

**Your studies**

**STUDENT HANDBOOK**  
**SCHOOL OF**  
**BIOLOGICAL**  
**SCIENCES**

**Postgraduate taught student handbook**

**2016–2017**



University of Essex

# Introduction

## Welcome

**Welcome to the School of Biological Sciences and thank you for choosing to study with us.**



Welcome to the School of Biological Sciences. The School is a rich community of administrative, research, teaching and technical staff, and postgraduate and undergraduate students, working together to provide learning, research and scholarship opportunities. You join in this community through your study, your participation in lectures/seminars and through your daily interaction with staff. We hope that your experience here will confirm the reputation of the School as a friendly, informal but supportive place in which to work and study, and that you will contribute positively to that atmosphere.

Undertaking a degree course is a major and important step in life, both in terms of personal development and in career planning. Studying for a degree is also a very complex activity, and science degrees in particular are very busy, because of the practical components. You may have concerns and questions about the organisation of your degree course, what is expected of you as a postgraduate student, what is the structure of the degree, what facilities are available, who to see, how is your work assessed etc.

The Postgraduate Taught Student Handbook should provide answers to many of your questions and clarify much about the organisation of the MSc Courses and the School. We hope that your time here will be stimulating and rewarding, and that you will use the opportunities and facilities of the University and School to the full, to achieve your goals.

### **Professor Christine Raines Head of School**

#### **About your Student Handbook**

This handbook has been designed to give you essential information about your School and the University.

Other sources of information are available to help you, and are at [www.essex.ac.uk/myessex](http://www.essex.ac.uk/myessex). Our friendly school staff are here to help and you can find their contact details in this handbook.

Remember that at Essex, we don't separate our students and academic staff, or our professional services staff from our alumni. Everyone is a member of our community for life. Our three uniquely intimate campuses encourage an inter-weaving of people, ideas and disciplines. We celebrate diversity and challenge inequality. Whatever your background, race or sexual orientation, you are part of a vibrant community that lives, learns and plays together.

All information in this Handbook was correct at the time of publishing.

## **Checklist of School Welcome Events at the beginning of Term**

### **The Postgraduate Taught Office**

The School Postgraduate Taught Office (Room 4.00a) is located in the Biological Sciences building and is immediately ahead after entering the back entrance from Square 2 (2SE). The Postgraduate Taught Administrator, Nicola Reason, is based in the Postgraduate Office and will be happy to help with any queries you may have during the first few weeks of term. You will have the opportunity to meet Nicola at the afternoon tea for new postgraduate students on Friday 7th October (see below).

### **Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> October**

#### **Registration for all new UK/EEA Postgraduate students**

Registration takes place **from 2.00 pm – 3.00 pm on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> October for UK/EEA Biological Sciences students** (Venue: Sports Hall).

### **Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> October**

#### **Welcome for all new Postgraduate Students (3.00 pm)**

A welcome from the Graduate Directors and a brief introduction to the MSc Course Directors. . (Venue: Lecture Theatre Building (LTB 8)

#### **Welcome and introduction for all MSc Biotechnology Students (3.30 pm)**

An introduction by Professor Chris Reynolds, Course Director. (Venue: 5A.106 Square 3 or 4 Entrance 3NE, or 4NW Level 5A) )

#### **Welcome and introduction for all MSc Cancer Biology Students (3.30 pm)**

An introduction by Professor Elena Klenova, Course Director. (Venue: 5A.108 Square 3 or 4 Entrance 3NE, or 4NW Level 5A)

#### **Welcome and introduction for all MSc Molecular Medicine Students (3.30 pm)**

An introduction by Dr Ralf Zwacka, Course Director. (Venue: 5A.330 Square 2, Entrance 2NE, Level 5A)

#### **Welcome and introduction for all MSc Tropical Marine Biology Students (3.30 pm)**

An introduction by Dr Michael Steinke, Course Director. (Venue: 5B.124 Square 3 or 4 Entrance 3NE, or 4NW Level 5B)

### **Wednesday 5th October**

#### **Registration for all new Non-EEA International Postgraduate Students**

Registration takes place **from 2.30 pm – 4.00 pm on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> October for Non-EEA International Biological Sciences students.** (Venue: Sports Hall)

### **Friday 7<sup>th</sup> October**

#### **Essential Key Skills for Postgraduate Taught Students (2.00pm)**

Professor Ian Colbeck, the School Plagiarism Officer will explore some key skills required for success at Masters level. This event is compulsory for all Masters students. (Venue: Lecture Theatre Building (LTB 8))

#### **Afternoon Tea Session for all new Postgraduate Students (3.30pm)**

An opportunity to meet informally for tea/coffee and biscuits with academic staff, existing postgraduate students and postgraduate administrative staff in the School. You will be able to ask any questions you may have after the introductory talks. (Venue: 4N.6.1 Square 3 or 4, Entrance 3NE, 4NW, Level 6)

### **Late Arrivals**

Any students who miss the introductory welcome sessions on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> October should report to the School Postgraduate Office, Room 4.00A and speak to Nicola Reason the Postgraduate Taught Administrator at the earliest opportunity.

Students are advised to check their online personal timetable on a regular basis for any last-minute timetabling changes particularly during Weeks 2 and 3.

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## 1.2 Term Date and Academic Week Numbering System

### 2016-2017

Autumn Term	10 October 2016 – 16 December 2016
Spring Term	16 January 2017 – 24 March 2017
Summer Term	24 April 2017 – 30 June 2017



### 2017-2018

Autumn Term	9 October 2017 – 15 December 2017
Spring Term	15 January 2018 – 23 March 2018
Summer Term	23 April 2018 – 29 June 2018

**NB These term dates are for general guidance only. Work associated with Research Projects will be timetabled outside of the University's stated term dates.**

## University of Essex Week Numbering System

The University uses a week numbering system that covers the 52 weeks of a calendar year, beginning with Welcome Week as Week 1. Autumn term teaching takes place during Weeks 2-11, spring term teaching takes place during Weeks 16-25 and the summer term is Weeks 30-39. You can find the University week structure/calendar here: <http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/course-admin/documents/weeks-2016-17.pdf>

The official University teaching day runs from 9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday. You must be available during these times every week in term time.

## 1.3 Teaching Timetable

You can view your timetable at: [www.essex.ac.uk/dsh/timetables](http://www.essex.ac.uk/dsh/timetables) (you will be prompted to login using your Essex username and password). Once you have chosen all your modules and received confirmation, they will appear on your personal timetable. You may find that the first week of your timetable is blank if you do not have any course commitments in Welcome Week. You can also access your timetable on most mobile devices including smart phones and tablets.

Timetable changes are sometimes unavoidable and you should be alert for any changes, especially in the first couple of weeks of term. Your personal timetable will be updated automatically every evening. Any last minute changes will also be e-mailed and posted on Moodle.

When changes are made at very short notice (less than 48 hours before the teaching session) they will also be texted to students who have provided mobile phone numbers. If you have any timetable difficulties you should speak to the School Manager, James Norman.

## **1.4 The MyEssex Student Portal**

MyEssex is the University's student portal that you used during your application process. Once you're a registered student, you can also use myEssex to update your personal details and as a quick reference guide to other student webpages:



[www.essex.ac.uk/dsh/myessex](http://www.essex.ac.uk/dsh/myessex)




## 2. About Our School



### 2.1 Academic Staff

This is a list of the academic staff that you are likely to be in contact with most frequently.

Most academic staff work from 9am-5pm Monday to Friday during term-time. However, they tend to have busy schedules so you should email or telephone first if you need an appointment. Their availability in the vacations will normally be much more limited as they may be undertaking research or on holiday. You cannot generally expect to receive a prompt response to any emails that you send to teaching staff during vacations. If you have an urgent query during the vacations, you can contact the Postgraduate Office.

<p><b>Dr Ralf Zwacka</b> Postgraduate Taught Director</p> 	<p>Dr Ralf Zwacka is the Postgraduate Taught Director. He oversees the management of all aspects postgraduate teaching in the School. Dr Zwacka can also advise on Board of Examiners outcomes and appeals and matters relating to the PGT Student Staff Liaison Committee.</p> <p>Link to Research Area: <a href="http://www.essex.ac.uk/bs/staff/profile.aspx?ID=3386">http://www.essex.ac.uk/bs/staff/profile.aspx?ID=3386</a></p>	<p>Office: 5.15 E-mail: rzwacka Tel: 2036</p>
<p><b>Professor Chris Reynolds</b> MSc Biotechnology Course Director</p> 	<p>Professor Chris Reynolds is the MSc Biotechnology Course Director. You can contact him regarding attendance and progress, extenuating circumstances, requests for intermission, withdrawal and changes of course approval.</p> <p>Link to Research Area: <a href="http://www.essex.ac.uk/bs/staff/profile.aspx?ID=1246">http://www.essex.ac.uk/bs/staff/profile.aspx?ID=1246</a></p>	<p>Office: 5.21 Email: reync Tel: 2540</p>


<p><b>Professor Elena Klenova</b> MSc Cancer Biology Course Director</p> 	<p>Professor Elena Klenova is the MSc Cancer Biology Course Director. You can contact her regarding attendance and progress, extenuating circumstances, requests for intermission, withdrawal and changes of course approval.</p> <p>Link to Research Area: <a href="http://www.essex.ac.uk/bs/staff/profile.aspx?ID=1229">http://www.essex.ac.uk/bs/staff/profile.aspx?ID=1229</a></p>	<p>Office: 5.25 E-mail: klenovae Tel: 4868</p>
<p><b>Dr Michael Steinke</b> MSc Tropical Marine Biology Course Director</p> 	<p>Dr Michael Steinke is the MSc Tropical Marine Biology Course Director and supervisor of BS707 (Methods in Tropical Marine Biology) and BS708 (Professional Skills in Tropical Marine Biology).</p> <p>Link to Research Area: <a href="http://www.essex.ac.uk/bs/staff/profile.aspx?ID=1252">http://www.essex.ac.uk/bs/staff/profile.aspx?ID=1252</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trace gas biogeochemistry</li> <li>• Role of dimethylsulphoniopropionate (DMSP) and related compounds in the stress-physiology of zooxanthellae-cnidarian symbioses</li> <li>• Production of dimethyl sulphide (DMS) and isoprene in coral reef ecosystems</li> </ul>	<p>Office: 4.10 E-mail: msteinke Tel: 3318</p>
<p><b>Dr Ralf Zwacka</b> MSc Molecular Medicine Course Director</p> 	<p>Dr Ralf Zwacka is the MSc Molecular Medicine Course Director. You can contact him regarding attendance and progress, extenuating circumstances, requests for intermission, withdrawal and changes of course approval. He is also the Module Supervisor for BS938 (Molecular Medicine and Biotechnology) and BS936 (Professional Skills and the Business of Molecular Medicine).</p> <p>Link to Research Area: <a href="http://www.essex.ac.uk/bs/staff/profile.aspx?ID=3386">http://www.essex.ac.uk/bs/staff/profile.aspx?ID=3386</a></p>	<p>Office: 5.15 E-mail: rzwacka Tel: 2036</p>





<p><b>Dr Julie Lloyd</b> Director of Education</p> 	<p>Dr Julie Lloyd is the Director of Education for the School.</p>	<p>Office: 5.39 Email: lloydj Tel: 3307</p>
<p><b>Dr Murray Griffin</b> Senior Tutor Disability Liaison Officer</p> 	<p>Dr Murray Griffin is the Senior Tutor for Sports and Exercise Science and Sports Performance and Coaching students. He provides pastoral support and advice to students who have issues that are affecting their studies. Murray can also be a point of contact if you do not want to approach your MSc Course Director.</p> <p>Murray is also the School's Disability Liaison Officer (SDLO) If you have a disability, medical condition, specific learning difficulty or mental health difficulty Murray is the School representative who can help you to access your studies.</p>	<p>Office: 5A.127 Email: mgriffin Tel: 3336</p>

Full Academic Staff List: <http://www.essex.ac.uk/bs/staff/Staff.aspx?type=academic>

## 2.2 Administrative Staff

The School Administrative Offices are open 9am – 1pm and 2pm – 5pm Monday to Friday.

