Education Committee Circulars Ref 08-20/21
Applicable to: undergraduate, postgraduate taught
Circulation: divisions, departments, faculties, colleges, Student Registry

Communication from Education Committee:

Notice of the permanent change to online submissions for taught courses, and also changes in relation to late submission, and an update on the policy for paper corrections in TT21

This circular provides information on policy changes approved by Taught Degrees Panel at its meeting of week 8 Hilary term 2021:

Action required

All divisions, departments/faculties, and colleges are asked to **note** the changes in policy in the following areas:

- Temporary changes to policy in relation of **late submission** (Part 14 of the Regulations for the Conduct of University Examinations) – increase in the period for which students with chronic, fluctuating conditions may self-certify for extensions based on provision in their SSP from 7 to 14 calendar days.

Exam boards in particular are asked to note:

- **Paper corrections** – paper correction process for in-person exams continues to be suspended for TT21 due to ongoing social distancing measures.

Departments and exam boards in particular are asked to note:

- A permanent change in policy requiring **all summative assessments which are submissions to be made via a University approved online assessment platform**, and not in hard copy. In limited circumstances, permission may be granted to retain hard copy submission for a specific assessment unit. Departments wishing to submit such a request must do so by Friday 23 July 2021.

Further Information

A. Changes to late submission (Part 14)

1. For 2020-21 students already have the ability to self-certify for a late submission/extension request for up to 7 days for non-Covid-19 reasons and for up to 14 days for Covid-19 related reasons.

2. Students with chronic, fluctuating, conditions have been allowed from 2020-21 a permanent policy change to self-certify for up to 7 days when they are experiencing a flare up if there is provision in their SSP to do so. Taught Degrees Panel has now agreed to extend this to 14 days for Trinity term 2021 to recognise the potential difficulties in accessing GPs for non-urgent/acute matters at this time.

3. Students who are experiencing more long-lasting disruption due to the pandemic are able to apply for more holistic consideration through the dispensation process which can

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take into account complex personal circumstances and longer-term disruption of the research process.

B. *Paper corrections - Trinity term 2021*

4. Due to the continued need for in-person exams to be run in a Covid-19 secure manner it has been agreed that the paper correction process for in-person exams continues to be suspended for TT21.

5. Exam boards are reminded that papers should be thoroughly checked before being sent to the Exams and Assessment team (this checking should involve someone who should be able to identify errors but that has not been involved in the setting of the paper).

C. *Submission of summative assessments*

6. In the last decade there has been a consistent move amongst HEIs to provide secure and efficient online submission processes for students and examiners, with many choosing to move away entirely from accepting any submissions in hard copy. Submission of coursework via an anonymous online platform is the accepted norm, and as such Oxford stood as an outlier when students were expected to submit a hard copy for assessment.

7. In MT20, Taught Degrees Panel agreed to retain online submission for all summative submitted assessment for 2020-21 after it was introduced as emergency policy for TT20. Following positive feedback and support from both staff and students, the matter was brought back to the Panel in HT21 for formal consideration of a permanent move to online-only submission.

8. From MT21 onwards, the Panel has approved that all summative assessments which are submissions will need to be made via a University approved online assessment platform, and not in hard copy. In most cases the submissions platform will be Inspera which is replacing WebLearn from MT21 onwards.

9. A notice giving the overarching provisions for online submission within the *Examination Regulations* will be published in the *Gazette* during TT21. Education Policy Support will organise appropriate notices for publication in the *Gazette* so that departments do not need to prepare notices for each individual regulation change. The updated regulations are expected to be available for departments to view from 15 August 2021.

10. Departments need to update their course handbooks before the start of the 2021-22 AY and ensure that guidelines for preparing summative submissions include details such as the resolution settings for images, the permitted file types and size etc.

11. Where it is clear conversion to a digital submission would be unsuitable for the work for a specific assessment unit for all students taking that unit (e.g. oversized architectural drawings or art portfolios) or the compressed file size exceeds, or is likely to exceed, 1GB, provision for hard copy can be made. Where hard copy is required for a specific unit, the process given under **Type I** requests should be followed.

