

Guidance for examiners: attending and marking exams

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Introduction

This document outlines the School's practice for what examiners are supposed to do during the exam and marking period, in terms of marking and mark-checking of end-of-year exams. (Project-type modules with no exam have their own procedures, and module-specific guidance and deadlines will be issued by the module organiser.)

When you need to be available

There are two main exam periods: 6–17 January and 5–29 May 2020. The exam timetable is available on the intranet. We are no longer required to attend our exams, but you are supposed to be available by phone. If this is impossible for you, you can ask a colleague to be available on your behalf. If you do this, it is your responsibility to make sure they are sufficiently familiar with the module and the exam paper that they can answer any queries.

You certainly need to be available to mark your exam. The SEB chair will issue deadlines for marking and checking, which roughly equate to marking twenty scripts per working day, and checking sixty scripts per working day. (Deadlines can be negotiated for exams very late in the exam period, or for those who are simultaneously marking a semester-A exam and teaching a semester-B module.) Please respect these deadlines, and don't be casual about marking just because you have an early exam: the exams team has a lot to do late in the exam period, so we need to get marks finalised for early exams as early as we can. *Let the SEB chair know if you are having trouble getting your work done and are likely to miss your deadline.*

The school has UG and PG exam board meetings in June. (For semester-A exams, students will receive *provisional* marks during semester B.) The UG meeting is provisionally scheduled for Thursday 18th June at 11am. The PG meeting (for all MSc programmes) is scheduled for Wednesday 24th June at 2pm. According to the Academic Regulations, all relevant examiners are supposed to attend exam board meetings, but if you have a good reason to be elsewhere then you can miss them, provided you brief a colleague on any issues relating to your modules.

Similar arrangements apply for the late-summer exams, with a shorter timescale. The exam period runs from 3rd to 14th August, and marking deadlines are set in the same way. The late-summer UG SEB meeting will be in late August.

Being available for your exam

You (or a well-briefed substitute) are supposed to be available by phone for the duration of your exam, in case of any queries from candidates about the paper. When planning how long you need to be available for, bear in mind that exams sometimes start slightly later than the official start time, and that some candidates are allowed 25% extra time. *Please let the maths office staff know which phone number should be used to call you.*

Marking

Getting hold of scripts

The office staff will collect your scripts, usually the working day after the exam, and let you know that you can pick them up from them. If you want to get the scripts sooner, it may be possible to go and fetch them yourself in the evening after the exam. Please liaise with the office staff about this.

The packages of scripts include invigilators' report forms (where invigilators will detail any unusual occurrences, such as candidates being taken ill). These forms are supposed to go to the Student Support Officer, since they're often needed by the Extenuating Circumstances Sub-Board, and rarely of any use to individual examiners, so the office staff will extract these from the script envelopes before giving you the scripts. If you find an invigilators' report form with your scripts, please give it to William Ng (even if there's nothing recorded on it).

Basic instructions for marking

Use a different colour from the candidate, red if possible. From here on, I'll assume you're using red. Make sure that you

make a red mark on every page the candidate has written on

even if what they've written is obviously worthless. (There's no need to write the word "seen" – just a red line will do.) This includes the left-hand "rough work" pages; even though it is rare to find material here that adds marks, we have to check, and we have to make it clear that we have checked.

Note that there are two styles of answer booklet in use in the College (and sometimes both styles are used in the same exam); some have the left-hand page designated for rough work, and some do not. Please check the rough work (and make a red mark on the page) to see whether there is anything that deserves credit; likewise for work that the candidate has crossed out. It is in our interest for the students to gain marks, so we should do whatever we can – short of compromising academic standards – to find marks.

Numerical marks

When recording your marking, you need to help the mark-checker to follow what you've done. You should put:

- a mark in the right-hand margin for each attempted part of each attempted question (even if it's an "obvious" zero);
- a circled total in the margin for each attempted question;
- nothing else in the margin.

The mark in the margin for each question and for each question-part should be written in the form " a/b ", where b is the number of marks available for that question part, and $0 \leq a \leq b$. (The " $/b$ " may be omitted in the case $a = 0$.)

Sometimes a part of a question may be worth a large number of marks which is broken down further in the mark scheme; if you want to write the broken-down marks to aid your adding-up or to make it clearer for the checker, then put them next to the candidate's writing, not in the margin.

Often a question (or even part of a question) will be fragmented in the script, as a candidate has temporarily given up, attempted a different question, and then returned to the original question. Putting notes like "continued later" or "continued from earlier" will be very helpful

to your checker. Be very careful to make sure you give credit (once only!) for each attempted part of the question, and that you count all the parts in the total. Often you will have given a mark for part of a question and then will later discover that the candidate has resumed their attempt at that part but achieved nothing further – writing “adds nothing” or “+0” is a good way to deal with this.

As you go along you may wish to make short notes to indicate how you’ve arrived at a particular mark – abbreviations such as “BOD” for “benefit of the doubt”, and “ECF” for “error carried forward” can be helpful here. You can occasionally deviate from the mark scheme if you have good reason, but give some indication that you’ve done this. “Error carried forward” (often also called “Follow-through” and abbreviated “FT”) means that a candidate has got one part of a question wrong, and has then used the wrong answer as input for the next part of the question. As long as they’ve done the right thing with their wrong input, you should give them the marks (unless the wrong input makes the question substantially easier).

The front page

For each attempted question you should copy the total for that question to the box on the front of the script; write this quite small so that there is space for corrections if necessary. Then add up the question totals to produce a final total – again, leave space so that this can be corrected. If the exam has a rubric in which candidates choose which questions to answer, then make sure your total takes this into account when they answer more than this – the best *m* questions attempted are supposed to count, except for the purposes of obtaining the pass mark. Put brackets round the marks on the front of the script for the questions that aren’t being counted.

