

Assessment Handbook : Code of Practice on the Quality Assurance and Academic Regulation of Assessment

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VERSION	1.1	OWNER	QCU
APPROVED DATE	October 2018	APPROVED BY	UAEC
REVIEW DATE	annually		

Introduction

This document replaces the previous version of the Assessment Handbook and should be read in conjunction with the supporting documents listed in Appendix 1.

1. Courses and modules

As noted in the [University Academic Regulations](#)

Each course will normally be made up of units of study called modules that consist of multiples of 20 credits. Modules are discrete units of assessed learning at a given level, with coherent learning outcomes.

Every module has a distinct set of learning outcomes that reflect the level of study as articulated in the [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#). Learning outcomes must be articulated for each module and specified in the Module Guide.

All modules must include at least one summative assessment designed to enable students to demonstrate that the module learning outcomes have been met. Module Guides will detail all forms of assessment required.

Every module must be allocated to a Module Results Board and be overseen by a named External Examiner. Modules must be considered by a Module Results Board on at least an annual basis.

Appendix 2 includes a flowchart of the process from the initial design and approval of assessments through to Assessment Boards.

2. Module assessment design and approval

Module Leaders should ensure that assessment is conducted within an **inclusive** and **supportive** environment for students with a wide range of sensory, physical or specific learning difficulties.

The mode of summative assessment for each module (e.g. coursework, presentation, examination etc.) is approved at initial validation and cannot be changed without going through the appropriate modification process.

Guidance on how to **validate / approve new provision** can be found on the Quality and Collaboration Unit's [Validation, Approval and Deletion](#) web page.

The assessment pattern for each module is recorded in SITS in accordance with that approved at initial validation. Any changes required to the assessment pattern requires a request for modification submitted through the task in e:Vision and approved through the formal quality process managed by the Faculty Academic Enhancement Committee.

Guidance on how to make **changes to existing courses and modules** can be found on the Quality and Collaboration Unit's [Modifications and Course Review](#) web page.

Guidance on **assessment design** is available from Faculty Learning and Teaching representatives as well as from the [College of Learning and Teaching](#).

Students with disabilities will not be exempt from academic assessment. If, however, a student is unable to complete any particular form of academic assessment due to their impairment, an alternative, but equivalent, academic assessment should be made available. This alternative academic assessment must still test the learning outcomes for which the original assessment was

designed.

Special examination arrangements are available to students with a recognised condition or impairment.

Staff should incorporate the University's Considerate Marking and Feedback Guidelines into the design of assessment.

Where a course and/or module forms part of the qualifications regime of a **Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body** (PSRB), clear information should be given in the course guide about the specific assessment requirements which must be met for progression towards a professional qualification, including those modules which must be passed and the level at which the course, or any part of it, must be passed in order to meet the requirements of the PSRB. Any PSRB requirements identified at module level must be included within the relevant module guide.

All teaching and assessment of modules within courses leading to an academic award of the University will be in the **English language** apart from the following exceptions:

- foreign language modules
- modules delivered and assessed by another University associated with a student exchange and approved by the Faculty Academic Enhancement Committee.

In these cases, the University will ensure that those staff teaching and assessing students have the subject knowledge and expertise in the language used, and shall ensure that appropriately qualified external examiners are appointed. Any assessment undertaken using a language other than English, as detailed in the exceptions above, shall be recorded on the student's transcript.

3. Approval of Assessment Strategies and Tasks (including Annual Update)

Module and course assessment strategies are approved at validation but their continued effectiveness will be monitored by course teams as part of the Continuous Monitoring Process and at Periodic Review and commented upon by External Examiners in their annual report.

Approval of summative assessment tasks (coursework brief or exam paper) must be completed prior to students being given the assessment task to complete. In the first instance there should be an internal approval process and then the relevant External Examiner should be asked to approve the assessment task which students will complete. No assessment tasks should be presented to students until internal (faculty) and external (external examiner) approval has been secured.

Faculties should have a process in place for reviewing and internally approving all summative assessment tasks e.g. course teams may establish an assessment approval panel where a subject team reviews all assessments that will be used in that subject that semester.

