forfeit your right to any feedback. It is entirely at the discretion of the marker whether to provide feedback.

Editorial and proof-reading services

The University’s policy in relation to students’ use of editorial and proof-reading services is available here: www.reading.ac.uk/exams/Policies/exa-proofreading.aspx.
Written Exams

Past exam papers

Past exam papers, which may be a useful aid to revision, are available on www.reading.ac.uk/exams. Papers for the previous session are normally published on the website in mid-January.

Examination periods

Centrally administered exams for postgraduate programmes are held in January (for Masters programmes offered by the ICMA Centre and the Whiteknights MBA only), in the Summer Term, and for a small number of programmes, in August. Re-examinations are normally held in late August.

The dates of the principal examination periods are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examination Period</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Postgraduate exam period</td>
<td>18 April - 27 May 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resit exam period</td>
<td>15 August - 26 August 2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exams for postgraduate programmes in a number of Schools are held outside these periods and are administered by the relevant School. You should consult your Programme Handbook for information about the exam arrangements for your programme.

Exams are typically held Monday – Friday during mornings and afternoons. Exams may also be scheduled during early evenings and on Saturdays, but are not normally held on Sundays or Bank Holidays.

Draft and final versions of timetables for centrally administered exams are published towards the end of the Spring Term. Personal timetables, together with a summary of rules and procedures for University exams, will be available on the RISISweb student portal by 6 April 2016. The location of exams is shown on the personal timetable.

Attendance at exams

Attendance at exams is compulsory. Students who are absent will receive a mark of zero for the exam unless there is good reason for the absence substantiated with appropriate documentary evidence (e.g. a medical certificate). Please see the section on ‘Medical and other extenuating circumstances’ below.

Detailed arrangements for exams

It is important that you read carefully the detailed instructions for sitting written exams contained in the guide called “What you need to know!” available at: http://www.reading.ac.uk/exams/exa-wyntk.aspx
Students with a disability or specific learning difficulties

If you have a disability or a disabling condition and feel that you require reasonable adjustments to be made in relation to exams or assessment, you should contact the Exams Office at examinations@reading.ac.uk for advice.

If you have been assessed as having specific learning difficulties, special arrangements may apply in respect of exams and the marking of written work. You will need to have submitted a full educational psychologist’s report to the Disability Office, or have been assessed by the University Specialist Teacher Assessor. Further information is available at www.reading.ac.uk/exams/student/exa-special.aspx

Medical and other extenuating circumstances

If there are circumstances which you think might affect or have affected your performance in exams or other assessment or if you wish to request an extension on the grounds of medical or other circumstances, you are required to complete the University’s Extenuating Circumstances form and inform your Personal Tutor or the lecturer responsible for your work.

The procedures for notifying extenuating circumstances are explained on the Exams Office website: www.reading.ac.uk/exams/student/exa-circumstances.aspx. The Extenuating Circumstances Form is available through the website and from your School Office. The completed form should be submitted at the earliest opportunity to the School Office of the School responsible for your programme.

Some form of evidence is required to support your case, such as a medical certificate or letter from a doctor or counsellor. Please refer to the webpage for further information: www.reading.ac.uk/exams/student/exa-circumstances.aspx

It is your responsibility to submit an extenuating circumstances form in relation to any circumstances which you believe have affected your performance. If you do not submit an extenuating circumstances form, your circumstances will not be considered. The relevant deadlines for submission are published here: www.reading.ac.uk/exams/student/exa-circumstances.aspx

Where extenuating circumstances are accepted as having a significant impact on your work, possible outcomes include:

- you are allowed an extension to the deadline for submission of coursework
- a penalty for late submission of coursework is removed
- you are deemed not to have sat one or more exams and are thereby permitted a further attempt at the exams as if for the first time
Extenuating circumstances are treated in strictest confidence. Exceptionally, in a case where a student has highly sensitive circumstances which they are reluctant to disclose to staff within the School, the student may submit an extenuating circumstances form directly to the Faculty Manager or Faculty Director of Administration of his or her Faculty.

If you are ill or have other difficulties during the examination period, the Exams Officer may be able to arrange for you to take exams in a special exam centre.

**Academic Misconduct**

Cheating, which is the attempt to gain an advantage for oneself or another by deceit, and other misconduct are breaches of discipline under the University’s Regulations for Conduct 16, and are punishable by a range of sanctions.

