

Communication from Education Committee: Academic support package – statement for submissions

This circular provides information on part of the Academic support package agreed at Taught Degrees Panel at its meeting of week 3 Hilary term 2020.

Action required

All divisions, departments/faculties, and colleges are asked to **note** the introduction of a new process to account for the impact on student submissions of the current restrictions on student travel and residence. This will be in effect for submissions with deadlines in Hilary and Trinity terms 2021 only.

Exam boards are particularly asked **to note and undertake the following**:

- *decide* for which submissions they wish students to be able to attach a submission statement;
- *decide* whether that statement will be solely completed by the student or will include a statement from the supervisor; and then
- *communicate* with students about the new process and provide them with a template to complete.
- *communicate* with markers how to take statements into account and keep appropriate records in the marking process.

Exam boards responsible for submissions related to lab-based research are encouraged to utilise existing mechanisms to identify impact of disruption on projects and ensure all students are aware that they can use these mechanisms to report the impact of the pandemic on their projects.

If you have queries please contact Rachel Dearlove, Head of Taught Degrees and Student Casework (rachel.dearlove@admin.ox.ac.uk).

Further information

1. With the lack of return of most students to Oxford in Hilary term (and the wider national and international restrictions), students are now not able to access in-person library provision, labs in which to undertake their research projects or key activities such as fieldwork, participant research or access to archives that inform their research.
2. Whilst this disruption could potentially be addressed through the existing MCE process this does not allow for any compensation in marking. Taught Degrees Panel has agreed that a different approach should be available to provide academic mitigation for these types of disruption.
3. A temporary process was put in place at the request of the Humanities division for coursework deadlines up to the end of week 3 HT21. The Panel has agreed that this provision should be extended to all appropriate submissions (as identified by exam boards) in HT21 and TT21. Details are provided below in an extract that will be incorporated into the next edition of the *Examinations and Assessment Framework*.
4. Students whose lab-based research has been disrupted should be able to utilise the existing processes in place to account for disruption to lab-based projects. Departments

should ensure that all students are aware of the existing processes and that these can be utilised to capture Covid-19 related disruption.

Addition to the *Examination and Assessment Framework*:

Statements for submitted work

To account for the potential impact on submitted work of students being unable to return to Oxford to access in-person library provision or to undertake key activities such as field work, participant research or access to archives as a result of pandemic restrictions, students will be allowed to attach a statement detailing the impact of such disruption for some items of submitted work. This in order to have that disruption taken into account during the marking process.

Statements can only address disruption to the research process and cannot be used to account for any other circumstances that have affected a students work such as illness or personal circumstances, these should, be addressed through the MCE process.

All exam boards with submission deadlines in Hilary and Trinity term 2021 will:

- decide for which submissions they wish students to be able to attach a submission statement;
- decide whether that statement will be solely completed by the student or will include a statement from the supervisor; and then
- communicate with students about the new process and provide them with a template to complete.
- communicate with assessors and examiners how to take statements into account and keep appropriate records in the marking process.

Statements should be kept with submitted work and retained according to the normal records retention schedule. All markers must record on the comment sheet how the statement has been taken into account and whether and how it has affected the mark given.

Below are examples of guidance to students and to assessors and examiners. These should be adapted as appropriate.

Example of guidance to students:

If you were unable to complete your references because you lost access to library resources in Oxford, you must still indicate passages which require a reference (according to the relevant referencing guidelines), and you should fill in as much information as you can. But you will not be penalized for the omission of specific referencing information, such as page-numbers, which resulted from loss of library access.

If you have been unable to access material which you had planned to consult for your submission, you may include a short statement with your essay on the form provided (maximum 200 words). This should explain as precisely as possible what material you were unable to consult or re-read, and what effect this has had on the work you have submitted.

Example of guidance to assessors and examiners:

Markers should not penalize missing or incomplete references to material which is difficult to access – especially that which only exists in hard-copy – arising from students' lack of access to hard-copy resources. Markers will be able to judge, however, where candidates have failed either to indicate passages which should have required a reference (according to the referencing guidelines), or to reference material that is more easily available (for example material they could have been expected to find remotely).

Where students have submitted a statement explaining how lack of access to libraries has resulted in them being unable to read or check particular material in the later stages of their preparation, assessors should take this into account in marking the essay. You must record the following on your comment-sheets: what it is that the candidate was unable to do as a result of losing access to material; how you have taken the statement into account; and whether and how it has affected your mark.