Birkbeck College
University of London
Department of Computer Science and
Information Systems

MSc/PGDip in Computing for the Financial Services

PROGRAMME HANDBOOK

ACADEMIC YEAR 2016-2017
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Programme Overview

Programme Director: George Roussos (g.roussos@bbk.ac.uk)
Projects Co-ordinator: Oded Lachish (oded@dcs.bbk.ac.uk)
Programme Administrator: Mitali Choudhory (pgadmin@dcs.bbk.ac.uk)

The MSc Computing for the Financial Services provides an intensive course specifically tailored for Computer Science graduates or graduates of related subjects with containing a substantial amount of programming interested in pursuing 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.

All students must take and pass the following core modules

- Financial Markets (FM) offered by the Department of Economics
- Accounting and Financial Management (AFM) offered by the Department of Management

and select five optional modules from the following list

- Software Engineering in Practice (SEiP)
- Advances in Data Management (ADM)
- Component Based Software Development (CBSD)
- Information Retrieval and Organisation (IRO)
- Intelligent Technologies (IT)
- Software Design and Programming (SDP)
- Asset Management (AM) by the Department of Economics
- Corporate Finance (CF) offered by the Department of Economics
- Econometrics for FM (EFM) offered by the Department of Economics
- Principles of Financial Reporting (PCF) offered by the Department of Management

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.

From 2015/16 any re-assessment which is attempted will be subject to a cap at the pass mark – for postgraduate awards this is 50%. Specifically, for any module that you do not pass at your first attempt you may be ‘re-assessed’ or you may be required to ‘re-take’. Re-assessment is where a student will re-attempt a failed element of a failed module; it does not require attendance at lectures and seminars. A re-take requires attendance at the module’s lectures and seminars as well.
as another attempt at the assessment. A decision on whether you will be permitted to be re-assessed in one or more elements of a module that has not been passed is at the discretion of the Sub-Board of Examiners.
Dates

Introductory talks for new students

27nd. of September at 6.00pm in room MAL 405.

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  Monday 3 October to Friday 16 December
- Spring   Monday 9 January to Friday 24 March
- Summer   Monday 24 April to Friday 7 July

Lectures begin on Monday 3 October in the Autumn Term, Monday 9 January in the Spring Term, and Monday 24 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 at the Department of Computer Science but at different times of the year at the Departments of Economics and Management. Make sure you confirm arrangements with the module tutor.

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 6pm on 22 December, and normal services will resume from 9am on 3 January.

Easter Closure: The College will close at 6pm on 12 April, and normal services will resume from 9am on 19 April.
## Timetables

### Part-time Year 1 Timetable 2016/17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Autumn Module</th>
<th>Autumn Time</th>
<th>Spring Module</th>
<th>Spring Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>FM</td>
<td>6:00-7:30</td>
<td>ADM**</td>
<td>2:00-5:00</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SEiP</td>
<td>6.00-9.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td></td>
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<td>IRO**</td>
<td>2:00-5:00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>FM</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6:00-9:00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>FM</td>
<td>6:00-7:30</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>FM</td>
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* FM Monday classes start in the second week of term.

** ADM and IRO run during the daytime in alternate years.

### Year 1 part-time lecture timetable (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Summer Module</th>
<th>Summer Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>AFM</td>
<td>6.00-9.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>AFM</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>AFM</td>
<td>6.00-9.00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* AFM runs for the first five weeks of the summer term only.
# Draft Part-time Year 2 Timetable 2017/18

## Year 2 part-time lecture timetable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Autumn</th>
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<th>Spring</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Module</td>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Module</td>
<td>Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ADM</td>
<td>6:00-9:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SEiP</td>
<td>6:00-9:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>IRO</td>
<td>6:00-9:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EFM</td>
<td>6:00-9:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AM</td>
<td>6:00-9:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>IT</td>
<td>6:00-9.00</td>
<td>SDP</td>
<td>6:00-9.00</td>
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<td></td>
<td>PRF</td>
<td>6:00-9.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
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<td></td>
<td>CBSD</td>
<td>6:00-9.00</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CF</td>
<td>6:00-9.00</td>
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### Locations

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

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

### NOTES:

* 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

Modules

Asset Management

Pre-requisite: Financial Markets

Lecturer: David Schroeder

Overview

The module aims at giving thorough understanding of the foundations of modern asset management in both theory and practice.

