



Senate

Subject: Assessment flexibility policy for elite athletes

Origin: Learning and Teaching Committee, 6 November 2008

The Committee considered, on the recommendation of Programme Quality Team, a proposed assessment flexibility policy for elite athletes.

It was resolved to recommend to Senate that the policy be approved, subject to the points highlighted by the PQ Team being incorporated.

It was noted that the approach was one which might be adopted in dealing with other groups of students who had grounds for seeking flexibility in assessment arrangements.



Learning and Teaching Committee

Subject: Assessment flexibility policy for elite athletes

Origin: Programme Quality Team

The Programme Quality Team at its meeting on 20 October 2008 considered a draft policy [*attached, without the pro forma that were included for PQ Team*]. The policy was intended to introduce greater consistency and equity into the treatment of student athletes. It recognised and would preserve the integrity of Loughborough degrees. It would require students to be proactive in the management of their commitments and responsibilities, both sporting and academic. It had been discussed with the Academic Registry which welcomed the introduction of a formal policy.

The definition of the performance standard set out in section 4.1 and the associated footnote was noted. It was noted that Wednesday afternoon examinations in Semester 1 caused problems for some Loughborough students participating in BUCS team competitions, but it was accepted that it would swamp the system to include BUCS in the performance standard.

It was agreed that the policy should not normally be used repeatedly for the same student athlete. The stretched degree would be the more appropriate option for students who were likely to need to avail themselves of it on several occasions.

It was emphasised that for examinations, the preferred option was that students defer their first attempt to the SAP. It was considered important that it was made clear to students choosing this course of action that if they subsequently failed the examination in the SAP, there would be no opportunity to retake the examination before the next academic year. This caution should be added to the policy and the application form.

In the case of coursework, students would normally be expected to manage their time in order to complete their assignments within the deadlines. The exceptions would be where an assignment was set with a very short deadline (eg submission within a week), or the assignment could not be completed before certain resources or information had been provided and this also resulted in it having to be carried out on a short timescale, or where there was an in-class test involved. In these circumstances, flexibility in relation to deadlines or timing would be requested.

It was felt the Personal Tutor was not always the most appropriate person below the HOD to be asked to comment on the application, and suggested that this be changed to the HOD's nominee to provide flexibility.

Subject to the minor adjustments suggested above, it was resolved to recommend the policy to Learning and Teaching Committee for adoption with immediate effect.

It was recommended that the implementation of the policy, and in particular the consistency of departmental support for applications, be monitored through the collection and presentation of data on an annual basis.

ASSESSMENT FLEXIBILITY POLICY

1. Scope of the Policy

This document sets out the following:

- Responsibilities of students in regard to their studies (Section 3)
- The standard of the performer that SDC will support in seeking flexibility concerning formal assessment at the University (Section 4)
- Assessment flexibility options (Section 5)
- The additional flexibility offered for UCCE¹ cricket (Section 6)

This policy does cover situations where a student is studying for a module and is fully expecting to complete the required assessments within the University timescales but an event beyond his/her control (for example international team selection) prevents him/her taking the assessment alongside the rest of the student body.

This policy does NOT cover a situation whereby a student feels that due to sporting commitments he/she will not be able to adequately prepare for assessments. In such a case other alternatives such as a stretch degree or leave of absence should be discussed with the Personal Tutor. Assessment flexibility as detailed in this policy is not normally appropriate in these circumstances.

2. Background to the Policy

Preservation of the integrity of a Loughborough University degree is paramount. However, the University recognises that the demands placed upon student-athletes are increasing and are greater than ever before. It is also essential to maintain equitable treatment of all students including student-athletes.

3. Student Responsibility

The onus will always remain with the student-athlete to contact their department if missed assessment may be a possibility. The personal responsibilities of the student-athlete themselves underpin this policy and the student-athlete is under obligation to discuss the possibility of missed assessment with their personal tutor as soon as they are aware it could be a possibility.

