Questions on Examination Arrangements

1. I am taking some courses which are not mentioned in any of the two lists in your email, how can I know whether they fall under one category or the other?
   a. Courses not included cannot award a grade or PASS on the basis of coursework alone. This means that if your grade for the course (i.e. the combined coursework and exam grades) is detrimental to your programme outcome for the year, the course will be discounted and will not count towards your programme outcome. If you have a failing grade you will be awarded credit for this discounted course. You can be awarded credit for failed courses up to a maximum of 60 credits.

2. Honours/MInf project questions:
   a. The guidance which you received from Professor Colm Harmon in late March told you that “Your final exams (or other forms of final, summative assessment) will impact on your grades on a non-detrimental basis.” Your project is a form of final, summative assessment so this means that your project will impact on your grades on a non-detrimental basis.
   b. This year, your projects and your dissertation write-up have been affected by the UCU strike and the circumstances surrounding the covid-19 disruption. There is no need to submit a Special Circumstances form for this. If your project was affected significantly more severely than other projects, you should submit a Special Circumstance form.
   c. For joint degrees, where the student has opted for a dissertation to be carried out in another School, the dissertation will be assessed following the procedure of the other School, the mark is then returned to the programme Board in Informatics and combined with grades on the other courses to arrive at a result for the programme. In this the dissertation is no different from any other course in a joint programme and is following the standard procedure for combined degrees.

3. In many of the emails we’ve received there has been discussion of uploading our completed exam scripts. I was wondering if the exam script must be handwritten as it would in an in-person exam?
   a. You are requested to upload PDFs these can be generated from photographs or other means (e.g. word processing software) so you will have a choice. The sample course should give you a chance to experiment and see what is possible directly.

4. Queries about courses not included in either of the two lists at the end of the email.
   a. In general, if a course is not on that list, then coursework is not seen as a reliable means of determining an overall mark for the course. This is usually because the coursework does not cover most of the learning outcomes for the course.
   b. Students have queried some specific courses omissions from the lists. These are: TTDS, COMN, I am checking on these and will update as soon as I can.

5. For those of us doing the two-year MSc, will the ‘year average’ you refer to be counted as the average of all marks thus far, or just those taken in the current year of study (for me, the second of my MSc)?
a. See 17 below – in your case we will use all of your courses so far.

6. What is the effect of not taking an examination in courses with 'Significant Coursework' eligible to be considered as a 'floor'? Will students be penalized in any way for not taking the examination in this case, or will the grade for the course simply become the coursework grade?
   a. The effect will be that the “floor” of the coursework grade will be the mark returned for the course. Students will not be penalized for not taking the examination (given the disruption to people’s lives at the moment there are many obstacles to taking an examination). Notice that the course could still be discounted, see 17 below.

7. Questions on the award of a PASS grade:
   a. Courses awarded a PASS grade are discounted from the average so why do we have a PASS grade at all?
      i. Suppose for a particular course you have a passing grade in the coursework, but you fail the exam and the overall grade is a fail. Then if the course is not on either of the lists at the end of the message then you will record a fail and the Board will discount the course and record credit awarded. If the course is on the list that allows the coursework to justify a PASS then the board would record a pass and there is no need to award credit. The board is limited to award at most 60 credits for failing courses.

8. Some semester 1 courses (Introductory Applied Machine Learning and Introduction to Vision and Robotics) are included in the list of courses with significant coursework that may be used to award a pass. Is this concerning resits?
   a. My apologies for any confusion here:
      i. There are multiple instances of IAML and this one is an instance for students in the Business School.
      ii. IVR is taught in first semester but examined in second semester so exam preparation has been affected by covid-19.

9. Interaction between 2hr +1hr exams and 48-hour exams:
   a. The final timetable has not yet been published and I am not clear how the interaction between the two styles of exam is being managed. I believe the re-timetabling has taken this into account. If you have a clash, please contact ITO as soon as possible.

10. How are our individual courses shown on our HEAR where help-not-hinder applied (e.g. you ignored it or took floor)
    a. If a grade is awarded that is shown as normal.
    b. If a PASS is awarded it will show as PASS
    c. If the course has been discounted without a grade or pass being awarded it will show “credits awarded”.

11. Timetabling. "All informatics examinations will be timed to take place 13h00-15h00 UTC". Learn says BST. It’s BST, right?
    a. Yes – my mistake – I have corrected it in the most recent version of the email.

12. Project. Does “help not hinder” apply to the Honours/MInf Project? (especially given we were told a month ago on Piazza that it does apply -
https://piazza.com/class/k5vevkuo8a6vr?cid=25 And the original deadline has already passed with us having no reason to believe it wouldn’t apply.