In the short introduction, we discuss the meaning of asset management and review the basic concepts of portfolios optimization. In the first part of the module, we turn to utility-based long-term (strategic) asset allocation strategies, including important extensions, such as labour income and life-cycle investment strategies. In the second part of the module, we look at specific asset management concepts, including portfolio insurance, hedge funds, pension funds and private wealth management. In the last section, we look at the performance measurement of investment funds.

The module includes also a variety of guest lectures with distinguished speakers from the asset management industry.

Topics

The course will focus on the following topics

Portfolio optimization
• Strategic asset allocation
• Hedge funds
• Performance measurement

Textbooks

- Campbell, Viceira: Strategic Asset Allocation. Oxford University Press
- Claus Munc: Dynamic Asset Allocation, unpublished manuscript

More texts will be indicated in the course outline to be distributed at the beginning of the module.

Assessment

2-hour examination in June (80% of the total mark) and course-work (20%).
**Corporate Finance**

**Pre-requisite:** Financial Markets

**Lecturer:** Arina Nikandrova

**Aims**

The course considers 2 broad sets of questions. The first part of the course focuses on assessing investment opportunities and (real and financial) asset valuation. The second part of the course considers how to raise funds necessary to finance investments. Here, special attention is devoted to implications of informational asymmetries, the possibility of bankruptcy and differential tax treatments of debt and equity incomes.

The analysis will then broaden to allow for the possibility that debt/equity choices may the corporate decision making process.

**Textbooks**

The lectures will be based on textbooks and journal articles. The journal articles will be circulated during the lectures.

- Berk, Jonathan and DeMarzo, Peter, Corporate Finance. Pearson.

**Assessment**

2-hour examination
Financial Markets

Lecturer: Various

Pre-requisites: The EMS pre-sessional Mathematics course or equivalent.

Module Description
The course aims primarily to familiarise you with the principles of finance. It will introduce you with the characteristics of equity, fixed income and derivatives markets, and provides grounding in financial models that would enable them to evaluate different financial assets. You will be introduced to option pricing theory, as well as to issues related to credit risk.

You will be equipped with the necessary knowledge of the financial markets, ready to work as practitioners in the financial industry.

Learning Outcomes
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 calculate present values of future cash flows and net present values of real investment projects.
✓ Understand the characteristics of equity, fixed income and derivative markets.
✓ Derive and apply pricing models for shares including the discounted-dividend model.
✓ Price bonds and extract interest rates from bond data.
✓ Understand different derivative securities such as forwards, futures, swaps and options.
✓ Explain the no-arbitrage principle and apply this to the pricing of derivative securities using both Black-Scholes option pricing model and the Binomial model.
✓ Understand the issues related to credit risk.

Required Reading

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.
- Extent 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

Background Reading

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

Pre-requisite
Appropriate level of experience with a modern programming language.

Aims
The main aim of the module is to provide students with the necessary skills for developing software utilising the object-oriented and functional programming paradigms, with Java 8. This ranges from learning object-oriented concepts, designing object-oriented software using a proven methodology and tools, to learning how to program in an object-oriented and functional style. The module provides detailed examination of Software Design Patterns, and the emerging functional features of current day object-oriented programming languages.

Assessment
By 2-hour unseen written examination and coursework exercises; weighting 80% and 20% respectively. See College Moodle server for details.

