

# Academic Quality and Standards Handbook

## Section 5: Assessment and Feedback

2024-25

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# **1 INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 Purpose and Aims**

1.1.1 This section describes:

- (a) How the University manages assessment and gives feedback to students;
- (b) How the examination process is secured;
- (c) How student achievement is reported and ratified at Assessment Boards.

1.1.2 The aim of the assessment process is to ensure that the University meets the obligations and expectations of its staff, students and regulators by:

1.1.3 Using processes to ensure that qualifications are awarded to those students who meet specified learning outcomes that are consistent with the relevant national qualifications descriptors, and that standards remain consistent over time.

1.1.4 Ensuring that assessments measure the extent to which students achieve the learning outcomes both at and beyond the threshold levels specified in national qualifications descriptors.

- (a) Using internal and external expertise to ensure that learning outcomes and assessments are consistent with the requirements of national qualification frameworks and that assessment measures the learning outcomes for courses.
- (b) Operating processes for assessment and classification that ensure student achievement is measured reliably, fairly and transparently.
- (c) Ensuring that course design supports the constructive alignment of curricula, learning outcomes and assessment, that assessment is valid and supports students' learning, and that feedback is timely, constructive and purposeful.
- (d) Ensuring that assessment is inclusive and equitable, and appropriately tailored to different environments.
- (e) Ensuring that assessment enables students to demonstrate to employers their real-world skills they have developed.
- (f) Ensuring that any partner involved in design or delivery of assessment complies with UWL regulations and standards.

## **1.2 Regulatory Framework**

- 1.2.1 To meet its responsibilities, UWL's Quality and Standards Framework must comply with the OfS Conditions B of registration, irrespective of where or how courses are delivered (including through an academic partnership). The University also seeks to meet the Sector-Agreed Principles and Key Practices of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Quality Code for Higher Education. This is detailed further in Section 1 (Quality and Standards Framework).

## **1.3 Apprenticeships: End Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO)**

- 1.3.1 Apprenticeships must not be delivered unless an EPAO is in place.
- 1.3.2 However, at the point of approval of an apprenticeship, a letter to show that an organisation is intending to be an EPAO for the relevant standard is acceptable.
- 1.3.3 In the case of Integrated Degree Apprenticeships, the EPAO is the University, and the University will appoint approved independent assessors.

## **1.4 Responsibilities**

- 1.4.1 Academic Board has the responsibility and authority to set, maintain and assure academic standards. Assessment Boards operate under the delegated authority of the Academic Board and are responsible for ratification of all assessment outcomes and for ensuring external approval of outcomes and processes of assessment.
- 1.4.2 Course Quality and Approval Sub-Committee (CQASC) is a sub-committee of Academic Quality and Standards Committee and has responsibility for the assurance of high-quality of course design including the assessment strategy and methodology. The Committee has delegated responsibility for the final approval and re-approval of courses and modules of the University.
- 1.4.3 School and College Quality Committees are sub-committees of AQSC and have the responsibility for assuring oversight of proposals for both minor and major amendments to courses and modules, to help assure high-quality course design including the assessment and feedback strategy and methodology.
- 1.4.4 Quality Committees may decide to add a Curriculum Amendment Quality Review Sub-Group to support its oversight of major amendments which would add flexibility to the timing and constituency of those scrutinising these amendments. These Sub-Groups are designed to help assure high-quality course design including the assessment and feedback strategy and methodology. The Academic Quality Lead is responsible for providing leadership and operational co-ordination at a School and College level to assure the standards and quality of University courses.
- 1.4.5 A Course Leader – identified for each course by the relevant School/College – is responsible for ensuring that the module assessments meet the module and course learning outcomes, that the overall balance, load and effectiveness of assessment is maintained and effective feedback is provided at appropriate times. The Course Leader is responsible for ensuring that any proposed amendments to assessment are carefully considered, including in relation to any courses delivered with Academic Partners, with appropriate externality prior to consideration for approval via the Section 4 (Course Amendments) process.
- 1.4.6 The Head of Subject (or equivalent) is responsible for ensuring that all courses and modules which contribute to the final award have an External Examiner appointed to them and that assessment briefs and examination papers are reviewed and approved by External Examiners.
- 1.4.7 The Head of Subject (or equivalent) is responsible for ensuring that courses are brought to a scheduled Module Assessment Board and an Award and Progression Board for consideration and ratification of assessment outcomes.

## 1.5 Interpretation

- 1.5.1 This Section refers to named positions (e.g. Academic Quality Lead, Dean or Director Head of School or College) in order to detail required activities, relation to regulations or authorisations.
- 1.5.2 Where a School or College does not have the identified position, an alternative must be identified, with comparable seniority and remit, such that all required activities or authorisations are undertaken.

## 1.6 Further Guidance

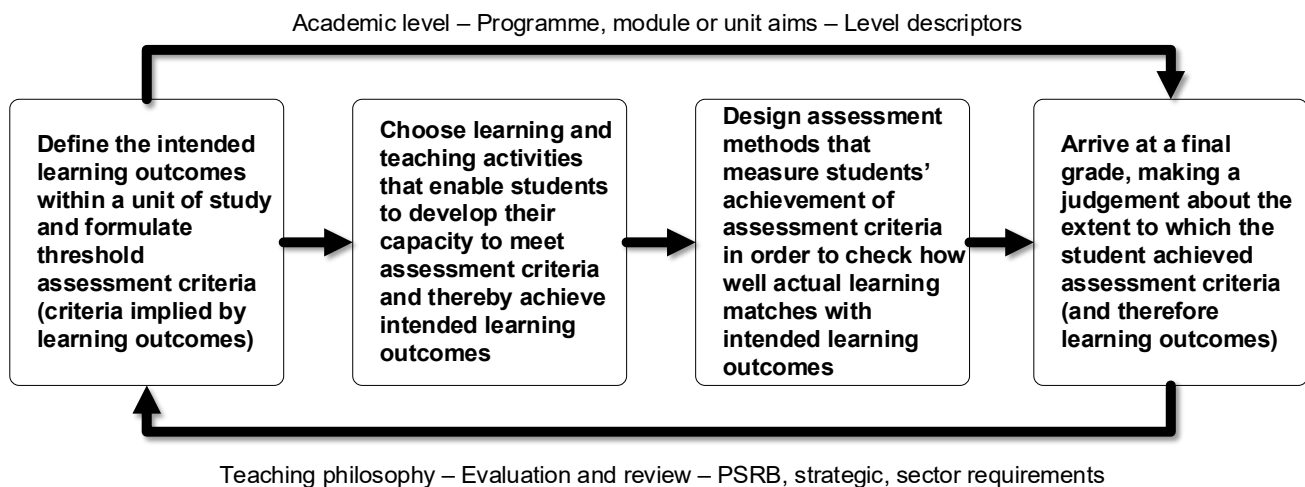
- 1.6.1 For further guidance colleagues should contact the Academic Quality and Standards Office (e.g. for enquiries related to assessment during course development) at [quality@uwl.ac.uk](mailto:quality@uwl.ac.uk) or on 020 8231 2997; Centre for Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (CELT) for enquiries related to assessment design and practice at [celt@uwl.ac.uk](mailto:celt@uwl.ac.uk); the Academic Registry for enquiries related to assessment boards or the Academic Regulations.
- 1.6.2 Where an assessment query involves an academic partnership with an external institution, the School/College should contact the Academic Developer (Academic Partners) at [celt@uwl.ac.uk](mailto:celt@uwl.ac.uk).

