

Section **15**

Nottingham Trent University

Quality Handbook

**Part D: Course design,
management and
enhancement**

Section 15: Assessment

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1. Principles of assessment

The principles and requirements set out in this Section are designed to ensure that the University, its Schools and course teams have processes of assessment in place which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes of the award.

This policy is supported by a set of specific regulations which determine the decisions about student performance and outcome (see part E of the NTU Quality Handbook).

Supporting information

- Please see the comprehensive list of supporting materials at the end of this document.

Requirements

1.1 Assessment should be:

- Valid** so that it enables students to demonstrate achievement of the intended learning outcomes and standards are maintained.
- Reliable** so that different assessors marking the same assessment would reach the same judgement based on the criteria and marking scheme. Reliability depends on the intended learning outcomes and criteria having been made explicit to both students and markers.
- Rigorous** so that students are enabled to demonstrate learning at high levels.
- Equitable** so that all students are given equivalent opportunities to demonstrate their achievement of the intended learning outcomes.
- Inclusive** so that all students are provided with the support they need to enable them to demonstrate achievement regardless of difference or impairment. (Discussed in section 5, below.)
- Clearly communicated** to students, such that students understand how they should perform on assessment tasks to best demonstrate their abilities.

2. Purposes of assessment

The main purposes of assessment are to judge the students' achievement of learning outcomes and to safeguard threshold academic standards. Appropriate assessment also informs teaching, facilitates and shapes learning and engagement and supports the development of graduate attributes.

Requirements

- 2.1 A course assessment strategy should reflect the different purposes that assessment serves.
- 2.2 Course teams should be mindful of the potential impact that decisions about assessment have on the learning and teaching experience and how that might impact student behaviour.

3. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

The University may recognise prior learning in order to admit a student onto a course or to admit a student with advanced standing beyond the beginning of the course.

Requirements

- 3.1 Candidates who might be eligible for recognition of prior learning (including currently registered students) are made aware of the opportunities available and are supported throughout the process of application and assessment.
- 3.2 The standards and criteria against which judgments on assessment and the recognition of prior learning will be made are provided to students and to staff involved in the assessment process.
- 3.3 Membership, procedures, powers and accountability of examination boards and assessment panels with respect to the recognition of prior learning must be clearly specified. This information is available to all members of such boards.

Explanatory note

- The University's full requirements for RPL are contained in Quality Handbook Supplement (QHS) 15C.

4. Course assessment strategy

The NTU model of assessment is holistic and integrative across the course, rather than piecemeal across modules. *Whole course assessment* design is thus an integral part of course planning and is articulated as the course assessment strategy.

Requirements

- 4.1 Every course has an explicit assessment strategy, which is agreed when the course is approved and kept up-to-date.
- 4.2 The assessment strategy reflects the assessment decisions that have been made by the course team in order that the principles and purposes of assessment are addressed. Particular consideration should be given to the underpinning of whole course assessment:
 - a. assessment tasks are explicitly related to intended learning outcomes and all course learning outcomes are assessed. The assessment methods that are selected are the most effective in enabling students to demonstrate specific outcomes and enhance learning (*alignment*);
 - b. assessments from different modules build on each other and create a coherent student experience of the curriculum (*coherence*);
 - c. assessment is integrated across a level (*horizontal integration*) and across years (*vertical integration*);
 - d. there is a range of assessment types but this is considered at course level so that there are opportunities for students to master the required skills and learn from feedback (*balance*). There is also balance in terms of assessment load across the course, i.e., an avoidance of deadlines bunching at particular times of the year and a balance of formative work and summative assessment;
 - e. there is sequencing throughout a course to allow progressively more challenge, supporting student development from novice to expert (*progression*).
- 4.3 The **course assessment strategy** should explain how these underpinnings are realised at course level. It should also include reference to the following:
 - a. inclusive approaches;
 - b. the language of assessment;
 - c. assessment tasks and their relationship to course learning outcomes;
 - d. anonymity in marking;
 - e. moderation procedures;
 - f. feedback that feeds into and results from assessment.

5. Inclusive assessment

Consideration is given to both the type and range of assessments across the course to ensure that all students are equally able to demonstrate their achievement.

