

Coursework submission dates are available in the Handbook, and all students were informed that the standard dates would apply for 2020-21 in a news [post](#) on 30<sup>th</sup> November:

*Please also note that the standard coursework and Preliminary Project Report submission dates will remain as stated in the Handbook.*

As coursework was published later than usual, we recognised that students would thus have reduced preparation time, and instructed examiners that this should be taken into consideration when marking. We also adjusted coursework where this approach was less viable. There were no new marking schemes – coursework instructions/mark breakdowns remained as originally published. Note: Level 6 coursework is posted after Levels 4 and 5, as the submission deadline is a month later.

We posted on 14<sup>th</sup> December to explain our [approach](#):

*Reducing the time available will mean a corresponding reduction in the level of work students will be able to produce, and examiners will expect this and adjust the marking accordingly. Think of it as less detailed ...*

We also offered [reassurance](#) on 20<sup>th</sup> December that coursework is assessed by two examiners, and that we would also compare cohort statistics:

*The courseworks are specified in exactly the same way as previously, and the reduced time available will be taken into account (and hence mitigated for all). ... two examiners assess the work independently, and we will also check for any unusual mark profiles, and present cohort results. The bottom line is that we want students to do well, and will do our best to help, for example on these discussion boards.*

We acknowledge that coursework is normally available earlier. However, students are initially working through their subject guides, and completing the additional reading and set exercises, as [posted](#) on 26<sup>th</sup> November:

*You'll have started working through the subject guides, and required reading, and should now review your study plan, to include time to complete your coursework.*

As noted, there was some variation in the release dates for specific modules across a level, but again, examiners were aware of the release dates, and took the reduced times into account when marking. Note that the last Level 5 coursework to be released (CO2209) was published later, as it was rewritten with a reduction in tasks, as the 'less detail' was not viable for the subject matter involved.

Our approach has provided flexibility in the marking, where the reduced preparation time is taken into account, or in adjustment of the coursework, as for CO2209 – students taking CO2209 CW1 were [informed](#) on 21<sup>st</sup> December that we were 'adjusting it to meet the reduced timescales'.

You comment that 'Level 5 second coursework assignments were published later than expected (although the delay was smaller).' These assignments were published shortly after the CW1 submission deadline, between 21<sup>st</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> January. Examiners sometimes adjust CW2 after a quick review of submissions for CW1, to check whether any topics require further reinforcement. CW2 was published in good time to allow time for completion.

Level 6 coursework 1 release was treated in the same way as Levels 4 and 5: we posted drafts for four courses on 23<sup>rd</sup> December, with the remainder posted on the 8<sup>th</sup> January, so students could make a start if they wished. Again, examiners were expecting less detail, proportionate to the reduction in time available, and would take this into account in their marking. (It's worth bearing in mind that some students are taking courses across Levels, so a consistent approach is helpful.)

You state that '*the unchanged deadlines have caused unprecedented stress on all students*' and highlight the assessments for the equivalent of a full-time study load at Level 6. Students may choose to be examined in fewer courses, and were given an additional month to decide on their entries, with a deadline of 1<sup>st</sup> March. The submissions for CW1, and subsequent examination entries indicate that students are generally on-track. Certainly the question of stress is very important, especially given the ongoing effects of the pandemic, and feedback from last year suggests that delay and uncertainty is a key factor in exacerbating stress. Keeping to the assessment deadlines with marking adjustments (plus reassurances) will enable students to complete their studies on schedule this year.

You note that the university has decided not to delay our coursework 1 deadline in order not to delay coursework 2 deadlines, exams and ultimately graduation, but say that this goal hasn't been achieved. The May exam schedule has been confirmed, and the University made an announcement (2<sup>nd</sup> March) [on assessment information](#). Keeping the standard dates for coursework and exams will allow students to progress and graduate according to the academic calendar; this is particularly important for those about to start their careers or continue their studies.

We recognise that this is a challenging time for everyone, and can report that feedback to date shows the approach is working, and that students are coping well. We encourage anyone who is experiencing stress to use the TalkCampus service.

Students have an open opportunity to express their opinions on the VLE. The Key Dates are published in the Handbook, and students were properly informed that these would be adhered to, with adjustments explained, and reassurances given.

We will continue to do our best to help students do well, and as previously noted, we are pleased to report that the feedback to date is that our approach regarding the coursework deadlines is working.

As you feel that the University has made no attempt to help you and has contributed to your stress, we would be happy to arrange an online meeting to discuss how our decisions have impacted your studies. Discussion board posts are certainly not ideal for discussing issues such as this.

We hope this response will reassure you that we have heard your voice. Please understand that other voices are equally convinced that the Key Dates should remain as published, given the approach and reassurances offered.

The Programme Team