

# Assessment and Feedback Policy



## 1) Principles of assessment and feedback

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, and to safeguard academic standards.

### a) Assessment will be:

- i) Inclusive so that all students are provided with the adjustments and assessment they need to enable them to demonstrate achievement.
- ii) Valid so that all students can demonstrate achievement of intended learning outcomes and that standards are maintained.
- iii) Reliable so that different assessors marking the same assessment would reach the same judgement based on explicit criteria and marking scheme.
- iv) Rigorous so that assessment processes are appropriately integrated within the learning and teaching strategies and activities of a programme, and that students are able to demonstrate learning at required levels.
- v) Fair so that all students are given equitable opportunities to demonstrate their achievement of the intended learning outcomes.
- vi) Diverse so that students can explore interests, specialisms, traditions and cultures that have meaning for them.
- vii) Clear so that students understand the academic requirements of the assessment task.

### b) Feedback will be:

- i) Clear and legible so that students understand their performance in relation to specific assessment criteria.
- ii) 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.
- iii) Formative, involving assessment that constitutes a learning experience in its own right and is not usually included in the formal grading of the work.
- iv) Summative, involving assessment undertaken at the end of a period of learning in order to generate a grade that reflects the student's performance.
- v) Provided within the required timescales and no later than the date published in advance to students.

- vi) A mechanism to encourage students to reflect critically on their work, act as a dialogue between students and tutor, and motivate students.

## 2) Operational expectations

- 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) Academic staff will publish in the first two weeks of each semester a clear assessment brief and clear assessment criteria for each item of assessment. The assessment brief should be available on the VLE and must reflect the weightings and methods in the Definitive Programme Document.
- c) Academic staff will provide feedback aligned to assessment criteria to support learning and progression.
- d) Academic staff will publish, on the VLE assessment timelines (submission deadlines and feedback return dates) during the first week of module delivery sessions.
- e) Alternative assessment(s) should be made 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.
- f) Assessment deadlines (including re-sits) will be coordinated as much as possible, so as 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.
- g) Assessment deadlines should not be set outside term dates, or for the first two days of any new term.
- h) Students should be informed of the marks/grades and feedback for all summative assignments within 15 working days from the deadline date for submission. These marks should be returned after moderation has taken place. Dissertations and major projects may take up to 30 days to be marked and moderated.
- i) 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.
- j) A variety of assessment methods will be employed across a programme to enable students to demonstrate the range of their capabilities and achievements.

- k) Written examinations will be online by default wherever possible, in the interests of inclusion and authenticity in assessment.
- l) The University will have a transparent process for marking, moderation and quality assurance to ensure students have parity of experience.

### 3) Assessment Tariffs

A university-wide tariff for summative assessment promotes deeper learning, fairness in assessment practice, transparency of process, and a more even assessment load across the academic year. Avoiding excessive assessment can also ensure space for faster and more effective feedback, giving students the opportunity to perform at their best.

Any exemptions to this section of the Assessment Policy should be approved by the Curriculum Committee.

- a) The choice of mode 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 good assessment practice.
- b) Academic teams must consider what word count or equivalent is most appropriate for an assessment item, within the parameters of the tariff for 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.
- c) The maximum number of summative components permitted in one 20 credit module is two. Where portfolio items are included, the components of the portfolio should be indicated, and kept to a minimum in order to avoid over-assessment.
- d) The maximum number of summative components in one 15 credit module is one. Where portfolio items are included, the components of the portfolio should be indicated, and kept to a minimum in order to avoid over-assessment.
- e) Modules with multiples of 15 or 20 credits can increase the maximum numbers of components and tariff accordingly.
- f) At Level 4, a 20 credit module constitutes 4,000 words or equivalent. The lower summative load is intended to create space for, and place more emphasis on, formative assessment. Formative assessment plays a key role in supporting student learning, providing opportunities to practise skills and measure knowledge that should be linked to the summative assessment tasks.
- g) At Levels 5 and 6, a 20 credit module constitutes 5,000 words or equivalent.
- h) At Level 7, a 15 credit module constitutes 4,000 words or equivalent.