Requirements

- 5.1 Inclusive assessment design should be considered at course level as part of the course assessment strategy. Tasks identified as problematic for inclusivity, but retained on grounds of standards, must include amelioration (reasonable adjustments or alternatives).
- 5.2 It is the responsibility of the Course Leader in consultation with Module Leaders to:
 - a. implement modes of assessment which provide all students with an appropriate opportunity to achieve the stated learning outcomes;
 - b. agree new or modified methods of assessment which will enable all students to demonstrate that they have achieved the stated learning outcomes;
 - c. refer as necessary to Student Support Services and Academic Registry.
- 5.3 The Course Leader should ensure that the Board of Examiners are notified of any adjustments to the assessment methods. Due regard should be given to requests for confidentiality from students in relation to the specific nature of any disability.

Explanatory notes

- NTU makes provision for students with disabilities: *modified assessment* involves making an alternative version of an assessment available; *reasonable adjustments* allow students with disabilities to undertake the standard assessment in a different way e.g. allowing more time for an examination, provided that such adjustments enable academic or other prescribed standards to be maintained.
- For further information on adjustments to a specific assessment made for an individual student, please contact the Disability Manager, Student Support Services.
- See also the Centre for Academic Development and Quality (CADQ) resource 'Assessment: designing for inclusion'.

6. Language of assessment

The language in which assessment is conducted is normally that used in the associated teaching. Where this is not the case, the University will assure itself that academic standards are not compromised.

Requirements

- 6.1 The language of assessment and teaching will normally be English. If, for a valid reason this is not the case, the course team should ensure that standards are not at risk. The course team will be expected to demonstrate at approval:
 - a. how individuals with the necessary expertise in the appropriate language(s), subject knowledge and assessment methods will be identified and employed;
 - b. how suitable external examiners fluent in the relevant language(s) will be identified, appointed and involved with the assessment process;
 - c. if translation is used, how the reliability and validity of the assessment judgements arising from the marking of translated assessments will be assured.
- 6.2 The moderation procedures for the course should reflect the approved arrangements.

Explanatory note

- Further information on the University's requirements in respect of collaborative provision is available in QH Section 10.

7. Assessment of course learning outcomes

Assessment is used to judge the extent to which individual students have achieved learning outcomes as evidenced by specific assessment criteria, which are clearly communicated to students.

Requirements

- 7.1 Each course learning outcome must be assessed in at least one (and preferably more) of the modules that comprise the course.
- 7.2 Assessment is criterion-referenced, not norm-referenced.
- 7.3 Each course must have a **curriculum map** (see QHS 5E) which shows in which modules the course outcomes are taught and assessed.

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Explanatory notes

- The curriculum map is submitted as part of the initial approval of the course. It should be kept up-to-date.
 - A distinction is drawn between 'Taught' (T) and 'Assessed' (A) learning outcomes for the purposes of the curriculum map.
 - Assessed outcomes are the essential learning outcomes that should be achieved in order to pass the module.
 - Taught outcomes guide student learning and help to constitute the overall coherence and balance of the course.
 - For example, problem solving is likely to be 'taught' in a wide range of modules, but may be only explicitly 'assessed' in a few. Module Leaders and course teams need to strike a balance here: it is helpful for students to understand what they are achieving beyond the assessed outcomes, but it is not necessary to specify all outcomes that might be associated with learning.
- 7.4 A 'Taught' module outcome needs to be assessed elsewhere in the course if it contributes to a course outcome. Module learning outcomes should align with the course learning outcomes, such that a module's assessed learning outcomes contribute to the course outcomes.
- 7.5 A module's learning outcomes (other than those that are simply 'Taught') should be assessed by (an) appropriate assessment method(s) using associated assessment criteria. These assessment methods and criteria must be explicit and communicated to students through course handbooks and / or module guides, and made available on the NTU Online Workspace (NOW).
- 7.6 The number of learning outcomes—and the assessment workload—should be in proportion to the module's credit size, and be relatively consistent across the course. Course and module teams should ensure that the assessment method(s) are sufficient to satisfactorily assess all the outcomes.
- 7.7 If the decision is made to have more than one piece of summative assessment for a single module, a clear rationale should be articulated in the assessment strategy. Where this is the case, the relative weighting of these elements needs to be specified.
- 7.8 In some cases, course teams may agree the need to break these elements down into further sub-elements of assessment. In these cases, a strong rationale should be articulated and care should be taken to avoid over-assessment.
- 7.9 The specific arrangements relating to the elements of assessment of a module will be set out in the module documentation.

Explanatory note

- The relative contribution of a sub-element of assessment to an overall element grade, including the minimum pass grade and the conditions for compensation, will have been agreed at approval.

8. Design of assessment tasks

The decision about what tasks will be used to assess which learning outcome is made at course level as part of the course assessment strategy.

