

# Postgraduate Online FAQ's and Answers

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## Virtual Learning Environment & Teaching

### **I understand resources are made available through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) - what does this entail? Extracts of essential books/articles, entire books/articles, the entire library?**

The VLE is where all of our online / distance learning (DL) students access their course materials, take part in discussion boards and submit any coursework. It is where the academics will upload essential documents, videos, reading lists etc. As a student you will gain access to the online library facilities to access electronic books. Students are free to access these materials and resources in their own time.

### **Are online students at a disadvantage if they are not in the proximity of the university library? Or does the university ensure that IDL courses have ALL essential reading electronically?**

Online courses are set up so you are not disadvantaged by not being able to access physical books. We do offer a large range of books electronically or the course leaders will ensure sections of text are available on the VLE.

### **What about lectures and seminars? In what form, if any, can we attend?**

It is not a requirement for Distance Learners to attend our campuses at any point during their studies. You can visit if you wish, but we would ask that you made an appointment with the programme leader in advance. All course materials will be available online through our Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), some course leaders will upload videos of their lectures. There are also discussion boards available.

### **Do online students get the same quality of teaching provided to on campus students?**

Yes, our online students have exactly the same learning outcomes as our Full Time on campus students.

### **Do I have to be online while I study?**

You do not need to be online for all your studies. You can print or download course notes for reading offline but the majority of the work, such as research, will be carried out online.

For other FAQ's go to <https://www.hw.ac.uk/schools/energy-geoscience-infrastructure-society/distance-learning/independent/frequently-asked-questions.htm>

**Are all lectures on video format?**

Some course leaders will upload videos of their lectures. Not all lectures are recorded, some course leaders supply lecture slides instead.

**Will we have access to past exams or tests with memorandum In the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)?**

Yes, you will have access to past exams on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Some of the course leaders set coursework to help you prepare for the exams.

**Will lectures be available to watch on-demand? Or only live?**

Lectures will be available to view at your convenience and to cater for students in different time zones.

**Can I access lecture notes and materials at my own convenience?**

Students are free to access these materials and resources on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) in their own time.

**When do students gain access to course materials (Virtual Learning Environment)?**

Students gain access to the VLE once they enrol, register and pay for their course(s).

## Length of Degree and Time Requirements

### **Based on your experience, how much study time is required to complete a MSc in 2-3 years?**

Each individual course is designed to take 150 study hours to complete, but every individual student is different and this time can vary. It is difficult to be prescriptive but the following may help you make a realistic judgement of the timeframe needed to complete your programme:

Minimum hours per week*	Equivalent study blocks per week	Time Taken to complete your MSc programme
25	4 evenings and 1 weekend day per week	2.5 years
17	2 evenings and 1 weekend day per week	3 years
13	3 evenings per week; or 1 weekend day and 1 evening per week	4 years

\*Based on studying 36 weeks of the year.

### **If not working, how many subjects can I take per semester?**

As distance learning is part time study we recommend only 2 courses (modules) per semester. However if you felt you had enough time you could do more. But for your first semester it is advised to only go for 2 so you can see how you get on.

### **If not working and we dedicate ourselves to full time study, can the Masters be completed in less than 2-3 years?**

You cannot complete in less than 2 years as we only offer an online / distance learning MSc part time.

### **What's the minimum number of courses I can register for?**

We would not recommend studying for any more than 2 courses (modules) per semester. You can take one if you wish or choose not to study that semester. Please bear in mind that you would have to finish your programme within the 8 years for MSc.

### **How long do I have to complete my MSc?**

An Online Learning programme - whether at PGDip or MSc level - can be completed in no less than two years as a rule. On average, our PGDip programmes are completed in 2-3 years, while MSc programmes are completed in 2.5-7 years. Our Online Learning programmes are designed with flexibility in mind, but you must complete your studies within 8 years (as an MSc student) or 6 years (if a Postgraduate Diploma student).

