

## University Assessment Policy

### Content/sections

- 1 [Preamble](#)
- 2 [Terminology](#)
- 3 [Principles of Assessment](#)
- 4 [Principles of Assessment at Level 4](#)
- 5 [Assessment Scheduling and Loading](#)
- 6 [Word Counts](#)
- 7 [Academic Referencing](#)
- 8 [Language of Assessment](#)
- 9 [Formative, Formal and Informal Assessment](#)
- 10 [Feedback to Students and Return of Student Assessments](#)
- 11 [Assessment Briefs and Assessment Criteria](#)
- 12 [Anonymous Marking](#)
- 13 [Approval of Assessment Items and Assessment Criteria](#)
- 14 [Moderation of Marking:](#)
  - [University minimum requirements for internal moderation of marking](#)
  - [University minimum requirements for external moderation of marking](#)
  - [Examination Board scrutiny of module grade profiles](#)
- 15 [Review of Student Performance](#)
- 16 [Publication of Results](#)
- 17 [Ownership and Archiving of Students' Assessed Work](#)
- 18 [Failure and Reassessment](#)
- 19 [Late Submission of Assignments](#)
- 20 [Mitigating Circumstances](#)
- 21 [Allegations of Cheating](#)
- 22 [Appeals Against the Decisions of Boards of Examiners](#)

[Appendix 1- Guidance on designing module and course assessment strategies](#)

[Appendix 2 - Guidance on implementation of the assessment principles at level 4](#)

[Appendix 3 – Guidance on using numeric marks for undergraduate work](#)

[Appendix 4 – Guidance on course closures, major changes and implications for student progression](#)

## 1 Preamble

- 1.1 The following policy relates to all programmes of study (courses or modules) validated as leading to University awards.
- 1.2 The policy relates to the University strategic objective of providing an outstanding student experience and the key institutional risks of: failure to provide an outstanding experience, leading to decline in levels of recruitment, retention and achievement, and student satisfaction (2); failure to achieve (and meet the needs of) a diverse student population (3); failure to comply with legislative framework (6); and poor quality assessments (8).
- 1.3 The intended audience for the policy is academic and learning support staff, including those involved in the design, approval and review of courses. The policy is also made available to students.

## 2 Terminology

**Note: these terms apply as they are used in this document, and take account of the URF and PRF – they are not intended to be authoritative or definitive.**

**Assessment item:** a piece of assessed work, e.g. an essay, project, assignment or examination; assessment items should be valid, reliable and authentic

- validity relates to the need to ensure that the assessment task measures student attainment of the intended learning outcomes
- reliability relates to the need to ensure that the assessment is accurate and repeatable
- authenticity relates to the design of assessments that require students to demonstrate skills and capabilities that represent problems and situations likely to be encountered in the 'real' world

**Assessment brief:** guidance provided for students on how to complete a specific item of assessment, to include information about the nature of the task, the format for presentation, and assessment criteria, and, if used, the marking scheme

**Assessment criteria:** specify the qualities of student work required to successfully complete the assessment item and indicate how particular grades may be achieved

**Grade descriptors:** describe in broad terms the typical performance required to achieve a particular band of marks or degree class; the University publishes generic grade descriptors for undergraduate and postgraduate work to be used by course/subject teams as a reference point or benchmark in establishing assessment criteria

**Approval of assessment:** a process involving both internal and external scrutiny to assure assessment items and assessment criteria are appropriate in terms of academic level, and learning outcomes are valid, reliable and authentic and that there is broad equivalence for students across modules/units

**Marking scheme:** a detailed framework for assigning marks, where a specific number of marks is given to individual components of the assessment

**Moderation of marking:** a process to assure assessment criteria, and thus academic standards, have been applied consistently and that assessment outcomes are fair and reliable

**Internal moderation:** a process of professional engagement by University staff to demonstrate that the grades awarded are accurate, appropriate and consistent to ensure parity of standards

**External moderation:** a process of objective engagement by experienced academic peers (external examiners), independent of the University, to ensure that the level of achievement of students reflects the required academic standards and is comparable to similar programmes nationally

**Subject Assessment Board:** first tier Board and responsible for:

- a) acting in accordance with the Regulations and Procedures of the University and to meet as necessary after each assessment point to fulfil this requirement
- b) Scrutiny and approval of assessment items and their marking
- c) assuring the appropriate standards for modules
- d) considering the performance of students on modules
- e) confirming the grades achieved by students on modules
- f) noting the decisions of the Mitigations Committee
- g) noting the decisions of the Cheating Committee
- h) making recommendations on a student's retrieval of failure to the appropriate Board of Examiners.

