

Assessment and Feedback
Policy

Department of Economics
University of Warwick

Undergraduate and Postgraduate Degrees

Appendices

Appendix A1: Forms of Assessment

Our modules contain a mixture of both summative and formative assessments. Summative assessments are those which contribute to the final mark for a module, including exams, essays, tests, problem sets, presentations and group work. Formative assessments are those pieces of work which don't contribute towards the final mark of a module. Different assessments test different skills, such as time management, problem-solving, the ability to analyse and evaluate, critical thinking and working as a team. The structure of assessment on our modules will vary across the 3 years of a typical Degree and during all years of Postgraduate study to ensure that students become effective learners and develop a range of skills that will enhance their employability. This is one of the reasons why we include such a variety of assessment methods within our modules and ensure that the mix is reviewed annually.

Furthermore, we see all of our students as researchers. Whether students are in their very first year, as an Undergraduate or undertaking a Postgraduate Degree, our aim is to develop these skills and help students reach their full potential, which can be done, in part, by creating the correct assessment methods. Below are details of the types of assessment methods we use in the Department of Economics.

Examination: This is a summative piece of assessment, which most modules use to assess performance throughout the year. This typically forms the largest component of any module assessment. Examinations can be of varying lengths and take place in January (for MSc Students only) and May/June of each year for both Undergraduate and Postgraduate students, with a resit opportunity during September for 1st year and Postgraduate exams. Examinations have different regulations in terms of the resources that can be brought into and used during the exam, such as calculators and formula books. All students are given an examinations timetable prior to the summer exam period, noting the time and location of their exam. Students are given a desk number and must bring their student identification card with them for verification during the exam. Examinations are invigilated by Lecturers, Teaching Assistants and PhD students and overall responsibility lies with the Exams Office in University House. All marks, both assessment and examination results are only provisional and will not become finalised until after the Exam Board.¹

Test: Some modules use tests as a summative form of assessment to examine students on a section of the course to date. These take place at different times throughout the year, often during lectures and are typically around 50 minutes, but the length can vary. Students will be informed by the Lecturer responsible when the test will take place and its location. Tests are invigilated by Teaching Assistants under the overall responsibility of the module Lecturer. Tests are marked and moderated by Teaching Assistants and Lecturers and made available for students to collect from the Undergraduate/Postgraduate Office within 20 working days from the date of the test.

Essay: Essays can be used as both a formative and summative means of assessment and are typically submitted online, as per Appendix A3. The essay title/topic will be set by the Lecturer responsible several weeks before the date of submission and details of it and submission dates etc. will be made available online. Students will be notified by email and/or during lectures as to when and where these details can be found. Essays should be written as a piece of prose (unless otherwise stated) and guidance will be provided on the module webpage. Essays will be marked by Teaching Assistants and/or the Lecturer, moderated and then made available with feedback for students to collect from the Undergraduate/Postgraduate Office within 20 working days from the submission date.

¹ For second year students, marks are provisional until the third year Exam Board.

Problem Set: These can be used as both a formative and summative means of assessment. Typically, they are comprised of a set of short questions on a particular topic, which students will have a few weeks to complete and submit. They will then be marked by Teaching Assistants and/or the Lecturer and returned to students via the Undergraduate/Postgraduate Office within 20 working days with annotations.

Group Project: These can take a variety of forms, including a piece of written work or a group presentation. Details of the project will be made available on the module webpage and students will be told of how they will be allocated to groups. Any concerns relating to the project should be taken directly to the module Lecturer.

Presentation: Students will be advised of the length and format of any presentation and will be given an indication as to the type of material which should be included, e.g. graphs, diagrams, data. Time slots will typically be allocated, so students know when they are presenting and following the presentation, there will usually be a chance for the Lecturer and other students to ask questions and provide feedback.

Appendix A2: Essays and Tests

Essays and other assignments are an integral part of assessment on many modules in the Department, either in the form of summative or formative assignments or both. We place great importance on ensuring that students get the best out of themselves when writing an essay and further guidance is available for all students in the [Undergraduate](#), [MSc](#) and [MRes](#) Handbooks. For students in their first year of an Undergraduate Degree, we see formative assessment as being especially important. Students can use the feedback they receive on essays and other assignments to enhance their learning and reflect on their own abilities, strengths and those areas where further improvements can be made. This is essential to enable students to focus on their own personal development and achieve their full potential every year.

With such importance placed on these assessments, we place equal importance on ensuring that assignments are the work of just one student (or one group of students, where relevant). The Department takes a strict approach to plagiarism of all kind and the Departmental policy on plagiarism can be found in the [Undergraduate](#), [MSc](#) and [MRes](#) Handbooks.

Tests offer a chance for students to be examined on what is typically a section of the course. This gives students an important incentive to revise the course material so far and begin to identify those areas where further work will be needed and which areas they are confident on. It also gives students an insight into how to deal with university assessments, when time management is an essential element.