<p><b>Nicola Reason</b> Postgraduate Taught Administrator</p> 	<p>Nicola handles all matters relating to the administration of postgraduate taught students and is your first point of call for general and administrative enquires and matters relating to postgraduate coursework submission. She is also secretary to the PGT SSLC meetings.</p>	<p>Office: 4.00A Email: n.reason Tel: 2051</p>
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<p><b>Olivia Pink</b> Education Services Manager (on Maternity Leave until May 2017)</p> 	<p>Olivia leads the administrative support team in the School. She is also the School's Examinations Officer and can help with queries about exams, rules of assessment and exam results. She will also administer change of course, special syllabus, intermission and withdrawal requests.</p>	<p>Office: 4.32 Email: olivia.pink Tel: 4459</p>
<p><b>Mel Wiltshire</b> Education Services Manager (Maternity Cover until May 2017)</p> 	<p>Mel leads the administrative support team in the School. She is also the School's Examinations Officer and can help with queries about exams, rules of assessment and exam results. She will also administer change of course, special syllabus, intermission and withdrawal requests</p>	<p>Office: 4.32 Email: esmbs Tel: 4459</p>
<p><b>James Norman</b> School Manager (on Paternity Leave until January 2017)</p> 	<p>James is the Professional Services Lead, with responsibility for managing educational, technical and research support in the School. He is also responsible for overseeing the timetable and can help you with timetabling queries.</p>	<p>Office: 4.06 Email: jnorman Tel: 2248</p>
<p><b>Kerry Alban</b> School Office Administrator</p> 	<p>Kerry is secretary to the School Undergraduate Progress and Late Submissions Committee and provides support to the School's Plagiarism Officer.</p>	<p>Office: 4.30 (School Office) Email: kerrya Tel: 4074</p>



## 2.3 Our Location

Colchester Campus

School of Biological Sciences

University of Essex

Wivenhoe Park

Colchester CO4 3SQ

Direct Tel: 01206 874074

General enquiries: [nandrews@essex.ac.uk](mailto:nandrews@essex.ac.uk)

Website: [www.essex.ac.uk/bs/](http://www.essex.ac.uk/bs/)



## Opening Hours

The Postgraduate Office is open from 9am –1pm and 2pm – 5pm

The School is open weekdays from 8am – 6pm. Access to the School outside these hours is not permitted without special permission.

## Common Room

The School Common Room (Room 4.11) is a recreational area for staff and students. It has tea and coffee making facilities, a microwave, fridge and a seating area.

## Photocopying

There are photocopiers in the Library, or you can visit the Copy Shop on Square 4.

## 2.4 School Support for Students

### Your Personal Tutor

Your MSc Course Director will be your Personal Tutor during your studies. They are there to help you feel connected to your School and provide someone you can talk to if you have questions about your course or encounter any difficulties which affect your studies. Your MSc Course Director may also recommend other support services on campus that might be able to help.

## Staff Research Interests

Research in the School is organised into three main groups: Environmental and Plant Biosciences, Molecular and Cellular Biosciences and The Centre for Sports and Exercise Sciences.

Academic staff are actively engaged in research on topics across a wide spectrum, including: agricultural sustainability; coral reef ecology; virology and immunology; molecular complications of diabetes; oxidative stress; photosynthetic metabolism; plant responses to environmental stresses; and optimum training regimes for athletes.

If you are interested in finding out more, see: <http://www.essex.ac.uk/bs/research/default.aspx>

## School Seminars

You are encouraged to attend the School Seminars (Thursday lunchtimes, 1-2 pm; see [http://www.essex.ac.uk/bs/news\\_and\\_seminars/seminars.aspx](http://www.essex.ac.uk/bs/news_and_seminars/seminars.aspx)), and selected research group seminars as advertised in the School's weekly electronic newsletter, *Yellow Monday*.

## 2.5 Correspondence and Communication

Most information is sent by email, but important documents and letters may be sent by post to your term-time or permanent home address. You must keep your contact information up-to-date through MyEssex, or you will miss important information.

You should check your University email account at least daily in term time. Moodle is also an important source of information and will be used to update you about module and timetabling information. General information is also placed on the Postgraduate Notice Board located outside the Postgraduate Office.

### Communication Methods

Other important information is communicated to students by means of land mail and electronic mail and on University notice boards. The primary means of communication is via e-mail and this is often used to notify students of administrative matters such as timetable changes and to communicate information on various aspects of student life. Once you have registered as a student, you will be provided with a University e-mail account which you are expected to access and check at least daily during term time.

You can easily access your University e-mail account in one of the computer labs on campus, or off campus via another internet service provider. In addition, the School PC laboratory (room 6.10, adjacent to the teaching laboratories) is available for students during working hours, except when in use for practical classes.



Important information is also posted on the School Postgraduate Taught Student Notice Board located on Floor 4 in the Biological Sciences building, just outside the Postgraduate Taught Office.

Elsewhere on campus, other notice boards located outside the Examinations Office (Room 6.101) and in the Lecture Theatre Building (LTB) foyer convey more general information. Students are advised to check these regularly.

### **Communicating with Members of Staff**

Most members of staff within the School of Biological Sciences operate an open-door policy by which you are free to contact them directly by e-mail, telephone or in person. However, in the interest of providing an efficient service, you are asked to abide by the following guidelines for communicating with staff:

Before you make a query please make sure you have checked all of your course documentation and online resources. The answer to at least 80 per cent of student queries is already documented.

Dr Zwacka operates a regular “surgery” session to deal in person with any student queries. Extremely urgent matters can be dealt with at other times, but, wherever possible, students should contact the Postgraduate Taught Administrator by e-mail to arrange a convenient appointment (email: [n.reason@essex.ac.uk](mailto:n.reason@essex.ac.uk), extension 2051).

Avoid directing general questions about the course or administrative matters towards individual lecturers or members of staff. Please reserve these for the Postgraduate Taught Administrator.

Please try to keep non-essential e-mail traffic to academic staff to a minimum. If you wish to see a member of staff in person, please arrange an appointment beforehand (this can often be done at short notice) unless it is urgent.

### **2.6 School Annual Prizes**

The School has several endowed postgraduate prizes which are awarded annually. The award of a School prize is noted on student transcripts. Postgraduate prizes are awarded at the Degree Day Reception.

## 2.7 Support for Female Students

The School of Biological Sciences has a large and vibrant community of female scientists working at all levels in research, teaching, management and outreach. The University was awarded the Athena SWAN Institutional Bronze Award in November 2013 in recognition of its continuing work to support women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects and the School of Biological Sciences achieved an Athena SWAN Bronze Departmental Award in November 2014. The School has a Women in Biological Sciences webpage with a range of information and resources for female staff and students [http://www.essex.ac.uk/bs/about/women\\_in\\_science/default.aspx](http://www.essex.ac.uk/bs/about/women_in_science/default.aspx).

## 3. Learning and Teaching

### MSc Courses

We offer a wide range of carefully structured and innovative MSc courses that give you a thorough and up-to-date knowledge and understanding of the subject. All of our courses are taught by staff who are experts in their fields and actively involved in research of international standing.

### 3.1 Learning and Teaching Methods

The School's broad educational purpose is to:

- 1) Deliver an education in the chosen subject of high academic standard set in a framework of procedures to monitor and improve quality;
- 2) Offer coherent MSc degree courses, shaped by the research strengths of the School, allowing specialisation in relevant disciplines;
- 3) Provide a choice of MSc degree courses with curricula designed to promote the progressive development of subject knowledge and understanding;
- 4) Deploy a range of teaching, learning and assessment modes structured to meet the requirements of the curriculum in a well resourced environment, making reasonable adjustments where appropriate to support individual student needs;
- 5) Stimulate interest in and enthusiasm for the chosen subject and encourage students to realise their academic potential;
- 6) Help students by providing a friendly, supportive environment and clear, comprehensive information relating to degree organisation, module content and assessment methods;
- 7) Produce graduates who can proceed either to PhD study particularly in appropriate subject areas, or to a range of careers, using the key skills acquired during their study.

Successful teaching and learning involves a partnership between student and staff.



## Course Participation

### Lectures, Practicals and Seminars

In a Masters-level course the mode of study is different from a first degree. Students are expected to have acquired good study skills in their first degree, and to be self-motivated in their study.

They should, therefore, require less supervision in their assimilation and follow-up of lecture and seminar material than undergraduates. Lectures, practicals and seminars in this course are designed to stimulate the students' academic development, and to provide up to date teaching in this specialised material.

Students are expected to do a substantial amount of work outside the lectures, which may involve learning or refreshing material that is unfamiliar using basic text books; though this should only be necessary in one or two areas that will differ for each student.

However, much of the material will be advanced texts and journal papers referred to by the lecturer, which will require considerable study.

Students should expect therefore to put in three to four hours of study for every formal contact hour, including preparing assessment work; and a typical weekly work rate at Masters level is 40-50 hours.

While some time off during the University vacations is essential, this should be limited, as there will be reading to do and assessments to prepare. Students should expect to use the library extensively and will probably need to purchase several books.

### Guidance on Study Methods for Masters Courses

Everyone has their own style and methods of study and on a Masters course there is much flexibility in how you organise your study to accompany lectures, practicals and seminars. You should try to develop a method that best suits you. We provide here some guidance that you might find useful in helping you to get started, particularly if you have been away from formal study for some time.

### Learning is an Interactive Process

Moodle: <http://moodle.essex.ac.uk> provides for each module: a Module Handbook; learning materials including presentations and handouts. Staff may also add other information such as useful weblinks and additional reading material. You should access Moodle regularly but do note that the extent of lecture materials on Moodle will vary from module to module, depending on staff preferences. You can also access Moodle through MyEssex. Moodle supports lectures but is not a substitute for attending lectures.

It is well to remember that learning is an interactive process. It is often useful to go back to something you studied earlier to find out whether it now makes more sense or has more meaning.

You may find it helpful to read some material quickly to gain an overall sense of content and direction, and then to return to that topic and study other material more closely later.

It may also help you to have confidence to tackle a less familiar area. The interactive aspect of learning should be kept in mind particularly if you feel you are getting stuck on something. Sometimes it may be better not to spend too much time on an idea or topic you cannot grasp immediately but schedule to return to this topic at a later date.

It is more likely that you will be able to tackle it more effectively at some later point, without becoming bored, or frustrated, or losing your patience.

It is important always to look at the aims and objectives of a course or seminar. You will make the best use of your time and effort if you have a clear understanding of what you should be achieving at each stage of your study. Take some time to examine the course outline and to understand its structure and progression and how the various components link together.

### **Organisation - The Study Habit**

A number of studies have shown that the most successful students are normally those who are well organised. One important aspect of organisation is being able to order your course materials, notes, newspaper cuttings and journal articles that you might collect. Find a way of filing or organising these things so that they are easy to get hold of when you need them. We will introduce you to referencing software (for example EndNote, Reference Manager) and you should use these to organise important information for easy retrieval and inclusion in your written work.

It is also important to organise your work times. You need to develop a study habit at the outset. Let your family and friends know too. Although it may seem rigid and difficult at first, it can be a good idea to draw up a timetable so that you have a clear idea of what you should cover within a given period. A milestones chart will provide you with a long-term view of the work you need to complete. Creating a weekly timetable should help to guide you towards regular concentrated work and improve your efficient use of time. It takes away the excuse for indecision by focusing your attention on what you are going to complete each week and helps to create that study habit.

## Support from others

Much of your study will involve you working alone. So try to take any opportunity you can of getting support that might help you. The value of discussion with others cannot be underestimated. Whether you talk to people who know something about your new area of study, or those who know little, their input can be of use to you in many ways.

Talking to other people is a good way of helping to clarify, in your own mind, some of the new ideas and concepts that you will be coming across in the course material.

If you are given the opportunity to talk about or argue a point of view or perspective prompted by the course material it will help to show what you have learnt, highlight areas you do not really understand and develop your skills in expressing a point of view or developing a well-structured argument.

## Reading and Note Taking

Modules vary in the amount of reading they ask for, but you will probably find that your course involves a considerable amount of reading. How you organise and use reading is, therefore, of central importance. Think of reading as a fundamental intellectual activity. As you read, you should be:

- Thinking about the content
- Making notes, if appropriate
- Relating concepts and ideas, particularly to other disciplines
- Comparing information with other knowledge and experience that you have
- Working out how what you are reading can help you formulate issues and answer questions
- Considering the applications of what you are studying

You should always adopt a critical approach to the materials. You are dealing with very complex issues and in some cases there will be gaps in the knowledge.

