

ASSESSMENT POLICY



1. Introduction: the purpose of assessment

The Assessment Policy describes any processes that appraise an individual's knowledge, understanding, abilities or skills. There are many different forms of assessment, serving a variety of purposes. These include:

- promoting student learning by providing the student with feedback, normally to help improve his/her performance.
- evaluating student knowledge, understanding, abilities, skills or competencies.
- providing a mark or grade that enables a student's performance to be established and may also be used to make progress decisions.
- enabling the public (including employers) and higher education providers, to know that an individual has attained an appropriate level of achievement that reflects the academic standards set by the awarding institution, including the frameworks for higher education qualifications.

2. General principles of assessment

- *Assessment will be reliable*

Reliability refers to the need for assessment to be accurate and repeatable. This requires clear and consistent processes for the setting, marking, grading and moderation of assignments.

- *Assessment will be valid*

Validity ensures that assessment tasks and associated criteria will effectively measure student attainment of the intended learning outcomes.

- *Information about assessment will be explicit and accessible*

Clear, accurate, consistent, and timely information on assessment tasks and procedures will be made available to students, staff and examiners.

- ***Inclusive and equitable assessment***

The Institute is committed to the provision of an environment which encourages and properly supports a diverse learning community.

The Institute will continue to work towards ensuring that assessment tasks and procedures are designed to be inclusive and do not disadvantage any group or individual.

- ***Assessment will address all the programme/level aims and outcomes***

Assessment tasks will primarily reflect the nature of the discipline or subject but will also ensure that students have the opportunity to develop a range of generic skills and capabilities.

- ***The amount of assessed work required will be manageable***

The scheduling of assignments and the amount of assessed work required will provide a reliable and valid profile of achievement without overloading staff or students.

- ***Feedback will be an integral part of the assessment process***

Students are entitled to feedback on all (submitted) assessment tasks. The nature, extent, and timing of feedback for each assessment task should be clear to students in advance. The Institute has developed a set of 7 Feedback Principles (see Appendix A).

3. Regulatory requirements

- ***Fulfilment of programme outcomes***

The purpose of assessment is to enable students to demonstrate that they have fulfilled the outcomes of the programme of study and that they have achieved the standard required.

- ***Confirmation of standard***

Assessment should reflect the achievement of the individual student in fulfilling the programme outcomes. It should, therefore, be carried out by competent and impartial examiners, using methods which enable them to assess students fairly.

- ***Examiners' judgement***

Students' work will be marked in accordance with the published Generic Assessment Criteria (see Appendix B).

- ***Assessment and formative feedback***

The study of all courses will include both assessment and formative feedback. An assessment may also provide the necessary formative function if the student receives detailed feedback normally no later than 20 working days (excluding days on which the Institute is officially closed) after submission and at least 10 working days prior to the deadline for any end of year/teaching block assessment.

As appropriate, students will receive purposeful and systematic feedback on their learning and progress through participation in other activities that fulfil a formative function (for example, seminar presentations). Such feedback may be provided in a variety of forms, including oral, written, and electronic formats to individuals or to groups of students.

- ***Annual assessment schedule***

The Student Office will publish an annual assessment schedule, which will include the deadlines for:

- Publication of examination timetable to students.
- Publication of results to students.

4. Moderation of assignment briefs and examination papers

The Dean has overall responsibility for overseeing the internal moderation of assignment briefs and examination papers for courses at all levels of study.

The course handbooks made available to students must include outline assessment briefs including the assessment criteria, and both hand-in and return dates. Arrangements for the submission of coursework shall be detailed in the course handbook made available to students.

The Institute will ensure that information on the date, time and location of all examinations is published in good time. Students are responsible for making themselves aware of the date, time, and venue for all examinations that they are required to take and for presenting themselves at the examination room in good time before the examination is due to begin.

5. Moderation of assessment results

5.1 Introduction

Internal moderation is a process separate from that of marking and provides assurance that assessment criteria have been applied appropriately, reflecting the shared understanding of the markers.