Requirements

- 8.1 The choice of assessment task is governed by the broader underpinnings articulated in the assessment strategy (see section 4 of this document). This will include decisions about:
 - a. alignment
 - b. coherence
 - c. vertical and horizontal integration
 - d. balance
 - e. progression
- 8.2 Assessment tasks should address specific learning outcomes and should take into account the evidence that will be required to demonstrate achievement of these learning outcomes.
- 8.3 All courses should incorporate a synoptic assessment piece, allowing students to combine learning in relation to their employability from a range of activities and experiences, and which requires a significant element of reflection in relation to their future employability aspirations. This synoptic assessment should be integrated into an appropriate module.
- 8.4 Assessment tasks involving a significant written element (other than timed written examinations) are subject to the requirements for the use of Turnitin (text-matching software).

Explanatory note

- The choice of assessment task will be determined in part by the learning outcomes to be assessed. Additional considerations might include, for example, accreditation requirements, or the type of tasks that might be useful for students in their likely career paths.

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- The requirements for the use of Turnitin are provided in QHS 15G.
- 8.5 Viva voce examinations to enable judgements to be made about students considered to be on the borderline between two degree classifications are *not* used.
- 8.6 Assessment tasks are moderated as stipulated in section 11 below.

9. Anonymity in assessment

The assessment of a student's work without knowledge of the student's identity (anonymous marking) is used to limit the possibility of grades being inadvertently influenced by factors other than the qualities of the work under consideration.

Principles and requirements

- 9.1 Fairness in assessment should be one of the key considerations in choosing the summative assessment tasks for a module and course.
- 9.2 Anonymous marking is an integral part of achieving fairness in assessment and must be considered for all summative assessment tasks as part of the course assessment strategy. It is the responsibility of each course team to identify and agree which of the assessed tasks will or will not be marked anonymously; anonymous marking must be used for ALL timed written examinations.
- 9.3 It is accepted that a course team has to take into account other considerations when choosing the most effective assessment for a module or course and that it may not be possible to mark the chosen assessment anonymously.
- 9.4 The broader process within which anonymous marking sits – the setting of the assessment task, the establishment of the assessment and marking criteria, the marking and moderation of the finished assessment – should all be designed with fairness in assessment to the fore (whether or not anonymous marking is adopted for that particular task).
- 9.5 Transparency in a course team's marking and moderation processes is central to building students' trust and confidence in the assessment processes and challenging the potential for 'perceptions of bias'. Course teams are expected to communicate effectively to students their approach to anonymity in assessment, through making available to students written assessment strategies and associated Assessment and Feedback plans.

Explanatory note

- Where it is considered impractical for the assessment method to be marked anonymously (for example, dissertations, presentations,

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performance / interaction, oral / aural elements, tasks or where feedback is given on work-in-progress), the course team must ensure that there is a sufficient measure of independence in the marking or moderation practices to guard against 'perceptions of bias'.

10. Articulating assessment criteria

The assessment criteria for each assessment task are planned, agreed and clearly communicated to students.

Requirements

- 10.1 Assessment criteria must be developed for all assessment tasks.
- 10.2 Assessment criteria must be aligned to the University's Grade Based Assessment descriptors. The descriptors represent a set of common characteristics expected of work at each of the different grade bands and should be contextualised to disciplines and tasks by Schools and / or Academic Teams.

Explanatory notes

- Assessment criteria are a set of statements that enable the marker to judge whether the learning outcomes have been achieved. Standards are articulated for each criterion. These should clearly indicate what the students need to do to demonstrate that they have met the learning outcome(s) and reached the standard required.
- 10.3 Course and module teams are required to publish and disseminate clear briefs and assessment criteria for all tasks. There should be consistency in the use of terminology and expression to ensure clarity and transparency. The main approach to providing this information to students is via an assessment grid or marking matrix.

Explanatory notes

- The Grade Based Assessment (GBA) descriptors are provided in QHS 15A.
- Course Leaders should maintain an oversight of marking matrices at each level to ensure consistency, clarity and appropriate contextualisation to task.

11. Managing marking and moderation

Course teams have processes for marking and for moderation that are clearly stated, understood and consistently operated by all members of the course team involved in the assessment process.

Requirements

- 11.1 Moderation of assessment starts at the initial stage of planning of assessment and extends through to the determination of grades and results. Moderation includes three key stages:
 - a. Review of the assessment task and its articulation
 - b. Review of the grades awarded within a module
 - c. Review of the grades awarded across modules within a level of study
- 11.2 Moderation has an internal and external dimension where standards and fairness of the assessment process are validated by the external examiner at key stages (see 11.19 below).
- 11.3 In implementing this policy, staff should ensure that documentary evidence is always kept to enable demonstration of the moderation processes that have been used.

