

## **Guidance on Student Access to Examination Scripts**

### **Introduction**

1. From the 2020-21 academic year, and applicable to all cohorts of students, the Code of Practice on Taught Programme and Module Assessment and Feedback states the following:
2. 4.1.19(b) *“PAUs shall allow Registered Students to view their examination scripts. This right may be applied to whole cohorts and not solely to any individual Registered Student. Access to examination script(s) is provided to Registered Students purely for their own educational use; they must not share, publish or otherwise disseminate their script/answers or the exam questions. Furthermore, unless their original scripts have been formally released to them, Registered Students must not mark/modify them in any way.”*
3. Following the implementation of the semesterised academic year, it is expected that more students will want to see and learn from their exam scripts from the January assessment period. It is also important for there to be a consistent approach to making exam scripts available to students across both assessment periods (January and May/June).
4. In this guidance, the terms ‘examination’ and ‘exam’ refer to assessment which is marked in a way which means that individual feedback is not prepared for students within 15 working days.

### **Principles**

5. University Education Committee has endorsed the following broad principles regarding students’ access to exam scripts:
  - Students must have access to their marked/annotated exam scripts, and must be made aware of how to access them in a timely manner;
  - Exams scripts, together with marking criteria and generic feedback, can be a powerful tool to support student learning if students have been taught how to use marking criteria, and been given plenty of opportunities to practice applying criteria to their own work and the work of their peers;
  - Schools should provide guidance to students regarding how to make the most of these tools (for a generic example of such guidance, please see Appendix 1);
  - All students would benefit from being actively supported to make the most of these tools, and the new Personal Academic Tutoring (PAT) modules (being introduced from 2020-21) present an ideal opportunity to provide this support to first year undergraduates at the beginning of their studies;
  - Personal Academic Tutoring for students in subsequent years and at PGT level may also be a valuable vehicle for ensuring these tools are utilised;
  - However, Personal Academic Tutors would not be expected to provide content-based exam feedback. Rather, their role would be to support students in making effective use of the tools available to prompt reflection on their exam performance;
  - Similar support could also be provided via Assessment Support Weeks;
  - It is important to note that the same mechanism for access to exam scripts may not be suitable for students at every stage of their academic career, or for every module;

- When marking exams, staff should not be expected to write more on the scripts than they typically would have in previous years. Rather, it should be made clear to students that any comments are to inform the internal moderator and external examiner how the mark was determined and, in advance, it may be helpful to provide them with details of the type of annotations they should expect to see on their marked scripts;
- It should also be reiterated to students that feedback on assessment performance does not permit any challenge to the academic judgement of examiners on the performance of students;
- There are certain exams to which it would not be appropriate to give students access, e.g. MCQs which are drawn from a bank of reusable questions;
- The exams for which students will not be able to view their scripts (and the reasons why) should be highlighted in advance of the exam period, usually via Canvas.

6. The aim is to frame exams as valuable learning opportunities for students.

### Operation

7. A review of internal and sector-wide practice has indicated that there are two main ways in which students can be given access to their exam scripts.

<p>1. Students can view their original (handwritten) scripts within a controlled environment</p>	<p>There are a number of possible ways in which this can be put in place. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) An open session on a specified time and date is scheduled where exam scripts are available for viewing in a controlled space;</li> <li>(b) Students submit a request to view their exam scripts by a specific deadline and the script is prepared and provided to the individual student in a controlled space at a scheduled time and date;</li> <li>(c) Students are able to request an opportunity to discuss and talk through their exam scripts with an appropriate member of staff (e.g. personal academic tutor or module tutor);</li> <li>(d) Exam scripts are routinely provided to personal academic tutors for discussion with students at a meeting.</li> </ul> <p>Additionally, some of these options could be combined, e.g. giving students an opportunity to view their script in a controlled environment and then also have a discussion with the relevant member of staff.</p>
<p>2. Scripts (either handwritten or typed, if it was an online exam) are returned to students</p>	<p>Whilst this is not currently recommended by the University's Legal Services (as, compared to coursework, exam scripts are subject to different provisions under the General Data Protection Regulation, i.e. exam scripts are excluded from Subject Access Requests), other institutions do this and there are a number of possible ways in which it can be done. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Exam scripts are scanned and either the scanned version is electronically (and securely) released to the student, or the scanned version is stored securely and the original script is released to the student;</li> <li>(b) Exam scripts are photocopied, and a copy is given to the student.</li> </ul>