Online material
http://moodle.bbk.ac.uk/

Syllabus
- The object model and how it is realised in various object-oriented languages
- Further development the ideas of inheritance and polymorphism (including a revision of parametric polymorphism)
- Language features: inner classes, closures, higher-order functions, meta-objects, etc.
- An introduction to Test Driven Design (TDD) and Behavioural Driven Design (BDD)
- The use of an Integrated Development Environment (IDE) for software development: e.g., editing, debugging, compilation, etc.
- Modularity, versioning, packaging, and managing the build process
- Design Patterns and Anti-Patterns and their application to software design
- The SOLID (Single responsibility, Open-closed, Liskov substitution, Interface segregation and Dependency inversion) approach to object oriented programming and design
- Code refactoring and analysis
- Graphical User Interfaces and frameworks
- Persistence Frameworks
- Concurrency and agents/actors

Recommended reading
Design Patterns: Elements of Reusable Object-Oriented Software by E. Gamma, R. Helm, R. Johnson, and J. Vlissides, Addison Wesley, 1994
**Advances in Data Management,**

*Lecturer:* Alex Poulovassilis

**Module Outline**

This module examines the technologies underlying modern data management systems. It studies advanced aspects of query processing, transaction management, distributed data management, and recent developments in web data, "big data" and alternative database architectures.

**Aims**

To study advanced aspects of databases and recent advances in data management technologies in three major directions: performance, distribution of data, and heterogeneity of data.

**Syllabus**

- Review of the fundamental principles of database management systems, relational databases and SQL.
- Query processing and query optimisation.
- Transaction management: ACID properties, concurrency control, recovery.
- Beyond records and objects: stored procedures and functions, triggers, semantic technologies.
- Distributed databases: data fragmentation and replication, distributed query processing, distributed transaction management.
- Heterogeneous data integration.
- XML data management.
- Linked Open Data.
- Parallel databases.
- Big data and NoSQL/NewSQL stores.

**Prerequisites**

A first module in Database Systems (e.g. as taught in a typical U.K. undergraduate degree in computer science).

**Assessment**

By 2-hour written examination and coursework. The final module mark will be the exam mark attained. A minimum mark of 40% on the coursework component will be necessary in order to pass the module overall.

**Recommended Reading**


A.Elmagarmid, M.Rusinkiewicz and A.Sheth (eds), Management of Heterogeneous and Autonomous Database Systems, Morgan Kaufmann, 1999
Software Engineering in Practice

Lecturers: Keith Mannock and Oded Lachish

Module Outline
This module provides a general understanding of Software Engineering; the typical phases of the software lifecycle with particular reference to practical specification, design and testing techniques. It serves to prepare students for the various software development projects undertaken throughout their studies and introduces them to important concepts that can be studied in more detail later in the programme.

Aims
Understand the different approaches to managing the software development process. Produce practical specifications from informal briefs. Understand how to test, debug and change programs. Understand how to represent formal program requirements. Understand how to create and deploy an effective plan for testing software systems. How to apply software engineering methodologies in practical scenarios. How to evaluate, select and deploy appropriate tools and techniques. Deploy a software development methodology, and to test and debug software, independent of programming language.

Syllabus
Software processes
- Agile software development
- Requirements engineering
- System modelling
- Architectural design
- Design and implementation
- Software builds
- Software testing
- Software evolution

Prerequisites
Information Systems. Introduction to Software Development module, or Programming in Java, or suitable experience with a modern programming language.

Coursework
A team project, each team consisting of up to four members. Selected from a set of topics on Software Engineering. Presentation to module cohort and written submission.

Assessment
Coursework (20%). Examination (80%).
Component Based Software Development

Lecturer: Keith Mannock

Module Outline

This module introduces the theory and practice associated with implementing large-scale distributed information systems in heterogeneous environments. The student will develop the technical knowledge necessary to analyse the scalability and interoperability problems associated with large-scale heterogeneous systems and will experience the design and implementation of enterprise-level computer applications. Industry standard frameworks such as Java Enterprise Edition (JEE), Spring, etc. will be explored utilising practical workshops. The development of web services will also be discussed through the use of standards such as XML, SOAP, WSDL and UDDI. How web services can be used to implement a Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) will be discussed.

