

Learning and Teaching Policy

What happens after Exams? Guide for Students

Step 1: The Course Leader/Team marks your script

The Professional Services teams collate all exam scripts and make sure they are passed to the Course Leader/Team for marking. Your exam script is marked according to pre-prepared marking criteria.

Assuring the integrity of the exams process

Marking criteria are informed by the course learning outcomes – these map to professional accreditation requirements (if relevant) and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. A sample of exam scripts is checked and approved by External Examiners from other universities. All these processes ensure that marking aligns to HWU and UK-wide academic standards.

Step 2: Students' work is checked and verified

Course Teams review students' work once marked, a mark sheet for each course is completed, differences in cohort performance are reviewed, and External Examiners provide scrutiny of work contributing to award.

Assuring the integrity of marking and verification

After marking has been carried out, Course Leaders (and teams where applicable) review students' work across campuses to ensure consistency of marking. A Course Marks List (CML) for each course is completed and further quality checks undertaken to verify marks have been transferred and presented accurately. Differences in cohort performance are reviewed and very occasionally these may be moderated for specific circumstances eg impact of UK industrial action or severe weather.. This is recorded on the CML for presentation at the Course Assessment Board. For Years 3, 4 + 5 and PGT, External Examiners view a sample of students' work (coursework and exams), drawn from across grades, levels and locations of study, to ensure consistency in marking standards.

Step 3: Mitigating Circumstances are formally considered

Assuring mitigation has been applied for personal circumstances

At the same time as your exams are being marked, School-level Mitigating Circumstances Boards are convened to review the [Mitigating Circumstances](#) requests that have been received from individual students and that have been sent forward for mitigation to be considered. Consistency of decision-making is checked across disciplines.

Step 4: A Course Assessment Board is held

Each Discipline holds a Course Assessment Board. The (Global) Programme Director, Year Coordinators and Course Leaders attend these Boards. **Each course is considered** individually to compare the performance with that of previous years.

Assuring Course-level performance and outcomes

Additional levels of scrutiny continue to be included to take account of the impact of circumstances affecting whole cohorts, eg the impact of industrial action or severe weather. The academic performance in courses in each year is evaluated against those of previous five cohorts.

This will provide a benchmark against which this year's student attainment can be considered and will enable the Course Assessment Board to confirm that overall outcomes are in keeping with previous years, or that they require moderation. Moderation may very occasionally include, for example, altering the grades for courses affected by particular circumstances, while ensuring the overall quality and standards are maintained.

Step 5: A Progression or Award Board is held

Each Discipline holds a Progression Board and an Award Board attended by (Global) Programme Directors, Discipline academics, and other senior academic staff from the School. Additionally, the University Dean (or their Representative) and an External Examiner attend Award Boards. Each individual student profile is considered in turn.

Ensuring individual performance is reflected in Progression and Award decisions

Attention is given to each student's overall grade profile over all taught final year courses, any previous year's qualifying courses (UG programmes), the overall average, and the number of credits achieved. If there are mitigating circumstances or the impact of circumstances affecting the whole cohort, these are also considered and appropriate mitigation applied. Results of students from previous years will also inform the discussion and the decisions that will be made. The results of students who are close to grade or classification boundaries are fully deliberated, taking account of several factors, including whether courses are core or not. There are different processes that allow the Board to recognise academic achievement when making their decisions. All these processes are used by Boards to ensure fairness and no academic disadvantage. Feedback is received from the Dean (or Representative) and External Examiners on the conduct, equity and fairness of decisions and on student performance.

Step 6: Results are released

Results are released online by Registry + Academic Support to all graduating and continuing undergraduate and postgraduate taught students. These are results for individual courses (including dissertations) and also overall decisions on progression and award. Information on accessing results can be found [here](#). The University's policy on Feedback on Exams can be found [here](#) (see [here](#) for Coursework Feedback Policy).

A ROBUST, FAIR APPROACH

Steps 1 – 5 ensure all individual results undergo close academic scrutiny. **It is not a spreadsheet exercise based on averages.** Academic teams have authority to use their academic judgement - within a strict quality assurance framework - to make sure **every student receives grades and degree classifications which accurately reflect their capabilities.** It's a very robust process, reviewed externally.

These checks and safeguards ensure **students receive the results they would have gained if it had not been for disruptions or circumstances beyond their control, and no student will get a lower grade than they deserve (which is unfair), but also will not get a higher grade (which devalues qualifications).**

These five-steps also reflect Heriot-Watt's **long-standing, robust and fair approach to considering student performance and maintaining academic standards.**

Academic Decisions Policy: [Full Policy](#); [Student Summary](#)

Mitigating Circumstances: [Student Guide](#)

Next Steps: Post-Results Advice: [Student Guide](#); [AskHWU](#)

[Student Appeals process](#) Due our robust quality and standards process, there is no appeal against academic judgements.