

Complete Policy Title:
Undergraduate Examinations Policy

Policy Number (if applicable):
N/A

Approved by:
Senate

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Supersedes/Amends Policy dated:

- **Instructors at Examinations – last revised date: March 10, 1971**
- **Use of Calculators in Examinations – last revised date: March 8, 1995**
- **Examinations for Level I Courses – last revised date: March 23, 1983**
- **Irregularities at Examinations – last revised date: September 19, 1985**
- **Termination of Underway Examinations – last revised date: May 1969**
- **Undergraduate Student Access to Final Examinations – last revised date: May 13, 2009**
- **Procedures for Conducting Undergraduate Oral Examinations – last revised date: October 15, 2009**
- **Procedures for Conducting Objective Structured Clinical Examinations – last revised date: October 11, 2000**

Responsible Executive:
Associate Vice-President (Faculty)

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PREAMBLE

This document brings together policies approved by the Senate of McMaster University related to undergraduate examinations. These policies are intended to communicate clearly the University's expectations with regard to the responsibilities of both students and instructors. Each section addresses a separate issue and the appendices provide additional useful information.

ASSESSMENT BAN

There is a university-wide ban on examinations and tests in the final week of classes – see Section C of the Undergraduate Course Management Policy for full details.

SECTION A: INSTRUCTOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Examination papers must be submitted to the Office of the Registrar according to the formatting guidelines provided by the Office of the Registrar.

Any authorized aids must be indicated on the examination paper and communicated in writing to students in advance of the examination date. If an instructor authorizes the use of a calculator it must be communicated to the students in advance of the examination. The instructor may specify the use of the McMaster Standard Calculator(s). Such calculator(s) are designated by the appropriate Associate Vice-President on behalf of Undergraduate Council. If an instructor permits the use of a different calculator, it is the instructor's responsibility to ensure the calculator does not allow an unfair advantage or disadvantage.

It is the responsibility of the instructor to devise and use checking procedures in the grading of all examinations to ensure that every portion of the examination is marked and the totalling of the marks awarded is correct.

For a course with an enrolment of 500 or more students and a final examination with a multiple choice component, the instructor must provide four different versions of the examination to the Office of the Registrar.

The instructor(s) (or an appropriate designate) is expected to be present at the regularly scheduled examination and is responsible for ensuring the accuracy of the examination paper. If the instructor (or appropriate designate) must leave the examination, the instructor (or appropriate designate) must provide the President with contact information where he/she can be reached for the remainder of the examination.

SECTION B: STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Students must be available for the entire examination period as listed in the *Sessional Dates* section of the Undergraduate Calendar. Examinations will not be re-scheduled for purposes of travel.

Students who encounter any of the following scheduling difficulties, and who wish to have an examination re-scheduled, must report the issue to the Office of the Registrar immediately. A minimum of 10 working days prior to the first day of the examination period is required to facilitate the re-scheduling of examinations.

- More than one examination scheduled at the same time.
- Three examinations in one calendar day (midnight to midnight).
- Three consecutive examinations over two days.
- December only: two consecutive examinations if the first examination is three hours in duration.

Students who wish to request the re-scheduling of examinations on the basis of religious obligations must contact the Office of the Registrar with appropriate supporting documentation as soon as possible and no later than 10 working days prior to the first day of the examination period.

Students with disabilities who will require additional aids or other accommodations in their examinations must contact and receive a recommendation regarding appropriate accommodation from Student Accessibility Services (SAS) by the last date for cancelling courses without failure by default. No additional aids or accommodations are allowed other than those confirmed by SAS and the course instructor. A late cancellation

or no show fee may be applied to any student who fails to provide at least 24 hour notice of cancellation of final examination accommodation requirements.

Students who miss an examination for compelling medical or personal reasons should refer to the Deferred Examination Section.

SECTION C: REGULATIONS

The following regulations apply to all examinations conducted by the Office of the Registrar (variations may occur for instructor-conducted examinations). Students who fail to comply will be required to surrender their examination paper and leave the room immediately.