Appendix A3: Submission of Assignments

Assignments within the Economics Department are normally submitted through e-submission or paper submission to the Undergraduate or Postgraduate Office. If submission details are different, students will be informed by the module Lecturer. Further details of the submission of assignments can be found in the [Undergraduate](#) Handbook and the [MSc Resources page](#). Every assignment has its own deadline, designed to give students sufficient time to prepare for it and to learn and improve for future assignments on the module, once the work has been returned. Details of the deadline for any given assignment or the date of a test can be found on the module webpages and will also be communicated to students via email.

Appendix A4: Appeals

If on receipt of your essay or test mark, you cannot understand how it has been determined, you should first review the comments and annotations made by the markers. If you are still unsure about

the mark, once you have reflected on this feedback, you should then consult your Class Tutor or the Module Leader. While these people can explain the basis of a mark, they cannot change it unilaterally once the coursework has been returned to you.

If you wish to appeal an assessment mark, you will need to complete [the Undergraduate appeal form](#) or [the Postgraduate appeal form](#) available online, but you should remember that you cannot appeal against academic judgement. That is, you cannot appeal because you received a lower mark than expected. An appeal must be based on the grounds that you believe there has been some inaccuracy in the marking process or that procedures have not been followed. Your appeal should be made within one week of the return of your coursework. This is the day when the coursework was available for you to collect and not the day that you decided to collect it. In other words, if you leave work uncollected, you may lose your right to appeal against a mark. Your appeal will go to the Director and Deputy Director of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Studies, who will decide whether there is an obvious *prima facie* error in the mark, in which case s/he will order an immediate internal re-mark; otherwise, s/he will refer the mark, with the student's other assessed work, to the Relevant Board of Examiners. In the event of an internal re-mark the Module Leader or an internal marker will consider the coursework again and confirm or amend the mark. In case of reference to the Board of Examiners, all of the student's assessed work in that module may be re-examined. Students should bear in mind that in either case marks may be revised downwards as well as upwards; the outcome of an appeal is not a one-way bet. The Examinations office will consider all cases of appeals against Exam marks and further details on the appeals procedure can be found on the [Appeals](#) section of the Academic Office website.

Appendix A5: Mitigating Circumstances - Examinations

We understand that sometimes students have personal and medical circumstances which may require special consideration. If a student has a properly-documented need for special arrangements, such as extra time in exams, we can make the necessary preparations. However, the student will need to speak to the Undergraduate or Postgraduate Office as soon as possible so that they can be put these arrangements in place.

Mitigating circumstances are events that may have a detrimental effect on a student's studies, such that it is in their best interests to bring it to the attention of the Department. As the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Handbooks outline, mitigating circumstances include (but are not limited to) illness, both bodily and emotional; the severe illness or death of a close family member; a shocking or traumatic personal experience. In addition, sudden, unexpected changes in family circumstances might affect a student's ability to make academic progress as a consequence of the emotional impact and thus can also be considered as mitigation. Mitigating evidence must pertain to the period that the student requires consideration for. For example, a letter relating to an illness in November will not be acceptable as evidence for a test absence in December. Furthermore, illnesses such as a mild cough or cold will not be considered as extenuating circumstances, unless there is significant evidence from a Medical Practitioner. The Year Tutors deal with all mitigating evidence and students can either go directly to their Year Tutor, or to their Personal Tutor who will then liaise with the relevant person.

If students are unable to attend an exam through illness or other personal circumstances, evidence must be submitted to the Department. If the circumstances occur prior to the examination, Undergraduate students should make their [Personal Tutor](#) or the [Year Tutor](#) aware of the situation and Postgraduate students should look to their [Supervisor or Personal Tutor](#). Evidence must be submitted to the Undergraduate or Postgraduate office to support the circumstances and this will then be given consideration at the relevant Board of Examiners. If an illness occurs during an exam, then an Invigilator should be made aware of this and appropriate steps will be taken. Medical evidence should again be obtained.

It is imperative that any mitigating circumstances are made known to the Department as soon as possible. If you have on-going mitigating circumstances throughout the year, you must inform the Year Tutor at the time (Personal Tutor for Postgraduate students). Retrospective mitigation will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances, where evidence is available as to why there was a delay in making the circumstances known.

