

STAFF GUIDANCE – MANAGING THE IMPACT OF INDUSTRIAL ACTION ON TEACHING, ASSESSMENT, PROGRESSION, AWARDS AND EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

This guidance continues to evolve and we will inform staff of future updates (March 2023).

Background

This guidance has been prepared for departments and Exam Boards on managing the impact of industrial action on teaching, assessment, progression, and awards. This guidance will be reviewed periodically and updated to reflect changes to the industrial action and/or its impact on LSE. The impact will vary across LSE. How this guidance is applied to each situation will need to be considered on its individual merits and in line with other School policies, procedures, and regulations, for example, the [Instructions for Examiners](#). The key principles that inform the approach are fairness to students and the maintenance of academic standards.

Guiding Principles

Where possible, the impact of industrial action on students' education will be kept to a minimum and assessments of all types should go ahead as planned. LSE will inform students that it will ensure they are not disadvantaged in their assessments by industrial action, and it should be clear that LSE will preserve the academic standards of its assessments and awards. Course managers must ensure that students are not assessed on teaching they have missed out on due to industrial action.

Cancelled Classes and Student Attendance

Student attendance requirements do not apply to cancelled teaching sessions and attendance registers should be left blank for any affected session. Where teaching has not been impacted by any industrial action, students are expected to attend; if they choose not to, they should be marked as absent without reason. Students on a visa should not be penalised if their class(es) is/are cancelled due to industrial action.

Rescheduling Teaching

If teaching cannot be delivered at the timetabled time due to industrial action, the first option will always be to reschedule the teaching if alternative teaching staff are unavailable to deliver the session(s) at the original timetabled time. Rescheduled teaching should be scheduled within a reasonable timeframe so as not to disrupt the logical progression of student learning on particular courses.

When rescheduling is not possible; for example timetabling constraints or ongoing industrial action, as an exception to the standard teaching delivery model and the supplementary guidance agreed for 2022/23 available [here](#), online teaching should be used in place of in-person teaching if this helps to facilitate rescheduling. Rescheduled teaching should be delivered wherever possible; however, alternatives include allowing students to attend unaffected teaching sessions on the same course or making recordings of the unaffected teaching available to affected students.

Please contact Timetables@lse.ac.uk for queries about rescheduling.

Assessments – Mitigation by Rescheduling and Assessment Revision

Where in-class assessments have not taken place because of industrial action, the assessment should be rescheduled where possible. In cases where it is not possible to reschedule a summative in-class assessment, then staff should substitute an alternative task, e.g., replace a presentation with a written assessment. Where the assessment is continuous, or similar, staff can recalibrate the weighting of the tasks that constitute the assessment to account for any tasks missed due to industrial action, e.g., an overall mark to be based on seven tasks rather than eight. The above would need to apply to all the students on the course and students should be given as much notice as possible of any assessment revisions.

Ideally, departments will reschedule any teaching that students miss because of industrial action, allow students to attend unaffected teaching sessions on the same course, or make recordings of the unaffected teaching available to affected students. However, where this is not possible, for example because of associated industrial action, students must not be assessed on material that they missed because a teaching session was cancelled. To mitigate the impact on students of missing teaching, staff are advised to appropriately adjust the content of any assessment accordingly. This may involve adjusting a question, removing certain questions, removing entire sections, or adjusting the exam paper rubric. Where it is agreed that the most appropriate mitigation for missed teaching is to adjust questions or tasks in an assessment/examination, this should be applied consistently to the whole cohort of students to ensure that the assessment is equitable to all students. Students should be informed of any revisions at the earliest possible opportunity.

To be clear, LSE's position is that if a teaching activity is cancelled due to strike action and the associated missed material is not taught elsewhere, then this material cannot be included in the assessment. For those courses that follow the traditional 'lecture and class/seminar' mode, if all lectures are delivered and therefore 'taught' then all course material is examinable. If additional material not covered by lectures is taught in associated classes/seminars, and any classes/seminars are cancelled due to strike action and the material is not taught in another way (e.g. catch-up online class), then that material cannot be included in the assessment. We acknowledge that this may cause difficulties and might not be well-received by students who covered the affected topics at classes/seminars scheduled on non-strike days.

