

Assessment and Feedback Policy



1) Principles

The principles and requirements of this policy are designed to ensure that processes of assessment are in place which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes of the award.

The main purposes of assessment are to judge the students' achievement of intended learning outcomes, in a manner that safeguards academic standards.

Assessment will be:

- a) **Inclusive**, so that all students are provided with the reasonable adjustments and optionality of assessment they need to enable them to demonstrate achievement.
- b) **Valid**, so that all students can demonstrate achievement of intended learning outcomes and that standards are maintained.
- c) **Reliable**, so that different assessors marking the same assessment would reach the same judgement based on explicit criteria and marking scheme.
- d) **Authentic**, designed to enhance learning, to connect students with work-related applications of their studies, and to demonstrate their individual knowledge and skills whilst using good academic practice, in line with the [University's Academic Integrity policy](#).
- e) **Rigorous**, so that assessment processes are appropriately integrated within the learning and teaching strategies and activities of a programme, and that students can demonstrate learning at required levels.
- f) **Fair**, so that all students are given equitable opportunities to demonstrate their achievement of the intended learning outcomes.
- g) **Diverse**, so that students can explore interests, specialisms, traditions and cultures that have meaning for them.
- h) **Clear**, so that students understand the academic requirements of the assessment task.

Assessment can be divided into:

- i) **Summative assessment**, which assesses the students' achievement of intended learning outcomes. In credit-bearing modules, summative assessments typically contribute to a student's grades.

- j) **Formative assessment**, which prioritises monitoring student learning against the intended learning outcomes and providing feedback to help students improve. These assessments can range from formal and substantial elements listed on the Module Descriptor (for instance presentations or mock tests), to informal and short activities which may only be a short part of an individual session (for instance group activities or questioning).

A framework for summative assessment promotes deeper learning, fairness and consistency in assessment experience, transparency of process, and a more even assessment load across the academic year.

Feedback will be:

- k) **Clear and legible**, so that students understand their performance in relation to specific marking criteria.
- l) **Constructive**, so that students understand how they could have improved the current piece of work and are able to be reflective and apply feedback to their learning to improve their future work.
- m) **Formative**, involving assessment that constitutes a learning experience in its own right and is not usually included in the formal grading of the work.
- n) **Summative**, involving assessment undertaken at the end of a period of learning to generate a grade that reflects the student's performance.
- o) **Timely**, provided within the required timescales and no later than the date published in advance to students.
- p) A mechanism to encourage students to reflect critically on their work, act as a dialogue between students and tutor, and motivate students.

The University has a transparent process for marking, moderation, and quality assurance (including the consideration of, and implementation of reasonable adjustments) to ensure students have parity of experience.

2) Assessment Design

- a) Assessments will be designed to assess the intended learning outcomes as set out in the Module Descriptor and mapped to the programme intended learning outcomes in the Definitive Programme Document.
- b) Providing a carefully considered and balanced assessment experience with a focus on learning will ensure space for faster and more effective feedback, giving students the opportunity to learn, develop and perform at their best.

- c) Assessments will be designed to encourage students to adopt good academic practice, and to minimise opportunities for academic misconduct, e.g. by ensuring students undertake assessments which are demonstrably their own work.
- d) The mode(s) of assessment remains at the discretion of the module and subject team; a diverse menu of assessment approaches should be offered, as an integral aspect of inclusive and authentic assessment practice. This enables students to demonstrate the range of their capabilities and achievements against the defined learning outcomes.
- e) Programme and module leaders must ensure that they can present a clear rationale for assessments formats (mode(s) and word count or equivalent), and that there is consistency within programmes
- f) The maximum number of summative components permitted in one:
 - i) 20 credit module is two;
 - ii) 15 credit module is one.

Modules with multiples of 15 or 20 credits can increase the maximum numbers of components accordingly.

