



**DEPARTMENT
OF
COMPUTER SCIENCE AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS**

MSc/PGDip

in

Computing for the Financial Services

**PROGRAMME HANDBOOK
2011-2012**

Contents

Contents	2
Programme Overview	3
Dates	4
Introductory talks for new students.....	4
Term dates	4
College holiday closing dates	4
Locations	6
Compulsory modules (for all students)	8
Portfolio Management.....	8
Financial Markets	9
Accounting and Financial Management	10
Object-Oriented Design and Programming	11
Data and Knowledge Management	12
Introduction to Software Engineering: Tools and environments.....	13
Compulsory C++ Pathway Module	14
Programming in C++.....	14
Compulsory Java Pathway Module	15
Introduction to Software Development	15
MSc Project	16
Student Support	17
Administration and Assessment	18
Career Development	23
Birkbeck Library	24
Other Resources and Organisations	26
Disability Statement	27
IT Services (ITS)	30
Common Awards Scheme	32

Programme Overview

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The MSc Computing for the Financial Services provides an intensive course in computing for graduates of other subjects, specifically tailored for individuals choosing a career in financial services. As well as gaining a broad knowledge of the subject, students acquire practical skills and have the opportunity to investigate certain areas of current research more deeply.

For students who are new to the subject, this MSc provides the foundation for a career in IT within the financial services industry, and for those already working in IT, it provides an opportunity to broaden their knowledge and update their skills specifically for finance while obtaining a formal qualification.

This is a part-time programme only and may be taken either as evenings only or by day-release.

The programme offers two distinct software development pathways in Java and for more experienced students in C++.

All students take the following core modules

- ✓ Data and Knowledge Management (DKM)
- ✓ Object-oriented design and programming (OODP)
- ✓ Introduction to Software Engineering: Tools and Environments (TOOLS)

and the core modules offered by the *Department of Economics*

- ✓ Financial Markets (FM)
- ✓ Portfolio Management (PM)

and the *Department of Management*

- ✓ Accounting and Financial Management (AFM)

Students who choose to follow the **C++ pathway** also have to take

- ✓ Programming in C++ (CXX)

Students who choose to follow the **Java pathway** also have to take

- ✓ Introduction to Software Development (ISD)

The information in this booklet is specific to the MSc Computing for the Financial Services. More information about the programme is available from the departmental web pages and the intranet. For more general information about Birkbeck and the Department of Computer Science and Information Systems, please consult the Department's Student Handbook.

It is your responsibility to familiarise yourself with the contents of both of these booklets as well as the web site, and to consult the web site on a regular basis since additional information will be posted there during the year.

Dates

Introductory talks for new students

29th of September 2011 at 6.00pm in rooms MAL 251 and 407.

These introductory talks, which all new students should attend, will include a short hands-on introduction to the department's computer systems. It would be helpful if as many students as possible could arrive up to half an hour early for these sessions, to complete some administration.

Term dates

The taught course covers three terms of eleven weeks each. The summer term is given over to revision, exams and the beginning of projects and in exceptional cases for compressed teaching. The term dates for the coming year are:

Autumn	Mon 3 Oct 2011	-	Fri 16 December 2011
Spring	Mon 9 Jan. 2012	-	Fri 23 March 2012
Summer	Mon 23 April 2012	-	Fri 6 July 2012

Lectures begin on Monday 3rd October in the Autumn Term, Monday 9th January in the Spring Term, and Monday 23th April in the Summer Term. Students should attend lectures during term time as shown in the timetables below. If students are unable to attend lectures, they should arrange with lecturers or fellow students to obtain copies of any material distributed in class.

Exams typically take place during the summer term with the exception of Financial Markets, which is usually held in April.

Exam timetables are published at the end of March and they become available via MyBirkbeck and also at the following location

<http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/administration/assessment/exams/timetable>

Any student who decides to withdraw from the course should inform the Programme Administrator, in writing or by email. Students who simply stop turning up for lectures without formally withdrawing from the course will still be held liable for fees.

College holiday closing dates

Christmas and New Year Closure. The College will close at 5pm on Thursday 22 December 2011, re-opening at 9am on Tuesday 3 January 2012.

Easter Closure: The College will close at 6pm on Wednesday 4 April 2012, re-opening at 9am on Wednesday 11 April 2012.

May Day Bank Holiday: closed all day on 7 May 2012.

Spring Bank Holiday: closed all day on 28 May 2012.

August Bank Holiday: closing on 8pm Friday, 24 August 2012, re-opening at 9am on Tuesday, 28 August 2012.

Timetables

In the timetables below, modules shown in bold are compulsory, modules shown underlined are pathway-specific, and the remaining modules are options available for those taking the Java pathway (Java pathway options are relevant for those who started the course in 2010 only).

Part-time Year 1 Timetable, 2011/2012

Year 1 part-time students must take the compulsory modules AFM, FM and either CXX or ISD, depending on their choice of pathway.

Year 1 part-time lecture timetable 2011/12						
Day	Autumn			Spring		
	Module	Time		Module	Time	
Monday	<u>CXX</u>	6.00-9.00		<u>CXX</u>	6.00-9.00	
Tuesday				FM	6.00-7.30 or 7.30-9.00	
Wednesday				FM	6.00-9.00	
Thursday	<u>ISD</u>	6.00-9.00				
Friday	<u>ISD</u>	5.00-7.30				

Year 1 part-time lecture timetable 2011/12 (cont.)			
Day	Summer		
	Module	Time	
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday	AFM	6.00-9.00	
Thursday			
Friday	AFM	6.00-9.00	

Draft Part-time Year 2 Timetable, 2011/2012

Year 2 part-time students should take the additional compulsory and any optional modules shown below.

Year 2 part-time lecture timetable 2011/12						
Day	Autumn			Spring		
	Module	Time		Module	Time	
Monday				DWDM	2.00-5.00	
Tuesday	TOOLS	6.00-9.00				
Wednesday	IWT	6.00-9.00		PM	6.00-9.00	
Thursday	DKM	6.00-9.00		OODP	6.00-9.00	
Friday						

Locations

An up-to-date list of modules and locations is available via the following link

http://www.dcs.bbk.ac.uk/courses/autumn_2011.pdf

NOTES:

* Wednesdays on Financial Markets are lectures and Tuesdays are practical classes, which last for one and a half hours (either between 6-7.30 or 7.30-9pm). Practical classes start in the second week of term i.e. January 18.

** Accounting and Financial Management runs from the beginning of May and for five weeks only.

Syllabus and Reading Lists

Lectures aim to introduce the key concepts of each module. The specific objectives of each module and the principal readings are circulated at the start of the term. The reading lists for individual modules given below are indicative – lecturers will specify, usually at the first lecture, whether or not specific books should be purchased for particular modules.

Most modules have dedicated web pages that provide links to relevant online literature. Depending on the nature of the material, some lecturers use ‘lecture outlines’ to support their teaching and may distribute these outlines via their web pages.

