

## HIGHER EDUCATION ASSESSMENT POLICY

### Introduction

This policy is not intended to supersede or replace the assessment procedures of the Group's awarding bodies, but rather to ensure that the assessment of students is consistent, fair and understood by Higher Education students and staff. This policy is aligned to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, in particular Expectation for Quality 1 (Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.) and Core Practice for Standards 4 (The provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent.).<sup>1</sup>

### Planning of the course

1. The course team, led by the Programme Director, prior to the commencement of the academic year, works through the preparations for the course delivery. This includes:
  - Unit/module sequencing and staffing
  - Assignments and project briefs prepared and internally verified
  - Resource planning/budgeting
  - Field trips and study visits
  - Schemes of work/ Academic delivery schedule
  - VLE and external resources updated
  - Writing and publishing the Assessment schedule on VLE (giving careful consideration to the distribution of assignment deadlines to avoid assessment bunching)
  - Checking when each element of study skills are covered, by whom and how
  - Ensuring employability and transferable skills are captured throughout delivery
  - Tutorial provision is planned

### 2. Planning internal verification

Internal verification is the quality assurance system used to monitor assessment practice and decisions for assignments, examinations and for assessment of student work. Internal verification must be planned for the start of the programme with an agreed schedule in place, covering every unit, every assignment and every assessor, with indicative dates of these events.

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<sup>1</sup> Available at: [Quality Code \(qaa.ac.uk\)](https://www.qaa.ac.uk).

Course files must contain a schedule of planned internal verification at the start of the programme.

For university validated and franchised programmes the university assessment regulations must be fully understood by all tutors and clearly communicated to all students.

### 3. Programme specifications

**University validated qualifications** - The Group works closely with its partner university to ensure that their procedures for programme design and approval are followed, Teams must adhere to the specifications and any changes to assessment outcomes and delivery can only be agreed by the awarding university<sup>2</sup>. Proposals for minor change as defined by the Code of Practice for Quality Assurance for Taught Programmes of Study, University of Kent<sup>3</sup>, must be approved by the HE Programme Leaders Forum before being progressed at the university. Major changes<sup>4</sup> must be approved by the HE Group before being progressed at the university.

**Pearson programme specifications.** Tutors must adhere to their Programme Specifications.

### 4. Planning Assessment

Module/unit assessment is required to be reliable, fair and measured in order to develop Knowledge, Understanding and Skills in line with assessment criteria and learning outcomes, as specified by the awarding body. A wide variety of assessment methods should be employed on each programme to provide opportunity for a range of students with different learning styles. Reasonable adjustment, where required, will be made without compromising academic standards.

### 5. Plagiarism (see the HE Academic Disciplinary Policy)

**5.1.** In accordance with the Academic Disciplinary Policy, all suspected cases of plagiarism will be dealt with consistently and fairly following the prescribed procedure.

**5.2.** The authentication of student work is the responsibility of the Group. Students must authenticate the evidence they provide for assessment and, where applicable, sign a declaration stating that it is their own work when they submit. Where required, students may be asked to produce evidence that the work is their own, such as notes, previous drafts and sources of information used to support an assessment task.

**5.3.** Any use of AI must be in accordance with the Group's Procedure for managing the use of Artificial Intelligence in assessment activities, otherwise may be considered plagiarism.

**5.4.** All written student work **must** be submitted through Turnitin.

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<sup>2</sup> **University of Kent, Collaborative Provision – Partner College**

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/collaborative-partnerships/procedures>

<sup>3</sup> University of Kent, Code of Practice. Available at: <https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/regulatory-framework>.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*

**5.5.** Student inductions will include an introduction to assessment and plagiarism and the methods for assessment to be used during the course of their studies. This will be supplemented with study skills advice and guidance.

## **6. Assignment or Project Briefs**

**6.1.** Briefs should emphasise blending vocational and academic knowledge, understanding and skills, making maximum use of work-related practical experience for the relevant sector. Tasks should be challenging and provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate a variety of differentiated outcomes.

**6.2.** All assignment briefs and examinations which form part of a student's final award will be internally verified (IVed) before being issued to students. University exam questions/ Examination Papers must be approved by the External Examiner or School prior to issuing to students.

**6.3.** Assignment briefs will be made available to the validating partners and awarding bodies if requested.

**6.4.** Copies of all assignment scripts and student examination papers, which form part of their final award, will be kept securely for a period of three years.

