

## Academic year reform implementation

### Frequently asked questions – Information for departments

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#### GENERAL

**1. How is the structure of the 2015-16 academic year (and thereafter) different from earlier sessions?**

In 2015-16, the School has moved to a system of two 11-week teaching terms and a 7-week Summer Term. A new exam period will also be held in the week prior to the start of Lent Term.

#### DATES

**2. What are the term dates for this year?**

Michaelmas Term 2015: Thursday 24 September – Friday 11 December

Lent Term Exams 2016: Monday 4 January – Friday 8 January

Lent Term 2016: Monday 11 January – Thursday 24 March

Summer Term 2016: Monday 25 April – Friday 10 June

**3. What are the closure dates for this year?**

Christmas: Wednesday 23 December 2015 – Friday 1 January 2016

Easter: Friday 25 March – Thursday 31 March 2016

May Bank Holiday: Monday 2 May 2016

Spring Bank Holiday: Monday 30 May 2016

Summer Bank Holiday: Monday 29 August 2016

**4. What are the other important dates for this year?**

|                                    |                               |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Early degree-specific registration | From 24 August 2015           |
| Pre-sessional registration         | From 25 August 2015           |
| Pre-sessional teaching             | 25 August – 25 September 2015 |
| Main registration period           | 18-25 September 2015          |
| Welcome Week                       | 21-25 September 2015          |
| First day of MT teaching           | 28 September 2015             |
| MT WK6                             | 2-6 November 2015             |
| Graduation ceremonies              | 14-17 December 2015           |
| LT0 exams                          | 4-8 January 2016              |
| First day of LT teaching           | 11 January 2016               |
| LT WK6                             | 15-19 February 2016           |
| First day of ST                    | 25 April 2016                 |
| Exams                              | 3 May – 10 June 2016          |

|                       |                 |
|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Exam sub-boards       | 20-24 June 2016 |
| School exam boards    | 29-30 June 2016 |
| Graduation ceremonies | 13-15 July 2016 |

## READING WEEKS

### 5. How will the extra term-time weeks in Michaelmas and Lent Terms be used?

The only requirement is that where departments have chosen to use this extra week as a reading week, it must be held in WK6. But there is no requirement to hold a reading week: some departments will teach across all 11 weeks of term. Examples of how departments are using the extra term-time week in different ways are set out below:

| <u>Approach</u>                       | <u>Details</u>   | <u>Departments</u>  |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| Pure reading weeks                    | Some departments plan to hold department-wide reading weeks, with no scheduled activities. This approach will preserve space in the middle of the term for students to consolidate their learning and to prepare assignments.  | Anthropology, Economic History, European Institute, Gender, Methodology, Geography and Environment, Media and Communications, |
| Mixed reading weeks                   | Some departments plan to hold department-wide reading weeks, but have permitted programme directors and individual course conveners to determine how best to make use of the time. Some courses (i.e. within the same dept) plan to offer a pure reading week, while others will hold essay-writing and advice sessions; research methods and design workshops; skills development training; film viewings; and applied case studies, to name but some of the additional learning activities that departments have reported. | International History, International Relations, Language Centre, Management, Methodology, Government, Sociology               |
| Formal teaching + mixed reading weeks | Some departments have left both the decision about whether to hold a reading week and what to do during it to individual course conveners. Some courses (i.e. within the same dept) will feature teaching across all 11 weeks (e.g. lectures in WK1-10; classes/seminars in WK2-11; or formal teaching in WK1-10 and revision teaching in WK11); while other courses will feature WK6 reading weeks, of which some will host additional learning activities.   | Accounting, Law, Statistics, Social Policy  |
| Formal teaching                       | Some departments have confirmed that they will teach across all 11 weeks of term in all courses (e.g. lectures in WK1-10, classes/seminars in WK2-11; or formal teaching in WK1-10 and revision teaching in WK11).   | Economics, Finance, Mathematics, Social Psychology  |

6. **Will there be a protocol for prioritising any clashes between formal teaching (i.e. for a course that is not observing a reading week) and additional learning activities on a course that is holding a skills-based or other type of value-added activity in WK6?**

In practice, there should be very few clashes of this kind. Departments running a WK6 learning activity will do so during the normal lecture or class/seminar slot for the course in question (i.e. where it is a course-specific activity); or during the normal lecture or class/seminar slot for the core course (i.e. where it is a programme-specific activity). Scheduling additional learning activities in this way will mean that they should not clash with formal teaching.