Students can also contact lecturers outside the classroom to discuss the material. They can meet the lecturers during scheduled ‘office hours’ or can contact them via email either to discuss a problem or to make an appointment. Lecturers’ contact details are given on the Department’s web site and in the Department’s Student Handbook.

A number of modules require students to submit coursework as part of the assessment. Such coursework must always be the students’ own work, except where explicitly noted. Students are required to confirm in writing or via email that each item of coursework submitted is indeed their own work. The Department and College have strict guidelines and penalties associated with plagiarism, and routinely submit students’ work to plagiarism detection services. More details are given in the Department’s Student Handbook and in the section “Plagiarism” of this booklet.

Pre-course Reading

Java pathway students can prepare for the programme by following the pre-course reading indicated on the module website at

<http://www.dcs.bbk.ac.uk/~keith/isd/>

and the C++ pathway students can achieve the same following via

<http://www.dcs.bbk.ac.uk/~roger/cpp/>

All students can prepare for the mathematical aspects of the Financial Markets module by following "Mastering Financial Calculations" by Bob Steiner, published by Prentice Hall (ISBN 978-0-273-70444-7).

Compulsory modules (for all students)

Portfolio Management

Aims

This standalone module provides an introduction to the theory and practice of portfolio construction and management. This begins with a treatment of the basic financial instruments such as bonds and shares and their derivatives including futures and options. The financial theory of the valuation of these derivative securities is then used as a basis to discuss trading strategies. The course also deals with the monitoring and evaluation of risky portfolios. A recent inclusion is the discussion of credit derivatives (CDO and CDS) and their role in the recent credit crisis.

Objectives

On successful completion of this course, students should:

- understand the processes of speculation and arbitrage and be able to identify strategies that exploit trading and arbitrage opportunities;
- understand the functions of portfolio managers and their role in assessing the objectives and constraints of the investor client;
- know how to measure, adjust and assess realised portfolio performance;
- understand the role of hedging in portfolio management and be able to design efficient hedging strategies.

Required Reading

- Blake, D, Financial Market Analysis, Wiley, Chichester, 2000. (DB)
- Bodie Z, Kane A and Marcus A.J, Essentials of Investments, McGraw Hill, 7th edition

Background Reading

- Bain, AD, The Economics of the Financial System, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1992

Assessment

A take home assignment to be completed during the Christmas or Easter vacation, is compulsory and will count for 20% of the course unit mark. In June, there will be a three-hour formal examination, which will count for 80% of the course unit mark.

Financial Markets

Module Description

The course aims primarily to introduce students to the basic principles of finance. It provides grounding in financial models that would enable students to evaluate investment projects and financial assets such as bonds and shares, as well as introducing and formalising risk management issues. A considerable part of the course is spent understanding and applying two of the fundamental pricing models in finance – the Capital Asset Pricing Model and the Option Pricing Theory.

Whereas the course primarily aims at making students familiar with the basics of finance, the limited time available implies that they will not necessarily have learned any specific finance technique in depth. The course aims, therefore, to give students enough base material to start their own learning process in finance, either through Masters courses or at places of their work. For instance, students who wish to pursue the finer details of derivatives pricing or risk management will become familiar with how to do this, although the course itself is too short for such in-depth study.

Aims

By the end of the course students should be able to demonstrate that they can

- understand and make use of financial statements;
- explain the time value of money and extract interest rates from bond data;
- explain the relationship between risk and return and derive risk-adjusted cost of capital;
- calculate present values of future cash flows and net present values of real investment projects;
- derive and use the Discounted-Dividend Model for the pricing of shares;
- explain the concept of Value at Risk and its limitations;
- explain the no-arbitrage principle and apply this to the pricing of derivative securities in a Binomial model;
- derive option prices using the Black-Scholes option pricing formula;

Teaching Arrangements

The course is taught over 10 weeks in the Spring Term, with a double lecture on Wednesdays from 6pm to 9pm and a single (1 hour) class every week. The class commences in the second week of the Spring Term.

Coursework and Assessment

The overall grade for this course is determined by one compulsory take-home exam during the reading week of the Spring Term and a three-hour examination at the end of the Spring Term. The mid-term test counts for 20% and the examination counts for 80% of the final mark

More information including a reading list available via the following URL:

http://www.ems.bbk.ac.uk/for_students/gradDipFinance/fin_mrkt_EMEC033U/

Accounting and Financial Management

Aims

The aim of this module is to provide a solid understanding of the concepts of financial management for non-accountants. At the end of this module, students are expected to:

- Appreciate the use of accounting numbers in managing a company's performance (financial statement analysis)
- Understand corporate financial decision making through standard techniques such as Project appraisal, Risk and return and cost of capital
- Be aware of issues such as corporate long term survivability through the management of its capital structure

Learning Objectives

On successful completion of this module students will be expected to be able to:

- Read and understand financial reports and company accounts;
- Comprehend the fundamental ideas and concepts of finance;
- Appreciate the usefulness and limitations of accounting in aiding financial management decisions; and
- Critically appraise key issues in accounting and finance raised in the media.
- Develop a logical approach in dealing with complex issues; and
- Compute and solve numerical problems.
- Extend their knowledge on IT skills such as excel, word processing and simple statistical software;
- Research company-related information via the library resources and on the internet.
- Enhance personal ability to work independently; and
- Continue to improve social skills through interaction during the seminars.

Content

- Introduction to financial reports and statements (simple explanation of profit and loss accounts and balance sheets)
- Cash flow statements and financial ratio analysis
- Financial project appraisals (discounted cash-flow techniques, internal rate of return and payback period) and valuation of business
- Risk and return (including the Portfolio Theory)
- Cost of capitals and Capital Assets Pricing Model
- Capital structure theory
- Dividend policy
- Introduction to Management Accounting issues (budgeting; financial decision-making; Break-even concepts)

Background Reading

Gitman, L J (2009), Principles of Managerial Finance (12th Edition), Pearson Addison Wesley

Object-Oriented Design and Programming

Pre-requisite

A strong performance on Information Systems Development or a programming module in a BSc in Computing.

Aims

The main aim of the module is to provide students with the necessary skills for developing software in an object-oriented way according to high quality standards. This ranges from learning object-oriented concepts, to designing object-oriented software using a proven methodology (such as the Unified Process) and learning how to program in an object-oriented way.

Assessment

By 2-hour written examination and practical coursework (design and programming), weighting 80% and 20% respectively.