**6.5.** There is an expectation that all assignment briefs are written and IVed and available at the start of the academic year

**6.6.** All assignment briefs and examination papers must be **internally verified**, prior to issue to the student and publishing on the VLE. The standard awarding body pro forma should be used to record this action and a copy kept for reference

### **6.7. Programme Assignment, key information requirements**

- Programme title /year of study
- Module/unit Title
- Learning Outcomes/and where applicable, Assessment Criteria and weighting (weighting does not apply to Pearson qualifications as all learning outcomes must be met)
- Hand-out date
- Deadline for submission of documentation via Turnitin
- Deadline for feedback to the students (no more than three working weeks)
- Name of unit/module tutor/s
- Name of Internal verifier
- Expected format: report/seminar paper/written essay, presentation, visual research, research proposal, portfolio
- Where appropriate: word length, duration or other equivalents to be identified (Pearson programmes can only include a suggested word count for guidance, students must not be penalised for going over or under the word count)
- A statement that confirms authorship and understanding of plagiarism to be signed by students on submission
- Assessment scheme, grading scheme/assessment criteria/marketing scheme (for Pearson programmes, students must meet all learning outcomes at Pass to pass the assignment; all Pass and Merit outcomes to achieve Merit; and all Pass, Merit and Distinction learning outcomes to achieve a Distinction)

- Indicate whether the assignment is a 'whole unit/module' assignment or part of a set of assignments that contribute to the whole unit/module assessment.

## 7. Assessment

**7.1. New academic tutors** will be given appropriate training and support as part of their induction to assessing at higher education level, which may include further training, depending on the requirements of the partner institution or awarding body. In their first term, their Head of Department and/or mentor will ensure that their marking is subject to second marking.

**7.2. Assessment Grade Tracking:** The assessment grade tracker for a programme should be in place at the start of the programme and must be kept up to date and available on the Group system. The Assessment Trackers are in a standardised format and are a live record of student progress and achievement. These inform Interim Board of Examiners and the final end of year Board of Examiners. It is therefore critical that the information placed on the grade tracker is **regularly updated, accurate and current**.

**7.3.** University awarding bodies request that students' final marks are submitted through their data-system procedures. This must be completed at least two weeks before the Examination Board.

**7.4. For all programmes,** the recording and communication of assessments and assessment decisions must follow precisely the processes and procedures of the validating Institution.

**7.5. Exam Boards** There are strict regulations regarding the end of stage programme Examination Boards. At the end of each stage of the programme, a formally recorded set of meetings take place to consider and ratify assessment decisions. These are: a Pre Examination Board of Assessors (course tutors consider grades and make recommendations to the Exam Board). A Mitigation Board (a small group of senior tutors/staff consider mitigating evidence and grade it according to the University of Kent criteria) and the Final Examination Board (receives assessment recommendations from course tutors, considers concessions, takes into account the views and recommendations of the programme external examiner and is chaired either by the Programme Director or a representative from a validating institution. Students are anonymised and considered on an individual basis.

**7.6. Formative Assessment** is the advice and guidance students receive from tutors and professionals as they engage in the course and develop their assignments. Formative assessment provides students with feedback that enables them to enhance their performance prior to summative assessment. There are many forms of formative feedback from conversations with tutors to formal formative feedback tutorials that are recorded on the student's profile. Where possible students and tutors should record the feedback provided so there is a record that can be used by the student. Formative feedback should provide clear, targeted guidance and critical support that identifies areas of strength and where opportunities exist to enhance performance. Formative feedback should be planned into the schedule of academic delivery and may take the form of one to one or group tutorials. Every

student should receive at least one formative assessment tutorial during the course of an assignment.

**7.7. Summative Assessment** - is where assignment/assessment decisions are made in relation to the assessment criteria/learning outcomes of a unit/module of study. Students are required for BA (Hons), BSc (Hons) HND and FdA programmes of study validated by University partners to engage in self-assessment at the point of submission. Prior to formative and summative assessment students must be informed of the unit/module assessment criteria, differences between grading criteria, the grading scheme and opportunities to achieve higher grades.

**7.8. Feedback Schedule:** All assessed work which is submitted punctually will be returned to the student within no more than three working weeks, with the exception of research projects that require additional time.