**Board of Examiners:** second tier Board and responsible for:

- a) reviewing the students' entire profile of module results
- b) making decisions regarding progression
- c) confirming eligibility for awards on the basis of accumulated credit
- d) ensuring any award-specific requirements have been met
- e) recommending that the Academic Board should grant the appropriate award and, if appropriate, agreeing the classification of each student.

### 3 Principles of Assessment

3.1 The University of Worcester believes that assessment is an integral part of effective learning processes, and has established the following principles for the design and management of assessment practice.

- 1 Each module/unit or course element will have an assessment strategy which is aligned with the intended learning outcomes and learning activities
- 2 All stated learning outcomes for a module/unit/course element will be summatively assessed
- 3 Assessments will enable students to demonstrate that they have met the learning outcomes of the module(s)/units/course elements and the overall aims and learning outcomes of their course or programme of studies and achieved the standard required for the award
- 4 Each course will include a variety of assessment types and an appropriate balance of assessment for summative and formative purposes
- 5 Information about assessment, including the details of assignments and due dates for submission, schedules for examinations, assessment or grading criteria, plus assessment regulations and arrangements for publication of results where these are course specific, will be published in the University Student Handbook, course handbooks, module outlines or equivalent as appropriate, at the start of the academic year or semester (or other defined teaching period) in which the course commences
- 6 Assessment tasks and assessment items will be reliable, valid and authentic
- 7 The scheduling and amount of assessment will be manageable for students

- 8 Constructive and timely relevant feedback will be an integral part of the assessment process
- 9 Assessment processes and regulations will be transparent, consistent and equitable across courses
- 10 Assessment processes and outcomes will be monitored and evaluated through the annual monitoring process.

#### **4 Principles of Assessment at Level 4**

- 4.1 Given the importance of assessment for student learning, the University has specified a set of principles for assessment at level 4.

The principles are that assessment at level 4:

- 1 is a key priority in the overall curriculum design process
- 2 is fundamentally concerned with assessment *for* learning
- 3 promotes provision of timely feedback that enhances learning
- 4 encourages dialogue and interaction with peers and tutors so that shared conceptions of the subject, criteria and standards are developed
- 5 prepares students for the methods and modes of assessment, as well as the technologies and ways of learning, at level 5
- 6 provides students with some choice as to their mode of assessment, within an overall structure
- 7 enhances aspirational engagement and intrinsic motivation.

- 4.2 Annexe 2 provides further guidance on implementation of these assessment principles.

#### **5 Assessment Scheduling and Loading**

- 5.1 Each module/unit of a course will specify the summative assessment items, together with any specific requirements for passing the modules (eg requirement to obtain a pass grade in each assessment item and/or attendance requirements) in the module specification, as set out below. The assessment details for each module will be subject to validation.

| Assessment item | Indicative word or time length | Weighting | Learning outcomes to be assessed | Anonymous marking |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------------|-------------------|
|                 |                                |           |                                  |                   |
|                 |                                |           |                                  |                   |

- 5.2 In determining the assessment for a module, account will be taken of the guidance provided in appendix 1 on assessment loading, together with consideration of the assessment design, schedule and loading for the course as a whole, also provided in appendix 1. This guidance aims to ensure some standardisation of the assessment loading across different modules and courses.
- 5.3 Where courses utilise end-of-course/module/unit formal examinations as a part of their assessment strategies, such examinations will take place in the last week of the semester, or at scheduled points in the academic year as published in the course handbook. Written examinations will be of no more than three hours duration, but courses/units/modules employing practical type examinations may employ examinations lasting up to five hours.

