

Amendments to University Policies and Regulations for 2024/25

This paper summarises the amendments to the University's academic UPRs (University Policies and Regulations for the 2024/25 academic year, available at: <https://www.herts.ac.uk/about-us/our-leadership-strategy-and-plans/our-governance-and-leadership/university-policies-and-regulations-uprs/uprs/academic-assessment-and-awards>) that students need to be aware of. *Amendments are identified in red italics.*

1. Exceptional Circumstances

Students who sit or submit an assessment deem themselves to be able to take that assessment and cannot later claim to have suffered Exceptional Circumstances. This is referred to as the 'Fit-to-Sit' principle. The University has broadened the circumstances in which we are prepared to accept an exception to this principle, as it recognises that the personal circumstances of students are many and varied, and that decisions are taken based on the individual circumstances of the student. The following amendments to UPR AS14, section C3.8 and D5.1 have been approved:

C3.8 Exceptional Circumstances

C3.8.5 However, the following two circumstances are considered to be exceptions to C3.8.4, above (*i.e. the 'Fit-to-Sit' principle*):

- i where a student suddenly becomes unwell during an examination or in-class test and elects to leave without completing the assessment.

Where the examination or test is invigilated during the assessment, before leaving the student must notify the Invigilator or Proctor of the Exceptional Circumstances which have necessitated their leaving the examination or test.

Where the examination or test is un-invigilated (or invigilated/reviewed as a post assessment activity), the student must submit a request based on exception i via their Student Portal by midnight on the calendar day after the on-line assessment. By submitting a request based on exception *i*, a student renders their original attempt null and void.

- ii *where, at the time of sitting or submitting the assessment concerned, the student was suffering from serious ill health or other circumstances which impaired their ability to make a rational judgement to take the assessment. This view must have the written support of a relevant professional who must have been consulted close to the assessment submission date.*

Evidence from a relevant professional must be provided on the Fit to Sit Exemption Form and could be a statement from the student's doctor, care provider, a domestic violence service, the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme, or from sources of support within the University such as mental health adviser, disability adviser, safeguarding officer, or counsellor.

Requests based on exception *ii* must be made by a student via their Student Portal using the submit request function within fifteen (15) working days of the assessment date.

Late submissions will not be accepted unless explicitly supported by the relevant professional to the effect that they consider that it was not reasonable to expect the student to submit their request within fifteen (15) working days of the assessment date.

Late submissions after the student's results have been issued must be made via Stage 1 – 3 of the process set out in UPR AS 12 Appendix 1 (Early Resolution and Appeals Process.)

D5.1 Deferred assessments

D5.1.1 The Exceptional Circumstances team may recommend that a student who has attempted one or more assessments, because of proven Exceptional Circumstances, may be permitted to undertake deferred assessments in the following circumstances:

- i *where, at the time of sitting or submitting the assessment concerned, the student was suffering from serious ill health or other circumstances which impaired their ability to make a rational judgement to take the assessment. This view must have the written support of a relevant professional who must have been consulted close to the assessment submission date.*

Evidence from a relevant professional must be provided on the Fit to Sit Exemption Form and could be a statement from the student's doctor, care provider, a domestic violence service, the Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme, or from sources of support within the University such as mental health adviser, disability adviser, safeguarding officer, or counsellor.

- ii the student became unwell during the examination or in-class test and has appropriate evidence of Exceptional Circumstances to support such request (see section C3.8.4).

The Module Board or Short Course Board will normally follow the recommendation of the Exceptional Circumstances team.

D5.1.2 Where a student submits a claim that, *at the time of sitting or submitting the assessment concerned, the student was suffering from serious ill health or other circumstances which impaired their ability to make a rational judgement about their ability to take the assessment* and this claim is *accepted*, the original mark will be null and void. If the student's claim *is rejected*, the original mark will stand.

2. Referral opportunities for students with grades below 20

Until now, the University has not allowed a student to undertake a referral if they achieve a first-sit grade of below 20. This requirement is no longer relevant and unnecessarily punitive, and so the following amendments to UPR AS14, section D5.2.2 and D5.2.3 have been approved:

D5.2.2 Referral in undergraduate programmes

- i Module Boards and Short Course Boards *will normally* allow a student the opportunity to be referred (indicated by the award of a FREFE/FREFC/FREFB status code) in an examination and/or coursework assessment. It is the responsibility of the student to choose which referral opportunities to accept, with the benefit of advice and counsel from the programme team and in accordance with University and programme regulations.

