

MAPS Education Strategy: Fair and Authentic Assessment

Support for Exam Preparation: A Guide for Students

This document outlines the support MAPS faculty students can expect to receive when preparing for exams. For the academic year 2021/22 departments will ensure that **baseline** support is in place and communicated to you. Where additional guidance is available, it will be highlighted and communicated.

Why have we prepared this guide?

Exam assessment has changed as a result of blended learning, and exam papers may now have a different format. We have therefore been refreshing our guidance to departments about how you can be assisted in preparing for exams. It was also the case that departments took different approaches to providing past papers and solutions and we wanted to ensure that all departments provide the same baseline level of support.

Who was involved in preparing this guide?

This guide was prepared with input from Departmental Exam Board and Teaching Committee Chairs. The content has been agreed on by Faculty Education Committee.

What is the aim of this guide?

We want to support you in using assessment as an authentic opportunity to demonstrate learning. Hence we wanted to make clear to you the level of support you can expect to receive when preparing for exams.

Specifically, you should expect:

- 1) Clarity on the types of questions you could encounter in an exam.
- 2) Opportunities to test your understanding of the questions and receive feedback.

With respect to solutions to past exam questions, you should be provided with sufficient guidance to support revision by helping you to understand the style, scope and depth of answers required in a typical exam. You should be able to test your understanding and gain reassurance you are on the right track.

Considerations:

We take the view that more is not always better. The simplest position for lecturers to adopt would be to provide all past papers and full worked solutions, but this is not the recommendation that was arrived at after consultation. The following points were put forward in support of the baseline we agreed on:

We want to provide materials that reflect the current design of the assessment

Modules are regularly updated. Older past papers may not be representative of the current syllabus or the style of exam questions and are therefore misleading.

We want to encourage “authentic” and “deep” approaches to learning

The current style of open-book papers requires less bookwork and uses more authentic assessment style (applied problem-solving, interpretation etc.) which lessens the benefit of past paper practice. We also wish to discourage rote learning, as it is of greater benefit to you to learn to apply your knowledge to unseen problems.

We want to set expectations about workload and allocation of effort

Giving lots of past papers provides implicit expectation that you should be doing this as practice. Many lecturers believe this is not the best use of your time and effort. Lecturers would prefer you to use material incorporated into lectures and tutorials and to think about (and talk to them!) about how this could be tested in an exam setting.

Below are the agreed baselines of support that departments should provide, along with additional support which will often (but not always) be available:

Access to past exam papers and questions

Baseline:

- Each module Moodle page should show one actual *or* sample paper that is representative of the content, format and style of the paper you will be sitting in the current academic year.
- Further past papers *may* be available on the Library Exams website, but this will vary. Departments will tell you which past papers are available on the Library website and the extent to which these are relevant to current course content.

Additional guidance (which will vary between modules and departments):

- Further papers and questions may be available in a variety of forms: posted on Moodle without modification; in-class examples; workshop and tutorial questions; coursework questions or formative examples (quizzes etc) within the taught module. Your lecturers can explain to you how these examples or questions relate to past exam papers.

Access to solutions to past exam papers

Baseline:

- There should be a set of indicative answers to support the example paper provided on Moodle. These answers should be detailed enough to allow you to judge the distribution of marks, depth of answer required and any flexibility in the mark scheme / acceptance of alternative answers.
- Clear written guidance should be provided to you about when and how you can access dedicated exam support, such as in office hours, revision workshops or Moodle forums.

Additional guidance (which will vary between modules and departments):

Guidance on how to approach past exam questions may additionally be provided in other forms, including:

- Full written 'model' answers.
- Solutions demonstrated or discussed orally in lectures, workshops and tutorials.
- 'Sketched solutions' that provide you with a prompt for the approach to take, some (but not all) steps in the solution and (if appropriate) a final answer.
- Numerical or final answers without working / explanation for you to check your own work.
- Moodle quizzes with answers that can be used for self-study.
- Written feedback to assessed coursework based on past exam questions.
- Generic feedback to an exam paper, e.g., questions answered well, common errors and reasons why full marks not given.
- Example student answers that show how marks were awarded (especially if these show a range of possible answers / approaches for which marks were awarded).