

# Quality Code for Higher Education

## Assessment Procedures

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<b>Originator:</b>	Higher Education & Skills Department
<b>Approval by:</b>	Higher Education Learning & Teaching Committee
<b>Date for Review:</b>	July 2023
<b>Description:</b>	<p>This Code of Practice (CoP) brings together information on assessment tariff, reasonable adjustments, class based assessments, anonymous marking, late submission, invigilation, second marking and archiving of assessed work. It also governs over length assessments, feedback on assessments and assessment criteria for levels 4-7.</p> <p><b>NOTE: Where the awarding body has different requirements this will take precedence over the College's Code of Practice</b></p>
<b>Responsibilities:</b>	Curriculum Leaders, s, Student Services, Additional Learning Support, Examinations Unit
<b>Applications for exemptions to:</b>	Higher Education Learning & Teaching Committee
<b>Report Exemptions to:</b>	Higher Education Learning & Teaching Committee
<b>Links to UK Quality Code for HE:</b>	<a href="#">Chapter B6</a>

## Introduction

1. This Code of Practice (CoP) is designed to bring together all matters relating to the process of assessment, complementing the codes governing boards of examiners and external examiners, and should be read alongside the College Programmes Regulations. Its purpose is to make explicit the College's expectations of the conduct of assessment.

## Authority

2. Higher Education Learning & Teaching Committee is the final arbiter of the application and interpretation of this CoP.

## Scope of the code

3. This CoP applies to all taught modules (whether offered self-standing for credit or as part of a programme of study leading to an award) whether delivered in whole or part by the College.

## SECTION I – COLLEGE ASSESSMENT TARIFF

### Introduction

4. The following section explains the criteria, approved by Higher Education Learning & Teaching Committee with regard to summative assessment tariff requirements for the assessment of taught modules and programmes.
5. The purpose of the tariff is to minimise the risk of assessment overload and inequity. The assessment tariff sets pro rata allowances for 20 credit modules. The tariff applies to all stages of an award.
6. The tariff recognises that credits relate to learning hours, rather than simply to the number of words written or length of an examination or other form of assessment. For example, modules that involve a greater proportion of independent study (e.g. dissertation modules) might reasonably be assessed by a piece of work of greater length than a taught module of the same credit value. The tariff also recognises that fewer words do not necessarily represent less work, especially where a large amount of data has to be organised, prioritised, edited and presented. The tariff is designed, therefore, to provide parameters within which assessment tasks **must** be based, but module designers may exercise academic judgement in determining the size and scale of these tasks.
7. Module providers **must** apply the tariff, in order to meet the learning outcomes of the module, defining precisely the word limits, or equivalent, which will apply to each assessment. Keeping within the limits specified below any piece of work **should** take into account:
  - the level of study (level 5 and 6 students might reasonably be expected to have the skills and experience to write in greater depth than level 4 students in the same amount of study time)
  - discipline-specific requirements
8. Module providers **must** communicate precise assessment modes, word limits, weightings, assessment criteria, and the method and timing of feedback to students in writing no later than the start of the module. This information **should** be included in module handbooks.

9. In designing the assessment strategy for a module, module providers **must** be aware of the impact of the timing of each assessment element on student workload, and make appropriate allowance in that timing to enable students to benefit from feedback received from one piece of assessment in the next subsequent assessment.
10. Module providers **must** communicate to students in writing the precise nature of assessments, whether they are summative or purely formative, and whether they must be attempted (and/or passed) in order to pass the module.

### Assessment Tariff

11. Based on academic judgement, a 20 credit module (other than a 20 credit dissertation module) **must** be assessed by either:

- A 4,000-6,000 word written assignment

**Or:**

- A mixture of modes of assessment, which is evidence-based and commensurate with the allocated learning hours, and which may include, for example:
  - A formal 2-hour written examination
  - A 2,000-3,000 word written assignment
  - Presentations
  - Laboratory work
  - Experiments
  - Performances
  - In-class tests
  - Oral examinations
  - Projects
  - Portfolios
  - Computer-based tests
  - E-assessment
  - Exhibition of art works
  - Live performance or outcomes evidenced through digital media

12. Departments **must**, if using a mixture of assessment modes within a single module, ensure that the overall assessment load for each student is not excessive, bearing in mind the requirements above.
13. Modules of other than 20 credits **must** have an assessment load which takes the above requirements into account.
14. Dissertations by their very nature require independent learning and scope to present an advanced, research based academic argument. For these reasons, dissertations require an extended word limit. Thus for a:
  - (1) 20 credit dissertation module, the limit **must** be within the range 5,000 – 7,500 words (or equivalent).
  - (2) 40 credit dissertation module, the limit **must** be within the range 10,000 – 15,000 words (or equivalent).

