

Principles: Priority for On-Campus Exams, December 2022 Exam Diet

Background and context

This document sets out the process for considering whether an exam may be approved to take place on-campus at the December 2022 exam diet. (It is likely that the same principles will also be used for the process of determining which exams will take place on-campus in Spring 2023, but this remains to be confirmed as there may be changes to the prevailing conditions in Spring 2023 that will require us to alter the approach.)

As a key academic principle, the University's position is that the methods used to carry out assessment should be identified on the basis of academic judgement of the optimal means of assessing students' attainment. The University also has responsibility for the security and integrity of examinations. During the pandemic, much progress has been made with respect to redesigning assessment and taking a programmatic approach to assessment such that online exams are proving to be appropriate and desirable in many disciplines, and are attracting support of external examiners. This provides a clear basis on which to continue with assessment redesign efforts in line with the Learning and Teaching Strategy. However, we recognise that assessment redesign takes time, and in some disciplines in particular there are vulnerabilities with certain types of online exams and colleagues' concerns in this regard are continuing to be taken into account. We wish to satisfy colleagues' requests for examining, and will do so as far as is practicable. However, there are multiple constraints and practical considerations that we must deal with, meaning we cannot be certain at this stage that accommodating all preferences will be fully possible.

It will be familiar to colleagues that a number of factors have led to the present situation. The main contributors are the increase in student numbers, the consequent increase in the number of courses and variety of students' course choices, the increase in numbers of students declaring a disability that requires exam adjustments and the increase in the number of end-of-course exams. These all drive up the scale and complexity of the exam diet timetable and thus the pressure on the estate.

To help mitigate matters, the University has been considering the acquisition of appropriate additional space. We are hiring for the duration of the diet part of the Kelvin Hall complex – specifically, a 500-seater hall we have experience of using previously. For December, we are also renting a 500-seater hall at the Scottish Exhibition Centre. This will be used for exams on a pilot basis. If successful, the possibility of increasing the volume of space rented for exams at the SEC for future exam diets to create an exams centre will be explored further. The latter is very appealing as a potential long-term solution, but the University has no experience of this approach (although it is common across the sector as a whole) and, given the risks, has concluded to pilot the approach on a limited scale for the forthcoming diet.

This document sets out the way in which exams will be ranked in order of priority to take place on-campus. The factors that are taken into consideration in determining the rank order are designed to allow the University to operate the December 2022 diet on a fair basis.

In deciding which exams may be on-campus for December, the main factors that will be considered are those that have been used in recent diets. Consequently, priority will be assigned on the basis of relative exam security and the significance of the exam to student outcomes. The following thus

represents an elaboration of the method used previously. This more involved approach is being adopted to facilitate more finely-grained decision-making that draws upon objective principles.

The other main factor to be considered concerns the extent to which the type and method of assessing students is dictated by an external regulator/accreditor. There is a potential for tension between the views of accreditors and considerations of academic freedom, as well as practical constraints around available space, etc. For that reason, consideration of accredited programmes has been guided by the extent of the control exercisable by the accrediting body. Again, therefore, a more refined approach is being taken re this factor to allow better discrimination between requests for on-campus exams.

Applications for holding exams on campus should be made to the relevant College Dean of L&T. The volume of requests will then be reconciled across the four Colleges with the amount of space available, and using the principles set out in this note.

Finally, it is recognised that in a small number of areas of the University, there may be some online exams conducted on-campus under in-person invigilated conditions. Any such arrangements will continue to be on a case-by-case basis and where very particular circumstances apply. The Clerk of Senate needs to be involved in and approve such arrangements.

The Principles

This document relates to prioritisation for hand-written, on-campus, invigilated, exams for the **December 2022 diet**. It does **not** apply to exams taking place outwith the December diet period or exams taking place in other types of venue – e.g., labs, music performance spaces, etc.

Here, we consider exams that contribute to:

- Undergraduate degrees (general, honours, and integrated masters)
- PGT

For the December 2022 diet, **exams should take place online by default**. Academic integrity of online exams can be appropriately assured through design of questions/tasks, the use of originality-checking software, restricted duration etc.

However, some exams require a higher level of assurance more suited to on-campus running.