Online material

<http://www.ble.ac.uk>

<http://www.dcs.bbk.ac.uk/~keith/oodp>

Syllabus

- Introduction to object-oriented concepts
- Overview of object-oriented analysis and design
- Use case models: analysis of requirements
- Formal specification of requirements
- Designing objects and their interactions
- Data model and implementation model
- Object-oriented language implementation
- Type systems and genericity
- Selected topics (as time permits)

Reading

- Craig Larman Applying UML and Patterns; An Introduction to Object-Oriented Analysis and Design and the Unified Process, 3rd edition, Prentice-Hall 2002
- E. Gamma, R. Helm, R. Johnson, J. Vlissides. Design Patterns. Elements of Reusable Object-Oriented Software
Roger S.Pressman Software Engineering. A practitioner's approach,. Fifth Edition 2001, Chapters 11,20-23

Data and Knowledge Management

Aims of the Module

To study the principles and application of data and knowledge management technology.

Assessment

By 2-hour written examination and in class written test, weighting 90% and 10% respectively.

Online material

<http://www.dcs.bbk.ac.uk/~nigel/teaching/dkm/>

Syllabus

- Database management software: origins and objectives.
- The relational model: data structure, data integrity, data manipulation.
- Algebraic and logical foundations of the relational model.
- Relational algebra and calculus.
- SQL: data manipulation, host language support for SQL, procedural extensions to SQL.
- Relational database theory: dependencies, normal forms.
- SQL data definition, other features.
- DBMS architectures and implementations: the relational approach illustrated by a commercial system.
- DBMS storage and indexing.
- Transaction management: recovery, concurrency.
- Query optimisation.
- Enhanced database capabilities: database triggers, deductive databases.
- Object DBMSs, OQL, object extensions to SQL. Object/relational persistence.
- Distributed databases, distributed architectures and connectivity.
- Databases and the Web, Java database programming - JDBC, SQLJ, databases and XML.

Reading

Raghu Ramakrishnan and Johannes Gehrke, Database Management Systems Third Edition, McGraw Hill, 2003, ISBN 0072465638.

Introduction to Software Engineering: Tools and environments

The module will train students in the principles and application of software tools and environments. On completion of the module, the successful student should have a good knowledge and understanding of the nature and variety of software tools and environments that are available for achieving software engineering tasks.

- Programming environments and Integrated Development Environments (IDE)
- Build tools
- Version control
- Configuration management
- Continuous integration
- Unit testing
- Integration, functional, load, and performance testing
- Quality metrics tools
- Issue Management
- Metadata repositories and data dictionaries
- Data modelling tools
- Technical documentation

This module will run for the first time in 2011/12 and more details will become available later in the year.

Compulsory C++ Pathway Module

Programming in C++

Aims of the Module

A substantial part of the first half of the MSc course is devoted to learning how to program. The language used is C++. Assignments are set as part of this module and all students are required to complete them. The ANSI/ISO standard version of C++ will be used.

Students will need the following:

- Cay Horstmann, *Computing Concepts with C++ Essentials* (3rd edition), John Wiley and Sons (2003), ISBN 0-471-16437-

Applicants for the MSc are sent a set of introductory notes on C++, also available, with further material, at <http://www.dcs.bbk.ac.uk/~roger/cpp>

All students will be expected to have read these and to have done the exercises in them by the beginning of the course. Students wanting a gentler introduction might try the following:

- Tony Jenkins, *How to Program using C++*, Palgrave Macmillan (2003) ISBN 0-333-99025-0

For a more detailed treatment of C++ than Horstmann provides, the following is recommended:

- Stanley B Lippman, Jos'ee Lajoie and Barbara Moo, *C++ Primer* (4th edition), Addison-Wesley (2005) ISBN 0-201-72148-1

Assessment

By 3-hour written examination and practical coursework, weighting 85% and 15%, respectively.

Online material

<http://www.dcs.bbk.ac.uk/~roger/cpp>

Additional Information

Students may do the assignments on their own computers or on one of the departmental computers. For assignments, students working at home will be required to use the same compiler as the one we will be using in the department, namely the Borland C++ compiler, available free from http://www.borland.com/products/downloads/download_cbuilder.html (note the underscore between download and cbuilder.html). You will find you have to create an "account" even though no money is changing hands. For help with installing it, see <http://www.dcs.bbk.ac.uk/support/borlandfreecpp.pdf>

Reading

The following are also useful (the book by Malik has been recommended by past students):

- Bjarne Stroustrup, *The C++ Programming Language* (3rd edition), Addison-Wesley (1997)
- Nicolai M Josuttis, *The C++ Standard Library* Addison-Wesley (1999)
- Scott Meyers, *Effective C++* CD Addison-Wesley (1998)
- Ann Ford and Toby J Teorey, *Practical Debugging in C++* Pearson Education (2002)
- D. S. Malik, *C++ programming from problem analysis to program design*, (4th ed), Thomson Course Technology (2008)

Compulsory Java Pathway Module

Introduction to Software Development

Aims

The main aim of this module is to allow students who hold a first degree in a subject other than computing to gain understanding of solving computational problems and of the software development process, which are fundamental to the study of information systems and Information Systems & Management.

The module covers the principles of designing, implementing and testing programs, with a specific focus on object-oriented design. The module explains the fundamental aspects of these techniques, and exemplifies them with respect to the Java programming language within a series of practical lab sessions. Students will be able to apply this knowledge in learning new programming languages, developing software systems, and managing software development projects within given time constraints.

Assessment

By 2-hour written examination and practical coursework, weighting 50% and 50% respectively.

Online material

<http://www.ble.ac.uk>

<http://www.dcs.bbk.ac.uk/~keith/isd>

Syllabus

- The software development process.
- Principles of programming and programming languages.
- Solving computational problems (problem decomposition, abstraction, sequencing, branching, iteration).
- The Java programming language (classes, objects, variables, values, types, arithmetic operations, control expressions, methods, string manipulation, persisting objects, exceptions, arrays, collections, documentation).
- Designing, implementing and testing Java programs (object-oriented design, unit testing, code coverage, performance considerations).

Reading

- Objects First with Java: A Practical Introduction Using BlueJ by David J. Barnes and Michael Kolling, Pearson Education; 4th Edition, 2008, ISBN 0137005628
- Big Java by Cay S. Horstmann, John Wiley & Sons; 3rd Edition, 2007, ISBN 0470105542
- Introduction to Programming Using Java, Fifth Edition by David J Eck, November 2007, online textbook, <http://math.hws.edu/javanotes/>

MSc Project

Aims

In the MSc project a student will be able to demonstrate his or her skills in organising and completing a task that goes beyond a typical coursework assignment. That means planning, designing and developing a major piece of software, and presenting also, existing approaches in the problem area (placing the student's own approach in the wider context),

Most projects will be co-supervised by an industrial host under arrangements made by the department. This arrangement is subject to the industrial sponsor being satisfied that the performance of the student is appropriate for the type and level of the work undertaken.

Assessment

Written project proposal (of about 2000-3000 words) and written project report (of about 10,000 words for an Implementation Project and 20,000 words for a Research Dissertation), weighting 20% and 80%, respectively.