5.4 Where courses utilise 'within module' or 'in class' tests, the arrangements for the organisation and management of such assessments must 'ensure the assessment is conducted with rigour, probity and fairness and with due regard to security' (QAA Code of Practice Section 6 Assessment of students, precept 5). This will mean consideration of:

- arrangements for disabled students
- arrangements for preparation and moderation of the test papers/activities and associated security at all stages
- arrangements for students with mitigating circumstances, for example who may not be able to attend the assessment
- arrangements for recording results
- in the case of multiple choice tests, determination of the pass mark.

All of the above should be considered when planning the assessment and where appropriate information should be included in the student course and/or module handbook.

5.5 The validated summative assessment strategy for a module or unit, together with details of the relative weighting of each assessment item, the assignment brief, submission deadline and assessment criteria (including any special rules for passing the module), must be published to students in the module outline or course handbook at the start of the academic year, or at the start of the semester (or other defined teaching period) in which the module/unit will run, as appropriate.

5.6 Where modules include an attendance requirement, this must be approved at validation (or through Institute procedures), and must be made clear to students in the module outline or course handbook. It is expected that attendance records are maintained for modules which include attendance requirements as a condition of passing the module.

5.7 Course teams must discuss the assessment loading on students across modules within a programme to try to avoid unnecessary loading of assessments at the same time and/or 'bunching' of hand-in dates. Hand-in dates should normally be set within semester/term dates taking account of designated examination dates where relevant.

## 6 Word Counts

6.1 For all written assessments, normally, guidance should be given to students on the maximum amount that should be written in order that the learning outcomes can be assessed. This can be expressed as a 'Word Limit'. Programme teams should use their professional judgement as to whether or not to implement a system of fixed penalties for exceeding a word limit.

6.2 Where a word limit is used, students must be informed of why it is being used, what is included within the word limit and how particular aspects of academic writing (e.g. footnotes and appendices) are used. It is 'normal practice' for example, not to include bibliographies/reference lists and appendices as part of the word count.

6.3 Where a fixed penalty is **not** used students must be:

- advised of what aspects of the assignment constitute part of the word count
- asked to give a word count for each written assignment submitted

- informed of the rationale for the word limit and its relationship to the assessment criteria
- advised that if they write in excess of 25% above the word limit, the grade awarded will be on the basis of the work up to this point.

6.4 If a fixed penalty is used students must be:

- advised of what aspects of the assignment constitute a part of the word count
- asked to give a word count for each written assignment submitted
- advised of the nature of the penalties.

6.5 Where a fixed penalty is used programme or course teams must ensure that assessors can determine the 'true' word count for any work submitted, and also ensure that each assessor implements the penalty system in a manner consistent with other markers and in a fair and transparent manner.

## **7 Academic Referencing**

7.1 All undergraduate courses (with the exception of Psychology which must use the APA referencing system in order to meet British Psychological Society conditions of accreditation) will use either the bespoke Worcester Harvard or Numerical system of academic referencing.

7.2 Exemptions to the requirement to use the Worcester Harvard or Numerical system of academic referencing may be granted by the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee.

7.3 Supporting materials for the Harvard and Numerical referencing systems will be provided by Information and Learning Services in the form of referencing guides, bibliographic software, and teaching and learning resources.

7.4 There is no specified referencing system to be used for postgraduate and research students who are expected to acquire a more in-depth understanding of citing sources and referencing. Institutes and supervisors will provide guidance and support materials on the most appropriate referencing style.

## **8 Language of Assessment**

8.1 All assessments contributing to a University of Worcester award will be conducted in the language of English, except in the case of awards or modules in modern foreign languages. Dictionaries will not be permitted in formal examinations.

## **9 Formative, Formal and Informal Assessment**

9.1 All modules/units/course elements should include both formal and informal assessments.

9.2 Formal assessments are those which have a summative role in contributing to the final grade or mark for the module/unit or course element. Informal assessments have a more formative purpose and do not carry a grade contributing to the final mark or grade for the module; their primary purpose is to improve the learning of students. Informal assessment can include peer-assessment and self-assessment as well as tutor-

assessment, and may include evaluation of the effectiveness of the learning process carried out while the module is in progress. It is recognised that summative assessments can also have a formative function.