- (3) 60 credit dissertation module, the limit **must** be within the range 15,000 – 20,000 words (or equivalent).

It is acknowledged that in some disciplines, a ‘dissertation’ module is not solely a textual piece of work, but may include other single, large pieces of work such as, for example, design/exhibition of art works or musical/dance arrangements or performances. These tasks **must** commensurate with the workload involved in producing dissertations to the word counts above.

### Examinations

15. The default length for all formal College examinations is 2 hours. Departments have the authority to permit 3 hour examinations where specific justification is provided. No other durations are permitted for formal examinations; however there are no restrictions on durations used for class-based tests.

### Methods of assessment

16. Where possible, modules **should** involve more than one method of assessment and programmes **should** involve a variety of methods. It is acknowledged that there will be cases where a single method of assessment can be justified, either by essay, exam, or other method of assessment.
17. New methods of assessment **should not** be introduced in the final stage of a programme. However, it is acknowledged that project work and dissertations may legitimately involve new approaches to learning and associated new modes of assessment.

### Assessment of long thin (year-long) modules

18. Assessment of long thin modules **must** follow the assessment tariff, whilst also taking into account the following:
- There **must** be no semester 1 formal examinations.
  - The emphasis in semester 1 assessment (coursework etc) for long thin modules **should** be formative. That is, Departments **must not** require more than 50% of the summative assessment for the module to be submitted during the first semester, but it is recognised there may be a proportionally higher amount of formative assessment depending on the discipline concerned.

## SECTION 2 – REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

### Purpose

19. Reasonable adjustments to examination and assessment arrangements may be made to enable disabled students to demonstrate their abilities. This must not change the purpose of the assessment but may alter the method. It is important that academic standards are maintained and therefore when reasonable adjustments for disabled students are made, the procedure described in Annexe 1 must be used to ensure parity for all students.
20. Additional explanatory information is provided in Annexes 6A and 6A(I).

## SECTION 3 – ANONYMOUS ASSESSMENT

21. All forms of summative assessment **must** be marked anonymously where this is practicable. Where it is considered that anonymity is not practicable it **should** be declared in the module specification and approved as part of the usual module approval process.

## SECTION 4 – FEEDBACK ON ASSESSMENT

22. Each academic Department **must** have in place a policy governing feedback on formative and summative assessment which has been developed in consultation with the Department's staff/student committee(s) and the external examiners and which has been approved or otherwise determined by the Higher Education & Skills Department. The policy **must** be clearly communicated to all students within the Department.
23. The policy **must** address the following principles:
- A clear statement **must** be given on the period of time in which student work will be returned with feedback. The period should be calculated to begin with submission and end with the return of student work and **should** not exceed 4 weeks.
  - Students **must** be provided with an opportunity to act on the feedback in preparing for further assessments in the same or other related modules.
  - Feedback **must** be clear, and where written, legible
  - Feedback **must** include specific reference to module learning outcomes or to clear grading criteria derived from learning outcomes, and **should** indicate specifically whether each outcome has been achieved, and if not the reasons for this judgement
  - The principles on which work is being marked **must** be made clear to students, whether this is via learning outcomes or grading criteria.
  - Where relevant, learning outcomes **should** be stated on the feedback form, rather than students being referred to their module handbooks or to other separate documents
  - Feedback **should** be balanced, to include strengths as well as areas for development
  - Feedback **must** include some targets for future development (relevant at both mid- and end-module). These targets could include:
    - General academic features / study skills
    - Presentation, style, structure
    - Range and use of reading
    - Criticality
    - Focus on the question / establishment of a key and relevant question
  - Feedback **must** include not only areas for development, but also practical ways to improve these areas
  - Clarification relating to feedback **must** be made available to students on request
24. In formulating and applying policies on feedback, Departments **should** consider the suggested feedback mechanisms provided as examples of good practice in Annexe 6K of this CoP. To ensure clear summative feedback is given to each student, teachers are required to use the summative assessment template, found in Annexe 6O for, at minimum, one assessment per student, per module.

## SECTION 5 – ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

### Application of assessment criteria

25. Academic Heads are responsible for ensuring that the marking of summatively assessed work is undertaken using discipline/assessment task specific assessment criteria which are informed by the generic assessment criteria published in Annexes 6E – 6I of this Code of Practice.
26. Students **must** be informed, for example through Departmental or module handbooks, of the criteria applicable to each assessment task.

