

# Remote Learning and assessment for Students: GCU approach to supporting students during Covid 19

## Frequently Asked Questions

Version date: 8<sup>th</sup> April 2020

### Sections:

**A: Assessment - Qs 1 - 29**

Including:

Assessments: All levels

Assessments: Levels 1 and 2

Assessments: Levels 3, 4 and Masters/ Taught Doctorate

Dissertation projects: Level 4, Masters and Taught Doctorate

Assessment Feedback and Results

Mitigating Circumstances (“MITs”)

Changes to Assessment Regulations in light of Covid-19 (As circulated to students on 02.04.2020)

(Please ensure you read all of the Assessment section to understand how you will be assessed.)

**B: Remote learning – Qs 30 – x**

(Same content as in the previous iteration of these FAQs.)

**C: Help and support – Qs y – z**

(Same content as in the previous iteration of these FAQs.)

## Section A: Assessments

GCU is operating exceptional arrangements for assessment to support students during this Covid pandemic while still maintaining academic standards to ensure that your qualification is highly valued in a competitive employment market when normal life returns. We will continue to ensure that the learning outcomes that students demonstrate mean that they meet the criteria of professional bodies.

This means two things. First, we will do everything we can to ensure students are not adversely affected by the impact of Covid 19 and that they can progress as they were expecting to do before the pandemic suspended so much of normal life.

Secondly, we appreciate that these extraordinary circumstances may be putting some students under multiple personal and family pressures making study exceptionally difficult. We recognise that some students may take longer to complete this session's work than expected as a result, and for some that could mean graduation is delayed until the autumn. This is also true of a small number of students for whom practical or professional body requirements mean that there is a part of their course which cannot be completed online or using alternative assessment means.

### Assessments: All levels

1.

**Q** Should I plan to complete and submit coursework associated with the Trimester B modules?

**A** Yes, you should submit coursework assessments as per normal processes. Assessment will continue as planned except for formal examinations scheduled for the Tri B assessment period. If you have coursework due over the next few weeks, you should go ahead and submit it as normal through the usual channels. Please check GCULearn regularly for any assessment updates from your Module Leader.

2.

**Q** Will the set assessment/submission deadlines for coursework currently due in be altered?

**A** Yes, recognising this unprecedented situation will create challenges for all students, all current coursework deadlines have been extended by one week. Some deadlines for assessments and online submissions may be subject to change. Please check each module on GCULearn regularly for further information on this

3.

**Q** If I am ready, can I submit my coursework/assessment by the original deadline?

**A** Yes, your Module Tutors will have extended the submission timeframe to allow students to submit from the original scheduled deadline until the new submission date, so please submit when you are ready.

4.

**Q** Although I recognise all students have been given a one-week extension, if I am struggling to meet the new assessment deadline, can I request an extension?

**A** Yes, in the normal way, please contact your Module Leader as early as possible to discuss your circumstances.

You do not have to complete a MITS form or follow MITS process to request an extension.

5.

**Q** If I have to undertake an alternative assessment will the details relating to this include the time I have to complete it?

**A** Yes, your Module Leader will include details regarding the new assessment, duration and submission information in their assessment update to you in GCULearn.

6.

**Q** Will class tests continue to run?

**A** Your Module Leader may remove class tests, practical lab tests, etc, where it is not possible to run these assessments online. Please review the announcements page of your module on GCULearn for information on your module(s).

## **Assessments: Levels 1 and 2**

7.

**Q** Will Trimester B formal examinations go ahead for Level 1 and 2 students?

**A** No, the University, in line with others in the sector, has decided to cancel all formal examinations for Level 1 and 2 students unless the examination is a requirement for registration with the Professional, Regulatory or Statutory Body (PRSB). If your Module team feels they can offer an alternative assessment that would meet the PRSB requirements, you will be asked to sit this alternative in the assessment period as planned. Where no alternative is acceptable to the PRSB, the examination will be scheduled for a period when the campus re-opens. You will be informed by your Module Leader as to whether or not their examination falls within the PRSB category and if an alternative or rescheduled current examination is being delivered.

8.

