Department of History

Statement of Assessment for Taught Postgraduate Programmes 2014-2015

The University’s Guide to Assessment, Standards, Marking and Feedback contains the University’s formal procedures relating to the conduct of assessment. It provides clear and detailed information on each aspect of student assessment and is a useful resource if you want to know more about how your work is assessed.

For further information, visit: www.york.ac.uk/about/departments/support-and-admin/registry-services/guide/

Assessment methods

You will encounter two types of assessment during your time at University: formative and summative.

- **Formative assessment** is there to help you develop. While it may not contribute to your degree award, it will help you learn more effectively – you will be provided with feedback on this type of assessment which will help you improve your performance.

- **Summative assessment** takes into account the extent of your success in meeting the assessment criteria and how well you have fulfilled the learning outcomes of a particular module or programme. This type of assessment will contribute to your final degree mark or towards progression decisions.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment in the History Department is of three principal kinds:

- Procedural coursework, usually in the form of a **procedural essay** of 1,500-2,000 words, completed during a module, for which you receive a mark and written feedback, and have the opportunity to discuss this with tutors during their student hours.

- Procedural coursework, usually in the form of a **seminar presentation** or report, that is not formally marked, but whose completion is part of a course requirement.

- Assessment of seminar performance (see Assessment format and submission of work). This forms part of the formative assessment for some modules, but is not counted towards your degree result.

Where work done as part of formative assessment generates a mark, this is the outcome of single marking by your module tutor. It is departmental policy that procedural essays are always given a mark.

Summative Assessment

You will complete two types of summative assessment.

- **Assessed essays** are essays that you write on a topic agreed with your module tutor. In some cases this is a topic of your own devising. In others this is one
chosen from a list set by the module tutor. The maximum length for assessed essay is 4,000 words with the expectation that you will write in the range of 3,500-4,000 words excluding notes and bibliography.

- **Dissertations** are independent, research-based pieces of work. It is on a topic of your choosing in consultation with staff members. The maximum length for a dissertation is 20,000 words with the expectation that you will write in the range of 15,000-20,000 words excluding notes and bibliography.

In addition, students on the MA in Medieval History will complete a third type of summative assessment.

- **Closed exams** are unseen papers that you sit in a designated examination room under invigilation without access to notes or reading. The rubric on each paper lays out the duration and number of questions that you need to answer. You must read the rubric with care before answering questions. Your answers to questions must be legible. Answers to questions are not expected to contain notes or bibliographies.

### Assessment format and submission of work

For details of current assessment arrangements for individual modules, see:

[www.york.ac.uk/history/student-intranet/postgraduates/taught-ma/ma-assessment/](http://www.york.ac.uk/history/student-intranet/postgraduates/taught-ma/ma-assessment/)

- For assessment and feedback deadlines, see: [www.york.ac.uk/history/student-intranet/postgraduates/taught-ma/ma-assessment/](http://www.york.ac.uk/history/student-intranet/postgraduates/taught-ma/ma-assessment/)
- Essays and dissertations must be word processed and fully referenced using footnotes and bibliographies. Your work must be double spaced with margins wide enough for markers to make comments in. It should also use a standard 12-point font such as Times New Roman, Calibri or Arial. The Department recommends that references are formatted in Chicago style. For detailed guidance on Chicago style, visit: [www.york.ac.uk/integrity/chicago.html](http://www.york.ac.uk/integrity/chicago.html).
- You must submit all assessed essays and dissertations to the History Office. Arrangements for submitting formative work are at the discretion of your module tutors or dissertation supervisor.

### Style Guide

For guidance on stylistic conventions in the Department, see your copy of *The Handbook for Taught Masters Degrees* or visit: [www.york.ac.uk/history/student-intranet/postgraduates](http://www.york.ac.uk/history/student-intranet/postgraduates)

### Penalties

Knowing how to manage your time, write succinctly and provide a complete and comprehensive piece of work to a strict deadline are skills you will develop at university.
In the interests of fairness, transparency and to be equitable we have strict rules around deadlines and the quality or quantity of work submitted and have clear penalties for any student these rules are not followed.

All work submitted late, without valid mitigating circumstances, will have ten percent of the available marks deducted for each day (or part of each day) that the work is late, up to a total of five days, including weekends and bank holidays, e.g. if work is awarded a mark of 30 out of 50, and the work is up to one day late, the final mark is 25.

After five days, the work is marked at zero. Note, however, that the penalty cannot result in a mark less than zero.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Submitted</th>
<th>Penalty</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>10% deducted from mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 days</td>
<td>20% deducted from mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 days</td>
<td>30% deducted from mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 days</td>
<td>40% deducted from mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 days</td>
<td>Work marked at zero</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Department does not apply a strict mathematical formula when dealing with work submitted for assessment (including Dissertations) that is felt to be under length, e.g. below 3,500 words in the case of essays where the rubric demands work to be 3,500-4,000 words. Such work, however, is very likely to be marked down for failure to meet the standards (e.g. in development of argument) required by the grade descriptors in order to meet a higher mark.

