

Chapter 8

How do we assess your work?

This chapter deals with formative assignments (FAs), assessed coursework for core and advanced modules (AAs), and how to take the examinations.

Please read this carefully before you start working on your assignments/preparing for your exams.

Assessing your work

Quite reasonably, many students worry about their degree and whether they will pass or fail. Some students worry more than others, in particular: those who have returned to academic life after many years' absence; those who are from other countries with different educational systems; or those for whom English is not their first language. Just the thought of examinations, of writing essays, of doing projects, of being marked, can be terrifying! Don't panic! We don't admit you to the International Programmes unless we think you have got what it takes to pass. You will certainly need to work hard, but if you work hard, you should pass.

So, how do we assess your work?

- The core modules of the Postgraduate Diploma and the advanced modules of the MSc are assessed by unseen written papers in the June examinations or by a written assignment. In addition there will be formative assignments (FAs) which are a progress test for each of the core modules but don't count towards the final degree.
- For the advanced modules of the MSc, the final assessment of your work will be based on a combination of examinations (the annual June examinations) and coursework (assessed assignments) for the advanced modules. Most of the advanced modules also have formative assignments associated with them, which again act as a progress test but do not count towards the final degree.

The project report counts towards the final assessment and completing students also have to sit an additional unseen written examination (E400) which draws together all the knowledge and skills you have learnt throughout the course (further information on the E400 paper will follow later in this chapter).

Details of how the assessment process is carried out and how grades are awarded can be found later in this chapter.

We encourage you to discuss issues relating to Epidemiology assignments with your fellow students, via WebBoard. It is important to note however that, while we encourage discussion, submitted assignments must be your own work.

If you are **re-sitting a module** this year, please refer to the section on page 71.

Assignments for core modules

Individual core module assignments should be downloaded from the module pages on the course website: <http://www.lshtm.ac.uk/dl/programme/student/ep/student/coremodules.htm>

Log-in details (username and password) for the course website will be sent to you at the beginning of the year. Please contact the Student Support Office dlsupport@lshtm.ac.uk if you are not able to download the current assignments for any reason.

Continuing students - please note that hard copy Assignment booklets are no longer produced. You must ensure you download the assignments corresponding to the year in which you are submitting your assignment for marking. Assignments from previous years will not be accepted.

Assignments for the Epidemiology core modules include:

- 4 Formative Assignments (FAs) for EP101 Fundamentals of Epidemiology
- 4 Formative Assignments (FAs) for EP102 Statistics with Computing
- 4 Formative Assignments (FAs) for EP103 Practical Epidemiology
- 2 Formative Assignments (FAs) for EP105 Writing and Reviewing Scientific Papers
- 1 Assessed Assignment (AA) for EP105 Writing and Reviewing Scientific Papers

Formative Assignments

The Formative Assignments (FAs) are progress checks in the core modules which all students are encouraged to complete and submit for feedback before they take the examinations in those modules. The results will not count towards the final degree but you are strongly advised to complete them if you can. The FAs give you an opportunity to review the progress you have made and to receive tutorial feedback from LSHTM. Core module FAs usually involve answering a series of short-answer questions. Instructions specific to the module FAs will be included within the FA itself. Study these instructions carefully, and when you are planning your study make sure to allocate enough time to do the FAs; plan to submit them well ahead of the deadlines so that if your studies are delayed unexpectedly you still have some time to complete them (see also Chapter 3, Section 5).

FAs should be submitted together with the **Formative Assignment submission sheet** an electronic copy of this sheet can be downloaded from the course website– (note this is different to the AA submission sheet). In this FA submission sheet, we invite you to identify any particular areas that you would like the tutor to address in their feedback. Please be specific in your comments, and explain clearly why you would like feedback on these areas – for example, any particular difficulties that you encountered. Completion of the comments section is optional and, regardless of whether you complete this section, you will still receive a grade and personalised feedback for your FA. Please note also that if you feel that any of your queries would benefit from student discussion and suitable to share with other students, we encourage you to post them on the WebBoard instead.

One assignment for **EP103** involves collaboration in group discussions on a Virtual Ethics Committee via the WebBoard and email. Dates for six-week group discussion periods will be sent to all students registered for EP103 via the WebBoard and email in the autumn. You should email the Student Support Office to register your interest and preferred time slot by the 29th October. Students work together via email/WebBoard to produce one final report.

Assessed Assignment

Module **EP105** *Writing and Reviewing Scientific Papers* is assessed solely by a written assessed assignment (AA), there is no unseen written examination. The AA comprises two parts: it is important that you submit both parts of the assignment for marking at the same time.. If you wish to submit the EP105 AA for marking this year, you should enter EP105 onto your examination entry form. There is no unseen written examination for this module

Assignments are subject to change each year and it is your responsibility to ensure you submit the correct assignment for the year in which you are submitting. Assignments should be downloaded from the course website.

Your EP105 AA should be submitted together with the **Assessed Assignment submission sheet** (an electronic copy of this sheet can be downloaded from the course website - note this is different to the FA submission sheet).

Assignments for advanced modules

Individual module assignments (Formative Assignments and Assessed Assignments) should be downloaded from the course website:

www.lshtm.ac.uk/dl/programme/student/ep/student/advancedmodules.htm Log-in details (username and password) for the course website will be sent to you at the beginning of the year. Please contact the Student Support Office dlsupport@lshtm.ac.uk if you are not able to download the current assignments for any reason.

Please note that hard copy Assignment booklets are no longer produced. You must ensure you download the assignments corresponding to the year in which you are submitting your assignment for marking. Assignments from previous years will not be accepted.