Absence forms

For any candidate who was supposed to attend the exam but didn’t, there will be an absence form instead of a script, and this should be in the place in the pile where the script would have been (the scripts are supposed to be sorted by student number). You should record the absence on the marks spreadsheet (see below) and keep the absence form in the pile of scripts.

Occasionally you will have both a script and an absence form for a candidate. There are two common reasons this can happen.

1. The student was in the Special Arrangements (SEA) room, but was only granted Special Arrangements at a late stage, so still appears on the register for the main exam room. So you’ll get a script from the SEA room and an absence form from the main room. You can just ignore the absence form.
2. An invigilator made a mistake in filling in the absence form and has put the student number of an adjacent candidate. To check for errors like this, see whether there’s a nearby candidate (either on the register which should be included with the scripts, or in the spreadsheet) for whom you have neither a script nor an absence form, and also check the desk number that appears on the absence form against the register. If it’s clear that an error of this kind has been made and what the correct situation should be, then do the sensible thing.

If you have a script and an absence form but there’s no obvious explanation, then enter the mark from the script into the spreadsheet.

In any case, let the relevant SEB Chair know about discrepancies with absence forms.

Organising the scripts

Now sort the scripts and absence forms by student number; they should be pretty well ordered anyway, except that the SEA candidates will need to be merged into the ordering; these candidates are no longer special once they've taken the exam (though they will often have a cover sheet on the front of their script explaining how you should take account of dyslexia etc in marking).

Now organise the scripts for your checker. Make sure you include the exam paper (of which several copies are usually included with the scripts) and solutions, and any comments on the marking that you think might be helpful to your checker or the external examiner.

Pass everything on to your checker, and email the spreadsheet to the checker and the SEB chair (making it clear that the marks are unconfirmed). Once your checker has done their job, make any corrections that need to be made, and email the confirmed spreadsheet to the SEB chair. *Make sure the scripts and absence forms are ordered by student number*, and return them to the maths office.

Mark entry

Scope

The instructions below apply to all module codes MTH4***, MTH5***, MTH61**, MTH61**P. (For other modules, the SEB chair will give you instructions.)

Spreadsheets

Before your exam, you will be sent a simple spreadsheet, which will look something like the following.

student no	student name	mark	grade	
120258279/1	Arslan S			
130057369/2	Hamid N			
130331591/1	Fernandes AE			first-sit
130345314/1	Rai SK			resit
130352703/1	Ahmed S			resit
140004131/1	Curylo NE			
140071512/1	Hubov EDK			

The spreadsheet is in CSV format, so can be edited in any spreadsheet program or just in a text editor.

The sheet includes all candidates (including first-sits and resits), and for level-6 modules the candidates for MTH61** and MTH61**P are combined. So you have a list of all candidates for your exam, sorted by student number. For modules with two UG codes, you will receive two separate spreadsheets (but I will give you aggregated summary data after marking).

What to do

Enter the marks in the mark column. These should be in the range 0 to 100. You then need to enter a grade *if and only if* the mark is 0: enter a grade of NS if the candidate is a no-show (i.e. there is an absentee form instead of a script) or a grade of F if there is actually a script that scores 0.

The fifth column shows whether each candidate is a first-sit or resit candidate. This is for information only, and should not affect how you mark the script.

Sometimes candidate lists can change at quite a late stage, which means that the spreadsheet won't be a completely accurate list of candidates. If there are scripts or absentee forms for candidates not in the spreadsheet, or there are candidates in the spreadsheet for whom you don't have scripts or absentee forms, email the details to the relevant SEB chair.

Save the file. It's very helpful if you save it in the same format with the same filename, but I can cope if you change things. If you want to sort the spreadsheet (e.g. into decreasing order of marks) that's fine, but please don't modify or delete the header row.

If you want to add comments to the spreadsheet, you can put whatever you like in column 6 (or further to the right) without causing any harm.

Email the file to the SEB chair and to your checker, making it clear that these marks are unconfirmed. While your checker is checking, I will process the file and send you a simple statistical report. We (i.e. the exams team, in consultation with you) will then consider scaling.

Meanwhile, your checker should check the mark entry. Once this is done and the corrections are made, please either send a confirmed version of the mark spreadsheet or just email us to say that the earlier marks are now confirmed.

Mark-checking

Basic instructions

Use a different colour from both the candidate and the first marker; green is the usual colour for checkers to use. You should check that:

- there is a red mark on *every* page the candidate has written on (including the “rough work” pages);
- there is a mark in the margin for every attempted part of every attempted question, in the form “ a/b ”, where b is the number of marks available for that question-part, and $0 \leq a \leq b$. (The “/ b ” may be omitted in the case $a = 0$.)
- there is a correct total for each question, and this has been faithfully copied to the front of the script;
- the total for the script is correct;
- the total has been entered correctly into the spreadsheet.

Also check that ONS has been put in the spreadsheet for each absence form, and that every mark in the spreadsheet corresponds to a script or an absence form.

Recording your checking

On the front of the script, tick each question total and the grand total to indicate that you’ve checked them, or put corrected figures in green if there’s a mistake. For scripts with mistakes or where you’re not sure whether there’s a mistake, put a Post-It note on the front of the script with a brief comment about what the mistake is; for example, “Q2 total should be 13?”, or “unmarked page Q4”. Keep all these scripts separate from the rest; then the first marker can go through them quickly and address all your comments and corrections and merge them back into the main pile.