13. Project. “Project supervisors will provide an assessment of the impact of COVID on the completion of the project in their evaluation of the project dissertation. This report will be considered by the Board.” - what do supervisors even have to say when it comes to how we have been affected? We are not meant to submit special circumstances for COVID-related issues, so how can supervisors determine on their own how bad this situation is for us? Supervisors who themselves have been affected could have different views than those who haven’t.
   a. This is part of the process – supervisors generally have an expectation of what should happen in a project and can contribute to assessing impact. This will not be the only source of information used by the board.
   b. If your circumstances affecting your project are particularly severe you should submit a special circumstances form.

14. Exam. Do we have to use Word? Is it OK if we made our PDF using LaTeX?
   a. Any PDF is fine.

15. Exam. From the email about the ‘own work declaration’. Are we supposed to ‘cite’ sources like slides or textbook from now on?
   a. We have been requested to use this by the University. In a short exam we will not be expecting citations of course material but if you use an external resource extensively we would expect to see an acknowledgement.

16. Project / Joint Degree. What’s the plan with dissertation projects for joint degree students who chose to do their thesis with the other school? What happens to joint degree students’ classification who are doing their dissertation with a different school.
   a. See 2) c) above.

17. For example, business school has said they are applying help not hinder for dissertation and not including dissertation in the baseline calculation but informatics is doing it in a different way.
   a. The baseline is not mentioned in University guidance. Dissertations will be compensated for general covid disruption without the need for a Special Circumstances form and will be compensated further for any additional Special Circumstances (including particularly severe covid circumstances) reported on a Special Circumstances form. The board will then consider all the available marks for the year and will discount covid affected courses that are detrimental to your programme outcome for the year.

18. Will you include this mark in the baseline mark if the other school doesn’t - seems unfair? Business school will not be asking supervisors to create a report assessing impact of COVID
   a. See answer 2) c) above about joint degrees. Informatics boards will all operate in the same way so all students following a degree programme in Informatics will be treated in the same way.
19. **Calculations.** What’s happening regarding the number of credits you need to graduate? For example, if a course is entirely discounted because it detracts your year average, does it still count for credits? And are there any changes to the number of credits we need to pass/requirements to graduate with honours? What happens if we only have like 30 credits from last semester and no 3rd year grades due to exchanges.
   a. There will be no change in the number of credits you need to graduate. For discounted courses credit will be awarded. The case of an exchange student you cite is difficult since the board will have relatively little to go on. We will follow the process described in 17 above. Also see below in 27 and 28 for further discussion on limitations to credits awarded.
20. **Calculations.** If our year average is 70% and the coursework for a course is enough to be awarded a PASS, but we get, say, 60% in the exam, will it still be discounted from the year average. This is specifically about courses that can be awarded a PASS, not courses with a floor.
   a. Yes, courses awarded a PASS are discounted from inclusion in your programme outcome. Credits that are PASSed are not “credits awarded” since there is enough evidence for the board to award a PASS.
21. **Calculations.** So how exactly is the baseline calculated? Some students are taking 40 credits of full year courses, and so only have 20 confirmed credits.
   a. Note that “baseline” is not included in the University guidance. See 17 above.
22. **Calculations.** So if a course is not on either of the two lists, which means it is not enough to be awarded a PASS on a coursework basis, what does this mean? Do we miss credits in that case if we do poorly in the exam? Does the grade still get discounted as the other courses?
   a. The course would be discounted if it worsens your performance and either a PASS or credits would be awarded.
23. **Calculations.** Can they give a clear example of what happens to grades for the courses in each list? E.g. course A is 30% coursework and 70% exam, i have an 80 in the coursework, so what is my “floor”?
   a. Your floor is the coursework grade - in this case 80.
24. **Calculations.** For courses where the coursework is sufficient to allow the Board to award a PASS, what coursework grade is deemed to be sufficient for a PASS to be awarded? E.g. if you achieve 40% in the coursework, is that coursework grade enough for a PASS to be awarded?
   a. Yes.
25. Is there any difference between being awarded a PASS and getting the course excluded from the avg vs. getting a low mark in a course (a course not on any list) and getting it excluded?
   a. Yes, a PASSed course does not contribute to the number of “credits awarded” to you and there is a limit to the number that can be awarded in this way (see 27 below).
26. **Exam.** Is there any issue with not taking an exam if the course is deemed to have significant coursework. Is the cw mark our course grade in that scenario.
   a. Yes you are awarded the coursework mark.
27. **Graduating Requirements.** 'To graduate with a Bachelor's Honours degree, you must achieve an overall mark in fourth year of 40 or more at the first attempt, and pass at least 80 credits of courses at level 10 or 11, also at the first attempt.' - does this still stand or are adjustments being made (e.g. School of Physics changed 80 → 60 credits).
   a. Adjustments are being made. The limit to credits awarded is normally 40 credits. This has been increased to 60 credits, so the Physics adjustment is in line with this change. Informatics will follow this.