	<p>In either case, the scripts should be marked as confidential to the student.</p> <p>Additionally, if an exam takes place online, returning the scripts to the students in this way is generally a straightforward undertaking.</p>
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8. Using the options given above, it is up to the School to determine how students are given access to their examination scripts. It may be useful for Schools to discuss (at the beginning of each academic year) the preferred access mechanism with Student Representatives.
9. Please note that different access mechanisms may be appropriate for different groups of students, e.g. students on different programmes, students at different stages of their programmes, students who are on campus/not on campus. It may also be appropriate to offer students with Reasonable Adjustment Plans (an) alternative access mechanism(s).
10. It may be helpful to Schools with joint honours or other multi-disciplinary provision to collaborate regarding the access mechanisms used.
11. All students should be given access to their January exam scripts early in semester two, shortly after their provisional marks for the January assessment period have been made available to them. At this point, it would be valuable to discuss feedback on exams as part of students' individual personal academic tutorials (along with their feedback on coursework).
12. All students should be given access to their May/June exam scripts either shortly after their confirmed marks have been made available to them (following the June exam board meeting), or early in semester one of the following academic year.

## Appendix 1: Generic example of guidance for students (to be adapted by Schools)

This document provides information about viewing your exam script(s) and how you can make the most of this opportunity, should you wish to take it up. The term exam script is used in this guidance to refer to the completed exam booklets (or equivalent, for online exams for which you do not receive individual feedback) that contain your responses.

### **Purpose**

You are provided with access to your exam script(s) as part of the feedback on assessment process, to help you learn from what you did well and what you could have done better so that you can improve your exam preparation approach and exam technique in the future. Your exam scripts should be used for this purpose in conjunction with the relevant marking criteria and the generic feedback for that particular exam, which will also be provided to you by your School. Used together, these documents form a powerful tool to support your learning and your development, and you are strongly encouraged to take up this opportunity. Your School will support you in this; for example, you may find it helpful to discuss feedback on assessment (including exams) with your Personal Academic Tutor.

- Please note that accessing your exam script(s) is not about querying or contesting the marks. Challenges to the academic judgement of examiners on the performance of students are not permitted. Rather it is about learning how to improve your exam performance in the future.
- Please also be aware that any annotations on an exam script are normally made for marking purposes (i.e. to inform the internal moderator and external examiner how the mark was determined) and are not usually intended as detailed feedback.

### **Arrangements**

Your School will let you know the mechanism by which you can access your examination script(s).

- Following the semester one/January assessment period, exam scripts will normally be available early in semester two. Please be aware that, at this point in the year, your marks will still be provisional (as they will not have been confirmed by an exam board).
- Following the May/June assessment period, exam scripts will normally be made available shortly after your confirmed marks (which were ratified at the June exam board meeting) have been made available to you, or early in semester one of the following academic year.

It may not be appropriate to see some exam scripts (e.g. those made up of multiple choice questions), and your School will confirm those exams where this is the case and explain why.

### **Your responsibilities**

There are two key conditions associated with accessing your exam script(s):

- the provision of access to your exam script(s) is purely for your own educational use; you must not share, publish or otherwise disseminate your script/answers or the exam questions;

- unless your original scripts have been formally released to you (i.e. for you to retain), you must not mark/modify them in any way.

Breaching either of these conditions would likely be considered a disciplinary offence under the University's [Regulation 8: Student Conduct](#).<sup>1</sup>

### **Getting the most out of viewing your exam script(s)<sup>2</sup>**

Please use the opportunity to view your exam script(s) as a means to reflect upon your performance and identify the areas in which you need to improve. You may wish consider your exam script(s) with the following questions in mind:

1. What three things do you think you did really effectively in this exam?
2. What three things do you think you could improve on for your next exam?
3. Are there any study skills resources/workshops you should access, or issues you feel you should discuss with your personal academic tutor or module tutor?

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<sup>1</sup> Please see 8.2.1(a): “any breach of any University Statute, Ordinance, Regulation, Code of Practice or Code of Professional Conduct and Fitness to Practise” and (r) “accessing or using confidential information or material, or giving confidential information or material to others without permission or the right to do so (unless the disclosure is permitted under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 or in accordance with the University’s Public Interest Disclosure Procedure or is required by law)”.

<sup>2</sup> It would be appropriate for Schools to provide further prompts and guidance to students, depending on the access mechanisms in place.