

Enhanced Academic Supports for Students – Semester 2, May 2020

Why are we putting in place enhanced student supports and adopting alternative assessments?

TU Dublin is very aware of the many challenges facing students in all facets of their lives as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of this pandemic is not affecting everyone in the same way and TU Dublin will endeavour to offer supports to individual students in a manner which best suits their current situation. Significant effort is being made in all areas of the University to identify specific student needs and to respond to them in a practical way. The University also has a duty of care to students to ensure that academic standards are maintained and that the quality of awards made at the end of the 2019/20 academic year have equal standing, both academically and in the eyes of the wider world, to awards made in any other year. This balanced approach, supporting current students with their personal challenges while ensuring the quality of their award, is in the very best interest of students and graduates and the wider community in which we operate.

How will this support students, and ensure the assessments are appropriate to the current situation?

To support individual students and ensure the assessments are appropriate to the current situation is the collective aim and ambition of the Students' Union and the University. This requires Examinations Boards **in all cases** to consider the totality of a student's results throughout the academic year and, if applicable, to consider extenuating circumstances that may have impacted on examination performance. This allows the University to take a compassionate approach to the circumstances in which students find themselves as a result of COVID-19. In addition, the University will introduce a policy in relation to granting of a deferral of an assessment for reasons directly or indirectly related to COVID19.

What format and approach will be taken by the Schools to design the alternative assessments?

In these extenuating circumstances arising from COVID19, each School in TU Dublin was required to consider appropriate alternative assessments that are fair and proportionate for every programme and module. These alternative assessments were facilitated through the introduction of modifications to the TU Dublin Quality Assurance Framework approved by Academic Council and ensure that the assessments devised support the students while maintaining the standard and integrity of every student's qualification. The TU Dublin Students' Union engaged with the University in relation to how these alternative assessments would be marked. A proposal was considered that no student would receive a grade or standing **less** than that which they had achieved at the end of Semester One.

While acknowledging the genuine concern for students that lay behind the proposal, the University felt that such a blanket guarantee would not address the individual needs of our students. The alternative approach that requires Examinations Boards **in all cases** to consider the totality of a student's results throughout the academic year coupled with enhanced extenuating circumstances and deferral policies is considered more appropriate.

Further details regarding **the format of assessments** and our approach are outlined **in the next section**.

Format of Alternative Assessments

1. The revised format for assessments may comprise online assessment or submission of a specified piece of coursework reflecting learning outcomes. Details regarding each assessment and submission deadlines for each module have been communicated directly to students using their TU Dublin email addresses and/or through Moodle/Brightspace.
2. Students are advised to check their [@MyTUDublin](#) email account and modules regularly. In advance of the time of each assessment, and to check that they have access to it. If they do not, they should contact their School by email as soon as possible.
3. In accordance with current regulations, TU Dublin may invite any student in an award year to undertake an oral examination on their coursework or required assessment. This is intended to support students in maximising their performance and to ensure that academic standards and academic integrity are maintained.

Declaration of Integrity

All students are required to abide by the University's General Assessment Regulations (or Marks and Standards). To confirm that they understand and agree, they will be required to sign a Declaration of Academic Integrity. The declaration has been embedded within the Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) Moodle and Brightspace.

Consequences of Examination Deferrals

- Progression for students to the next year of their programme, or graduation if in final year, will be based, as normal, on the successful completion of both Semester 1 and Semester 2 modules.
- A student failing a supplemental / repeat examination may not be able to progress in their studies, or to graduate if in their final year of study, until such time as they successfully complete those examinations.
- A second deferral of an examination will only be allowed under the most exceptional of circumstances.