Second marking is an aspect of examining and assessment which is important for a number of reasons. It is one of the means by which the Institute seeks to ensure that students are assessed accurately, fairly and with only those aspects of subjectivity which are academically justifiable.

The Institute has a policy of refusal to hear appeals from students against the marks awarded to students as these questions the academic judgment of examiners, although the Institute will hear appeals against failures in process. This is an essential protection of an important part of academic freedom but

does depend on the integrity and efficiency of the assessment processes which are used.

5.2 Process

Moderation of course results involve marking and second marking by Associate Professors. Head Professors are responsible for ensuring that this takes place.

Associate Professors are responsible for ensuring that students have been fairly assessed in accordance with the course assessment criteria and for maintaining accurate records of students' marks. Where two or more staff are involved in the assessment of a course, the Head Professor is responsible for moderating marks, entering those results into the Student Record, and checking them.

All final year undergraduate dissertations must be second marked for verification purposes. The second marker will review all work already first marked, with annotations and/or marks still attached from the first marker in order to verify overall standards. Verification means that the marks awarded by the first marker are scrutinised in order to verify that they are fair and consistent with the marking scheme for the assessment.

The sample for verification second marking is at least ten per cent of the scripts. Where the number of scripts is less than ten, then the marking sample should be set at 50%.

Where there are significant discrepancies between the first marker and second verification marker (either within classification boundaries or at a classification borderline), and this discrepancy cannot be resolved between the two markers, this should be reported to the Dean to take appropriate action, which might include:

- Requiring the first marker to review all assessment marks for the module in the light of the second marker's comments.
- Asking a third marker to mark the same sample of work.
- Requiring that all work in a particular class be re-marked.

- Requiring that all work for the course be re-marked.

It must be noted that any amendment to the marks of the sample as a result of the internal moderation process must be applied to the rest of the cohort in order to ensure equity and consistency.

In those cases where the overall course mark is at the borderline of pass/fail, the Head Professor must review the mark in advance of the moderation process.

6. Coursework feedback

6.1 Background, purpose, and scope

The Institute should provide feedback on assessment, which is timely, constructive, and developmental.

The aim is to ensure that there is a consistent approach to giving feedback to students throughout the Institute and to make students aware of the processes which staff are required to follow in order to provide effective feedback to support continual learning.

These arrangements apply to all taught undergraduate and postgraduate Institute courses, irrespective of the length or mode of delivery.

6.2 Key principles

Feedback is an important and integral part of the ongoing student learning process. Although feedback is given in relation to an assessed task, it is a key mechanism which is used to inform future learning and to motivate students to continue learning. To be meaningful, feedback is:

- Provided in a timescale which can inform subsequent assessments.
- Closely linked to the specified learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

- Used to identify areas for improvement.
- Provided in a format which is appropriate for the assessment and in line with discipline specific pedagogies.

At the start of each course, and then periodically thereafter, students should be reminded about the importance of feedback to their learning. As part of the annual monitoring process, the views of students on the methods, content and timing of feedback are gathered. These views are considered, and, wherever possible, used to further inform the feedback regime in each area.

Guidance on providing high quality feedback to students is provided through the 7 Feedback Principles (Appendix A).

6.3 Definitions

Feedback refers to any comments (both written and verbal) on an assigned task.

Feedback does not contribute to a formalised, recorded mark and is normally used as an ongoing mechanism to enhance the development and progress of students. Examples of the way in which formative feedback might be given are:

- Written feedback.
- Oral feedback in class.
- Peer feedback.
- Self-assessment.

6.4 Content of feedback

Whilst accepting that each subject gives feedback in a way that is appropriate for their area, the following precepts are expected to be observed by all staff who provide feedback relating to assessment:

- Feedback is sufficiently detailed to inform future learning and development.