(a) Cheating in assessed coursework (for example, dissertations, long essays or projects) and open book exams includes, but is not restricted to:

(i) Plagiarism

For the purposes of these regulations, plagiarism is defined as the fraudulent representation of another’s work as one’s own. This applies whatever the source of the material (for example, a published source, the web, or the work of another student), whether the material is copied word for word or paraphrased, and whatever the extent of the material used. Wilful and deliberate disregard for good academic practice in respect of attribution of material will be construed as plagiarism.

[Please note that programme handbooks normally provide discipline-specific advice on the appropriate use and attribution of source material]

(ii) Taking a copy of another student’s work without his or her permission (whether or not this work is subsequently plagiarised).

(iii) Reproduction of work assessed elsewhere

Unless otherwise stated, it is not permissible for a piece of work submitted for assessment to include substantial sections which are drawn from another piece of work submitted for a qualification, whether of this University or another awarding body. In the case of assessments where the incorporation of work from another assessment is permitted, the relevant School will inform students accordingly. Any material in an assignment which has been drawn from another
piece of work submitted for a qualification should be clearly indicated with a reference to the assessment and qualification for which the material was previously submitted.

(iv) Falsifying data, evidence, or experimental results.

(v) Collusion: acting with another student with the intention to deceive.

(b) Cheating and other academic misconduct in written exams (including in-class tests and exams administered by a School/Department) include, but are not restricted to:

(i) Taking into the exam hall, or possessing while in the exam hall, any books, memoranda, notes or other similar material (including material held electronically) except that students are permitted to deposit such material in an area designated by the invigilator prior to the start of the exam. Material which has been supplied by the invigilator or authorised by the Examiners is exempt from this proscription.*

(ii) Taking into the exam hall or possessing while in the exam hall any device which permits communication with others or receipt of communication from others or receipt of information;*

(iii) Copying from, consulting or otherwise making use of another candidate’s script; or attempting to copy from, consult or otherwise make use of another candidate’s script;

(iv) Improperly aiding or attempting to aid another candidate, or improperly obtaining or attempting to obtain aid from any person;

(v) Consulting or attempting to consult, any books, memoranda, notes or any other similar material (including material held electronically) while present in the exam hall during the period of the exam;*

(vi) Impersonating or attempting to impersonate another candidate or being knowingly impersonated.

* Please note that for the purposes of these regulations, ‘exam hall’ includes the exam room, the toilets and any other areas to which candidates have access during the exam.

(c) Other misconduct in written exams

Candidates are not allowed under any circumstances to talk to each other or to behave in a manner likely to disturb or distract other candidates during an exam. Candidates are not permitted to smoke
or eat in the exam room, and are permitted to drink still water only. Candidates are not permitted to have a pencil case or other container in the vicinity of their exam desk, unless the pencil case or container is transparent. It is forbidden to remove an exam script or a part of an exam script from the exam room.

Candidates are not allowed to leave the exam before it has finished, or to leave the exam room temporarily for any purpose, without the permission of the invigilator.

Invigilators are authorised to instruct candidates who are talking or behaving in a disruptive manner to leave the room. Invigilators will report candidates whose conduct appears to constitute cheating.

It is an offence to disregard a legitimate instruction given by an invigilator. Candidates failing to comply with such instructions will be liable to disciplinary action.

(d) Penalties

It must be emphasised that the most serious view is taken within the University of cheating and other academic misconduct, whether in written exams, in-class tests or coursework. Any such case will be treated as a disciplinary matter and will be referred to the School Director of Teaching and Learning (in respect of students registered on taught programmes) or the School Director of Postgraduate Research (in respect of students registered on research programmes) who may impose a penalty or refer the matter to the relevant Faculty Director of Teaching and Learning, who has powers to impose more severe penalties. In the most serious cases, the Faculty Director of Teaching and Learning will refer the matter to the Senate Standing Committee on Academic Misconduct, which may lead to a student being failed in all assessments for the relevant Part of their programme or being removed from membership of the University.

You must not have a mobile phone on your person during an exam, even if it is switched off.

The University reserves the right to confiscate mobile phones and other items in cases of alleged cheating. Confiscated items will not normally be returned until the end of the exam period.
Originality Reports

The University uses text matching software called Turnitin to aid the detection of plagiarism. Your work may be routinely run through Turnitin to check the originality of the text submitted. New students may be given the development opportunity to access an Originality Report so they can understand how it works and how a lecturer may make use of it. In addition, you may also be given an opportunity to submit some draft work, to check for correct referencing, before submitting a piece for final assessment.