The University acknowledges that the timescale for notification of selection is completely outside the student's control and may be on a relatively short timescale. The student should, however, contact his/her department as soon as they are aware that selection may be a possibility.

If the student-athlete wishes to be absent from an assessment for the preparation for an international training event, negotiation with the National Governing Body of Sport should ascertain whether a modified length of stay at the training camp would be possible.

¹ University Cricket Centre of Excellence

4. Definitions

4.1 The Performance Standard

- Student-athlete must be competing at a major international competition, or be involved in preparation immediately preceding an international competition. This is commensurate with the performance standard required for consideration for a stretched degree.²
- BUCS (British University & College Sport) competition is not usually considered to be of the level where flexibility should be considered. Please see Section 6 below in reference to the special case for cricket.

4.2 Assessments

- Assessment is defined by the University as academic work (essays, coursework assignments, examinations, etc.) for which marks are awarded. This Policy covers all types of assessment. Further information can be found at <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/admin/ar/student/exams/marking/>

5. Assessment Flexibility Options

The following sections set out the procedures for the various types of assessment.

5.1 Exam Flexibility Options

- If a student-athlete meets the above criteria and is due to be absent on the day of the exam itself the department is requested to consider offering the student flexibility.
- Requests for flexibility relating to the period immediately prior to an exam will not normally be supported by SDC; preparation for assessments should be a continuous process throughout the whole semester and as such other commitments immediately prior to an exam will not be seen as grounds to request flexibility.
- The final decision on the level of flexibility offered is left to departmental discretion in relation to the best interests of the student-athlete but the two options are outlined below:
 1. **Defer First Sitting of an exam to the SAP or next appropriate time.**
(Preferred option)
 2. **Undertake the exam in situ** where the student-athlete is competing. The student should be encouraged to think through all the implications of taking an examination in situ, for example an exam may take place at an unsociable hour to ensure synchronised timing with the Loughborough exam. This will have implications for both their academic and sporting performance, and the student should fully understand that participation in the sporting event is the student's own choice.

Further information on the Departmental Guidance for Off Campus Exams can be found at:

<https://internal.lboro.ac.uk/restricted/registry/staff/ar/student/forms/Overseas%20Exams/>

² Performance Standard required to apply for a stretched degree: The athlete should have a realistic opportunity of competing at senior international level in their sport within 18 months of commencing a stretch degree study mode, or be aiming for a specified major international event (e.g. World Student Games, European Championships, World Championships, Commonwealth Games or Olympics). Performers who fall just short of these criteria but who have other extenuating circumstances may also be considered for SDC support.

5.1.1 The Exam Flexibility Procedure

- AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY the student-athlete should discuss the possibility of missed examinations with his or her personal tutor. This could be prior to selection for the team or squad but where there is the possibility of selection.
- The student-athlete should obtain a supporting statement from their National Governing Body as to the nature of the competition/training camp, including when the student-athlete was informed of their selection/possible selection. (Proforma attached)
- Director of Individual Sport/Head Coach and Head of Performance Sport, Sports Development Centre, to support/not support the application for assessment flexibility
- Should the Head of Performance Sport feel that the applicant does not meet the Performance Standard (see Section 4) or has not acted in a responsible manner in terms of their organisation and communication of their selection (see Section 3) then the request for Academic Flexibility may be declined at this stage. The student may request to meet with the Head of Performance Sport to discuss their declined application.
- Academic Department (Personal Tutor & Head of Department) to support/not support the application, including an indication of the alternative examination arrangements
- Should the Academic Department feel that the applicant has not acted in a responsible manner in terms of their organisation and communication of selection (see Section 3) then the request for Academic Flexibility may be declined at this stage. The student may request to meet with the Head of Department to discuss their declined application.
- Return to Student Records with relevant approval so the student record can be updated.

5.2 Coursework Flexibility

5.2.1 Coursework Test Flexibility

- If the student-athlete meets the above eligibility criteria and is due to be absent on the day of the coursework test itself the department is requested to consider offering the student flexibility.
- The final decision on the level of flexibility is left to departmental discretion in relation to the best interests of the student-athlete.