**Q** My Level 1 or 2 module only had one piece of assessment, which was a formal exam. How will I be assessed?

**A** Where a level 1 or 2 module is only assessed by a single formal exam, this will be replaced with an online alternative assessment (subject to conditions relating to the PRSB, as outlined above). Details will be provided by the Module Leader on GCULearn

9.

**Q I am a Level 1 or 2 student, with my formal exams now cancelled, will this stop me progressing to Level 2 or 3?**

A Where an exam has been cancelled (and not replaced with an alternative assessment, see Q7), level 1 and 2 modules will be assessed as a Pass or Fail based on assessment already submitted or scheduled for completion.

If you have passed or pass the coursework element(s) of your module you will be given a pass grade for the overall module and will be eligible to progress in the normal way. Module teams will consider whether or not additional learning sessions are required to ensure all learning outcomes have been met and will plan when these would be delivered in future years. Should you fail the module, you will be required to re-take the assessment as per normal practice.

10.

**Q What if I'm a Level 3 student with a Level 2 formal exam resit scheduled for Trimester B?**

A You will not be expected to retake this component as all Tri B formal examinations have been cancelled for Level 1 and 2 modules. Other forms of assessment will go ahead as planned, eg coursework. As with others taking a Level 1 or 2 module in Tri B, your overall module decision will be based on assessment components already considered and a pass/fail grade will be given.

## **Assessments: Levels 3, 4 and Masters/ Taught Doctorate**

11.

**Q I am a Level 3, 4, Masters or Taught Doctorate student, will my assessments scheduled for the Trimester B assessment period go ahead?**

A Yes, but formal centrally-timetabled examinations scheduled for this assessment period will not go ahead. Module teams are designing an alternative which can be undertaken while students and staff are off campus e.g. online examination, open book through GCU Learn, coursework, etc. The time available to students to complete an individual assessment will be notified through each module on GCU Learn.

You will be required to complete the alternative assessment unless the centrally timetabled examination currently scheduled is a requirement for registration with the Professional, Regulatory or Statutory Body (PRSB).

Where this is the case, and no alternative is acceptable to the PRSB, the examination will be rescheduled for a period when the campus has re-opened. Please check the announcements page of your module on GCU Learn, where you will be informed by the Module Leader regarding assessment requirements.

12.

**Q I am scheduled to undertake lab-based assessments or practical examinations, will these go ahead?**

A No, face-to-face teaching has been suspended. Where a lab examination or practical, for example, is a programme requirement, these will be rescheduled for a period when the campus has re-opened. To assist students in their learning, some programmes may be able to use simulated practical experiences in the online environment.

**13.**

**Q Where do I find out details about the alternative assessment for my modules?**

A Each Module Leader will provide information via GCULearn on the alternative assessment you are required to complete

**14.**

**Q How will I receive my alternative assessment and how do I submit it?**

A In the information provided by your Module Leader on GCULearn they will explain whether your formal examination has been replaced by, for example an online examination, open book, report, coursework, etc. They will also include details of when this will be available to you, how long you have to complete it and how and when to submit it.

**15.**

**Q When will my alternative assessment take place?**

A Recognising alternative assessments are, for many students, a new way of working, the University has decided to move the start of the “Exam” diet period back, to allow students more preparation time. The assessment period will now commence Friday, May 1st. As stated above, your Module Leaders will provide details of dates regarding alternative assessment on GCULearn. (Whilst the revised exam timetable is available [here](#), please continue to visit GCULearn for details of all your module assessments, including alternative assessments which may not be listed on the exam timetable.)

**16.**

**Q How long will I have to complete the alternative assessment?**

A Due to the exceptional circumstances, you will be given additional time to complete the alternative assessments. The assessment and completion time available will be provided for each of your modules on GCULearn.

**17.**

**Q What is an open-book examination?**

A An open-book exam is an assessment which allows you to refer to either class notes, textbooks, or other approved sources while answering questions. In some open-book exams, students are provided with the questions prior to sitting the exam and, in others, students can attempt the exam at home and submit their completed assessment online. If your assessment is open book, it is important to check the details for the module in GCULearn, particularly the information given on the time you are allowed to complete it and the materials approved as sources.

18.

