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# Bath Spa University

# Assessment Policy

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## 1. Student Assessment

*The principal aims of the University's assessment policy are:*

- 1.1. To ensure that assessment processes are valid, reliable, fair and transparent, and appropriately integrated within the learning and teaching strategies and activities of a programme;
- 1.2. To evaluate students' achievement at module and programme levels; their knowledge and understanding, and their abilities, skills and professional competences;
- 1.3. To promote learning by providing students with clear, regular, motivating and constructive feedback which helps them to see the standard and of their work and how their future performance and achievement may be enhanced;
- 1.4. To ensure that the marks or grades awarded to each student within their modules and across their programmes of study enables the University to establish an overall standard of performance for each student;
- 1.5. To have explicit and clearly applied assessment criteria (and, where appropriate, marking schemes) for all summative assignments to ensure that marking is carried out fairly and consistently within and across all subjects;
- 1.6. To enable the wider public, including employers, to know that students have attained an appropriate level of achievement that reflects the academic standards set by the University;
- 1.7. To ensure that the standards for each award and award element are set and maintained at the appropriate level, and that student performance is properly judged against these standards;
- 1.8. To ensure that students attain the learning outcomes of their modules and overall aims of their programmes/awards.
- 1.9. To ensure that assessment is conducted with diligence, integrity and due regard for data security.

*To support the University policy we aim to:*

- 1.10. Provide students with opportunities at all levels of study to apply formative feedback on their learning (as through ARFs or equivalent) to improve their work in future assignments;
- 1.11. Ensure that feedback on summative assignments is legible, clear, and constructive;
- 1.12. Promote, where appropriate, the use of readily-available technologies to support assessment processes;
- 1.13. Provide feedback to students on their assessed work (including traditional examinations) in ways that are both effective and efficient, with due attention to staff time;
- 1.14. Where possible, to coordinate assessment deadlines (including re-sits), especially where students are studying several subjects in parallel and/or taking joint programmes, so as to avoid 'assessment deadline bunching' for students and staff;

- 1.15. Ensure that the amount and timing of assessments enables effective and appropriate measurement of students' achievement of intended learning outcomes;
- 1.16. Monitor the extent to which assessment tasks and associated criteria are effective in measuring student achievement of the intended learning outcomes of modules and courses;
- 1.17. Design assessments that minimize opportunities for unfair practice (e.g., by ensuring that students undertake assessments which are demonstrably their own work);
- 1.18. Promote diversity in assessment tasks within subjects, enabling students to demonstrate the range of their capabilities and achievements within a programme;
- 1.19. Encourage students to adopt good academic practice (e.g., in use of scholarly citation) in respect of their assignments and are aware of their responsibilities (e.g., with regard to submission of assignments, and good academic practice);
- 1.20. Ensure that students are informed of the marks/grades for all summative assignments within 15 working days from the deadline date for submission.

## **2. Assessment Tariffs**

*It is recognised that there are diverse assessment practices across the institution, in many cases relating to specific disciplinary or industrial expectations. A diverse, innovative assessment diet is encouraged, however it is important that some consistency is maintained in order to ensure fairness of student experience, particularly in the context of open, shared, multi-disciplinary modules and combined awards. To ensure consistency of experience across the university, and clarify expectations, the following sets out the assessment load or tariff per module.*

- 2.1 A university-wide tariff for summative assessment promotes deeper learning, fairness in assessment practice, transparency of process, a reduction in assessment load and a more even assessment load across the academic year. Fewer assessments can also create more space for faster and more effective feedback, giving students the opportunity to perform at their best.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 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.

- 2.5 Double modules can carry double the amount of summative assessment, both in terms of maximum numbers of components and tariff.
- 2.6 At Level 4, a 20 credit module constitutes 4,000 words. 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 practice skills and measure knowledge that should be linked to the summative assessment tasks.
- 2.7 At Levels 5 and 6, a 20 credit module constitutes 5,000 words.

### **3. Assessment Limits**

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

- 3.1. 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.
- 3.2. Students must state their word count for all written work. Incorrectly stating the word count may result in an accusation of unfair practice.
- 3.3. No additional penalties are applied; content that exceeds the word or timing limit will not be marked.
- 3.4. The word count refers to everything in the main body of the text, including headings, tables, figures, quotes, lists etc. Items not included in the word count are titles, contents pages, executive summaries or abstracts, appendices, bibliographies or reference lists.

### **4. Assessment Submission**

- 4.1 In order to increase consistency for students and reduce the financial and environmental costs, as far as possible assessments should be submitted, marked and returned online. Hard copies should only be requested from students if there is a pedagogic rationale for doing so e.g. publishing artefacts, bound musical scores and parts, dissertations.
- 4.2 Where assessed work is submitted online, but the marking tutor's preference is to mark 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.
- 4.3 Where possible, all assessed work should be submitted to Turnitin through the VLE. Turnitin should be enabled to permit the following:
  - 4.3.1 Students should be able to submit multiple drafts until the deadline
  - 4.3.2 Students should be able to view Originality Reports for each draft submitted

- 4.4 Student marks should be made available in the Grade Centre within 15 working days of the deadline date of submission.