28. **Graduating Requirements.** - Follow up to the previous question, ‘...and pass at least 80 credits of courses at level 10 or 11, also at the first attempt.” Does that count all level 10 and 11 courses from years 3 and 4, or only year 4 courses?
   a. This will be reduced to 60 credits in the final year.

29. For the courses for which the coursework permits a PASS, does this mean that if you pass all coursework you pass the course, or is it case by case?
   a. If your overall coursework grade is a passing mark you can be awarded a PASS for the course.

30. What does discounting a course mean with regards to exchange and visiting students? For us specific classes with their associated grades come back, so the overall year average is unimportant.
   a. This is a difficult question and I am awaiting final guidance on this. You correctly observe that a programme board is irrelevant to you because your programme is in your home institution not in Edinburgh. We would advise you to please contact your home institution to find out about their Special Circumstance policy and practice, how they will process your marks from the University of Edinburgh and how they can help you in your specific situation.

31. How will courses be shown on our transcripts if they have been discounted from our year average? i.e someone with a year average of 75 might still want a course they get a 73 in to be shown on their transcript.
   a. We are encouraged to record numerical marks where possible so we will record the 73 but will discount the course from the calculation of the programme outcome.

32. For the coursework mark considered as a “floor”. If my coursework score does not reach the pass line, is the “floor” of this course a PASS or still the fail coursework score?
   a. Your “floor” is still a fail.

33. For the courses where there is not significant coursework, the Examination Board will discount all courses or only one of them from the calculation of your year average if its inclusion reduces my year average?
   a. The exam board can discount up to 60 credits of course with failing grades.

34. If a course has significant coursework, and is in the first list, but this coursework baseline is below my year average, which baseline would be used? To explain with an example: Say I have a 70% year grade average and take SAPM and receive 50% on the coursework then achieve 30% on the exam. Would my SAPM grade be given as 50% and kept, or would this course be ignored due to it being below the year average of 70%?
   a. The SAPM mark would be discounted under no-detriment. When such a course is discounted we would still record a numerical mark and in this case it
would be the better of the coursework mark and the overall grade for the course.
35. I am a bit concerned that the exam time is still treated as 2 hours. The examination room and my house is different. This is mostly due to the noise that I have no control that happens near my street, such as construction or people selling items using a loudspeaker. Thus, I will continuously lose focus. From what I observed, there is help for this type of situation from university, and pass/fail do not help me because my exam is 100%. This is assuming that the extra hour is just for uploading the answers.
   a. In the time allowed – we are limited in our choice of format and cannot extend the time since the University has decided on these two formats.
36. I wonder if no exam will have a 48 hour period because it was mentioned earlier that some exams may last for 48 hours.
   a. No Informatics exam is using the 48 hour pattern.
37. I have a question regarding 'Courses awarded a PASS will be discounted from the calculation of the average for the year'. If I did very poorly in the coursework and was unable to obtain a PASS with the coursework. However, when combined with the final exam, I can obtain a PASS but the course will still lower my average for the year. In this case, will the course be discounted from the calculation of the average for the year?
   a. Yes it will be discounted.
38. Regarding the list of courses "Where the Board can use coursework to award a PASS", what happens in the case where the coursework result is deemed a "fail"? Concretely, I'm referring to the scenario where:
   1) The coursework result is deemed a fail, AND
   2) The course's grade, after the exam is taken into account, would be detrimental to the year average
      Will the fail be somehow applied to the year average or will the course be completely discounted - or something entirely different?
   a. The course will be discounted.
39. Request for more info on the 'slightly modified marking scheme' - there is hope that this does not mean scaling the grades, which students would think unfair.
   a. The modification is an adjustment between the knowledge-based parts of the questions and those involving reasoning etc because the paper is no longer closed book. The attribution of marks to the parts of the questions has been updated to reduce the level of credit given to remembering something.
40. How are courses discounted through the no-detriment policy going to show up on the transcript?
   a. They could have a grade, PASS, FAIL, or Credit Awarded depending on how much information the board has to make its decision.
41. Can students opt to not sit an exam?
   a. Yes, then the transcript will just show the board’s decision which could be a grade, PASS, FAIL, or Credit Awarded.
42. [MSc] Is there a possibility to adjust the marking scheme to award pass/distinction for lower grades than normal?
   a. At the moment this is not envisaged (recall the MSc board awarding merit etc will not take place until October). The no-detriment measures are intended
to deal with the impact by adjusting at the course level and at the
programme level through discounting courses.

43. [MSc] Is a degree with distinction still awarded if a course was failed/exam not
taken under the no-detriment policy?
   a. Discounted courses will not play any role in decisions about awards.

44. Is there planning around crashing upload servers due to load? What would
   happen?
   a. We believe the servers will be robust and the hour to upload may spread the
      peak. If there is a failure, then this would be a special circumstance.