The physical capacity to support on campus exams is limited and it is possible that demand outstrips available space. In that case, on-campus exam provision will be prioritised according to the following principles, which are intended to be clear, logical, and fair.

- I. **The purpose of the Programme:** Licencing for professional practice and accreditation requirements. Aspects of the exam format here are subject to external control, and thus require to be treated as a separate category to other considerations. The extent of the external control varies, however, and this is considered also in the scheme set out below.
- II. **Exam type: Setting aside the necessary consequences of external accreditation, first priority will be given to protecting the integrity of exams.** Can integrity of the exam be confirmed by use of originality-checking software?
- III. **The needs of the Programme:** The extent to which academic integrity of the Programme outcome cannot be assured through use of originality-checking software
- IV. **The level and importance of the exam** to determining degree outcome.

What follows relates primarily to:

- Undergraduate, including integrated masters, years 3-to-5
- PGT

Level 1 and 2 exams should be held on-campus by exception only. The rationale for this is that, in the great majority of instances, these exams do not contribute to degree outcomes. It is recognised that the prescriptions of accrediting bodies may in some cases also apply to Levels 1 and 2. In such cases, application should be made to the relevant Dean of L&T. (It is also recognised that Level 1 and 2 results will affect the outcomes for students taking designated degrees. However, these are very few in number and in most such cases it will not be known by December 2022 whether this is the pathway such students will take.)

Categories and Classes

The following *Categories and Classes* are listed in *descending order of priority* by application of the specific criteria. Highest priority for on-campus exams first.

The final scheme is summarised at the end of the document.

Relevant Principle being applied:

Principle 1: The purpose of the Programme: Licencing for professional practice and accreditation requirements

Category 1 (highest priority): Accredited degree for health professional practice – statutory: Entry to the profession is controlled by statute, with possession of the degree being a requirement for professional practice. The statutory obligation is to ensure that ***each individual candidate*** meets professional licence standard: that each and every graduate is competent. Assurance of individual performance must be maximally reliable.

(Expected to apply only to some or all exams in years 3-5 in the undergraduate medical professions training, *e.g.*, Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Medicine, Nursing)

Category 2 (next highest priority): Accredited degree for professional practice – non-statutory:

Entry to the profession is not controlled by statute. However, possession of an accredited degree is essential for entry to the profession. Accreditation relies on assurance of ***each individual candidate*** meeting professional licence standard: that each and every graduate is competent. Assurance of individual performance must be strict and reliable (more than for typical university education).

(Expected to apply to some exams in years 3-5 in areas such as Education, Law, Accountancy and Engineering.)

2a: On-campus assessment is specified by the accrediting body

2b: On-campus assessment is not specified by the accrediting body

Category 3: Accredited degree: accreditation assuring education standard

The programme is subject to accreditation aimed at assuring the content and standard of education in that area. Such accreditation is not essential to the purpose of the degree. Assurance of individual performance required is typical of university education.

(Expected to apply to years 3-5 in areas such as Life Sciences, Physics, Chemistry, Economics, etc.)

Category 4: Degree not accredited

The programme is not accredited. Assurance of individual performance is typical of university education.

(Applies to years 3-5 of all programmes not captured above)

For exams falling in **Categories 3 and 4** above (i.e., outwith Categories 1, 2a or 2b), equal consideration will be given to requests to permit an exam to take place on-campus by the scheme to follow. However, **both** of the following conditions must be met before consideration is given:

- (i) The whole cohort of students is present on-campus (i.e., no students are being supported to complete the course remotely).
- (ii) The authenticity of the exam could *not* be assured by means of originality-checking software (eg, Turnitin) because of the nature of the questions/tasks. Answers are necessarily simple, limited or have no text content, for example:
 - where good answers will necessarily be identical or very similar, such as MCQ/short-answer/problem-solving/data-interpretation/quantitative & notation-based types, (for example but not limited to quantitative subjects like mathematics, physics, economics, etc.)
 - or
 - where the assessment involves demonstration of the independent ability to recall/reproduce knowledge and show competence in applying that knowledge to practical or technical tasks. Key examples of the latter are practical exams (including music performance and some written and oral language exams).