**Q What if I am not able to complete the alternative assessment?**

A If you have particular circumstances which means that you are not able to complete an alternative assessment, please contact your Module Leader as soon as possible to inform them of your circumstances.

Please also see the section below regarding Mitigating Circumstances.

## **Dissertation projects: Level 4, Masters and Taught Doctorate**

19.

**Q How will I be supported to complete my dissertation?**

A Your supervisor will reach out to you to arrange the method by which you will continue to be supervised eg skype, telephone, etc.

20.

**Q Should I submit my Honours Project/dissertation by the normal hand-in date?**

A Yes you should submit as planned (adjusting for the blanket 1 week extension) unless advised differently by your programme leader and/or Supervisor.

21.

**Q I have not yet collected or completed my data for my dissertation, what should I do?**

A You should discuss this with your Supervisor, who will advise on a case-by-case basis, and to establish if there are any adjustments which can be made to your current assignment.

## **Assessment Feedback and Results**

22.

**Q When will I receive feedback for my coursework and other assessments?**

A While we will endeavour to stick to the three-week turnaround for coursework feedback, under these unique circumstances, this will be unlikely in some instances. As soon as Module

Leaders are aware that the three-week timeline will not be met, students will be informed of this and when feedback will likely be provided.

23.

**Q Will Progression and Award Boards still be held as per the academic calendar?**

A Given i) the extension to assessment submission, ii) the additional time that is required to ensure every student profile is reviewed in light of the disruption and iii) taking into account the general impact that Covid-19 may have on staff, it has been decided to move the final date by which Progression & Award Boards (PABs) are scheduled to have met until June 26<sup>th</sup>. However, where possible PABS will meet earlier in June.

24.

**Q When will my formal results be communicated to me?**

A While unratified results will be returned to students as soon as the marking of their assignments has been completed, as the Progression & Award Boards (PAB) are not due to meet until the end of June, it is anticipated that all results will be formally communicated to students by July 2<sup>nd</sup>, with results released within 4 working days of the PAB.

25.

**Q My results were considered at a Progression and Awards Board (PAB) that met prior to the campus closure, and I have to resubmit/resit an assessment as a further attempt. Am I still required to undertake this?**

A Yes – All PAB decisions prior to the closure of the campus and transition to online delivery remain as is. This also includes any Trimester A modules where min thresholds were still in operation.

## Mitigating Circumstances (“MITs”)

26.

**Q The Coronavirus has meant that the University has had to deliver my studies online and offer alternative assessments, should I submit Mitigating Circumstances (MITs) in recognition of the potential impact this might have on my performance?**

A No, you will not have to submit MITs due to the general disruption that is being felt by everyone. Quite simply, all students will have their performance reviewed as if they had submitted MITs in respect of Covid-19 for ALL Trimester B and C modules. There is therefore **no need** for students to submit MITS in respect of the prevailing disruption and social isolation due to Covid 19.

27.

**Q** I have other mitigating circumstances, how do I submit a request for these to be taken into account?

**A** While all Trimester B and C student performance, including the overall award level for those completing will be reviewed as if each student had submitted MITS, students can submit MITS in relation to personal health or other circumstances that they wish the University to be made aware of.

An online form has been developed and is available at

<https://www.gcu.ac.uk/student/essentials/exams/mitigatingcircumstances/>

28.

**Q** Do I need to submit evidence along with my MITs form?

**A** No, there will be no need to provide evidence for any MITs but we ask that you still provide details of the impact that any exceptional, serious, acute and unforeseen problem that has impacted your studies, as per the current MITs Policy.

## Changes to Assessment Regulations in light of Covid-19

29.

**Q** Given that on-campus learning has ceased, access to the physical library etc is not possible, combined with my personal circumstances, I am worried that I will not have performed as well as hoped. What special measures are the University putting in place to take account of these exceptional circumstances?

**A** The University is taking extraordinary steps in relation to the design of alternative assessments and in considering the overall outcome for individual students. Moreover, in addition to considering individual students' profiles, the Progression and Award Board will also compare student performance in Trimester B modules against the performance of previous student cohorts in order to detect any anomalies or dramatic changes and make adjustments accordingly. In short, we will do everything we can to ensure that you will be awarded fair grades. Listed below are steps we are taking to give students every support to complete this session's work on time and to take account of those for whom personal or family circumstances make this exceptionally difficult.