### **How long do I have to complete an individual course / module?**

For other FAQ's go to <https://www.hw.ac.uk/schools/energy-geoscience-infrastructure-society/distance-learning/independent/frequently-asked-questions.htm>

Students have a maximum of six exam diets (approximately 2 years) to complete the assessment for a course, from the date of registration.

## Application Process

### **I have got my acceptance letter for my MSc. What is my next step?**

If you have received an unconditional offer please respond as soon as possible. We will email you with joining instructions on how to register nearer the start date.

### **I have received confirmation of a place to study at Heriot-Watt University under a condition of uploading updated TOEFL results; what is the deadline for uploading TOEFL results?**

If you intend to start your studies in September 2019 then we would recommend that you fulfil any conditions on your offer by August 2019 (6 weeks before the start of the semester).

### **How long does it usually take to get an application response from the admissions team?**

We try and respond as soon as the Admissions Tutor has reviewed an application. Please email us at [egis-idl-apps@hw.ac.uk](mailto:egis-idl-apps@hw.ac.uk) with your full name and details of which programme you applied for and we can look at your application. Please put my name in the subject of the email.

### **Is TOEFL or IELTS a prerequisite for online students?**

We can consider an IELTS test gaining an overall score of 6.5 (no elements less than 6.0) or a TOEFL ibt gaining an overall score of 79-93 (no components less than 15). These tests must be done within the last 2 years of your intended start date. For more information on English language requirements please visit our webpage - <https://www.hw.ac.uk/study/entry/english-language-requirements.htm>

### **I was given an offer so I plan to start in September. By when is first the payment needed?**

Payment will be due at the end of August but you will be emailed at the end of July / start of August (6 weeks before the start of the semester).

### **What is the application deadline for each of the semesters?**

Dates vary each year, but roughly speaking we advise applicants to submit their applications 6-8 weeks before the start of each semester. So end of July for Semester 1, Start of November for Semester 2 and end of March for Semester 3.

### **Can I defer my conditional offer to another semester / intake?**

Yes. You are able to defer your offer. Please send us an email to [egis-idl-apps@hw.ac.uk](mailto:egis-idl-apps@hw.ac.uk) confirming this.

### **When should we expect to receive details on how to register / enrol on our courses?**

Students will receive an email about 6-8 weeks before the start date of each semester. For September 2019 students should receive an email at the start of August.

### **What is the difference between conditional and unconditional offer?**

If an applicant is made an Unconditional offer, they are not required to provide any further documents. If an applicant is made a Conditional offer, they will be required to meet specific criteria in order to receive an Unconditional offer.

### **Regarding the application procedure, do I need to send a motivation letter / personal statement?**

For other FAQ's go to <https://www.hw.ac.uk/schools/energy-geoscience-infrastructure-society/distance-learning/independent/frequently-asked-questions.htm>

We normally expect applicants to upload a personal statement during the application process. This would outline why you wish to study the chosen programme.

**What is the timing/deadline for the application process if I want to start in September?**

If you want to start in September, please submit your application by the end of July if possible.

**When will students receive their HW User ID's?**

You will receive this when you complete online enrolment prior to starting your studies. Students will receive an email about 6-8 weeks before the start date of each semester.

**Can a MSc programme be shortened if a student has previous qualifications in some of the courses within the MSc programme?**

We are happy to consider requests for recognition of prior learning (RPL) credits. This is awarded on the basis of a subject / level match of the qualifications that you have already completed. You will be asked to provide an academic transcript and course descriptors for your previous qualification. Please email [egis-idl-apps@hw.ac.uk](mailto:egis-idl-apps@hw.ac.uk) to discuss further.

## Payment

### **What are the payment methods for paying for tuition fees?**

The methods of payment are credit or debit card, banker's draft, UK cheque or bank transfer. Please note that bank transfers can take several weeks to be allocated within the University, especially near the beginning of each semester so we recommend using the online payment system as the quickest and simplest method. We cannot give a student access to the course material until the payment has been received in the University's bank account.