There is no substitute for making your own notes of key concepts, techniques, issues and arguments. In note taking, the choice you make about what you think is most important, interesting and relevant, and putting it in your own words, are a powerful means of acquiring and developing your knowledge of a subject.

By the end of your course you should have a set of notes which provides you with a useful summary of what you have learned, and constitutes your own commentary on the subject matter of the course.

Your notes will build up into your own reference collection of the material you have covered and will also act as an important tool or resource when it comes to clarifying and understanding what you have been learning, especially in preparation for your assignments and Project. Note taking increases the time spent concentrating on a study topic and it reinforces your ability to absorb what you have been learning.

Notes should be:

- Well organised
- Well-structured with headings, numbers and indentations
- Full in content with neither too much nor too little detail
- Able to convey clearly the meaning of the source to which they refer

It is important to remember that any notes you take should record, probably at the start of the page, the source of the information. Reference to the pages that the notes are taken from, as you go along, will also be helpful, particularly if you use your notes when you come to write an essay.

### **3.2 Teaching and Learning Expectations**

**You can expect that we will:**

- Work to achieve our aims;
- Provide clear and comprehensive documentation for all modules;
- Provide teaching sessions which (a) are well prepared and delivered, (b) are supported by sufficient materials and equipment and (c) for practical work, are safe;
- Notify you as far in advance as is possible of any changes to the teaching timetable;
- Return assessed work within 3 term time weeks, with clear and helpful feedback and marked in accordance with the marks classification in this handbook, on a coversheet where appropriate;
- Deal with queries you may have relating to modules within a reasonable timescale.

**We expect that you will:**

- Make the best use of the educational opportunities and resources available and work to achieve the stated objectives and to realise your academic potential;
- Familiarise yourself with the contents of this handbook and the documentation which accompanies each module and follow the guidance, procedures and rules described;
- Attend prescribed instruction of all types and where absence is unavoidable notify the relevant person;
- Regularly consult noticeboards and your email and keep your address updated so that you do not miss important information;
- Prepare adequately for and participate actively in teaching sessions;
- Support your formal tuition with an appropriate level and intensity of student managed learning;
- Submit assessed work in the appropriate form and by the published deadlines;
- Use feedback on written work constructively, both to build on your strengths and to identify and remedy your weaknesses;
- Regularly review your academic progress (marks) and take appropriate action where and when necessary;
- Contribute to the development and improvement of the student learning experience by providing accurate and considered feedback on modules when required, and by participating in the student staff liaison process;
- Abide by the various rules and regulations in the School and University that have evolved in order to provide safe, fair and effective teaching and learning support for all students.



## Job References: Requesting References from Members of Staff

If you require a personal reference, always ask permission from a member of staff before giving their name as a referee. You should consider from whom it is most appropriate to request a reference and who will be best equipped to provide evidence of your character and performance in the subject.

Every reasonable effort will be made to meet a request for a reference for graduates up to three years after they leave the University.

Requests received outside of this timescale may, of course, be met if a member of staff is equipped with the necessary information on the student and is willing to provide a reference. Requests received after this three-year period has lapsed will be dealt with by providing a more factual statement, comprising details of academic attendance and marks, drawing on records held within the School and/or central administration, as appropriate. Transcripts are supplied by the Registry. Attendance and participation are borne in mind by staff when references are given. It is helpful if you can provide the member of staff with details of the course or job you have applied for and a CV. Please try to ask for references in good time as it will not always be possible for a member of staff to write a reference immediately.

### Copies of References

A copy of any reference provided will be retained within our School for no longer than three years for taught students. If a reference is retained beyond this timeframe, our School will seek explicit consent from the student concerned.

## 3.3 Moodle and FASER

We use **Moodle** as our online learning environment, to enhance face-to-face teaching. It lets you get to course materials, and has built-in features to enhance learning such as discussion forums, chat facilities, quizzes, surveys, glossaries and wikis.

**FASER** is our **online coursework submission and feedback system**. Use it to submit your coursework electronically, produce a watermarked copy of your work and receive electronic feedback all in one place.

[www.essex.ac.uk/e-learning/tools/faser/account/login](http://www.essex.ac.uk/e-learning/tools/faser/account/login)

[www.essex.ac.uk/it/elearning](http://www.essex.ac.uk/it/elearning)

**Further information about using FASER is given in Section 5.**

### 3.4 Course Structures

We offer a wide range of carefully structured and innovative MSc courses that give you a thorough and up-to-date knowledge and understanding of the subject. All of our courses are taught by staff who are experts in their fields and actively involved in research of international standing.

Students currently in the School may be studying the following MSc Courses:

MSc Biotechnology
MSc Cancer Biology
MSc Molecular Medicine
MSc Tropical Marine Biology

**Further information on the Individual MSc Course Structures can be found in the relevant Appendices at the back of this handbook.**

#### Programme Specifications

Programme Specifications provide key information, such as the structure and aims of your course, as well as the knowledge and skills you will develop. The relevant Programme Specification for your course and stage of study will be available to you when you log onto either myEssex or eNROL

#### Learning Outcomes

Your course's learning outcomes are set out in Programme Specifications. They are categorised into knowledge, intellectual, practical and key skills, and are linked to the aims, learning outcomes and assessment on the modules you take. You can measure your progress against the outcomes, for example when reviewing coursework feedback, and they can be used to guide you when undertaking independent study. You can find a copy of the module map showing how your course learning outcomes are connected to the modules in the programme specification for your course, online through the MyEssex webpage or via this link: <http://www.essex.ac.uk/programmespecs/>. Full module outlines are located on the module directory: <http://www.essex.ac.uk/modules/>

## Credits

The University credit-rating system for Postgraduate study is based on a nationally recognised framework. The Postgraduate academic year consists of 180 credits and each postgraduate module is assigned a number of 'workload credits'. In our Biological Sciences MSc Courses, individual modules are assigned 15, 30 or 60 credits.

### 3.5 Changing your Degree

If you want to change your course, you should talk to someone in your school first. Normally, you would be required to make a new application for admission.

Investigate your potential new course by looking at course information on the department's web pages, talking to students on the course and speaking to MSc Course Directors.. You should also look at our Rules of Assessment for the new course to check whether there are any course-specific requirements.

If you want to **change your mode of study** from full-time to part-time, you should discuss this with our school staff. If this is possible, you will need to make a formal request using the online **Change of Mode of Study form** which you can find here: <https://www.essex.ac.uk/esf/>

Changing your mode of study may affect your immigration status if you have a Tier 4 visa and you may need to contact the Home Office or make a new Tier 4 application.

**Please read carefully our guidance on Tier4 and course changes here:**

[www.essex.ac.uk/immigration/studies/changes](http://www.essex.ac.uk/immigration/studies/changes)

### 3.6 Listen Again

Did you miss something? Our Listen Again digital recording service lets you listen again to lectures so you grasp every detail. Available in teaching rooms or lecture theatres where you see the sign.

[listenagain.essex.ac.uk/](http://listenagain.essex.ac.uk/)

### 3.7 Information for Disabled Students

We would encourage all new students with a disability, long term medical condition, specific learning difficulty or mental health difficulty to disclose and register with the disability service so that we can plan how best to support you in your studies.

You can find out about the academic and learning support we offer here:

[www.essex.ac.uk/students/disability/academic.aspx](http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/disability/academic.aspx)

UK students may be eligible for a Disabled Students' Allowance grant. Go here for more information including application forms and key changes for 2016-17

[www.essex.ac.uk/students/disability/funding.aspx](http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/disability/funding.aspx)

### 3.8 Information for International Students

We are proud to be a global community and we recognise that living and studying in the UK may be very different from your own country.

Essex has a wide range of support covering academic and health and wellbeing issues. Our friendly and professional staff will be able to guide, give advice and assist you during your time at Essex.

You can find helpful information here - [www.essex.ac.uk/students/new/international](http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/new/international)

If you are studying on a **Tier 4 visa**, don't forget to read section **8.4 Tier 4 Information** of this handbook which has further information and links.

### 3.9 Mature and Part-time Students

As a mature student you'll be in very good company – around 37% of our students are mature students. We appreciate that studying as a mature student can present challenges. This is particularly true if this is your first experience of higher education and you have other commitments and responsibilities to meet such as work and family. We want you to be aware of the support available so that you can make the most of your time at Essex.

You can find more information here: [www.essex.ac.uk/life/students/mature](http://www.essex.ac.uk/life/students/mature)

### 3.10 Student Representation, Student Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC), Student Assessment of Modules and Teaching (SAMT) and Student Surveys

Student feedback is a vital part of the University's approach to quality assurance and enhancement. It is therefore important that you are given the opportunity to feedback and that you take the time to feedback to the University.



You can do this in a number of ways:-

1. You can contact (or be elected as) a **student representative** who represent the voice of fellow students in School Postgraduate Student Staff Liaison Committees (SSLCs) and other University level committees.
2. You can find more information on the Students' Union website [www.essexstudent.com/representation/coursereprs/](http://www.essexstudent.com/representation/coursereprs/) and the University's policy here: [www.essex.ac.uk/quality/student\\_representation/student\\_rep.asp](http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/student_representation/student_rep.asp)
3. You can find out information about SSLCs here: [www.essex.ac.uk/quality/student\\_representation/sslc.asp](http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/student_representation/sslc.asp)

Every year, we will ask you to complete the **Student Assessment of Module and Teaching (SAMT)**. This survey will be summarised and discussed by SSLCs and will inform reports written by us for central University committees as part of our quality assurance processes.

**Student satisfaction surveys** enable the University to gauge overall satisfaction amongst students. When the results have been reviewed and analysed, the University can then enhance the student experience of learning at Essex. You will probably be aware of the National Student Survey (NSS) for final year undergraduate students which feeds into university league tables. We also run our own Student Satisfaction Survey (SSS) which tells us on a local level how we're doing and where we can make improvements. It's for all postgraduate students (except those in the first year of a part-time postgraduate taught programme). The surveys are run online and you will receive a link to the survey in your email.

### 3.11 Library Services

At our Colchester Campus, the **Albert Sloman Library** on Square 5 has long opening hours, a new extension, and 24 hours a day access in the weeks leading up to exam time, the library has a wide range of learning resources, including books, journals, British and foreign-language newspapers, databases, microfilms and audio-visual materials. There are quiet group study areas and networked PCs on all floors.

[libwww.essex.ac.uk](http://libwww.essex.ac.uk)

### 3.12 Attendance Monitoring (Count-me-in) and Absence from Sessions

Your attendance at lectures and classes has a significant impact on how successful you are in your studies. At Essex, we monitor attendance so we can identify students who may need guidance and support.

You'll need to **record your attendance** at teaching events using your registration card and the electronic reader in the teaching room. Just 'tap in' for every timetabled teaching event you attend. Your tap will count from 15 mins before the start time and up to 15 mins after the start on your timetable.

**You should not tap in for someone who is not attending the class; and also you should not tap in if you then immediately leave the teaching event. This is breaking the Student Code of Conduct and you could be fined.**

Attending is especially important if you are here on a Tier 4 visa.

If you **lose your card** or it is **faulty**, go to the Student Services Hub to get a new card (a small fee is applicable for lost cards).

If you need to **report an absence** from a teaching event you should do so by completing the **notified absence** on MyEssex. We will consider the reasons and may record it as an **authorised absence**. Be aware that you may need to **provide evidence**, including medical evidence if relevant. Please see [www.essex.ac.uk/see/attendance](http://www.essex.ac.uk/see/attendance) for acceptable reasons to be absent.

You will be able to **check your attendance record**, and notified absences on **MyEssex**. **We are introducing this by school during the year.**

Please contact your MSc Course Director School Staff, or the Student Services Hub for advice and support, particularly if you are going to be absent for several weeks.

For more information on attendance, and for links to forms and guidelines visit: [www.essex.ac.uk/see/attendance](http://www.essex.ac.uk/see/attendance)

Please note that **absence from practical sessions** will result in a mark of zero for the associated work. The School will not be able to schedule alternative assessment. Participation in a practical is confirmed by your **signature on the hard copy register** provided so it is essential you sign this during the session. Note: you should also 'tap in' for your practical so that your presence is recorded for general absence monitoring. If your **absence is the result of extenuating circumstances, you should complete an Extenuating Circumstances form, in addition to the 'Notified Absence from Teaching form'**, for the Exam Board that meets at the end of the year (see section 4.2 for further details).