The internal approval process should confirm that the task (coursework brief or exam paper):

- Is the same as that given in the module guide e.g. Coursework - 3000 word report, a Group Presentation - 15 minute, etc.;
- Assesses those learning outcomes assigned to the assessment task in the module guide;
- Is given a weighting which is the same as that assigned to the assessment task in the module guide;
- Is clear and understandable and written in good English;
- Is set at the appropriate academic level and is achievable within the constraints of the

assessment length

- Has appropriate assessment criteria and assessment-specific performance descriptors

Once approved internally the assessment should be sent to the external examiner for external for approval.

This approval process applies to both assessment and re-assessment (resit) tasks for each module to ensure that assessment at each opportunity is equitable and fair.

The External Examiner should be asked to comment on the suitability of the assessment tasks with regards to the module specification, level of work expected and in relation to the standard of the tasks in comparison with similar courses at other institutions; as well as to comment on the clarity of the task and on the guidance provided to the students.

4. Communication with students

The **Course Guide** contains all of the essential information needed to help a student understand how their course operates. It specifies the modules required to be taken and any other additional requirements which must be satisfied for the award of the qualification. Course Guides are generated annually from the validated Course Specification through an online task on e:vision.

The sections of the course guide which relate to assessment are :

- Teaching, Learning and Assessment
- Assessment Methods (calculated)

The sections of the course guide which can be updated as part of the annual update task are :

- Welcome from the Course Leader
- Course Team information
- Health & Safety Issues

Any other sections need to be amended in line with **published deadlines** using the course change process. Once updated, Course Guides are published on the University Course Guide web pages.

The **Module Guide** is created from the validated Module Specification. Module Guides are generated annually from the validated Module Specification through an online task on e:vision.

The sections of the module guide which relate to assessment are :

- Module assessments
- Assessment Criteria
- Performance Descriptors
- Response to Student feedback
- E-submission / Computer assisted Assessment
- Module Assessment Submission information

The sections of the Module Guide which can be updated as part of the annual update task are :

- Module Content
- Learning Activities
- Blended Learning
- All sections relating to Resources
- Assessment Criteria
- Contact Hours
- Performance Descriptors
- “As a result of your feedback ...” section on responses to student feedback

Any other sections need to be amended in line with **published deadlines** using the module change process. Once updated, Module Guides are published on e:vision and Canvas.

As the information in validated Course and Module Specifications merges directly into the published guides, it is important that the language used is student-friendly.

Guidance on the creation and update of on-line Course and Module Guides is available through the e:Vision 'Module and Courses' page. A video walkthrough is available detailing the processes required.

Separate information on examinations is published on the University web site - <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/current-students/examinations/>

On this page students can find information on :

- Timetables
- Examination / assessment weeks
- Examination clashes
- Examination regulations
- Examination attendance record
- Special examination arrangements

5. Submission of assessment

Where **hard copy** assessments are submitted students will be given a receipt. It is the student's responsibility to keep receipts for submitted assessments.

Assessments submitted to a specified location will be held securely. Internal markers will be required to collect assessments from the location where they were submitted and must ensure that assessments continue to be held securely at all times.

Exam scripts are collected and processed in accordance with the University's examination rules. As noted above, separate guidance is available on the management and regulation of examinations.

Where submission is made **online**, this will take place through Canvas.

6. Marking

All undergraduate and taught postgraduate assessments and overall module scores are marked on a **Percentage Scale** (1-100%) as detailed in the University Academic Regulations.

The University is committed to transparent and fair marking arrangements that also reflect and protect the integrity of academic judgement as outlined in Considerate Marking and Feedback.

University Performance Descriptors are generic descriptors which apply mainly, though not exclusively, to written academic work. Module-specific assessment criteria and performance descriptors (i.e. not the generic descriptors but descriptors relevant to the assessment being set) as well as the word limit, length of presentation, practical element, examination or test, etc. must be provided in the module guide. (see also section 3 above)

After assessments have been marked and moderated they should be retained in line with the Document Retention Schedule

7. Moderation

The section outlines the University's policy on moderation.