Online material

TBA

Syllabus

The main part of the module will be done by a student on his or her own (supported by the supervisor). There is a small taught part of the module in which the students are acquainted with

- how to formulate the objectives/aims of an MSc project
- how to write a project proposal
- how to organise and plan the project
- how to research literature
- how to write a project report

Reading

As recommended by the supervisor.

Student Support

Every student is allocated a personal tutor in the first weeks of the programme. The personal tutor is someone whom students can contact to discuss any problems of a non-academic nature. These may relate to special needs or personal problems that may affect the student's academic performance. The Department also has a disability officer whom students can contact.

Academic problems should first be addressed to the lecturer concerned. If the problem is not resolved or it does not relate to a specific module, then the Programme Director should be contacted. A more detailed complaints procedure is given in the Department's Student Handbook and in the College's "Student Complaints Procedure" which is available from the Registry's webpages at <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/reg/>

Another forum for discussion is the Student-Staff Exchange Committee. Student representatives, who are elected by the students, meet lecturing staff on the programme once a term to exchange ideas about the programme. This allows students to communicate their shared concerns in an informal manner, and for the staff to react and respond speedily to address their concerns. More details regarding student support are described in the Department's Student Handbook.

Administration and Assessment

Requirements for the Award of the MSc/PGDip

Each taught module comprises 15 credits and is assessed by a written exam and, in most cases, by additional coursework. The project module comprises 60 credits and is assessed by the project proposal document (20%) and the project report (80%). For each module, a Pass requires at least 50% of the available marks.

Each taught module has a written exam. Up to 2 taught modules which have been failed with a mark above 40% can be compensated, provided the total weighted average mark for the taught modules is above 50%.

To gain an award the following is required:

- Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert): pass the three compulsory taught modules and one more optional taught module.
- Postgraduate Diploma (PGDip): pass all 8 taught modules
- Master of Science (MSc): pass all 8 taught modules and pass the project.

The final grade is computed by taking the weighted average (according to number of credits) of the individual module assessment marks:

- Pass requires at least a 50% weighted average mark
- Merit requires at least a 60% weighted average mark
- Distinction requires at least a 70% weighted average mark.

Announcement of Results

The Examination Board meets in July to consider the results of the written exams and coursework, and in November to consider the results of the projects and to award degree.

Shortly after the meeting of the Exam Board you will receive a letter from the Department about your results. Your results and grades will be confirmed officially by a letter some time later by the College.

Please keep the Department notified of any change of address; the letters sent to you after the Exam Board go to whatever address the Department holds for you. The College letters go to whatever address you put on your examination entry forms.

Candidates are also offered the option of receiving photocopies of their marked exam scripts. The letter that goes out after the July Exam Board contains a form on which candidates can make this request. A charge is made for this service.

Students who have not paid their fees are given *no information at all* about their examination results.

Exam Entry Forms

You receive your exam entry forms from the Registry and return them to the Programme Administrator in the Department's admin office. You have to list all modules (including the project) that you want to be assessed that year.

Deferral

In **exceptional cases**, students may be permitted to defer the written exams and/or the project to the following year. They must apply by filling in a deferral form (available from the Programme Administrator) setting out the reasons for wishing to defer. They have to do this

before **1 May**. A student who defers an element of assessment has to enter for that element the following year; normally no further deferrals are permitted.

Simply not turning up for an exam or failing to submit a coursework or project, without permission to defer, will be considered to be the same as failing it, in the sense that it will count as one of the two attempts that you are permitted to make at passing that element. If you have a valid excuse for not turning up for the exam, such as illness, you should send details in writing to the Programme Director within 28 days of the exam. In the case of illness, this should be accompanied by a doctor's certificate.

Resitting Elements of the Assessment

One resit (but only one) is allowed for each element. You may resit a written exam or the project if your marks for that element are below 50%

There are no special resit exams; students resit alongside the other candidates. They normally do so a year after their first attempt. Where the syllabus has changed, we set a paper that is suitable for resit candidates, providing alternative questions where necessary. Note, however, that we do this only for candidates from the previous year, not from further in the past.

Enrolment as a Revision Student or Project-Only Student

It is not essential to re-enrol as a student in order to resit the written exams; you may simply complete the examination entry forms (obtainable from the Programme Administrator in February/March) and pay an exam entrance fee. Non-enrolled students may not attend lectures or use the Department's facilities. They may, however, make use of the Birkbeck library, for a fee of £50 (you need a letter from the Programme Administrator confirming your status).

If, however, you wish to re-enrol, perhaps to attend some of the lecture courses again, you may enrol as a part-time Revision Student; you enrol in October and you pay half the regular part-time fee for the year.

Students who wish to use the departmental equipment to do any necessary extra coursework should enrol as Revision Students.

It is also possible to enrol as a Revision Student at Easter, for the remainder of the year (until the start of the next academic year). In this case the fee is one quarter of the year's regular part-time fee. If students wish to attend the revision lectures in the summer term or wish to submit answers to old exam questions to the relevant lecturers for marking, they should enrol as part-time Revision Students, at least from Easter.

Candidates who enrol as Revision Students do not have to pay a further fee for the examination entrance.

Students who wish to resit the project have to enrol as a Project-Only student for the period that they receive supervision for their project.

Examinations

Exams are scheduled by the College examinations office on specified dates: these are posted well in advance on the College and programme web sites and are non-negotiable. Students are required to sit their exams at the scheduled time and place at Birkbeck.

Note that examinations are held during the day, so part-time students will have to make arrangements with their employers to take leave of absence.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as “copying a whole or substantial parts of a paper from a source text (e.g. a web site, journal article, book or encyclopedia), without proper acknowledgement; paraphrasing of another's piece of work closely, with minor changes but with the essential

meaning, form and/or progression of ideas maintained; piecing together sections of the work of others into a new whole; procuring a paper from a company or essay bank (including Internet sites); submitting another student's work, with or without that student's knowledge; submitting a paper written by someone else (e.g. a peer or relative), and passing it off as one's own; representing a piece of joint or group work as one's own”.

There are many ways of plagiarising the work of others. Some examples are given below:

- Copying chunks of text without using quotation marks and without appropriate acknowledgement; for example, cutting-and-pasting text from website encyclopaedias or online research papers, or copying papers written by students who did a similar project.
- Copying text and making very minor changes, and without appropriate acknowledgement. This is an example of unacceptable paraphrasing.
- Copying a picture or photo from the Internet, without appropriate acknowledgement. If you use images protected by copyright you must also obtain permission from the copyright owner. See the Library for guidance.
- Using another person's numerical spreadsheet, software or results, without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Duplicating your own work, for example by submitting almost exactly the same work for two different assignments, e.g. a piece of coursework and the MSc project.
- Using code developed by another person without acknowledging the original author as the person who developed it.