You may also have received the relevant course *Advanced Module Assignment* booklet (ID or PH) if you are taking any non-EP modules. EP students registered for any CT modules will be advised of the CT module assignments via the online learning environment.

Assignments for the Epidemiology advanced modules include:

- i) 1 Formative Assignment (FA) for each of the Epidemiology advanced modules (except EP201)
- ii) 1 Summary outline for EP201
- iii) 1 Assessed Assignment (AA) for each of the Epidemiology advanced modules.

Formative Assignments (Epidemiology / Clinical Trials advanced modules only)

The EP and CT advanced modules (but not those of the ID or PH courses) have formative assignments (FAs). As discussed in the core module assignment section, the results will not count towards the final degree but you are strongly encouraged to do them and to submit them early in the study year (ideally by 31 December), as the feedback you receive will help you carry out your assessed coursework. Instructions specific to the module FAs will be included within the FA itself. Study these instructions carefully, and when you are planning your study make sure to allocate enough time to do the FAs; plan to submit them well ahead of the deadlines so that if your studies are delayed unexpectedly you still have some time to complete them.

FAs should be submitted together with the **Formative Assignment submission sheet** an electronic copy of this sheet can be downloaded from the course website– (note this is different to the AA submission sheet). In this FA submission sheet, we invite you to identify any particular areas that you would like the tutor to address in their feedback. Please be specific in your comments, and explain clearly why you would like feedback on these areas – for example, any particular difficulties that you encountered. Completion of the comments section is optional and, regardless of whether you complete this section, you will still receive a grade and personalised feedback for your FA. Please note also that if you feel that any of your queries would benefit from student discussion and suitable to share with other students, we encourage you to post them on the WebBoard instead.

Please note the deadline for submitting FAs for EP202, 303, 304 & 306 is now the 28th February. The EP301 FA deadline is 31st March.

Assessed Assignments

- All advanced modules, including those from the other DL courses (CT, ID or PH), are assessed by a combination of unseen written examinations and written assignments. (The assessment for EP201 is wholly by an assignment - see below for further details.) The assessed assignments (AAs) are compulsory and in order to pass an advanced module you are required to obtain a minimum grade point of 1.00 for your AA assignment, otherwise the module grade is considered a fail and you would need to re-sit the AA component the following year.

**Assignments are subject to change each year and it is your responsibility to ensure you submit the correct assignment for the year in which you are submitting.
Assignments should be downloaded from the course website.**

If you have any doubts about which assignment you should be doing, please contact the Student Support Office. If you are re-sitting an assignment you will need to complete a different assignment to the one completed before - please contact the Student Support Office for details (see section below for further details on re-sitting).

Please ensure that you have read and understood the instructions before commencing your assignment. AAs should be submitted together with the Assessed Assignment submission sheet (an electronic copy of this sheet can be downloaded from the DL website).

Where appropriate you should cite sources and use correct referencing. Please see page 75 and Appendix 7 for more information, as well as the *Academic Writing Handbook* (available on the course website).

The advanced module **EP201** is assessed solely by a written assignment (there is no unseen written examination). For EP201, students must choose an assignment topic and submit an outline summary via AMS by the following deadlines:

- by 28 February if planning to submit AA by 31 May
- by 31 May if planning to submit AA by 31 August.

The assignment for **EP301** involves collaboration in group discussions via the WebBoard and email. Dates for six-week group discussion periods will be sent to all students registered for EP301 via the WebBoard and email in the autumn. You should email the Student Support Office if you have not been notified of your group by 31 October. Students work together via email/WebBoard to produce one final report which will form the assignment for the module, comprising 30% of the overall grade for the module.

WebBoard discussion of assignments

We encourage you to discuss issues relating to Epidemiology assignments with your fellow students, via WebBoard. As explained in Chapter 7, FA and AA conferences will be open for each module from 1 October until the FA/AA submission date for that module and will be made 'read only' after this date. The purpose of these conferences is to enable discussion of conceptual issues, but should not be used as a forum for sharing your individual conclusions or answers. Tutors will moderate these discussions, intervening and guiding you as appropriate, but will not provide the answers for you. If at any time you are unsure about what you may or may not discuss in the conference, please post a message to this effect for clarification from the tutors. Please note however that the nature of the guidance provided depends on the specific AA, and the module, and so there may be differences between the modules in the extent and type of guidance provided.

It is important to note that while we encourage you to discuss issues relating to FAs and AAs with each other via the WebBoard your submission must be your own work.

When and how to send in your assignments

How to submit assignments

When you log into the AMS, and before you upload your assignment, you must read and accept the **Plagiarism Declaration**. An explanation of what plagiarism is and how to avoid it are given later in this chapter. The School uses the plagiarism detection service Turnitin UK for cross-checking assessment submissions.

You should submit all assignments via the Assignment Management System (AMS). Full details on how to do use the AMS are given in Appendix 3. If you are sending in an advanced assignment from the CT, ID or PH courses you should still upload your assignment to AMS.

You may submit your EP assignments from the 1st October. Please see Table 1 overleaf for submission deadlines. Some important points to note:

- Please send **one** assignment per file, and make sure that your student number appears on each page of your work.
- Please ensure pages are numbered.
- Please ensure you have completed the assignment submission form (FA or AA as appropriate). Please use whichever text format is simplest: our preference is for Microsoft Word. Excel files can also be sent. If you are in doubt about the format, save your work in Rich Text Format (*.RTF), which can be read by most word processors, or contact the Student Support Office.
- Remember that your work will be printed out in black and white – so do not use colour.
- Please also ensure that your final document submitted does not contain any review functions such as Track Changes or comments.