- g) Where portfolio items are included, the components of the portfolio should be kept to a minimum to avoid over-assessment. The portfolio will be marked and assessed as one summative component only.
- h) Academic teams must consider what word count or equivalent is most appropriate for an assessment item, such that student effort is commensurate with the level and credit value of the module. The word count or equivalent should reflect the length, or time, that students need to achieve the learning outcomes, acknowledging that sometimes the skill is in the ability to be concise.

To ensure consistency of experience for all provision that leads to a University award, all assessments should adopt a word count, or equivalent, limit with a +10% margin for tolerance. Beyond this margin, no further content will be marked. Students may, therefore, be disadvantaged for failing to be concise and for failing to conclude their work within the limit specified.

- i) For consistency across Schools and programmes, the proportion of notional learning workload for the preparation and completion of assessment tasks is normally 20% (approximately 40 hours for a 20 credit module of 200 notional learning hours). Guidance is provided to support good assessment design, including an illustration of example word counts and equivalents for different modes of assessment.

- j) Notional learning workload, and associated word counts and equivalents, for the preparation and completion of assessment tasks at Levels 7 and 8 is likely to be higher as a larger proportion of learning and independent study time contributes to the development of the assessment artefact (e.g. through original research).
- k) Any exemptions to this section of the Assessment and Feedback Policy will need to be approved by the Education Committee.

3) Assessment Brief: design, approval, and publication

Design and Approval

- a) Module Leaders are responsible for designing and approving assessment briefs and marking criteria for each item of assessment within their module (in consultation with Programme Leaders and External Examiners, as needed). They must also ensure that assessment requirements are clearly communicated to students.

Subject to School Quality Management Committee agreement and review, and with guidance from the Link Tutor and/or BSU Module Leader, the Module Leaders (or their equivalents) at partners delivering franchised programmes may create the first draft of the assessment brief. This will often follow a similar format to the home assessment and must be in line with the Module Descriptor. The External Examiner responsible for that module at the partner may be consulted, as needed. The assessment brief must be submitted to the BSU Module Leader for approval and cannot be considered final or used until approval is granted.

Module Leaders (or their equivalents) at partners delivering validated programmes are responsible for drafting and approving assessment briefs. These should be submitted to the BSU Link Tutor for feedback before being used.

An Assessment Brief Template and Grading Descriptors and Marking Criteria Toolkit are provided for guidance.

- b) Module Leaders should make alternative assessment(s) available to any student with a recommendation in their Academic Access Plan or Support to Study Action Plan provided through Student Wellbeing Services. A clear assessment brief and criteria should be provided, that reflects the weightings in the Definitive Programme Document and enables the student to demonstrate achievement of the intended learning outcomes.
- c) Where portfolio items are included, the components of the portfolio should be indicated within the assessment brief.

- d) Module leaders are responsible for providing guidance to students on how they might use Generative Artificial Intelligence to inform or support their assessment, including if they may not use it and how this should be acknowledged and referenced in the student's formal submission. An assessment brief template is available which suggests appropriate wording for alternative scenarios.
- e) Written examinations and written time-controlled assessments will be online by default wherever possible, in the interests of inclusion and authenticity in assessment.
- f) It is the responsibility of the Module Leader to define the type of file that they consider acceptable in the submission instructions set out in the assessment brief.

Publication

- g) The Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) Core Requirements confirm the requirements for assessment timelines, assessment briefs, marking criteria and submission portals to be published on the VLE. The Assessment Brief should be available on the VLE and must reflect the weightings and methods in the Definitive Programme Document.
- h) Assessment deadlines (including re-sits) will be coordinated to limit the bunching of deadlines, for students and staff. Where possible, information on deadlines across the academic year should be made available to students.
- i) Assessment deadlines must not be set outside term dates (other than for reassessment work), or for the first two days of any new term.
- j) Programme Leaders are responsible for ensuring that academic staff publish:
 - i) During the first week of module delivery, assessment timelines on the VLE (submission deadlines and feedback return dates).
 - ii) In the first two weeks of each semester, a clear assessment brief and clear marking criteria for each item of assessment.
 - iii) The online assessment submission point on the VLE within the first two weeks of a semester, unless there is a compelling reason this cannot be done (e.g. timebound assessments).