- i) At Foundation level, a 20 credit module constitutes 3,000 words or equivalent.

#### 4) Assessment Limits

All assessments should adopt the following approach to limits and penalties, in order to ensure consistency of experience across the University:

- a) Use of a word count or timing limit with +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.
- b) Students must state their word count for all written work. Incorrectly stating the word count may result in an accusation of academic misconduct.
- c) No additional penalties are applied; content that exceeds the word or timing limit will not be marked.
- d) There is no additional penalty for work submitted below the word count, but students are advised that submitting work significantly below the word count risks failing to meet the assessment criteria.
- e) The word count refers to everything in the main body of the text, including headings, tables, figures, in-text citations, quotes, lists etc. Items not included in the word count are titles, contents pages, executive summaries or abstracts, appendices, bibliographies or reference lists.

#### 5) 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.
- b) In order 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. 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. 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.

- c) 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. It is the responsibility of the student to submit in the format specified in the submission instructions.
- d) 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.
- e) 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 by email will only be accepted if technical issues with Turnitin or other assessment tools are experienced.
- f) 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 5a) and must request an extension in advance.
- g) Student marks should be made available in Minerva within 15 working days (30 days for dissertations and major projects) of the deadline date of submission.

## 6) Reassessment

- a) Following failure in an assessment item, all students should have the opportunity to discuss their work and feedback with a module tutor.
- b) When a fail has been recorded at an Award Board, 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.
- 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.

## 7) Marking and Moderation

### a) Marking

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.

Module Leaders have responsibility for 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. However, it should be noted that all summative assignments should be internally moderated.

#### i) Double marking

For non-written forms of assessment (e.g., 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 (e.g., handouts for seminar presentations, video clips of a performance, online resources).

#### ii) 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 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.

### b) Internal Moderation

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, and an approach which enables comparability across academic subjects (in particular recognising that students may be studying more than one subject).

- i) Internal moderation ensures 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.
- ii) Moderation should take place prior to marks being returned to students.

- iii) For each module, internal moderation should be undertaken on a sample basis and a record kept on the Moderation Form. The Moderator should be appointed by the Programme leader. 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.
- iv) Work marked by lecturers new to assessment in HE or inexperienced lecturers should be closely monitored within this sampling process.
- v) 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 Subject 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 are free to 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.
- vi) Marks can be amended at the Assessment Board and are therefore provisional until ratified by the Assessment Board.

b) Collaborative Provision

The requirement for establishing robust moderation procedures applies equally to collaborative programmes leading to BSU credits and awards. The university must be assured that students are being assessed in a way that is directly comparable to their counterparts on on-campus programmes.

- i) Partner institutions must ensure that their own internal processes for the approval of assessment tasks and the moderation of student output are rigorous and consistent with the University Assessment Policy. Arrangements for moderation by BSU, 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. The University's involvement in moderation will verify that the internal marking process at the partner institution, including second marking, is fair and consistent across the programme and within sector norms.
- ii) When determining the sample size for BSU moderation of assessments marked by partner providers, the following criteria should be considered:
  - (1) the length of time the partnership has been established
  - (2) the length of time the programme has been in operation
  - (3) any conditions for moderation as set out at the approval event

- (4) the experience of the lecturer marking the student output
- (5) the level of the unit and contribution to the overall degree classification
- (6) the type of student output and the practicalities of implementing the moderation process e.g. art exhibitions and performances.

iii) Any concerns identified by moderation will be followed up with the first marker. In the event of concerns about the quality of provision Bath Spa University may extend and/or increase levels and duration of second marking and moderation.

## 8. The role of External Examiners

External examiners are asked to examine the programme/subject as approved, within the regulations laid down by Academic Board. Their role 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 HEIs, and such expressions of national consensus as the QAA "benchmark" statements.

The External Examiner's role is to audit/validate the assessment, marking and moderation processes. The External Examiner should not be treated as an additional marker. The External Examiner should be presented with a complete set of marks, evidence of marking and moderation and a sample set of assessments after completion of the internal moderation process.

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. 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.

Academic Board is the final authority for any award of Bath Spa University, or for any marks assigned in connection with a BSU award.

## 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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