

Student Access to Examination Scripts

For consideration by Teaching Committee on Wednesday 11th September 2019.
Paul Jackson.

Background

Our current policy (see Appendices A & B below) allows students to view their marked exams at the ITO office.

Currently students are not allowed to see the sample solutions and marking scheme for all Honours-level exams and some non-Honours-level exams:

- The School policy on exam setting and marking for UG3, UG4, MSc and VUG exams from 2011 says:

The School agreed in January 2011 that it will no longer publish online the sample answers provided to examiners. Furthermore, that all previous such answers should be removed from the School website.

<https://www.inf.ed.ac.uk/student-services/teaching-organisation/for-teaching-staff/examination-setting/exam-setting-marking-policy.pdf>

- At the non-Honours level, the School policy for exam setting and marking from 2005 is:

They [Sample answers] are made available to students unless you wish them not to be: in which case, please inform the ITO of your preference.

<https://www.inf.ed.ac.uk/student-services/teaching-organisation/for-teaching-staff/examination-setting/Exam-Setting-Marking-Guidelines-NonHonours-2005-06.pdf>

This policy seems not completely up to date: starting in 2015/16, the ITO has stopped releasing sample solutions for the resit exams. I do not know whether or not the ITO has been allowing viewing of these sample solutions.

Earlier this year, several of my UG4 tutees complained to me about this lack of access to the sample solutions & marking schemes when viewing their exam scripts. In a number of cases they received partial or zero credit for a question part they thought they answered reasonably, but where the marker gave no indication of why. In a couple of these cases it became subsequently clear that the marker had misread the provided solution.

This seems though rather severe. It is one thing to not post sample solutions in order to allow exam setters greater freedom to reuse questions and so reduce the effort required to set exams. But I cant see the rationale for not even letting the students see the sample solutions during these review sessions.

Basic proposal

In cases when we do not generally make sample solutions available to students, I would like to propose that nevertheless we allow students access to the sample solutions during these script review sessions.

Examples of practices elsewhere

We might want to discuss at Teaching Committee more broadly revisiting our access policy. Here are a couple of alternatives.

School of Mathematics, University of Edinburgh

One of our student reps asked if we could be more like Maths. Key points are that

- only scripts for exams that have been failed can be viewed,
- students are emailed PDF scans of scripts.

Manchester Maths department

In addition to allowing viewing of marked scripts, they provide generic feedback on each exam that highlights

- common mistakes that were made by the students during last year's exams;
- where students were particularly losing marks; and
- identifies the questions that students did particularly well on.

Like us, they emphasise that they do not remark examination scripts, but do allow students to request that their scripts be checked to ensure that all parts have been marked and that the total marks have been calculated correctly.

A. Current policy on Student Access to Exam Scripts

Student Access to Examination Scripts

The following was approved by Teaching Committee at the start of 2007/08:

Access to examination papers is provided to students on request for the purpose of gaining feedback from the examination process. If the student detects a clear error in the examining of their script (e.g. marking omitted on part of an answer, an arithmetical error) then this will be corrected and the overall mark will be revised.

However, this process should not be seen as an opportunity to review the marking process. Nor should it be used to take issue with the exercise of the markers discretion in the award of marks. Therefore there is no need for discussion between the student and marker on the detailed allocation of marks. Any request from a student to discuss their marks must be declined.

Students who wish to view their completed examination scripts are therefore invited to contact the ITO with details of the script/s they wish to access. The ITO and the student will then agree on a suitable date for the student to be given access to his/her script/s, under the supervision of a member of the ITO staff. ITO are unable to give access to examination scripts until after the last BoE meeting has been completed, meaning students will normally have to wait until mid/late-June before being able to access scripts they submitted during the April/May examination diet.

Exam Script viewing Guidelines, updated 2017

1. Exam script viewing must be booked in advance with the ITO. Please bring your student card to the session.
2. Do not write on the scripts; paper and pencil are permitted for note taking.
3. Group discussions are not permitted at script viewing sessions.
4. For courses in Years 1 and 2, marking guides can be made available to students during the session, in addition to the examination paper. For courses in Years 3, 4, 5, PGT marking guides are not provided.
5. In the unlikely event that there is a numerical error in the marking, alert the ITO invigilator who will follow this up with the appropriate lecturer/marker to rectify the error.
6. Scripts must be returned at the end of the session.

From:

http://web.inf.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/atoms/files/updated_student_access_to_examination_scripts.pdf

B. Additional guidance from ITO staff on viewing exam scripts

Provided recently (e.g. February 2019) to students in emails about viewing.

Please note that the ITO does not provide solution papers.

Pencils and papers will be provided and you are welcome to make any notes you want to. Taking photographs of your exam script is NOT permitted.

Please note that the opportunity to view your papers is for feedback purposes only and it should not be used to take issue with the exercise of the markers discretion in the award of marks.

We recommend that students read the following webpages as a guide to viewing their exam scripts for further clarification:

<http://www.inf.ed.ac.uk/admin/committees/teaching/meetings/10-10-07/access.html>

The template for this email needs updating, as it points to outdated 2007 policy.