### **Can I pay my tuition fees for the entire programme in one instalment?**

Most students opt to pay for courses on a pay as you go basis / as they register for them. The payment options are set up to be flexible and allow students to spread the cost. In addition, the fees are set per academic year so we are not normally able to take full payment in one instalment. However, if you have some mitigating circumstances please email us with further information at [egis-idl-apps@hw.ac.uk](mailto:egis-idl-apps@hw.ac.uk) and we will make further enquiries with our Finance Team.

### **What is the total cost for my online degree?**

Students pay as they study. This means that you pay per course (module). If you register for 1 or 2 courses each semester then you only pay for those courses prior to the semester starting. The fees for the upcoming academic year 2019/20 are – found on the individual degree programme page under the “Fees and funding” tab. For most of the MSc degrees, students will take 8 courses and a dissertation. The course cost varies from £1075 to £1350 per course (module). On the MSc programme there is also a fee for the dissertation / projects – which varies from £1050 to £1740. Please note the costs may increase annually in line with inflation.

## Visa

**I was given an unconditional offer, but I am planning to sit my exams in Edinburgh. What steps do I need to take in order to organise my visa?**

You would need to check with the UKVI as you will need to check what type of visa you would need. We could provide you with a letter if you choose to sit your exams here, however we can arrange exams in most large cities around the world so you don't need to travel to the UK.



## Studying & General

**On the programme web page, it says I 'must first take exams in two courses of the programme. Based on the results from these entry courses students will continue on the programme at MSc or at PG Diploma level.' What does this mean?**

If it says this on your programme's web page, it means MSc and PG Dip students must take and successfully complete exams in the specified two courses before proceeding onto the other courses. Students are then free to select what courses they study next.

**I am studying for MSc in Civil Engineering. Once I have completed it I would like to study MSc Structural & Foundation Engineering which has 4 of the same courses. Do I receive any credits for taking these courses already?**

You cannot obtain credit for the same course twice (what we call double credit). If two programmes have the same mandatory courses then unfortunately you cannot study both. Students must study the full credits worth of courses (and dissertation) to get an award of MSc.

**What is the different between PgDip and MSc level?**

For PgDip and MSc students complete 8 taught courses. To be awarded an MSc, students must then complete a dissertation / projects.

**Can I switch from IDL to on campus? If so, am I eligible to apply for financial assistance?**

If you are classed as an overseas applicant then it is unlikely that you would be able to switch from IDL to on campus study due to Visa issues. Information on Scholarships can be found at the following link <https://www.hw.ac.uk/study/scholarships/uk.htm>.

**While studying; is there a possibility for the university to help me get an internship in a one of the companies related to my field of study?**

Unfortunately there are no internships.

**If I applied for one course per semester then couldn't afford to register for one semester will that cause my dismissal?**

If you applied for one course per semester or take a break from your studies you will not be dismissed if you don't register. For the MSc you have up to 8 years to complete.

**Are there any other degrees awarded while you complete your MSc courses? For example, a certificate or diploma?**

If you finish your full programme (ie your 8 modules) and you don't want to complete your dissertation you can have the option to graduate with a PG Dip.

**After enrolling what kind of official legal papers can the university provides us?**

We can supply you with confirmation of studies letter (ie enrolment letter).

**I would like to know if there are hard copy study packs for IDL / online students, which could be used for referencing at a later stage in our career after the completion of the MSc programme**

For other FAQ's go to <https://www.hw.ac.uk/schools/energy-geoscience-infrastructure-society/distance-learning/independent/frequently-asked-questions.htm>

No we don't send out hard copies of our packs. All material is available online through the VLE (Virtual Learning Environment).

**How is the dissertation defence presented? Do we have the right to choose to discuss it on campus?**

No you would not need to present your dissertation on campus. You would co-ordinate with your dissertation supervisor at that time.

**I also plan to go for the MSc but applied for the PgDip. Can I upgrade while studying?**

Provided that you pass your full 8 modules with grade C or above you will automatically be transferred to the MSc stream. We will email you with information on when and how to pay for your first modules.