Only one version of your assessed assignment can be accepted for marking - once you have submitted your final assignment we cannot accept any further late revisions so make sure

the assignment you send in is the correct and final version that you wish to be sent for marking.

Please note you may only upload one file to the AMS, if you have more than one file then you will need to either zip these or re-format to one document.

Assessment criteria

Penalties will be applied if you fail to adhere to the assessment criteria for a piece of work - for example, the word/page limit or formatting instructions. Penalties will be set according to the severity of the offence e.g. downgrading by one or more grades, or an automatic fail grade for substantial breaches of criteria.

Submission deadlines

All assessed assignments must be completed and submitted to the Assignment Management System by the deadlines outlined in Table 1.

Please note that all assignments (FAs and AAs) must be submitted by 12 midnight UK time on the due date. The penalties for assignments submitted after this deadline are as follows:

- **Formative Assignments (FAs) submitted after this time will not be marked.**
- **Assessed Assignments (AAs) submitted up to 7 days after the submission deadline will be given a deduction of one grade. AAs submitted more than 7 days past the submission deadline will not be accepted and students will be required to submit their assignment for the module the following year or a later year.**

Table1 Assignment submission deadlines and feedback times

Module	Assignment	Deadline	Feedback time
EP101 & EP102	Formative Assignment (FA)	31 March	Within 4 weeks
EP103	Formative Assignment (FA)	31 March or 6 weeks after the start date for the EP103 VEC exercise	Within 4 weeks
EP105	Formative Assignment (FA)	31 March (when submitting AA for 31 May deadline) or 31 May (when submitting AA for 31 August deadline)	Within 4 weeks
	Assessed Assignment (AA)	31 May or 31 August*	End of August or End of November

* Please note that if your subsequent progression to advanced modules depends upon you passing the EP105 module (e.g. if you have only passed EP101 and EP102 in June), then progression to advanced modules would be delayed until early December (as results from the August EP105 AA submission would take until then to be formally confirmed). No extensions to the submission date for advanced module assignments will be given for delayed progression.

Module	Assignment	Deadline	Feedback time
EP201	EP201 grant outline	28 February (if submitting AA for 31 May) <i>or</i> 31 May (if submitting AA for 31 August)	Within 4 weeks
	Assessed Assignment (AA)	31 May <i>or</i> 31 August	End of August <i>or</i> End of November
EP202, EP303, EP304, EP306	Formative Assignment (FA)	28 February	Within 4 weeks
	Assessed Assignment (AA)	31 March	End of May
EP301	Formative Assignment (FA)	31 March	Within 4 weeks
	Assessed Assignment (AA)	6 weeks after the assigned start date of outbreak group	Between 1 April-31 May, depending on timing of outbreak group
CT advanced modules	Formative Assignment (FA)	31 March	Within 6 weeks of submission
	Assessed Assignment (AA)	31 March 12 May	By end of May By end of August
ID & PH advanced modules	Assessed Assignment (AA)	31 March*	Mid - end of May

*Please note that PH AAs cannot be submitted before 1st January.

Extensions to submission deadlines

In extenuating circumstances, for example acute illness, you may request a deadline extension. This should be requested, and will need to be agreed, before the original deadline arrives - retrospective extensions will not be given where it would have been possible to make such a request ahead of the original deadline, or where a request is made so late that agreement cannot be given before the original deadline arrives. Deadline extensions should be sought via the Student Support Office, in writing, setting out full reasons why you may be unable to meet the normal deadline. Medical Certificates and other supporting documentation may be required. The Faculty Taught Course Director will decide on all requests, and this decision will be communicated back via the Student Support Office.

Before requesting an extension, please remember that if one is granted, submitting after the deadline may delay the return of your grade and feedback, which are intended to guide your preparation for your exams. It will also limit the time you have available to prepare for your exams. We encourage you to make every effort to submit your assignments on time, thereby giving you time to focus on preparing for your exams in June and time to consider the grade awarded and feedback provided for your assignments.

Feedback and grades

Formative Assignments

Formative assignments are marked by a member of staff highly qualified in the subject area of the module. Staff who assess assignments are advised to:

- a) provide comments that are constructive and as helpful as possible; and
- b) return feedback by the dates outlined in Table 1 above.

Feedback on your assignment is designed to help you understand the subject area, learn how well you have responded to the task at hand and/or may have improved your response and to support you in preparation for the final exam.

Feedback and a grade will be returned to you via the Assignment Management System usually within 4 weeks of receipt (see Table 1 above). A specimen answer will usually be available on AMS once you have submitted your assignment for all EP FAs except EP105.1

For advanced module EP FAs received by the end of December, we aim to return feedback by the end of January so that the feedback can help you in your preparation for the AA. Feedback on the EP201 summary outline is usually returned within 4 weeks of submission to AMS.

Assessed Assignments

Assessed Assignments are marked by two independent assessors. Once the assessors have marked the work and they have arrived at an agreed grade and feedback, students will receive a confidential note of their grade and feedback via the AMS. The grade received is provisional (although not negotiable) because, at this point, the work has only been assessed internally. An external examiner checks the quality of the assessment conducted in each MSc and final Assessed Assignment grades are produced only when the internal and the external examiners have agreed the grades. Formal approval of all grades is given at Exam Board meetings held at the end of July and beginning of November.

Feedback for AAs received by 31 March (excluding EP105 or EP201) will be returned to you by the end of May at the latest. There are two deadline dates for submission of the EP105 and EP201 AAs: 31 May or 31 August. Feedback for EP105 and EP201 AAs submitted by 31 May will be sent to students by the end of August, and will be made available to students by the end of November for those who have submitted their EP105/EP201 AA by 31 August.