Planning moderation

- 11.4 As part of its explicit assessment strategy, course teams are responsible for planning appropriate moderation and for ensuring clarity and explicitness of:
 - a. the forms of moderation to be employed;
 - b. the marking arrangements;
 - c. the sample to be reviewed (size, range and threshold cases);
 - d. the nature of the sample to be referred to the external examiner(s).

Stage 1: Moderation of assessment tasks

- 11.5 Course and module teams should ensure that appropriate peers are consulted to check the validity of the tasks being prepared.
- 11.6 Where the assessment contributes to the classification of the final award, the external examiner should be included as one of the academic peers. Decisions about moderation practice will be articulated in the course assessment strategy.
- 11.7 This peer moderation process should involve checking:
 - a. the alignment of assessment with the relevant learning outcomes;
 - b. the clarity of the task description;
 - c. the clarity of any additional rubric or guidance notes accompanying the tasks;

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- d. the criteria by which it is intended to mark the assessment;
 - e. the available guidance for markers, e.g. model answers;
 - f. the academic challenge of the tasks in relationship to the level;
 - g. overlap and coverage with regards to all assessment tasks within a level;
 - h. the workload or time requirements of the assessment tasks.
- 11.8 An outcome of this stage of moderation may be the decision to amend the aspects of the assessment task and / or its articulation. The agreed assessment information should then be systematically communicated by staff to students at the appropriate time to support their learning and achievement.

Stage 2: Review of marking and results: within module

- 11.9 The main effort in moderation of marking and results should be targeted at assessments that contribute to the final award.
- 11.10 Moderation of grading practices by means of 'grading exercises' undertaken by markers on relevant samples of student work prior to the main grading phase are strongly recommended.
- 11.11 Moderation of marking is generally undertaken by reviewing a sample of students' marked work. This involves the moderator in reviewing (rather than marking in the full sense) an agreed sample of work to establish whether the marking is at the appropriate standard, consistent and in line with the explicit assessment criteria.
- 11.12 The sampling process should concentrate at the boundaries of classifications and should normally involve between 10% and 25% of assessed student work, depending on the numbers of students within the cohort.
- 11.13 Where assessments do **not** contribute to final award classifications, moderation should be focused at the pass / fail threshold, which is the crucial determinant for progression to the next stage of the course. In cases where there are no students at that threshold, then the assessed work of the five nearest students should be moderated. Course teams may wish to extend the range of moderation in these non-qualifying assessments in relationship to particular issues of interest or concern.

Explanatory notes

- As a guide, where there are more than 50 students, a 10% sample is appropriate. For cohorts under 50 the percentage sample should increase to 25%. Where there are very large cohorts of students (above 100) then the 10% sample guideline can be reduced, but the sample selected needs to be carefully constructed to ensure adequately robust moderation.
- 11.14 Moderation can be completed in specific instances through double or team marking of the sample. In this case student work is independently marked by more than one marker. Double or team marking can be undertaken as blind

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marking, where each marker is unaware of the grades allocated by the other(s), or as second marking, where all markers are aware of the grades they have assigned.

- 11.15 Double or team marking of the sample should be used as the norm for the moderation process for dissertations and major projects or studio work at final award level; in courses with small cohorts, it may be possible to double or team mark the work of the whole student cohort.
- 11.16 Outcomes and consequences of within-module moderation are as follows:
- Agreement that the marking is consistent and at the right level: where grades are agreed they should be submitted to the Student Data and Systems Team as soon as possible.
 - Agreement that the marking is consistently too high or too low, across all work, or in one or more ranges of grades: marks should be adjusted where appropriate (see paragraph 11.21 below).
 - Agreement that the work has been inconsistently marked: the matter should be referred to the Course Leader who should arrange for the work to be re-marked and further moderated.

Stage 3: Moderation of marking and results: across modules

- 11.17 After completion of the within-module moderation process, the grades from all modules taken by the same student cohort in the same level should be considered. The minimum requirement is to consider frequency distributions for each module.
- 11.18 If there is evidence that the grades that have been awarded for a particular module are problematic and the reason(s) for this can be identified, then it may be that the grades for that module need to be adjusted (see paragraph 11.21 below).

