

Examination and Assessment Report: Academic Year 2011-12

May/June examinations (Saturday 12 May to Friday 22 June 2012)

Examination timetable:

- Evening sessions were needed throughout weeks 8, 9 and 10 of the summer term.
- The draft and final versions of the exam timetable were on the web earlier than the deadline. We received a few complaints, mainly due to 'bunching' i.e. exams scheduled on consecutive days.
- The scheduling of take away papers within the examination timetable proved difficult, and we would recommend timetabling these papers outside of the exam period.
- Students with special needs were taken into account when drawing up the timetable. Accommodating these reasonable adjustments put extra constraints on the timetable.
- Account was taken of students who were unable to take exams on Saturdays or other Holy Days for religious reasons.

Question papers:

- A few question papers were extremely late arriving in the Student Progress & Assessment Office. This put pressure on the staff of the Student Progress & Assessment Office who had to chase up the missing papers and prepare them for the exam hall.
- Question papers were photocopied by Print Unit staff in the Hastings Building.

Summer term submission week:

- Both submission days were very busy but there were no major problems.
- Moving large numbers of scripts between Sussex House and Mandela Hall was difficult, requiring assistance from porters plus other willing helpers. Sorting the scripts and arranging for collection by Schools/Departments delayed the start time for marking.

Exam rooms:

- Exams were held in the Sportcentre large hall, Mandela Hall and Mandela Balcony for the whole six week period. Exams were run from Monday to Saturday inclusive and there were morning and afternoon sessions on nearly every day, plus evening sessions on weekdays in weeks 8, 9 & 10.
- The 3½ hour final year History papers did not allow much time for invigilators to clear the exam hall and set up the afternoon session. Students with special needs were in exam rooms for more than four hours when taking these examinations.

Accommodating students with special needs:

- As well as four rooms on the ground floor of the Arundel Building, we were allocated further rooms on the second floor (although we cannot use these on Saturdays or evenings), six rooms in the Fulton Building and one room in the Pevensy building for the six week exam period. Bramber House cluster room was used for students taking exams using PCs. One-to-one PCs were set up in rooms Arundel 1C & 1D. In Fulton Building the sensor system caused the lights to turn off while candidates were sitting still taking their exams.

- An increased number of students needed a room to themselves with an invigilator, scribe or reader. We held interviews in February 2012 and appointed several new scribe/readers.
- The number of students needing reasonable adjustments, including alternative modes of assessment, extended deadlines, and deferred exams has also increased.

Student Advisers:

Saturday and Bank Holiday telephone cover was again offered by Student Advisers. Students have told us that they find it extremely helpful to get advice without waiting until the following Monday. Exams staff appreciate the help and support given by Student Advisers and hope that this will continue.

Summer vacation period

Staff:

- Staff were needed in the office throughout the vacation period to prepare for the August/September resit exams. They obtained pass/fail information, input sits and resits to the database and sent letters to students (within 3 weeks from the date of the June/July pass lists). They also drew up the exam timetable, chased up missing question papers, and made the necessary arrangements for candidates with special needs.
- There was very little time for staff to take a much needed break in July and August. Most staff only managed to take a maximum of five working days.

August/September examination period (Monday 27 August to Thursday 6 September 2012)

Resit modes of assessment:

- Schools were asked to produce a list of resit modes and essay titles. Essay titles were put on a web site in order that students could access these to begin their essays. This worked well, although some subjects were late in providing the Student Progress & Assessment Office with their essay titles.
- Some resit modes were incorrect showing as unseen examination (UEX) on the database when students needed to use PCs and take exams in rooms set up in Engineering. Some were laboratory sessions (Physics) which had to be accommodated within the two week resit period.

Exams and timetable:

- The number of expected of student taking examinations (including special needs) rose from 2696 in 2010 to 2989 in 2011. The number rose again in 2012 to 3474.

August/September submissions:

The essay titles were again posted on the web which worked extremely well although we had several phone calls asking where the titles could be found.

September question papers:

A number of papers were received late, too many were received a few days before the exam. All question papers were photocopied or printed by exam staff in Sussex House.

Students with special needs:

Small group rooms were provided for students with special needs in the Arundel Building. Provision was made for students needing a room to themselves.

September results:

There was very little time between the exam board meetings and start of the new academic year, in which to inform candidates of their results.

Summary

Overall the examination process ran smoothly due to the dedicated and experienced members of staff in the Student Progress and Assessment team. The well established invigilating team continued to contribute significantly to the successful running of examinations.

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7 December 2012