Grading criteria

The grades that will be used in assessing module assignments at the School from 2009-10 – and what they mean – is given in Table 2 (Please note that in previous years the School used a system of letter grades when assigning marks; from October 2009 all grades awarded will be via grade points – see also Appendix 6.)

Table 2 Criteria for awarding grades

<i>Grade point</i>	<i>Descriptor</i>	<i>Typical work should include evidence of...</i>
5	Excellent	Excellent engagement with the topic, excellent depth of understanding and insight, excellent argument and analysis. Generally, this work will be 'distinction standard'. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NB that excellent work does not have to be 'outstanding' or exceptional by comparison with other students; these grades should not be capped to a limited number of students per class. Nor should such work be expected to be 100% perfect – some minor inaccuracies or omissions may be permissible.
4	Very good	Very good engagement with the topic, very good depth of understanding and insight, very good argument and analysis. This work may be 'borderline distinction standard'. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note that very good work may have some inaccuracies or omissions but not enough to question the understanding of the subject matter.
3	Good	Good (but not necessarily comprehensive) engagement with the topic, clear understanding & insight, reasonable argument and analysis, but may have inaccuracies or omissions.
2	Satisfactory	Adequate evidence of engagement with the topic but some gaps in understanding or insight, routine argument and analysis, and may have inaccuracies or omissions.
1	Unsatisfactory / poor (fail)	Inadequate engagement with the topic, gaps in understanding, poor argument and analysis.
0	Very poor (fail)	Poor engagement with the topic, limited understanding, very poor argument and analysis.
0	Not submitted (null)	Null mark may be given where work has not been submitted, or is in serious breach of assessment criteria/regulations.

Re-sit students

If you were not successful in one or more of your modules last year, please read the information below carefully and do email the Student Support Office dlsupport@lshtm.ac.uk if anything is unclear. Please also let us know if you have specific queries on preparation for re-sitting your exam – such queries may be forwarded to the relevant Module Organiser who will do what they can to help guide you.

For **all** modules that you plan to re-sit this year, please note that you must:

- re-register** for the module to ensure you get updated materials for this academic year and access to this module on AMS. The Registration and Learning Resources office can be contacted at pg.registration@lon.ac.uk.
- re-register** for the examination by 1 February 2011 (please note the exam re-entry fee as given in the *Regulations*, Section 8.7).

If you have failed a module with a grade point (GP) between 1.00 and 1.99, this grade may be compensated for by higher grades in other modules. Appendix 6 gives further details of the compensation rules. The exam result notification you were sent by the Examinations Office should also indicate your recommended action. Please note though that your final project report and the E400 completing examination must be passed with at least a GP of 2.00 and cannot be compensated. **Grades below 1.00 cannot be compensated and must be re-sat.**

For those modules which include an Assessed Assignment, please see the important information below:

- Modules which are assessed by both an exam and an Assessed Assignment (AA) (EP202, EP301, EP303, EP304, EP306, all PH/CT advanced modules): you are required to re-sit only the element(s) you failed i.e.
 - **If you failed the AA only** - if you failed a module overall, having received a fail grade on your AA but a pass on the examination you should re-sit the AA only (see below regarding doing a **re-sit assignment**). Please note you must re-register for this module to ensure you receive up to date materials, and to have access to this module on AMS.
 - **If you failed the exam only** - if you failed a module overall, having failed the examination but passed the AA, you will need to re-sit only the unseen written examination again.
 - **If you failed both the AA and the exam** - if you received a fail grade for both the AA and the examination, then you should re-sit both elements (see below regarding doing a **fresh assignment**). Please note you must re-register for this module to ensure you receive up to date materials, and to have access to this module on AMS.

When re-sitting the AA component, you must complete a **re-sit assignment**. Please email dlsupport@lshtm.ac.uk to request the re-sit assignment. If you complete the wrong assignment, this will not be marked and you will be required to re-sit the assignment again the following academic year.

Changing modules

If you have failed an exam for an advanced module at the first attempt you may change to another option **before** you re-sit the failed module (note you cannot change to another option once you have re-sat a module). Up to **two** advanced modules only may be changed in this way. If you do change your choice of advanced module(s), then you will be required to pay the full advanced module fee for each new module. If you are unsure whether to change modules and would like further advice, please email the Student Support Office and your message will be forwarded to one of the Course Directors.

Completing your degree - the Additional Paper (E400)

In order to complete your degree, you are required to pass the additional paper (E400). This is a three-hour examination (held in June) and must be taken in the final year of the course i.e. when you are planning to complete the last of your advanced modules.

E400 is intended to test the integrated knowledge and skills that you have gained across the whole MSc - some would describe them as a "synthesis" assessment of the whole range of epidemiological skills. This will be particularly the fundamental understanding of epidemiological principles in association with the statistical techniques used to analyse epidemiological studies. Since you will each have done a varied selection of advanced modules, disease specific knowledge is not required but you are expected to be able to show a structured approach to understanding design and analysis of any problem.

The best ways of preparing for this exam are to review the compulsory modules (in particular EP101, EP102, EP103 and EP202), combined with answering past papers from these modules and from E400. Reading published epidemiological studies in journals such as the *American Journal of Epidemiology* or the *International Journal of Epidemiology* is also helpful.

There will be a WebBoard conference for E400 set up throughout the year for queries on this paper and in April, exam practice conferences will also be set up for this paper for you to discuss your answers to examination questions from previous years. These conferences will be monitored by tutors who will be able to guide and help you.