## 2 ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

### 2.1 Assessment: Guiding Principles

- 2.1.1 The following principles draw on the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Quality Code advice and guidance on assessment ([www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/advice-and-guidance](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/advice-and-guidance)) and should be reflected in all assessment practice:
- 2.1.2 **Assessment methods and criteria are aligned to learning outcomes and teaching activities:** in designing assessment, course teams use constructive alignment to ensure that learning outcomes, teaching and learning strategies and assessment methods operate in clear alignment with each other. Assessment design should develop progressively across stages and levels of study.

**Figure 1: The four major steps to constructive alignment**



- 2.1.3 **Assessment is reliable, consistent, fair and valid:** assessment processes are objective and repeatable over time. Assessment activities have clearly articulated assessment criteria and weightings. Assessment criteria facilitate reasonable parity between the judgements of different assessors. Grading and moderation procedures are clearly articulated and consistently operated.
- 2.1.4 **Assessment design is approached holistically:** assessment is designed ‘top down’, beginning with the award, then going down into module level so that it is clear how module learning outcomes contribute to the achievement of course learning outcomes. Variety in assessment provides students with opportunities to develop a range of skills and also supports students with a diverse range of needs and abilities.
- 2.1.5 **Assessment is inclusive and equitable:** every student has an opportunity to demonstrate their achievement through assessment, with no group or individual disadvantaged. Assessment methods are designed to be inclusive and flexible enough to enable all students to engage in them, minimising the need for reasonable adjustments or alternative assessment wherever possible. to create alternative assessments to address individual student needs.
- 2.1.6 **Assessment is explicit and transparent:** Students are clearly informed of the purpose and requirements of assessment tasks. Students are supported to understand and interpret learning outcomes, assessment criteria and grading guidelines.
- 2.1.7 **Assessment and feedback are purposeful:** assessment is fit for purpose and methods are valid in measuring achievement against learning outcomes. Feedback explicitly aligns with the stated learning outcomes. Assessment and feedback enables students to benchmark their current level of knowledge or skills, identify areas for improvement and make judgements about their overall progress. Feedback reflects attainment relevant to learning outcomes, assessment and grading criteria, and identifies areas and methods for development.

- 2.1.8 **Assessment and feedback is timely:** assessment tasks and feedback are timed to promote student learning and facilitate improvement. Students are given sufficient opportunity to undertake learning that builds their capacity for assessment. Course assessment calendars are designed to avoid over-burdening students. Feedback is provided in time to enable students to enhance their performance in subsequent assessment tasks.
- 2.1.9 **Assessment is efficient and manageable:** the scheduling of assignments and the amount of assessed work provides a reliable and valid profile of achievement without overloading students or staff. Assessment requirements take into account the notional learning hours for any given unit of study.
- 2.1.10 **Students are supported and prepared for assessment and encourages assessment literacy:** students are given opportunities to develop assessment literacy, practise subject-related skills and knowledge, engage with content and develop the competencies required to meet learning outcomes.
- 2.1.11 **Assessment designed to promote academic integrity** assessment is designed to promote and safeguard academic integrity, minimising opportunities for students to commit academic misconduct, including plagiarism. Policies and procedures relevant to academic integrity are clear, accessible and actively promoted. Information on whether and how artificial intelligence can be used in assessment should be clear.

## 2.2 Course Design: Assessment

- 2.2.1 In approving a course, the authorising body and individuals responsible should certify that the approved qualification and curriculum:
- (a) Clearly articulates outcomes – for each enrollable and exit qualification – which meet the threshold standards set by the UK Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.
  - (b) Clearly articulates how the course enables students to achieve standards beyond the threshold level in line with similar qualifications (for example, grading guidelines).
  - (c) Clearly articulates how the assessment tasks on the course provide valid opportunities for students to achieve the learning outcomes at course and module level, are inclusive and content specific.
  - (d) Clearly articulates how the outcomes of the course – both at threshold standard and above – will be reliably assessed and student achievements recognised.
  - (e) Clearly articulates how all students are supported in terms of the assessments – regardless of background and study choice – to achieve the outcomes at threshold standard or above.
  - (f) Supports the development of academic competencies and good practice.



2.2.2 For further guidance on course approval see Academic Quality and Standards Handbook Section 3 (Course Approval and Re-approval).

### 2.3 Purposes of Assessment

2.3.1 Assessment is a fundamental aspect of the student learning experience. Engagement in assessment activities and interaction with staff and peers enables learning, both as part of the task and through review of their performance. It is a vehicle for obtaining feedback. Ultimately it determines whether each student has achieved their course's learning outcomes and allows the awarding body to ensure that appropriate standards are being applied rigorously. Deliberate, systematic quality assurance ensures that assessment processes, standards and any other criteria are applied consistently and equitably, with reliability, validity and fairness (QAA Quality Code, Nov 2018).