The College considers plagiarism a serious offence, and as such it warrants disciplinary action. This is particularly important in assessed pieces of work where plagiarism goes so far as to dishonestly claim credit for ideas that have been taken from someone else. According to paragraph 3.2 of the College's “Procedures for Dealing with Plagiarism by Students on Taught Programmes of Study”, “a student who knowingly assists another student to plagiarise (for example by willingly giving them their own work to copy from) is committing an examination offence.” The College's procedure also identifies various types of plagiarism and is available online at the Registry's web page: <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/reg/regs/>

The College offers the learning module “Avoiding Plagiarism” on Blackboard VLE to all students. This module will help you understand plagiarism and explain in detail how one can avoid plagiarism. Below some examples are given from this module.

Citing other peoples' work properly

Citations give brief details of the source at the point in the text where the source is used. Citations using the Harvard system show the author and date of publication and the page number for quotations. For example:

Oakshott (2001) argues that ...

or:

Oakshott (2001, p. 3) argues that "democracy is dead".

If a quotation is longer than two or three lines, it is often indented using block formatting. By convention, block quotations do not usually need quotation marks - check with your course lecturer for guidance. For example:

Worsley (2002) argues that Karl Marx is still very influential:

Karl Marx has probably affected the course of twentieth-century history more than any other single thinker. Because of this, his ideas have generated a vast output of writings (Worsley, 2002, p. 1).

Referencing

References should include the full bibliographic information about the source, such as the author(s)' name(s), date of publication, title of work, place of publication, and publisher. This information is usually listed in a section called Reference List or Bibliography at the end of your document. The key principle is that you should give enough information to allow another person to find the source for themselves.

Here are some examples using the Harvard referencing system:

When you are referring to a book:

Lewin, K., 1951. *Field Theory in Social Science*. New York: Harper and Row.

When you are referring to a chapter in a book, where 'ed.' means editor, and 'edn.' means 'edition':

Piaget, J., 1970. Piaget's theory. In: P. Smith, ed., *Handbook of Child Psychology*. 3rd edn. New York: Wiley, 1970, pp. 34-76.

When you are referring to a journal article:

Holmqvist, M., 2003. A Dynamic Model of Intra- and Interorganizational Learning. *Organization Studies*, 24(1), 95-123.

When you are referring to a webpage:

W3C, Web Accessibility Guidelines and Techniques, available online at <http://www.w3.org/WAI/guid-tech.html>. Last accessed 12/05/2007.

Independent of their type (e.g. book, article, webpage), all references should be included at the end of a document in alphabetical order starting from the author's name as in the example above.

Paraphrasing

Here are some examples from the plagiarism module that might help you to understand which forms of paraphrasing are acceptable and which are treated as plagiarism.

First, the original extract is given, taken from the book, *Marx and Marxism*, by Peter Worsley.

Karl Marx has probably affected the course of twentieth-century history more than any other single thinker. Because of this, his ideas have generated a vast output of writings, ranging from texts written by revolutionaries aimed at telling people how to do revolution - how to carry on Marx's work of demolishing capitalism and creating a new socialist society - to the many hundreds of volumes dedicated to proving that Marx was wrong about practically everything.

Acceptable practice: Worsley (2002) suggests that Karl Marx has had a significant impact on the course of twentieth-century history. He argues that Marx's ideas have led to a great deal of writing, across a spectrum from promoting his call for revolution to trying to show he was wrong in his analysis and predictions.

Plagiarism: Karl Marx, the inspiration for revolutionary activity in many countries, has probably affected the course of 20C history more than almost any other thinker. Because of this, his ideas have generated a vast output of writings, ranging from books written about revolution - how to demolish capitalism and create a new socialist society - to books dedicated to proving that Marx was wrong about practically everything.

Copying the whole text without using quotation marks and without appropriate acknowledgement is considered plagiarism: Karl Marx has probably affected the course of twentieth-century history more than any other single thinker. Because of this, his ideas have generated a vast output of writings, ranging from texts written by revolutionaries aimed at

telling people how to do revolution - how to carry on Marx's work of demolishing capitalism and creating a new socialist society - to the many hundreds of volumes dedicated to proving that Marx was wrong about practically everything.

Career Development

Most students are interested in developing their careers, either within their current field of work or in a completely new direction. **The Specialist Institutions' Careers Service [SICS]**, part of The Careers Group, University of London, offers great expertise and experience in working with students and graduates of **all** ages and at **all** stages of career development. And it's Birkbeck's next-door neighbour!

During term-time they offer an Early Evening Advisory Service specifically and exclusively for evening students and a Drop-In Advice Service, which is always very popular with the Birkbeck students.

Longer Advisory Interviews can be arranged if necessary - for complete career beginners, for people wanting a practice job interview, and for every stage and situation in between.

They also offer Psychometric Testing and Personality Assessment Workshops, Employer Presentations, Computer-based Career Guidance Programs, Insight Career Courses as well as invaluable information on Course Funding.

For more information and opening times visit the SICS website at:

<http://www.careers.lon.ac.uk/sics> .

Birkbeck Library

Although lectures and computing sessions are essential elements of your course, success in learning depends largely on the reading and research that you undertake. Most items on module reading lists can be found in the Birkbeck Library and it is important that you familiarise yourself with these Libraries as soon as you can. At postgraduate level, you will also be expected to use other libraries during your studies.

The entrance to Birkbeck Library is on the ground floor of the main building in Malet Street. Your College ID card gives you automatic access to the Library. There is no need to register. The opening times of the Library are designed to meet the needs of part-time students in full-time work – see <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/lib/> for details of opening hours.

You can borrow up to 15 items and they can be renewed as long as no-one else requests them. Most books can be borrowed for 3 weeks. Some books, videos and DVDs can be borrowed for 1 week. A few items can only be issued for 1 day. There is also a Reading Room Collection with reference access to key course readings.

Please be a responsible Library user. The smooth running of the Library depends on your co-operation. Please renew or return items promptly, especially if someone else has requested them. If you fail to return items on time you will incur fines and your borrowing rights will be suspended. Students who have overdue items at the end of the academic year will have examination results withheld until the items are returned.

You can access a whole host of electronic journals and databases from any PC in College. The majority of resources can also be accessed from outside College with your IT Services (ITS) username and password.

The Library website is at <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/lib>. As well as giving comprehensive information about the Library's services and collections, you can also:

- Search the Library catalogue, renew your books and place reservations on items that are out on loan.
- Read articles in over 25,000 electronic journal titles and newspapers.
- Search databases to help you find out what has been written about the subject you are researching, including the *ACM* and *IEEE Digital Libraries*, *Business Source Premier*, *Nexis UK* and the *Science and Social Sciences Citation Index*.
- Access past exam papers.
- Work through *LIFE* – an online tutorial to help you make the most of the Library.

Birkbeck students can also use a range of other libraries. Students have reference access to most University of London college libraries. In addition, postgraduate students can join the *SCONUL Access Scheme* which allows access to most other higher education libraries with limited borrowing rights. See the Library web site for more information.