External moderation

- 11.19 At levels that contribute to the final award, the external examiner should monitor the moderation process at appropriate stages. The course team should indicate in their assessment strategy precisely how the external examiner will be involved. Where a level contributes only a proportion to the final award, the involvement of the external examiner may include reviewing a sample of moderated student work, but may be limited to receiving for comment the assessment tasks and checking the final results spreadsheets. The nature of the external examiner involvement in such cases is a matter for negotiation between the Course Leader and the external examiner.
- 11.20 Review of samples of assessed work undertaken by external examiners should take place on-site where possible (see also QH Section 9).

Explanatory note

- The external examiner should NOT be used to reconcile differences between internal assessors, but might be called upon to advise internal

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markers on their resolution of differences. The external examiner's role is to monitor the standards achieved by students on the course and the consistency and effectiveness of the assessment processes (see also QH Section 9).

Adjustment of grades as an outcome of within - and across - module moderation

- 11.21 The need to adjust students' grades on an assessment task, sometimes known as scaling, might need to be made in order to ensure that the grades properly reflect the students' performance. Grades can only be adjusted if there are legitimate grounds. These are:
- inappropriate marking standards (for example a marker has marked too harshly or too easily);
 - inter-marker discrepancy (where two or more markers are marking the same module);
 - inappropriate challenge of the assessment task (not identified at stage 1 of the moderation process);
 - a concern about the quality of teaching on the module;
 - a problematic issue with the articulation of the assessment task (for example, an error or ambiguity in a question not identified at stage 1);
 - a problematic issue with the assessment context (for example, an interruption to an examination).
- 11.22 The extent of the adjustment of grades where legitimate grounds have been agreed is dependent on the nature of the issue identified. Typically, this will be one of the following:
- Systematic adjustment to a range of grades for a particular assessment task, or for a module (for example, where across-module moderation has identified that a module stands out because there are a disproportionate number of fails).
 - Adjustment to all the grades awarded for a particular part of an assessment task for all those students who attempted that part (for example, where an issue has been identified with a particular question on an examination paper).
 - Adjustment to all the grades for all students on an assessment task (for example where there has been disruption in the examination room).
- 11.23 Adjustments must be consistent with the sampling method employed in the moderation process. For example, if an assessment task has been moderated by means of consideration of a sample of student work, the individual grades of a sampled assignment must not be adjusted. If all the student work for a particular assessment have been moderated (for example, when double marking has taken place) then individual grades can be adjusted.
- 11.24 Adjustment of grades should not be undertaken in the following circumstances:
- To align student outcomes with sector benchmarks.
 - To align student outcomes with competitor profiles.

- c. To achieve a particular set of desired attainment profiles.
- 11.25 The adjustment of grades should not be undertaken as routine practice. Where adjustment of grades has been required, the cause of the problem must be addressed in order to prevent a similar occurrence at a later date. This might have implications at the level of the module, or the course.
- 11.26 If it is determined that students' grades for an assessment task should be adjusted, a clear rationale and the intended method of grade adjustment must be presented by the Course Leader to the Chair of the Board of Examiners and to the relevant external examiner(s) in cases where the assessment contributes to the classification of the final award.
- 11.27 The Course Leader should record, as a minimum, the following for scrutiny and approval at the Board of Examiners:
- a. The reason for adjusting students' grades on the assessment task.
 - b. The evidence considered in arriving at the decision.
 - c. The method of grade adjustment selected.
 - d. The relationship between the original grades and the scaled grades.
 - e. An explanation of the consequences of adjusting the grades (for example, the impact on students' end of year results or classifications of the final awards).
 - f. An explanation of how the issue will be rectified in the future so that the adjustment of students' grades will not be necessary.
- 11.28 It is important that the approaches taken to adjust grades for an assessment task are robust and transparent. This should be discussed at the Board of Examiners and recorded in the minutes taken. The rationale for the adjustment of grades and the approach taken should be communicated to students.
- 11.29 Grades should be submitted to the Student Data and Systems Team as soon as possible after moderation.

12. Providing effective feedback

Course teams ensure that feedback on assessment is timely, constructive and informative. Such feedback provides students with opportunities to develop an understanding of good academic practice. Constructive feedback supports students in reflecting on their progress, guides them in enhancing their future academic work and helps them become increasingly independent in their learning.

- 12.1 High quality feedback is characterised by the following:
- a. It helps to clarify what good performance is. This can be achieved by explaining the goals of the assessment task and providing clear criteria and standards of performance.

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- b. It facilitates the development of self-assessment and reflection. If students can be helped to recognise the strengths and weaknesses in their performance, then they can address these.
- c. It encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning.
- d. It is provided in good time to feed into revisions or further work.
- e. It guides learning by helping students to understand the principles or ideas underpinning their work.
- f. It encourages self-belief and positive motivation.