4) Assessment Submission

- a) The deadline for all assessments submitted as a hard copy or electronically is normally 12.00 (noon) UK time, with the VLE accepting submissions without

penalty until 17.00. Students should be encouraged to leave sufficient time for upload to the VLE (considering, for example, the likelihood of connection issues).

- b) To increase consistency for students, reduce the financial and environmental costs, and comply with assessment item retention regulations, as far as possible assessments should be submitted, marked, and returned online using the VLE, including written examinations. A digital version of the assessment item should be stored on the VLE for compliance with assessment item retention regulations. For example, this may consist of a photograph of an artefact or a video of a performance or presentation.

Use of other electronic submission portals shall be avoided. Hard copy assessments (including handwritten examinations) should only be requested if there is a pedagogic rationale for doing so (e.g. publishing artefacts, bound musical scores and parts, dissertations).

- c) Where assessed work is submitted online, but the marking tutor wishes to read a hard copy, it is the responsibility of the tutor/subject to produce the hard copy. In these cases, students are not required to submit a hard copy, and all marking and feedback should be submitted online via the VLE.
- d) Where possible, all assessed work should be submitted to appropriate tools through the VLE. Text based assignments should be submitted to Turnitin through the VLE, so that a similarity report can be accessed. Work submitted outside of the VLE will only be accepted if technical issues with the VLE tools are experienced.
- e) Submission settings should be enabled to permit the following:
 - i) Students should be able to submit multiple drafts until the deadline.
 - ii) For Turnitin submissions, students should be able to view Originality Reports for each draft submitted.
 - iii) Students should be able to submit work after the published deadline (up to one week after the published deadline). This work will be capped at the pass mark unless an extension has been granted in advance. Where assessment items are marked at pass/fail only, students will not be able to submit after the published deadline (as set out in 4a) and must request an extension in advance. Where the submission deadline is for a reassessment item, extensions must be requested in advance and the approval of these extension requests is at the module tutor's discretion.

- f) It is the responsibility of the student to:
- i) Submit in the format specified in the submission instructions set out in the assessment brief.
 - ii) State their word count for all written work.

For written assessments, the word count refers to everything in the main body of the text, including headings, tables, figures, in-text citations, quotes, and lists. Items not included in the word count are titles, contents pages, executive summaries or abstracts, appendices, bibliographies or reference lists. Incorrectly stating the word count may result in an accusation of academic misconduct.

No additional penalties are applied; content that exceeds the word count or equivalent limit will not be marked. There is no additional penalty for work submitted below the word count or equivalent, but students are advised that submitting work significantly below the limit risks failing to meet the marking criteria.

- iii) Understand their obligations under the Academic Integrity Policy, including citing and referencing Generative Artificial Intelligence tools used in research. By submitting an assessment, students confirm that they are adhering to these obligations.

5) Marking

- a) Marking involves making judgements about the quality of students' summative assignments (based upon the explicit marking criteria for that assignment); deciding on an overall grade/mark that reflects the standard of each student's achievement/performance; and providing clear and useful feedback to students on both the quality of their work and how it might be enhanced. Academic staff will provide feedback aligned to marking criteria to support learning and progression.
- b) Module Leaders are responsible for:
 - i) ensuring that summative assignments are double-marked or second-marked where it is appropriate. This is subject to academic judgement and should be based on the guidance below.

Double marking

For non-written forms of assessment (for instance, oral examinations, seminar presentations, and performances) at least two internal assessors should normally be involved in marking the assignment and agreeing the final mark for each piece of work. The External Examiner should have

access to the agreed comments of the assessors and, where practicable, any supporting materials that provide evidence of the student's work for that assignment (for instance, handouts for seminar presentations, video clips of a performance, online resources).

