



COVID mitigation for 2020-21 assessments

Introduction

It had been hoped that all the work that went into preparing for the 2020-21 academic year would make 'No Detriment' arrangements unnecessary for 2020-21 assessments. UCL departments adapted every part of the curriculum to prepare for education during the coronavirus pandemic. We designed our teaching and assessments to recognise that students are working remotely, or might not have access to normal facilities, or would not be able to sit in physical examination halls.

However, the pandemic worsened again, with new variants leading to much stricter lockdown measures. Students faced different challenges in 2020-21 compared to 2019-20: the pandemic had continued throughout the whole of the 2020-21 academic year, raising students' concerns that they would be unable to produce their best work. Therefore, working closely with the Students' Union, we revisited our COVID mitigation plans for 2020-21 assessments.

Supporting students before, during and after assessment

Principles

UCL recognises that students will not be able to obtain evidence for self-isolation, and that we risk placing undue pressure on the NHS and other health services if we require evidence for minor ailments or short illnesses. However, we also recognise that an open self-certification policy can encourage students to submit 'just-in-case claims', and can focus support away from those students who are vulnerable and most in need of help. For 2020-21, UCL will therefore permit self-certification, within the parameters outlined below.

1. We will support you all as individuals.

- Wherever possible we will remove or minimise barriers to learning and increase the support available to help you feel part of the UCL community, develop your knowledge and skills, and feel confident about taking assessments.
- We recognise that you are all affected by the pandemic, but in many different and complex ways depending on your background, circumstances and location, so we will attempt to ensure that our package of support covers the reality you face.

2. Assessment will be fair and equitable.

- Work will continue to be graded according to how it exhibits the critical thinking and creativity for which UCL graduates are renowned, taking account of the different types of programmes, subjects and levels of study across UCL.

- However, we will not ask you to demonstrate your ability in the context of subject matter or skills which you have not been taught, or using materials which you have not been able to access.
- And we will endeavour to ensure that you are not prevented from demonstrating the full extent of your academic ability as a result of your location or adverse personal circumstances.

3. We will protect the value of your degree.

- We will continue to provide as much of the content of your degree as we can without risking your health and safety and that of our staff, as determined by our own health experts, Government guidance and the law.
- We will take steps to ensure that results are broadly comparable to normal years, taking account of best practice across the UK.

Safety Net Stage 1: Helping you prepare and plan for your assessments

1. We will only assess you on what you have been taught

- Departments have adjusted all of your course content and assessments to ensure that they are adapted to online learning. We will keep this under continuous review to make sure that you aren't assessed on material that you haven't covered e.g., if you cannot access a specialist archive, collection or laboratory, the assessment will be adjusted.
- This might include changing exam questions, marking criteria, learning outcomes or marking rubrics. In some cases, the method of assessment itself might be changed e.g., an exam might be converted to coursework.
- Departments might also adjust coursework deadlines to give you more time to complete the work.
- Your department will let you know about any further changes to your individual assessments.

2. We will provide a wide range of support for you as an individual

Find out about the help available to you:

- All of our students have access to the full range of support services from [UCL Student Support and Wellbeing](#).

If you identify as having a disability, impairment, physical health or mental health condition, or as neurodivergent:

- UCL provides longer-term support via 'Reasonable Adjustments'. [You can find out more on the Support for Disabled Students website](#).

If you are a parent or carer:

- During the pandemic, the definition of Extenuating Circumstances has been expanded to include ongoing parenting/ home-schooling and caring responsibilities. Find out more in the [Enhanced Extenuating Circumstances procedure](#).

If you are a critical worker:

- During the pandemic, the definition of Extenuating Circumstances has been expanded to include ongoing employment as a critical worker, such as UCL students who work for the NHS. Find out more in the [Enhanced Extenuating Circumstances procedure](#).

If you are thinking of taking time out from your studies:

- If you feel you can no longer engage with your studies in the longer term, remember that you have the option to take a formal break from your studies through [interruption](#). It is important to think carefully about this and speak with your department **first** to decide the best option for you.

If you have to self-isolate:

- [If you have to self-isolate](#) we have many resources to support you, including health advice and practical recommendations.

Further information:

- [UCL's Coronavirus pages](#) include information and advice for our students on a wide range of topics related to Covid-19.

Safety Net Stage 2: Supporting you during your assessments

3. You can self-certify for Extenuating Circumstances on more occasions

- You can now self-certify for up on **five** separate occasions.
- If your programme includes teaching after Term 3 (e.g. Taught Postgraduate Masters students) you can also self-certify on a **sixth** separate occasion.
- Self-certification can be used to access an extension or deferral, or to waive the late submission penalties for up to 14 calendar days. The 14-day period covers any coursework or exams due within the two-week window. Normally, these periods must be 14 calendar days apart, although Faculty EC Panels can use their discretion to accept self-certified claims within a shorter interval if, for example, you have two self-isolation periods close together.
- You can also self-certify if you need to spread your assessments over two assessment periods in order to manage your overall workload, for example if you are trying to juggle work, parenting or caring responsibilities with your studies. In this case the 14-day limitation does not apply. Please note: Spreading your assessments could affect your ability to graduate or progress to the next year on time, so please think carefully before applying for this option. For more information, please refer to the [Enhanced EC Procedure](#).
- If you run out of self-certifications, you can still apply for Extenuating Circumstances but we will ask you to provide some evidence, e.g., from your doctor. However, if you can't provide evidence – for example because you are having to self-isolate - please get in touch with your Department for advice.
- There are also other types of help available through ECs, but we will ask you to provide some evidence. Read more about the support available in the [UCL Academic Manual](#).