**What is the total cost for my online degree?**

Students pay as they study. This means that you pay per course (module). If you register for 1 or 2 courses each semester then you only pay for those courses prior to the semester starting. The fees for the upcoming academic year 2019/20 are – found on the individual degree programme page under the “Fees and funding” tab. For most of the MSc degrees, students will take 8 courses and a dissertation. The course cost varies from £1075 to £1350 per course (module). On the MSc programme there is also a fee for the dissertation / projects – which varies from £1050 to £1740. Please note the costs may increase annually in line with inflation.

**Do students have to pay to sit exams / re-assessments?**

The cost of exams are incorporated within the course fees. Currently, HW Online students are not required to make payment for any re-assessments. For information, Postgraduate students are permitted one re-assessment per course, in a maximum of three courses.

**Will the MSc Qualification from HWU be recognized and accepted worldwide?**

We are a recognised University worldwide but you would need to check with your individual country or organisation if they acknowledge our degree programmes. We haven't come across any problems before.

**Can I write my dissertation in one semester?**

Students normally study their dissertation over two semesters. However, with the agreement of their supervisor, they may submit the dissertation after one semester.

**When should we expect to receive details on how to register / enrol on our courses?**

Students will receive an email about 6-8 weeks before the start date of each semester. For September 2019 students should receive an email at the start of August.

**What are the semester start and finish dates?**

Semesters run for 12 weeks excluding the assessments (14 weeks with assessments). The start dates for the semesters are 16<sup>th</sup> September 2019, Start of January, and the end of April / start of May. The dates for each of the semesters can be found [here](#).

For other FAQ's go to <https://www.hw.ac.uk/schools/energy-geoscience-infrastructure-society/distance-learning/independent/frequently-asked-questions.htm>

**I live in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Will I submit the course fee, sit for exam and submit coursework at Heriot Watt University Malaysia?**

All online students can submit their course fee online using the online payment system. All course work is also submitted online via the Virtual Learning Environment. However, if you live close to Heriot-Watt in Malaysia you can opt to sit your exams there (if that's the closest exam centre).

**Can online students benefit from advice from the Heriot-Watt career service?**

Online students will be able to contact the Careers Service at any point during their studies. You can find information on the [Careers Service](#) pages on the website.

**How will I be able to do my group project in my final semester online? Because I can already see the constraints (talking and coordinating with my peers...)?**

As a HW Online student you would get access to additional information that will allow you to complete the project on your own. However, online students do have opportunities to collaborate on the Virtual Learning Environment through webinars, discussion groups and sometimes café areas.

## Exam / Assessment

### **I live in Algeria; do I need to sit the exams in the British council in my country?**

When registering online for exams, students are required to specify which exam location suits them best from a dropdown list. Please note that we cannot guarantee every student's exact location, but we have over 450 exam centres around the world so students often don't have to travel far.

### **Will exams be organised in special centres worldwide, not online?**

Exams are taken in exam centres and are written exams, not online. They are taken under exam conditions with an invigilator present.

### **Do we have to visit exam centres 8 times or can exams be combined and we can visit centre 4 times?**

Each exam is taken separately so you should expect to have to sit 8 exams. They cannot be combined.

### **How much is fee for the exam?**

Exam fees are incorporated in the cost of the course.

### **Do students have to pay to sit re-assessments?**

Currently, HW Online students are not required to make payment for any re-assessments. For information, Postgraduate students are permitted one re-assessment per course, in a maximum of three courses.

### **Is there simply one exam per module then? Otherwise is there anywhere we can find out the details of all past exams, essays etc. required?**

Yes there is one exam per module / course. Previous exam questions are available to view on Vision (Virtual Learning Environment).

### **Can we pick where to sit our exams?**

Yes. We ask students what their preferred location is when they register for exams (through completing an exam application form). We then arrange exams as close to that location as we can.

### **Is there an area on your website (or email contact) where I would be able to check available exam locations or is it dealt with on a case-by-case basis?**

Unfortunately there is nothing on the website but provided you select a major city then there should be an exam venue to suit you. When registering online for exams, students are required to specify which exam location suits them best from a dropdown list. Please note that we cannot guarantee every student's exact location, but we have over 450 exam centres around the world so students often don't have to travel far.