A6: Mitigating Circumstances – Essays/Tests

In the case of test absences and extension requests, we will only be able to condone an absence or grant an extension, if the evidence is submitted within two weeks of the date of the request, unless there are exceptional circumstances. All submitted assessments have deadlines and if a student is unable to submit an assignment by the deadline, an extension can be granted. However, this will only be done under extenuating circumstances, as outlined above. If a student wishes to apply for an extension, this must be done via [My.Economics](#). An extension/exemption request form can be completed and submitted with the circumstances requiring an extension and the Undergraduate or Postgraduate Teaching and Learning Manager, in consultation with the Deputy Director of Undergraduate or Postgraduate Studies will review the request, together with the evidence. The same form also pertains to absences from tests due to illness and once again evidence must be submitted in support. In both cases, evidence must be received by the Undergraduate or Postgraduate Office within two weeks of the deadline or test, otherwise the test absence will not be condoned and penalties for late submission of work will be applied. Where an assessment is condoned, the weighting of that assessment will be passed onto the examination for that module.

Further details of mitigating circumstances, including things that will and will not be accepted can be found in the [Undergraduate](#) and [Postgraduate](#) Handbooks.

Appendix A7: 20 Working Day Deadline

During the 2012/13 academic year, the Department of Economics signed up to the University's introduction of a 20 working day deadline for the return of work, with feedback to students. The 20 working day deadline thus excludes weekends, Holidays (e.g. Christmas and Easter), Bank Holidays and any day when the University is officially closed, including closures due to bad weather.

While the quality of feedback is important, so is the time it takes for students to receive it. We therefore aim to meet this deadline, but have also put provisions in place as outlined in Chapter 2 to ensure that the quality of our feedback and marking is maintained.

It is important to note here that this deadline does not just refer to the date by which work must be marked, but to the date by which students are able to collect their work. Unless students are told otherwise, all work will be available for collection from the Undergraduate Office or Postgraduate Office within 20 working days. Students will receive an email telling them from which date they can collect their work. It should be noted here that it is the date from which work can be collected and not the date on which students actually choose to collect their work that is important. This distinction is particularly important regarding appeals, which are outlined in Appendix A4.

Appendix B1: Background to Feedback

Lecturers sometimes teach around 400 students in a module, thus providing the type and amount of feedback that students have been used to at school/college is infeasible. However, university is – and should be – a very different environment from school/college, where students are encouraged to take an active and responsible approach to their own learning and development. We have a firm commitment to developing in our Undergraduate students and enhancing in our Postgraduate students the capacity of independent learning, thus students must make the most of the various forms of feedback available. Nevertheless, we are always looking at new methods of providing more and better quality feedback to our students.

Feedback comes in many forms, from the written comments given on their essays to the guidance and solutions provided by class tutors and Lecturers during seminars and other classes. In many cases, the feedback a student receives will accompany a mark and here the feedback should be constructive, well-thought out and must reflect the mark given. Part of the moderation process involves reviewing the feedback in relation to the mark and ensuring that they are consistent.

We are always looking to further enhance the quantity, quality and type of feedback students receive to enable them to develop their understanding of the material, of their strengths and of those areas where improvements can be made. Each year, new initiatives will be introduced in our Assessment and Feedback Policy through consultation across the Department and with the SSLC, with the aim of enhancing the feedback students receive and adding value to the student experience.

Appendix B2: Forms of Feedback

Written Comments: When a piece of work is submitted, it will be marked and moderated and then returned to students with constructive comments that confirm the mark and can be used by the student to make improvements and reflect on their performance. Written comments are typically given on a cover page, which is submitted with every essay/assignment. In addition, they may also be given as margin comments throughout the essay. Markers are given guidance as to what constitutes good quality feedback and are provided with examples of the types of feedback they might provide. This usually includes some general comments on the overall essay; the identification of the good aspects: e.g. well-structured, key points included, clear graphs, logical proofs; a list of at least 2 points where improvements can be made: e.g. explanations of graphs missing; incomplete proofs; a lack of evaluation; within these areas, an effort should be made to suggest how improvements can be made, perhaps by indicating some further reading. Finally a summarising sentence should be included, such as a good effort; a well thought out piece of work.

On receipt of this feedback, students should be encouraged to reflect on the comments. If they wish to speak to the Lecturer or Teaching Assistant, they can book an appointment, but must ensure that they have reviewed the feedback, considered the points and made an effort to re-write or amend certain aspects of their essay. Such a meeting should NOT be considered as an opportunity for the mark to be changed, as academic judgement cannot be challenged. It is purely an opportunity for a discussion on the merits and weaknesses of the essay and a reflection on which areas can be improved upon for future assignments. If, however, the student wishes to appeal the mark they received on an assessed piece of work, this can be done and further details are contained within Appendix A4.

Guided Feedback: Following the return of an essay to students, guided feedback/solutions will be made available by the Lecturer. Essays can be approached in a multitude of different ways and thus you may have written something which is correct, but is not included on the solutions. Similarly, you may have included everything that is on the feedback/solutions and thus wonder why your mark is not higher. The solutions are there simply as a means of guiding students and thus should not be viewed as complete solutions, but as an overview of some of the points that you might have included in the essay. If a meeting is requested by a student to review their essay, the student must show evidence of having reviewed and reflected on the solutions provided.