Preparing written assignments

The following sections contain excerpts from the LSHTM *Academic Writing Handbook* (AWH). The AWH is a comprehensive resource which should be helpful for any students who want further guidance on academic writing skills - especially if you have not studied with a UK university before or English is not your first language. The emphasis is on good referencing practice and avoiding plagiarism, although it also has brief pointers on language skills and structuring work, as well as links to many further resources.

The *Academic Writing Handbook* can be viewed or downloaded from the General Resources section of the course website. Please contact the Student Support Office dlsupport@lshtm.ac.uk if you are unable to access this.

General writing skills

The ability to produce good-quality written work is a key aspect of obtaining your degree, and also likely to be very important in your subsequent professional life. The key requirements of 'academic' writing – such as how to cite and reference your sources correctly, and ensuring you acknowledge the work of others and avoid plagiarism are briefly addressed here (and in detail in the AWH) but we also encourage you to review Chapter 1 of the AWH which covers 'general' writing skills, as well as providing links to more comprehensive guidance and resources. There are many useful hints on writing essays and reports in Chapter 9 of the SGSG also.

In some assignments, or in your project, you may be expected to review a number of papers or the published literature on an epidemiological topic. In this case we expect you to write *critically*, summarising the evidence for and against a point of view, and mentioning the strengths and weaknesses of each paper that you discuss. It is not enough simply to repeat what is written in the paper. Some students may have been educated in a tradition in which they were taught to repeat bookwork or the teacher's words. This is not the approach that we are looking for; a graduate of this course should be an independent scientist, and needs to demonstrate evidence of independent thinking. For further details, see Chapter 1 of the AWH and also Chapter 5 of '*Writing and Publishing in Medicine*', one of your core module textbooks.

Citing and Referencing

A citation or reference is a way of properly acknowledging where you make use of the work of others. "Citing" means giving such an acknowledgement within the main body of a piece of work, while "referencing" is a broader term which covers both in-text citations and more extensive information about the source material which you should present at the end of your work.

You should always use a specific citation method to present references within your work. There are a large number of recognised systems for this; the most common two are the author/date system (Harvard system) and the numbering system (Vancouver system).

Citing and Referencing are covered in detail in Chapter 2 of the *AWH*. In addition to covering referencing systems and reference presentation, the *AWH* covers other referencing issues such as non-authored works and secondary sources. In particular, it addresses the use of open-content collaborative resources such as Wikipedia. Wikipedia and similar wiki-based internet resources are not considered a reliable source of information for academic work. Wikipedia even has a 'general disclaimer' which makes clear that it cannot be guaranteed to be accurate. This does not mean you cannot make use of such resources; they may still be helpful research tools to point you towards authoritative primary sources. However, if you are using secondary sources then it is preferable that these be more reliable ones such as published encyclopaedias. Over-reliance on potentially poor quality internet-based resources is seen as poor academic practice and likely to result in a lower mark.

Reference management software

Various computer software packages are available which allow references to be readily recovered from databases and which automatically inserts them and adjusts for any alterations. These are known as "reference management" packages and a number of these packages are available for free. Two of the most widely recommended and for which specific guides are available are:

Zotero, www.zotero.org – a web-based open-source application from a US not-for-profit organization.

Mendeley, www.mendeley.com – a desktop and web-based application from a UK company.

'Quick-start' guides to using these are available to download from the course website.

Plagiarism and other assessment irregularities

As a student of LSHTM, you are expected to comply with the School's standards and expectations in all your scholarly activity – especially assessments, examinations and research.

Chapter 3 of the *AWH* sets out the School's definitions of "assessment irregularities" – things you must not do in your work. It is important that you make yourself aware of these definitions. Any breach of the rules, whether intentional or unintentional, will be treated very seriously and may result in penalties which affect your degree.

Please consult a module tutor, Course Director or project supervisor (as appropriate) if you are having any difficulties with assessed work, need clarification or guidance about citing and referencing, or are in any doubt about what is permissible.

Types of assessment irregularities

The term 'assessment irregularity' applies to any suspected instance of plagiarism, cheating, fraud, collusion, personation or other non-standard activity identified in connection with assessed work – including essays or other coursework assessments, formal examinations, or research projects. Definitions of all of these are given in Chapter 3 of the *AWH*, but we have also included excerpts from the *AWH* on plagiarism and cheating here.

Note that the term 'irregularity' does not necessarily imply misconduct on the part of a student. Judgement as to whether a specific offence has occurred will only be made following proper investigation of the case under the School's procedures.

It may also be helpful to observe that although these definitions and guidance are specific to LSHTM, understanding and applying them as good scholarly practice may be relevant in your

work after graduating. The School's principles on issues such as plagiarism or fraud are consistent with typical expectations in academia or scientific research around the world.

Declaration on plagiarism and cheating

The first time you log on to the Assignment Management System (you will only need to do this once), you will be required to sign a statement confirming that you have read the School's definitions of plagiarism and cheating (which follow); that all work submitted is and will be your own; and that failure to comply with the School's policies may be penalised.

This declaration also covers consent for the School to upload relevant documents and information to external services or third parties, in order to identify potential plagiarism or irregularities. The School uses the plagiarism detection service Turnitin UK for cross-checking assessment submissions.

LSHTM definition of plagiarism

Plagiarism is the copying or use of the work of others, whether intentionally or unintentionally, as if it were your own. Such work may come from any source whether published or unpublished, in print or online – including words, images, audio recordings, diagrams, formulae, computer code, performances, ideas, judgements, discoveries and results.

To avoid plagiarism:

- Where any use or mention is made of the work of others, it should be acknowledged.
- A recognised citation system should be used.
- Quotations must accurately refer to and acknowledge the originator(s) of the work.
- Direct quotations, whether extended or short, must always be clearly identified.
- Paraphrasing – using other words to express the ideas or judgements of others – must be clearly acknowledged.
- Work done in collaboration with others must appropriately refer to their involvement and input.
- Use of your own past work should be referenced as clearly as the work of others.