Requirements

- 12.2 Feedback opportunities should be planned at course level to ensure effectiveness in terms of frequency, timeliness and the development of student understanding.
- 12.3 The feedback offered to students should be related to learning outcomes and assessment criteria; feedback on summative assessments should be consistent with the grade awarded.
- 12.4 The feedback should inform students of their progress and help them to improve their future performance.

Explanatory notes

- The following points may be useful to discuss as a module or course team:
 - What variety of feedback-generating formative tasks is used on the module / course?
 - When and how frequently is feedback provided, including opportunities for feedback prior to summative assessment?
 - Who produces feedback (tutor, peer, self, etc.) and in what formats?
 - What strategies are used to engage students with the feedback?
- Feedback may also be used by:
 - Module Leaders in reflecting on the assessment strategy;
 - course tutors and other staff advising students on academic matters;
 - external examiners as part of their monitoring of standards and quality.
- Underpinning these purposes is the belief that assessment itself functions not only to evaluate learning, but also to develop learning. In all of this, the shared responsibility of student and tutor is recognised.

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The Assessment and Feedback Plan

- 12.5 The Course Leader, with the support of the course team, should engage in annual assessment planning to create the **Assessment and Feedback Plan (AFP)**. The AFP will include details about the:
- assessment tasks;
 - assessment hand-in dates;
 - the use of Turnitin in relation to the assessment tasks;
 - dates of key formative tasks which support summative assessments;
 - feedback schedule and rationale, including return dates for student work and feedback.
- 12.6 The AFP is communicated to students in the course handbook, or equivalent in NOW, and in module information.

Explanatory notes

- Course teams should consider which feedback types and formats are fit for context. The pedagogic rationale for these decisions should be articulated in the AFP.
 - The feedback schedule in the AFP should refer to all formal feedback that will be offered. This would include, for example, feedback offered in preparation for an assessment, on work-in-progress, or after an assessment task.
 - Where formal feedback is offered to students on drafts or other work-in-progress, then it is advisable to specify clearly the extent of this and the means by which it will be undertaken.
 - It is expected that frequent interactions with peers or a tutor, as well as guided self-reflection, will generate informal feedback on an ongoing basis. It is not necessary to include this informal feedback in the AFP.
- 12.7 Course teams should have in place mechanisms for reviewing and monitoring the nature and timeliness of feedback for all forms of assessment. There should be ongoing reflection on the AFP at key points of the year. Staff should be in a position to outline their approach to strengthening the effective use of feedback.
- 12.8 School Academic Standards and Quality Committees (SASQCs) should keep under review procedures for feedback to students on assessments.

The nature and timeliness of assessment feedback

- 12.9 The University is committed to providing students with effective and timely feedback on all assessments.

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- 12.10 Feedback on assessment may take a variety of forms and can come from a variety of sources, including tutors, peers, external agencies or students themselves. Feedback can also be individual or given to the cohort as a whole (generic).
- 12.11 The University has made specific commitments about the nature and timeliness of feedback on assessments that contribute to an overall module grade (defined here as *summative assessment*).
- a. The following commitments apply to the **format of feedback**:
 - i. *Coursework*. Students will receive individual feedback (written or recorded), including an individual grade, on all assessed coursework.
 - ii. *Examinations*. Feedback will be provided for all examinations, where a balance of individual and cohort feedback may be used. In deciding this balance, the course team must take into account the students' experience of assessment across the level and course. Students should receive individual feedback for targeted examinations, to enable them to perform better in later examinations. The course team should clearly specify those examinations for which students can expect to receive individual written feedback and those for which they will receive cohort feedback.
 - b. The following commitments apply to the **timeliness of feedback**:
 - i. *Coursework*. Students will receive feedback on all assessed coursework within three weeks of the submission date unless iv (below) applies. Large pieces of work (e.g. a portfolio, final year project or dissertation) are exempt from this timeframe. In recognition that such work requires considerably longer to mark than other coursework, the feedback (and grade) may be provided outside the standard three-week period. This exemption may only be used where formative feedback has been provided on work-in-progress.
 - ii. *Examinations*. For end-of-year and final year examinations, the individual feedback and grade should be provided after the Examination Board, even if this is outside the standard three-week period. Course teams may provide generic cohort feedback on examinations (but not individual feedback or grades) in advance of the Examination Board in order to support students in preparing for other, upcoming assessments. For examinations earlier in the year, the individual feedback timeframe should follow that for coursework unless iv (below) applies.
 - iii. The three-week period for feedback excludes University closure days.
 - iv. For all coursework and examinations for which the three-week feedback period falls within either (a) the end-of-year examination period (which includes the degree show period) or (b) an end of first-half-year examination period and when students undertake further examinations within this period: the grades and individual feedback associated with these assessments will not be released to students until (a) after the Board of Examiners or (b) after the final assessment has been undertaken, respectively.