### Minimum Thresholds

The regulation regarding minimum thresholds in each assessment component will be suspended for all Trimester B and C modules (including those modules that are taught over more than one trimester and unless Professional, Statutory & Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) requirements cannot be waived. This means students will not have to achieve the minimum threshold for each assessment but can achieve a module pass overall if their combined marks meet or exceed the pass mark.

### Extension to submission dates

While a blanket extension of 1 week has been added to all coursework submission dates, we recognise that the personal and family circumstances of some students mean this may not be

enough. If students are in that position, they should contact their Module Leader as soon as possible to discuss a further extension due to their circumstances.

### **Alternative Assessments**

All alternative assessments have been designed with additional time for students to complete to take into account differing student circumstances. Details of the alternative assessment for each module will be provided in the module pages of GCU Learn.

### **Mitigating Circumstances (MITS)**

As above, student performance of all Trimester B and C modules (including modules that run over modules A and B) will be considered AS IF all students have submitted MITS. This provides Progression and Award Boards with further flexibility in determining award classification levels.

### **Preservation of assessment attempts**

Any student who is unable to submit an assessment or fails a required assessment in relation to a Trimester B or C module(s) will automatically be given the opportunity to resubmit with their attempt preserved i.e. if a student does not manage to submit (or submits and fails) for the first time, their subsequent submission will again be treated as a first attempt. Similarly, if a student does not manage to submit (or submits and fails) as a second attempt, their subsequent submission will again be treated as a second attempt. In short, if you are unable to submit or if you submit and fail, you will suffer no detriment because you will preserve the attempt.

### **Catch Up Period**

Students who are unable to engage with their studies or where certain aspects of student's learning cannot be delivered on line such as, lab based skills development, practical classes etc there will be a catch up period to support students to complete their studies for this academic session. Programme teams will consider what material should be delivered to students once the campus has reopened. How and what will be included in the catch up period will be decided locally and communicated to students by programme teams.

### **Level 1 and 2 (SCQG 7 & 8) students**

In line with other universities across the sector Level 1 and 2 Trimester B formal examinations have been cancelled for all students with the exception of those required by Professional, Statutory & Regulatory Bodies (PSRB). Where PSRB requirements must be met an alternative assessment has been developed to facilitate students achieving their module(s) requirements. Students in this category have been notified separately of arrangements.

Where an exam has been cancelled and not replaced with an alternative assessment, level 1 and 2 modules will be assessed as a Pass or Fail based on assessment already submitted or scheduled for completion.

### **Merit and Distinction at Level 1 and 2**

Due to the pass/fail marking scheme being applied to Trimester B modules merit and distinction calculations will be suspended for this academic year.

### **Level 3 (SCQF 9) students**

Level 3 Trimester B formal examinations have been cancelled and replaced with alternative assessments. In addition to carefully considering individual students' profiles, the Progression and Award Board will also compare Trimester B modules with previous cohorts' performance in the modules in order to detect any anomalies or significant changes and make adjustments accordingly. Merit and distinction decisions will be taken in line with current assessment regulation criteria.

For current Level 3 students who subsequently proceed to honours and whose level 3 modules are included in their eventual honours classification calculation, Progression and Awards Boards (PABs) will take 2019/20 Trimester B results into account and recognise the exceptional circumstances to ensure that they do not detrimentally affect the overall classification awarded.

**Level 4 (SCQF 10) students**

In order to ensure no detrimental impact of Tri B modules individual students' profiles will be carefully reviewed to take into account your academic performance across the entirety of your programme. In addition, the Progression and Award Board will compare Trimester B module results with the performance of previous student cohorts in order to detect any anomalies or dramatic changes and make adjustments accordingly, whilst continuing to make sound, evidence-based decisions, to protect the quality of your degree award.

Progression & Award boards will consider 2019/20 Trimester B marks and ensure that they do not detrimentally affect the calculation of each students' overall honours classification.