If a book you need is not available in the Library or you require any assistance using the resources or finding information, please ask at the Help Desk. Telephone: 020 7631 6063. Alternatively, contact your Subject Librarian, **Kate Purcell**, directly. Telephone: 020 7631 6062. Email k.purcell@bbk.ac.uk

Birkbeck eLibrary

As well as its physical holdings, the Library has a comprehensive range of e-resources including bibliographic databases (which tell you what has been written on a topic), and electronic journals. Most of the electronic resources can be accessed from outside the College using your IT Services username and password. If you did not receive this upon enrolment, please ask for them at IT Services reception (Malet Street).

The LAMP Service (**LibrAry Materials by Post**) is a subscription based service which enables you to have books and photocopies of articles posted to your home address. You may find it particularly useful if you are not able to visit the library frequently. Birkbeck students with disabilities may be able to join the service for free on the recommendation of the College Disability Officer, Mark Pimm. If you think you may be eligible for free membership, please first contact Mark Pimm in the Disability Office.

The College Library also runs an interlibrary loan service to enable you to obtain copies of books and articles not held in its own collections. As it can take a couple of weeks to obtain copies of requested materials, you are advised to plan ahead in your general reading and essay preparation so as to make use of this facility. Please note: a charge of £1 will be made for each interlibrary loan request received and there is a limit of 10 requests in progress at any one time.

An introduction to the Library and bibliographical skills is timetabled at the start of your course at which you will meet the Subject Librarian who looks after the collection. They will introduce you to the Library and its electronic resources. In addition, the Library has an online tutorial called LIFE (Library Induction for Everyone) which is always available: <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/lib/life/> which has a module in it on 'Researching a topic'.

Other Resources and Organisations

Birkbeck Student Union

You are automatically a member of the Birkbeck Students' Union, the University of London Union and NUS upon taking up the offer of a place to study at Birkbeck. NUS cards are available online (NUS Extra) or from the Union Office, Malet Street. Application can be made to become a member of the International Students' Association by completing a form that can also be obtained from their shop.

Location and Telephone: Offices on the 4th Floor of the extension building in Malet Street. General Union Office is in Room 456, Tel: 020 7631 6335. Enquiries: administrator@bcsu.bbk.ac.uk . Visit the website at <http://www.birkbeckunion.org/> .

Counselling

The Students' Union offers counselling free of charge.

Birkbeck Evening Nursery

Birkbeck College has an Evening Nursery, which is available for students and current members of staff and accepts children aged 2-10 years. In exceptional circumstances, children up to 12 will be accepted. However, Nursery Staff reserve the right not to accept older children if they are disruptive. Full details, including opening times, may be found at: www.bbk.ac.uk/pers/nursery.

Disability Statement

At Birkbeck there are students with a wide range of disabilities including dyslexia, visual or hearing impairments, mobility difficulties, mental health needs, HIV, ME, respiratory conditions etc. Many of them have benefited from the advice and support provided by the College's disability service.

The Disability Office

The College has a Disability Office located on the main corridor of the Malet Street building. We have a Disability Service Manager, Mark Pimm, and a Disability Advisor, Steve Short.

Mark is your first point of referral for disability enquiries at the College whilst Steve is for dyslexia. They can provide advice and support on travel and parking, physical access, the Disabled Students' Allowance, special equipment, personal support, examination arrangements etc. If you have a disability or dyslexia, we recommend you come to our drop in session where we can discuss support and make follow up appointments as necessary. The drop in sessions are between 4pm and 6pm Monday to Friday.

At your first appointment at the Disability Office they will ask you to complete a Confidentiality Consent Form. This allows you to state who in the College can be informed of your disability. Remember, if you wish, we do not need to inform people of the exact nature of your disability, just your disability related needs.

They will also complete an Individual Student Support Agreement form, confirming your support requirements and send this to your School and relevant Departments at the College so they are informed of your needs.

Access at Birkbeck

Birkbeck's main buildings have wheelchair access, accessible lifts and toilets, our reception desks have induction loops for people with hearing impairments and we have large print and tactile signage. Disabled parking, lockers, specialist seating in lectures and seminars and portable induction loops etc can all be arranged by the Disability Office.

The Disabled Students' Allowance

UK and most EU students with disabilities on undergraduate and postgraduate courses are eligible to apply for the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). The DSA usually provides **thousands of pounds worth of support** and all the evidence shows that students who receive it are more likely to complete their courses successfully. The Disability Office can provide further information on the DSA and can assist you in applying to Student Finance England for this support.

The Personal Assistance Scheme

Some students need a personal assistant to provide support on their course, for example a note-taker, sign language interpreter, reader, personal assistant, disability mentor or dyslexia support tutor. Birkbeck uses a specialist agency to recruit Personal Assistants and they can assist you with recruiting, training and paying your personal assistant. Please contact Steve for information on this scheme.

Support in your School

The provision which can be made for students with disabilities by Schools is set out in the Procedures for Students with Disabilities. This is available from the Disability Office and the Disability website (see below).

As mentioned above your School will receive a copy of your Individual Student Support Agreement from the Disability Office. This will make specific recommendations about the support you should receive from the School.

Support in IT Services and Library Services

There is a comprehensive range of specialist equipment for students with disabilities in IT Services. This includes software packages for dyslexic students (TextHELP Read and Write and Inspiration), screen reading and character enhancing software for students with visual impairments, specialist scanning software, large monitors, ergonomic mice and keyboards, specialist orthopaedic chairs etc. For advice and assistance please contact Disability IT Support. There is also a range of specialist equipment in the Library including a CCTV reading machine for visually impaired students as well as specialist orthopaedic chairs and writing slopes. The Disability Office refers all students with disabilities to the Library Access Support service who provides a comprehensive range of services for students with disabilities.

Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia)

Mature students who experienced problems at school are often unaware that these problems may result from their being dyslexic. Whilst dyslexia cannot be cured, you can learn strategies which make studying significantly easier. If you think you may be dyslexic you should contact Steve, he can screen you and where appropriate refer you to an Educational Psychologist for a dyslexia assessment. These assessments cost £215. Some students can receive assistance in meeting this cost from their employer. In exceptional cases students may receive assistance from the Access to Learning Fund.

Examinations

Students with disabilities and dyslexia may be eligible for special arrangements for examinations e.g. extra time, use of a word processor, amanuensis, enlarged examination papers etc. In order to receive special arrangements a student must provide Medical Evidence of their disability (or an Educational Psychologist's Report if you are dyslexic) to the Disability Office. For School examinations you should contact your Programme Director to request special arrangements at least 2 weeks before the examination. For main College summer examinations you are given the opportunity to declare that you require special provision on your assessment entry form. Students who require provision should then attend an appointment with the Disability Office to discuss and formalise the appropriate arrangements. The closing date for making special examination arrangements in College examinations is the 15th March and beyond this date consideration will only be given to emergency cases.