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Explanatory notes

- Where generic (cohort) feedback is utilised it should be in the form of a supportive pedagogic tool rather than as an alternative to written individual feedback.
- Cohort feedback can be generated to improve individual performance for example through one or more of the following:
 - a. by providing a description (oral and/or written) of the overall strengths and weaknesses of a cohort's completed assessment and encouraging students to ask questions;
 - b. by asking students to undertake a self-assessment of their completed assessment task in light of the cohort feedback with action points for future work;
 - c. by providing individual feedback which builds on the earlier cohort feedback.
- AFPs should be used to manage submission deadlines so that the extended period of closure at Christmas does not negatively impact the students' overall experience of feedback on their course.
- Schools should be mindful of managing staff leave and illness when implementing these requirements.

Encouraging students to use feedback

- 12.12 Students should be supported to participate in evaluating their learning and furthering their academic development via meaningful engagement with feedback.
- 12.13 Opportunities to engage with feedback from formative tasks and summative assessments should be designed into the curriculum.

Explanatory notes

- Examples of opportunities where students can engage with feedback might include:
 - activities in seminars or tutorials where students reflect on feedback received;
 - a planned series of tasks where students apply feedback from each piece of assessment in order to complete the next;
 - structured peer feedback activities.

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- Guided opportunities to engage with feedback are likely to be particularly worthwhile in the first year of study.

Communication with students

- 12.14 Student engagement with feedback is encouraged by clear communication about the purpose and characteristics of feedback.
- 12.15 The AFP plays a key role in students' understanding of and engagement with feedback.
- 12.16 In communicating feedback, or facilitating peer feedback, tutors should be mindful of the diversity of students on the course and work to ensure fairness in feedback provision.

Explanatory notes

- Course teams should support students to recognise feedback by pointing out the different forms it can take and by drawing attention to it whenever it is being given—particularly informal, verbal or peer feedback. Regular messages about the relevance of particular formative tasks and feedback activities to specific summative assessments can often motivate learners to engage with these activities.
- Feedback can also include encouraging a student to seek appropriate support from outside the course, for example, study skills support, disability support, student mentors, stress management courses, pastoral support.

13. Ensuring quality and standards

A range of quality management mechanisms ensures that the threshold standard for each award is set and maintained at the appropriate level, and that student performance is equitably judged against this standard.

Requirements

Externality

- 13.1 External examiners play a role in the moderation of assessment tasks and judgements of student work (see section 11, above).
- 13.2 In line with the terms of reference for Boards of Examiners, an opportunity should be provided at their meetings to discuss aspects of assessment design, tasks and coherence and provide advice to Course Leaders, committees and teams on

assessment issues that have arisen through the marking and moderation processes. The consideration of this item and the advice offered should be recorded in the minutes of the Board.

The Board of Examiners (BOE)

- 13.3 BOEs have delegated powers from the Academic Board for the determination of academic awards to students, and for decisions about the progression of students. Membership, procedures, powers and accountability of BOEs are clearly specified, and this information is available to all members.
- 13.4 Each award-bearing course must have a BOE to:
- ensure there are consistent and fair arrangements for assessment;
 - make academic judgements on the progress of students;
 - make academic judgements on the conferment of awards;
 - consider any case of student performance that is giving cause for concern.
- 13.5 A Board should operate with due regard to:
- the course specification;
 - any Academic Board agreements with other validating, accrediting or professional bodies (or a collaborating centre) as appropriate;
 - principles and policies on assessment as set out in the Quality Handbook.
- 13.6 A Board may appoint a Subsidiary Examination Board if this is necessary, normally in the context of collaborative arrangements.
- 13.7 A Board may be responsible for more than one course provided this is approved by the SASQC.
- 13.8 A Board may operate a two-tier, Award Board / Subject Board, structure.

Explanatory notes

- The full membership, terms of reference and key duties of members of Boards of Examiners are provided in QHS 15B.
- 13.9 Threshold standards are also set and maintained by consideration of:
- relevant subject benchmark statements;
 - any Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements.