## SECTION 6 – OVERLENGTH ASSESSMENTS

27. There is a College standard system of penalties which departments **must** apply to summatively assessed work which is deemed to be 'over length'.
28. The following penalties **must** be adhered to:
- (i) Penalties are a percentage of the **maximum mark** available for the assessment element which is over length
  - (ii) Over length assessment penalties apply only to word counts and exclude charts, graphs, tables etc
  - (iii) Unless otherwise specified the published word limit excludes references in footnotes, appendices, references and bibliography lists
  - (iv) Coursework assessment rubrics **must** instruct students to declare a word count on the coversheet where a word limit is specified
  - (v) An erroneous word count declaration **must** be dealt with as suspected use of unfair means. The case **must** then be followed up according to the Regulations on the Use of Unfair Means
  - (vi) The penalties which **must** be applied to work which is over length are:
    - 10-20% over the specified word limit, a penalty of 10%
    - more than 20% over the published word limit, the work will be awarded a mark of zero
  - (vii) Other penalties **must not** be applied.

## CHAPTER 7 – PENALTIES FOR LATE SUBMISSION

29. There is a College standard system of penalties for late submission of coursework. The aim of the system is to encourage good time-management skills, and to operate a clear, simple, rigorous and transparent system.
30. The following penalties **must** be adhered to:
- (i) Penalties are a percentage of the **maximum mark** available for the assessment element which has been submitted late
  - (ii) All coursework assessments **must** have a published submission time which **should** be no later than 4pm and this time **must** be communicated effectively to students
  - (iii) The late submission penalties which **must** be applied to coursework submitted after the published deadline are:
    - Up to and including 24 hours after the deadline, a penalty of 10%
    - More than 24 hours and up to and including 7 days after the deadline; either a penalty of 10% or the mark awarded is reduced to the pass mark, **whichever results in the lower mark**
    - More than 7 days after the deadline, a mark of zero is awarded.

## CHAPTER 8 - PRINCIPLES FOR THE USE OF TURNITIN

31. TurnItIn is a tool to detect potential instances of plagiarism and incorrect source referencing. Academic judgement is an essential element in the process of detecting plagiarism and the interpretation of TurnItIn reports.
32. This section sets out the College's expectations regarding the use of the TurnItIn software. The College is committed to ensuring that all students are treated equitably and consistently and to upholding the highest level of academic integrity and rigour.
33. All instances of unfair means are regulated by the College's Regulations (principally Regulations on the Use of Unfair Means).
34. The production and submission of any piece of assessed written work, whether via TurnItIn or otherwise, remains the sole responsibility of the student. That is, students are expected to ensure all sources are appropriately acknowledged within their own work and in line with departmental practices.
35. TurnItIn can be used as a developmental tool to support students in gaining a greater understanding of good academic practice. Students **must** have access to the 'Playpen' facility during the period for which they are eligible to receive a Caution under Unfair Means Regulations.
36. Departments **must** ensure that students receive a range of appropriate guidance and support regarding good academic practice, instructions for the use of TurnItIn (for example during induction for both new and returning students) and guidance on the interpretation of originality reports.
37. All forms of summative written assessment **must** be screened using TurnItIn where this is practicable. Where it is considered that screening via TurnItIn is not practicable it **should** be declared in the module specification and approved as part of the usual module approval process.

## SECTION 9 – SECOND MARKING

### Terminology

38. The following definitions inform the College's expectations for second marking:

- *Marking*: a process by which a numerical score is attached to a student's work
- *Formative marking*: refers to marks awarded solely in order to provide the student with feedback on assessment where the marks do not contribute to the overall module mark
- *Summative marking*: refers to marks awarded that contribute to the overall module mark
- *Single-marking*: students' work is marked by a single internal examiner
- *Second-marking*: a process whereby the awarded marks are checked and validated by a second marker. The guidance given to the second-marker should include necessary information on assessment criteria and learning outcomes. There are two types of second-marking:

*Open second-marking*: at the time of marking, the second marker knows the marks awarded by the first marker

*Independent second-marking:* at the time of marking, the second marker does not know the marks awarded by the first marker

- *Whole-group second marking:* In some cases the work of every student in a group is second marked
- *Sub-group second marking:* Alternatively, samples of work of a sub-group may be second marked. Such work **should** be a representative sample equally spanning the full range of marks awarded with a minimum of 10 scripts or 10% of the whole group (whichever is the larger).