If you are **absent from an examination**, you should complete an *Absence from Exam Notification Form*. Depending on the reason for your absence, you may also need to complete an Extenuating Circumstances Form (see 4.2).

For more information about how to report an absence, and for links to the online form and guidelines, visit [www.essex.ac.uk/see/attendance](http://www.essex.ac.uk/see/attendance)

### 3.13 Your Progress

Your engagement with your programme of study is primarily measured by attendance, and completion of, and performance in, assessments, as appropriate. We monitor attendance and will follow-up concerns about any student in accordance with the University's Progress Procedures at:

[www.essex.ac.uk/dsh/progress](http://www.essex.ac.uk/dsh/progress)

As a student, if engagement in your studies, as measured by attendance and/or submission of assessed work, is unsatisfactory you'll be contacted and offered guidance and support.

If your progress causes concerns you'll initially be contacted by your MSc Course Director, and then by the School Progress Officer. Where serious concerns persist, you may be referred to the Deputy Dean Education and your case formally considered by a Progress Committee.

## 4. Assessment

### 4.1 Rules of Assessment

<http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/exams-and-coursework/ppg/pgt/assess-rules.aspx>

**The Rules of Assessment** are the rules, principles and frameworks which the University uses to calculate your course progression and final results. These decisions are made by the Board of Examiners who use the Rules of Assessment to decide:

- you can be awarded credit for the modules you have studied
- you have done enough to move on to the next stage of your course (if you are on a course which lasts more than one year)
- you need reassessment
- whether you have done enough to pass your course
- whether you are eligible to receive a merit or distinction

If you **fail your course** you are not able to repeat it. The Rules of Assessment for Postgraduate Taught Awards only allow reassessment for up to a maximum of 60 credits worth of modules for taught masters degrees. The Board of Examiners will inform you if you are eligible for reassessment once it has considered your marks.

If you **fail your dissertation** you may be permitted by the Board of Examiners to resubmit your work, provided you meet the criteria as set out in the Rules of Assessment for Postgraduate Taught Awards. Alternatively, if you have obtained enough credits in your taught modules, you may be eligible for another award such as a postgraduate diploma or certificate.

You can decide if you want to **accumulate credit** by taking individual modules with the aim of achieving a postgraduate award; this is called **Modular study**. There are opportunities to achieve postgraduate awards through **credit accumulation study** in an increasing number of departments, as an alternative to standard full or part-time study.



Individual modules can yield 15, 20, 30 or 40 credits depending upon which department you are studying in.

Each award has a defined structure, normally consisting of a combination of core, compulsory and optional modules, and requires a specific volume of credit to be achieved:

- Graduate/Postgraduate Certificates - 60 credits (all taught module credits)
- Graduate/Postgraduate Diplomas - 120 credits (all taught module credits)
- Masters Courses - 180 credits (normally 120 credits of taught module credits and a 60 credit dissertation or equivalent)

Credit is awarded for successful completion of individual modules. Students taking a credit-accumulation route of study register for the separate modules individually and accumulate the required volume of credit for the relevant award, including the dissertation if necessary. You will be given a different registration number for each module.

The Rules of Assessment are different when you study individual modules; make sure you check the relevant Rules of Assessment for the award you're studying towards.

**You will have a maximum of six years to study** (this is usually five years with a sixth year for a dissertation). We measure the six years from the first module you register on towards the award.

You can find out more information here: <http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/exams-and-coursework/ppg/pgt/modular> and you should talk to your MSc Course Director about fees, and applying accumulated credit towards an award.

## 4.2 Boards of Examiners

The Board of Examiners meets in mid June for the Interim Exam Board in order to consider results, progression outcomes (as determined by the Rules of Assessment) and extenuating circumstances claims. Very occasionally when there is a problem with the assessment for a module, the Exam Board may scale (increase or decrease) the marks for a whole module in order to achieve a fair result for students.

Students will be required to withdraw at this stage if the accumulation of further credit would not result in the achievement of an award according to the Rules of Assessment: [www.essex.ac.uk/dsh/pgtrules](http://www.essex.ac.uk/dsh/pgtrules)

To enable the Board of Examiners to confirm the marks relating to the taught modules of the degree, all coursework will be recalled and made available for the External Examiner to view.

A request to recall coursework will be e-mailed to students in the Summer Term. It is essential that all students comply with this request.

The Final Board of Examiners Meeting will review and confirm the Research Project marks and will determine the appropriate final award for each student.

For your information, the timing of the Interim Board in 2016-17 is yet to be finalised, but Final Boards are usually held during Week 8 of the following academic year. The Exam Board timetable should be available by Week 9; please contact the Postgraduate Taught Administrator if you require any further information regarding the timing of the Board of Examiners Meetings for your course.

## Results

Results are published by the Registry within 48 hours of the relevant Exam Board at:  
[www.essex.ac.uk/results](http://www.essex.ac.uk/results)

You can access your results using your University login and password. Formal transcripts will not be issued to students who are in debt to the University and degrees will not be conferred until any debt has been cleared.

If you have a query about your exam results you can contact the Postgraduate Taught Administrator ([n.reason@essex.ac.uk](mailto:n.reason@essex.ac.uk)).

## 4.3 Extenuating Circumstances, Withdrawing and Intermitting

**Extenuating circumstances** are circumstances beyond your control which cause you to perform less well in your coursework or examinations than you might have expected. In general, extenuating circumstances will be of a medical or personal nature that affect you for any significant period of time and/or during the examination period.

You need to submit your form by the deadline given here - [www.essex.ac.uk/students/exams-and-coursework/ext-circ](http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/exams-and-coursework/ext-circ)

You will **not** get extra marks you hand in an extenuating circumstances form. Boards of Examiners use other methods to take into account extenuating circumstances, such as permitting further reassessment opportunities for uncapped marks.

**Please read the guidance on extenuating circumstances very carefully before submitting your form and evidence. Please seek advice from the Students' Union Advice Centre**

**([www.essexstudent.com/services/advice\\_centre/](http://www.essexstudent.com/services/advice_centre/)) or the Student Services Hub ([www.essex.ac.uk/students/contact/registry](http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/contact/registry)) if you need any guidance.**

**Intermitting** is a temporary withdrawal or leave of absence from your studies for one term, two terms or one academic year (stage). In exceptional circumstances, a period of up to two academic years away from our University may be allowed as long as it does not exceed your maximum period of study. Normally this is for reasons beyond your control such as health or personal problems. An intermission is approved for a defined period of time after which you would return to your studies. This is a formal process which needs formal approval.

If you are thinking about intermitting, there are some practical things you need to consider such as academic issues, for example, the impact on your module choices and maximum period of study, accommodation, financial matters including the impact on your tuition fees, and visas if you have a student or Tier 4 visa.

If you decide to intermit you will no longer be entitled to attend tuition but you will still have access to your Essex email account (which we will use to communicate with you) and some Library access.

If you decide to intermit, you will need to complete the online form at: [www.essex.ac.uk/esf/](http://www.essex.ac.uk/esf/) and you will receive an email confirming whether your request to intermit has been successful.

**You should read the guidance on intermitting very carefully before submitting your form at [www.essex.ac.uk/students/course-admin/intermission](http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/course-admin/intermission). You are strongly advised to discuss intermitting with your school.**

You may experience doubts about continuing on your course at some point during your studies.

**Withdrawing from your course** is the formal process for permanently leaving your programme of study and the University. There are plenty of people at Essex who can provide you with information, advice, guidance and support to help you to make a decision that's right for you. For instance, you might find that taking a temporary break from your studies (intermitting) will enable you to resolve the current situation that is causing you to think about leaving. Also, please note that if you are thinking about withdrawing from the University, there are some practical things you need to consider: accommodation, financial matters including your tuition fees, visas if you have a student or Tier 4 visa, and careers advice. Who to contact for advice, the practical matters that you need to consider, your options, and the withdrawal process are all detailed here: <http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/course-admin/withdrawing.aspx>

If you decide to withdraw, you will need to complete the online form at [www.essex.ac.uk/esf/](http://www.essex.ac.uk/esf/) and you will receive a letter confirming that your withdrawal has been completed.

#### 4.4 Re-marking of Coursework

You have the right to request a re-mark of your coursework under certain circumstances which your school will advise you on. The University Marking Policy can be found here: [www.essex.ac.uk/quality/university\\_policies/examination\\_and\\_assessment/marking\\_policy](http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/university_policies/examination_and_assessment/marking_policy). You will need to complete a form and be aware that marks can go down as well as up.

#### 4.5 Moderation, Second Marking Policies and External Examiners

The University policy on **moderation** can be found as part of the Marking Policy. When work is moderated, it means that a second member of academic staff takes a random sample of the work for a particular assessment and reviews the marks given. A moderator would not change the individual marks for the work, but would liaise with the first marker if s/he believed that the marks were not at the correct level, with a view to the first marker reviewing and adjusting the marking.

**Second Marking** is where a second marker marks the work but has access to the first marker's marks and/or comments. Where two members of staff are involved in marking a piece of work, the markers should make every effort to agree a mark, rather than merely averaging the two marks. Schools must keep a full record of both individual and agreed marks for all work which is second or double marked.

**External Examiners** are usually academics from other universities but may be from industry, business or the profession depending on the requirements of the course. They give an impartial view of the course and independent advice to ensure that courses at the University meet the academic standards expected across UK higher education. External Examiners write reports on the courses and modules they are responsible for which are made available to you via your department. You can find the name and institution of the External Examiner for your course and modules by looking on the Programme Specifications Catalogue and the Module Directory. You can find out more about how the University uses External Examiners by following this link: [www.essex.ac.uk/quality/external\\_examiners](http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/external_examiners)

**Please note: you may not contact External Examiners directly under any circumstances.** If you have any concerns about the quality and standards of your course, please contact your student rep, your Head of School or the Students' Union.

## 4.6 Appeals, Complaints, and Fitness to Practise

Following the release of your end of year results, you are eligible to submit a formal appeal against the **progress decision** of the Board of Examiners that have made the decision regarding your academic progress. Formal appeals can take up to 6 weeks to be considered, however, if you are not in the final year of your programme of study, you can “Consult the Dean” before submitting a formal appeal. The Dean can take action and change the original progress decision, and can also consider requests from students who want to repeat the year rather than take reassessment across the summer. Please visit the Appeals webpage for information regarding the deadline by which you must “Consult the Dean” and/or submit your formal appeal by.

As with all appeals, you would be required to provide any relevant evidence that substantiate your claims. The main legitimate grounds for appeal are any extenuating circumstances that you could not make the Board of Examiners’ aware of in advance, or procedural irregularities in the conduct of the Board of Examiners (including alleged administrative error) of such a nature as to cause reasonable doubt as to whether the result might have been different had they not occurred. Other grounds will be considered on their merits but **you may not appeal against academic judgement**. This means that you can’t appeal against the marks you have been given by a Board of Examiners without evidence of extenuating circumstances or procedural irregularity.

The Appeals Procedure gives examples of grounds for appeal which are not considered legitimate. You should read these before submitting an appeal. You may also appeal against the outcome of academic offences committees and progress committees under certain circumstances.

**We strongly advise all students thinking about making an appeal to contact the Students’ Union Advice Centre. Please visit [www.essexstudent.com/advice](http://www.essexstudent.com/advice) for more information.**

### **The Complaints Procedure:**

The University is a large community engaged in many activities, both academic and non-academic. If you feel dissatisfied with some aspect of your dealings with the University, it is important that the issue is dealt with constructively and as quickly as possible without risk of disadvantage or recrimination. You can find the complaints procedure and the forms here:

[www.essex.ac.uk/see/complaints](http://www.essex.ac.uk/see/complaints)

**Fitness to practise** is only applicable to students on certain professional courses (such as nursing or social work). If this applies to you, you will have been told by your department.

You can read the procedures on the University website at:

[www.essex.ac.uk/students/exams-and-coursework/ppg](http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/exams-and-coursework/ppg)

## 4.7 Academic Offences Policy

[www.essex.ac.uk/see/academic-offence](http://www.essex.ac.uk/see/academic-offence)

All students are expected to behave with honesty and integrity in relation to coursework, examinations and other assessed work. If you do not do so, you may be found to have committed an academic offence. The University takes academic offences very seriously.