There are a handful of courses, however, that plan to run additional learning activities that will take longer to deliver than the length of the corresponding lecture or class/seminar slot (e.g. film screenings/discussions). In such cases, the activity will need to be truly 'additional', in the sense that a student will not be disadvantaged in assessment if she/he has to miss it owing to a clash with formal teaching.

7. **Will School committee meetings be scheduled during WK6 of both terms?**

Yes.

## EXAMS

8. **Which courses will be examined in LT Week 0 2016?**

The list of courses that will be examined in LT Week 0 next year can be found [here](#). Please make your 2015-16 new and continuing students aware of this list.

The LT week 0 exam period will take place from Monday 4<sup>th</sup> – Friday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2016 inclusive. Please note that we are now at capacity for holding these exams and are unable to accept any further requests for LT week 0 exams for LT 15/16.

Owing to the short exam period, we will not be able to accept any specific timetable requests from Departments. The timetable will be available from Monday 30<sup>th</sup> November with student personal timetables being produced following this.

The Student Services Bulletin will be circulated shortly and will give Departments full details of the students who we expect to take week 0 LT exams, including deferred, resitting and interrupted students. It will also give you information regarding all aspects of the exam process including the production and submission of exam papers.

A dedicated 'Lent Term Week 0 Examinations' webpage is now available online [here](#). You can find information about:

- Lent Term Week 0 Examination Timetable;
- Re-Entry of Deferred, Discounted or Failed Examinations for Lent Term Week 0;
- Visa Guidance: Non-UK/EEA Students with Lent Term Week 0 Re-sit Assessments;
- Individual Examination Adjustments;
- Applying for IEAs in Lent Term Week 0;
- Illness and Other Exceptional Circumstances;
- Overseas Examination Arrangements.

9. **When will the LT Week 0 2016 exam schedule be available?**

30 November 2015

**10. Can students on 30 week contracts stay in halls of residences during LT0 2016?**

LSE student residents in Carr-Saunders, Rosebery and Passfield Halls who are required to attend examinations during the week commencing Monday 4 January 2016 can now make contact with the reception desk in their hall to arrange to extend their stay to arrive back early after the vacation. Term time rates will apply for each additional night booked from Sunday 3 January onwards.

Students who wish to extend their booking should visit the reception of the hall between Wednesday 7 October and Friday 19 October to reserve their room. Students who wish to book after these dates, will be subject to availability and will pay a student vacation rate. Students who are late arrivals (e.g. students who have not yet arrived to the hall) should contact the hall by 31 October at the very latest to complete their bookings.

**11. What will the status of LT Week 0 exam results be?**

Registry will provide guidance to departments on the formatting, paper deadline and marks processing arrangements for LT Week 0 exams in early Michaelmas Term 2015. This will include guidance on the timing of the return of provisional marks to Registry.

LT Week 0 exam results will remain provisional until ratified in the normal way by end-of-session exam boards. However, good practice suggests that these provisional results, together with exam feedback, be provided to students. Some departments which will be running LT Week 0 exams have already undertaken to do so.

The School has thought carefully about how to manage the results of LT Week 0 exams and will not hold additional exam boards or release final results until the normal, published times in the academic year (i.e. July and November).

A decision has been taken to provisionally release marks for LT week 0 exams in Week 6 of LT. This was based upon several factors, including providing a realistic marking turnaround time for markers for exams taken in LT week 0 whilst still allowing time for the results to feed in to developmental and support activities. It is envisaged that by releasing results at this time, any academic issues can be addressed in advance of the next summative assessment period.