To put this another way: plagiarism is essentially the presentation of another person's work (such as their words or ideas) as if it were your own – even if this is done accidentally. The School expects all students to demonstrate rigorous and respectful academic practice at all times, particularly through referencing and citing. Plagiarism is considered wrong because it does not clearly indicate where prior work or knowledge has been used, it is disrespectful to the original authors, it is misleading for those teaching you and marking your work, and it may be harmful to the reputation of the School and the University.

Appendix 7 gives a worked example which shows how to avoid plagiarism, building on the citing and referencing guidance given in Chapter 2 of the *AWH*. Please see also Chapter 3 of the *AWH* for more on how to avoid plagiarism.

LSHTM definition of cheating

Cheating is a deliberate attempt to deceive in order to gain advantage in an assessed piece of work, including coursework, in-module assessments and examinations. This covers a range of offences, from significant instances of plagiarism to exam misconduct.

The essence of the School's policy on cheating is that **you must not engage in any deliberate deception** in order to gain advantage in formal assessment or evaluation.

Key principles you should be aware of include:

- Submitting someone else's work, knowledge or ideas, while pretending that they are your own, constitutes cheating.

- This applies to all forms of assessment – e.g. coursework assignments, presentations, groupwork, module tests, formal examinations, research project reports, or theses.
- Serious forms of plagiarism, fraud, collusion or personation, or any deliberate failure to comply with assessment regulations, are all liable to constitute cheating.
- The use of commercial essay banks, essay-writing services or any similar “cheat sites” is highly likely to constitute cheating.
- Any inappropriate activities under exam conditions, e.g. bringing unauthorised materials into an exam room, will also constitute cheating.
- Cheating will be treated even more seriously and result in heavier penalties than other forms of assessment irregularities.

For more information about assessment irregularities, including the School's formal Assessment Irregularities procedure, please refer to Chapter 3 of the *AWH*.

Examinations

Students will be examined in June by unseen written papers on the core and advanced modules (usually two hours each), although some modules may be examined wholly by assessed assignments rather than an unseen written paper (e.g. EP105, EP201). Note that unless you have chosen one of the ‘fast’ options you do not need to take examinations in all core or advanced modules in the same year. Admission to examinations for advanced modules is only possible if the examinations for the core modules have been passed and the necessary coursework has been handed in. The grade awarded for each advanced module will be based on the mark obtained in the written examination and the mark of the assignment (or the combined mark for the best two assignments if there is more than one assessed assignment). The examination mark and the combined mark of the assignments will be weighted on the scale 70:30 for EP, ID and PH modules, and 80:20 for CT modules. The grades obtained for the project report and final additional paper for those completing the degree are weighted separately - see Appendix 6 at the back of this handbook for full details.

(Chapter 6 of this handbook gives details of examination entry and the procedure for notification of results.)

It is a good idea to register for any examinations you think you might want to take – even if you aren't completely sure. If you decide to drop out nearer the time you may do so, but please inform the local examination centre with which you are registered. There is no penalty for dropping out of an examination in this way, but you may not be entitled to a refund of your examination fees.

Please note, though, that if you have entered to be examined in the project report you must write to the Course Director for approval of late submission or deferment - if you do not do this, and do not submit your final project report, this will be considered as a first attempt.

How to study and how to pass examinations

Some of you will be fresh from studying and examinations; others may worry that you have forgotten how to pass exams. These brief notes are here to remind you. As you will see, it pays to:

- plan
- study regularly
- read the essential readings
- be sceptical about what you read.

If you have problems, write to the Student Support Office. Don't keep all your worries to yourself. You will also find useful hints on taking examinations in Chapter 10 of the SGSG.

Revising for your examinations

The term 'revision' may sound unfamiliar to you in this context, in fact Americans use the term 'review'. It means simply preparing yourself for the examinations by revisiting and pulling together what you have learned in the course. Revision exercises for particular modules and helpful hints may also be sent to you prior to the exams, with the opportunity for discussion of these using the web board.

Set aside the time

You should block out enough time after working through the modules for revision. Ideally this should be the whole of the month of May. Make very few appointments and postpone any big parties until after the exam! Concentrate first and foremost on revision. Make yourself a revision timetable. Set yourself to do the same amount of revision for each of the main subjects on which you will be examined. Stick to this. Do not spend lots more time revising the subjects you like best or find easiest. Likewise, do not spend all your time on the subjects you find most difficult. Finally, do make sure that you don't spend every minute on revision – this way you'll go mad. Short breaks will refresh you and prevent you getting completely obsessed.

Refer to past examination papers

You may also want to try to work out what questions are likely to be asked in the June examinations. Examination papers from the last three years, which also includes the examiner's reports on those papers will be made available to you. However, don't rely wholly on 'question-spotting'. First some of the modules you are doing may have never been assessed in previous examinations. Second, though some of the questions cover similar topics, they do vary in the way they are phrased and this variation can change an easy question into a very difficult one.

You can use past examination papers to give you practice in writing under time constraints. However, remember when you see a question in an examination paper that you seem to recognize, to check first whether it is exactly the same – or slightly but importantly different. Many students get caught out and just write answers to the questions they have revised, failing to check whether these questions were actually asked in the examination.

