

# School Assessment Guidelines

The following guidelines have been compiled to assist lecturers in the production, submission, organisation and grading of exams for modules offered by the School of Mathematics and Statistics. In addition, UCD has an assessment code of practice, see <http://www.ucd.ie/registry/assessment/>.

## 1 Writing and internal reading of exams

- 1.1 For modules that are ordinarily intended for graduate students only (e.g. taught MSc), please insert MASTERS on the title page, e.g. 'X TRIMESTER EXAMINATION (MASTERS) 20XX/XX'. This is simply to give some additional clarity for e.g. external examiners.
- 1.2 Please ensure accuracy of other title page information, such as trimester, year and instructions for candidates and invigilators.
- 1.3 Specifically, it should be clear to invigilators whether or not programmable or non-programmable calculators are allowed, and whether or not books of tables or formulae are allowed or required (and if so, precisely which ones). Some actuarial modules allow students to bring their own tables. This should be clearly communicated to the student.
- 1.4 The maximum exam duration for a module is 2 hours. Only in exceptional circumstances can an exam be longer than 2 hours.
- 1.5 It is recommended that exams for level 1 or 2 modules are designed in such a way that students must cover all broad themes of the module in order to obtain full marks, e.g. one could set one question per chapter and require students to answer all questions.
- 1.6 Some lecturers include a sheet of formulae with their exam paper. This is a matter of choice for each individual lecturer.

- 1.7  $\text{\LaTeX}$  exam templates for typesetting exams are available at <https://maths.ucd.ie/docserve?id=140>. (Contact Alex Gubic or Michael Mackey for an account on the maths server if you do not have one.)
- 1.8 All exams, both first offering and resit exams, should be read by another staff member in the school, regardless of, whether or not they are to be sent to external examiners. Lists of these 'internal' readers will be provided by the head of exams/subject heads.
- 1.9 Full exam solutions should be supplied to internal readers and external examiners.
- 1.10 The solutions should state which exam questions are seen and which are unseen.
- 1.11 Sending an exam to an internal reader should be done with care and with a view to ensuring security. Public key encryption is ideal if you are familiar with e.g. `openpgp` or `gpg4win` software. Unencrypted email is not recommended. Password protecting a pdf file helps, but cracking tools exist and you still have the problem of communicating the password. Internal readers should now be able to read exams assigned to them on the EPMS (see 3.5).
- 1.12 If reading an exam, please pay attention to the
- a. mathematical correctness of questions and solutions;
  - b. overall length and difficulty of exam, keeping in mind the module level, and
  - c. grammar and misprints.
- 1.13 For examination mapping to actuarial exemptions, a mapping of question to the professional syllabus should be provided.
- 1.14 The title page of the examination paper should now refer to AUTUMN TRIMESTER, SPRING TRIMESTER and SUMMER TRIMESTER (and not e.g. AUTUMN SEMESTER or TRIMESTER 1). UCD Assessment will reject an exam on this basis.

## 2 Availability of exam solutions for students

- 2.1 It is now school policy that, by default, exam solutions should not be posted on Brightspace or given out to students. The lecturer is free to quote this policy if necessary.
- 2.2 However, this policy is not binding and lecturers are free to make solutions available if it is deemed appropriate, e.g. specimen solutions in the case of new modules.

### 3 Submission of exams / EPMS

- 3.1 Deadlines for submission of final versions of exams to UCD's exam paper management system (EPMS) will be set by the head of exams and communicated. Typically, in a given trimester, this deadline is Tuesday of week 9.
- 3.2 Deadlines for submission of exams to the EPMS, for advance reading by external examiners, will be set by the head of exams/subject heads. Typically, they are set about two weeks in advance of the final deadline above.
- 3.3 The EPMS is available at <https://epms.ucd.ie>.
- 3.4 External examiners can access the exams through the EPMS.
- 3.5 Internal (second) readers can also access exams assigned to them through the EPMS. The necessary permissions are given by the school office. The papers you are assigned as second reader on should be available under the Menu -> Exam Paper Approval tab on the EPMS, once uploaded.
- 3.6 The EPMS has a number of quirks/features/bugs which lead to the points below.
- (a) The EPMS may reject a pdf file without explanation. (This seems related to font embedding- while pdflatex does embed fonts by default, the EPMS checker does not seem to like repeated font subset embeddings.) The solution is to filter the pdf file through postscript- which is easily achieved by printing your pdf file and choosing the "print to PDF file" option, or on linux by e.g.  

```
$> pdf2ps badexam.pdf - | ps2pdf - goodexam.pdf
```
  - (b) You cannot download your exam to check that you have put up the correct file. If you are not sure, you have to, perhaps unnecessarily, re-upload the correct file.
  - (c) When you upload an exam you also have to enter meta information such as instructions for invigilators, provision of statistical tables, or whether colour printing is required, etc. *When you re-upload an exam this meta information may be reset to default* so make sure to go through it again.
  - (d) Files are communicated to the externs via the EPMS. If your exam is due for extern reading, it should include solutions. *Make sure that there is a cover page clearly indicating this version is for the extern and has solutions.*
  - (e) Following extern comments, your revised file must be uploaded. If there are no extern comments, *don't forget to replace the extern version with the exam hall version.*