Please note: this course requires a great deal of time outside of class. Students should take this into account when considering taking other courses or if they encounter a great deal of travel for work.

Aims

At the conclusion of the course the student should have an appreciation of:

- the design and implementation of multi-tier applications;
- the use, and understand the relevance of, distributed component technology;
- the evaluation of requirements and specifications;
- the security implications on intranets and the Internet of multi-tier applications;
- the complex ideas of component software engineering and relate them to a specific problem;
- the implementation of server-side applications and an e-Commerce application using a variety or proprietary and open-source approaches;
- the relationship between Microsoft component technology and the Java enterprise bean approach;
- the enhanced systems analysis techniques;
- the development of systems architecture design.

Syllabus

- Introduction to Component Based Software
- Java approaches to n-tier architectures (JEE, Spring, etc.)
- Enterprise Computing in the real world (Case Study)
- Message-Oriented Middleware (RabbitMQ, etc.)
- Virtualisation and Cloud Computing
- Design Patterns and Enterprise Architectures
- The .NET model for distributed computing
- Persistence layers
• User Interfaces
• Web Services
• RESTful services

Prerequisites
One of the following:

  Introduction to Software Development (with a distinction level grade)
  Programming in Java
  or a similar course or relevant experience

Assessment
By two hour written examination (worth 80%) and practical coursework (worth 20%).

Recommended Reading


**Fundamentals of Concurrent Systems**

**Lecturer:** Szabolcs Mikulas

**Module Outline**
Basics of concurrency (including interprocess communication) and a formal approach to modelling the behaviour of concurrent programs (including specification and verification).

**Aims**
In this module we will concentrate on concurrency (arising by the use of multithreaded programs or distributed computations). We will introduce a formal approach (labelled transition systems) for modelling concurrent programs and tools (modal and temporal logics) to reason about their behaviours. Applications include software engineering (formal specification and verification of concurrent programs) and distributed systems (reasoning about knowledge in multi-agent systems).

**Syllabus**
- Concurrency mechanisms (semaphores, monitors, software solutions, message passing)
- Modelling concurrent programs (labelled transition systems)
- Basics of propositional logic (syntax, semantics, decidability)
- Basics of modal and temporal logics (syntax, semantics)
- Temporal logic as a specification language
- Model checking for temporal logic
- Verification using model checking
- Rule-based verification
- Other applications of modal/temporal logic (multi-agent systems, knowledge representation) - depending on student interest

**Prerequisites**
Familiarity with the basics of formal reasoning and algorithms (e.g. as taught in a typical UK undergraduate degree in computer science). For MSc CS students an understanding of the first part of the Fundamentals of Computing module suffices.

**Assessment**
Two-hour written examination (100%) and compulsory homework (0%).

**Recommended Reading**
**Information Retrieval and Organisation**

**Lecturers:** Dell Zhang, Mark Levene

**Module Outline**
Due to the explosive growth of digital information in recent years, modern Information Retrieval (IR) systems such as search engines have become more and more important in almost everyone's work and life (e.g. see the phenomenal rise of Google). IR research and development are one of the hottest research areas in academia as well as industry. This module will convey the basic principles of modern IR systems to students.

**Aims**
The aim of this module is to introduce modern Information Retrieval (IR) concepts and techniques, from basic text indexing to advanced text mining and Web IR. Both theoretical and practical aspects of IR systems will be presented and the most recent issues in the field of IR will be discussed. This will give students an insight into how modern search engines work and are developed.

**Syllabus**
- Boolean Retrieval
- The Term Vocabulary and Postings Lists
- Dictionaries and Tolerant Retrieval
- Index Construction and Compression
- Scoring, Term Weighting and the Vector Space Model
- Computing Scores in A Complete Search System
- Evaluation in Information Retrieval, Relevance Feedback and Query Expansion
- Probabilistic Information Retrieval
- Language Models for Information Retrieval
- Text Classification, Naive Bayes and Vector Space Classification
- Flat and Hierarchical Clustering
- Advanced Topics in IR

**Coursework**
The coursework includes two assignments.

**Assessment**
Coursework (20%). Examination (80%).

**Recommended Reading**
**Intelligent Technologies**

**Lecturer:** George Magoulas

**Aims**
The module covers computational algorithms for intelligent information management, decision making and complex problem solving. It provides an introduction to technologies such as knowledge-based systems, artificial neural networks, fuzzy logic, evolutionary computation, hybrid systems showing how such technologies work to support the development of modern intelligent applications.