The Disability Handbook

The Disability Handbook provides detailed information on the support available from the College. Copies are available from all main reception areas, the Disability Office and from the College disability web site at:

<http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/disability>

For further information or to make an appointment to see Mark or Steve, please call Steve Short (Disability Advisor) on 020 7631 6336 or email disability@bbk.ac.uk.

Disability and Student Support Team Contact details:

Mark Pimm

Disability Co-ordinator

Room G057 Registry

Birkbeck College

Malet Street

London WC1E 7HX

Telephone: 020 7631 6315

Email: m.pimm@bbk.ac.uk

Steve Short

Disability Administrator

Room G057 Registry

Birkbeck College

Malet Street

London WC1E 7HX

Telephone: 020 7631 6336

Email: disability@bbk.ac.uk

Lisa Mayer

Assistant Examinations Officer

Telephone: 020 7631 6598

l.mayer@bbk.ac.uk

The Student Financial Support Office

Telephone: 020 7631 6362

Jackie Barnes

Examinations Officer

Telephone: 020 7631 6385

President of the Student Union

Telephone: 020 7631 6365

Email: president@bcsu.bbk.ac.uk

Web address: www.bbk.ac.uk/su

IT Services (ITS)

Access to College IT facilities and services is controlled by using a username and password. IT Services (ITS) usernames and passwords are allocated to registered students of Birkbeck College.

Accepted applicants for undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses will receive details from ITS of the username and password for the purpose of on-line enrolment. Following completion of enrolment, registered students will be able to access the full range of IT services. Details of the allocated email address and an *Overview to ITS for Students* are included in the communication students will receive from ITS. Please note the account and email address are not operational until the enrolment has been completed, until then the username and password can only be used for on-line enrolment.

Returning students should continue to use the same account they were previously allocated. If you forget your password, visit www.bbk.ac.uk/its/mycomputeraccount - if you have registered an external email address with the Registry then it may be possible to send you a new password, otherwise you will have to contact the ITS Helpdesk.

You are expected to be familiar with the College Computing Regulations which are available at:

http://www.bbk.ac.uk/hr/policies_services/policies_az/computing_regulations

ITS resources include:

- PC workstation rooms
- Wireless network
- Wide range of general office and specialist computer applications
- Web-based electronic mail
- Blackboard Virtual Learning Environment
- Assistive technology facilities
- Training workshops and self-training materials
- Remote access to College electronic resources and services from home or work

You can find out more about these services and others by visiting our website at: www.bbk.ac.uk/its

Your Birkbeck email address will be used for official Birkbeck correspondence so you should check it at least once a week. Alternatively you can forward all email sent to this address to another email address that you do regularly check, instructions on how to do this are on the ITS website.

There is a text message news flash service which enables students to receive free urgent messages from the College via their mobile phones. You are encouraged to subscribe. Full details are available at: www.bbk.ac.uk/its/services/sms

Students are allocated personal storage space on a networked file server. Files will remain on the server for one year after you leave.

Your ITS username, password and email address will normally remain valid as long as you remain a paid up undergraduate or postgraduate student of Birkbeck College. However, if we have reason to think that the security of an account has been compromised your account could be suspended without warning and you will need to visit the ITS Helpdesk to have it reinstated.

ITS Helpdesk Opening Hours

Ground Floor, Malet Street Main Building

Term time: Monday to Friday 9:00am to 8:00pm

Vacations: Monday to Friday 9:00am to 6:00pm

Tel: 020 7631 6543

Email: [**its-helpdesk@bbk.ac.uk**](mailto:its-helpdesk@bbk.ac.uk)

Your ITS username and password will not necessarily work on systems that are locally managed by Schools or departments. Schools/Departments provide details of access to these.

Common Awards Scheme

Introduction

1. The majority of Birkbeck’s postgraduate programmes are offered as part of the College’s Common Awards Scheme. Programmes within the Scheme have common regulations, and a common structure, and this makes it possible for you to take modules from other programmes across the College (subject to programme regulations and timetable constraints).
2. This paper gives a brief introduction to the Common Awards Scheme. Further details on regulations and policies that form the Common Awards Scheme can be accessed via:

<http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/rules>

Structure of Programmes

3. All programmes offered as part of the Common Awards Scheme consist of modules, each of which are “credit-rated”. In order to achieve your award you will need to gain at least the following, and meet the requirements outlined in your programme specification:

Qualification	Credits needed	Min at upper level	Max at lower level	Birkbeck common awards schemes
Masters Degree	180	150 level 7	30 level 6 (not included in calculation of classification)	4 modules plus dissertation
Postgraduate Diploma	120	90 level 7	30 level 6 (not included in calculation of classification)	4 modules
Postgraduate Certificate	60	60 level 7	n/a	2 modules

4. The Common Awards Scheme offers, for postgraduate programmes, half modules (15 credits), modules (30 credits), double modules (60 credits), or exceptionally triple modules (90 credits) and quadruple modules (120 credits – normally for MRes dissertations)
5. The detailed requirements for each programme are published in the relevant programme specification. Each module on a programme is designated as one of the following:

- core** the module must be taken and passed to allow the student to complete the degree
- compulsory** the module must be taken, and Programme Regulations must stipulate the minimum assessment that must be *attempted*
- option** students may choose a stipulated number of modules from a range made available to them. Option modules are clearly identified in Programme Regulations.
- elective** students may replace an option module with modules from another programme, subject to approval of Programme Directors, availability of places and timetable requirements.

Modules may also be designated as **pre-requisite** modules, meaning they must be taken and passed to allow for progression to a specified follow-up module.

Degree Classification

6. Postgraduate awards may be made with Merit or Distinction. Distinctions are normally awarded to students who achieve an average result of 70% or more, including a mark of 70 or over in their dissertation, for all level 7 modules on their programme. A Merit is normally awarded to students who achieve an average result of 60% or more, but less than 70% for all level 7 modules. Level 6 modules included as part of the programme are not included in the calculation for degree classification for postgraduate programmes.