**Failure to submit**
If you, with no valid mitigating circumstances, fail to submit an assessment by the deadline after five days or fail to attend an examination, a mark of zero will be awarded. You may be given the opportunity for reassessment – see the subsection *Reassessment*.

**What happens if I fail a module?** However, if the examination or assessment missed is already a re-sit or re-assessment to redeem an initial failure, no further re-assessment opportunities will be available without proof of mitigating circumstances.

If you are struggling to meet deadlines, submit a piece of work or will miss an exam due to personal circumstances you will need to inform the University as soon as possible and apply for Mitigating Circumstances – See section on *Mitigating Circumstances*.

**Academic Misconduct**
The University is committed to developing high standards of academic practice among its staff and students, and to safeguarding the standards of its academic awards to individuals. The University regards any form of academic misconduct as an extremely serious matter. Academic misconduct offences are divided into two categories:
assessment and disciplinary.

**Assessment offences** are committed by a student(s) in work submitted for assessment for their own programme of study and for which the penalty or judgement can be applied to the assessed piece of work. The University recognises the existence of five assessment offences:

- Plagiarism
- Collusion between students taking the same assessment
- Cheating
- Commission and incorporation
- Fabrication

These are dealt with within departments and subject clusters through Standing Academic Misconduct Panels.

**Disciplinary offences** are offences committed by students, or staff, that are intended to gain an advantage in assessment (for themselves or for others) where the penalty cannot be normally attached to a specific piece of their own academic work. The University recognises the existence of six disciplinary offences:

- Soliciting
- Personation
- Deception
- Unethical research behaviour
- Academic misconduct involving staff members
- Academic misconduct alleged subsequent to the conferment of an award

These are dealt with by University disciplinary procedures or other existing mechanisms.

For more information on what constitutes academic misconduct, as well as how it is identified, investigated and dealt with, see the University's *Academic Misconduct Policy*: [www.york.ac.uk/about/departments/support-and-admin/registry-services/academic-misconduct/](http://www.york.ac.uk/about/departments/support-and-admin/registry-services/academic-misconduct/)

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**Formal Examination requirements**

For information on the University’s formal examination requirements, consult your University handbook or visit: [www.york.ac.uk/students/studying/assessment-and-examination/](http://www.york.ac.uk/students/studying/assessment-and-examination/)

Individual examination arrangements may be approved for students who are unable to sit formal University examination conditions as a result of a disability or other condition. It is important to note that such arrangements must be in place at least six weeks prior to the exam in question, so it is essential that students requiring individual
arrangements contact Disability Services as soon as possible in order to ensure that adjustments can be made.
Visit: www.york.ac.uk/students/studying/assessment-and-examination/disability/making/

**External Examiners**

Currently, the external examiners are:

- **MA in Medieval History**
  - Prof Julia Barrow, Professor of Medieval Studies, University of Leeds
    www.leeds.ac.uk/arts/profile/20046/947/julia_barrow

- **MA in Early Modern History**
  - TBC

- **MA in Modern History**
  - Prof Barry Doyle, Professor of Health History, University of Huddersfield,
    www.hud.ac.uk/ourstaff/profile/index.php?staffuid=smusbmd

- **MA in Contemporary History and International Politics**
  - Prof Sharif Gemie, Professor of Modern and Contemporary History, University of South Wales,
    http://staff.southwales.ac.uk/users/405-sgemie#about

- **MA in Public History**
  - Prof John Tosh, Professor of History, Roehampton University,
    www.roehampton.ac.uk/staff/John-Tosh/

- **MA in Renaissance and Early Modern Studies**
  - TBC

It is inappropriate to make direct contact with external examiners, in particular regarding your performance in assessments. If you have any issues or concerns you can register these through appeal (see below) or complaint. Complaints should be directed to the Chair of the Graduate School Board.

You can engage with the process through which the University considers and responds to external examiners. This varies from department to department. In History it involves your course reps as members of Graduate School Board. For more information, see: http://www.yorkgsa.org/site
Feedback on assessment

‘Feedback’ at a University level can be understood as any part of the learning process which is designed to guide your progress through your degree programme. We aim to help you reflect on your own learning and help you feel clearer about your progress through clarifying what is expected of you in both formative and summative assessments.