**Masters students and Taught Doctoral students - Level M and Taught D (SCQF 11)**

Level M and Taught D Trimester B formal examinations have been cancelled and replaced with alternative assessments. In addition to carefully considering individual students' profiles, the Progression and Award Board will also compare Trimester B module results against the performance of previous student cohorts to detect any anomalies or significant changes and make adjustments accordingly. Merit and distinction decisions will be taken in line with current assessment regulation criteria, which includes special consideration taking into account that all students have mitigating circumstances.

## **Section B: Remote learning**

### **Online Learning**

30.

**Q** Where will my online learning take place?

A Many of you will already be familiar with learning online through using GCU Learn. This is our virtual learning environment using the Blackboard platform: [GCU Learn](#)

31.

**Q** How will I know when to ensure I am online?

A Students should stick to the timetable they have been issued for Trimester B, this will ensure there are no module clashes. Module tutors will endeavour to use these these slots to deliver teaching or facilitate a discussion forum or direct students learning etc Module tutors will also be able to respond to student questions in these slots or through the discussion board, by email or via other technologies.

32.

**Q** How will my tutor keep in touch and how will I get information about my module (s)?

A The key ways that your lecturers will use GCU Learn to offer online learning will be through the module GCU Learn site. Here you can find:

- Announcements
- Module handbooks
- Learning materials
- Assignment guidance
- Discussion board and use of Collaborate Ultra

Check the module announcements every day. Your module team will post information and guidance here.

33.

**Q** How can I get information on how to use GCU Learn?

A There are many resources to support you to learn online for those new to learning in this way. The key source of information on how to make the most of learning online is available to you by clicking on the Student Help tab when you log into GCU Learn.

34.

**Q** **What if I can't engage with my modules over the remainder of the teaching period in trimester B?**

**A** Module teams are developing a 'catch-up' plan to support students who, for whatever reason, will be unable to engage over the next four weeks. These plans will be enacted when the University campus is open again. Information on 'catch up' will be provided by module teams and will be developed locally to meet programme and module specific needs.

**35.**

**Q** **What is a discussion board?**

**A** A discussion board is an area where you can post your ideas and share these with others. You can post comments in response to others, and this creates an opportunity for discussion to take place.

**36.**

**Q** **What is Collaborate Ultra?**

**A** Your lecturer may invite you to join an online group discussion, or to view a recorded version of a planned lecture. This will probably use Collaborate Ultra as the tool on GCU Learn. Collaborate Ultra works best using the Chrome browser, so download this if you do not already use this. If you are unfamiliar with Collaborate Ultra, full guidance is provided on the Student Help tab on GCU Learn. (Your lecturers may employ voiceovers to Powerpoint slides, so please ensure you have your device sound switched on.)

**37.**

**Q** **I'm new to online learning, can you give me some practical tips to prepare myself?**

**A**

1. Be patient: Your lecturers have been asked to make their teaching available to you online at the last minute. The best online learning takes time to develop. Please be patient with yourself and them if things don't go right for you the first time. Ask for help.
2. Embrace online: Online learning will become more and more common in the future, so this is a great chance for you to develop some skills to help you succeed.
3. Develop your communication skills: You will communicate in different ways on various online formats (email, discussion boards, social media, online seminars). Be professional and appropriate, but don't be afraid to project your personality.
4. What if I have a technical issue? Develop your initiative and resilience. Don't give up if you hit a technical issue. For example, if your reading link is broken, maybe you can search for the journal article yourself by using the GCU Library search.
5. Stick to a routine: There are many time-management techniques, so find one which works for you. There will likely be daily and weekly tasks for you to do, plus longer-term targets like deadlines. Plan a daily, weekly and monthly schedule to manage these different timescales.

6. Get connected: Be proactive with communicating with your course mates. Set up course Whatsapp groups or a Microsoft Teams group (or another platform if you prefer) for offline chatting and engagement. Form small virtual study or reading groups and work through online materials together.
7. Find somewhere quiet to work. Yes, you can work from bed but this might not be the most comfortable! Make sure you have somewhere peaceful to work, try to use a workspace such as a desk or table, and cut down on external and online distractions.
8. Use the right channels to solve your problems: This will be signposted for you in your course, so contacting the correct person will help you get your problem solved more quickly.
9. Embrace discussion boards: If your GCU Learn module has them, these are a great way to discuss with your peers and work through learning as a group. Ask questions, comment on your course mates' answers, and enter into dialogue.
10. Online learning communities can be as rich, supportive and exciting as on-campus learning. We hope you can adapt to this experience and benefit from it.