Option to Defer (See Figure 1)

1. Given the current exceptional circumstances, TU Dublin has amended normal deferral policies. **'The default position of the University will be to consider all Deferral Requests for reasons directly or indirectly related to COVID-19 without the requirement for supporting documentation'.**

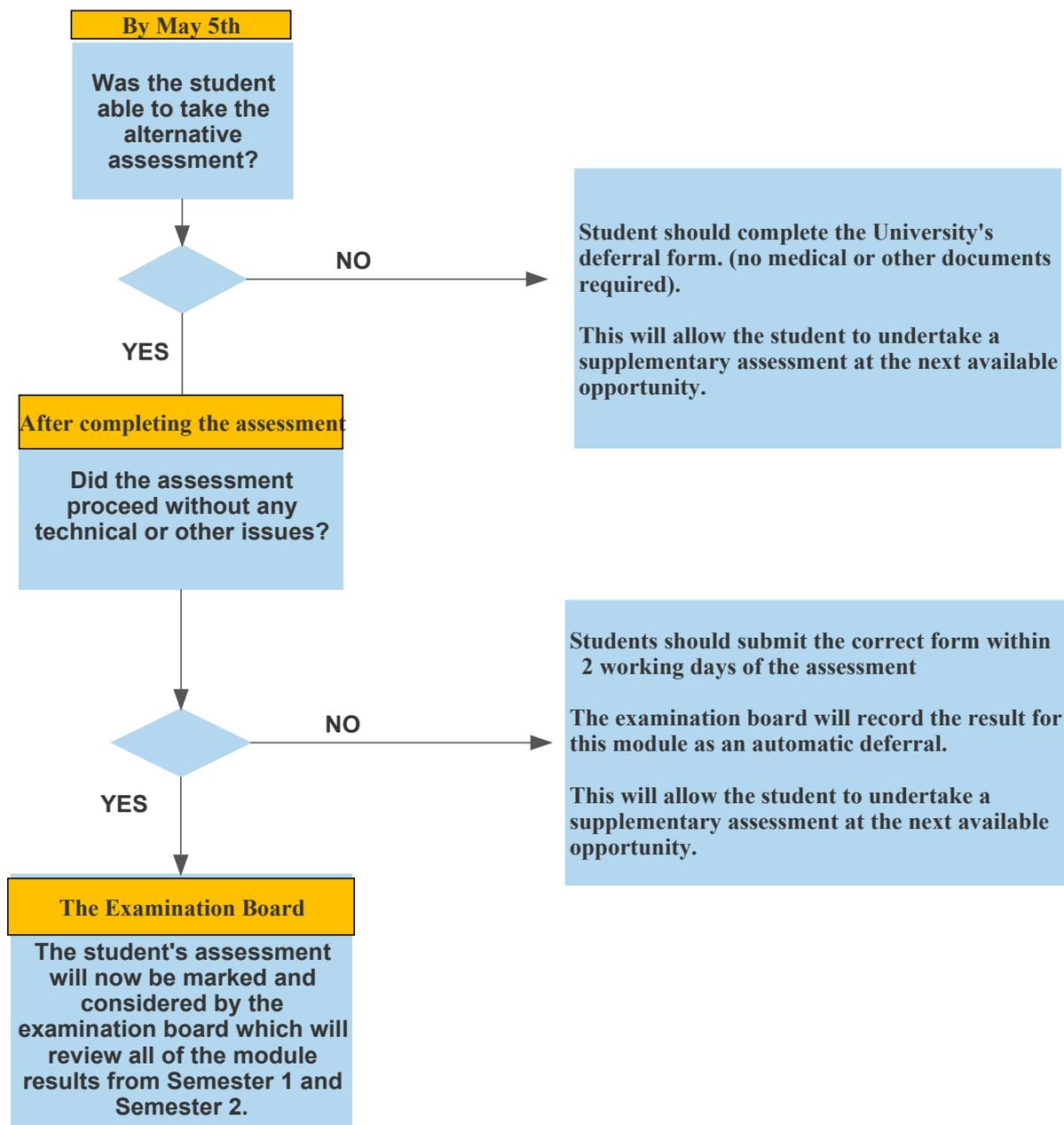
2. Students will be afforded two opportunities to defer* examinations/assessments in May 2020:
 - a. **Prior to examinations/assessments**, if a student feels they will be unable to complete any assessment, they can apply to defer the examination/assessment by completing the appropriate form and submitting it by email on or before **May 5th 2020**.
 - i. **City Campus:** submit completed form by email to your Head of School.
Forms are available [here](#);
 - ii. **Blanchardstown:** Please complete an online deferral form [here](#).
 - iii. **Tallaght:** submit completed forms by email to:
examinationdeferral.tallaght@tudublin.ie. Forms are available [here](#)