1. The student is responsible for writing the correct examination (instructor and section) at the place and time indicated on his/her personal examination timetable.
2. No student will be admitted to the examination room more than 30 minutes after the start of any examination. No extra time will be allowed for a student who arrives late to the examination.
3. McMaster student photo identification cards (I.D. cards) are required for all examinations. A student who arrives without their I.D. card will be required (before being seated) to obtain a substitute card and pay a \$30.00 fee; no extra time will be allowed for students arriving without their I.D. card.
4. Students should use the washroom before the examination.
5. Students should bring into the examination room only what is necessary to write the examination. All items not required to write the examination must be left at the side of the room at the student's risk. Only small personal belongings (e.g., purses) may be left beneath the chairs, not on the desks. The University assumes no responsibility for lost articles.
6. No aids (including but not limited to; books, papers, instruments, communication or electronic devices, cell phones, etc.) may be used in examinations unless specified by the instructor. Invigilators will check for compliance.
7. No food is permitted. Drinks must be in a spill proof container.
8. No form of communication between students is permitted.
9. The University makes every effort to ensure that examination papers are properly prepared however it is the responsibility of the student check the paper and to bring any discrepancies found in their examination to the attention of the invigilator.
10. A student officially registered in any class shall have the right to take the final examination in that class regardless of his/her attendance record at the class lectures.
11. Students who are unwell during the examination and are unable to complete an examination must report to the Room Presider. A Petition for Special Consideration form with supporting documentation

may be submitted to the Office of the Associate Dean (Studies) of the student's Faculty normally within five working days of the missed examination.

12. Students may not remove examination books or supplies from the examination room.

SECTION D: MIDTERMS AND FINAL EXAMINATIONS

All September to April (Term 3) Level I courses, with the exception of those that do not hold final examinations, must have a formal mid-year examination. Such examinations will be written in December as scheduled by the Office of the Registrar.

The Office of the Registrar will attempt to schedule and assign rooms for upper-level mid-year examinations if requested, on the understanding that these requests have a lower priority than Level I mid-year examinations and final examinations in first term courses.

SECTION E: EXAMINATIONS IN PROGRESS

From time to time unforeseen problems arise during examinations such as:

- A fire alarm leading to the evacuation of the examination location,
- A power failure,
- A number of examination papers being defective, and
- An instructor failing to arrive to administer an instructor-administered examination.

When such an irregularity occurs, the Office of the Registrar decides whether or not to terminate the examination(s) and collect the papers. Such decisions are reported to the appropriate Associate Dean and instructor.

If the University is unexpectedly closed during an examination period (e.g. inclement weather) the Office of the Registrar will re-schedule the affected examinations and communicate the new schedule to students and instructors.

If academic dishonesty is suspected during an examination the Office of the Registrar has protocols in place for invigilators to document and/or stop the behaviour. The Office of Academic Integrity will be informed of all suspected cases of academic dishonesty in examinations and will proceed according to the Academic Integrity Policy.

SECTION F: STUDENT ACCESS TO WRITTEN FINAL EXAMINATIONS

The procedure for student access to written final examinations has the following two objectives:

1. to provide an opportunity for the student to review the graded examination; and
2. to enable the instructor to maintain the confidentiality of questions drawn from a limited pool of questions.

A student's written request to review the graded examination must be submitted to the Department Chair¹ by June 30 following the Fall/Winter Session or by October 15 following the Spring/Summer Session. The relevant Session is the one during which the last graded material for the course was due. The Chair, in consultation with the instructor, will decide on one of the following courses of action:

1. The instructor may review the student's graded examination with the student. Although it is not mandatory for instructors to do this, they are encouraged to do so when it is feasible.
2. The student may read the graded examination under supervised conditions, but must not make notes. Where appropriate, model answers and/or the marking scheme also may be examined by the student, subject to the approval of the instructor.
3. A photocopy of the student's graded examination, and, where appropriate, model answers and/or the marking scheme may be provided to the student at cost², subject to the approval of the instructor.

The responsibility for implementing the above procedures rests with the Chair of the instructor's department. A student's final examination script will be made available to the student as soon as possible and not later than one month after the written request by the student.

SECTION G: NON-WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS

Alternate means of final assessment may be appropriate or necessary, such as oral examinations, assessment of practical or performance skills and clinical performance (OSCE). In these final assessments, students must be made aware of the objectives and criteria for evaluation. Suitable notes, records, marking sheets, recordings, etc. must be kept intact for at least one year after last use, and remain accessible to the Department Chair for that period.

1. Oral Examinations

Final oral examinations shall be either recorded or witnessed by a second faculty member who is competent in the subject being examined. Where the examination involves demonstration that cannot adequately be recorded, suitable notes shall be taken by the examiner and the second faculty member so that a written record will be available.