## 5. Marking, Moderation and the role of the External Examiner

### 5.1 Marking

- 5.1.1 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. An Assessment Report Form (ARF) or equivalent should be completed for each summative assignment ([Quality and Standards A-Z Assessment Report Form](#)). Where possible, students should be able to submit assignments anonymously before they are marked.
- 5.1.2 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 (see 4.2).

#### *a) 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 (e.g., on the ARF or equivalent) 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).

#### *b) 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.

### 5.2 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).*

[QAA Quality Code, Chapter B6 Assessment of Students](#)

- 5.2.1 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.
- 5.2.2 For each module, internal moderation should be undertaken on a sample basis. 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.
- 5.2.3 Work marked by lecturers new to assessment in HE or inexperienced lecturers should be closely monitored within this sampling process.
- 5.2.4 A record should be kept (by the module leader) of the internal moderation that has taken place. This must be available for scrutiny by external examiners or other parties, usually by completion of an Assessment Moderation pro forma. The Moderator should aim to assure her/himself and colleagues that the sample is representative and accurately marked. He/she 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, another marker should be invited to adjudicate. The external examiner should not act as another marker.

### **5.3 Collaborative Provision**

- 5.3.1 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.
- 5.3.2 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. 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.
- 5.3.3 When determining the sample size for BSU moderation of assessments marked by partner providers, the following criteria should be considered:
  - the length of time the partnership has been established
  - the length of time the programme has been in operation
  - any conditions for moderation as set out at the approval event
  - the experience of the lecturer marking the student output
  - the level of the unit and contribution to the overall degree classification
  - the type of student output and the practicalities of implementing the moderation process e.g. art exhibitions and performances.

- 5.3.4 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.

#### **5.4 The role of external examiners**

- 5.4.1 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.
- 5.4.2 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 (typically 10% or a minimum of 8 and all 'fails') should be chosen from across the mark range. The sample may include examples of work that has been internally moderated.
- 5.4.3 Academic Board is the final authority for any award of Bath Spa University, or for any marks assigned in connection with a BSU award.

Further guidance on the [operational role of the External Examiner](#) is provided on the Quality and Standards web pages.

## 6. Assessment methods

Type
<i>Indicative – summative</i>
Tutor-marked unseen examinations under controlled conditions
Tutor-marked open book examinations under controlled conditions
Tutor-marked examinations under controlled conditions for which the question papers are issued in advance
Tutor-marked practical laboratory examinations under controlled conditions
Tutor-marked group assignments including projects, reports, portfolios
Tutor-marked group assignments including case studies, problem-solving exercises, design tasks, fieldwork
Tutor-marked group assignments including learning logs, diaries, mapping exercises, notebooks
Tutor-marked group assignments including presentations, exhibitions, poster displays
Tutor-marked individual assignments including projects, reports, portfolios and essays
Tutor-marked individual assignments including case studies, problem-solving exercises, design tasks, fieldwork
Tutor-marked individual assignments including learning logs, diaries, mapping exercises, notebooks
Tutor-marked individual assignments including presentations, exhibitions, poster displays
Tutor-marked synoptic examinations, projects and dissertations
Multiple choice tests
Cloze tests (requiring the insertion of key terms or concepts to demonstrate understanding)
Computer-based assessment online
Computer-assisted assessment via optical mark or character reading technology
<i>Indicative – formative</i>
Negotiated learning contracts
Work-based assessment
Placement assessment
Simulation exercises, in-tray exercises

## 7. Glossary

**Assessment criteria.** Based on the intended learning outcomes for the work being assessed, the knowledge, understanding and abilities that markers expect a student to display in the assessment task and which must be utilised in marking the work.

**Authentic assessment:** is about designing assessment tasks that require students to utilise prior knowledge and abilities to tackle complex 'real world' problems.

**Diagnostic assessment** is used to show a learner's preparedness for a module or programme and identifies, for the learner and the teacher, any strengths and potential gaps in knowledge, understanding and skills expected at the start of the programme, or other possible problems. Particular strengths may lead to a formal consideration of accreditation of prior learning.

**Formative assessment** has a developmental purpose and is designed to help learners learn more effectively by giving them feedback on their performance and on how it can be improved and/or maintained. Reflective practice by students sometimes contributes to formative assessment.

**Summative assessment** is used to indicate the extent of a learner's success in meeting the assessment criteria used to gauge the intended learning outcomes of a module or programme.

**Synoptic assessment:** An assessment that encourages students to combine elements of their learning from different parts of a programme and to show their accumulated knowledge and understanding of a topic or subject area. A synoptic assessment normally enables students to show their ability to integrate and apply their skills, knowledge and understanding with breadth and depth in the subject. It can help to test a student's capability of applying the knowledge and understanding gained in one part of a programme to increase their understanding in other parts of the programme, or across the programme as a whole.