Academic offences can include plagiarism, false authorship, collusion, falsifying data or evidence, unethical research behaviour and cheating in an examination (this list is not exhaustive). Academic offences can be committed as a result of negligence, meaning that you may be found guilty of an academic offence even if you didn't intend to commit one.

It is your responsibility to make yourself aware of the Academic Offences Procedure, the regulations governing examinations, and how to correctly reference and cite the work of others. If you aren't sure what referencing system you should use, you should ask your department and also refer to 8: Referencing and good academic practice in this handbook.

If an allegation of an academic offence is made against you, we strongly advise contacting the Students' Union Advice Centre. Please visit [www.essexstudent.com/advice](http://www.essexstudent.com/advice) for more information.

## 4.8 Ethics

All research involving human participants, whether undertaken by the University's staff or students, **must** undergo an ethics review by an appropriate body and ethical approval **must** be obtained before it commences. You can find our Guidelines for Ethical Approval of Research Involving Human Participants here - [www.essex.ac.uk/reo/governance/human](http://www.essex.ac.uk/reo/governance/human) - along with the University Ethical Approval application form.

'Human participants' are defined as including living human beings, human beings who have recently died (cadavers, human remains and body parts), embryos and fetuses, human tissue and bodily fluids, and personal data and records (such as, but not restricted to medical, genetic, financial, personnel, criminal or administrative records and test results including scholastic achievements).

Research involving the NHS may require and research involving human tissue or adults lacking capacity to consent will require Health Research Authority approval.

## 5. Coursework

### 5.1 Assessment

A variety of types of assessment are used in the School. The two categories are:

Coursework, e.g.:

- Essays
- Worksheets, data analysis and interpretation exercises
- Practical field or lab reports: including SPF (Scientific Paper Format) reports
- Posters
- Oral presentations
- Writing summaries, popular scientific articles

Exams:

- A written exam, including short questions and longer essay questions. **This applies to MSc Biotechnology, Cancer Biology and Molecular Medicine students only. The exam is held in January (Week 15 during the Christmas Vacation Exam Period).**

The details of assessments are given in the Module Handbooks. We use defined marks criteria to mark all assessments (see 'Marking' section). You should study the marks criteria carefully to fully understand what is expected of you for each assignment. The marks criteria will also be provided in the Module Handbook on Moodle.



## Interpreting Assignment Marks

It is important that you correctly interpret the assessment of your work. Customs vary considerably across disciplines, universities and countries. What appears as a poor mark, according to the customs of a particular country, may in fact represent a very good performance, simply because the conventions for awarding marks are different. The conventions on this course are given below.

70%	Excellent	Anything over 70 is Distinction level. Well done.
65-69%	Very good	Merit: not quite Distinction level, but a very commendable standard.
60-64%	Good	A Merit, and a very sound performance. Maintain this level and you will achieve a high standard.
50-59%	Satisfactory	A Pass, but there is no room for complacency. The <i>minimum</i> standard to be maintained.
40-49%	Improvement needed	This would be a failure at Masters level, and it implies the need for a more sustained focus. If in doubt regarding the problem seek immediate advice.
<40%	Major improvement needed	An outright Fail. The student should be very concerned that they have either not allowed enough time for study, or that the approach to written work is inadequate. If in doubt regarding the problem, seek immediate advice.

## 5.2 Assignment and Essay Length

Part of your training in writing assignments is to produce a piece of work by a given deadline and conforming to a specified length. The work should be clear, comprehensive and concise and should answer the question. Significantly exceeding the word limit is a way of seeking an unfair advantage over other students who abide by the limits, it can also indicate that undue attention has been given to presenting the material clearly and concisely. You are allowed a  $\pm 10\%$  leeway with regard to the word count without penalty. If requested you must provide a word count on the title page of all submitted work: it should include all the main text but exclude figures, tables and the reference list.

Staff will pay strict attention to word limits. If you are considerably under the given limit (-10%), it is likely that you will not have covered the material in sufficient depth and you will probably receive reduced marks as a result.

If you exceed the word limit (+10%) your work is likely to be marked down for not being concise or focused, or for including irrelevant material.

In addition, if you exceed the word limit by more than 10%, you will be penalized - School policy is that 10% will be deducted from the total mark allocated for the work (i.e. for a piece of work marked as 36 out of 50, 5 marks will be deducted, giving a final mark of 31).

## **5.3 Guidelines on Writing Assignments**

### **How to Approach Writing an Essay**

An essay should be a well-structured and well-reasoned written argument answering a particular question. It should not only help others to assess how much you understand about a particular topic, but also act as a piece of creative work that enables you to explain your point of view about a subject area or helps you explore or develop your widening knowledge base.

When you are asked to write an essay, the first step is to read the title carefully and identify what exactly it is you are being asked to write. You should identify the key words in the question and properly understand what the question is asking and how you should write the essay.

The definitions of common 'process' words used in essay questions are listed below:-

#### **Compare**

Look for and explain similarities and differences between arguments/approaches, and reach a conclusion about which is preferable.

#### **Contrast**

Set different ideas or concepts in opposition in order to bring out and discuss differences.

#### **Criticise**

Give your reasoned and well-informed judgement or opinion about the merit of theories, concepts or accepted truths, discussing the evidence.

**Define**

Set down the precise meaning of a word, phrase, concept or idea; in some cases, explain how the distinctions and assumptions implied in the definition are necessary.

**Describe**

Give a detailed account of.

**Discuss**

Explore an issue by reasoned argument, debate and give reasons for and against.

**Enumerate**

Write in a list or outline form, giving points consistently one by one.

**Evaluate**

Make an appraisal of the worth of something, which can include your own well informed opinion.

**Explain**

Clarify, make plain, interpret or account for; in some cases, give reasons for differences of opinion or for results, and try to analyse causes.

**Illustrate**

Use a figure, diagram or examples to explain or clarify an issue.

**Interpret**

Clarify the meaning of: make clear and explicit, also usually giving your judgement.

**Justify**

Show and explain adequate grounds or evidence for decisions, or examples.

**List**

As in 'Enumerate', write an itemised series of concise statements.

**Outline**

Organise a description under main points and subordinate points, omitting minor details and stressing the arrangement or classification of things.

**Prove**

Establish that something is entirely accurate by citing factual evidence or giving clear, logical reasons.

**Relate**

Show how things are related to, or connected with, each other or how one causes another, correlates with another, or is like another.

**Review**

Make a survey of a point or idea, examining the subject critically.

**State**

Present the main points in brief, clear sequence, usually omitting details, illustrations or examples.

**Summarise**

Give a brief account of the chief points or substance of a matter.

*Source: Wye College External Programme*

**Organising Your Thinking**

Organise your thoughts by producing a scheme or plan of the essay topic. There are many ways of arranging your ideas on paper, but what is important is that it helps you clarify the interrelationships, ideas, concepts, and examples you will be writing about. This will also be something concrete to which you can refer as you write, keeping your ideas and arguments progressing in a logical and ordered way.

One way of putting your initial thoughts down on paper is in the form of a spider diagram, mind map, or network, which clusters and links ideas together (see below).

Alternatively, a hierarchy is a more ordered, structured way of organising information under different headings and subheadings. Try to experiment with a number of techniques before deciding which is best for you.

Preparation always requires time, but it is a mistake to start writing before you have a definite plan and before you have thought matters out. Be selective about the information you provide.

### **The Mind Map Method**

Unlike conventional linear notes which work down the page, this method involves starting in the middle of the page and working outwards. The title/main idea/topic is written in a box or bubble in the centre of a plain sheet of paper.

Then, major points/themes are written along lines radiating out from the centre. Subsidiary points branch off from these main branches.

A key word or phrase is used to encapsulate each point - the rationale being that if the word/phrase can be summoned up, the whole point will return to mind, in more detail.

Dotted lines/arrows can be added in, to bring out links and connections; different coloured pens used, to highlight main points, and so on. Around these basic guidelines you develop your own system.

*From: Wye College External Programme*

### **Essay Structure**

Your essay should be well structured. There should be:

- A clear *introduction*, which should state briefly the material you are going to cover and act as a lead into the subject of the essay.
- A *middle section*, which forms the discussion or main body of your essay.
- A *conclusion*, which very concisely rounds off your writing.

Your prepared plan outlining what you intend to cover in each part of the essay will give you something to refer to as you write. It will also help you maintain a clear, unified and precise piece of writing. Note, however, that there is never only one way to write to produce a sound and relevant answer.

Your writing should be composed of paragraphs, which together clearly convey to the reader the content, structure and thread of your argument.

You should, as you write, be aiming for clarity of expression and, as the essay may have a word limit, you should make sure that every word you write counts (see George Orwell's six rules on the following page).



## George Orwell's Six Elementary Rules for Good Writing

1. Never use a metaphor, simile or other figure of speech that you are not used to seeing in print.
2. Never use a long word where a short one will do.
3. If it is possible to cut out a word, always cut it out.
4. Never use the passive where you can use the active.
5. Never use a scientific word or jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.
6. Break any of these rules sooner than say anything outright barbarous.

Also try to avoid verbose or long-winded language or expression. What matters about an essay is quality of writing rather than sheer quantity of words.

Your essay should also be clearly referenced (see guidance below) and you are advised to be familiar with and closely follow the advice given in this handbook avoiding cheating and plagiarism).

### Style of Writing

Use the third person (this means not using 'I'). You will be expected to use the third person as it enables you to show that you are being objective. You could try using:

This essay discusses the importance of ...

This research shows that ...

When you have thought about what you are going to write, you should ideally produce a first draft of your work in one sitting.

It is true that many new ideas tend to occur whilst you are actually writing. Interrupting your writing might cause you to produce a piece of work that is stilted or less thorough than it might otherwise have been.

After completing your first draft, it is a good idea to put your work to one side and come back to it after a day or two to re-read what you have written and check it for errors.

Whilst you review your essay draft you should be asking yourself whether you have kept to the main themes, as suggested by the essay question or title; if each paragraph is a natural and logical unit; if you have included an adequate number of relevant examples; and if the general effect of your writing is what you intended.

You might find it useful to ask somebody else to review your work and to offer some constructive criticism, and to spot flaws and weaknesses.

It is also useful to remember that diagrams and tables can often convey ideas in a concise and immediate form.

*The entire process of writing an essay, then, should follow this basic pattern:*

- Read the question carefully
- Think about the question
- Order your thoughts and ideas, produce a plan, gather source material
- Write a draft essay
- Review your work
- Correct and redraft your work
- Produce a final copy

*The main things to bear in mind to achieve a good essay are:*

- Logical, well reasoned argument
- Relevance of examples, diagram and argument
- Effective use of source material
- Clear and easily understood presentation

## 5.4 Referencing

Drawing on the wide range of reading you do around your subject area, and demonstrating how you have used this to develop your knowledge and form your own views, is a key aspect of your coursework. It's essential that you reference your source materials so it's clear where the information has come from, and to avoid any misunderstanding over whether you are presenting ideas as your own.

You should reference any examples, quotes, or sources of information as you write your essay following the formal conventions. The purpose of referencing is to acknowledge the sources of data and material that you are using, and also to provide the reader with sufficient details so that they might find the information you have used for themselves.

References to authors' names and date of publication should appear in the text, with full publication details listed at the end of your essay.

In the text, references can appear in several ways:

- As reference to an idea, concept or piece of work: (Smith, 1997).
- As reference to a quote: (Smith, 1997, p 43).
- As reference to what the author says: Smith (1997) argues that...

If there are two authors, name both: Smith and Jones (1997); or (Smith and Jones, 1997).

If there are three authors, use the Latin *et al*: Smith *et al* (1998); or (Smith *et al*, 1998).

Note that references arranged in this way should be given in date order. If you do not know the author's name, you can reference it as Anon (1990), or by the source: New Scientist (1997).

All the references that you use in the text must be listed at the end of your essay or Project in a section listed as 'References'. These should be arranged in both alphabetical and date order, for example:

Honjo, M., Manabe, K., Shimada, H., Mita, I., Nakayama, A. & Furutani, Y. (1984). Cloning and expression of the gene for neutral protease of *Bacillus amyloliquefaciens* in *Bacillus subtilis*. *J. Biotechnol.* 1, 265-77.

