

Guidance on Alternative Assessment for Study Abroad, Exchange and Erasmus students

This guidance follows from the [‘Policy on Alternative Assessments’](#) originally agreed at Senate on 17 October 2007 and should be read in conjunction with the policy.

Background

The University encourages a variety of exchange, fee-paying study abroad and collaborative programmes in which our students undertake part of their programme at an institution abroad (outgoing students) or students from an institution abroad undertake part of their programme here (incoming students). Because academic years and semesters differ in different countries, difficulties arise for such students when our assessment periods conflict with the attendance requirements at a partner institution to which we are sending students or from which we are receiving them.

In order to overcome these difficulties, the normal place, time or nature of assessment or re-assessment may need to be changed. Such changes yield an *alternative assessment*.

Guidance

Schools will devise their policy on alternative assessments in accordance with the guidance provided here. Schools are strongly encouraged to adopt a common policy for each of their discipline areas. Stakeholders, such as the International Programmes Office, should be kept informed of any changes to School Policy. School Policy must receive Faculty approval via the Associate Dean for Teaching and Learning.

1. Semester 1 – Assessment Arrangements

Outgoing students may have to commence their programme at a partner institution overseas in January before our Semester 1 examinations have taken place. Similarly, incoming students may need to return to their home institution to commence classes in early January. An alternative assessment may then be provided. This could take one of the following forms:

- (a) An alternative assessment may be conducted for both incoming and outgoing students before they leave for Christmas. This alternative can be provided exclusively for exchange/study abroad students, or for efficiency may be conducted for the whole cohort at the same time. Alternative forms of assessment must assess the same intended learning outcomes as the normal assessment and be of the same standard. They must be approved through School examination procedures.

Essays may be used as an alternative to assessment by formal examination, with a submission deadline either prior to the Christmas break, or, if remote submission is permitted, by the end of semester. Schools should consider how to ensure that essays assess the same breadth of learning as the normal examination. An alternative is to consider the setting of a ‘take-home’ examination paper instead (to be submitted within 24 hours for example). This is more directly comparable to the formal examination.

- (b) Outgoing students could take the examinations set for the summer re-sits as a first attempt after they return from abroad. However, Schools should consider whether

assessment in a different format at an earlier date would reduce the pressure on the students.

- (c) Where there is no alternative to a formal examination, outgoing students may, in exceptional circumstances, be allowed to take their Manchester examinations at the partner institution. Similarly, incoming students may be permitted, in exceptional circumstances, to sit the Manchester examinations back at their home institution. However, such an arrangement should only be adopted as exceptions. It should not form the standard practice of a School, as it places considerable demand on the goodwill of the partner institution (requiring room bookings, invigilation and couriering of exam scripts); incurs additional costs; and places an additional burden on outgoing students in particular when they are settling-in and trying to cope with jet-lag and culture shock. Additionally, many incoming fee-paying study abroad students come from institutions with whom we do not have any formal partnership, or via third party providers where there is no contact with a home institution to facilitate such an arrangement.

2. Semester 2 – Assessment Arrangements

Incoming study abroad/exchange students are not permitted to take any form of alternative assessment in semester 2, unless the assessment is offered as standard to all students on a course unit. Outgoing students are also unlikely to need to be at a partner institution before the end of the Manchester semester 2 examination period.

3. Re-sit Period – Assessment Arrangements

Outgoing students who fail a unit here and are required to undergo re-assessment may have to attend a partner university in the summer before our re-sit examination period. Where the period abroad does not form a compulsory part of the student's degree programme, the failure of an examination may require the student to withdraw from the exchange; every effort should be made to identify re-sit candidates as early as possible. Since exchanges cannot always be cancelled at short notice, or may form a compulsory part of the degree programme, Schools should consider whether to allow such students to undergo re-assessment in a different format before they start their exchange, or to take the re-sit examination after they finish, instead of requiring them to return from their exchange for the re-sit.

Incoming students who fail a unit here for which a re-sit examination or re-assessment is offered must be provided with the opportunity to complete the re-sit/re-assessment. Re-sit examinations must be undertaken in Manchester except in exceptional circumstances.

International Programmes Office – Principles on Alternative Assessment for Incoming Study Abroad/Exchange Students

The Principles on Alternative Assessment for incoming students is determined by the International Programmes Office, as the owning administrative department for these students.

Policy:

1. In order for an incoming study abroad/exchange student to be eligible for alternative assessment, all three of the criteria below must apply:
 - A student's programme of study at UoM ends in January;
AND
 - A student's home university's spring semester has a start date earlier than the official end date of UoM's semester 1;
AND
 - The subject area at UoM permits alternative assessment
2. It is not possible for any students whose study at UoM ends in June (either because they have studied at UoM for semester 2 only (January-June) or for a full academic year (September-June) to have any form of alternative assessment, unless this alternative is offered as standard to all students on a course unit.
3. Alternative Assessment is ONLY permitted where a clash of semester dates between UoM and a student's home university mean that a student would be late for the start of the January semester back at home. It is not possible for alternative assessment to be granted for any other reason (e.g. to begin internships, to start summer programmes, to attend family events etc.).
4. Students who need alternative assessment must complete an application form as part of their online application for the exchange/study abroad programme, and this form must state the start date of their home university's semester 2. It must be signed by an adviser at the home university. After the add/drop period, the International Programmes Office will send a list of students who are eligible for alternative assessment to relevant Schools. Some Schools may require a separate alternative assessment form to be completed, and students must comply with this requirement where this is the case. Schools are responsible for devising the alternative assessment, and for advising students directly of the format and relevant submission deadlines.
5. If a student is eligible to take alternative assessment, and needs to change their course units for any reason during the add/drop period, they are responsible for ensuring that they do not select any new course units in subject areas which do not permit alternative assessment (e.g. Economics, Engineering).

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