2.3.2 Please refer also to Section 7 of this document, Assessment and Feedback policy

2.3.3 Further guidance and advice on assessment can be sought from the CELT at [celt@uwl.ac.uk](mailto:celt@uwl.ac.uk).

### 2.4 Purposes of Feedback

2.4.1 Feedback (sometimes described as feedforward) is an essential element of assessment. It gives students information about their attainment relative to module and course learning outcomes, thereby enabling them to reflect on their learning, identify areas for improvement and understand how to progress and develop.

2.4.2 Students must receive feedback on all formative and summative assessments

2.4.3 Justification of grade is one element of feedback, usually given after a summative assessment. It explains to students why they achieved a particular mark, making direct and specific reference to learning outcomes, assessment criteria, and to grading guidelines.

2.4.4 Justification of grade must be communicated to students within 15 working days of assignment submission.

### 2.5 Types of Assessment

2.5.1 Assessment is typically understood to be diagnostic, formative or summative, informal or formal.

2.5.2 Commonly held understandings of these terms are that:

- (a) **Diagnostic assessment** provides an indicator of a student's aptitude and preparedness for a course of study and identifies possible learning needs.
- (b) **Formative assessment** is assessment with a developmental purpose, designed to help learners learn more effectively by giving them feedback on their performance and how it can be improved and/or maintained. Although tutors may choose to give students grades for formative assessments, these do not count towards the final grade for the module.

- (c) **Summative assessment** is used to indicate the extent of a learner's success in meeting the assessment criteria to gauge the intended learning outcomes of a module or course. The marks awarded for summative assessments, count towards the final mark of the module.

2.5.3 No summative assessment type should be used unless a student has had a previous opportunity to experience or practice it, or key aspects of it. These opportunities may be formative.

## 2.6 Types of Assessment for Apprenticeships

2.6.1 All apprentices must undertake an initial assessment of prior learning of their qualifications and experience to establish their starting point. This includes their knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) mapped against the apprenticeship standard that has been selected. There is a University assessment tool designed for every apprenticeship standard which maps against the knowledge, skills and behaviours of that standard.

2.6.2 Additional assessment to meet industry specific needs should be agreed at a local level by the relevant Deans or Directors or Heads of School or College.

2.6.3 Diagnostic assessment for Mathematics and/or English must be carried out for apprentices who do not present the relevant qualifications at enrolment and are therefore deemed to require a Mathematics and/or English Level 2 qualification before the Gateway stage of their apprenticeship.

2.6.4 **Apprenticeship Gateway:** all apprenticeship standards require the apprentice to complete a range of assessed activity to get them to the Gateway stage. This will include specific requirements for each standard:

- (a) Minimum English and Mathematics requirements
- (b) Mandatory qualifications detailed in the occupational standard (e.g. gaining 360 academic credits enables the apprentice to achieve an Honours degree)
- (c) Any requirements or outputs that underpin an assessment method. For example, if a portfolio demonstrating particular aspects of the occupational standard is used to support a presentation in the End Point Assessment (EPA), it should be made clear to the apprentice what this portfolio should contain and that it should be completed prior to the Gateway
- (d) Confirmation that the employer is confident that the apprentice is occupationally competent to, i.e. that they are deemed to be working at or above the level set out in the occupational standard and are ready to undertake the EPA

2.6.5 **End Point Assessment (EPA):** Once the apprentice has met all of the requirements of the Gateway they will then enter the End Point Assessment stage.

2.6.6 The EPA must include at least two different assessment methods and at least one of these must assess the KSBs in the occupational standard synoptically, ie, it should test some knowledge, some skills and some behaviours.

- 2.6.7 The EPA will be assessed by an independent End Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO).
- 2.6.8 In the case of Integrated Degree Apprenticeships, the EPAO is the University and the University will appoint approved assessors.
- 2.6.9 Please refer to the Course Handbook for further details on the End Point Assessment for a given apprenticeship standard.

## 2.7 Assignment Typology

2.7.1 All assessment tasks should fit into one of the assessment types listed in bold. The examples offered in italics are indicative.

- **Written Examination:** *a seen or unseen examination*
- **Oral Examination:** *a discussion with a panel of examiners*
- **Written Assignment:** *e.g. report; essay; short-essay; review; analysis; case study; creative and/or professional brief; dissertation; thesis; literature review; research method essay; research proposal; in-class test; multiple choice questionnaire (MCQ); mathematical/statistical problem; online task; web-based exercise; translation*
- **Oral Assignment:** *individual or group presentation; discussion; defence; pitch; performance; teaching, Viva Voce*
- **Portfolio:** *a series of short written, creative, linguistic or mathematical tasks collected as part of one assignment resulting in a single overall mark*
- **Artefact:** *visual; audio; software; composition; design; culinary; artistic*
- **Practical:** *experiment, clinical, performance-based, educational or hospitality practice-based assignment*

## 2.8 Guidance on Assessment Loads

- 2.8.1 The principles included in this section are provided **for guidance only**, with the aim of facilitating equity of assessment across courses and disciplines.
- 2.8.2 It is important to acknowledge that the progressive demands of assessment across levels may be related more to the quality than to the quantity of student work and those designing assessment may therefore interpret this guidance in accordance with practices and norms specific to their disciplines.
- 2.8.3 It is best practice to include no more than two summative assessment tasks per 20 credits at any level.
- 2.8.4 There is no limit on the number of formative tasks set per module, although course and module designers should pay due attention to notional learning hours.

2.8.5 **Word count and equivalency:** the word limits and timings shown in the table below are for guidance only. The demands of different courses mean that word counts and timings cannot always be precisely calibrated and that it can be difficult to make comparisons between different assessment tasks, for instance, an essay and a performance.

2.8.6 In some cases it may be more appropriate to consider the progressive demands of assessment tasks over stages or levels in terms of their increased intellectual, artistic or technical sophistication rather than their length or volume.