Feedback to Students

Coursework and in-class tests

It is the University’s policy that you should receive timely, structured and appropriate feedback on your coursework assignments and in-class tests. Whilst such feedback may be oral, normally it will be written, available online via Blackboard along with your provisional mark, and will contain comments appropriate to the nature of the assignment and how it is to be assessed. These comments, whether positive or negative, should provide the basis for you to improve and develop. You should expect that the type and amount of feedback will vary depending on whether the assignment is formative (usually coursework within a particular module) or summative (counting towards the final mark for a module). In setting an assignment, you can expect staff to give you an indication of the date on which an assignment will be returned and feedback provided.

Across all undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes, the standard turnaround time for individual feedback and marks on coursework and in-class tests is a maximum of fifteen working days from the deadline for submission/date of the in-class test. Some assessments may be exempt from the fifteen working day turnaround feedback policy. The following assessments are exempt, subject to the proviso that work submitted in the Summer Term of the Final Part should be returned prior to graduation:

- Dissertations
- Final year projects

If you would like feedback on your overall progress, module providers will give you an indication of your progress in an individual module, while feedback on progress on your programme will normally be given by your personal tutor or in some instances by the programme director or programme adviser.

Exams

1 Where in-class tests are referred to in the University’s Code of Practice on the Assessment of Taught Programmes and other University policies and procedures, these refer to formal tests administered by Schools/Departments in a classroom setting which contribute to the mark for the relevant module. In-class tests may take place at the end of a module or part-way through the teaching on a module. They will be held under conditions which are closely comparable to those of University examinations.
Feedback on performance in written exams, if sought, is available from Schools. The School is responsible for determining the nature and extent of feedback which is appropriate to the circumstances, subject to the proviso that students who are resitting a module are entitled to guidance on their performance in the relevant module which identifies the strengths and weaknesses of their performance and how they might improve their performance. In the case of students who are not resitting, more generic feedback, which does not specifically address each individual case, may be appropriate. You do not have an entitlement to have access to your exam scripts.

Examiners

Internal and External Examiners are appointed for all programmes which lead to an award of the University. Internal Examiners are members of the academic staff in the relevant subject(s). External Examiners are drawn from other universities or from among suitably qualified professionals, and are involved in scrutinising draft exam papers, moderating the marking of assessments and determining the overall result for each student.

External Examiners’ reports are considered by the relevant Board of Studies and Student Staff Liaison Committee. You can request a copy of the External Examiner’s report for your programme by contacting the Exams Office.

Marking and Classification Conventions

For postgraduate cohorts (excluding the PGCE) who entered in the Autumn Term 2008 and thereafter, generic marking criteria and generic classification conventions are contained in ‘Marking Criteria and Classification Framework for Taught Postgraduate Programmes (for cohorts entering in the Session 2008/9 and thereafter)’, which is available at: www.reading.ac.uk/exams/Policies/exa-class.aspx

Results

Masters degrees may be awarded with the following classifications:

Passed with Distinction
Passed with Merit
Passed

Candidates who have failed to fulfil the requirements for the degree shall be stated to have Failed; they may, however, be eligible for the award of a Postgraduate Diploma or Postgraduate Certificate.

An Aegrotat degree may be awarded to a candidate who is prevented by reason of illness from completing the assessment for a degree, subject to the provisions of the relevant Ordinance.
A candidate may at the discretion of the Faculty Examiners be deemed not to have sat the exam if the candidate has been prevented from sitting the exam by illness or other good cause or if the candidate’s performance in the exam has been significantly affected by illness or other serious personal circumstance. A student who has been deemed not to have sat is permitted a further attempt at the exam at the next opportunity.

No recommendation shall be submitted to the Senate in respect of a candidate who is in debt to the University. (See below for further information in relation to Finalists who are debtors.)

Where a result is not yet available for a candidate, this shall be stated on the results list.

**Debtors**

No recommendation of a result will be published or disclosed to a candidate or submitted to the Senate in respect of candidates in their final year who have a tuition debt outstanding to the University. Candidates who are in debt to the University will therefore not be able to graduate in person or in absence until after the debt has been cleared. When the debt has been settled, a recommendation will be considered and the result published. If the candidate is eligible for an award, he or she will graduate at the degree congregations following the approval of the result. If the student has failed at the first attempt, the student has the right to be re-examined in relevant modules at the next opportunity, provided that the debt has been settled and the result released within eighteen months of the decision that there be no recommendation.

Candidates taking mid-programme exams who are in debt to the University may not be allowed to sit a re-exam or to return to the University until their debt is settled.