**7.9. BA (Hons) BSc (Hons) dissertations/research projects** – students are assigned a supervisory tutor. Both the supervisor/assessor and another assessor blind-mark the assignment. Both tutors, independently, write a short report about the qualities of the study and record their grade. Following this the assessors hold a meeting to agree recommendations for grades. If there is a difference of 10% in the grades, or if, subsequent to discussion, the two markers do not agree on the classification band into which the student's work falls (Fail/Third; Third/Lower Second; Lower Second/Upper Second; Upper Second/First), a third blind-marking blind assessment takes place with a further meeting of all the assessors takes place to agree the grade.

**7.10. Re-submission:** Following summative assessment students are not able to re-submit work to achieve a higher grade. Any further opportunities to improve grades are subject to the regulations of the awarding body.

**7.11. Mitigation** Applications for consideration of mitigating circumstances must be submitted by the student before the submission date of the assignment to which they refer. There are two types of mitigation application. The first is for the extension of a deadline for a particular assignment; the second, which may relate to more than one assessment, may be submitted for consideration by the Examination Board. The latter applies to incidences of long-term, severe impairment of study.

**7.12. HNC/HND Awards:** In order to achieve a Pass grade or higher a student must achieve all the learning outcomes/assessment criteria for the programme.

**7.13. Word Count** - Students are required to record the total word count of all written coursework on the front page of submissions for university programmes. The word count will include everything in the body of the text, such as quotations, citations, footnotes and subheadings. It does not include the coursework title, bibliography, reference list, appendices or other supplementary material, which does not form an essential part of the text. Unless stated otherwise, there is an allowance of 10% deviation over or below the stated maximum word count. Any more significant deviation will result in the coursework being assessed only on the stated word count plus 10%. For Pearson programmes, in line with number 6.7 above, word count guidance only can be provided.

**7.14. Grammar and Spelling** - Students are expected to submit their work with due regard to correct spelling and grammar

**7.15. Presentation Assessments:** Where only one assessor is available to grade student presentations, supporting evidence of the student work, in the form of video recording, should be kept as reference material for internal verification and the External Examiner. Summative assessment feedback on student work should be available for 3 years. Students are responsible for maintaining copies of their work and keeping organised portfolios in preparation for assessment and Boards of Examiners.

## 8. Grading

### 8.1. Grading Higher National Units for Pearson Programmes only

Each successfully completed unit will be graded as a **fail, pass, merit** or **distinction**.

- A **Pass** is awarded for the achievement of all learning outcomes against the specified assessment criteria, showing coverage of the unit content.
- **Merit** and **Distinction** are awarded for higher-level performance (Merit must achieve all Pass and Merit criteria, Distinction must achieve all Pass, Merit and Distinction criteria)

**8.2.** Assessment decisions are based on the specific criteria given in each unit and set at each level of attainment in that unit and at the qualification level. Grades are given for the unit as a whole according to the highest level for which the student is judged to have met all the criteria.

### 8.3. Grading University validated Higher National Diplomas and Degree top-ups

Refer to the programme specifications and Student Handbooks for marking schemes<sup>5</sup>. University of Kent programmes use the categorical marking scheme which is found in each programme handbook and in Annex 6 of the Credit Framework for Taught Programmes<sup>6</sup>.

## 9. Meeting Deadlines for all Programmes

**9.1.** The consequences of late submission of work must be made clear to students and deadlines need to be strictly and fairly observed.

### 9.2. Submission of Late Work and Referrals for University Higher National Programmes

Failure to submit assignments within the set deadline will result in a fail being recorded. Failed assignments may be resubmitted on one further occasion during the academic year in which they are taken but receive no higher mark than a capped 'pass' 40%. If this second submission also fails to achieve a pass mark this will constitute failure of the module, to be reported at the Examination Board. All students are to be made aware of the University Credit Frameworks for Taught Programmes and UoK Annex 12 for Higher Nationals. Further Opportunities for resubmissions can only be agreed through the Board of Examiners<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Credit Framework for Taught Programmes

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/regulatory-framework/credit-framework#annex-12>

<sup>6</sup> Credit Framework for Taught Programmes <https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/regulatory-framework/credit-framework#annex-6>

<sup>7</sup> Credit Framework for Taught Programmes

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/regulatory-framework/credit-framework#annex-12>

### **9.3. Submission of Late Work and Referrals for University validated Degree top-up Programmes.**

The University of Kent regulations state that unauthorised late-submitted work may not be accepted for marking (unless accompanied by a sanctioned concession). All students are to be made aware of the university Credit Frameworks for Taught Programmes. Opportunities for re-submissions can only be agreed through the Board of Examiners.