- 9.3 Work presented for a module/unit/course, whether for summative or formative purposes, should conform to the norms of academic scholarship and referencing unless otherwise specified.

## 10 Feedback to Students and Return of Student Assessments

- 10.1 Effective and timely feedback should be given to students for all formal and informal assessments including examinations.
- 10.2 Feedback to students encompasses a marker's comments on student performance in an item of assessment and should be provided on all summative and formative assessments. Types of feedback include, but are not limited to:
- individual oral feedback
  - group oral feedback
  - written comments for individual students
  - model answers
  - generic written or oral feedback, eg assessor's or examiner's report.
- 10.3 Where appropriate, feedback may be given in advance of the return of individual assessment items to students, and may be provided electronically.
- 10.4 Feedback to students on their assessments should:
- promote learning, and enable students to improve their performance in subsequent assessments, by indicating areas for improvement and/or setting specific targets or goals for improvement
  - be clearly linked to learning outcomes and assessment criteria
  - provide the students with an understanding of the way in which their grade was derived and their relative success in meeting the learning outcomes
  - be based on a consistent course team approach to providing assessment feedback to students.

Further guidance on good practice in assessment feedback is available from the Academic Development and Practice Unit.

- 10.5 The details of all formal assessment items should be included in module outlines, together with the deadline for submission and the date by which students will be able to collect the marked assessment item.
- 10.6 In normal circumstances assessment items should be marked and returned to students with feedback within **twenty working days** of the date of submission. Where, for valid reasons, this cannot be achieved, the member of staff concerned should consult with the course leader and where appropriate their line manager; agree an alternative date, and inform the students affected of the revised date of return. In such circumstances it may be desirable to provide students with feedback in advance of the return of the assessment item and determination of the provisional grade.

- 10.7 Staff should enter grades for marked assessment items onto the student record system as soon as possible after the work for the whole group has been marked. All grades for assessment items remain provisional until confirmed by an examination board.
- 10.8 Feedback on performance in examinations should be provided for students. This may take the form of generic feedback to a student group, eg in the form of an 'examiner's report' on each question or similar. Additionally and/or alternatively students may be offered the opportunity to discuss their examination scripts and receive personal feedback. All students are entitled to see their marked examination script; however, this remains the property of the University. The arrangements for providing feedback on examinations should also be specified in the module outline.

## **11 Assessment Briefs and Assessment Criteria**

- 11.1 Students must be provided with written assessment guidelines describing the nature of the task, the format for presentation and the assessment criteria (see below) for all items of assessment. This normally takes the form of an assessment (or assignment) brief, and provides clear information for students on what they are expected to do, how they are expected to go about it, and how their work will be marked.
- 11.2 Assessment briefs should include:
- an explanation of how the particular item of assessment relates to the learning outcomes and skills requirements of the module
  - any specific constraints or requirements, eg word limits, and the need for good academic practice, eg referencing of sources
  - assessment criteria - the basis upon which the quality of a student's work will be graded
  - details of any marking scheme (if used)
  - submission procedures and deadlines, and the consequences of late, incomplete or non-submission.
- 11.3 Assessment criteria can be specified at different levels: for example criteria can be set for each individual item of assessment, for each type of assessment (eg essays, laboratory reports, presentations), for each module, or they can be set at the level of the discipline (although in such cases it is usual to establish specific criteria for individual assessments also). There is no right approach to establishing assessment criteria and a variety of approaches are acceptable; however, course/subject teams should have a consistent approach to assessment criteria, for example whether they are specified at the assignment or module level and how they are presented to students.
- 11.4 In establishing assessment criteria, course teams should ensure they are benchmarked to the University's grade descriptors, and take account of level descriptors, the FHEQ, and subject benchmark statements as appropriate.
- 11.5 Assessment criteria should be subject to internal and external scrutiny in order to assure academic standards.
- 11.6 Assessment criteria should be discussed with students, and feedback to students on their assessments should be informed by assessment criteria.