- **Definition**

Internal moderation is the process by which an individual or group, preferably **not** involved in the setting or grading of an assessment task, confirms:

- i. that the task being set and the criteria being used to determine grade differences are at an appropriate standard for the level concerned and that the task tests what it intends to test and
- ii. that the grades given to students for completing the task have been awarded consistently by the assessor or assessors.

Moderation does **not** change the grades of individual students. If moderators identify anomalies in the grading of work, then the grades of the whole cohort should be modified.

- **Outcomes of Moderation**

If on moderation it is found that grading is too high, low or inappropriately distributed then the grade profile for the whole student cohort should be changed e.g. all grades lowered, raised or the distribution stretched/compressed, as appropriate. Such decisions should be taken through agreement between the first marker(s) and the moderator. If agreement cannot be reached a further moderation by an independent moderator should take place. Moderation does **not** change the grades of individual students. If moderators identify anomalies in the grading of individual students' work, rather than systematic under or over marking which applies to a whole cohort, then the work of all students should be second marked and further moderation take place following this.

- **Internal Moderation Samples**

Normally moderation of completed assessments is **based on a sample of the graded work** and is used as a means of assuring students, assessment boards and other interested parties that the standards expected of and achieved by students are appropriate, reliable and consistent.

Moderators should have access to all of the grades awarded for the module, not just the sample grades.

The University **minimum sample size** for internal moderation is at least 10% of the graded assessments or six assessments whichever is the largest, however, for small modules, it may be appropriate to moderate most or all of the completed assessments.

The **sample selection process** must be agreed by the moderation team and be both transparent and objective.

The **chosen sample** must reflect the range of marks awarded by each marker across each iteration and cohort.

In cases where marking of assessments takes place in a **'live' situation**, for example, oral presentations, drama and dance 'performances', the assessment is moderated in one of the following ways:

- two members of the module team are present
- the assessment is recorded using an appropriate recording medium for internal

- moderation at a later stage or
- another method specific to the module is determined by subject staff.

Faculties must publish clear statements as to how assessments of this type will be moderated in the relevant course guide and/or module guide.

Samples of assessments undertaken in these conditions must be made available to external examiners.

- **Second marking**

Second marking involves a second or third marker reading and grading course work and/or examinations.

Second marking can be 'closed' or 'open'. When undertaking 'closed' marking the second marker does not have access to the grades or comments of the first marker. In 'open' marking the second marker sees the first marker's grades and comments.

Unless being used to benchmark standards, second marking should normally be applied to **all the students in a group**, not a sample, however there may be a small number of cases in which the first assessor wants a second opinion.

- **Dissertations/projects**

Dissertations/projects are independently marked by two members of staff. They are not necessarily subject to further internal moderation but are moderated by External Examiners.

Students are required to submit **two copies of their dissertation/project**.

- **Resolving differences**

Faculties must have an **agreed method of resolving differences** between grades awarded by the moderation team and this process must be a) transparent and b) communicated to students. In cases where the two markers disagree on the grade to be awarded, the matter is normally resolved by the two members of staff concerned. Where it is not possible to reach agreement, a third marker's view may be sought. In very difficult cases, the matter may be referred to the Course Leader. External examiners must not be asked to resolve disagreements of this kind.

Students who achieve a **marginal fail grade** (0-39%) at levels 3-6 have a right to re-sit the assessment (Section 4 – [University Academic Regulations](#)). Module Leaders must ensure that arrangements for the re-sit of assessments are in place and discussed with the External Examiner.

- **External Examiner Samples**

External examiners require samples for module assessments at level 5 and above and if the module contributes to the qualification awarded e.g. Foundation Degree, HNC or HND then this may include level 3 and level 4. Samples provided to external examiners should be selected on the basis of:

- for each module in every semester that the module is run a sample of assessed work covering the whole range of grades awarded (including fail grades) for the module. the minimum size of a sample of scripts/examination papers is the larger of 10% of the number of students presenting assessments or 6 assessments. the nature of the sample should be agreed between the external examiner and the subject team but should normally include:
 - i. assessed work from all components of the assessment regime of a module
 - ii. presentations, laboratory work, practical and work placements where appropriate and/or if required by professional and other bodies.

