

Code of Practice on the Conduct of External Awarding Body Examinations

Approved 1st October 2018



This Code of Practice applies to all External Awarding Body examinations held at University College Birmingham including GCSE and Functional Skills and should be read in conjunction with:

- 1 The relevant external awarding body regulations
- 2 Where relevant, The Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) regulations and requirements (www.jcq.org.uk)
- 3 UCB General Student Regulations
- 4 UCB Academic Regulations
- 5 The Conduct and Invigilation of Examinations
- 6 The Code of Practice for Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct

Class based written and practical assessments and tests are not covered by this Code of Practice, (see Teaching, Learning and Assessment Procedures).

This Code of Practice is intended as an information guide for all students undertaking external awarding body examinations at University College Birmingham. This Code of Practice is also intended to inform members of staff of the roles and responsibilities in facilitating external awarding body examinations within the University.

1. Registration

Students are registered with an Awarding Body according to the requirements specified by the relevant Awarding Body for each Subject. It is policy of UCB to register candidates with the appropriate Awarding Body (based on current enrolments) within any deadline specified by the Awarding Body.

Registry manages the timing of registrations and/or entries to avoid making unnecessary entries for students who have withdrawn from the subject. This is intended to reduce registration costs for UCB, and to avoid creating inaccurate records at the Awarding Body.

1.1 Examination Entry

Students will be entered for required tests and assessments (based on current enrolments) before the Awarding Body's published deadline.

In the case of Functional Skills, students are entered for specific tests upon notification from the academic team. These tests can be electronic or paper based.

2. Examination Timetables

External Awarding body examinations are held throughout the academic year at UCB. The times for exam sessions are usually determined by the External Awarding Body. Where this is the case the Examinations Unit will ensure that examinations are timetabled and resourced for the specified time.

Examination timetables will be published in advance to students. Examination timetables are provided to Course Tutors for communication to students, including those students granted access arrangements. The only exceptions to this are for adult students studying full-cost part time provision. In such cases the students are contacted individually with timetable information.

It is the responsibility of each student to raise any queries or concerns regarding the Examination timetable with the Examinations Unit and ensure that adequate preparation has been made in order to attend the exams.

Each timetable shows:

- day and date of exam
- start and finish times of exam
- title of exam
- exam location

Where a lecturer has queries or concerns with the data contained in the timetables, these should be raised immediately with the Examinations Unit.

Students who have confirmed access arrangements for examinations will be sent a personal timetable with details of extra provision and alternative venue.

Where it is necessary to make a change to the arrangements for an examination after the Final timetable has been published, the updated timetable will be sent to students and course tutors will also notify students.

2.1 Special Consideration for Sabbaths and Holy Days

In the event that a student is unable to attend a scheduled exam due to the exam falling on the same date as a Religious Festival, it is expected that the student will notify the Examinations Team in advance so that alternative arrangements for sitting the exam can be made, if permitted by the Awarding Body. No extra fee will be charged to the student in such circumstances.

3. Special Considerations

Students who feel that they have been unable to perform to the best of their ability due to reasons beyond their control, or who have been unable to attend an examination or assessment for similar reasons should contact the Examinations Unit or the University Registry.

Where a student does not or cannot attend an exam, he or she should immediately provide a written explanation through completing an extenuating circumstances form from the University Registry. Evidence supporting the absence, such as a medical certificate, must be included.

4. Access Arrangements

Where a student has been assessed as eligible for access arrangements for examinations by the Academic Skills Centre, the Examinations Unit will liaise with the Academic Skills Centre to ensure that Awarding Body approval for access arrangements is sought and that once approved appropriate access

arrangements are provided to the student for the External Awarding Body examination.

All consideration of access arrangements and reasonable adjustments will be in accordance with the relevant awarding body guidance and where appropriate, in accordance with JCQ regulations on Access Arrangements and Reasonable Adjustments.

Students will be informed in writing of the date, time and venues of their examinations and what arrangements will be made for them (i.e. scribe, reader and/or computer).

5. Arrangements for examination sittings

UCB will provide suitable examination conditions for students sitting formal written examinations which meet Awarding body and JCQ standards (where required).