Level	Word limit (total for 20 credit module)	Examinations	In-class test	Portfolios	Presentation / active task
Level 3	500 – 1500	None	Up to 1 hour	<i>Portfolios may contain a range of tasks in different modes. Staff should consider student workload equivalency with written work/ exams with an upper limit of 5000 words.</i>	<i>The range of modes makes this difficult to quantify. Staff should consider student workload equivalency with written work/ exams with an upper limit of 20 minutes for a group presentation</i>
Level 4	1500 – 2500	None	Up to 1 hour		
Level 5	3000	2 hours	1 – 2 hours		
Level 6	3000 – 3500	2 hours	1 – 2 hours		
Level 7	3000 – 4000	2-3 hours	1 – 3 hours		

2.8.7 Written examinations are not permitted for assessment at Level 3. At Level 4, Level 5 and Level 6, examinations may be used where there are PSRB requirements or where a rationale for their inclusion is approved as part of an amendment, re-approval or approval process. Where used, examinations must be balanced against other assessment methods and normally constitute no more than 50% of a module mark (unless required by a PSRB or where a rationale is approved).

2.8.8 **Dissertation** (please refer also to the Academic Quality and Standards Handbook Section 2 (Qualifications and Curriculum Framework))

- (a) A 40 credit level 6 Dissertation or professional project should consist of a written and/or artistic product equivalent to 9,000-10,000 words in total
- (b) A 60 credit Level 7 Dissertation should consist of a written and/or artistic product equivalent to 15,000 words in total

## 2.9 Word/Time limit enforcement guidance

2.9.1 There is a clear pedagogic rationale for having word/time limits in place. Word/time limits can help:

- encourage succinct and clear presentation of work by students;
  - reinforce required professional and academic skills in sticking to advised word/time limits (e.g. for funding applications, Conference presentation slots);
  - ensure equity between all students doing a particular assessment;
  - balance assessment loads across modules;
  - provide a guide to students on the amount of time that they may wish to spend on undertaking an assessment.
- 2.9.2 Enforcement of word/time limits is intended to support students' understanding of these principles. Enforcement of word/time limits is focused on assessment types which support the use and monitoring of word/time limits.
- 2.9.3 Staff within subject areas should decide whether word/time limits are to be enforced and for which assessments.
- 2.9.4 In assessment briefs and module study guides, it should be made clear to students which assessments will have the word/time limit enforced.
- 2.9.5 Guidance should be provided to all students on why word/time limits are used and the academic and professional benefits of being able to produce concise work.
- 2.9.6 Guidance should be provided to all students on where to access additional support on writing skills, including editing work to meet expected word limits.
- 2.9.7 Where word limits are enforced, this will be done by the marker finishing reading at the specified word limit. This would normally include a 10% cut off point, for example if the submission is 3000 words the cut-off point would be at 3300 words. The marks awarded to the piece of work will be based on the content of the submission within the specified word limit.
- 2.9.8 Where work is subject to a set time limit (such as a presentation, video, performance), the marker will finish marking at the specified end point (e.g. 5 minutes). This would normally include a 10% cut off point, for example, if a presentation is allocated 5 minutes, the cut off point would be at 5 minutes and 30 seconds. The marks awarded to the piece of work will be based on the content of the submission within the specified time limit.
- 2.9.9 Where work is being performed/presented live, the student(s) should be encouraged to have a way of tracking the duration of their performance/presentation. In addition, where appropriate/possible, the marker or another member of staff may provide a warning (verbal or otherwise) in advance of the student(s) reaching the final cut off point.

### **3 GRADE CRITERIA**

#### **3.1 Use of Grade Criteria**

- 3.1.1 Grade criteria are general descriptors of typical student performance within a marking band/range of marks for a particular level of course, for example, they describe in general terms what constitutes a mark between 50 and 60 (lower 2<sup>nd</sup> class) for an undergraduate student.
- 3.1.2 They should be used in conjunction with module-specific learning outcomes to inform and guide assessors in assigning marks to assessed student work.
- 3.1.3 They play an important role in ensuring comparability of standards across modules, courses and disciplines within the University.
- 3.1.4 They also help External Examiners to judge the comparability of standards across a given sector.
- 3.1.5 All Schools/Colleges must have grade descriptors, which should be aligned with:
- (a) The University Generic marking scheme provided below
  - (b) The relevant national threshold level descriptors
  - (c) Sector-recognised standards as expressed in subject benchmark statements
  - (d) Other relevant resources such as Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements or apprenticeship standards.
- 3.1.6 Marking schemes must be made available to students and course teams should ensure that students are given time and support to engage with and understand them and the ways they are used to inform markers' judgements.

#### **3.2 Calibration**

- 3.2.1 Schools and Colleges must ensure that all staff involved with assessment are familiar with the grade descriptors in use and participate in regular calibration activities to ensure a shared understanding of terms and standards.
- 3.2.2 Calibration activities could include exercises such as all staff blind marking a single piece of work and then comparing grades and comments. Calibration should address the full range of assessment tasks used within the School or College.

#### **3.3 Pass-Fail Assessments**

- 3.3.1 Where a course or module team wishes to incorporate a pass-fail assessment, care must be taken to ensure that use of the pass-fail will not skew the assessment results and unfairly advantage or disadvantage students.
- 3.3.2 Where an element of assessment is pass-fail, this must not contribute to the overall numerical grade of the module; its only function will be to determine that the module is passed or failed when other element(s) combine to achieve a pass mark. Under

no circumstances may a numerical grade be determined or entered against a pass-fail element. A numerical grade may be produced for the purpose of providing feedback.

- 3.3.3 Where an entire module is graded pass-fail, the module credits will contribute to the credits required to complete the associated Level but this module must not contribute to any numerical calculation of the final classification. A special algorithm may be required and special regulations may need to be approved for any course that incorporates a pass-fail module. Course Leaders and course developers must consult the Academic Quality and Standards Office and Academic Registry for guidance to ensure the course will operate within the Academic Regulations.

### 3.4 University Generic Grade descriptors

- 3.4.1 The tables below outline the advisory Generic Grade Descriptors for undergraduate and taught postgraduate courses which can be used in all subject areas across the University.