 - b. **Post examination**, a student who has undertaken a module examination / assessment but feels their performance was adversely affected by their current situation and wishes to bring this to the attention of the Examination Board, should complete and submit the relevant form **within 2 working days of the module assessment date**. In such cases, the examination board will record the result for this module as a deferral. This will allow the student to undertake a supplementary assessment, as a first attempt, at the next available opportunity.
 - i. **City:** complete and submit an online Form by email to the [relevant Examinations Office](#):
Form is available [here](#)
 - ii. **Blanchardstown:** Please complete an online deferral form [here](#).
 - iii. **Tallaght:** submit a completed Examination Deferral form by email to
examinationdeferral.tallaght@tudublin.ie. Forms are available [here](#)

- * **In the case of assessments that have already commenced, a student may seek to defer the assessment under 2(b) above and up to May 5th 2020.**
In the case of final assessments already completed, the student will be able to defer that assessment under 2(b) above if sought before May 5th 2020.

In all cases, students are strongly encouraged to seek advice from their Department, School, Lecturer before applying to defer any exam. It is imperative that the student understands the potential consequences of examination deferral.

Figure 1: Option to Defer Decision Tree



3. Students who have deferred an examination/assessment will be required to take those assessments at the next available opportunity, normally in August. Those deferred exams will be recorded as such in student transcripts. *Note, some examinations may not be available again until next year.*
4. Deferred May 2020 examinations intended as first sittings will be treated as first sittings when next taken. Students due to sit repeat examinations in May as 2nd attempts will continue to be considered as 2nd attempts.
5. If opting to defer examinations, students should be aware that **invigilated assessments may not be possible for Supplemental Assessments in August 2020**. August assessments are likely to follow the similar formats as those currently planned for May (this also applies for students needing to sit supplemental winter semester examinations).

Examination Boards

The examination board will consider a student's overall profile of grades, and take into consideration any extenuating circumstances (difficulties caused directly or indirectly by the current COVID19 crisis) which have had a disproportionately negative impact on a student's grades and may adjust the overall grade if they deem this to be justified. Existing compensation mechanisms will continue to be available.

Availability of Results

End of year results will be released as they become available during June. The normal processes for examination re-checks, re-marks and appeals will operate.

Supplemental Assessment in August

Supplemental assessment which normally takes place in August, is likely to comprise similar forms of online / remote assessment to those used in May 2020. Schools will notify exam candidates of the arrangements for individual modules. Registration for supplemental examinations will take place in July. Students must register for August exams **by Friday 31st July 2020**.

Supports for Students in Dealing with New Assessment Methods

Student Services in TU Dublin continue to be available and students are encouraged to engage with them if they require assistance or support. These include academic as well as personal and technical supports. The following have been forwarded to students:

- The **National Forum / USI** top tips to Students when online learning:
- <https://www.teachingandlearning.ie/wp-content/uploads/10-Points-to-Remember-when-Learning-Online.pdf>
- **Occupational Therapists in UCD, TCD and TU Dublin Disability Support Services** [OT video series](#) on Tips for 'Staying Engaged', 'Mental Health' and 'Managing your Environment and Designing your Routine'.
- **ICT Services** have made available a range of software and applications that students can access remotely and the IS Support Desk is available to respond to queries.