## **12 Anonymous Marking**

- 12.1 Wherever possible and practical the anonymity of students in the marking process should be maintained. Anonymous marking is a system whereby the student's identity is not made known to the internal/external examiner at the time of marking. Its purpose is to protect students and markers against the possibility of bias, whether conscious or unconscious. A student's assessed work should be identified only by a reference number, which will normally be the student number found on their identity card.
- 12.2 Anonymity must be retained until the grade for the assessment (which remains provisional until the examination board has confirmed it) has been formally recorded on the student record system.
- 12.3 It is recognised that certain forms of assessment cannot be marked anonymously as it is impossible for the students not to identify themselves. The following forms of assessment should normally be marked anonymously:
- essays
  - written seminar or other presentation papers
  - examinations
  - book reviews
  - library assessments/projects
  - data analysis
  - case study analysis
  - reports of practicals for taught courses.

## **13 Approval of Assessment Items and Assessment Criteria**

- 13.1 It is the responsibility of the Subject Assessment Board to ensure internal scrutiny and approval of all summative items of assessment (examination papers and coursework assignments), including specific assessment criteria, before publication to students. The purpose is to ensure that the standards set are appropriate and consistent across modules/units/course elements, and that the assessments are reliable, valid and authentic, and where appropriate, are equivalent in terms of workload and demand on students taking account of the relative assessment weighting. The Subject Assessment Board may delegate this task to the course/subject team.
- 13.2 Institutes and/or course teams must have a formally stated procedure for the approval of items of assessment and assessment criteria.
- 13.3 Approval applies to re-assessment items as well as original assessments, and should normally be undertaken at the same time.
- 13.4 A sample of internally approved assessment items and related assessment criteria (together, where appropriate, with assessment briefs) to include all examination papers must be provided to the external examiner for comment. Course/subject teams will agree with external examiners whether external scrutiny of assessment items and assessment criteria (including marking schemes/grids or model answers or similar) should take place before publication of assessment briefs to students, or alternatively may be carried out as part of the process of external moderation of student work.

## 14 Moderation of Marking

- 14.1 Moderation is employed to ensure that academic standards are appropriate and consistent across course/subject teams and reflect agreed assessment policies and assessment criteria, and that the assessment outcomes for students are fair and reliable.
- 14.2 It is the responsibility of the course/subject team to ensure internal moderation of all marking (student examination papers and coursework assignments), before grades are presented for confirmation to the Board of Examiners.
- 14.3 All Institutes and/or course/subject teams must have a formal statement of procedures for the internal and external moderation of marking which takes account of the University stated minimum requirements, and the specific assessment strategy of the course/subject must be maintained. Institute and course/subject policies and procedures should be subject to regular review and formal approval through Institute Quality Committees and published as an annexe to the Student Course Handbook.
- 14.4 The University takes the view that a variety of practice in relation to moderation of marking exists, reflecting discipline differences and conventions, differences in the assessment tasks and/or assessed materials. There is, therefore, a range of different acceptable models of moderation of marking:
- **Blind double marking:** two separate assessors each independently assess a piece of student work, assigning a mark and providing comments which justify the marks in relation to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria. Both examiners record their marks and comments separately and then compare marks and resolve differences to produce an agreed mark. Agreed marks and comments may then be entered on the work. Normally carried out as a universal exercise, ie every piece of student work is considered by two assessors
  - **Non-blind double marking:** an assessor marks a piece of student work, assigning a mark and providing comments to justify the mark, and then a second assessor also assigns a mark and provides comments. Normally carried out as a universal exercise
  - **Second marking<sup>1</sup>:** an assessor marks a piece of student work, assigning a mark and providing comments to justify the mark as above. A second assessor then reviews the mark and comments in order to confirm (or not) the mark awarded by the first marker. Normally carried out on a sample basis, in order to corroborate the accuracy of the marking standards applied by the first marker, but can be applied as a universal exercise
  - **Marking standardisation exercises:** a group of assessors (eg a module marking team, or a course team) all independently mark a sample of pieces of student work and assign grades using agreed criteria, compare and discuss the outcomes. The purpose of this exercise is to establish that all assessors are applying the agreed criteria consistently. Following the exercise, the assessors each mark student work in the normal way. Marking standardisation exercises as a model of moderation can be used in addition to various models of double or second marking – it is particularly useful as a means of assisting new staff become familiar with marking standards and conventions.