- iii. the range of modules moderated.
- the distribution of grades awarded within a module and across the subject portfolio.
- the appropriateness of module assessment in content, level, time allocation, degree of challenge and its comparability with that of other modules in the subject portfolio.

Faculties must have **evidence of internal moderation** available for scrutiny by the external examiner and to ensure that the process can be verified. The sample of assessments provided to the external examiner must include a mix of moderated and unmoderated work. It must be clear to the external examiner which of the assessments have formed part of the internal moderated sample and which have not.

- **Resits**

Processes for the **marking of re-assessment (resit)** work should reflect those carried out for all assessment at first attempt.

The **internal moderation of resits** is not required if the module has been subject to internal moderation and scrutiny from the external examiner at the first sit.

All re-assessment (resit) work must be made available for the External Examiner on request and their input into this process should be discussed and agreed at the time of the Module Results Board.

8. Results

SITS has been programmed with award regulations and will **calculate** the award achieved by finalists and the classification where appropriate. This information is presented to Award Boards, which confer awards and recommend retrieval or retakes of modules.

There is an **Award Predictor** in e:Vision for students from the link is called 'Predict my award' where students can enter the results they expect to achieve and view what classification of degree they would receive. Staff also have access to the award predictor from the e:Vision 'Modules and Courses' page.

Module Leaders are asked to check each module assessment pattern from their e:Vision account prior to module delivery and report any discrepancies to their Faculty Quality Officer.

Module Leaders are responsible for **entering grades** through e:Vision. An online e:Vision Web Mark entry manual is available from the teaching page of e:Vision. Once all items of work have been entered, SITS will calculate the final overall module grade and will automatically work out if the student has passed or failed the module overall and their right to reassessment as necessary.

University policy is to publish grades, requirements for re-assessment (resit) and recommendations from Progression and Award Boards to students through e:Vision. Grades **must not** be published on notice boards.

For finalists, a letter confirming the award conferred and a finalist transcript is sent to the student's home address.

9. Assessment Boards

The University operates a **two-tier** Assessment Board structure.

The **Module Results Board** is responsible for a cognate set of modules. Modules in this set will

normally belong to more than one subject area. The Board carries full responsibility for considering the performance of students, individual modules, module groups and confirming module results.

Progression and Award Boards are responsible for confirming that University regulations have been correctly applied in determining the qualification and classification of finalists and a student's right to continue study.

There is provision within the structure for courses, which need to satisfy the requirements of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies, to establish Boards which can meet more often and operate differently.

For details of the Assessment Boards' composition and terms of reference and the role and duties of External examiners, see the [External Examiner Guidance webpages](#) and [University Academic Regulations](#)

10. Resit, retake, leave of absence and appeals

Section 4 of the [University Academic Regulations](#) relates to a student's rights and the University's responsibilities with regard to the **management of failure** (i.e. resits and retakes) and leave of absence.

Students apply for **leave of absence** via their e:Vision account and students are advised to seek advice from their Personal Tutor, Faculty Student Services¹ or the Students' Union, particularly regarding financial implications before taking this step.

If a student is concerned that an **assessment grade is lower than expected**, the student should meet with the relevant module tutor (or their personal tutor) to review the feedback provided. This process would be expected to resolve most immediate concerns. If, as part of this process, it becomes clear that there has been a problem with marking, such as questions being missed or grades being miscalculated, these should be resolved immediately. The module leader should check that a similar problem has not occurred with other work and should be assured through the internal moderation processes that this is an isolated issue.