Please note also the 'exam practice' conferences mentioned in Chapter 7. These will be open for six weeks prior to the day of the exam (specific to each module) and made 'read only' after the exam. The purpose of these conferences is for you to discuss possible solutions to past questions and related conceptual issues with fellow students. You should use these to highlight parts of questions for which you would benefit from discussion, rather than posting up complete answers. Tutors will moderate student discussions on the questions, intervening and guiding you as appropriate - but they will not provide complete solutions.

What to expect in examinations

You may not be familiar with the British system of taking written examinations, as in your country the system of academic education might be different. You will have an opportunity to practise essay writing in some of the core modules (the FAs) and in a number of the advanced modules where it will be part of the final assessment. However, in the examinations the situation is different as time pressure is added. Clearly, you need to

practise writing under a closely-timed schedule. Make sure to set aside enough time for simulating examination conditions. Practise writing a paper in the same time you would have under real conditions during the examinations.

There are two types of questions

- Short answer questions: these will largely focus on technical content, factual knowledge, and an explanation of concepts that have been covered in the course.
- Essay questions: essays require you to give an account of your understanding of one or more parts of the course and to demonstrate the ability to analyse epidemiological problems both empirically and theoretically.

How to do well in your examinations

Doing well in examinations is mostly a matter of how much you have learnt – but is also a matter of *examination technique*. If you are not used to unseen examinations, pay close attention to the following suggestions. As you can see, examinations are quite a good test of your ability both to organize yourself and to think carefully under pressure.

The easiest way to fail an examination is not to answer enough questions

Every examination paper will ask you to answer a certain number of questions, and marks will be allocated to each question. It is not uncommon for a student to answer too few questions, and each question not answered will automatically be awarded zero marks. Thus, if you have to answer four questions, and you answer two, you will almost certainly fail, as you will have to produce perfect answers for the remaining two questions to scrape a pass. Even if you answer three out of four, you will have to produce very good answers in those three just to pass.

Spending time perfecting one question at the expense of doing another is a bad mistake! So, the first priority is to check the number of questions you have to answer and to allocate time for each of them, in addition to thinking time (see below).

Most marks in examinations are lost through a failure to answer the question properly

Surprisingly few students do this well. How can you make sure you do? First, read each question carefully, then go back and read the instructions again. Make sure you answer the correct number of questions. Then re-read the questions very carefully. Where questions look similar to those that you have revised, check to see if they are exactly the same or whether they differ in some important respects. Some questions that look easy at first glance turn out to be very hard on a second look. Other, apparently difficult questions, turn out to be easy. Check and double-check.

Before you start writing, choose all the questions you are going to answer

You should make your overall choice of questions before you start answering any of them. This way you avoid panicking when you have answered one or two questions and don't know what to do next. Similarly, take care over the order in which you answer the questions. Starting off with the easiest can seem the best solution. It does, however, have one big disadvantage – the examination gets worse and worse as you go on. In an examination where you have to answer three questions, some people prefer to answer the second-best question first of all. Then tackle the easiest question. This way you should be feeling good when you come to the most difficult question.

Think first

In any examination you should spend perhaps a sixth of your time just thinking and planning and not writing answers at all. In a two-hour exam, for example, you should spend the first

five minutes studying the whole examination paper carefully, reading the instructions and selecting the questions you are going to answer. Time to read the questions is built into the exam. Then, before you answer each of the questions you have chosen, spend five minutes developing a plan. (Once you start writing, you can add any additional thoughts to your plan.)

Give your answer a structure

As you write your plan, remember that a good answer is not a list of everything you know about the subject but a careful argument with a clear structure which addresses the particular question that has been asked about that subject. Concentrate on getting the structure right and making sure you have a clear, well ordered argument; a plan which sums up the main points for and against the position you are taking and references research on both sides.

Has the question got several parts?

Remember that some questions contain several parts. So study the question carefully, identify its main components and plan an answer to each of them, not just to the one you are most interested in. Once you have finished your plan, read through the question again and see if you have missed anything. When you write your answer, make sure:

- that you answer all the parts that are required, e.g. it may be for two out of three sub-questions, or an 'either/or' question
- that you spend enough time on each of the main parts of the question
- that you have got the type of question right, e.g. are you asked to write a short essay, or 'short notes'?

Be careful with general questions

The sorts of questions you get asked in examinations vary. Most are precisely focused on topics that have been covered during the teaching. One or two may be much more general questions, which require you to draw on knowledge from all parts of your course. General questions like these are much harder to answer well. Only attempt them if you are really confident and have done a lot of work on this particular course.

If English is not your first language ...

You may worry that you will both read and write more slowly than your colleagues do. Even if this is the case, remember that you get good marks for writing clear, critical and well-organized answers. Very short answers can still get good marks. It constantly amazes examiners how some very long answers can contain almost nothing and some very short answers can contain almost everything!

Time your answers

Time your answers carefully and allow enough time for each question. If you spend all your time on the first two questions and barely answer the third, you will lose a large amount of marks. If you do find that you have spent far too much time on the first two questions, don't panic. Carefully work out a plan for the third question; then write short notes based on that plan. This way a lot can be said in a very short time. The best option, however, is not to run out of time!

Getting prepared

Finally, it may seem obvious – but make sure that you know in advance exactly where the examination is being held! Most students will have some distance to travel to the examination centre, and many of you will have to plan for the necessary overnight accommodation. Take enough time to find out exactly where the examination takes place and how you get there. Make yourself familiar with the building. Students have been known to go to the wrong place and try to take the wrong exam! Get a good night's sleep beforehand. Don't stay up all night.

Make sure, in fact, that you arrive in plenty of time for the exam, so that you are relaxed. Take a watch with you. If you have some distance to travel, catch an earlier train or bus, so that you can be certain you will be there on time. If the examination requires a calculator, make sure that you have got one and that the batteries work – one year a student was 45 minutes late because they were searching for the right batteries! Make sure this is not you.