**Syllabus**
- Knowledge-based Systems
- Rule-based Expert systems
- Fuzzy Systems
- Uncertainly Management
- Neural Computing
- Genetic and Evolutionary Computing
- Hybrid Approaches

**Prerequisites**
No formal pre-requisite or co-requisite module but knowledge of mathematical concepts such as those presented in the website (http://www.gcseguide.co.uk/mathsgcseguide.htm) is essential.

**Assessment**
Exam

**Recommended Reading**
**Econometrics of Financial Markets**

**Pre-requisite:** Financial Markets

**Aims**

This course provides an introduction to applied financial econometrics, statistical methods and an understanding of the data with the ability to use the appropriate software and interpret the output.

**Learning objectives**

By the end of this module, students should be able to:

- Understand the foundations of statistics, including probability distributions and descriptive statistics.
- Derive the Ordinary Least Square (OLS) estimator and understand its properties.
- Explain the basis for standard tests and use them in practice.
- Develop and analyse basic univariate and multivariate time-series models for integrated and co-integrated data and know how to choose between alternative models.
- Use standard econometrics packages and interpret their output.
- Read, understand and explain empirical articles in academic literature.
- Conduct and report on an independent piece of empirical research that uses econometric techniques.

**Recommended reading**


**Assessment:** exam (80%) and coursework (20%).
Principles of Financial Reporting

Convenor and lecturer: Dr Libon Fung

Prerequisites: none

Assessment: group coursework of 4000 words (40%) and an examination (60%).

Overview

This module explores the fundamental concepts which underpin the development of the current practices of financial reporting. It will enable you to understand and interpret the importance of accounting information in decision making for complex entities. You will also learn how to prepare and interpret financial statements for individual and group of companies.

There is an emphasis throughout on international financial reporting and the accounting information in capital markets.

Module aims

- Develop your understanding of the theory and practice of accounting.
- Develop your ability to critically assess theoretical issues and recent developments in accounting.
- Develop your communication skills, both oral and written.
- Develop your skills in summarising and critically assessing professional reports and statements and academic articles.

Learning objectives

At the end of this module, students will be able to:

- Prepare and interpret financial statements for single and group of companies.
- Critically assess accounting conventions and their information content including fair value accounting.
- Integrate subject matter studied on related modules and to demonstrate the multidisciplinary aspect of practical financial reporting problems.
- Use academic theory and research to question established financial reporting standards and theories.
- Proficiently research materials on the internet and the Birkbeck Library database.
- Interpret corporate financial reports.
- Appreciate public speaking and presentation, through group discussion and case study.

Recommended reading

3. Additional articles and further readings will be recommended throughout the module.
5. 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).

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
https://www.dcs.bbk.ac.uk/intranet/index.php/MSc_ACT_project

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.
**Employability**

**The Business Engagement Team (BEI School)**

The Business Engagement Team work to develop sustainable external relationships and add value to your Birkbeck experience by facilitating professional partnerships and delivering events. Please look out for information on events held on the last evening of each academic term as well as special events throughout the year. You can also follow the School of Business, Economics and Informatics (BEI) on social media for information and conversations:

- Twitter: @BirkbeckBEI
- Facebook: BirkbeckBEI
- LinkedIn: Search ‘Birkbeck, School of Business, Economics and Informatics’
- Google+: Search ‘Birkbeck, School of Business, Economics and Informatics’

**Mentoring**

Using partnerships forged with Credit Suisse, PwC, Birkbeck alumni and other partners, the Business Engagement Team organise a Mentoring programme each year for students in their final year of their under-graduate programme or for those taking a post-graduate qualification. Business Mentoring at Birkbeck pairs successful applicants with industry professionals for individual advice and guidance. There are approximately 50 places available.