5.2.2 Coursework Flexibility

- The majority of coursework assignments are provided to the students early in each semester. The student-athlete is expected to proactively manage their time effectively to allow them to engage in the work necessary to complete the coursework assignment prior to any absence from University.
- Requests for flexibility relating to the period immediately prior to a coursework assignment hand in date will not normally be supported by SDC; completion of coursework should be a continuous process throughout the whole semester and as such other commitments immediately prior to a coursework deadline will not be seen as grounds to request flexibility.

- In cases where the coursework assignment is provided to the student with a very short deadline (e.g. submission one week later) and the student-athlete meets the eligibility criteria outlined in Section 4, departmental flexibility in relation to hand in deadlines is requested.

5.2.3 Coursework Flexibility Procedure

- AT THE EARLIEST OPPORTUNITY the student-athlete should discuss the possibility of missed coursework assessments with his or her personal tutor. This could be prior to selection for the team or squad but where there is the possibility of selection.
- The student-athlete should obtain a supporting statement from their National Governing Body as to the nature of the competition/training camp, including when the student-athlete was informed of their selection/possible selection. (Proforma attached)
- Head of Performance Sport, Sports Development Centre, to support/not support the application for assessment flexibility.
- Academic Department (Personal Tutor & Head of Department) to support/not support the application, including an indication of the alternative assessment arrangements.
- A copy of the form to be kept by the Academic Department and a copy sent to SDC (note, for coursework flexibility it is not necessary to return the form to Student Records – however, doing so will ensure that it is filed on the student's electronic file).

6. The Special Case for UCCE Cricket

6.1 Rationale

Due to the timing of the competitive season for UCCE cricket fixtures, assessment flexibility is required so that students can compete for the University. The nature of the cricket season means that the students are highly unlikely to be available for examinations during the SAP, and so the students are permitted to take their exams off campus on the same date as the Semester Two (May/June) exams taking place on campus (hereinafter referred to as "scheduled campus exam").

Students who are part of the men's elite performance programme, together with members of the women's UCCE squad are included in this group.

6.2 Procedure for Cricket UCCE fixture exam clash

- The Cricket Performance Manager will provide the Exams Office with the fixtures list, names, student ID numbers, courses and modules affected as early as possible following the start of Semester Two.
- The Cricket Performance Manager will ensure all the cricketers affected fully understand the implications of amended examination timings, for example a three hour exam may have to begin at 6am to allow completion before the start of the match. The student should be encouraged to think through all the implications for both their academic and sporting performance, and understand that participation in the cricket is the student's own choice. The student should be made aware that amended exam timings alone will not normally be sufficient grounds for a claim for impaired performance at a later date.
- Ensuring the exam protocol is adhered to will be the responsibility of the Head of Cricket. The off-campus exam will be invigilated by the Head of Cricket, or if he/she is unavailable by another University employee who has been appropriately trained.
- Each off-campus exam will take place on the day of the scheduled campus exam and will take place at a time as close as possible to the start time of the campus scheduled exam. The timing of cricket fixtures will often dictate that the off-campus exam will have to start prior (e.g. at 6.00am with a 9.00am match) to the scheduled campus exam start time.
- If the off campus exam timing is different to the scheduled campus exam start time, the student will then be constantly chaperoned by the Head of Cricket until the scheduled campus exam start time has passed. This will include confiscation of mobile phones and ensuring absolutely no form of contact between the student and the rest of the Loughborough student body.
- The Cricket Performance Manager will ensure the examination paper is returned by hand to the relevant academic department.
- Further guidance can be found at <https://internal.lboro.ac.uk/restricted/registry/staff/ar/student/forms/Overseas%20Exams/#1>

7. Further Information

For an initial discussion on the level of competition the student-athlete would like to attend please contact:

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ASSESSMENT FLEXIBILITY PROCESS

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