#### Generic Grade Descriptors – Undergraduate

%	Descriptor
86 – 100	The standard achieved is exceptional and the work provides clear evidence that the knowledge, understanding and skills are at a level appropriate to the level of study. There is evidence showing that all the learning outcomes appropriate to that level are achieved with many at an exceptional standard.
76 – 85	The standard achieved is outstanding and the work provides clear evidence that the knowledge, understanding and skills are at a level appropriate to the level of study. There is evidence showing that all the learning outcomes appropriate to that level are achieved with many at an outstanding standard.
70 – 75	The standard achieved is excellent and the work provides clear evidence that the knowledge, understanding and skills are at a level appropriate to the level of study. There is evidence showing that all the learning outcomes appropriate to that level are achieved with many at an excellent standard.
65 – 69	The standard achieved is very good and the work provides clear evidence that the knowledge, understanding and skills are at a level appropriate to the level of study. There is evidence showing that all the learning outcomes appropriate to that level are achieved with many at a very good standard
60 – 64	The standard achieved is good and the work provides evidence that the knowledge, understanding and skills are at a level appropriate to the level of study. There is evidence showing that all the learning outcomes appropriate to that level are achieved with many at a good standard

%	Descriptor
55 – 59	The standard achieved is satisfactory and the work provides evidence that the knowledge, understanding and skills are at a level appropriate to the level of study. There is evidence showing that all the learning outcomes appropriate to that level are achieved with many at a satisfactory standard
50 – 54	The standard achieved is acceptable and the work provides evidence that the knowledge, understanding and skills are at a level appropriate to the level of study. There is evidence showing that all the learning outcomes appropriate to that level are achieved mostly at an acceptable standard
45 – 49	The standard achieved is acceptable and the work provides evidence that the knowledge, understanding and skills are at a level appropriate to the level of study. There is evidence showing that all the learning outcomes appropriate to that level are achieved though quite a few are only achieved at a basic standard
40 – 44 (Marginal pass)	The standard achieved is basic and the work provides evidence that the knowledge, understanding and skills are at a level appropriate to the level of study. There is evidence showing that all the learning outcomes appropriate to that level are achieved mostly at a basic standard
35 – 39 (Marginal fail)	The standard achieved is weak and the work provides evidence of insufficient knowledge, understanding and/or skills appropriate to the level of study, although some of the learning outcomes appropriate to that level are achieved
30 – 34	The standard achieved is very weak and the work provides evidence of insufficient knowledge, understanding and/or skills appropriate to the level of study. The evidence shows that some of the learning outcomes appropriate to that level are achieved OR that none is achieved but there is evidence that many of the learning outcomes may be almost achieved.
20 – 29	The standard achieved is unacceptable and the work provides little evidence of the knowledge, understanding and/or skills appropriate to the level of study. The evidence shows that few, if any, of the learning outcomes appropriate to that level are achieved.
10 – 19	The standard achieved is unacceptable and the work provides very little evidence of the knowledge, understanding and/or skills appropriate to the level of study. The evidence shows that very few, if any, of the learning outcomes appropriate to that level are achieved.
0 – 9	The standard achieved is unacceptable and the work provides negligible or no evidence of the knowledge, understanding and/or skills appropriate to the level of study. The evidence fails to show that any of the learning outcomes appropriate to that level are achieved.



## Generic Grade Descriptors – Postgraduate

%	Descriptor
86 - 100	The standard achieved is exceptional and the work provides clear evidence that the knowledge, understanding and skills are at a level appropriate to the level of study. There is evidence showing that all the learning outcomes appropriate to that level are achieved with many at an exceptional standard.
76 - 85	The standard achieved is outstanding and the work provides clear evidence that the knowledge, understanding and skills are at a level appropriate to the level of study. There is evidence showing that all the learning outcomes appropriate to that level are achieved with many at an outstanding standard.
70 - 75	The standard achieved is excellent and the work provides clear evidence that the knowledge, understanding and skills are at a level appropriate to the level of study. There is evidence showing that all the learning outcomes appropriate to that level are achieved with many at an excellent standard.
65 - 69	The standard achieved is very good and the work provides clear evidence that the knowledge, understanding and skills are at a level appropriate to the level of study. There is evidence showing that all the learning outcomes appropriate to that level are achieved with many at a very good standard
60 - 64	The standard achieved is good and the work provides evidence that the knowledge, understanding and skills are at a level appropriate to the level of study. There is evidence showing that all the learning outcomes appropriate to that level are achieved with many at a good standard
55 - 59	The standard achieved is acceptable and the work provides evidence that the knowledge, understanding and skills are at a level appropriate to the level of study. There is evidence showing that all the learning outcomes appropriate to that level are achieved with many at an acceptable standard
50 – 54 (Marginal pass)	The standard achieved is acceptable and the work provides evidence that the knowledge, understanding and skills are at a level appropriate to the level of study. There is evidence showing that all the learning outcomes appropriate to that level are achieved though a few at only a very basic level
45 – 49 (Marginal fail)	The standard achieved is weak and the work provides evidence of insufficient knowledge, understanding and/or skills at a level appropriate to the level of study. There is evidence showing that a majority but not all of the learning outcomes appropriate to that level are achieved

%	Descriptor
40 - 44	The standard achieved is weak and the work provides evidence of insufficient knowledge, understanding and/or skills are at a level appropriate to the level of study. There is evidence showing that several of the learning outcomes appropriate to that level are achieved
35 - 39	The standard achieved is very weak and the work provides evidence of insufficient knowledge, understanding and/or skills appropriate to the level of study, although some of the learning outcomes appropriate to that level are achieved
30 - 34	The standard achieved is very weak and the work provides evidence of insufficient knowledge, understanding and/or skills appropriate to the level of study. The evidence shows that some of the learning outcomes appropriate to that level are achieved OR that none is achieved but there is evidence that many of the learning outcomes may be almost achieved.
25 - 29	The standard achieved is unacceptable and the work provides little evidence of the knowledge, understanding and/or skills appropriate to the level of study. The evidence shows that few, if any, of the learning outcomes appropriate to that level are achieved.
15 - 24	The standard achieved is unacceptable and the work provides very little evidence of the knowledge, understanding and/or skills appropriate to the level of study. The evidence shows that very few, if any, of the learning outcomes appropriate to that level are achieved.
0 - 14	The standard achieved is unacceptable and the work provides negligible or no evidence of the knowledge, understanding and/or skills appropriate to the level of study. The evidence fails to show that any of the learning outcomes appropriate to that level are achieved.