Results will be released utilising the provisional results release system designed for students taking 12-month Masters programmes. Marks should be returned to Registry in the usual way, by no later than week 4 of the LT and will be released in the provisional results screen of LSE for You during Week 6. Departments can apply to opt out of releasing Week 0 LT exam results by making a case to either GSBE or SBE.

**12. If a student fails, bad fails or defers a LT0 exam, can he/she re-sit or make the deferred attempt in the ST?**

No. The absence of autumn re-sits would make it inequitable for students who fail LT week 0 exams to re-sit in the Summer Term (i.e. because students who fail in Summer Term have no equally proximate re-sit opportunity). School regulations have been amended to clarify that re-sits or deferred attempts can only be made in the equivalent exam period the following year.

The only exception to this rule will be in the 2015-16 transitional year, e.g. if a student fails, bad fails or defers a ST 2015 exam in one of the courses that from 2015-16 will be examined in LT week 0.

## **Resists/Deferrals/Interruptions**

The 15/16 academic year is a transition year while the new exam arrangements bed in. As such, we need to consider each set of potential student circumstances and the most appropriate approach to each. Please do contact Cheryl Edwardes at [C.A.Edwardes@lse.ac.uk](mailto:C.A.Edwardes@lse.ac.uk) if you have any questions regarding a scenario which is not accounted for below. These are the default positions for these situations. However, some courses have large numbers of students from 14/15 whose exam is now due to take place in LT week 0 or is split across both periods, while others have very small numbers. In the cases of courses with very small numbers i.e. 1 or 2, we may be able to discuss the individual student circumstances if necessary and apply some flexibility.

### **Scenario 1 - The exam is moving from the ST to LT week 0 and all assessment for the course remains the same i.e. the exam is the same format and weight:**

e.g. EH401 was formerly assessed 100% by a two-hour exam in ST. It will now be assessed 100% by a two-hour exam in LT week 0.

Exams that fall into this category in 2015/16 are PH228, PH230, ST226, ST302, ST306, EH401, EH402, EH413, EH414, EH463, EH481, GV441, GV443, GV467, GV4C9, GV4G4, LL4A8, LL4BH, LL4CD, LL4CL, LL4CN, LL4F4, LL4K9, LL4Z6, PH428, ST409, ST422, ST425, ST427, ST435.

The student takes the exam in week 0 LT, but can apply to take the exam overseas if they are unable to travel to LSE for their exam for good reason.

### **Scenario 2 - The exam element of the course is moving from the ST to LT Week 0 and comprises a larger or smaller proportion of the overall assessment for the course:**

e.g. AC411 was formerly assessed 100% by a 90 minute exam in ST. It will now be assessed 70% by a two-hour exam in LT0, plus an essay (15%) and project (15%).

Exams that fall into this category in 2015/16 are AC411, PH430, PS400, PS404, PS429.

If the syllabus for the course has changed, the Department will be asked to set an appropriate paper for the 14/15 syllabus as would have been the case under the previous exam timings, and the students will sit the exam in week 0 LT.

If the syllabus has not changed, the Department will be asked to set an exam paper for the resit students which reflects the 14/15 weighting of the paper and the students will take the exam in week 0 LT.

Again, students can apply to take the exam overseas if they are unable to travel to LSE for their exam for good reason.

### **Scenario 3: The exam element of the course has been split between the ST and LT week 0 exam periods.**

e.g. EC102 was formerly assessed 100% by a three-hour exam in ST. It will now be assessed 50% by a two-hour exam in LT0 and 50% by a two-hour exam in ST.

Exams that fall into this category in 2015/16 are EC100, EC102, MA100, ST102.

If the syllabus has changed, the Department will be asked to set a resit paper for all 14/15 students as would have been the case under the previous exam timings. Students will sit the exam in just the ST period, to reflect the original timing of the assessment.

If the syllabus has not changed, the Department will be asked to set an ST paper which is suitable for all candidates and students will sit the exam in just the ST period, to reflect the original timing of the assessment.