Any action to adjust the content of an assessment must be agreed in accordance with the normal 'Principles for Scrutiny of Assessment' as set out in Annex D of the [Instructions for Examiners](#). Although external examiners only need to be informed, and LSE will not require external examiner approval for the change, departments are encouraged to facilitate external examiner scrutiny and feedback when possible.

In the event of industrial action affecting the production of exam papers, the deadline for the submission of exam papers to the Exams Team will not change. This is to ensure logistical preparations for exams can be made on time. Please ensure that exam papers are submitted by the deadline as normal: **27 March 2023** for May/June 2023 exams (**14 April 2023** for RDAP2 PGT papers only), and **19 July 2023** for August 2023 IRDAP exams. Ideally, any adjustments that may be required to exam papers should be made before they are submitted. However, if there is a paper where adjustments due to industrial action are required after the submission deadline, this should be flagged to the Exams Team. The department will need to print a full set of revised exam papers and deliver these to the Exams Team in-person at a pre-agreed time.

Students undertaking research projects/dissertations may be affected differently depending on their supervision and support arrangements. As with other courses, any mitigation for teaching/supervision missed due to industrial action should be applied consistently to all students in a cohort. However, some circumstances might require different forms of mitigation to be applied to students in the same cohort e.g., some might require extensions where others do not, dependent on the extent of industrial action in a particular department or as it affects a particular course.

Students must be informed proactively by course teachers as soon as possible about any mitigation that has been applied, including changes to exam papers, and the rationale for applying that mitigation.

Marking and Moderation

It is expected that all marking will be conducted as normal and likewise, that all normal internal and external moderation practices will apply.

Timelines for the return of marks to the Student Services Centre will remain as published. If provisional January exam marks are not submitted by the deadline, marks may be released late to students. If final marks are not submitted by the deadline, results will not be ready to be considered by the Sub-Board and/or School Board, and results may be released late to students.

Progression

Given the mitigations outlined above, it is not expected that any industrial action will impact on individual student's ability to progress. However, it may be possible to consider any specific impact on a student as part of a future request for exceptional progression.

As noted above, if Sub-Boards of Examiners do not meet as a result of industrial action and final mark frames are not submitted to the Student Services Centre by the required deadline, results will not be ratified by the relevant School Board at the scheduled time, and results may be released late to students.

External Examiners

The University and College Union (UCU) has previously called on External Examiners to resign their duties as part of industrial action. UCU has also previously advised them to fulfil all contractual obligations, including notice period, and this is LSE's expectation too. External Examiner's appointment letters state:

"Your appointment as an External Examiner does not place restrictions on your activities or employment outside of your role (save to the extent that they might impact on your eligibility for the role). Please note that your appointment does not confer on you the status of employee of the School and you should not describe yourself as such at any time. If you wish to terminate your appointment, this should normally be arranged to take effect at the end of an academic year, but in any case, is subject to three months' notice by either party."

UCU have previously advised External Examiners to complete their notice periods, and LSE would likewise expect them to do so.

In an instance where an External Examiner cannot, or will not, carry out their usual role because of industrial action, the [Instructions for Examiners](#) Annex B, states:

B.4.6. In cases of industrial action, IT failings, serious illness and unexpected resignation, the Academic Board approved the use of an ad-hoc group comprising the USSC and GSSC Chairs, the Chairs of the School and Graduate Boards of Examiners, and the Academic Registrar. It has delegated authority from the Academic Board to put in place extraordinary arrangements to continue the School's assessment processes when replacement External Examiners cannot be found at short notice, including the appointment of an 'internal' external who would perform the duties set out in sections 7.2.1 and 7.2.2 of the 'Instructions for Examiners'; exercise the authority, as necessary, as set out in 7.2.5 and 7.2.6; receive the External Examiner fee; but not be required to prepare and submit the external's report.

If departments do need to appoint an 'internal' external, it is recommended that they try and do so from a cognate academic discipline if possible. If it is not possible to appoint an 'internal' external prior to scrutinising assessment questions, confirming marks, or prior to a Sub-Board meeting, these activities should proceed without one.

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