## 4 COURSEWORK SUBMISSION

### 4.1 Online Submission

- 4.1.1 All written coursework must be submitted online, through Turnitin or Blackboard. The submission should be set up to allow students to submit in advance as a formative process prior to making the final, formal submission.
- 4.1.2 As far as possible, arrangements should be made for all other forms of coursework, including portfolios and compositions, to be submitted electronically.

### 4.2 Artefact Submission

- 4.2.1 Where the nature of the coursework is such that online submission is not possible, for example where the coursework is an artefact or artistic output, arrangements

must be made in advance with the School or College for submission to be done in person and evidence of the submission given to the submitting student.

- 4.2.2 Care must be taken to avoid the loss or misplacement of coursework submitted in this way; the module leader is responsible for collecting the work in good time and for its secure retention.

## **5 MARKING AND MODERATION**

### **5.1 Marking**

- 5.1.1 Student work must be marked against learning outcomes and assessment criteria derived from learning outcomes, and with reference to grade descriptors (as described in Part 3 above). It is good practice to develop indicative answers or model answers and provide these to all markers.
- 5.1.2 Wherever possible, module teams should undertake calibration activities prior to the beginning of the summative marking processes, to ensure a shared understanding of terms and standards.
- 5.1.3 Typical practice for module marking is that grades should indicate clearly where a piece of coursework sits within the grade descriptor, i.e. markers should avoid marks at the grade boundaries. This will prevent the need for any grade boundary considerations at element level. However, where a module has more than one element of assessment, this may result in a final grade that sits within a grade boundary. In this case, rounding up or down of grades should not take place and the final module grade must remain within the grade boundary. Boundary considerations must take place only at the point of final classification of the award so as not to skew results.
- 5.1.4 Deans, Directors and Heads of School or College, Academic Quality Leads and Heads of Subject must ensure that all markers clearly understand this practice and that inappropriate grade boundary considerations do not take place. This should be managed through oversight of marking and moderation processes and provision of clear and consistent guidance. Regular training on marking processes should be signposted and provided to academic staff, especially new members of staff.
- 5.1.5 Decisions should be made in advance as to which members of staff will undertake marking responsibilities. A record of the markers involved should be kept and be made available to Assessment Boards on request.
- 5.1.6 **Second marking** – assessment of students' work by two (or more) independent markers as a means of safeguarding or assuring academic standards by controlling for individual bias.
- 5.1.7 For each module, a decision should be made before marking takes place as to the scale of second marking required (full or sampled), whether blind or open second marking is required and whether second marking is independent (also known as double-marking) or check-marking.

- 5.1.8 **Independent second marking (double marking)** means that each marker assigns a mark and the two marks are subsequently reconciled to agree the mark for the assessment.
- 5.1.9 **Blind second marking** requires each marker to assign a mark independently, without being aware of the mark of the other marker. The two marks are subsequently reconciled to agree the mark for the assessment. Open second marking occurs when the second marker is informed of the first marker's marks and comments beforehand and can take these into account.
- 5.1.10 **Check marking** requires the second marker to determine whether the mark given by the first marker is appropriate but without providing a separate mark. The second marker will need to bring any discrepancies in the marking to the attention of the first marker. Check marking will usually only be appropriate for quantitative or multiple-choice assessments in which answers can be scored objectively rather than requiring qualitative judgement on the part of the markers.
- 5.1.11 100% of all final dissertations and final projects should be fully second marked, normally through blind second marking.
- 5.1.12 Second marking may be 'live', i.e. where an assessment is conducted 'live' (e.g. oral examinations, presentations, exhibitions, laboratory work, group work etc.) arrangements should be made for second-marking to take place at the time the assessment is being held. Where this is not possible, alternative arrangements may be considered to enable internal moderation including recording (video or audio).
- 5.1.13 For quantitative or multiple-choice assessments in which answers can be scored objectively rather than requiring qualitative judgement on the part of the markers, check marking may be used whereby the second marker determines whether the mark awarded by the first marker is appropriate, but does not give a separate mark. The second marker confirms the mark if appropriate, and brings it to the attention of the first marker if not.
- 5.1.14 Following the second marking process, the markers should discuss any significant disagreements and resolve them through close reference to the module learning outcomes and/or assessment criteria and grading guidelines.
- 5.1.15 Where first and second markers are unable to reach agreement, a third marker, nominated by the Dean, Director or Head of School or College, may be asked to adjudicate. The third marker will then make a recommendation to the Course Leader or Head of Subject taking into account the views of the first two markers.

## **5.2 Anonymous Marking**

- 5.2.1 Definition: Markers do not know the identity of the student(s) whose work they are marking.
- 5.2.2 Anonymous marking is a means of reducing unconscious bias for or against individual students. It can serve to protect staff from allegations of bias and to increase the confidence of students in the impartiality of the marking system.
- 5.2.3 Wherever possible, student work should be submitted and marked anonymously.

5.2.4 All written examinations must be anonymously marked.

### 5.3 Online Marking

5.3.1 **Definition of online rubric:** An online rubric is a scoring guide used to evaluate the quality of students' work typically using a set of marking criteria and quality definitions for those criteria at particular levels of achievement. Online rubrics are typically presented in a table format and can be developed using BlackBoard or Turnitin assignments.

5.3.2 Wherever possible student work should be marked online using Blackboard or Turnitin and normally using a scoring guide such as a rubric.

5.3.3 Grades and feedback should be returned to students electronically via Blackboard.

### 5.4 Internal Moderation

5.4.1 **Definition:** The process of ensuring that assessment outcome is fair and reliable and that assessment criteria have been applied consistently, normally involving scrutiny of a representative sample.

5.4.2 A sample of all student assessed work that contributes to the final award must be internally moderated.

5.4.3 The minimum internal moderation requirement at all levels for all awards is: 10% of student work for each assessment on any modules that contribute to the final award, or ten pieces of work per assessment (whichever is the greater). The sample should reflect the range of marks across the module and include all borderline fails.

