

A 'How To' Guide to Off Campus Examinations

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Background

- In 2006 the University removed a regulation which allowed overseas students an additional opportunity to defer resits.
- This was approved by Senate but minutes included concern about overseas students travelling long distances in order to take resit exams in the summer.
- This minute was the impetus to investigate the feasibility of offering off campus resit exams.
- A policy giving all students living outside of the UK the right to apply to take resit exams in their home country was approved and implemented in 2009.



Concerns

It's a good idea but....

- where will students sit?
- what about time difference?
- how can we maintain standards?
- does this mean any extra work for academics?
- Will there be a delay in receiving papers for marking?
- how many applications will we get?
- how will we cope with the workload?
- how much will it cost the university?
- should we charge students a fee and will this be acceptable?
- it's impossible! Our lab-based exams must be held here!



How it works at Newcastle

- Where?
British Council or equivalent (BC are not in USA, Australia, Baltic States)
- Time Difference?
Most scenarios can be resolved by:
Scheduling effected exams in the morning in UK as most locations are East.
When dealing with China or Japan, we flex start times as much as possible to fit BC office opening hours
Resit exam timetables are easily shuffled to accommodate e.g. we have schedule exams mid-day on-campus so the paper can take place both East and West of UK.
If essential, additional papers are requested from schools.
- Quality Assurance?
Each host signs agreement and full instructions are issued. British Council tend to be very reliable. Only one irregularity and one lost script reported so far.



How it works at Newcastle (cont)

- Extra work for academics?
No. Apart from the occasional additional paper. No complaints.
- Delays in receiving answer scripts
Some problems . We plan to request scanned copies in future.
- How many students applied?
2009 – 62 students applied to sit 159 exams;
2010 – 86 students applied to sit 180 exams
2011 – 168 students applied to sit 337 exams in 47 cities in 33 countries from Brunei to Baltimore, USA (example schedules follow)
- Will we cope with the extra workload?
Strictly resits only.
Slow start until established.
Online applications, mail merged schedules & forms – keep it simple
Other work is relatively light in August.



Examples of schedules

Standard schedule

| UK start time | Exam duration | Bahrain (+2 hrs) | Hanoi (+6) | Kuala Lumpur (+7) |
|---------------|---------------|------------------|------------|-------------------|
| 09:30 | 3 hours | 11:30 | 14:30 | 15:30 |

Flexed start times

| UK start time | Exam duration | Indiana, USA (-5) | Athens (+2) | New Delhi (+4.5) | China (+7) |
|---------------|---------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 12:30 | 3 hours | 08:00 (13:00) | 14:30 (12:00) | 16:00 (11:30) | 18:00 (11:00) |

Flexed start times work if students starting the exam before the standard time are not permitted to leave the exam room until all students sitting elsewhere are admitted*. In the case of flexed start times we request the exam host to retain candidates in the room for the entire duration of the exam.

*we do not allow admittance to an exam after 30 minutes has lapsed.

Costs and Charges August 2011

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| DHL cost | £875 |
| Charge to students | £50 per exam. |
| Income | £14000 (approx) |
| Balance | £13125 |

(invisible costs for additional administration / overtime)



Newcastle's procedure in brief

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Early July | Online off campus resit application opens – following publication of results. |
| Mid July | <p>Application closes.</p> <p>Contact hosts contacted to send guidelines, agreement form and student contact details.</p> <p>Resit exam timetable scheduled considering off campus applications and time differences.</p> |
| Late July | <p>Schools/students/hosts contacted to resolve any scheduling problems.</p> <p>Resit timetable published.</p> |
| Early Aug | <p>Off campus exam schedules drawn up by linking applications with data from the timetable via an Access query then emailed to hosts and students.</p> <p>Payment requested via online store.</p> |
| Mid August | <p>Stationary and equipment packs shipped to hosts by DHL.</p> <p>Set up folders of scanned exam papers.</p> <p>Payment reminders sent.</p> |
| Exam Period (Aug week 3-4) | Email papers 3 or 4 days before exams. |
| After Exams | Question books scanned and emailed. Hard copies returned with courier |



Any questions?