The University guidelines for feedback are available in *The Guide to Assessment, Standards, Marking and Feedback*. For more information, see: www.york.ac.uk/about/departments/support-and-admin/registry-services/guide/

You will be able to find out your marks for the taught part of your programme via e:vision no later than six weeks after the deadline for assessment. To access e:vision, visit: https://evision.york.ac.uk. Agreed marks and the internal examiners’ reports for assessed essays are normally released on e:vision within six weeks of the submission date of the assessment, after the internal marking has been completed, and the marks are subsequently reviewed by the External Examiner. These marks remain provisional until they have been confirmed by the Graduate Examinations Board in November. Dissertation marks and examiners’ reports, together with the final results of the degree, are available shortly after the Final Examinations Board in November.

Feedback is not given purely to justify the marks you have been awarded. Feedback is also intended to help you to improve your work by indicating areas where improvement is needed and, where possible, offering advice on how that might be achieved. Do please reflect on your marks and the internal examiners’ reports, and use it to help you perform better subsequently. If you do not understand your feedback you can discuss it with your module tutor or your MA convenor. Your MA convenor may also be able to give you advice more generally on your work and how you can try and improve.

For more information, read the Department’s *Statement on Feedback*. You will find it here: www.york.ac.uk/history/student-intranet/postgraduates/taught-ma/ma-assessment/

How is my work marked?

All work is marked on the University’s postgraduate mark scale, which runs from 0 to 100.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marks</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>70 and above</td>
<td>Distinction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>Merit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-49</td>
<td>Fail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To assist the process of marking, the Department of History uses grade descriptors. Marks are assigned according to how the assessed work matches up against the descriptors. Detailed grade descriptors are given on the departmental web pages. To
All assessed work that counts towards your degree award is marked by two different internal examiners. In cases where marks cannot be resolved, a third internal examiner is called upon. All work is marked anonymously by examination number. All work is available to be seen by one or other of our external examiners who have oversight of the rigour and quality of the assessment process.

The Department of History uses two different kinds of marking.

- **Double marking** is used for all taught modules. All scripts are read by two examiners, but sequentially. The first marking, having completed their marking, passes the scripts with their marks and comments to the second marker who marks in the light of the first examiner’s marks and comments. Once the second marking has completed his or her marking, the two markers consult to agree final marks with reference to the grade descriptors and reasoned argument based on the evidence of the scripts. This use of sequential double marking recognises the particular specialist knowledge of the first examiner, the second examiner’s role being primarily to ensure that marks are appropriately calibrated with reference to the grade descriptors.

- **Blind double marking** is used in the case of Dissertations. The two examiners mark the work without access to each other’s marks or comments. The examiners then discuss and agree a final mark with reference to the grade descriptors and reasoned argument based on the evidence of the Dissertation.

All scripts are marked anonymously. In other words the candidate is identified by exam number only, not by name. You should never put your name on any work submitted for examination that contributes to your degree award. Equally, it is important that you do include your University examination number clearly and accurately.

After completion of first and second marking of all scripts for a module, the two examiners confer to reach agreed or reconciled marks for all scripts. In the case of Dissertations marks are agreed individually on each piece of work. In the case of an assessed essay, the agreed or reconciled mark is the mark that the student receives for that element of assessment.

In the case of examinations, an overall mark for the examination as a whole is computed on the basis of the agreed or reconciled marks for individual questions. This is done by calculating the mean overall mark (averaging) and rounding any decimals to the nearest integer. Thus fractions of marks constituting 0.5 or above are rounded up (so, for example, a mark of 64.5 would go up to 65) but a smaller fraction would be rounded down (so a mark of 62.3 would be returned as 62).
Where first and second markers are unable to reach an agreed or reconciled mark on a given piece of work, either their marks are averaged (if the difference between them is five marks or less) or, where the disagreement is greater than this, the work in question is referred to an internal moderator, who re-reads the script and assigns a mark within the range delimited by the first and second markers’ original marks.

**How can I tell if I’m making progress?**

The *Student Guide to the University’s Rules for Progression and Award in Taught Postgraduate Programmes* clarifies what we mean by ‘academic progress’. They explain what you need to do to progress through your degree programme and how you can calculate your current award marks along the way. For more information, see: [www.york.ac.uk/media/history/documents/intranet-postgraduate/Guide%20to%20Progression%20and%20Award%20PG%202014.pdf](www.york.ac.uk/media/history/documents/intranet-postgraduate/Guide%20to%20Progression%20and%20Award%20PG%202014.pdf)

**What happens if I fail a module?**

There are two possible ways in which you may be able to still pass your year and progress to the next level.

**Compensation**

For Masters-level modules, the pass mark for module assessments is 50. However, if your mark for a module is in the 40-49 range, you may still be able to get the credits for the module if your performance in other modules is good enough to compensate. In other words, ‘marginal’ failure in some modules may be compensated by achievement in others.