D5.2.3 Referral in postgraduate programmes

- i Module Boards and Short Course Boards *will normally* allow a student the opportunity to be referred (indicated by the award of a FREFE/FREFC/FREFB status code) in examination and/or coursework assessment. It is the responsibility of the student to choose which referral opportunities to accept, with the benefit of advice and counsel from the programme team and in accordance with University and programme regulations. Where a student has more than **60** credits of referral the Programme Board will not allow further study other than that relevant to the referrals.

3. Fake referencing

The definition of fake referencing has been revised, to take account of the fact that references to a 'real source' which contains no such article or words is strictly not fake referencing and may occur due to poor academic writing skills without any intent to mislead/cheat. The following amendment to UPR AS14, Appendix III, section 2.9 (Academic Misconduct) has therefore been approved:

2.9 Fake referencing

Fake referencing includes supplying *fabricated* citations. This offence includes AI generated fake references, whether or not you were aware that the references were fake.

4. Students who are debtors to the University

The University has clarified its response to students who are debtors. This includes the withdrawal of access to StudyNet and Canvas, which prevents students from accessing study materials and submitting all assignments. The following amendment has therefore been approved to UPR AS12, section 10.1.7:

10.1.7 Withholding of results

- i The University reserves the right to withhold the formal notification of the examination or assessment results from any student who owes money to the University in the form of Academic Student Debt, as defined in Appendix I, UPR SA13⁵/Appendix I, UPR SA15⁶, *until such time as the moneys owed have* been paid.
- ~~ii — *Students in these circumstances will, nevertheless, be notified of any examination or coursework referrals/deferrals and will be permitted to submit for such examinations or assessments. However, the University reserves the right to withhold the formal notification of the results of any referred examinations or assessments until such time as the moneys owed have been paid.*~~

Further, the following amendment has also been approved to UPR AS12, Appendix I, section 1.3 (regulations for students):

1.3 Students who are debtors of the University

Students who are debtors of the University *may be blocked from accessing IT systems. During this block students will not be entitled to undertake or submit their assessments. Students may be offered a deferral opportunity in these assessments once debts have been resolved.*

5. Eligibility to attend graduation ceremonies

The Exams and Awards Office have updated the student requirements for deferring their award ceremony. The following amendment has therefore been approved to UPR AS12, section 12.1.5:

12.1.5 Eligibility to attend graduation ceremonies

- iv If a graduate or diplomate is unable to attend the ceremony to which they had been invited, they may defer this invitation once, to the ceremony period *advised by the Exams and Awards Office*. In order to defer their invite, the graduate or diplomate *must inform the Exams and Awards Team before the advised deadline, available on the Graduate Ceremonies website and notified in the invitation e-mail. If the graduate or diplomate has not, for any reason, requested a deferral before the advised deadline, and received confirmation of the deferral, they will not be eligible to attend any future ceremony.* Deferral requests are considered at the discretion of

the Associate Director (Academic Services), subject to availability and in meeting the eligibility criteria listed in 12.1.7.

- v It should be noted that attendance at ceremonies for the presentation of degrees and diplomas is solely by invitation of the University. An individual who is in debt to the University and where such sum has not been paid *eight (8)* working days prior to the registration deadline (see Appendix I, UPR SA13⁵/Appendix I, UPR SA15⁶), is not eligible to *attend* any such ceremony.

6. Revised arrangements for student appeals (early resolution, appeal to the Dean)

There has been an increase in the number of appeals in recent years. This inevitably results in delays to decision making, causing stress to the student and a poor student experience. The bulk of appeals occur after the referred/deferred period and the delay in reaching a decision often has knock on effects for students in terms of graduation, progression and visas. The new Early Resolution process seeks to improve this, by:

- i helping the student articulate and set out clearly the facts upon which they believe an examination board decision should be reviewed; and
- ii provide holistic advice and support and to direct the student's query to the appropriate decision maker for timely consideration.