## 4 Marking and grade entry

- 4.1 Academic staff having permanent appointments or contract appointments of one year or more are considered internal examiners by default. Other staff seeking to be internal examiners must be appointed by the Academic Council on Examinations (ACCE), on recommendation by the Head of School. Such appointments last for one year, and must be renewed thereafter. If a module coordinator wants someone to correct final examinations who is not a member of academic staff, then this person must firstly be approved by the relevant Subject Head. The person then needs to be approved by ACCE. Undergraduate students should not grade any continuous assessment. Undergraduate students and taught masters students should not grade final examinations.
- 4.2 It is recommended that, at the very least, a mark be made on each part of a question on a student's exam script, once it has been corrected, so that if it is necessary to look at the script again, the examiner knows that the given page has been checked and accounted for.
- 4.3 School policy is that *only final grades should be entered into Gradebook*. Please do not enter component grades into Gradebook. Note however that students must be given feedback on assessment within 20 days of its submission. This should be done in a way that the students only see their own grades. Never post a classlist that is accessible to all students.
- 4.4 Please do not discuss provisional grades with students until they are formally released by the University (this usually takes place a few days after Gradebook closes for the second time).

## 5 Moderation and School Review

- 5.1 Before Gradebook closes, you should have your grades moderated by a colleague, for example, the internal reader for the exam. This involves a brief clerical check of the grades entered, as detailed below.
- a. The moderator may pick a few students in the class at random, and check that the grades have been computed correctly from the given marks.
  - b. More specifically, the reader should consider issues such as:
    - (i) the weightings used on components agree with those provided in the module descriptor (or, if they differ, this is not to the detriment of any student),

- (ii) the accuracy of any formulae used in the spreadsheet;
- (iii) the accuracy of marks copied from one spreadsheet to another, and
- (iv) the accuracy of class lists from one spreadsheet to another.

- c. For a class of over 50 students, the moderator may also compare the final grades on the examiner's spreadsheet with the grades entered into Gradebook.
- d. For a class of over 100 students, it is recommended that two people are involved in entering grades into the main spreadsheet/Gradebook. This is not necessary if the grades are electronically transferred and a small sample checked.

5.2 Academic regulations require a school module exam committee (SMEC) to review grades each trimester as part of the Grade Approval Process (GAP). This happens 2-3 days after the Grade entry deadline.

5.3 Heads of School, Subjects, T&L, Graduate T&L, and the Programme Directors constitute the SMEC committee.

5.4 To inform the SMEC, all MCs should record relevant observations on their module results in Gradebook. Information such as who has moderated your grades, observations of performance relative to previous years, or between different cohorts of students, and any steps taken to mitigate unusual grade profiles are helpful.

5.5 Suggestions to review grades may come from the SMEC or from College Extenuating Circumstances committee meetings which also occur around this time.

5.6 Grade changes may

## **6 Script viewing and exam appeals**

Students have a right to view their scripts and to make sure that no clerical errors have been made in the allocation of their grades. Lecturers can organise script viewings informally, by themselves. However, the school office can also arrange them on a more formal level.

1. If you want the office to arrange script viewings, please forward any requests to Genevieve ([genevieve.peterson@ucd.ie](mailto:genevieve.peterson@ucd.ie), ext 2562).
2. The office arranges viewings typically a week or two after the grades are released. If a student still has a query after the viewing then the office will refer them back to the lecturer.

3. The details of the formal appeals process can be found at <https://www.ucd.ie/secca/assessmentappeals/>.
4. Note that appeals solely based on hopes of raising GPAs are not valid.

## 7 Organisation of local exams

The majority of final exams are run by Assessment during the exam period at the end of each semester. However, in some cases it is necessary to run exams locally in the School, such in the case of midterm exams, lab exams and some exams to remediate IX grades. Lecturers that require the School Office to assist them in the organisation of their exams must fill out the School Local Examination Form and submit it to the School Office at least two weeks before the exam is scheduled to take place.

Lecturers are responsible for the running of their midterm/local exam. Lecturers who are not module coordinators (MC) must communicate and inform the MC about the exam and must provide them in advance with a copy of the exam.

It is the responsibility of the lecturer to:

- Set the date and time of all exams, to inform the students at the start of the trimester, and to ensure that the selected time, if not a lecture slot, is one that students can honour within reason.
- Fill in the School Local Examination Form which will inform the School Office if a special type or room (e.g. a computer lab) or if additional rooms are needed for the exam and whether exam booklets, books of tables, or MCQ answer sheets are required.
- Liaise with students who are entitled to a separate exam location and/or additional time, and to ensure that only those registered with the ACCESS centre avail of such arrangements.
- Bring the exam papers (and any books of tables or formulae) to the venue (or arrange for this to be done), leave contact details with invigilators, and stay for the start of the exam in order to resolve any problems and answer queries that may arise. The lecturer must be contactable at all times throughout the examination. The invigilators will meet with the module coordinator at the appointed venue prior to the exam. If a lecturer is not available to attend their exam, they must organise for another member of academic staff to perform the above duties on their behalf (and not a tutor/PhD student/postdoc).
- Make sure that any necessary data files are made available (if it is a lab exam, for example).
- Be available to answer questions during the whole duration of the exam.

- Make all arrangements for exam corrections including the processing of MCQ sheets.

The School Office can assist with the following:

- Organisation of invigilators.
- Booking rooms.
- Copying large numbers of exam papers.
- Ordering exam answer booklets and MCQs answer sheets.
- Organise special arrangements for students that may require extra assistance during the exam such as a separate room, a computer, a Reader etc.

March 2023, M. Mackey

~~October 2019, C. Boyd~~

~~2017, R. Smith~~