5.4.4 This applies to all modes of assessment that contribute to the final grade of a given module, except dissertations and final projects. This also applies to the first delivery of new modules which don't contribute to the final grade of a course.

5.4.5 Schools and Colleges may choose to internally moderate a larger sample where, for instance, the first marker is new to the University, where the assessment involves group presentations or performances, for modules with an unusual profile of student performance, or for new courses or for large modules with a team of markers.

5.4.6 Samples for moderation should include:

- (a) The assessment(s) marked highest overall
- (b) A selection of passed assessments from each classification band
- (c) Any problematic assessments, particularly where there was wide disagreement among first and second markers.
- (d) All borderline fails.

- 5.4.7 Internal moderation requires checks that marking is comparable across marking pairs or teams or across different module options.
- 5.4.8 Where possible, the internal moderator should be someone who has not taught on the module, but it is understood that this is not always achievable.
- 5.4.9 It is expected that inconsistencies and variations between markers will occur. However, the mark awarded by the original marker(s) should be recorded as the final mark unless moderation highlights a pattern of significant discrepancies between the marker(s) and the moderator.
- 5.4.10 The internal moderator's role is to assure standards and confirm that internal /procedures have been followed. Their concern is with the overall marking pattern for the module, as illustrated by the sample of work, rather than with individual marks.
- 5.4.11 Therefore, the internal moderator must not argue for changes to individual marks but could comment, for instance, that there is a lack of consistency in application of assessment criteria by markers (individual or working as pairs or in a team) or that the marking across different optional modules results in discrepancies in student performance.
- 5.4.12 Internal moderators must assure themselves that no inappropriate grade boundary considerations have taken place.
- 5.4.13 Where there is disagreement in terms of the general consistency of marking, the marker(s) and internal moderator can negotiate to adjust the marks accordingly for **all** students, not just those in the sample.
- 5.4.14 A record of the moderation process must be made and submitted to the External Examiner along with the sample of student work for external moderation. This record should make clear the type of moderation carried out and the original and agreed marks. Templates for recording the moderation process are available from the Academic Quality and Standards Office.

## **5.5 External Moderation**

- 5.5.1 This section refers to the role of the External Examiner. Please see Section 7 of the AQS Handbook, External Examining, for full details.
- 5.5.2 The External Examiner is an impartial and independent expert responsible for ensuring the standards of University awards and the reliability of student achievement in relation to those standards.
- 5.5.3 A sample of all students' assessed work that contributes to the final award must be submitted to the External Examiner for external moderation. This is normally the same sample that has been internally moderated (see 4.4 above), and must be accompanied by the record of internal moderation. This also applies to the first delivery of new modules which don't contribute to the final grade of a course.
- 5.5.4 However, the External Examiner has the right to see all assessed work in order to select an appropriate sample for moderation and/or audit against marking

schemes/model answers/outline solutions. Detailed arrangements for selection shall be agreed with the External Examiner in advance.

- 5.5.5 An External Examiner may be invited to observe assessments carried out 'live' (e.g. oral examinations, presentations, laboratory work), where the first and second marking will also be carried out at the same time.
- 5.5.6 The External Examiner has the right to see any worked scripts and other assessed assignments, including coursework, projects, dissertations which contribute to the module mark. External Examiners shall have discretion to sample material which will allow them to render a judgement as to the:
- (a) Overall suitability of the assessment methods in practice
  - (b) Coherence of the assessment strategy
  - (c) Reliability of internal marking
- 5.5.7 The External Examiner may conduct viva voce examinations in such exceptional cases as shall be determined by the Dean, Director or Head of School or College in consultation with the External Examiner.

## **6 EXAMINATION PROCESS**

### **6.1 Written Examinations**

- 6.1.1 Written Examinations are not permitted for assessment at Level 3 or Level 4. At Level 5 and Level 6, examinations may be used where there are PSRB requirements or where a rationale for their inclusion is approved as part of an amendment, re-approval or approval process. Where used, examinations must be balanced against other assessment methods and normally constitute no more than 50% of a module mark (unless required by a PSRB or where a rationale is approved).
- 6.1.2 Written examination durations are either two hours and ten minutes or three hours and ten minutes. The ten minutes is scheduled reading time and must be included. No other durations are available unless there is a specific PSRB requirement; this must be discussed and approved in the course and module approval process, in conjunction with the Assistant Registrar (Conferments, Awards and Examinations). Clear information on the activities permitted during the reading time should be supplied with the examination paper.
- 6.1.3 Written exams normally take place in the exam periods set out in the academic calendar.
- 6.1.4 Exam-style assessments which are shorter than 2 hours are normally referred to as 'in-class tests' and will be administered by the School/College rather than the Exams team. These do not need to take place during the exam periods as set out in the academic calendar.

- 6.1.5 A first sit, resit and spare examination paper and accompanying marking rubrics or guidance must be prepared for each examination session. Where the resit or spare papers are not subsequently used (that is, there are no resitting students) these may be used for the next examination session.
- 6.1.6 Examination question papers must be produced on the standard University question paper proforma supplied by the Examinations Office.
- 6.1.7 All examination question papers and marking rubrics must be approved by the External Examiner and submitted to the Examinations Office when approved.
- 6.1.8 Answers to the examination questions or any marking guidance must not be attached to the main question paper.
- 6.1.9 Seen examination papers, once approved, should be made available to all students in advance of the examination at the same time, via an accessible means.
- 6.1.10 The examination paper cover sheet must clearly indicate if any books, calculators, materials, documents, formulae etc are to be allowed in the examination room.

## **7 ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK POLICY**

### **7.1 Vision**

To be sector leading in student satisfaction for assessment and feedback

### **7.2 Mission**

To inspire our students to become innovative and creative professionals connecting them to exciting and rewarding careers.

### **7.3 Values**

Accessible, Affordable, Diverse, Transparent, Accountable

### **7.4 Stakeholders**

#### **7.4.1 Our students can expect:**

- Assessment practices that fairly but rigorously allow students to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Assessments which will enable them to demonstrate to employers the real world skills they have developed.
- Timely and effective feedback that enables students, through reflection and application to enhance their assessment performance
- Opportunities for relevant, co & extra curricula learning which enhance their engagement, personal confidence & employability.