If you are currently employed and believe your employer may be interested in working as a partner organisation to provide more mentors for this scheme, please email: mentoring@bbk.ac.uk

**Entrepreneurship**

The Business Engagement Team also runs projects, events and networking opportunities to enhance your entrepreneurial thinking and to provide support for students interested in self-employment or already managing their own businesses.

**Communications**

You may be contacted with emails directly by the Business Engagement Team, unless you requested ‘no publicity’. These emails will inform you of upcoming events, unique opportunities with potential employers and other ways in which you may grow your network with Birkbeck. Should you encounter any difficulties in receiving these emails, please contact: Events and Communications Manager, Matthew Jayes (m.jayes@bbk.ac.uk).
Administration and Assessment

Requirements for the Award of the MSc/PGDip

Each taught module comprises of 15 or 30 credits and is assessed by a combination of a written exam and 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.

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%.

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.

From 2015/16 any re-assessment which is attempted will be subject to a cap at the pass mark – for postgraduate awards this is 50%. Specifically, for any module that you do not pass at your first attempt you may be ‘re-assessed’ or you may be required to ‘re-take’. Re-assessment is where a student will re-attempt a failed element of a failed module; it does not require attendance at lectures and seminars. A re-take requires attendance at the module’s lectures and seminars as well as another attempt at the assessment. A decision on whether you will be permitted to be re-assessed in one or more elements of a module that has not been passed is at the discretion of the Sub-Board of Examiners.

**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/](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:


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


When you are referring to a journal article:


When you are referring to a webpage:


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.
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Career Development

In 2015 the College introduced the in-house Careers and Employability Service for enhancing career development and employability throughout a student’s time at Birkbeck, from enrolment through to graduation. CES provides comprehensive careers advice, events and information services for current students, both in person and online. Their support includes: Workshops and events for current students; Online careers and employability support service; Social media/Twitter hour; Information on Scoop.it; 1:1 appointments; and Students' Employability Space / Employability advisor.

For more information and opening times visit the CES website at:
http://www.bbk.ac.uk/careers/careers-service
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](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 cooperation. 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](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/](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@bcu.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

The College’s Wellbeing Service is made up of the Counselling Service, the Disability and Dyslexia Service, and the Mental Health Service. The service is committed to help students meet the challenges and seize the opportunities that study at Birkbeck presents and to support them in reaching their maximum potential at university and beyond. For more information http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/well-being-service

The Counselling Service provides assistance to students who are experiencing emotional difficulties which may be impacting upon their studies or overall experience at Birkbeck. They offer short-term, confidential counselling to all registered students. Students can make an appointment for an initial consultation with a professionally trained counsellor to discuss anything that is troubling.

The Disability and Dyslexia Service aims to provide all of our students with a study environment that enables them to participate fully in our courses. They can provide advice and support to students with conditions that impact their ability to study, such as:

- specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia, Dyspraxia, Dyscalculia, AD(H)D)
- sensory impairments (blind/partially sighted, d/Deaf/hearing impaired)
- mobility conditions (including RSI, arthritis, neck back and knee conditions etc.)
- medical conditions (e.g. HIV, CFS, diabetes, cancer, chest and respiratory conditions etc.)
- Autism Spectrum Conditions (Autism or Asperger’s Syndrome)

For more information and details on how to contact the DDS see http://www.bbk.ac.uk/mybirkbeck/services/facilities/well-being-service/disability

The Mental Health Service provides support and specialist advice to students with any mental health conditions which may impact upon their ability to study, including:

- anxiety disorders and phobias
- mood disorders (e.g. depression and bipolar)
- eating disorders (e.g. anorexia and bulimia)
- personality disorders and obsessive compulsive disorder
- schizophrenia

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 the 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 please call 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.
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.
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
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:

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

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