The Examinations Unit will administer alternative examination venues for students with access arrangements according to JCQ regulations and awarding body requirements.

All externally set examinations are carried out in line with Awarding Body regulations. Where required, examination papers are stored securely according to JCQ regulations. Following the exam, exam papers are sent for marking to the appropriate designated recipient (marker or Awarding Body) via courier.

For all examinations the Examinations Unit will appoint a team of invigilators to ensure that the examination session is conducted in a proper manner and in line with the Awarding Body regulations. Full details can be found in the Conduct and Invigilation of Examinations.

The Senior Invigilator is issued with an 'Exams Pack', compiled by the Examinations Team, which contains the relevant documents and information for the exam. Any specific Awarding Body regulation booklets are provided in addition, if stipulated by the Awarding Body.

Each examination session will begin promptly.

All students shall follow all written and oral instructions during the examination. Failure to do so shall constitute an examination malpractice, as detailed in the Code of Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct.

Students will be required to provide evidence of their identity during the sitting. This will usually be done by displaying their UCB Identity Card on the desk.

Students must listen carefully to the Invigilator's announcements at the start, during and at the end of the examination and act upon these. Before the session begins students should ensure they have left all, papers, notes, textbooks, bags and coats, communication devices and other unauthorised electronic or computer equipment in the area designated within the examination venue. Failure to comply with these instructions will constitute an examination malpractice.

Students must ensure that they take note of the rubric at the top of each examination question paper; failure to comply with these instructions is likely to constitute an examination malpractice.

Students must ensure that they do not engage in any form of cheating in connection with the examination. UCB treats any form of cheating under examination conditions as an extremely serious matter (as it does the related offence of plagiarism). It will instigate Examination Malpractice procedures against an individual student where there is sufficient evidence of cheating based on the Invigilator's report and a report will be made to the Awarding Body.

Students must leave all question sheets and answer books provided during an examination sitting in the examination venue when the student leaves the venue.

Candidates are only permitted to use a calculator if stated on the Examination paper. If a calculator is required for an examination, one will be issued by the University at the examination venue. No calculator, other than the one issued by the University may be used during examinations, unless written permission has been given in advance by the Examinations Manager.

During an examination candidates are not allowed to use a mobile phone or any other device as a calculator.

The use of electronic information processors or mobile phones that permit the storing of exam notes is not permitted and is deemed as malpractice for which penalties apply.

Hats should be removed at the start of the examination.

Candidates are only permitted to wear coats providing they turn their pockets out when asked to do so by the invigilator.

Any examination irregularities will be reported to the Awarding Body in accordance with Awarding Body guidelines.

5.1 Adverse Weather Conditions during Examinations

In the event of adverse weather - most likely during the Spring Term - it should be assumed that exams will continue as timetabled. Where a student claims to be affected by such conditions and is unable to take the exam they should complete an extenuating circumstances form obtained from their Year Manager or Registry.

5.2 Security of Examination Papers

On receipt of exam papers and scripts, the Examinations Unit ensures that all materials are securely stored in line the JCQ's 'Instructions for conducting examinations'.

On the day of the exam, exam papers and blank scripts are taken to the exam venue by a member of UCB staff.

Following the conclusion of each exam all exam papers and scripts are returned directly to the Examinations Unit. Once checked and packaged these are then dispatched via courier to the Awarding Body.

6. Examination and Assessment Malpractice by University Staff

This section aims to give guidance to academic and support staff of the University on issues of malpractice in connection with external Awarding Body examinations and the necessary steps that will be taken if anyone is found in breach of these guidelines.

6.1 Conflict of Interest

Academic and support staff of the University should inform the Examinations Unit of any members of UCB staff who are either sitting examinations and assessments or teaching a subject where a potential conflict of interest exists for examinations and assessments. The Examinations Manager should also be informed where a potential conflict of interest exists with any member of the Examinations Unit staff with regard to examinations and assessment. In the case of FE students the Awarding body will be notified as appropriate.