#### 7.4.2 Our staff can expect:

- Support and guidance in designing and redesigning programmes of study which incorporate assessment FOR learning.
- Opportunities to develop their professional practice in relation to feedback and feedforward to enhance student attainment and retention
- Advice and guidance on how to support student understanding of assessment and to provide clear and accessible assessment criteria

#### 7.4.3 Our partners can expect where relevant:

- Support and (where necessary) development in enhancing their assessment and feedback practices informed by this policy

#### 7.4.4 Our employers can expect:

- Graduates who have demonstrated their academic achievements through authentic, real world assessments, informed by developmental feedback.

### 7.5 Aims

#### 7.5.1 Assessment

- **Authentic assessment:** all assessments should be authentic and explicitly related to the world of work.
- **Formative assessment:** all students must have opportunities to submit work for feedback and feedforward only, to acclimatise them to what 'good' looks like in Higher Education.
- **Synoptic assessments:** where possible synoptic assessments (those covering more than one topic/module) should be used to demonstrate course learning outcomes at the appropriate level.
- **Timing of assessments:** all courses should map assessment points to avoid assessment overload at any one time and to provide early indications of progress.
- **Uncoupling assessment:** All module, level and course learning outcomes need to be assessed, but not repeatedly. Where possible synoptic assessment should be used aimed at course learning outcomes across a number of module.

#### 7.5.2 Feedback

- **Developmental Feedback (Feedforward):** this should be provided on all assessment and should inform subsequent substantive assessments. This type of feedback addresses skills (writing, argumentation, critical thinking) and demonstration and use of knowledge, rather than criticising explicit information.

- **Consistent Feedback:** provided through the use of rubrics so that students understand how marks are apportioned and what is expected of them.
- **Explicit Feedback:** to ensure students understand clearly when they are being given feedback and how to make use of it for future assignments.
- **Timing:** All feedback to be supplied within 15 working days of submission

### 7.5.3 Impact

- **Improved student satisfaction:** increased NSS/MEQ assessment and feedback scores
- **Improved learning gain:** assessment design drives student learning and feedback informs development.
- **Employability:** Assessment and feedback lead to improvement of general and specific skills desired by employers.

## 7.6 Enablers

### 7.6.1 Processes

- **Self-assessment:** Submission pro-forma to include student coursework checklist which also allows them to identify areas where they would welcome feedback on presentation, content and knowledge.
- **Formative feedback:** Provision of early formative feedback between weeks 2-4 to give an early indication of progress and retention. A draft of all summative assessments to be given formative feedforward (i.e. advice and guidance on how to develop their knowledge and skills which is applicable to any type of assessment. All courses should include regular opportunities for students to test their progress through in class exercises (e.g. using Poll everywhere) or online mini-tests, MCQs.
- **Student engagement:** Assessment should drive learning, thus all assessment artefacts should be introduced in class, assessment criteria and learning outcomes discussed, and opportunity for clarification be provided to ensure students understand what is expected.
- **Flexible assessment and Reassessment:** the approach to assessment should result in a 'portfolio style' of assessment encouraging learning through formative assessment and reducing the need for capping and reassessment

### 7.6.2 Assessment and Feedback Methods

- **Examinations:** May not be used for L3 or 4. At L5 & 6 examinations may be used where there are PSRB requirements or a rationale for their use is approved. Where used they must be balanced against other assessment methods and normally will constitute no more than 50% of a module grade (unless required by a PSRB or a rationale for this is approved)

- **In class exercises:** Should be varied (BB quizzes, practicals, presentations), should not constitute more than 10% of the final module grade. At L5 & 6 more focus should be on the submission of a substantive assessment for formative feedback (e.g. developmental feedback on a thesis or capstone project).
- **Feedback:** should be provided in a variety of ways to suit the type of assessment activity. These include but are not limited to podcasts, video, annotated work, group feedback, face to face. The emphasis should be on development and its use in enhancing future assessment activities and so should not emphasise accuracy of content but quality of knowledge and skills.

### 7.6.3 Quality Assurance and Enhancement

- **New course validation:** will ensure curriculum design incorporates this policy
- **Curriculum review:** will include the need to provide evidence of how this policy has been implemented in modules and courses
- **Staff Development:** Staff development will be provided to help course teams consider assessment and feedback mapping, weighting and design.

## 7.7 Mitigation of potential risks

### 7.7.1 Academic

- **Inclusivity:** assessment practices need to be fit for all students.  
*Mitigation: Use of inclusive practice frameworks when modules and courses are validated/reviewed*
- **Timing:** Feedback is only effective if provided in a timely way so that students can use it to improve their academic performance  
*Mitigation: Requirement for all feedback to be supplied within 15 working days of submission, monitored by course teams and School committees*
- **Over assessment:** Potential for perception of over assessment.  
*Mitigation: Ensure all students understand the role of assessment in driving learning and ensure assessment maps are published at the start of the year*

### 7.7.2 Personnel

- **Perception of increased workload:** the necessity for formative assessment suggests a doubling of assessment practices  
*Mitigation: ensure assessment regimes include technology-assisted assessment, reduces number of artefacts required and makes use of synoptic assessment to encourage cross-module connections and course integration*

- **Staff development:** A lack of experience in delivering alternative assessments for learning leads to lack of implementation of policy.

***Mitigation:** Provision of a range of staff development opportunities both as CPD and through validation/review events.*

- **Authentic assessment:** there may be a reliance on employers to provide 'live projects' to ensure authenticity.

***Mitigation:** Develop a 'live projects' data base with current contacts as a resource for assessment.*

### 7.7.3 Financial

- **Improved retention:** Assessment for learning identifies students at risk of failing allowing interventions to support their retention.
- **Reduced cost of assessment:** Loss of examinations at L3 and L4 and reduced examination at L5 and L6 means far less expenditure on examination particularly for those with disabilities.
- **Increased Staff Development needs:** The need to raise staff awareness about alternative methods of assessment and developing their technology skills.

***Mitigation:** Appoint curriculum & assessment academic development specialists*