



Retention of Taught Course Assessed Material and Research Theses Policy Document

Background

The following policy on the retention of taught course assessed material and research theses was passed by the Learning and Teaching Committee on 14th April 2005 and revised by the Quality Enhancement Committee on 20th September 2006.

1. Retention of Research Theses (Ph.D. and Masters by Research)

Current arrangements for Higher Degrees by Research as described in the Calendar (Rules VI) stand with some clarifications:

- Departments retaining copies of theses for reference purposes may dispose of them when no longer required as copies deposited in the library will be retained permanently.
- Any external requests for access to Theses (Under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 or otherwise) should be directed to the library and not facilitated by departments.
- Where students seek to restrict access to their theses for a defined period they need to be made aware that it may, nonetheless, be released under the FoISA if no exemption applies.

2. Retention of Taught Course Assessment Material

Taught course assessment materials account for a significant volume of the records held in academic departments. Retention of such beyond their immediate administrative use places a burden on departments, both in terms of storage space and in responding to information requests under the FoISA and Data Protection Act 1998. The retention period for such records is detailed below:

RECORD TYPE	RECORD DESCRIPTION	RETENTION	REASON	NOTES
Taught Course Assessment Materials	Exam scripts, projects, essays, assignments, dissertations and any other assessed work.	Decision of Module Board of Examiners at which the final module grade has been determined + 4 months (Destroy)	Appeal period of 1 month in first instance.	Assessment materials will need to be retained longer if they form part of an appeal. If any professional or statutory bodies require the retention of assessed work for longer, this should be complied with.

Instances where such materials may need to be retained longer than the stated 4 months are indicated in the notes column. Retention beyond this should only be in exceptional circumstances.

3. Retention of Taught Undergraduate and Postgraduate Dissertations

Whilst the above retention period for taught course assessment material applies equally to dissertations, it is recognised that departments will require some dissertations to be retained longer for reference purposes. The following approach should be followed:

- Departments wishing to retain a selection of dissertations of high academic quality beyond the 4 month period should deposit them in the Library where they can be catalogued and made accessible both to members of the University and external enquirers under existing arrangements. For instance, dissertations of particular merit may be selected as exemplars for successive cohorts of students, or on account of their contributions to knowledge in their particular subject fields. The Library would also house any which are required to be retained by a professional body.
- Retained dissertations will be reviewed every four years, in consultation with departments to assess their continuing reference value, and will be disposed of when no longer required.

PROCESS

- Departments are asked to contact the relevant Senior Subject Librarian before depositing new dissertations.
- The Library will review with Departments the existing collection of dissertations, by sending out lists of titles which are more than four years old. This exercise will take place each summer. The Library will retain only titles which are flagged by academic staff as being of particular reference value, or which are required to be retained by a professional body.
- Students need to be informed that their dissertations may be retained in this manner and given the opportunity to object. Suitable wording should be included in departmental student handbooks. The following is suggested:

“Students should be aware that a copy of their taught course dissertation may be selected by the department for retention in the University Library for a period where it will be accessible both to members of the University and external enquirers through Library access provisions. If you do not wish your dissertation to be retained for this purpose please inform the department upon submission.”

Further Information

For further advice, guidance or clarification on any of the above please contact the Policy, Planning & Governance: x6670.

Revised September 2006