**Reassessment**

If you get a module mark below 40 for Masters-level modules this cannot be compensated and you will have to be reassessed. However, there is a limit to the number of credits failed below 40 for Masters level in which you can be reassessed. If you get a mark between 40 and 49 for Masters-level modules and you are not eligible for compensation, you may also need to be reassessed in those modules.

Please note that not all modules can be reassessed. If you fail the Dissertation (Independent Study Module) there is no opportunity for reassessment. If you get a mark between 40 and 49 for the Dissertation, you will have the opportunity to make amendments that enable you to read the threshold for a pass. The mark after resubmission will be capped at 50.

For further information on compensation and reassessment, see the *Student Guide to the University’s Rules for Progression and Award in Taught Postgraduate Programmes*: [www.york.ac.uk/media/history/documents/intranet-postgraduate/Guide%20to%20Progression%20and%20Award%20PG%202014.pdf](www.york.ac.uk/media/history/documents/intranet-postgraduate/Guide%20to%20Progression%20and%20Award%20PG%202014.pdf)
Resits, repeats and readmission

- If you have failed or missed an examination because of medical or compassionate circumstances the department may request permission for you to take the examination again ‘as if for the first time’, which means discounting the failed or missed attempt.

- Students are not normally allowed to repeat any part of the teaching on their programme. Repeat study will only be considered in cases where a student can show that they had truly exceptional circumstances which did not allow them to benefit from the teaching on their first attempt.

- If you have to leave your programme because you have failed the year then you will not be permitted to restart the same programme at the University of York.

For further information, visit:
www.york.ac.uk/students/support/academic/taught/resits/

You will need to submit evidence of mitigating circumstances to qualify for resits and repeats. See Mitigating Circumstances below.

Programme extensions and termination

A programme extension can be recommended where a student cannot complete the programme within a normal timescale because of mitigating circumstances. If you find yourself in this situation, talk to your supervisor.

If you are academically unsatisfactory the Graduate School Board can recommend that your programme is ended before its normal end date. This may be due to reasons such as poor attendance (without good reason) or through having failed so much of the programme that it is no longer possible to graduate.

Further information can be found at
www.york.ac.uk/students/support/academic/taught/programme/

Also, see Mitigating Circumstances for any other circumstances which may affect you undertaking any assessments.
Mitigating Circumstances

If circumstances in your life significantly affect you undertaking any assessments (including examinations) then you can submit what we call 'mitigating circumstances' to the department. To find out how to submit an application for mitigating circumstances visit: www.york.ac.uk/students/support/academic/mitigation/

For a list of the circumstances that are normally accepted and not accepted, visit: https://www.york.ac.uk/media/studenthome/supportwelfareandhealth/academicprogress/documents/3%20%20Acceptability%20of%20circ.pdf

If your claim is successful, and the committee accept that your assessment was significantly affected by your circumstances you will usually be given an opportunity to take the assessment again as if for the first time. If it is an open assessment then you may be given an extension. Grades will never be altered without a further attempt at the assessment, and work will not be ‘re-marked’, though you may be allowed to re-submit it following revisions.

Please note: it is very important that submit your case for Mitigating Circumstances as soon as possible, preferably BEFORE the assessment which you believe may have been affected.

For a full list of documents and policy information visit: www.york.ac.uk/staff/supporting-students/issues/academic/taught/mitigation/

Making an Appeal

You can appeal against a procedural error in arriving at an academic decision or on the basis of mitigating circumstances that the examiners didn’t know about (see above) or a procedural irregularity in the assessment.

However, you cannot appeal against an academic judgement of your work (this is the marker’s opinion under the Academic Appeals procedure).

For further details on both terms and how to appeal, visit: www.york.ac.uk/students/help/appeals/

Assistance with appeals and representation at hearings is also available through the Students’ Union Advice and Support Centre. All communication is confidential and free. For further information, visit: www.yusu.org/advice-and-support

If you feel an assessment has failed to represent the module as taught or is in other ways unfair, or if you are unhappy about the tone of the feedback you have received, or you have complaints about any other aspect of the assessment procedure, these should be directed to the Chair of the Graduate School Board.
Your final award

The University applies the following mark scale to postgraduate work:

Distinguished performance at postgraduate level: 70-100
Good performance at postgraduate level: 60-69
Satisfactory performance at postgraduate level: 50-59
Fail: 0-49*

* Note that a fail mark of 40-49 is potentially compensatable, and marks of 0-39 are outright fails.

For information on calculating your degree award, see the Student Guide to the University’s Rules for Progression and Award in Taught Postgraduate Programmes.

www.york.ac.uk/media/history/documents/intranet-postgraduate/Guide%20to%20Progression%20and%20Award%20PG%202014.pdf