Second-marking

Student assignments can be second-marked where all of the work submitted for assessment is available to the second marking tutor. In this case, the second marker should ideally be marking blind – that is, without prior knowledge of the first marker's grade, though it is recognised that this is not always practicable. Once the exercise is completed the two markers should discuss and agree a grade. In cases where the markers disagree, a third marker (not the External Examiner) should be asked to adjudicate. Second marking is strongly recommended for all substantial summative assignments such as dissertations and final projects.

- ii) Ensuring that markers are familiar with their obligations for marking, the provision of feedback and the referral of cases under the Academic Integrity Policy.

6) Moderation

- a) Moderation is the process of checking and ensuring that the marking of student assignments is rigorous, fair, reliable, consistent with the marking criteria, and that the grades/ marks awarded are at the appropriate standard. It is a separate process from marking. It should reflect the shared understanding of the markers, and an approach which enables comparability across academic subjects (in particular recognising that students may be studying more than one subject).
- b) The Moderator should be appointed by the Programme Leader and moderation should take place prior to provisional marks being returned to students.
- c) For each module, moderation should be undertaken on a sample basis and a record kept on the Marking Moderation Form. All summative assignments should be internally moderated. Where second marking has taken place, moderation is required where three or more markers are within the marking team to ensure consistency.
- d) The University's involvement in moderation of assessments marked by partner providers will verify that the partner's marking process is fair and consistent across the programme and in line with BSU norms.

It will usually be the case that, particularly where there are large student cohorts, the partner will initially moderate the assessment before submitting it

to BSU for further moderation. In some instances, BSU will run the entire moderation process. If partners are initially moderating assessment, it is expected that their approach will align with the University's policy on moderation, as set out in this section. Arrangements for BSU moderation of assessments marked by partner providers, which must involve at least one member of University staff (usually the Link Tutor), should be agreed annually with the partner organisation and confirmed at School Quality Management Committees

All modules at partner institutions will be sampled for moderation by the University.

e) Sampling

The sample size is typically 10% or a minimum of 8 assignments taken from the full range of marks awarded. All failed assignments should be moderated. If 8 or fewer assignments are available, all of these should be moderated. Samples should be taken to represent student work at every delivery location (including modules delivered at partner institutions) and every mode of study. Resubmitted work should also be moderated.

When determining the sample size for BSU moderation of assessments marked by partner providers, the following criteria should be considered:

- i) the length of time the partnership has been established
 - ii) the length of time the programme has been in operation
 - iii) any conditions for moderation as set out at the programme approval event
 - iv) the experience of the lecturer marking the student output
 - v) the level of the module and contribution to the overall degree classification
 - vi) the type of student output and the practicalities of implementing the moderation process e.g. art exhibitions and performances.
- f) Work marked by lecturers new to assessment in HE or inexperienced lecturers should be closely monitored within this sampling process.
- g) The Moderation Form should be completed by the Module Leader showing a record of the internal moderation that has taken place. This must be available for scrutiny by External Examiners or other parties and be submitted to the Module Assessment Board. The Moderator should aim to assure themselves and colleagues that the sample is representative and accurately marked.

The Moderator is not entitled to amend individual marks. However, if

Moderators have specific concerns, they should raise these with the original markers, but have no right to overrule. Should such a dispute occur, with no resolution, a third marker should be invited to adjudicate. The External Examiner should not act as another marker. Should feedback from the Moderator result in the original markers amending marks for students within the sample, all summative assignments for that cohort will be reviewed by the original markers to check for fairness and consistency of approach.

- h) In the event of concerns about the quality of provision the University may extend and/or increase levels and duration of second marking and moderation.