Horiuchi, H., Yanai, K., Okazaki, T., Takagi, M., & Yano, K. (1988). Isolation and sequencing of a genomic clone encoding the aspartic proteinase of *Rhizopus niveus*. *J. Bacteriol.* 170, 272-278.



Horiuchi, H., Ashikari, T., Amachi, T., Yoshizumi, H., Takagi, M. & Yano, K. (1990). High level secretion of a *Rhizopus niveus* aspartic proteinase in *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*. *Agric. Biol. Chem.* 54, 1771-1779.

Houde, A., & Weber, J.M. (1987). Sequence of the protease of human subgroup E adenovirus type 4. *Gene* 54, 51-56.

Houde, A., & Weber, J.M. (1988). The primary structure of human adenovirus type 12 protease. *Nucleic Acids Res.* 16, 7195.

All references should be given in full including the names of all authors and the unabbreviated titles of journals. Individual chapters in books, symposia etc should also follow the convention of including full details of the main publication. Although there are many different traditions, the following general format for papers, books, reports and websites should be used.

We advocate use of American Society for Microbiology journal reference formats or similar.

Books should be referenced citing the author's surname(s) (Family name), initial(s), year of publication in brackets, title in italics, publisher and town.

eg Glick, B.R. and Pasternak, J.J. (1998). *Molecular Biotechnology* 2nd edn. ASM Press, Washington D.C.

Glazer, A. N. and Nikaido, N. (1995). *Microbial Biotechnology: Fundamentals of Applied Microbiology*. W. H. Freeman, New York.

Journal articles should be cited by surname(s), initial(s), year, title of the paper or article, journal or magazine title, volume, and page numbers.

eg Gilles, P.N., Wu, D.J., Foster, C.B., Dillon, P.J., & Chanock, S.J. (1999). Single nucleotide polymorphic discrimination by an electronic dot blot assay on semiconductor microchips. *Nature Biotechnol.* 17, 365-370.

Reports appear like this:

RCEP. 1996. *Sustainable Use of Soil*. 19th report of the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution. Cmnd 3165, HMSO, London.

Book chapters appear like this:

Dame, J.B. (1998). Formulation of cloning strategies. In Recombinant DNA: Principles and methodologies. (ed. J.J. Greene & V.B. Rao) pp. 193-269. Marcel Dekker, New York.

Websites appear like this:

Mahillon, J. (1998). IS finder. <http://www-is.biotoul.fr/is.html>

You may also want to quote informal information gleaned during conversations or correspondence you might have had with people of relevance. This is acceptable when cited as private communications, eg Gary Gray, personal communication (appearing in the text as Gary Gray, pers. comm. 14 June 1997).

## 5.5 Coursework Submission

All PGT coursework must be submitted in electronic format using the University's Feedback, Assessment (Assignments), and Submission electronic repository (FASER) with the exception of the MSc Research Project which will need to be submitted electronically AND in hardcopy. The system allows you to upload a digital copy of your assignment to the web. A signed coversheet is NOT required. Word counts (if applicable) should be stated clearly on the front page of your submission.

The online coursework submission system (FASER) can be accessed through MyEssex or at this web address: <http://faser.essex.ac.uk/> where you will find full instructions.

### To submit a file to FASER:

- Go to myEssex and log in with your campus username and password.
- You will see an overview page with tabs underneath your name that read: Overview, Current Modules, Previous Modules, Student Support and Help.
- Click on 'Current Modules' and a list of your modules with assignment deadlines should appear.
- Click on the Module and find the assignment you are submitting for.
- Click on 'Upload Files' and 'Browse'
- Find your file on your computer or memory stick. Click on Open.

### **When uploading your work to FASER please:**

- **use word documents only (unless otherwise instructed) and**
- **always name your file as follows: FAMILY NAME or SURNAME in CAPITALS**
- Click to agree to the statement with regards to plagiarism awareness and then on 'Submit (upload file'.
- This should upload your file to FASER .You will receive an email to confirm that this has happened.

You can upload as many draft versions of your work as you like onto the server. Indeed you are encouraged to use this as a safe and secure area to store your coursework. This can help to avoid the problem of your computer crashing at the last minute and your important files being lost. In cases where multiple versions are uploaded you will **need to make any which you do NOT want to be included in the final submission to the School a 'draft'** otherwise just the most recently uploaded file will be taken as the final version. The maximum file upload size is **50 mb**.

### **Problems with FASER:**

If you find you are having a problem with FASER, please do not wait to tell someone about it. We understand that there can be circumstances beyond your control (e.g. loss of internet connection) that may make uploading to FASER difficult.

If you have technical difficulties: Please contact the Learning Technology Team [ltt@essex.ac.uk](mailto:ltt@essex.ac.uk) as soon as possible to find out if this is a University issue or whether it may be a problem with your computer. You can contact the IT helpdesk on [desk@essex.ac.uk](mailto:desk@essex.ac.uk).

If you are confused or unsure how to upload, or are having non-technical difficulties, you should contact the Postgraduate Taught Administrator.

You are encouraged to log on to FASER at the start of the year so that you understand how it works before you reach your first deadline. There is a trial module and deadline for you to use as a practice submission.

## **5.6 Coursework Deadlines and Postgraduate Taught Coursework Deadline Policy**

Deadlines for coursework have been organised so as to give an even flow to the work you have to submit. Learning how to prioritise tasks, plan and manage your time are important skills and it is your responsibility to plan your affairs to meet these deadlines

### **Assignments and Deadlines**

All coursework must be submitted by the published deadlines, which are set out in the relevant Module Handbooks. You should use this information to assist with planning your coursework throughout the year to ensure you are able to meet all your deadlines. Changes of deadline can only be made by the MSc Course Director. Any changes to deadlines will be circulated by email. It is your responsibility to check for changes to deadlines.

As far as possible, your deadlines will have been organised to avoid clashes, but inevitably some deadlines will fall on the same day, especially for students who have optional module choices. It is an important skill to learn how to prioritise tasks and manage your time. It is your responsibility to plan your work to meet your deadlines.

**If you take optional modules outside your home department, you should make sure you are aware of their coursework submission policy.**

### **Postgraduate Taught Coursework Deadline Policy**

It is expected that all students plan their own workloads in order to meet the deadlines set for all items of coursework associated with their degree. This should mean that you aim to submit your coursework in advance of the deadline. The School does however recognise that extenuating circumstances may occasionally prevent students from submitting work by the deadline.

These would normally comprise circumstances beyond a student's control and not circumstances that you can have reasonably been expected to anticipate (e.g. general pressure of work, planned family event, etc).

In circumstances where you are unable to meet the deadline, you can apply for an extension using the 'Extension Request Form' available from the Postgraduate Taught Office (Room 4.00A). You should make the application in advance of the published deadline. On the form you are required to give details of your reasons for requesting an extension and you may also submit supporting documentary evidence if you feel it will support your case. Your application will be considered by the Course Director.

Requests for extensions to deadlines should not be made to individual module supervisors. Only the Course Director can approve such requests. If you are unable to take your form to the Course Director in person, you will be notified of the outcome by the Postgraduate Taught Administrator.

If your request is approved, you should take a copy of the approved Extension Request Form which will detail the revised deadline (or collect a copy from the Postgraduate Taught Administrator if she has passed on your form to the Course Director for you), leave the original Extension Request Form with the Postgraduate Taught Administrator, and submit your work online in the normal way.

Failure to submit your coursework by the deadline will result in you obtaining a mark of zero, unless late submission has been approved by the Course Director, or you have serious extenuating circumstances that you could not have reported before the deadline. Applications for late submission should be exceptional rather than routine and there is no guarantee that applications will be approved.

All students should also note that the frequency of applications for extensions will be monitored and students who make several applications will be called for an interview with the Course Director.

If you experience serious, more long-term extenuating circumstances that you feel may have affected your performance, you should complete and submit an Extenuating Circumstances Form (see [www.essex.ac.uk/dsh/extenuatingpgg](http://www.essex.ac.uk/dsh/extenuatingpgg)) for consideration by the Board of Examiners for your course.

Whilst you are not permitted to appeal to the Board of Examiners to have a rejected extension request approved, a request for an extension does not prevent a separate claim for extenuation on other grounds to the Board of Examiners.

Short extensions to the deadline for the research project may only be granted in exceptional circumstances by the Course Director in consultation with the Postgraduate Taught Director. In all cases, any application would have to be supported by third party documentary evidence.

## 5.7 Anonymous Marking Policy

Effective feedback helps students to understand the mark given for a particular piece of work, and helps students to reflect on their own learning and to achieve better marks in future pieces of work. A variety of methods of providing feedback are used across the University, and departments chose the most appropriate for their courses and modules. The University does not have an institution-wide approach to anonymous marking in coursework. Departments/Schools decide whether to use anonymous marking in coursework or not.

Our School operates a system of anonymous marking in coursework. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education defines anonymous marking as the 'marking of students' submitted work without their identity being revealed to the person carrying out the marking at the time the work is marked, so that the assessment is unbiased.' Anonymity helps to ensure that conscious or unconscious prejudice does not affect marks, and that each piece of work is judged on its merits and not in relation to the marker's other impressions of a student. Anonymity should not prevent you discussing your work with academic staff, although systems for permitting this may vary depending on factors such as the nature of the exercise.

**If you take optional modules outside your home department, you should make sure you are aware of the policy on whether coursework is marked anonymously or not, and how to submit coursework.**

## **5.8 Return of Marked Coursework**

For coursework submitted electronically (via FASer) you will receive an email notification alert when your marked work is available. Marked work is normally returned within three weeks of the hand-in date. Where this three week deadline falls during the vacations, work will be returned to you in the first week of the next term.

## **5.9 Samples of Coursework**

One of the roles of the External Examiners is to comment generally on the standards of marking and performance. To facilitate their work, a sample of coursework undertaken by Postgraduate Students is recalled (if hardcopy) and made available for the External Examiners to view. Where applicable, you will be e-mailed by the Postgraduate Office in the summer term and notified of the arrangements for this. Work submitted online will also be made available to the External Examiner.

## **5.10 Reassessment in Coursework**

If the Board of Examiners has required you to complete essays or assignments over the vacation, the School will send you a letter by email with further information. Please check your Essex email account regularly once your results have been published. The School will then send you details of the assignments which you are required to undertake. You should note that this will, in most cases, take the form of a substantial piece of work equivalent to the entire coursework component of the module. If you haven't received anything within three weeks of the results being published, you must contact your School or the Registry.

## **5.11 Disputed Coursework Marks**

If you are unhappy about a mark you receive for a piece of work, you should first ask the Module Supervisor for a fuller explanation of the mark. If you are still unhappy you can ask for a second opinion and to do this you should approach the Postgraduate Taught Director. Any requests for second marking must be made within two weeks of return of the work. You should be aware that a mark might go up or down in the process of second marking. You will be obliged to accept the outcome as final, no matter what the mark.

## 6. Examinations

### 6.1 Examination Regulations

The General Regulations which govern examinations can be found via the website here:

[www.essex.ac.uk/about/governance/regulations/affairs.aspx#exams](http://www.essex.ac.uk/about/governance/regulations/affairs.aspx#exams).

You need to be aware that attendance at examinations is **compulsory**. For exams that are more than an hour long, you will not be allowed to enter the examination room if you arrive later than 55 minutes after the start of the exam. If your exam is only an hour long, you will only be admitted up to ten minutes after the start of the exam.

### 6.2 Access to Exam Scripts

If you want to see your exam script, you should normally make the request within four weeks of the exam to the school which is responsible for that module. The school should either: let you see the script in the presence of one of the staff responsible for teaching the module *or* give you a copy or summary of the examiners' comments on your performance.

Further information can be found in the Assessment Policies for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Awards [www.essex.ac.uk/quality/university\\_policies](http://www.essex.ac.uk/quality/university_policies)

Students must not attempt to engage the member of staff in discussions about whether the work has been marked correctly. The marks will have been approved by the external examiners and ratified by the examination board.

A student who wishes to view an examination script or project should first contact the Postgraduate Taught Administrator, Nicola Reason in the Postgraduate Office.