It is recognized this recommendation involves the assumption that final oral examinations can be clearly defined. Undergraduate Council suggest the above procedure be followed for examinations that occur at the end of a course and are worth a significant proportion of the students' final grade. If it is unclear whether a particular examination qualifies as "final", the responsibility for deciding should rest with the Department Chair and the Dean of the Faculty.

2. Practical Skills or Performance Exams

Final examinations can be structured to measure practical skills or performance skills. Students should be informed in advance about the format of the examination and the objectives for

¹ In this document any reference to a Department Chair shall also include the Director of a School or Program.

² Current cost is \$10.00 per examination.

evaluation. Evaluation criteria are determined on the basis of course objectives. Practical skills or performance examinations may be recorded or have multiple observers evaluating the students.

3. Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCE)

An OSCE is an objective evaluation measure used to assess components of clinical competence. Students should be made aware of the objectives for the evaluation in the OSCE, which is structured to sample student performance in a variety of areas relevant to these objectives. Students rotate through a series of timed stations normally each lasting 5-10 minutes. At each station students are asked to perform a specific task (such as taking a patient history, performing a treatment technique, etc.). There are two types of stations. Examiner stations involve the use of a rater who scores a student's performance and may entail interaction with a standardized patient or mannequin. Marker stations, where a student is asked to answer written questions, record findings or interpret patient data, do not require an observer but entail subsequent marking. Evaluation criteria are determined in advance on the basis of course objectives. A rating form or standardised checklist clearly specifies the evaluation criteria and the scoring system to be used by the examiners.

Final OSCE examinations consisting of 8 or more stations can be used toward the final grade in a course. As 8 or more raters (1 per station) are involved in assessing the student's performance, a review of the documentation provided by these raters on the student's performance by an independent faculty member competent in the subject being examined would constitute a fair and adequate review of the student's performance in the case of a student appeal of the mark.

If the final OSCE examination consists of 7 or fewer stations, one of the following must be included when conducting the OSCE examination:

1. A second rater at all examination stations; or
2. Videotaping or audiotaping, depending on the nature of the task being examined of each student at all examiner stations; or
3. Using standardised patients at all examiner stations who are trained to complete a checklist regarding each student's performance.

The standardised marking sheets for each student should be kept intact for a period of 1 year after last use following the end of the academic session in which the evaluation takes place.

SECTION H: DEFERRED EXAMINATIONS (see Sessional Dates section of the Undergraduate Calendar)

For a student who has missed an examination because of compelling medical or personal reasons, he/she must fill out the Petition for Special Consideration: Request for Deferred Examination (Form B). The form must be submitted normally within five working days of the missed examination.

Please note, deferred examinations may affect academic decisions including the eligibility to graduate, admission into a program and progression.

1. Once a student has completed an examination, no subsequent request for special consideration will be granted.
2. If the reason is medical, the approved McMaster University Medical Form must be used. The student must be seen by a doctor at the earliest possible date, normally on or before the date of the missed exam and the doctor must verify the duration of the illness. Relief will not be available for minor illnesses. If the reason is non-medical, appropriate documentation with verifiable origin covering the relevant dates must be submitted, normally within five working days.
3. In deciding whether or not to grant a petition, the adequacy of the supporting documentation, including the timing in relation to the due date of the missed work and the degree of the student's incapacitation, will be taken into account.
4. It is the student's responsibility to check with the Faculty office for a decision on the request for a deferred examination. If the deferred examination is granted, the student will be informed officially by means of the notation DEF which will appear against the relevant course on the student's academic record and on the student's grade report (available on MUGSI).
5. Deferred examinations are written during the next official University deferred examination period. Default of the deferred examination will result in a fail for that examination.
6. Students who have been granted more than one deferred examination may be required by their Faculty/Program office to reduce their course load during the term in which the deferred examinations are being written. The decision on a reduced load will be made and communicated with the decision on the request for deferred examinations.
7. At the discretion of the Faculty/Program office, students who have been granted one or more deferred examinations may not be allowed to register in a subsequent session until all deferred examination(s) have been completed and the Result of Session calculated. Students will be notified of this decision by their Faculty/Program office or on their End of Session Grade Report.

Students wanting to write their approved deferred examination at an institution other than McMaster must submit a Request to Write Deferred Examinations Off-Campus Form at least 15 working days prior to the date of the deferred examination. Any fees incurred are the responsibility of the student. This includes the fee to courier the written examination(s) back to the Office of the Registrar.