How do you know our assessment of your work has been fair?

To ensure that our assessment of your work is fair, we use three different methods.

- 1 First, all assessed work is graded by two different markers – ‘double-marking’ as it is known.
- 2 Second, we use the method of anonymous marking: markers don’t have information on your personal details.
- 3 Third, a selection of all the work on a MSc is sent to the External Examiners, academics in other universities whose job it is to check on the standards at the School. The examiners are independent and report to the University of London.

When reading your work, examiners look for several different things. The main considerations are listed in Table 3. Note that, where appropriate, you are expected to give your own opinion of studies and methodologies – their weaknesses and strengths. We want to hear your own critical views – not just a simple description of a study or method – we want constructive criticism. If you are uncertain about what is needed, you should discuss these criteria with your tutor.

Table 3

	Good answers	Poor answers
Arguments	rigorous, relevant to question	weak and off the point
Structure	clear, logical	muddled
Use of sources	relevant, selective imaginative	irrelevant, unselective purely descriptive
Understanding	critical approach to both theory and methods used in sources deep, developing own ideas	superficial
Style	fluent, clear	repetitive, unclear
(Students will not be penalized for imperfect use of English, as long as the level is reasonably adequate and comprehensible)		
References	correctly cited	lacking or incorrect
Presentation	legible, correct length	hard to read

Grading of individual modules

Three of the four core modules (EP101, EP102 and EP103) are assessed solely by the unseen written examinations held in June. EP105 is assessed solely by a written assignment. Marking is carried out as in 1-3 on the previous page, and then marks are combined according to the School’s ‘Distance Learning System for Grading Work and Combining

Grades' which is copied as Appendix 6 at the back of this handbook. This system may seem at first glance to be rather complicated.

In summary, each examination paper is assigned a grade point average (GPA) based on an average of grades obtained in each examination question. . The GPAs from each core module are then added together and divided by 4 to give an overall core module grade point GPA. This is then converted to a final outcome for the Diploma (pass, fail or distinction) using Table 1 of Appendix 6, GPAs over 2.00 being pass grades. Individual grades for the core modules will be reported on University transcripts.

Grading of advanced modules is slightly different, as final assessment grades for each module (with the exception of EP201 and the project report) are, for EP, ID and PH modules, based 30% on the assignment and 70% on the examination (see point 4.2 of Appendix 6). For CT modules these figures are 20% and 80% respectively (point 4.1 of Appendix 6).

You should sit the examination for a module in the same year as you submit the assignment for marking. The GPAs of all the core modules and advanced modules are then combined with the project and final additional exam paper GPAs, and divided by 15 to give an overall MSc course GPA (point 8.2.2 of Appendix 6). This GPA is then used in Table 1 of Appendix 6 to give the final MSc course result (fail, pass or pass with distinction).

What happens if you fail in a subject?

Although the majority of students pass all modules, some may have particular difficulties with specific modules. The School does allow for some compensation of low grades, provided that higher grades are achieved in other modules. Full details are given in point 8.3 of Appendix 6. In summary, any module which achieves a GPA of below 1.00 cannot be compensated for and must be retaken.

The first two core modules, EP101 and EP102, project report and additional paper E400 must be passed with a GPA of 2.00 or higher; no compensation is allowed for these. If a module is awarded a GPA of between 1.00 and 1.99, compensation may be allowed provided that the overall GPA for the whole course is 2.00 or higher. Only one core module (excluding EP101 and EP102) may be compensated in this way (the total GPA of the four core modules must be 2.00 or higher), and only one advanced module (the total GPA of the MSc course must be 2.00 or higher). Please note that in the advanced modules, you must obtain a minimum GP of 1.00 or higher for the assessed assignment; even if you pass the exam component of an advanced module, if you get less than 1.00 for the assessed assignment you cannot pass the module. Students are entitled to one further attempt at a failed module, and may re-sit only the failed component – see page 70.

Grading of the final diploma/degree award

University of London degrees are awarded in two classifications, 'pass' or 'pass with distinction' (see Table 1 of Appendix 6). Distinction is awarded on the basis of achieving marks in accordance with the School's marking scheme to students who have shown exceptional merit throughout the course. The examiners have complete discretion to take into account the student's overall performance. Very few students fail – but very few are awarded a distinction.

Receipt of your final diploma/degree award

Final diploma or degree award certificate will be sent to successful students from the University of London Diploma Production office. The official date of the award will be 1

November in the year of completion of the course. However, it will take several months for the certificates to be drawn up and sent out. The University will also send out details of their graduation ceremony for external students, which is usually held in March of the following year.

Included with your final award certificate will be a diploma supplement. This document will include a transcript of your academic record. You should find your diploma supplement and transcript particularly useful to show to future employers and/or educational establishments as the documents describe the nature, level, content and status of the course you have studied and successfully completed. If you need a copy of your educational transcript before you have completed your course, or require additional copies once you have been awarded your diploma/degree, you can apply for this using the application form available on the International Programmes website at www.londoninternational.ac.uk/transcripts or by contacting the Transcripts Office at Stewart House (see Chapter 6) (a fee will be payable).

Students who have received the MSc award are also automatically awarded the Diploma of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine – the DLSHTM. This is an additional award, which will be sent to students direct from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, not the University of London. The School also holds a diploma presentation ceremony, usually in February or March, to which the distance learning MSc graduands are invited to receive their School diploma.

The Postgraduate Diploma in Epidemiology will automatically be awarded to MSc-registered Epidemiology students once they have satisfied the necessary Diploma requirements i.e. the four core modules.