- Feedback must directly relate to the intended learning outcomes for a course so that the student can be given confirmation as to whether or not each one of these has been met.
- Wherever possible, feedback includes information about the positive aspects of students' work, as well as the areas for development.

6.5 Timing of feedback

Students will normally receive feedback on all their assessments within 20 working days following the date of submission. For some assessments the feedback period will be less than 20 working days. However, it may be the case that the 20-day rule for some assessments cannot be met for justified reasons (for example, courses on which a large number of students are enrolled). However, it is anticipated that this will apply to only a small number of courses, and, in those cases, the feedback return period will not exceed 30 days.

Any information on marks or performance that is provided to students prior to completion of moderation must include an explicit statement that the marks are provisional, and subject to change by moderation.

All students are informed about the assessment and feedback schedule. This information is normally communicated to students through course handbooks.

6.6 Communication to students

In order to manage expectations, information about the nature and extent of feedback and the timescale for this to occur must be made available to all students. This is normally done through course handbooks.

Prior to commencing an assessment, students are made aware of assessment criteria, marking schemes, the content and structure of agreed feedback templates.

The planned schedule of assessment and feedback is explicitly communicated to students. This is normally achieved via course handbooks issued to students

at the beginning of the academic year, and tutors are required to signpost students to where this information is available.

Any unforeseen changes to the method and timing of feedback are communicated to students at the earliest opportunity. In all cases, this must be before an assessment is taken.

7. Post-examination feedback

7.1 Introduction and rationale

Having access to post examination feedback makes a significant contribution to the on-going learning process of students. Due to the variety of subject areas, post examination feedback may take a variety of formats. As a minimum, however, generic feedback must be made available to all students who take written examinations.

Feedback must also be given in a timely way so as to inform the future performance of students in either referrals or subsequent examinations. The manner in which post examination feedback is provided should be made explicit at the start of every academic year and communicated to students to ensure transparency of the process.

7.2 Definition

Examinations are regarded as time-limited, formal, assessments which normally occur at the end of a course.

7.3 Feedback methods available to subject areas

Although post-examination feedback is guaranteed in all courses, this takes a variety of formats and may be either generic or personalised, dependent on the strategies agreed by each subject area. This decision is dependent on a number of factors including the nature of the subject, the nature of the examination, student needs and the numbers of students in each cohort.

As part of the annual process of curriculum planning, subject areas select the method of post-examination feedback. Examples of how this feedback might be provided include:

- Post examination Associate Professors-led workshops, allowing students to have access to their own individual scripts and relevant examiner/marker comments.
- Post examination workshops whereby Associate Professors provide generic commentary on common mistakes and key learning points relating to each question.
- Individual feedback sheets for each student, providing detailed comments on the strengths and areas for development in relation to the specific questions.
- Access to model answers for all questions, giving specific details of the marking scheme adopted.
- Opportunity to request individualised one-to-one feedback from the marking Associate Professors for each student.

7.4 Timescales for feedback

Examination feedback should be provided as soon as possible after the relevant examination and in advance of the next examination period for the relevant cohort.

8. Publication of Results

The Student Office is responsible for recording of students' official results. Communication of the individual course results will be made electronically via email.

It is the student's responsibility to ascertain his or her results.

As examination results are personal data, student results must not be displayed on notice boards. Results should not be disclosed over the telephone.

The Student Office will provide the student with an official transcript and award certificate (where appropriate).

9. Ownership of Students' Assessed Work

Students hold the intellectual property inherent in all work produced for assessments, but the material produced by students for assessment (essays, projects, examination scripts, dissertations, artworks, computer disks, etc) is the property of the Institute.

With the exception of examination scripts, the Institute will endeavour to return to students any artefacts or hard copy dissertations whenever a student explicitly requests this. Arrangements for returning assessed work to students are the responsibility of individual Associate Professors.

Assessed coursework that has not been collected by the student will be retained by the Institute for six months, after which time it may be disposed.