If the ST exam duration has been altered for current (non-resit) students to reflect the revised weighting of the exam, Departments can set one core paper (i.e. where the syllabus has not changed) which is shortened or lengthened by adding or removing questions to reach the necessary exam duration as appropriate for the group of students in question.

In cases where the ST exam duration has remained the same for non-resit students as resit students despite the revised weighting of the exam, the Department will be asked to set two exam papers which reflect the work expected of students taking papers of different weights.

Again, students can apply to take the exam overseas if they are unable to travel to LSE for their exam for good reason.

### **13. Deferral Processes**

#### **Before the School Closure**

If students submit deferral forms to you before the School closes on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> December, please follow the normal process. Whilst not essential it would be helpful if students could use the most up to date version of the [Deferral of Assessment](#) form.

#### **During the School Closure**

We will have staff working over the Christmas closure period to monitor enquiries sent to [ssc.advice@lse.ac.uk](mailto:ssc.advice@lse.ac.uk). We are aiming to respond to urgent queries related to LT week 0 exams within five days wherever possible. The support is focused on the days after Christmas day when we anticipate there will be the most need..

If students seek to defer a LT week 0 exam during closure, we will advise them to complete the deferral form and collate the evidence as soon as possible. After this we'll advise them to make contact with the person responsible for authorising deferrals by email and if appropriate be prepared to bring the form, with evidence, to the School to authorised on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January.

We would prefer Sub-board Chairs to be available to authorise deferrals. However, if this is not possible, Departments should nominate another staff member to authorise deferral requests on the Chair's behalf.

Those who are responsible for authorising deferral requests must understand the following points in order to be able to advise students in the event of questions:

- If students defer the LT 0 exam element of a course they will still be expected to complete all other assessments unless these are also deferred. If any assessment element of a course is deferred, the whole course will be treated as deferred during results processing in the summer. The marks from elements not deferred will normally be 'banked' and used the following year, but this varies by department.
- Students taking exams for a course which is split over the LT 0 and ST exam periods can only apply to defer the LT 0 exam at the time proximate to their LT 0 exam. If they wish to subsequently apply to defer the ST exam, they should do this at a time proximate to the ST exam.
- If a student is seeking to defer both their LT 0 and ST exams for a course, they should instead be advised to interrupt, if the circumstances warrant it. If it is not possible to approve the interruption before LT 0 exams commence, students should be advised to apply to defer their LT 0 exams and submit an application to interrupt as soon as possible following that. In such cases, and where there is clear evidence for an interruption, the deferral request can be approved, pending the interruption approval.

- If a student misses a LT 0 exam and does not apply to defer the exam, they will be marked as incomplete for the entire course, which could result in non-progression. All usual criteria for applying for exceptional progression apply and can be found [here](#).

#### **After the School Closure i.e. during the LT 0 exam period**

Again, please follow the normal deferral application process. Whilst not essential it would be helpful if the most up to date version of the [Deferral of Assessment](#) form.

### **14. Students Receiving Repeat Teaching**

Students who are receiving repeat teaching are examined on the syllabus for which they last received teaching. So, if a student is having repeat teaching in 2015/16, they will be examined on the 2015/16 syllabus and will have to take exams in January if that is how the course is now assessed. It is not possible for a student to be examined on any other syllabus than that in which they last received teaching.

Students may only receive repeat teaching for the courses that have been formally agreed by the Repeat Teaching Panel.

### **15. Release of Provisional Results**

It is expected that all Departments will release provisional results from the LT week 0 exam period. However, if you wish to apply to opt-out of releasing provisional results for these exams, please utilise the standard process to do so: an application to the SBE or GSBE Chair via Nicola Foster.

Please note that from the summer 15/16, applications to opt out of provisional results release will no longer be accepted by the SBE and GSBE Chairs and all Departments will be expected to release provisional results. Please ensure the relevant External Examiners are made aware of the expectation to review work in advance of provisional result release.

