

UNIVERSITY POLICY

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS

Introduction

Assessment is a generic term for a set of processes that measure the outcomes of students' learning, in terms of knowledge acquired, understanding developed, and skills gained. It serves many purposes. Assessment provides the means by which students are graded, passed, failed or referred. It provides the basis for decisions on whether a student is ready to proceed, to qualify for an award or to demonstrate competence to practise. It enables students to obtain feedback on their learning and helps them improve their performance. It enables staff to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching.

Assessment plays a significant role in the learning experience of students. It determines their progression through their programmes and enables them to demonstrate that they have achieved the intended learning outcomes. It is assessment that provides the main basis for public recognition of achievement, through the awarding of qualifications and/or credit.

Assessment is usually construed as being diagnostic, formative or summative.

Commonly held understandings of these terms are that:

- *diagnostic assessment* provides an indicator of a learner's aptitude and preparedness for a programme of study and identifies possible learning problems;
- *formative assessment* is designed to provide learners with feedback on progress and inform development. It may or may not contribute to the overall assessment;
- *summative assessment* provides a measure of achievement or failure made in respect of a learner's performance in relation to the intended learning outcomes of the programme of study.

Any assessment instrument can, and often does, involve more than one of these elements. So, for example, much programme work is formative in that it provides an opportunity for students to be given feedback on their level of attainment, but also often counts towards the credit being accumulated for a summative statement of achievement. An end-of-module or end-of-programme examination is designed primarily to result in a summative judgement on the level of attainment the student has reached. Both formative and summative assessment can have a diagnostic function. Assessment primarily aimed at diagnosis is intrinsically formative, though it might, rarely, contribute towards a summative judgement.

The precepts

1. The University will have effective procedures for:
 - designing, approving, supervising and reviewing the assessment strategies for programmes and awards;
 - the consistent implementation of rigorous assessment practices which ensure that the academic/professional standard for each award and award element is set and maintained at the appropriate level and that student performance is properly judged against this.

2. The principles, procedures and processes of all assessment will be explicit, valid, and reliable.
3. The University will have effective arrangements for diagnosing and supporting students in the development of assessment skills.
4. The University will have effective mechanisms to deal with breaches of assessment regulations, and the resolution of appeals against assessment decisions.
5. The University will take account of the requirements of professional bodies, where appropriate.
6. The University will evaluate periodically the maintenance and development of its academic standards.
7. The University will implement effective, clear, and consistent policies in respect of the membership, procedures, powers and accountability of assessment panels and boards of examiners. Where there is more than one such body the relative powers of each will be defined.
8. The University will ensure that assessment is conducted with rigour and fairness and with due regard for security.
9. The University, through its subject areas, will ensure that the scheduling and amount of assessment is consistent with an effective and appropriate measurement of the achievement by students of the intended learning outcomes and effectively supports learning.
10. The University will publish, and implement consistently, clear criteria for the marking and grading of assessments.
11. The University will ensure that there are robust mechanisms for marking and for the moderation of marks.
12. The University will publish clear criteria for the aggregation of marks and grades and the rules and regulations for progression, final awards and classifications.
13. The University will ensure that appropriate feedback is provided to students on assessed work in a way that promotes learning and facilitates improvement.
14. The University will ensure that all staff involved in the assessment of students are competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities.
15. The languages of assessment and study will normally be the same; if, for any reason, this cannot be achieved, the University will ensure that their academic standards are not consequently put at risk.
16. The University will ensure that where a programme forms part of the qualifications regime of a professional or statutory body clear information is available to staff and students about specific assessment requirements that must be met for progression towards the professional qualification.
17. The University will have effective mechanisms for the review and development of assessment regulations.

18. The University will ensure that assessment decisions are recorded and documented accurately and systematically.
19. The University will ensure that the decisions of relevant examination boards are published as quickly as possible, consistent with rigour of assessment and accuracy.
20. The University will have effective procedures for resolving student complaints and academic appeals. Students will have a full opportunity to raise, individually or collectively, matters of proper concern to them without fear of disadvantage and in the knowledge that privacy and confidentiality will be respected.
21. The University will require its external examiners, in their expert judgement, to report on:

whether the standards set are appropriate for its awards, or award elements, by reference to published national subject benchmarks, the national qualifications frameworks, programme specifications and other relevant information;

the standards of student performance in those programmes or parts of programmes which they have been appointed to examine, and on the comparability of the standards with those of similar programmes or parts of programmes in other UK higher education the University;

the extent to which its processes for assessment, examination, and the determination of awards are sound and have been fairly conducted.
22. Prior to the publication of mark lists, pass lists or similar documents, the University will require external examiners to endorse in writing the outcomes of the assessment(s) they have been appointed to scrutinise.
23. Assessment and examination policies, practices and procedures will provide students with a known disability an equivalent opportunity as their peers to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes.
24. The examination and assessment requirements for programmes provided under a collaborative arrangement must be devised so as to ensure that the academic standards of the awards are equivalent to those of the same or comparable programmes delivered by the Awarding University and, as such, reflect any national benchmarks.
25. For franchised programmes the examination and other assessment requirements will be the same as those required by the Awarding University when it delivers the same or comparable programmes itself. If variations are essential these must only be made with the prior approval of the University and must be able to demonstrate that academic standards will not be compromised as a result.
26. For programmes delivered under an accreditation or validation arrangement the examination and assessment requirements will be equivalent to, and as effective as, those employed by the Awarding University when it delivers the same or comparable programmes itself.
27. The University will ensure that the partner organisation understands and follows the University's requirements for the conduct of assessments.

28. The University will be able to demonstrate publicly that assessment procedures used for programmes studied at a distance are appropriate for the mode of study, for the circumstances in which the programmes are studied and for the nature of the assessment being undertaken; that assessments are conducted and marked and results promulgated, in a reliable and properly regulated manner; and that, in all respects, assessment procedures accord with the requirement to safeguard academic standards.
 29. The University will be able to demonstrate that the assessment of a module, and/or a programme of study as a whole, adequately assesses students' achievement of the learning outcomes stated for the module and/or programme of study.
 30. The University will have mechanisms to assure itself of the rigour and conduct of the assessment process and the determination of results.
 31. The University will monitor systematically the soundness of its assessment procedures and practice and be ready to amend them in the light of feedback.
 32. Work based or placement learning should be considered as an integral part of programme or module design. In the schedule of programme approval and monitoring, the university will ensure that the assessment of the outcomes of work based or placement learning, whether undertaken on the placement, at the work place or at the institution, is to the appropriate level of the award or stage of the programme and that student performance is properly judged against this.
 33. The University will determine, through validation, the contribution that work based or placement learning makes to the overall aims of the programme or module and to specific programme or module outcomes when it designs and implements the assessment strategy for the programme.
 34. The University will determine, through validation, how the assessment of work based or placement learning is to be covered by the arrangements for internal moderation and external examining, and how the standards which are applied to the assessment of work based or placement learning are consistent with available subject benchmarks and other relevant reference points and, where appropriate, fulfil professional or regulatory body requirements.
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University Policy Statement on Anonymous Marking

Anonymous marking is a means of reducing unconscious bias for or against individual students and is consistent with the University's equal opportunity policy. It can serve to protect staff from allegations of bias and to increase the confidence of students in the impartiality of the marking system.

In addition to the current practice of anonymous marking of all written examinations, all Faculties should adopt a policy of anonymous marking for written assignments where this is practical and feasible and does not preclude the development of innovation in assessment practice.