## 6.3 School policy on the use of Dictionaries and Calculators

### Dictionaries

Dictionaries are not permitted. If you take a dictionary to an exam where it is not permitted, you will be reported on suspicion of committing an academic offence. Even if English is not your first language you are still not entitled to use a translation dictionary.

### Calculators

If you are allowed to use a calculator in your examinations, the **only** models you are permitted to use are the **Casio FX-83GT PLUS** or the **Casio FX-85GT PLUS**.

The only exception is for certain **Finance** exams that require a **financial** calculator, in which case you may use the **Hewlett Packard 12c** (all variants) or the **Texas Instruments BAII Plus** (including the BAII Plus Professional).

A limited number of the permitted calculators will be available to borrow **on the day of your exam** from the Exams Office on a first-come, first-served basis, on production of your registration card.

## 6.4 General Information about Examinations and Examination Results

You can find your personalised exam timetable online at: [www.essex.ac.uk/examtimes/](http://www.essex.ac.uk/examtimes/)

**You must bring your registration card and exam entry form with you to the exam.** You will not be allowed entry without them. Remember to check your exam entry form carefully and contact the Examinations Office if there are any errors.

You can download a guide to examinations at:

[www.essex.ac.uk/students/exams-and-coursework/](http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/exams-and-coursework/)

You will receive an email to your Essex email account as soon as your results are published. You can find the publication schedule at:

[www.essex.ac.uk/students/exams-and-coursework/schedule](http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/exams-and-coursework/schedule)



## 6.5 Help to prepare for your Examinations

Exams for the **MSc Biotechnology and Molecular Medicine students take place in the Christmas Vacation exam period (Week 15)**. You should plan to have completed your revision for all your exams before the exam period starts, with gaps between exams reserved for some relaxation and for quickly refreshing your memory of what you already know.

This requires you to organise your time so that you study the material as each module progresses, consolidating and extending your knowledge and understanding.

Module Handbooks are an important learning tool because they provide detailed documentation of what you should know for each module. The learning outcomes define what you should be able to do on successful completion of a module, and the detailed learning objectives specify how you will be assessed to see if you have met those outcomes. Note in particular which terms are used – to meet a learning objective that specifies “Discuss ...” would usually require much more work in preparation than one which is “Define...” or “List...”.

### Exam stress

Exams create stress for most people. The University Talent Development Centre offers a series of Exam Workshops which are run by specialist staff. These sessions cover revision planning and techniques, as well as sessions on relaxation and how to cope with stress. Staff in the Counseling Service can also provide sessions on stress management if required.

## 6.6 Anonymous Marking Policy in Examinations

All formal examinations at the University of Essex are marked anonymously.

## 6.7 Reassessment in Examinations

You can find information relating to resitting exams at: [www.essex.ac.uk/students/exams-and-coursework/resits](http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/exams-and-coursework/resits)

Remember that reassessment in examinations (and coursework) carries a fee.

# 7. Good Academic Practice

## 7.1 Good Academic Practice

Respecting authorship through good academic practice is one of the keys to academic integrity, and a key value of higher education in the United Kingdom.

The Talent Development Centre provides online courses and guides to help you fully understand what is required from you. You can find out about the full range of workshops and resources that are available to you by visiting [www.essex.ac.uk/see/tdc](http://www.essex.ac.uk/see/tdc). You can also complete the online Academic Integrity course

[moodle.essex.ac.uk/login/index.php](http://moodle.essex.ac.uk/login/index.php)

You should read the sections of this handbook which refer to referencing, coursework and examinations very carefully. Failure to understand the academic conventions may result in you being found to have committed an academic offence (see section **4.7 Academic Offences Procedure**).

Remember, if you have any questions about referencing you can ask our academic staff, or staff in the Talent Development Centre.

### Repeated Work

You may also be accused of an academic offence if you repeat work previously submitted for an assessed assignment without full acknowledgement of the extent to which that previous work has been used; in other words, if you hand in the same or a very similar essay to one that you have already submitted. You should note that it is also an offence for a student knowingly to assist another student to commit an academic offence, whether in an examination, or in any other piece of work.

### Group Work

Sometimes students who have been working together end up submitting almost identical work and are accused of an academic offence. While we do not want to dissuade you from working with or discussing your work with another student, you must be careful that you do not collaborate too closely, and it would be wise to seek advice from your tutors on the limits of collaboration before you submit your work.

Please see section 4.7 and remember that the Academic Offences Policy applies to all students

[www.essex.ac.uk/see/academic-offence](http://www.essex.ac.uk/see/academic-offence)

## 7.3 Plagiarism

Plagiarism is to steal ideas, verbalisations or writings from another person without correct acknowledgement, presenting these as your own work. It also includes utilising your own previous assessment submissions, without correct identification of such ('Self-plagiarism'). Any source you access and utilise when preparing your work (book, journal article, newspaper article, internet page, podcast etc) must be referenced appropriately to avoid plagiarism – ignorance of correct referencing techniques is inexcusable.

You may also be accused of assisting plagiarism if you lend your work to another student who then copies your text. Plagiarism is indefensible and will not be tolerated in any form within the University of Essex. This Academic Offence carries severe penalties, and you may be withdrawn from your programme. All students should view the University of Essex plagiarism online tutorial at: <http://www.essex.ac.uk/plagiarism/tut.html> to familiarise yourself with this issue. If you are concerned about plagiarism, you should talk with your MSc Course Director.

### How to Avoid Plagiarism

To avoid plagiarism give yourself enough time to plan, draft, write, edit and proof-read your work. Make sure you print or save full details of all sources, so that you can reference them easily once you have used them. Do not copy and paste large chunks of text from the internet – look at the source, read it critically, identify the main themes, and then paraphrase or present as a direct quote. NB: paraphrasing does not mean changing the odd word within a sentence. You need to re-phrase the entire sentence in your own words, thus demonstrating your understanding. In addition, do not copy from other students.

## Responsibilities Relating to Plagiarism

### 1. Plagiarism

- Plagiarism is cheating
- Submission of work that is plagiarised is unacceptable
- Poor academic practice with regard to referencing, which may be considered as contributing to plagiarism, is also unacceptable

### 2. Students' Responsibility

- To appraise him/herself of the nature of plagiarism
- To appraise him/herself of the academic offences policy of the University of Essex
- To submit work that does not contain plagiarism
- To utilise plagiarism checking systems where available

### 3. Our School's Responsibility

To ensure that all **School** staff have a shared understanding of the nature of plagiarism and action to be taken in the event of plagiarism being uncovered (Head of School)

- For 'standalone' modules (regardless of whether they form part of a programme) - to include within each module induction, accurate information regarding plagiarism (Module Supervisor)
- For modules studied as components of a single programme – to include within the programme induction, accurate information regarding plagiarism and supporting information within the VLE. A record of attendance at plagiarism induction will be maintained (Course Director).
- To include supporting information and links on our School website and on our School's Moodle Study Skills resource (Head of School)
- To advise all students that they should expect that submissions for assessment will be subjected to a plagiarism check (Director of Education)
- To refer plagiarism to the Plagiarism Officer in a transparently fair and equitable manner (all markers)
- To remind students on commencement of each term of their responsibilities regarding plagiarism (Director of Education)
- To transparently apply University Rules regarding plagiarism (Head of School)



4. The University's Responsibility

- To apply the Academic Offences Policy universally and transparently
- To provide equitable access to plagiarism checker systems

[www.essex.ac.uk/dsh/plagiarism](http://www.essex.ac.uk/dsh/plagiarism)

# 8. Practicalities: Getting Started and IT Matters

## 8.1 Registration, Enrolling and Transcripts

All new and returning students must **register** at the start of each academic year. The full process for new students includes activating your student record for the academic year, getting your email account, gaining access to IT and library services, and enrolment on modules and confirming your contact details.

As your studies draw to a close, once your exam board has met, it takes up to ten working days for your results to be confirmed. The Assessment Team will publish your results, close your record and send you an award confirmation letter. You will receive an email when your results have been published on a secure web page. Your award certificate and academic transcript cannot be produced until the Assessment Team has released the results. For more about registration, visit our student webpages.

[www.essex.ac.uk/students/new/registration](http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/new/registration)

[www.essex.ac.uk/students/graduation/award-documents](http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/graduation/award-documents)

## 8.2 Find Your Way and Room Numbering System

Find Your Way is our interactive campus map app. Download it to help you find any location on campus and get directions quickly and easily. There's also a handy web version - <http://findyourway.essex.ac.uk/>

If you're looking for a specific room, follow these rules.

**If the room number has three parts and the first is alphabetical** eg TC.1.20 then the room is in one of the outer buildings. The format is building.floor.room. The first part indicates the building - "TC" is the Teaching Centre and "LH" is the Ivor Crewe Lecture Hall. The second part tells you the floor and the third the room number. For example, LH.1.12 is Ivor Crewe Lecture Hall, floor 1, room 12.

**If the number has three parts and the first contains numbers and letters** eg 5N.7.16, then the room is in square 4 or 5. The format is entrance.floor.room. The first part tells you the square and corner (eg 4S is the south corner of square 4), which matches the labels on the entrances (eg door 4NW is next to The Store). The second part is the floor and the third part the room. For example, 5NW.6.12 is in the north-west (NW) corner of Square 5 (entrance "5NW"), floor 6, room 12.

**If the number has two elements and the second element has three digits** eg 4.722, the room is in the Maths/Social Studies/Rab Butler/Square 1 building area. The first number shows the floor and the last three digits show the room number.

**Also...** if the last three digits are 700-799 the room is off Square 1, and if the last three digits are 500-599 the room is in the Square 2 area (Computer Science). For example, 5.512 is room 512, floor 5.

[www.essex.ac.uk/about/colchester/documents/location\\_of\\_teaching\\_rooms.pdf](http://www.essex.ac.uk/about/colchester/documents/location_of_teaching_rooms.pdf)

## 8.3 IT Support

Visit our website to set up your **IT account and password**. Once you're set up, you can access email, log on to lab computers, connect to eduroam wi-fi and much more. [www.essex.ac.uk/it/getaccount](http://www.essex.ac.uk/it/getaccount).

You must change your password within four weeks of starting, and then once every four months after that. The easiest way to **change your password** is online at: [www.essex.ac.uk/password](http://www.essex.ac.uk/password).

As part of your Office 365 email account you get unlimited cloud storage space for all your documents with OneDrive. OneDrive lets you create, edit, and share documents online. You also get at least 300 MB of local storage, known as your M: drive. You can access this by going to 'My Documents' on any lab computer.

Visit the IT Services website for helpful information, including how-to guides, answers to frequently asked questions, and links to video screencasts. [www.essex.ac.uk/it](http://www.essex.ac.uk/it)

If you can't find what you're looking for, or if you need to talk to someone, then you can get help from the IT Helpdesk in the Silberrad Student Centre. Open Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 6.00pm, and Friday 8.30am to 5.45pm.

You can also download Microsoft Office 365, for free. You can install it for free on up to five computers, and up to five mobile devices. [www.essex.ac.uk/see/software](http://www.essex.ac.uk/see/software)

If you need to use a **computer on campus** our computer labs are the perfect place to study or work. Many labs stay open until late and some are open 24/7. For computer lab locations, opening hours and real-time availability visit: [www.essex.ac.uk/it/computers/labs](http://www.essex.ac.uk/it/computers/labs).

## 8.4 Tier 4 Information

If you are a citizen of a country that is not part of the European Economic Area or Switzerland it is likely that you will require a **visa** to enter or remain in the UK to study. The type of visa you need to apply for will depend on your personal circumstances, proposed study and where you are applying from. Find out more on the University's website at: [www.essex.ac.uk/immigration/](http://www.essex.ac.uk/immigration/)

## 8.5 On-Campus Facilities

There is a broad range of **facilities** to support your living and learning experience at our Colchester Campus – including study-based services like the IT helpdesk and group study pods, but also various food and drink venues, three banks, a general store run by the Students' Union, a printing and copy centre, market stalls each Thursday, a Post Office, launderettes, and much, much more. Full details on all on-campus facilities feature on our student webpages and in the campus guide you received with your welcome information when you joined us as a student member.