### College requirements

39. In applying the following requirements account **should** be taken of:

- the significance of the assessment
- the experience of the marker
- the type of assessment

Marking **must** be guided by published assessment criteria and learning outcomes and, if appropriate, by model answers.

40. The College's minimum requirements for second marking for each assessment task are designed to balance rigour with practicality in the time scales for the assessment period:

Assessment type	Marking requirement
Formative assessment	Single marking
Undergraduate Pre-Certificate and Certificate stage summative assessment ^	Single marking
All other summative assessment +	Open second marking of a sub-group of work comprising no less than the work of 10 students or 10% of the whole group (whichever is the larger) and including a representative sample equally spanning the full range of marks awarded
Marking conducted by a member of staff with less than one year's marking experience at the level in question	Open second marking of all work marked by that person
Summative assessment which is not available to post-hoc scrutiny (such as performance, including seminars where part or all of the mark depends on the standard of presentation, musical performances, or the demonstration of practical skills)	Where the performance element constitutes greater than 33% of the assessment for the module simultaneous independent second marking
Assessment of practice modules where the theoretical assessment is linked to practice and where the practice element must meet the competency standard set by professional statutory bodies	Students must be observed on separate but not necessarily successive occasions

^ It must be recognised that a free elective module, although at level 4 may be being taken by a candidate at the Diploma stage



+ with the exception of summative continuous assessment elements which, taken together, comprise less than 33% of the overall module mark

## SECTION 10 – CLASS-BASED ASSESSMENTS

41. This section sets out the minimum requirements for all class-based assessment. It defines the types of assessment covered, and when these types of assessment can be used.

### Definition

42. Class-Based Assessment is defined as any assessment, written or otherwise, organised by an academic department, either within the usual teaching room or another room booked for the purpose.

### Module Specification

43. Summative class-based assessment **must not** be used unless it has been approved prior to commencement of the module as part of the module assessment strategy, and published as part of the module specification.

### Prior Notification of Assessments

44. All summative class-based assessments **must** be communicated to all students in advance, and should be published in the module handbook and provided at the beginning of the module. It is good practice to reinforce information using other departmental methods of communication to students, such as Moodle or Blackboard, notice boards, email or directly to students in class.

45. Class-based assessments that are entirely formative, and so do not count towards the final module mark, **may** be announced in advance to students.

### Arrangements for Summative Assessments

46. Prior to holding summative class-based assessments, the person responsible for the assessment (normally the member of academic staff) **must** consider the venue for the assessment. Consideration **must** be given to the:

- physical environment (heating, lighting, physical space, etc)
- the security of the assessment
- the opportunities for students to use unfair means (e.g. are the students separated enough, are they permitted personal belongings whilst taking the assessment, is the venue a suitable one to invigilate the assessment in)
- appropriate arrangements for late arrivals, etc.

### Alternative Arrangements

47. The person responsible for the assessment **must** consider appropriately the needs of any student with a particular health or other problem. Students with alternative needs are assessed through the Additional Learning Support, and changes to the arrangements of assessments for these students **must** only be made on their advice. This applies equally to summative and formative assessments. When making reasonable adjustments Annexes 6A, 6A(1) and 6B **must** be used.

### Anonymity

48. The requirement in paragraph 23 above for anonymised assessment where practicable applies equally to class-based assessments.

## SECTION 11 – INVIGILATION OF EXAMINATIONS

49. The Head of Student Services is responsible for recruiting, training, paying and allocating a team to perform the duties of invigilator at centrally organised College examinations within the central examination venues.
50. The invigilation team will be recruited by application from people external to the College.
51. Examinations which are not organised centrally, or not held in central examination venues will be invigilated by internal staff members.
52. All invigilators **must** have attended suitable training for the role prior to undertaking any invigilation duties.
53. All invigilators **must** have read 'Instructions to Invigilators' (published as Annexe 6D of this CoP).
54. Each Department **must** have an identified member of staff who is familiar with the academic content of the module and who **must** be available to be easily contacted for the duration of the examination, in case of query. Staff whose examination is taking place are advised to be present in the examination room at the start of the examination.