12. Where hard copy is required for an individual student, the process under **Type II** requests should be followed. All applications should be made to the Submissions and Research Degree Manager (taughtdegrees@admin.ox.ac.uk). The deadlines for

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requests for this year are given below. The deadlines for subsequent academic years will be communicated in due course.

Type I requests

13. Type I requests relate to all submissions for a specific assessment unit. Departments are asked to identify any submission for an assessment unit(s) that is not appropriate for digital submission. Hard-copy submission will only be approved where there are insurmountable practical barriers to online submission; preference for a hard-copy by markers is not a valid reason for retaining hard-copy submission.

14. The department will need to submit their request to retain hard copy submissions for the relevant assessment unit to Samantha Hutton, Submissions and Research Degrees Manager (taughtdegrees@admin.ox.ac.uk) by Friday 23 July 2021.

15. Such requests will need to include:

- The programme name.
- The full assessment unit title and code.
- The submission deadline.
- The reason that hard copy submission is required.
- Confirmation that the department understands that they will be responsible for the reporting of any missing or late submissions.
- The name of the key contact who will be responsible for reporting missing and late submissions (if permission is granted for the retention of a hard copy submission, guidance on the reporting process will be provided by the Submissions and Research Degree Manager).
- A copy of the current *Examination Regulations* for the programme with changes to provide for hard copy submission to the department shown using standard change notation (underlining for additional text, strike through for deleted text).

16. Departments and the Proctor's Office will be notified by the Submissions and Research Degree Manager by Wednesday 25 August 2021. Confirmation of approval and the submitted regulation changes will be sent to Education Policy Support so that the regulations can be approved and a notice sent to the *Gazette* for publication in the first *Gazette* of the year (expected deadline 15 September). Departments must ensure that course handbooks and any other relevant student information accurately reflect the regulations.

17. The University IT services provide numerous online training courses on managing long and complex documents in Word and other software and these should be signposted to students in the guidance students receive for preparing their submissions.

18. If a Type I request is received after 23 July, reasonable efforts will be made to consider the request in time for the 2021-22 academic year. Departments should be aware that any request that it is not possible to consider before the start of MT21 that affects a submission in 2021-22 may need consultation with students before it can be approved.

19. The deadline for consideration of requests for 2022-23 will be communicated in due course.

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Type II requests

20. Type II requests relate to a submission for an individual student for a specific assessment unit. If a department identifies any students whose work for a particular assessment is not suitable for digital submission, a request will need to be made by the department on behalf of each affected student to the Submissions and Research Degree Manager ([taughtdegrees@admin.ox.ac.uk)](mailto:taughtdegrees@admin.ox.ac.uk) for permission for the affected students to submit in hard copy.

21. Type II requests will need to be made well in advance of the submission deadline. Such requests will need to include:

   - The student's name, number and college (if applicable)
   - The programme name
   - The full assessment unit title and code
   - The submission deadline
   - The reason that hard copy submission is required.
   - Confirmation that the department understands that they will be responsible for the reporting of any missing or late submissions.
   - The name of the key contact who will be responsible for reporting missing and late submissions (guidance on the reporting process if permission is granted for the retention of a hard copy submission will be provided).

22. Hard-copy submission will only be approved where there are insurmountable practical barriers to online submission. If permission is granted, confirmation will be sent to the department by the Submissions and Research Degree Manager along with guidance on the reporting process.

Submission of hard-copy summative assessments

23. Where approval has been granted to retain submission in hard-copy, the place of submission will be the department. The reporting of late and missing submissions will be the responsibility of the department concerned and guidance on the reporting process will be provided by the Submissions and Research Degree Manager.

24. Failure to provide adequate advice or students not following the guidelines on the preparation of their submission documents will not be accepted as a valid reason for reverting to hard copy submission. Such difficulties should instead be managed through improved communications, guidance and training.

If you have queries about any practical aspects of this policy please contact Samantha Hutton, Submissions and Research Degrees Manager (samantha.hutton@admin.ox.ac.uk), or if you have queries about the policy itself please contact Amanda Tattersall, Senior Policy Officer (amanda.tattersall@admin.ox.ac.uk).