4. You will have extra time in all exams

- Most online exams will be 24 hours (written exams are usually between one and three hours long). This extra time is designed to help you manage your assessment in a way that works for you, allowing for time-zone differences, examination adjustments, childcare, work commitments, internet connection difficulties or any other circumstances which might make it harder for you to study. You are not expected to work for more than a few hours within the 24-hour window.
- Some exams are shorter to reflect the academic requirements of the discipline e.g., students will have three hours to complete the exam within a 24-hour window. These exams will include an additional 1-hour upload window at the end in case you experience any problems (so if your exam is scheduled for three hours, you will have four hours in which to submit).
- Even with this extra time we understand that you might experience technical issues in an exam. If you are not able to submit within the upload window, you can apply to defer the exam to the Late Summer using the Exam Query Form – you do not need to put in a claim for Extenuating Circumstances. We will ask you to provide some screenshots/ photos etc. so that we can understand the problem.
- Some departments are running ‘take home papers’ where you will be given a longer window such as 48 hours or 72 hours to complete the assessment. These are managed by departments and fall under the regulations for coursework i.e., the normal Extenuating Circumstances and Late Submission rules apply.

5. If you are a non-finalist, we will help you to progress through your programme

- If you are on a programme with formal progression requirements, such as a Bachelors, MSci/MEng, and some two-year PGT Masters programmes, we will provide a safety net to help you progress to next year.

If you fail up to 30 Taught credits you may be eligible for condonement

- [‘Condonement’](#) means that you are allowed to fail a small number of assessments and still progress or graduate without resitting the assessment, if you meet certain conditions.
- Make sure you check your Student Handbook or Moodle to see if you are eligible e.g. some modules are not eligible for condonement and you will need to get a year average above a certain mark.

If you fail up to 30 credits you may be able to take your resits next year

- [‘Provisional Progression’](#) means that you can progress to the next year of your programme even if you have some outstanding credits, and complete your resits next year. Make sure you check with your department whether you are eligible e.g. you cannot trail failure if you have already used up [all of your attempts](#) and it is not available on some professionally-accredited programmes.
- You will still have to take the trailed modules next year and you will need to pass those modules in order to finish your degree.

If you fail up to 60 credits, you may be eligible for condonement and to take some resits next year

- During 2020-21, if you fail up to 60 credits you might be eligible for condonement in up to 30 taught credits and to trail up to 30 credits of resits into next year, if you meet all of the above criteria.

6. UCL will not charge resit fees

- Unlike many universities, UCL does not charge resit fees. We will continue to allow students a second in-year attempt without any additional costs. Make sure you check the regulations around resits for full details about second attempts e.g., some students may be required to repeat modules next year, and there are usually fees for repeat tuition.

Safety Net Stage 3: Ensuring fair classification

7. We will widen the classification borderline by 1.00% for 2020-21 finalists

Undergraduate finalists 2020-21:

- Each borderline will be widened by 1.00%
- If an individual student achieves a Final Weighted Mean which falls into the new borderline zone they will be raised automatically to the next class if 50% of their final year credits are in the higher class.

Graduate and Taught Postgraduate finalists 2020-21:

- Each borderline will be widened by 1.00%
- If an individual student achieves a Final Weighted Mean which falls into the new borderline zone they will be raised automatically to the next class if 50% of their credits are in the higher class.

MRes finalists 2020-21:

- Each borderline will be widened by 1.00%
- If an individual student achieves a Final Weighted Mean which falls into the new borderline zone they will be raised automatically to the next class if 50% of their taught credits AND the dissertation/ research project are in the higher class.

Example

The normal criteria for a first on a three-year Bachelors are:

Qualifies for First Class Honours (1):

- A Final Weighted Mark greater than or equal to 69.50%
or
- A Final Weighted Mark greater than or equal to 68.50%
and
- Module marks of at least 70.00% in at least 50% of the Final Year credits.

The second of these algorithms represents the current 'borderline' rules. This will change to:

Qualifies for First Class Honours (1):

- A Final Weighted Mark greater than or equal to 69.50%
or
- A Final Weighted Mark greater than or equal to 67.50%
and
- Module marks of at least 70.00% in at least 50% of the Final Year credits.

This is just one example. Further details for each level of study are available on the [revised borderline rules page](#). Different programmes use different rules to calculate the classification. You can find the standard regulations in the UCL Academic Manual:

- [10.1 Overarching Principles](#)
- [10.2 Calculating Classifications](#)
- [10.3 Pre-Honours Classification Scheme](#)
- [10.4 Honours Degree Classification Scheme](#)
- [10.5 Graduate Classification Scheme](#)
- [10.6 Taught Postgraduate Classification Scheme](#)
- [10.7 Research Masters \(MRes\) Classification Scheme](#)
- [10.8 Non-Modular Programmes](#)
- Undergraduate students who first enrolled on their programme at UCL in 2017-18 or earlier should refer to [Section 15: Classification for Undergraduate Students first enrolling in 2017-18 or earlier](#).

8. If you are on a specialist programme, we will work with your department to put together a bespoke package of support for you

- A number of UCL programmes have unique requirements, such as those in Fine Art, the MBBS, Initial Teacher Education, the Anna Freud Centre, the MBBS and LLM students first enrolling in 2017-18 or earlier. UCL is working with departments to ensure that a tailored support package is put together to support you, and information about your programme will be published soon.

9. If you were studying with us in 2019-20, you will be eligible for No Detriment for 2019-20 assessments

- If you are a continuing student, 2019-20's's No Detriment arrangements will be applied to any assessments which you took in the 2019-20 academic session.