The following amendments have been approved to UPR AS12, Appendix I, sections 5.5 and 5.6 (regulations for students):

5 Requests for the review of assessment decisions – undergraduate and taught postgraduate students (appeals procedure)

5.5 Stage 1 – Early Resolution

5.5.1 Early Resolution is a stage designed to give help and support to a student with concerns about their academic results to:

- i articulate their issue(s) more clearly;*
- ii understand their results in the context of the UPRs and any programme specific regulations and the next steps;*
- iii receive clarification or resolution of their issue(s) by assisting the student in liaising with the relevant programme team / Chair of exam board;*
- iv understand whether an exception to the 'fit to sit' principle may apply and, if so, to advise on the process to be followed;*
- v complete the Stage 2 appeals form, where appropriate, to their best advantage.*

5.5.2 A student who wishes to pursue a request to review an Examination Board decision (an appeal) within the limits of the permitted grounds set out in section 5.4 must follow the Early Resolution procedure set out in 5.5.3 below.

5.5.3 The student must complete an Early Resolution Request Form in the case of:

- i a request to review an assessment decision, within ten (10) working days of the publication date for results by Short Course/Module Boards of Examiners; or*
- ii a review of a continuation, termination or award decision, within ten (10) working days of the notification of the recommendation of the Programme Board of Examiners.*

5.5.4 The student must be given a response to their request within five (5) working days of receipt of the Early Resolution Form. Within 15 working days from the date on which the student submitted the Early Resolution Request Form, notification of completion of Stage 1 – Early Resolution must be provided to the student whether or not a resolution has been found.

5.6 **Stage 2 – an appeal to the Dean of School**

- 5.6.1 All requests for a formal review of a decision of a Board of Examiners under the provisions of the regulations in this section (5.6) must be made, in writing, solely by means of the current version of the pro forma found in the following link:

<https://ask.herts.ac.uk/academic-appeals-requests-for-the-review-of-assessment-decisions>

Requests for formal reviews (appeals) can only be made after completion of Stage 1 - Early Resolution and when a resolution cannot be found.

- 5.6.2 Students wishing to request a formal review *by the Dean of School* must do so using the procedures set out in this section (5.6). Such request must be submitted *within ten (10) working days of the completion of Stage 1- Early Resolution or, where applicable, within ten (10) working days of the receipt of a Fit to Sit decision from the Exceptional Circumstances Team following a late submission after the student has received their results (see AS14 C.3.8.5) or where additional evidence has been provided following an earlier decision of the Exceptional Circumstances Team (AS12 5.4.1f);*

Requests for a formal review (*an appeal*)-under the provisions of this section (5.6) not submitted using the required pro forma *within ten (10) working days of completion of Stage 1- Early Resolution or, where applicable, within ten (10) working days of the receipt of a Fit to Sit decision from the Exceptional Circumstances Team following a late submission after the student has received their results (see AS14 C.3.8.5) or where additional evidence has been provided following an earlier decision of the Exceptional Circumstances Team (AS12 5.4.1f)*, will not be considered.

- 5.6.3 Any student wishing to request a formal review (*an appeal*) *is advised to seek immediate guidance from* the Students' Union.

7. **Anticipating the needs of students with disabilities**

The University has reviewed the regulations on 'Students with Disabilities and Other Needs' to align it with its regulations on Inclusive Assessments. The following amendments have been approved to UPR AS12, Appendix II, sections 3, 4 and 5:

3 **Identifying and making reasonable adjustments to examination arrangements**

- 3.1 Students must contact their *Student Wellbeing* or their Adviser *within Student Wellbeing ('Adviser')* at the earliest opportunity and must do so no later than four (4) weeks prior to the period for Semester A and Semester B examinations identified in the University Calendar and three (3) weeks prior to the period so identified for referred/deferred examinations to agree reasonable adjustments *beyond those which are already incorporated into the design of the examination. Where it is reasonable and possible to agree adjustments outside of that period the University will do all that is reasonable and where adjustments are not possible will support students to submit exceptional circumstances or signpost to other services.*
- 3.2 Where an examination has been scheduled 'out of time' (that is, other than during the times referred to in section 3.1) students must contact their Adviser at the earliest opportunity and must do so no later than four (4) weeks prior to the 'out of time' examination.
- 3.3 **Requests from disabled *students where their needs are not met in the design of an assessment***

Even where an assessment has been designed in compliance with UPR TL05, a disabled student may feel that their needs are not met by the assessment design. Consequently,

they may request for a reasonable adjustment to be made. The Student Wellbeing Adviser will determine the adjustments to be made for disabled students. The Adviser will discuss requests with the student concerned and, by using the Study Needs Agreement, will agree with the student the arrangements which are to be put in place. The agreed Study Needs Agreement operates for the entire period during which the student is enrolled on the programme but, where appropriate, the Adviser may agree to revise the Study Needs Agreement.