Documentation

- 13.10 Information about a course's assessment is contained in the following documents:
- the curriculum map;
 - the course assessment strategy;
 - the AFP.

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- 13.11 The curriculum map and course assessment strategy are approved as part of the course approval process and their currency is maintained by the course committee.
- 13.12 The curriculum map is used by BOEs to ensure that all course module outcomes have been met when considering offering a compensated pass on specific modules.
- 13.13 The AFP is agreed year-on-year and provides details about the schedule of assessment tasks and feedback. It is made available to students in the course handbook, or equivalent in NOW, and in module information.

Explanatory note

- See section 14 of this document for supporting QH Supplements.

Common Assessment Regulations

- 13.14 The University applies clear regulations for progression within a course and for the attainment of an award.
- 13.15 All courses of study will adopt the appropriate Common Assessment Regulations (CAR) (see QH Sections 16).
- 13.16 Course teams should devise conventions that can be applied to areas of discretion within the CAR.

Proof-reading

- 13.17 The University does not offer a proof-reading service to students, nor does the University recommend the use of any particular proof-reading services.
- 13.18 The use of others, whether paid or not, to write or rewrite any part of an assignment for a student, is specifically forbidden and may be penalised under the Academic Irregularities Policy, even if the person providing such a service describes it as 'proof-reading'.
- 13.19 Students must complete a submission form containing the declaration "In submitting this work I confirm that I am aware of, and am abiding by, the University's expectations for proof-reading".
- 13.20 When a proof-reader is used students must keep a copy of the following:
- a. the text prior to it being submitted to the proof-reader;
 - b. the text returned by the proofreading (with all comments visible);
 - c. the final version of the work following corrections (i.e. that submitted for assessment).

Academic irregularities

- 13.21 Fair and effective arrangements which enable academic irregularities to be detected and penalised are implemented by the University.

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- 13.22 The responsibility for ensuring that all work submitted for assessment meets the University's criteria, in terms of content, conventions and originality of authorship, rests with the student.
- 13.23 In all cases work submitted by a student must be their own work and any use of a third party proof-reader or proof-reading or editing service must not compromise the authorship of the work submitted.
- 13.24 The University retains the right to independently check that the student has satisfied these criteria and, if not, apply the University's Academic Irregularities procedures.
- 13.25 The University takes seriously all forms of academic irregularity in its various forms. Course teams must ensure that students are fully aware of the University's requirements.

Explanatory notes

- The University's full requirements for Academic Irregularities are contained in QH Section 17C.
- The University's guidance on proof-reading is provided as QHS 15F.
- The University's requirements for the use of Turnitin are provided in QHS 15G.

The role of the Academic Standards and Quality Committee

- 13.26 The Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) assures itself of the sound implementation of its procedures through:
- a. its course development and approval process;
 - b. policy and practice debates at ASQC and its sub-committees;
 - c. effective annual reporting at course, School and institutional level;
 - d. the analysis of student data;
 - e. comprehensive arrangements for the student voice to be heard;
 - f. staff development and practice sharing activities.

Retention of student work

- 13.27 Schools may operate local policies for enabling students to view examination scripts. The University's retention policy provides details about the requirements for the retention of students' assessed work.

14. Supporting supplements

- QHS 15A – Grade based marking descriptors
- QHS 15B – Boards of Examiners requirements
- QHS 15C – RPL
- QHS 15D – Course assessment and feedback plan – exemplar

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- QHS 15E – Information and guidance for Boards of Examiner’s meetings
- QHS 15F – Proof-reading guidance
- QHS 15G – Requirements for the use of Turnitin

Policy owner
CADQ

Change history			
<i>Version:</i>	<i>Approval date:</i>	<i>Implementation date:</i>	<i>Nature of significant revisions:</i>
Sept 2016	30.09.16	01.10.16	Removal of reference to graduate attributes Inclusion of reference to sub-elements of assessment Expansion of principles relating to anonymous marking
Sept 2017	12.09.17	01.11.17	Inclusion of reference to synoptic assessment 8.3.
Sept 2018	12.09.18	01.10.18	Included option for course teams to provide generic cohort feedback on examinations in advance of the Examination Board New policy on release of grades included 12.11 iv
Sept 2019	11.09.19	01.10.19	Included cross-references to the requirements for the use of Turnitin
Sept 2020	16.09.20	01.10.20	None
Sept 2021	07.09.21	01.10.21	None

Equality Analysis		
<i>Version:</i>	<i>EA date:</i>	<i>Completed by:</i>
Sept 2015	04.11.2015	CADQ