Generic Feedback: After essays have been returned to students, the Lecturer responsible is required to provide generic feedback. This includes an overview of the entire cohort of students and their performance on the essay. There should be comments as to what was expected, together with reflections on what was generally done well; the areas where students typically struggled; issues that were missed; issues that were analysed well; common mistakes; the distribution of marks; the average/mean; maximum and minimum marks. Students should use this information to reflect on their performance and how they ranked relative to their peers. This will help students to identify any modules where they perhaps need a greater focus.

Tests: Test scripts are returned to students within 20 working days and these will be fully annotated by the marker(s). The feedback provided includes the mark allocation for each question; the aspects of the question that were right/wrong; missing information; irrelevant information. These annotations should be used by students when reviewing each part of a question to find out where they lost marks and hence to learn and improve their performance in the next assessment.

Solutions: All tests/problem sets etc. will have a set of written solutions, which will be available on the relevant module webpage. These solutions should be used by students to work back over the test paper to find out where they went wrong and how marks were allocated.

Seminars: Seminars should be viewed by students as feedback sessions. They are a prime opportunity to ask questions and generate discussions on a variety of related topics. Most modules provide seminar questions to work through during class and the solutions provided by Teaching Assistants and other students should be seen as an invaluable source of feedback. Students can learn different methods of solving the same problem; common mistakes to avoid; opinions that you have not considered; evaluative points you omitted. Students should aim to be fully prepared for seminars and take advantage of this small group of students to begin detailed discussions on relevant topics.

Office Hours: Office hours are generally very poorly used by students. Yet, they are an opportunity for students to meet with their Lecturers and Tutors on a one-to-one basis and receive invaluable feedback and guidance. If you have specific questions relating to the material covered in lectures and seminars, you can receive feedback on these problem areas, but you can also use these office hours to discuss broader issues. You might have read something in a journal or heard a discussion of a topic and want to clarify a point. Lecturers and tutors will always be willing to provide you with help and feedback, as long as you can show them that you have put in the work and thus are prepared.

Appendix B3: Forums

We are dedicated to providing an excellent teaching and learning environment in the Economics Department at Warwick University and so we want to begin by developing this new initiative on a small selection of modules. The long term idea will be to extend this across the Department for all years in both Undergraduate and Postgraduate study. The initial modules involved will be the core first year Undergraduate modules, including EC107, EC108 and EC109. Forums will gradually be disseminated to core second year modules and beyond.

The Forums will be based on a template for all modules, but individual Lecturers and Tutors will undoubtedly have small variations in how they use them. For the modules involved, students have seminars each week, typically commencing in week 3. In these modules, exercise sheets are provided for preparation prior to the seminar and these are then completed in class, where students receive feedback from their Tutors on the methodology and application needed to fully answer the question. Further to this, students will now be provided with weekly or bi-weekly additional questions, which are perhaps more challenging, applied and/or discursive. Rather than working through them in class and waiting for feedback from the Class Tutor, the answers will be discussed and answered via the online Forum.

Once the questions have been made available, it will be down to students to begin working through the problems or gathering their thoughts on the discussion questions. Students will then be encouraged to post something online. It might be a simple comment relating to the first step they took to solve the problem, or perhaps it might include a link to a useful research paper. Alternatively, they may enter a paragraph on their thoughts about the topic, which another student might either agree or disagree with and hence they will be encouraged to post something in response. If students don't understand part of a post or a step taken in solving a problem, they should also use the Forum as a means of asking questions. We would encourage other students to make an effort to answer these

questions, as a means improving both their and the other student's understanding. If mistakes are made or inaccurate comments are posted, the Tutor will be there to correct these to ensure that the final summary of information is accurate.

We appreciate how daunting it can be to ask a question in class or admit that you do not understand something. However, in our experience, if one person does not understand a concept or a step in a solution, there will be many other people who have the same problem. We therefore hope that the Forum will allow everyone to post comments and questions and thus learn from each other, without the pressure of a large lecture theatre.

Appendix B4: Development Review Meetings

We are always interested in what our students think and the feedback they provide helps us to improve our systems and develop new initiatives, such as review meetings. Our students have told us that they want more one-to-one contact with members of staff, especially in their final year, when they are thinking about applications for jobs, undertaking further study and understanding how they can make improvements on their second year performance.

In response to this demand, the Department of Economics created Development Review Meetings, where every finalist was offered the opportunity to meet with a member of staff for up to 30 minutes to discuss their progress so far, ask any questions they might have about their future plans and generally discuss and receive feedback on their personal and academic development. These Development review meetings will take place in the 2013/14 academic year, during the first five weeks of term 1 (October – November). Furthermore, to ensure that all students benefit from such an invaluable opportunity, these Development Review Meetings will form a compulsory part of the final year for our students.