

Assessment Handbook 2021-22: Summary of changes

1. This document summarises the meaningful changes to the Assessment Handbook for the 2021-22 iteration. Minor changes that do not affect meaning are not included in this document.

External examining and assessment approval arrangements

2. The Assessment and Feedback Work Stream has a dedicated sub-group looking at external examining arrangements. The Group recommended a number of changes to the duties of externals and to the responsibilities of exam boards to seek external approval for assessments. These reflect changes to Queen Mary's assessment profile over recent years, with a move away from invigilated examinations (exacerbated by, but not solely due to, the changes made during the pandemic). Historically, most modules had an examination that counted for the majority of the module mark. External examining arrangements were set up to account for this, with a requirement that all exam papers be scrutinised by an external as part of the paper approval process.

With a move to more diverse assessment methods, that policy now has the potential to be to the detriment of other forms of assessment where scrutiny may be better directed. A recommendation has been made to instead require only examinations counting for 50 per cent or more of a module mark to go to externals. Beyond that core requirement, it will be at the discretion of examination boards to decide which and how many assessments go to externals for approval, with the aim of increasing both scrutiny and innovation on non-examination assessments. It remains the case that *all* examination papers must be reviewed in detail and approved by a dedicated Scrutiny Sub-board of each Subject Examination Board (SEB).

Additionally, the roles that externals perform in considering (a) assessments/question papers and (b) student submissions have been renamed 'review' from the previous 'moderation'. Moderation is a specific and distinct part of marking, and the previous terminology had the potential to cause confusion as externals are not markers.

This change is reflected throughout the Assessment Handbook, notably at **3.6, 3.13, 8.6, 8.17-18, and 8.22**.

3. There was previously a reference to student reports from examinations, where an issue arose. This has been amended at **4.23** to clarify that student reports are messages from students that should be sent to the exam board directly after the assessment, rather than a pro forma (as was historically the case with in-person exams).
4. The section on late diagnosis of specific learning differences (SpLDs) at **5.56** has been amended. Previously, this stated that any work from the current academic year that had not yet gone through an exam board would be re-marked with the advice of the new SpLD cover sheet in mind. That has been amended to just refer to the current academic year, as there are now multiple sittings and exam boards each year, and there is scope to be slightly more flexible. It remains the case that work from previous years cannot be revisited. Separately, a provision that allowed additional flexibility in the application of the borderline classification policy for these cases has been removed (as part of wider changes to the borderline policy in line with national guidance), and additional information on support from the Disability and Dyslexia Service (which was consulted on this change) has been added.
5. In line with a change to the Academic Regulations, the section on self-certified extenuating circumstances (**9.11**) has been updated to introduce a time-period for each self-certified claim – up to seven calendar days. The policy is otherwise unchanged.
6. The Academic Regulations have for some years included a list of invalid grounds for extenuating circumstances. The Assessment Handbook had only a subset of those examples; the full list has now been added at **9.28**. This includes 'submission of an "incorrect" assessment', which was not previously listed but was (as part of the fit to sit policy) already Queen Mary policy.
7. Minor amendments have been made throughout the document to reflect changes to the processing of extenuating circumstances claims, particularly in terms of mark entry, following the introduction of a new online system during 2020-21. These are technical points that do not affect policy. Examples include **5.70, 9.9, and 9.12**.

8. Similarly to the previous point, there have been changes to the process ('TMR') that put data in SITS into a format from which an exam board report could be generated. TMR will no longer be a prerequisite to run SEB reports, and it will be applied after the SEBs (and before the DEBs), allowing greater flexibility for SEBs in terms of when marks are entered and reports are run. Again, this has no policy implications and is purely a procedural point. It is referenced at **6.26**.
9. The borderline classification policy has been amended. The zone of consideration has been expanded to a fixed 1.5 per cent, but the discretionary provisions for extenuating circumstances (increasing the zone, or using ECs as a proxy for credits at the higher classification) have been removed, in line with national guidance. A provision allowing the discounting of up to 30 credits of modules affected by ECs from the Classification Mark has been removed for the same reason. This is a reflection of changes approved by the EQSB during 2020-21, and covered in more detail in the Academic Regulations 2021-22. The changes are referenced in the Assessment Handbook at **6.70, 6.72.ii, 6.78-79 (in detail), 6.122 (where the old provision has been deleted), 9.35, 9.36 and 9.50**.

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