**Publication of results**

Provisional Results Lists for Final Examinations are published in Schools following the relevant Programme Examiners’ Meeting. Students may wish to contact their Schools at this stage to be advised of their result. Following the relevant Faculty Examiners’ Meeting, overall results are published individually to the student’s RISISweb portal.

In the case of students for whom a final result has been agreed, marks are published on the student’s RISISweb portal (in early July or mid-November, as appropriate). In the case of students who have not completed their programme, marks may be disclosed to students by their Department/School.

Students who have failed, who have been deemed not to have sat, or for whom there is no recommendation will, in addition, be sent a letter by the Exams Office specifying the arrangements for further exams or other action which they might be required to take.
2. Re-examinations and Appeals

Re-examinations

Resitting failed modules

Students who have failed a module are normally permitted one further attempt at the exam, except in certain cases where a student is deemed to be a potential risk to clients in a practical exam. Students are permitted to resit those modules in which they achieved less than 50.

In practice, this means that resits for taught modules may take place before the final result for the programme as a whole has been determined. In such a case, the award will be determined on the outcome both of the first attempt at modules and of any second attempts which have been taken.

Where a candidate has failed a taught module and the resit falls within a period scheduled for preparation of a dissertation, an extension of one month will normally be granted to the submission date for the dissertation.

Candidates who fail the dissertation at the first attempt and whose other results are such that a second attempt at the dissertation might lead to the award of the degree of Master will be permitted to resubmit the dissertation within twelve months from the original submission date, as determined by the Faculty Examiners’ Meeting.

Candidates whose results from the taught component of the programme (including second attempts where they have been permitted) are such that they are unable to fulfil the criteria for the award of the degree of Master will not be permitted reassessment in the dissertation.

If you are offered a resit in a module and you choose to decline the opportunity, you will not normally be entitled to resit that module at a later date.

Awarding conventions in relation to reassessed modules

The mark forwarded for classification will be the higher of the original or the resit mark, subject to a cap of 50 where the candidate reaches passing standard on resit.

Awards will be based on the profile of marks forwarded for classification regardless of how many modules have been resat.

Academic support for re-examination candidates

Re-examination candidates are encouraged to seek from their School feedback on their performance in the
initial assessment and guidance in respect of the re-examination.

It is the student’s responsibility to seek such feedback and guidance within the period specified by the School. If you wish to seek further guidance in respect of a particular module, you should note that members of academic staff may not be readily available after the end of term, due to annual leave, research and other academic commitments, and that, in consequence, access to the relevant module convenor or lecturer after the end of term cannot be guaranteed. See also the section below on Candidates permitted a further attempt in the following Session.

Re-examination fees

Students who are re-examined are liable for a re-examination fee as published in the University Calendar. The principal fees for the Session 2015-16 are as follows:

- Taught postgraduate programmes
  
  *Programmes within the modular system* £5 per credit retaken
  
  (Students resitting more than 65 credits will be charged the maximum which is £325)

- Re-examination in Teaching Practice £620

In the case of re-examination in Teaching Practice, the fee specified above constitutes the total fee for such a re-examination rather than a supplement to the standard credit-based fee.

Re-examination period

Re-examinations which are administered centrally (rather than by Schools) are normally held in August. In the Session 2015-16, the re-examination period for centrally administered exams will be 15 – 26 August 2016 inclusive.

Failure at the second attempt

Students who fail the Final Examination overall are normally permitted a second attempt at any modules which they have failed and at which they have not had a second attempt, subject to the provisions relating to the dissertation module. If a candidate fails the programme as a whole having already been offered a resit for any modules, he or she will have had opportunity for the two assessments at such modules and will only have the right to resit modules which he or she has not previously been offered the opportunity to resit.

Students who have failed the Final Examination overall at the second attempt are not permitted a further attempt and are required to leave the University.
Candidates permitted a further attempt in the following Session

Any candidate who has not passed the Examination before the start of the 2015-16 Session and who is allowed a further attempt at the examination in the 2015-16 Session (i.e. a candidate with a result of failed or deemed not to have sat), will be required to suspend their registration for the whole of the Session 2015-16 (and so effectively leave the University for this period). Candidates in this position should seek advice from the Student Helpdesk in the Carrington Building, as there may be implications for funding or visa status.

During the period of suspension pending re-examination or pending examination subsequent to having been deemed not to have sat, the provisions related to accessing university facilities are outlined here:
http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/Policies/exa-facilities.aspx

How to make an Appeal

Under certain circumstances, you may request a review of your marks or results. Details about what is possible and how to go about it are available on the Appeals web page:
http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/exams/Policies/exa-appeal.aspx