### **16. How do we appoint External Examiners for LT Week 0 exams?**

Some departments will require an external examiner to be appointed now due to the imminent expiration of the contracts held by the external examiners responsible for these courses. In these cases, departments can either:

1. Extend existing contracts to meet January exam requirements for 2015/16 or
2. Recruit new externals such that their contracts begin as soon as possible in MT 2015.

We realise that the timeframe for either option is short but we would do all we could to support departments with the implementation of either option.

Information regarding external examiners, and a link to the latest version of the *Instructions to Examiners*, can be found on the [information for examiners webpage](#)

The webpage also includes links to the Sub-Board Chair nomination form, the external examiner's report form and the external examiner's expense payment form. Please direct externals to this page during and after exam boards if they have any queries.

### **17. Visa Enquiries**

The LSE International Student Immigration Service (ISIS) has extensive information on its webpages for students re-taking assessments

<http://www.lse.ac.uk/intranet/students/ISIS/currentStudents/RetakeExams.aspx>

If your students have enquiries regarding the visa implications of re-taking or having deferred assessments, please direct them to these pages.

**18. What if a student absents him/herself from a LT0 exam? Will she/he be able to progress?**

The student will receive a '0 Incomplete' or '0 Absent' mark for the course in question, depending on whether the exam is the sole piece of summative assessment for the course. For students on degree programmes (i.e. not General Course students), progression will depend on their overall results at the end of the year, to which the normal progression rules will apply, e.g. an undergraduate student may progress to the next year of his/her programme if she/he is carrying no more than 1.0 failed units.

**19. Can the seven-week ST accommodate any revision teaching?**

WK1 of the ST will be held open for revision teaching, with exams starting the following week on 3 May 2016. Some departments plan to use LT11 for revision teaching, which is fine. To be clear, there is no requirement to hold revision teaching on individual courses that have not done so in the past.

**20. What about revision teaching beyond ST1?**

The teaching timetable was insufficiently processed by the time the course guides were published at the end of August 2015 to assure the availability of teaching space alongside exams beyond ST1. Course guides should therefore officially state that any ST teaching will take place in WK1 only. Timetables contacted course conveners who requested teaching space beyond ST1 via the web data collector. In practice, it is possible that teaching space beyond ST1 will be available, which Timetables will help book later in the year; or which course conveners can book via LFY.

**21. ST exams finish on 10 June, but sub-board meetings run from 20-24 June, outside of term. Was this in the original proposal?**

The final academic year reform proposal that Academic Board approved in May 2014 gave no undertaking that academic staff would not have any exam processing responsibilities beyond the end of ST7. To achieve that scenario, all exams would need to be completed by the end of ST3. The School has insufficient exam space to allow all exams to be completed by that time.

**INFORMATION**

**22. What information should we make available to our students?**

Please make available to new and continuing students your MT and LT WK6 plans at the individual course level. This information will allow students to see what their WK6 will look like, depending on their combination of course choices across departments.

One way to do this is to publish on your websites the 'Departmental WK6 Plans' you submitted by 22 May, with some guidance on the implications of a) holding a reading week with or without a room (i.e. whether a WK6 learning activity is scheduled or not), and b) of not holding a reading week (i.e. whether formal teaching will extend across the full 11 weeks of term). An example from Law's submission follows:

| Course code | Course title       | MT Week 6 reading week? | MT Room required? | LT Week 6 reading week? | LT Room required? |
|-------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| LL104       | Law of Obligations | Yes                     | No                | Yes                     | No                |

**23. Anything else?**

Yes, for any of your courses that plan to hold a pure reading week in WK6, please indicate the level of staff presence students can expect.

**24. What about LT0 exams?**

Yes, please make your new and continuing students aware of the list of [LT0 2016 exams](#). The Admissions team also made this information known to offer-holders.

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For further information on any of the points above, or for any questions that are not covered, please contact Cheryl Edwardes regarding LT week 0 exams ([c.a.edwardes@lse.ac.uk](mailto:c.a.edwardes@lse.ac.uk), ext. 7149) or Tom Hewlett ([t.w.hewlett@lse.ac.uk](mailto:t.w.hewlett@lse.ac.uk), ext. 6387).

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