### **9.4. Submission of Late Work and Referrals for Pearson Higher National Programmes**

The ability to meet a deadline is an important part of preparing students for employment or further higher study. Therefore, statements about meeting agreed deadlines will be added to **every** unit/assignment brief, thereby integrating time-bound grading criteria into every assignment brief. Consequently late submissions can achieve no more than a Pass grade. However, submitted work should be assessed 'without penalty' in the first

instance, the late submission should be recorded and the student should be made aware that the lateness of submission may have an impact on their grade.

For programmes on the RQF framework, one resubmission is allowed if a student does not achieve a pass on first submission (same assignment). The reassessment opportunity will be capped at Pass for that unit.

### **9.5. Resubmissions for Pearson Higher National Programmes**

If a student submits work within the specified deadline that fails to achieve a pass grade and they have made full use of formative feedback opportunities, they may be given one further assessment opportunity. Reassessment for course work, project or portfolio-based assessments shall normally involve the reworking of the original task. For examinations, reassessment shall involve completion of a new task. Only a pass grade will be offered for this assessment opportunity. A student is not entitled to be reassessed in any component for which a Pass or higher has already been awarded.

### **9.6. Re-sits during the Summer recess - for all awarding bodies**

Boards of Examiners (BoEs) take place at the end of the academic year to receive recommendations regarding student achievement. Often attended by the External Examiner, decisions are agreed about progression to the next stage of study and exit awards. For students at the end of their programme the Board of Examiners makes decisions about the award of qualifications. It also - for students that have failed to successfully meet the requirements of the award - may offer opportunities to repeat the assessment of assignments and modules during the summer recess, or to repeat a year, or partial year, or to withdraw from the programme and where appropriate claim an exit award/units/modules.

Where the offer of summer re-sits is agreed, shortly after the Board students will be written to with details of the assessment/s required for submission and the submission date. The work is then assessed and the grades are recommended to a

Re-sit Board of Examiners, usually held in the first two weeks of September. Resubmitted assignments will be capped at a pass, 40%, unless concessions have been agreed at the end of year Board of Examiners and retakes are classified as AFT (as if for the first time).

## **9.7. Repeating years and Trailing Modules**

For students seeking to progress that do not pass during summer resits, a decision is made by the Board of Examiners in September whether to offer further opportunities to repeat the modules in the next academic year or to trail modules.

If the student has 25% or less of the programme outstanding the Board of Examiners can approve the modules to be trailed into the following year. The following process will be followed:

- Students will have to complete all outstanding assessments for the trailed module(s) early in the academic year and the module will go to a Board of Examiners in November.
- If the trailed module(s) are passed at the November board the student can continue their study.
- If the trailed module is failed at the November board and is a final attempt then the student's registration on their course will be terminated at that point.
- If the trailed module is failed or deferred at the November board but the student has another attempt, then the student will be required to intermit for the year and resume at the beginning of the following academic year under the condition of successful completion of the outstanding assessment. They will be offered an opportunity to take further attempt at assessment but without further attendance on the course.
- If the student fails or intermits following the November board they will be charged fees up to this point. The fees will be pro-rated to the point that they interrupted/withdrew according to the Tuition Fee Policy.

If students have more than 25% of their modules to resit or the assessments for outstanding modules cannot be completed prior to November in the following year (eg: seasonal practical assessments such as lambing) the student will have to repeat the year.

Any students repeating a year are charged standard tuition fees commensurate with the modules/units being retaken.

## **10. Internal Verification of Assessment Decisions**

### **10.1. Internal verification is a process undertaken to check that:**



- Assignments are clearly articulated, fit for purpose and appropriately challenging to the level of study
- Assessment and grading are consistent across the programme and that assessment decisions are accurately set against assessment criteria and learning outcomes<sup>8</sup>.

**10.2. Resources needed to internally verify:**

- The module/unit specification outlining the module/unit content and assessment criteria.
- The assignment brief.
- The learners' work which has been assessed and annotated by the assessor.
- Record of assessment decisions and feedback to the learner.
- The internal verification form for assessment decisions.

