

ACADEMIC POLICY 2:

Assessment Policy

2011-2012

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PREFACE

This policy is an amalgamation of two policies and sets of regulations previously agreed by the University; namely, the Assessment Regulations and the Policy on Fairness in Assessment. In the course of amalgamating these documents minor amendments and deletions have been made to reflect changes to the Academic Regulations agreed in 2009/10 and to assist with standardising this document.

Academic Registrar
September 2010

ASSESSMENT POLICY

Definition of Assessment

1 The University has adopted the following definition of assessment:

'Assessment describes any process which appraises an individual's knowledge understanding, abilities or skills'. This includes any process which:

- promotes student learning by providing the student with feedback, normally to help improve his/her performance
- evaluates student knowledge, understanding, abilities or skills
- provides a mark or grade that enables a student's performance to be assessed
- enables the public (including employers), and higher education providers, to know that an individual has attained an appropriate level of achievement that reflects the academic standards set by the awarding institution and agreed UK norms, including the framework for higher education qualifications. This may include demonstrating fitness to practise or meeting other professional requirements.

Types of Assessment

2 The University recognises the following types of assessment:

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

3 The University recognises that any individual piece of assessment can fulfil one or more of these functions.

Assessment Principles

4 The University has agreed the following principles for the assessment of students.

The University will:

- publish criteria and guidance that enables its academic standards to be described and maintained
- support its staff in understanding policy and practice in regard to assessment
- ensure that all assessments are fair and unaffected by gender, ethnicity, age or any other personal characteristics of the students

- publish clear assessment criteria and other information about assessment requirements to students
- ensure that assessment strategies are designed to ensure that the assessment loading is appropriate to the credit value for the module
- ensure that assessment strategies are formally approved for all programmes of study both initially and following any subsequent revisions. Strategies will be kept under review to ensure currency and all assessment strategies are validated by the University
- educate students about their responsibilities with respect to the assessment process and facilitating understanding of assessment requirements
- provide students with clear information in regard to assessment, including information on:
 - the types of assessments
 - the timing of those assessments
 - the criteria that will be used to mark each summative assessment
 - the way in which marks are checked and agreed
 - how they will receive feedback and by when
 - the mechanisms available for raising queries about the accuracy of the marks provided
- provide students with guidelines indicating the nature and range of mechanisms used to:
 - check the accuracy of the marks
 - check the consistency of the academic judgements made by staff *eg.* by sample double marking
 - ensure an element of independence of judgement where anonymous marking is not employed *e.g.* by second marking
 - ensure transparency in the assessment process *eg.* recording major assessments such as presentations or performances
 - agree marks where there are significant differences between markers
- ensure that all assessments are marked in a transparent manner against the published criteria or marking scheme. Where double marking is employed, a clear audit trail will be provided for external examiners
- ensure all summative examinations in the Undergraduate Modular Scheme and Postgraduate Credit Framework are marked under conditions of anonymity. Anonymous marking may be used for other types of assessment where is feasible and agreed by a faculty
- appoint external examiners as auditors of the assessment process in accordance with the QAA Code of Practice (Section 4: External Examining)
- provide induction opportunities for external examiners
- provide feedback which is timely (which is deemed to be within 4 working weeks of the submission deadline)

- ensure that all students who successfully pass the assessment for an award will have achieved the stated learning outcomes for the programme of study, demonstrating at least a minimum threshold level of knowledge and skill
- review policies and regulations related to assessment on a regular basis.

Student obligations in regard to assessment

5 The University has agreed the following student obligations in regard to assessment.

Students must:

- undertake assessments, comply with assessment deadlines and follow guidelines on referencing conventions and maintain good academic conduct in relation to assessment practice
- ensure that they conduct themselves with honesty and integrity in all assessment activities
- ensure that they actively engage with formal and informal assessment feedback.
- ensure that work produced for assessment is legible to the examiners unless alternative assessment arrangements have been agreed in advance. Illegible work will be marked as failed unless the work is transcribed into a legible form, under supervision and at the student's expense. This may delay determination of the grade.

Assessment Regulations

6 The University has agreed common assessment regulations for all programmes in the Undergraduate Modular Scheme and the Postgraduate Credit Framework. These regulations are set out in the Academic Regulations 2: Undergraduate Courses and Academic Regulations 3: Taught Postgraduate Courses.

7 Assessment regulations for Research Postgraduate Courses are set out in the Academic Regulations 4: Research courses.

8 Variations to the common assessment regulations may be agreed on an exceptional basis by the Academic Regulations Committee on behalf of the Academic Board.

Religious Observance and examinations

9 Many members of religion or belief groups may wish to observe a range of customs, rules or disciplines that are determined by the doctrines of their faith and/or their particular interpretation of it (Weller, 2011)¹. The University recognises that students may experience conflict between religious observance and formal timetabled examinations.

¹ Weller, P. (2011). *Religion and Belief in Higher Education the experiences of staff and students*. Equality Challenge Unit.