If a student is entered for an examination and has a relative or friend (or any person with a potential conflict of interest) employed at UCB, the Examinations Unit must ensure that during the examination period the student's relative or friend (or any person with a potential conflict of interest) does not have unaccompanied access to examination materials e.g. question papers and pre-release materials, either before the examination or after the examination, e.g. answer scripts.

6.2 Breach of Security

This entails breaking the confidentiality of question papers or materials, and their electronic equivalents, or the confidentiality of candidates, scripts or their electronic equivalents.

Breaches of security involve:

- Moving the time or date of an examination without giving adequate notice to students or allowing a different group of students or an individual student to take the exam at a different time without adequate affidavit measures taken into consideration.
- Moving the date or time of an examination without prior written approval from the Awarding Body.
- Permitting, facilitating or obtaining for a student unauthorised access to examination material prior to an examination.
- Failing to retain and secure examination papers after an examination, in cases where the life of the paper may extend beyond that particular session.
- Tampering with candidate scripts or coursework.
- Failing to keep secure student computer files which contain coursework or an examination, or technical problems arising from malfunctioning University equipment leading to the loss of a students work.

6.3 Deception

This consists of any act of dishonesty in relation to any examination or assessment, but not limited to:

- Inventing or changing marks for internally assessed components (e.g. coursework) or examination marks where there is no actual evidence of the candidate's achievement to justify the marks being given.
- Fabricating assessment and/or internal verification records.
- Entering fictitious candidates for examinations or assessments, or otherwise subverting the assessment or certification process with the intention of financial gain (Fraud).

6.4 Improper assistance to candidates

This involves giving assistance beyond the requirements of the specification to a candidate or group of candidates which results in a potential or actual advantage in an examination or assessment. For example:

- Assisting candidates in the production of coursework or aiding with examination questions.
- Assisting or prompting candidates with the production of answers;
- Permitting candidates in an examination to access prohibited materials (Dictionaries, calculators, mobile phones etc.);
- Prompting candidates in Language Speaking or Oral Examinations by means of signs, or verbal or written prompts.

6.5 Maladministration

This consists of malpractice in the conduct of the examinations or assessments and/or the processing of examination papers, candidate scripts, mark sheets, cumulative assessment records, certificate claim forms, etc. For example:

- Failing to display adequate and informative examination timetables on student's examination notice boards and UCB Online and in sufficient time before the examination period.
- Failing to post notices relating to the examination or assessment on all rooms
- where examinations and assessments are to be held;
- Failing to issue to candidates the appropriate notices and warnings;
- Not ensuring that the examination venue conforms to requirements;
- Failure to ensure the safeguard and security of examination scripts once completed after an examination.
- Permitting student's access to examination scripts once completed after an examination.
- Failing to dispatch candidate scripts / coursework to the internal and external examiners expeditiously;
- The inappropriate retention of certificates;
- Failing to report an instance of suspected malpractice in examinations or
- assessments to the appropriate person within the University as soon as possible after such an instance occurs or is discovered;
- Failing to conduct a thorough investigation into suspected examination or assessment malpractice.
- Production of unauthorized and unofficial timetables by a member of staff

In the event that any of the above circumstances occur the relevant Awarding Body Policies and Procedures must be followed.

Any member of staff found to be in breach of the any of the above conditions will be subject to University Disciplinary procedures.

Examinations which fall under the remit of the Joint Council for qualifications (JCQ) will be conducted in accordance with current JCQ guidelines.

7. Results and Certificates

Upon receipt of final award Certificates the University Registry updates the student records system to show that the certificate has been received and posted to the student. During this process, the Examinations Team check if the student owes any monies to UCB and if so Certification is temporarily withheld in order to initiate a resolution.

7.1 Post Results Enquiries and Appeals

In instances of post results enquiries and the process for making an appeal against an awarding body decision UCB will refer to the awarding body's documentation. For appeals against decisions made by the JCQ awarding bodies in relation to GCSE and Functional Skills UCB will refer to the JCQ publication 'A guide to awarding bodies' appeals processes'. Where UCB's appeal procedure confirms that the appeal is valid, the appeal application process to the Awarding Body is managed by Registry and the Examinations Unit.