**10.3. Assessment sample:** For each assignment a sample of assessed work will be reviewed by a tutor familiar with the discipline, the awarding body and level of the programme. The sample is determined by the awarding body and may include a range of grades or modules/units. Feedback is provided to the assessor about the appropriateness of the assessments and the quality of student feedback provided. This process should be clearly recorded and any actions completed. If required, moderation discussions may take place before results are made known to learners, particularly where new assessors are engaged in the assessments process.

**10.4. Internal verification** must take place immediately after assessment, therefore throughout the academic year and is not end-loaded (dates are programmed in to the assessment schedule at the start of the year).

**10.5. Internal verification of assessment decisions** must take place before the work is returned to the students.

**10.6. Sample size – University of Kent** – When work is marked by two internal assessors, at least 80% must be double marked or when marked by one assessor, the moderator (internal verifier) should review the work of 10% of the candidates, or a minimum of 6 candidates. The work should contain a range of marks and possible top and bottom ends of the grading scale and all fails. The role of the moderator (internal verifier) is to vouch for the accuracy and consistency of marking and where he or she cannot, the matter will be referred to the Chair of the Board of Examiners. The Chair can arrange for all of the work to be double-marked, normally by the moderator, or on occasions by third party. Refer to Annex 6 of the Credit Framework for Taught Programmes<sup>9</sup>.

**10.7. Sample size - Pearson programmes:** there is no prescribed internal verification sample size but a well-constructed sample should consider a full range of assessment decisions; new assessors should have all initial assessment decisions internally verified; new programmes or units should be more stringently sampled. Prior to a visit, the External Examiner will request a sample of work either to be posted in advance or to be prepared for the visit. Examiners can ask for all work to

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<sup>8</sup> BTEC Pearson Internal Verification found at [http://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/btec-brand/BTEC\\_Centre\\_Guide\\_to\\_Internal\\_Verification.pdf](http://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/btec-brand/BTEC_Centre_Guide_to_Internal_Verification.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Credit Framework for Taught Programmes. Annex 6: Marking. <https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/regulatory-framework/credit-framework#annex-6>

be available and it is important that course tutors communicate effectively with them to identify the sample size and any other requirements.

**10.8. Standardisation** is a process where two or more assessors sample learner work to agree standards, normally prior to formal assessment and internal verification. Standardisation can also be used as a staff development tool and as a cross disciplinary exercise seeking to align assessments to the FHEQ and for new staff induction.

## **12. Student Appeals**

The appeals process must be communicated to students and understood by staff:

- During induction, students must be provided with an explanation of the Assessment Policy, the Appeals Policy, and the Complaints Policy.
- Where effective internal verification has taken place, no appeal is permitted which challenges the academic judgment. All other appeals will be considered initially by the Academic and Disciplinary Board. This does not include academic appeals against decisions by the Board of Examiners for University of Kent franchised programmes. These must be made directly to the University (see Academic Appeals Policy).
- All internal processes for appeal must be exhausted prior to appeals being submitted to the awarding body.
- All stages of the appeal are recorded in written.

## **13. Boards of Examiners (separate guidance)**

**13.1.** Programme Directors/Leaders ensure that all assessed work is marked and moderated in advance of the Board of Examiners, that marks are available in an appropriate format and that a constructive dialogue is maintained throughout the year with the External Examiner.

**13.2.** Only the Mitigation Committee has the authority to consider and make formal recommendations in claims of mitigating circumstances. The Board of Examiners will ratify any decisions from the Mitigation Committee.

All assignment grades are provisional until ratified by the External Examiner and Board of Examiners; final outcomes are provisional until ratified (certificated) by the awarding body.

## **14. All programmes**

Examination Boards, team meetings, course meetings and the internal verification process will ensure that there is consistency of assessment practice. Students are responsible for their portfolios of work and assignments and should ensure that their work is 'backed-up' and that copies are available.

Copies of all assignments, feedback and examination scripts will be submitted to the external examiner on request before a visit, or made available as a matter of course during the examiner's visit.

## **Related policies and procedures**

- Course Handbooks

- Student Handbooks
- Pearson BTEC Centre Guide to External Examination (UK) Levels 4 to 7
- Pearson Level 4 -7 Assessment Guide
- Pearson BTEC Centre Guide to Internal Verification
- Codes of Practice – University of Kent
- Credit Framework – University of Kent
- Guidelines for Exam Boards
- HE Academic Appeals Policy
- HE Academic Discipline Policy
- HE Recognition of Prior Learning Policy
- Complaints Procedure (EKC Group)
- Procedure for managing the use of Artificial Intelligence in assessment activities