[www.essex.ac.uk/students](http://www.essex.ac.uk/students)

[www.essex.ac.uk/welcome](http://www.essex.ac.uk/welcome)

## 8.6 Graduation

The culmination of all your hard work, **Graduation** ceremonies take place at our Colchester Campus each July in the Ivor Crewe Lecture Hall. All eligible students studying at our Colchester, Loughton and Southend Campuses will be invited to attend. For more information visit our graduation pages:

[www.essex.ac.uk/students/graduation](http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/graduation)

## 8.7 Ordering Important Documents

Please use the Student Documentation Ordering System to order academic transcripts, award confirmation letters, bank letters, Certificate of Registration, Council Tax certificates and Degree certificates. It's online at: [www.essex.ac.uk/studentdocs](http://www.essex.ac.uk/studentdocs)



## 9. Skills, Employability and Experience

### 9.1 Employability and Careers Centre

Our careers specialists can give you valuable advice throughout your time at Essex and beyond. We offer one-to-one advice and guidance, job-hunting workshops, CV and job application reviews, and online access to graduate and part-time job vacancies.

[www.essex.ac.uk/careers](http://www.essex.ac.uk/careers)

### 9.2 Learning Languages at Essex

Learn a language at Essex to increase your global and cultural awareness. Language learning can give you the confidence to work and travel internationally, expand your options for studying abroad, and get a competitive edge when you're looking for a job. There are a number of ways to do it, so look online to discover the best option for you.

[www.essex.ac.uk/study/why/languages](http://www.essex.ac.uk/study/why/languages)

### 9.3 Talent Development Centre

Unleash your potential and visit our Talent Development Centre. Providing support on academic literacy, numeracy, English language, employability and IT to help you be the best you can be.

[www.essex.ac.uk/students/study-resources/tdc/](http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/study-resources/tdc/)

### 9.4 Career Hub

Browse hundreds of top jobs and graduate vacancies, sign up to exclusive careers events, book CV reviews and one-to-one careers advice, and connect with employers on CareerHub, our online jobs portal.

[www.essex.ac.uk/welcome/careerhub](http://www.essex.ac.uk/welcome/careerhub)

### 9.5 Frontrunners

**Frontrunners** is the on-campus work placement scheme, and one of the best ways to enrich your experience. Frontrunners is our unique placement scheme for students. We'll give you challenging employment opportunities on campus and help you develop the skills you need to compete for the best jobs. We'll even give you on-the-job training and pay you, too.



## 9.6 Student Ambassadors

Student Ambassadors are current students who help to promote the University and higher education. As a Student Ambassador you can get involved in a whole range of opportunities, in particular helping our Student Recruitment and Outreach teams. Student Ambassadors are normally recruited at the start of the Autumn Term.

[www.essex.ac.uk/careers/job\\_hunting/on\\_campus](http://www.essex.ac.uk/careers/job_hunting/on_campus)

## 9.7 Volunteering

There are plenty of opportunities to **volunteer** during your time at Essex. The Students' Union runs the vTeam, which is a fantastic opportunity to meet new people, make friends, give something to the local community, and gain valuable skills.

[www.essex.su/vteam](http://www.essex.su/vteam)

## 9.8 Big Essex Award

This is the University's **employability award** and will help you stand out from the crowd and get University recognition for all your extra-curricular experience.

[www.essex.ac.uk/careers/bige](http://www.essex.ac.uk/careers/bige)

## 9.9 Essex Interns

Essex interns create paid internships exclusively for you as an Essex student. They're flexible too; part time during term time or full time in vacations. You can even take part up to three years after you graduate, as part of our Essex graduates support package.

[www.essex.ac.uk/careers/internships](http://www.essex.ac.uk/careers/internships)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/internshipsessex](https://www.facebook.com/internshipsessex)

Twitter: @EssexInterns

# 10. You Matter: Health, Welfare, Support and Safety

## 10.1 Student Services Hub, including contacts for Disability, Wellbeing, Counselling and Confidential Issues

If you need practical advice, a confidential conversation, or general information and guidance on University life, no matter what the issue is, the Student Services Hub is the place to go. Want to know how and when to apply for accommodation? Having problems with your funding? Struggling with exam stress? Your questions matter and you'll get answers from our team of experts.

Colchester email: [askthehub@essex.ac.uk](mailto:askthehub@essex.ac.uk)

[www.essex.ac.uk/students/health-and-wellbeing](http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/health-and-wellbeing)

If you get into financial difficulty get help and talk to someone as soon as possible. The sooner your problem is identified, the sooner it can be solved. Advisers in our Student Services Hub and our independent SU Advice Centre can listen and talk you through the issues.

<http://www.essex.ac.uk/fees-and-funding/money/> <http://www.essexstudent.com/advice/money/>

## 10.2 Harassment Advisory Network, Dignity and Respect

We are Essex. We encourage a culture of dignity and respect. We're committed to upholding an environment that's free from any form of harassment or bullying. Though rare, these incidents can occur and if they do our network of trained harassment advisors are on hand to help.

[www.essex.ac.uk/equality](http://www.essex.ac.uk/equality)

[www.essex.ac.uk/equality/harassment](http://www.essex.ac.uk/equality/harassment)

[www.essex.ac.uk/students/new](http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/new)



### 10.3 Faith Groups

We're proud of our vibrant and diverse multicultural community and we recognise and support the many different religions and beliefs on campus. The calm, friendly and supportive atmosphere in our Multi-Faith Chaplaincy is a welcoming place for staff, students and the wider community to meet, interact and engage with each other.

[www.essex.ac.uk/students/experience/mfc](http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/experience/mfc)

### 10.4 Nightline

Established at Essex in 1970, Nightline is a friendly help and support service run by students, for students. We work under strict confidentiality ensuring complete anonymity, and we're always willing to listen. From tea and toast to campbeds, whether you're waiting for a taxi, need a revision break, or just want to chat, pop in or call us.

[www.essex.ac.uk/students/health-and-wellbeing/nightline](http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/health-and-wellbeing/nightline)

### 10.5 Health and Safety on Campus

Our campuses are generally very safe environments. We want to ensure that things stay this way. In order to achieve this we work closely with local agencies including the police and borough councils. Take a look at our website for general advice and information.

<http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/experience/safety>

Please read the emergency evacuation notice in your accommodation, work or study location for fire safety procedures. If you have a permanent or temporary disabilities that may mean you have difficulty in evacuating one or more areas, you can arrange for a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP).

[www.essex.ac.uk/students/experience/safety](http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/experience/safety)

[www.essexstudent.com/services/safety\\_bus](http://www.essexstudent.com/services/safety_bus)

[www.essex.ac.uk/students/campus/emergency](http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/campus/emergency)

[www.essex.ac.uk/ohsas/fireSafety/peep.htm](http://www.essex.ac.uk/ohsas/fireSafety/peep.htm)

## 10.6 Safety in the Laboratory

The School is legally and morally obliged to ensure the safety of students and staff. However, the School expects students and staff to observe certain standards of safety for their own sakes and for those of their colleagues. You should familiarise yourself with the School Safety webpages

<http://bsintra.essex.ac.uk/safety/default.shtm>. The information is not exhaustive but is regularly updated.

You should remember that a laboratory is a potentially hazardous place with chemicals, glassware, gas, electricity, micro-organisms, etc., within it. Nevertheless the laboratory will be a safe environment if a few simple, common-sense rules are observed, as outlined in the Practical Handbooks and Project Handbook.

Additional information relating to particular hazards associated with individual practicals can be found listed at the start of each practical schedule in the Practical Handbooks.

Please report all accidents, however minor, to the lecturer in charge of the practical session. The Technician in charge of the class laboratory is a qualified first-aider.

## 10.7 Residence Life

Our Residence Life team is here to help you settle in and support you during your time living on campus. Each residents' assistant (RA) is assigned an area and will aim to get to know you and organise a range of social activities. Plus they can help if you've got any concerns or complaints. Residence Life operates outside of office hours when other University support services are closed.

<http://www.essex.ac.uk/accommodation/support/reslife>

## 10.8 Health Centre

If you're studying on a course for more than six months, you're required to register with a local doctor. Our Colchester Campus has its own health centre or you can use the NHS Choices postcode finder to find your nearest doctor.

[www.rowhedgesurgery.co.uk](http://www.rowhedgesurgery.co.uk)

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)



## 10.9 Students' Union Advice Centre

Our SU advice centre offers free, confidential, independent and impartial advice on any issue that might be affecting you. Our friendly, trained staff are on hand to support you throughout your time at Essex.

[www.essex.su/advice](http://www.essex.su/advice)

[suadvice@essex.ac.uk](mailto:suadvice@essex.ac.uk)

01206 874034

## 10.10 University Privacy Statement

Under the Data Protection Act 1998, any individuals about whom the University may be holding personal data have the right to access the data that is being held about them. Full details about how this works, and how to request such information are available on the Records Management web pages, see: 'How to access your personal data'.

[www.essex.ac.uk/site/privacy\\_policy](http://www.essex.ac.uk/site/privacy_policy)

[www.essex.ac.uk/records\\_management/request](http://www.essex.ac.uk/records_management/request)

# 11. The Essex Experience

## 11.1 The Essex Student Charter

Our **Student Charter** is developed by the University of Essex and our Students' Union as a part of our ongoing commitment to create an outstanding environment that offers the highest standards of teaching, research and support in an international and multi-cultural community.

[www.essex.ac.uk/students/experience/charter](http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/experience/charter)

## 11.2 Freedom of Speech Policy and the Code of Conduct

For regulations relating to the **Code of Student Conduct**; procedures for investigating breaches; appeals process please refer to the Terms and Conditions apply booklet all new students receive with welcome information, previously known as the Code of Student Conduct and The Rulebook. This information is on the University's website and is updated annually.

[www.essex.ac.uk/students/study-resources/handbooks](http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/study-resources/handbooks)

[www.essex.ac.uk/about/governance/regulations/code-conduct.aspx](http://www.essex.ac.uk/about/governance/regulations/code-conduct.aspx)

## 11.3 Essex Spirit, Social Media and Other Channels of Communication with Students

Keep up-to-date with important news, events and offers from across the University with our Essex Spirit blog. Go to our email lists to subscribe to the fortnightly e-bulletin.

<http://blogs.essex.ac.uk/essexspirit/>

[www.essex.ac.uk/students/new/](http://www.essex.ac.uk/students/new/)

We have more than 60 Facebook pages, including one for each department. We're also on Twitter.

[www.facebook.com/uniofessex/](http://www.facebook.com/uniofessex/)

[https://twitter.com/Uni\\_of\\_Essex](https://twitter.com/Uni_of_Essex)

Our 'What's on?' calendar brings together all the events happening across our three campuses, so you can make the most of your time at Essex.

<http://www.essex.ac.uk/events>

## 11.4 Students' Union

We're famous for our **Students' Union** at Essex, and for good reason. Here you're not just a member of a normal Students' Union, you're part of a family. We're here to cheer you on as you walk into exams and to help you absolutely destroy the competition in interviews and land your dream job. We've given students the tools to set up over 100 societies for anything they want. And if you're into sport – we run more than 40 sports teams and unlike other Universities ours are free to join. You choose what drinks we serve in our bar and what products we stock in our shops, just write it on the wall and we'll do our absolute best to get it in stock for you ASAP.

Say hello at [essex.su](http://essex.su)

## 11.5 Alumni

Your time will fly by. But Essex is forever, not just for a few years, and you'll be part of this place for life. When you graduate, you'll get an alumni card, which gets you access to all alumni events, like our popular Sports Weekend, and allows you to keep using the gym and the library, so stay in touch.

[alumni.essex.ac.uk/home](http://alumni.essex.ac.uk/home)

## 11.6 What Comes Next?

Choosing to be a **Postgraduate Research Student** at Essex is one of the few decisions in life that's black and white. Our research degrees include PhD and MPhil and our culture of world-class research provides an outstanding and supportive environment in which to undertake your research study. If you decide to stay on for further study with us, you'll have a great opportunity to study a challenging course within a research-intensive and supportive environment. You'll develop knowledge in your chosen area and learn from some of the top academics in the field, while becoming a valued member of our postgraduate community. Explore our courses on our coursefinder, and find out more about the value of being a postgraduate research student.

[www.essex.ac.uk/study/pg](http://www.essex.ac.uk/study/pg)

[www.essex.ac.uk/coursefinder](http://www.essex.ac.uk/coursefinder)

### Useful Information

**School Website Address:** <http://www.essex.ac.uk/bs/>

**School Facebook pages:** [School of Biological Sciences](#)