Failure and Re-assessment of a Module

7. The Regulations for Taught Programmes of Study outline how an examination board should treat a failed module when considering progression and awards. However, each examination board is responsible for judging, within these regulations, whether a fail can be “compensated” (ie whether you can be awarded credit for that module even if you have not actually passed), whether you will need to re-take the module (see paragraph 8) or whether you will be able to attempt a re-assessment (see paragraph 9)
8. For any module on a postgraduate programme, if you fail to pass at the first attempt then any subsequent attempt will either be a “re-take” or a “re-assessment”. A re-take requires attendance at the module’s lectures and seminars as well as another attempt at the assessment, whereas “re-assessment” is where a student attempts only the failed element(s) of a failed module. The decision on whether you will be offered a re-take or re-assessment will be made by your sub-board of examiners.
9. A Sub-board of Examiners may offer an alternative form of assessment for failed elements as part of a re-assessment regime.
10. The timing of any re-assessment will be at the discretion of the Sub-board of Examiners; this will normally be either at the next normal assessment opportunity or in some instances before the beginning of the next academic year.
11. You will normally be offered two attempts at passing a module (the original attempt plus one further attempt which will either be a re-assessment or a re-take). After this, if the module has not been passed it will be classed either as a “compensated fail” (see 12) or a fail. In some cases this will mean that it will not be possible for you to gain the award that you have registered for; in such cases, your registration will normally be terminated.
12. If your module result is between 40 and 49% your Sub-board of Examiners may award a “compensated fail”. This will mean that you retain the module result, but are awarded credit for that module. An MA or MSc may be awarded to a student carrying no more than 30 credits as compensated fail. A core module may not be treated as a compensated fail; core modules must be passed in order to gain the award. The awards of MRes, Postgraduate Diploma or Postgraduate Certificate do not normally permit the inclusion of compensated fail results in the calculation of classification

Common Award Scheme Policies

1. As part of the introduction of the Common Awards Scheme, the College has implemented a number of College-wide policies. The full policies can be seen at <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/rules>
Some brief details on key policies are included here:

Late Submission of work for assessment

2. College policy dictates how Schools will treat work that is due for assessment but is submitted after the published deadline. Any work that is submitted for formal assessment after the published deadline is given two marks: a penalty mark of 50% for postgraduate students, assuming it is of a pass standard, and the 'real' mark that would have been awarded if the work had not been late. Both marks are given to the student on a cover sheet. If the work is not of a pass standard a single mark is given.
3. If you submit late work that is to be considered for assessment then you should provide written documentation, medical or otherwise, to explain why the work was submitted late. You will need to complete a standard pro-forma and submit it, with documentary evidence as appropriate, to your Tutor or Programme Director. The case will then be considered by the appropriate sub-board or delegated panel.
4. If no case is made then the penalty mark will stand. If the case is made and accepted then the examination board may allow the 'real' mark to stand.

Assessment Offences

5. The College Policy on Assessment Offences incorporates the College policy on plagiarism.
6. The policy describes two stages in the process for dealing with assessment offences (which include plagiarism, collusion, examination offences and other offences). The first stage allows for a formal school investigation into the alleged offence. Stage 2 involves a centrally convened panel for more serious offences, dealt with under the Code of Student Discipline.
7. The College treats all assessment offences seriously. It makes strenuous efforts to detect plagiarism, including using web-based software that can provide clear evidence. If you are in any doubt as to what constitutes acceptable conduct you should consult your personal tutor or another member of academic staff. The College has a wide range of sanctions that it may apply in cases of plagiarism, including the termination of a student's registration in the most serious cases.

Mitigating Circumstances

8. The College Policy on Mitigating Circumstances determines how Sub-boards of Examiners will treat assessment that has been affected by adverse circumstances. Mitigating Circumstances are defined as unforeseen, unpreventable circumstances that significantly disrupt your performance in assessment. This should not be confused with long term issues such as medical conditions, for which the College can make adjustments before assessment (for guidance on how arrangements can be made in these cases please see the College's Procedures for Dealing with Special Examination Arrangements).
9. A Mitigating Circumstances claim should be submitted if valid detrimental circumstances result in:
 - a) the late or non-submission of assessment;
 - b) non-attendance at examination(s);
 - c) poor performance in assessment.
10. For a claim to be accepted you must produce independent documentary evidence to show that the circumstances:
 - a) have detrimentally affected your performance or will do so, with respect to 9a, 9b and 9c above;
 - b) were unforeseen;
 - c) were out of your control and could not have been prevented;

- d) relate directly to the timing of the assessment affected.
11. Documentation should be presented, wherever possible, on the official headed paper of the issuing body, and should normally include the dates of the period in which the circumstances applied. Copies of documentary evidence will not normally be accepted. If you need an original document for another purpose, you should bring the original into the Departmental Office so that a copy can be made by a member of College staff. (Where a photocopy is made by a member of staff they should indicate on the copy that they have seen the original).
 12. Discussing your claim with a member of staff does not constitute a submission of a claim of mitigating circumstances.
 13. You are encouraged to submit your claim for mitigating circumstances in advance and at the earliest opportunity. The final deadline for submission of a claim is *normally* 1 week after the final examination unless otherwise stated by your Department. Where possible, claims should be submitted using the standard College Mitigating Circumstances claim form (available from your Departmental office) which should be submitted in accordance with the procedure for submission published by your Department. Claims should always be supported by appropriate documentary evidence.
 14. You should be aware that individual marks will almost never be changed in the light of mitigating circumstances. Assessment is designed to test your achievement rather than your potential; it is not normally possible to gauge what you would have achieved had mitigating circumstances not arisen. Where mitigating circumstances are accepted, and it is judged by an Sub-board of Examiners that these circumstances were sufficiently severe to have affected your performance in assessment the usual response will be to offer you another opportunity for assessment without penalty, at the next available opportunity.
 15. Guidance on what may constitute acceptable mitigating circumstances is available as an appendix to the policy, available from <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/rules> or your Departmental office; you should note that this is not an exhaustive list, and that each case will be treated on its merits by the relevant sub-board or delegated body.
 16. You should note that decisions on mitigating circumstances are the responsibility of the sub-board for your programme. Where you are taking an elective or other module offered by another department or school, any application for mitigating circumstances should be to your “home” department.

Break-in-Studies Policy

17. The Common Awards Scheme regulations allow you to suspend studies for a maximum of two years in total during your programme of study. This may be for one period of two years or for non-consecutive shorter periods (see 18) that add up to a total of two years or less.
18. Any break-in-studies on a postgraduate programme would normally be for a minimum of one year; breaks may also be permitted for a period of one or two terms, dependent on the structure of the programme.
19. Any application for a break-in-studies should be made in writing to your programme director or personal tutor. If you are applying for an approved break-in-studies, you should give details of the length of the proposed break and the reasons for the application.
20. You will not be liable for fees while on an approved break-in-studies. If you have attended for part of a term you will normally be liable for the fees due in that term, unless there are mitigating circumstances.
21. If you are on a break-in-studies you will not have access to the Library or ITS unless you make an application and pay the appropriate fee to use these facilities. Applications must be made directly to the Library and/or ITS.
22. If you do not re-enrol after having completed two years of break-in-studies you will be deemed to have withdrawn from your programme. If you wish to resume your programme after having been withdrawn, you will normally be required to re-apply for admission.

Other Policies

22. In addition to the policies above, other College academic-related policies include:

Accredited Prior Learning
Termination of Registration
Procedures for Dealing with Special Examination Arrangements
Suspension of Regulations
The Operation of Boards and Sub-Boards of Examiners
The Role of External & Intercollegiate Examiners
Marking and Moderation
Feedback on Assessment

To see these policies, please see the Common Awards Scheme website:

<http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/rules>

23. The College also operates a Procedure for Appeals Against Decisions of Boards of Examiners; this is also available from this website.

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