Above all "be kind to yourself" - now is an anxious time, take care of yourself and others.  
Thanks to @katesymons for these useful tips.

## Catch-up period

38.

**Q** What if I am unable to engage in my studies at home or if parts of my module cannot be delivered e.g. lab or practical classes, will there be a catch-up period when the University re-opens?

**A** Yes, programme teams are planning what material should be delivered to students once the campus has re-opened. How and what will be included in the catch-up period will be decided locally and communicated to students by programme teams. For any individual students who were unable to study online, the University will offer a catch-up period to once the campus has reopened.

## Placement

39.

**Q** If my placement is cancelled, what happens?

**A** In the event of any placement being cancelled the University will review this requirement and assess where the placement is needed. Should placement work be essential to your course, an additional placement will be offered at a later date. Placement FAQs can be accessed via the [website](#).

## Equipment

40.

**Q** [I do not have access to a computer and or wifi outside the University.](#)

**A** If you have a mobile device, GCU Learn can be accessed this way. If any student does not have access to a computer or wifi, please contact your module leader for further information and advice.

## Campus Access

41.

**Q** [Will any of the campus be open?](#)

**A** In light of the Prime Minister's announcement on March 23, the IT facilities that were available to students at the Learning Café on our Glasgow campus will be closed as of March 24 until further notice. This is the same for the facilities that were available to students at our GCU London Campus. Only essential staff will be allowed on campus."

## Library

42.

**Q** [Will I be able to access the library?](#)

**A** Although the Sir Alex Ferguson Library building will be closed, the library team will continue to provide support to students remotely. Should you be having difficulty accessing any resources online, please access the [library webpages](#) where there are self-help guides and or you can contact a member of staff to help with your enquiry.

## Section C: Help and support

### Support

43.

**Q** [What additional learning support is available to help me with learning online?](#)

A Services at the University will be operating remotely. You can still contact your programme/module leader and personal tutor. The following services are also available and can be accessed remotely:

- [Learning Development Centers](#)
- [The Library](#)
- [Academic Librarians](#)
- [The Disability Team](#)

44.

**Q** [Will I still be able to contact my personal tutor for help?](#)

A Yes, you can contact your personal tutor through the channels you have agreed e.g. email, skype etc.

### Students with disabilities

45.

**Q** [I have a disability and need additional support, how can I access this help?](#)

A [The Disability Team](#) is available remotely and can be accessed via the contact details online.

### Help

46.

**Q** [Will I be able to access Student Support Services?](#)

A Our Student Support Services will be available to support you remotely. Information on how to contact these services can be found online:

- [The Student Funding Team](#)
- [The Careers Service](#)
- [The VISA Team](#)
- [The Disability Team](#)
- [The Counselling Team](#)

47.

**Q** I haven't accessed student services before, but what if I need to now?

**A** If you have a generic student support query, please email [studentsupport@gcu.ac.uk](mailto:studentsupport@gcu.ac.uk). Otherwise you can access support through the links above.

48.

**Q** If I have a mentor currently, will I still be able to access this support?

**A** Yes, your mentor will arrange with you how they will continue to support you.

## International students

49.

**Q** I am a Tier International Student – where do I get advice regarding ensuring compliance with my visa?

**A** Specific advice and information is being provided direct to International students – however for all visa related queries, please contact the VISA team at [visa@gcu.ac.uk](mailto:visa@gcu.ac.uk).

## Students' Association web chats

50.

**Q** If I feel isolated or down what can I do?

**A** Students' Association Online Activities- The Students' Association services are still available online, to find out how to get in contact please visit [www.gcustudents.co.uk](http://www.gcustudents.co.uk) The Full Time Officers will also endeavour to host online activities twice a week for you to engage with. Please visit the GCU Students' Association Facebook page for more information.