While a student may not question "academic judgement", the University operates a formal academic appeals process by which any student may appeal the decision of the relevant Award Board:

Advice from the Students' Union:

*"You cannot appeal against the academic judgement of the University. This means that you can't question your grades or another University decision simply because you feel you could have done better or you are disappointed by the result. This is because the academic staff are the experts, and the University has internal and external moderation procedures to ensure your assessment is marked fairly. If you do not agree with a decision of an Award Board, the University's regulations allow you to appeal within **twenty working days** of that decision providing you have grounds to do so..."*

The University's [Academic Appeals](#) processes apply only to the decisions of Assessment Boards of the University. The University has no powers to review assessment which is considered externally.

A student has the **right to appeal** against the decision of an Assessment Board if there is evidence

¹ Amended from "Student Centres" 20/12/18

of one or more of the following:

- The published grades are incorrect.
- There has been a material irregularity in the assessment process which casts reasonable doubt on the validity of the result.
- Performance in assessment was affected by exceptional factors which could not (for valid reasons) be notified to the Award Board prior to its meeting.
- There has been an error in the application of University regulations in a decision of the Award Board relation to continuation, progression, completion or conferment.
- There has been a material error in the calculation of an award classification.

Students who believe that they have evidence on which to base an appeal are advised to seek advice from the Student's Union Welfare and Advice Centre.

For further information on University policy and procedures relating to academic misconduct reference the following:

- [Policy on Maintaining Academic Integrity](#)
- [Academic Misconduct](#)

11. Assessment change

As a part of Continuous Monitoring, course teams are required to review and evaluate the effectiveness of assessments, looking to identify opportunities for improvement which is then reported in the **academic enhancement plan**. In doing this evaluation the following sources of information should be used.

- comments of internal moderators/second markers;
- External Examiner reports;
- all forms of student feedback such as group discussions and mid-module evaluations;
- student module evaluation questionnaires;
- previous course journal / academic enhancement plan reporting;
- profiles of grades awarded;
- submitted assessments.

Any **revisions to assessment regimes** have to be approved through the Faculty's modifications process, in the academic year **preceding** the delivery of the module in order to comply with expectations of the [Competitions and Markets Authority](#).

Refer to [The Modification of Existing Provision](#) guidelines for further information on processes for the modification to approved module assessments.

For further information on the deadlines for making changes see the Timelines Section on QCU's [Modifications and ongoing course review](#) page

See also the [Code of Practice for the Management of Changes to Modules and Courses](#)

Appendix 1 – Supporting documents / web links

- [Bye-law 6 - Examinations and Other Assessments](#) (PDF 19K, Downloads file)
- [Code of Practice for the Management of Changes to Modules and Courses](#) (PDF 45K, Downloads file)
- [Code of Practice for University Assessment Boards](#) (PDF 371K, Downloads file)
- [Conduct and Appeals](#)
- [Considerate Marking and Feedback](#)
- [Document Retention Schedule](#) (PDF 429K, Downloads file)
- [Policy on Maintaining Academic Integrity](#) (PDF 152K, Downloads file)
- [Procedure for the Management of a Viva in Cases of Suspected Academic Misconduct](#) (PDF 86K, Downloads file)
- [Regulations and Procedure for Academic Appeals](#) (PDF 93K, Downloads file)
- [Regulations and Procedure for Academic Misconduct](#) (PDF 161K, Downloads file)
- [Role of the module results examiner](#)
- [Role of the award / progression examiner](#)
- [Special examination arrangements](#)
- [Student Support and Wellbeing \(SSW\)](#)
- [Undergraduate, Foundation, Taught Postgraduate and Professional Doctorate Regulations](#)
- [University Academic Regulations](#) (**Word doc 322k**)
- [University Assessment and Feedback Principles](#) (PDF 82K, Downloads file)
- [University Examination Regulations for Students](#) (Word doc 42k)
 - Section 4 : Assessment
- University Examinations Guidelines for Staff - this document is currently being updated. Contact Examinations and Timetabling: timetable@wlv.ac.uk
- [University Performance Descriptors](#) (PDF 421K, Downloads file)

Information regarding assessment design can be provided by the [College of Learning & Teaching](#) (colt@wlv.ac.uk)

Appendix 2 – Assessment lifecycle