3.4 Where the Adviser needs to request medical or other appropriate evidence, this will be used for the purpose of agreeing adjustments and will be shared *only for reasons which are necessary*. Evidence will normally take the form of a doctor's or consultant's note or, for students who disclose a Specific Learning Difficulty, a report following an assessment with an Educational Psychologist or other suitably qualified person with a recognised practicing certificate.

3.5 Where a student requests adjustments on grounds of a Specific Learning Difficulty but does not have a suitable assessment report they will be supported, *where appropriate, to obtain an assessment with an Educational Psychologist or specialist teacher through the University's diagnostic assessment service.*

3.6 Requests from students who are not disabled

Where the assessments are not accessible, additional requests for special arrangements for reasons other than disability, such as pregnancy, will be made to the appropriate Adviser. Where special arrangements are agreed by the Adviser, the adjustments agreed will apply only to the examination session for which the adjustments were requested. Further, separate, requests must be made in respect of any future examination session.

4 Administration of assessment/examination arrangements for students with disabilities or other additional needs

4.3 Costs

Costs that arise from complying with any duty to make reasonable adjustments must not be passed on to the student for whom the adjustment is being made. Any additional costs *that have already been* incurred either by the student or by a centre other than the student's School should be met from the budget of the student's School or other appropriate funding sources, for example, a student's Disabled Students' Allowance.

5 Time constrained in-course/module assessments

5.1 *Additional* reasonable adjustments will be agreed for disabled students by their Advisers and written into their Study Needs Agreements. Schools will be informed of these adjustments via the *automated system*.

8. Exceptional Circumstances at Partner Institutions

The University's assessment regulations identify the procedures for handling exceptional circumstances from University of Hertfordshire-based students. However, these procedures do not apply to students in partner institutions, and so additional guidance for these students has been developed. The following addition has been approved to UPR AS13, Appendix I (*student regulations for students based at partner institutions*), section 3:

3 Exceptional Circumstances

3.1 *Exceptional Circumstances are significant unforeseen circumstances beyond a student's control that would have affected their ability to perform to their full potential if they were to sit or submit an assessment at the appointed time.*

- 3.2 *Request(s) for Exceptional Circumstances must be submitted by the student at the earliest possible time after the applicable assessment deadline and within fifteen (15) working days of the assessment deadline, and at least five (5) working days before the applicable Board of Examiners' meeting. Students should refer to their institution's local information and guidance about how to submit a request.*
- 3.3 *Students who sit or submit an assessment deem themselves to be sufficiently able to take the assessment and cannot later claim to have suffered Exceptional Circumstances.*
- 3.4 *However, the following two circumstances are considered to be exceptions to 3.3, above:*
- i where a student suddenly becomes unwell during an examination or in-class test and elects to leave without completing the assessment. Where the assessment is invigilated, before leaving the examination room, the student must notify the Invigilator or Proctor of the Exceptional Circumstances which have necessitated their leaving the examination or test.*
- For un-invigilated on-line assessments based on exception i, the student must submit a request by midnight on the calendar day after the on-line assessment. By submitting a request based on exception ii, a student renders their original attempt null and void.*
- or*
- ii where, at the time of sitting or submitting the assessment concerned, the student was not capable of understanding that their performance was likely to be affected seriously by ill health and/or its treatment and this view has the written support from a psychiatrist or mental health practitioner who has been treating the student over a period of time. A GP may also give support if they are aware of (a) treatment or referrals to such specialists (b) an incident close to the assessment date that may have temporarily affected the student's capacity to take decisions.*
- Requests based on exception ii must be made by a student within fifteen (15) working days of the assessment date.*
- 3.5 *A student's Exceptional Circumstances request must include full details and written evidence from independent third parties. Students can be assured that all statements of Exceptional Circumstances will be treated as confidential. If the student is concerned about the personal nature of the information or they find it difficult to obtain evidence, they should consult their institution's local information and guidance about who to contact for support.*
- 3.6 *Partner organisations are responsible for informing the University of the outcome of Exceptional Circumstances considerations at least three (3) days before the relevant Module Board.*
- 3.7 *The acceptance of Exceptional Circumstances will not necessarily cause the Module Board to come to a different decision.*