7) Release of Marks and Feedback

- a) Provisional marks are those agreed upon after the moderation process is complete, but before they are reviewed by the External Examiner and ratified by the assessment boards. Provisional marks should only be returned after moderation has taken place and students informed that provisional marks may be subject to change following consideration by External Examiners and the assessment boards.
- b) Provisional marks/grades and feedback for all summative assignments should be made available to students in the VLE within 15 working days (within 30 days for dissertations and major projects) from the specific deadline date set for submission. Where an educational partnership is carrying out internal moderation in addition to University moderation, this period may be extended, by the relevant Head of School, to up to 20 working days.

8) External Examining

- a) The role of an External Examiner is primarily to ensure that the marks of internal examiners are consistent with marks awarded for similar subjects in relation to similar awards elsewhere in the UK HE sector. External Examiners' reference points will be their experience in other HE providers, and such expressions of national consensus as the QAA "benchmark" statements.
- b) External Examiners are appointed by the University for all provision that leads to a BSU award. They are asked to examine the programme/subject as approved, within the regulations laid down by Academic Board.
- c) External Examiners audit/validate the assessment, marking, and moderation processes. The External Examiner should not be treated as an additional marker.
- d) Sampling
The External Examiner should be presented with a complete set of marks,

evidence of marking and/or moderation and a sample set of assessments after completion of the marking and internal moderation process. Where assessments are submitted and available on the VLE, sample assessments (and marks) should be shared with the External Examiner via the VLE only.

The sample size should be sufficient to enable the External Examiner to be satisfied that each student is fairly placed in relation to the rest of the module cohort. The sample (typically 10% or a minimum of 8 and all 'fails') should be chosen from across the mark range. Where External Examiners are responsible for programmes that span multiple sites or delivery organisations, samples of assessed work should cover all locations and organisations. For pass/fail assessment, the sample size will be agreed between the External Examiner and the marker. The sample may include examples of work that has been internally moderated. External examiners normally view work at Level 5 and above, but they may request to see work below Level 5. External examiners may also be requested by the University to review work from foundation year study and Level 4 modules, where appropriate.

9) Assessment Governance

- a) Academic Board is the final authority for any award of Bath Spa University, or for any marks assigned in connection with a BSU award.
- b) Module Assessment Boards (MABs) are held to consider the operation of assessment processes for the modules within the purview of the Board, confirm marks for modules, review and reflect on student performance trends, and receive feedback from External Examiners.

Following recommendations from the Module Assessment Boards, Progression and Awards Boards (PABs) confirm decisions on student progression to the next stage of study, and grant awards on behalf of the Academic Board.

10) Failure and Reassessment

- a) Following failure, including non-submission in an assessment item, all students should have the opportunity to discuss their work and feedback with a module tutor.
- b) When an assessment item has been failed, retrieval of the situation should be used where possible. Retrieval means that the existing assessment item can be used, and already submitted material can be incorporated into the resubmitted piece of work. The Progression and Awards Board (PAB) will decide whether the mark for a retrieved assessment item is uncapped (also known as deferred) or capped at the pass mark (also known as referred).

- c) In circumstances of significant failure in a piece of work, it may be agreed through conversation with a tutor that retrieval is not appropriate, and that the student should restart the piece of work.
- d) Failed unseen examinations should normally result in resubmission of a new assessment item rather than retrieval using already submitted material.
- e) Reassessments should usually be submitted in the same manner as the original assessment; usually through the VLE. A copy of the reassessment should be retained in the VLE (see further Section 4).

11) Retention of assessed work

- a) Records of assessed students' work are likely to be relevant evidence that the Office for Students would use in making judgements about the University's compliance with elements of conditions of registration B4 and B5. Appropriate records of assessed students' work, including for students who are no longer registered on a programme, are therefore retained for a period of five years after the end date of a programme.

Document details

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Responsible Officer: PVC Student Experience

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<https://www.bathspa.ac.uk/about-us/governance/policies/>

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