## SECTION 12 – CHECKING STUDENT IDENTITY

55. Students are required to have identification (ID) on display during examinations and this **should** normally be the student card. Invigilators **must** check the identity of each student to ensure that the correct person is taking the exam.
56. The name and registration number of any student unable to provide suitable ID in the exam **must** be noted on the front of the exam packet so that the marker of the exam has an accurate record of those students without suitable ID. Examinations Department is responsible for ensuring that this list is copied and sent to the Academic Head of the subject concerned.
57. The identity of each student unable to provide suitable ID in the exam **must** be checked prior to marking, using at least one of the following methods:
  - i. Check that the signature on the exam script matches other recorded signatures within the department.
  - ii. Check the handwriting on the exam script against previous work.
  - iii. Check the handwriting on the exam script against other documentation held in the department.
58. The Academic Head is responsible for ensuring that the identity of each student unable to provide suitable ID in the exam is checked as set out above. The Academic Head **must** confirm with the Examinations Department, that these checks have taken place before the exam is marked.
59. If the marker (or other staff member checking ID in the Department) is satisfied that the script has been written by the correct student, the student **must** be contacted by the Department, and be made aware of the College requirement in relation to ID at examinations. This warning **should** be recorded for future reference.

60. If the marker (or other staff member checking ID in the department) is not satisfied that the script has been written by the correct student, then it **must** be dealt with as suspected use of unfair means. The case **must** then be followed up according to the Regulations on the Use of Unfair Means.

### **SECTION 13 – TREATMENT OF STUDENTS WHO DO NOT FOLLOW THE EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS**

61. Where a student has answered too many questions, markers **must** mark all compulsory questions first and then mark the required number of questions **in the order they appear on the examination paper**, make a note on the script and disregard all subsequent answers.
62. Where a student has failed to answer a compulsory question (whether that be for the whole paper or within a section of a multi-sectioned paper), they **must** be awarded zero for that question. The required number of additional questions **must** then be marked **in the order they appear on the examination paper**, disregarding any extra questions above and beyond what was required.
63. Examination requirements **should** instruct students to cross out questions attempted that they do not want marked and **must** include a statement on the treatment of students who fail to follow the examination rubric.

### **SECTION 14 – ARCHIVING OF ASSESSED WORK**

64. There are two main reasons for retaining and archiving students' assessed work:
- in case of query, complaint or appeal by, or about, the student
  - to provide an archive of sample marked scripts for quality assurance purposes

This chapter therefore deals with both of these categories of archiving.

65. Within this chapter, a clear distinction is made between coursework and formal examination scripts. It is expected that coursework be returned to the student once a mark is assigned and that examination scripts are retained.
66. "Coursework" should be taken to mean any piece of work that is formally assessed, and whose mark contributes to the final module mark, excepting formal examination scripts. This includes essays, records of performances, laboratory work, etc.
67. The archiving of assessed work may be in paper format or using electronic methods, to reduce the need for large storage areas. It is acceptable in the case of large pieces of practice work, to store photographs.

#### **Retention of examination scripts in case of query, complaint or appeal**

68. All examination scripts which contribute to the final module mark **must** be stored securely and confidentially for as long as the student has not completed their studies in the programme to which they refer. In addition, where practicable, all exam scripts **must** be kept for three months following the student completing their studies.

69. Three months after the student has completed their final stage, the examination scripts should not be retained by the department, and be destroyed as confidential waste (subject to paragraphs 73-75 below) or returned to the student.
70. Where a student is in dispute with the College by way of a query, an academic appeal or complaint by, or about, the student, all examination scripts relating to the candidate must be kept until the dispute is resolved.

### **Coursework**

71. It is assumed that after the formal approval of a mark for a piece of coursework at an Exam Board, the coursework is returned to the student (subject to paragraphs 73-75 a sample must be held for quality assurance purposes). Where external examiners have agreed that a selection of coursework is sufficient for their scrutiny, departments may return work to students before the Exam Board. In case of any subsequent dispute, query, appeal or complaint by, or about, the student, it is the student's responsibility to produce the coursework in question. This **must** be made clear to all students when the work is returned to them, and be included in student handbooks.

### **Archiving of assessed work for Quality Assurance purposes**

72. The QAA requires that institutions 'maintain an archive of sample marked scripts in all subject areas'.

#### ***Archiving of Examination Scripts***

73. All examination scripts **must** be kept until after the students have left the College.
74. Upon completion of the programme, a minimum of one student from each of the classifications awarded (including fails) must be selected. This student should be a 'typical' representative of that classification, in accordance with the appropriate subject benchmark(s). Examination scripts covering the entire programme for each selected student must be archived. This information, and other assessed work, can be used periodically as part of an evaluation of student progression and achievement. This information must be held for five years.

#### ***Archiving of Coursework***

A sample of all other assessed work at module level must also be archived. A suitable sample of work would include work from the top, middle and bottom of the range of marks and would also cover students from the different degree programmes for which the module is a component. This work can then be used periodically to monitor trends in, for example, marking and achievement. A five year sample must be available; this may include the work of currently registered students.