Relevant Principle being applied:

Principle II: Exam type

Hence, all exams that do not meet these conditions will **not** be considered for on-campus running. These include any exam based solely or largely on extended text/writing such as essays.

NOTE: most or all relevant exams in Categories 1 and 2a/2b meet the above conditions (i) and (ii)

For exams:

- *in years 3-to-5 of undergraduate study or in PGT*
- *of programmes that fall into categories 3 and 4 and*
- *that also meet conditions (i) and (ii)*

*then the priority for on-campus running will be decided according to the following **classes**, in descending order of priority:*

Relevant Principle being applied:

Principle III: The extent to which academic integrity of the Programme outcome cannot be assured through use of originality-checking software

And

Principle IV: The level and importance of the exam to determining degree outcome.

Class A: Degree outcome is substantially (**50% or more**) assessed by exams that meet conditions (i) and (ii) set out above: then those exams are prioritised for on-campus running in descending order¹:

A1: Final honours undergraduate

(Expected to apply, for example, to some or all exams in final year for quantitative subjects such as but not limited to Physics, Economics, Mathematics, and to oral language exams, etc.)

A2: Junior honours/3rd year undergraduate

(Expected to apply, for example, to some or all exams in junior-honours year for quantitative subjects such as but not limited to Economics, Chemistry, Mathematics and to oral language exams, etc.)

A3: PGT: final/only year or progression to dissertation

(Expected to apply, for example, to some or all exams in Masters courses for quantitative subjects such as but not limited to Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Economics and to oral language exams, etc.)

Class B: Degree outcome is significantly assessed (**between 25% and 49%**) by exams that meet conditions (i) and (ii) set out above: then those exams are prioritised for on-campus running in descending order:

B1: Final honours undergraduate

B2: Junior honours/3rd year undergraduate

(Expected to apply, for example, to some or all exams in junior-honours year for quantitative subjects such as but not limited to Economics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Economics and to oral language exams, etc.)

B3: PGT: final/only year or progression to dissertation

Class C: Degree outcome is dependent to a small extent (**between 10% and 24%**) on exams that meet conditions (i) and (ii) set out above: then those exams are prioritised for on-campus running in descending order:

C1: Final honours undergraduate

C2: Junior honours/3rd year undergraduate

(Expected to apply, for example, to some or all exams in junior-honours year for quantitative subjects such as but not limited to Physics, Chemistry, Statistics, Economics and to oral language exams, etc.)

C3: PGT: final/only year or progression to dissertation

Class D: Degree outcome is NOT significantly dependent (**less than 10%**) on exams that meet conditions (i) and (ii) set out above: then those exams are NOT prioritised for on-campus running.

¹ Please see point made above concerning students taking designated degrees.

Summary of Prioritisation Scheme

Exams will be prioritised for on-campus running by the HIGHEST category/class that applies to them. Categories and classes are in descending order of priority as follows, and only for exams in years 3-to-5 of Undergraduate and in PGT:

Top priority	Category 1	<i>Accredited professional: Statutory</i>
Next	Category 2a	<i>Accredited professional: Non-Statutory (a)</i>
Next	Category 2b	<i>Accredited professional: Non-Statutory (b)</i>
For	Categories 3 & 4 (<i>Other accredited or not accredited</i>) equitably separated into Classes as follows: Only exams meeting conditions (i) and (ii) and for decreasing % of programme outcome determined by those exams:	
Next	Class A1	<i>final honours</i>
Next	Class A2	<i>junior honours/3rd year</i>
Next	Class A3	<i>PGT</i>
Next	Class B1	<i>final honours</i>
Next	Class B2	<i>junior honours/3rd year</i>
Next	Class B3	<i>PGT</i>
	Next	Class C1 <i>final honours</i>
	Next	Class C2 <i>junior honours/3rd year</i>
	Lowest permitted	Class C3 <i>PGT</i>

NOT Permitted for on-campus exams **Class D**

NOT Permitted for on-campus exams other than by exception:
Undergraduate years 1 & 2 (levels 1 & 2)

In summary: decreasing order of priority (left to right) for on-campus running by classification:

1, 2a, 2b, A1, A2, A3, B1, B2, B3, C1, C2, C3