### University minimum requirements for internal moderation of marking

- 14.5 All course/subject teams and/or Institutes are required to maintain a formal published statement of moderation procedures that is regularly reviewed. This statement should

---

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes referred to as 'verification'

be published as an annexe to the Student Course Handbook (which may be a link to an electronic document).

- 14.6 Where a course or module is delivered at more than one site, there must be a specific course or module statement of moderation procedures which specifies the arrangements for ensuring consistency of marking standards across sites (see also 14.17 below).
- 14.7 Moderation of marking procedures applies to all modules/units and items of assessment (including live assessments), and since these vary significantly, there is no assumption that a course or subject will use only one model of moderation. Institutes and course/subject teams should give careful consideration to the method(s) of moderation of marking to be employed taking account of:
- the principle that for all assessments more than one marker should be involved in grading decisions
  - the nature of the material or task to be assessed
  - the number, experience and role of staff (including employers/mentors or practice professionals) involved in the marking process
  - the level of study of the module or unit
  - the relative importance in terms of weighting of the item of assessment
  - the significance of the decision arising from the mark awarded
  - the norms of the discipline
  - the expertise and views of the external examiner(s).
- 14.8 All independent studies and dissertations or similar projects must be blind double marked.
- 14.9 All failed assessment items must be internally moderated through non-blind double marking.
- 14.10 Where sample double or second marking is employed, the sample of student work must include all fails and a minimum of 10% of all other work across the grade bands. In the case of small cohorts, the sample should not be less than 6 pieces of work, and normally no more than 20 pieces of work (excluding failed student work).
- 14.11 The Institute and/or course policy must specify how differences between markers are to be resolved (eg discussion between the two markers, taking the mean, resort to a third marker). In the case of sample second marking, normally the process will confirm the appropriateness of the standard of marking; however, where this is not confirmed, the policy must provide for the review of the student work and/or the marks of the whole cohort.
- 14.12 The Institute and/or course policy must specify the method for recording whether a piece of work has been moderated and what the outcome was.

### **University minimum requirements for external moderation of marking**

- 14.13 Assessment relating to level 4 modules in three-year degree programmes is not normally subject to external moderation after the first year of delivery.
- 14.14 In order to carry out their responsibility for external moderation, in addition to the sample of student work, external examiners must be provided with the module outline, examination papers and/or assessment briefs and assessment and grade criteria,

together with the provisional statistical profile of marks for the modules/units for which they are responsible.

- 14.15 External examiners are not expected to arbitrate in the event of disagreement between first and second markers, and are not expected to change marks for individual items of student work.
- 14.16 A minimum sample of 15% of the work for each item of assessment for individual modules must be made available to the external examiner(s). This should normally include all modules contributing to the final award, and must include student work across all grade bands. The 15% sample must also include student work in the highest and fail categories. In the case of small cohorts the sample should never be less than 6 in number, and should normally be no more than 25. The external examiner is expected to use the sample to ensure that marking standards are appropriate and that internal moderation has been effective. The rationale for providing a larger sample for external moderation is to enable the external examiner to ascertain the effectiveness of the internal moderation procedures – there is little point in asking the external examiner to moderate only student work that has been subject to internal moderation – rather, the external examiner will compare marking practices and grading across a sample of internally moderated and unmoderated student work, and from this will be able to reach judgements regarding the effectiveness of internal moderation processes.
- 14.17 Where a course or module is delivered at more than one site, the external examiner should be provided with the provisional statistical profile of marks for each site of delivery, so that they are able to comment on the standards for each delivery site. If the provisional profile of marks indicates significant discrepancies, then the external examiner and/or the Board of Examiners may require a further process of second marking to be carried out.

### **Examination Board scrutiny of module grade profiles**

- 14.18 Subject Assessment Boards should review the provisional statistical grade profiles of modules individually and by level for each subject/course in order to identify any issues relating to the performance of the students and/or standards of marking. The Subject Assessment Board will determine whether or not, in the light of the grade profiles, any action needs to be taken before the grades for one or more modules can be confirmed.
- 14.19 The Subject Assessment Board can refer modules for consideration or review by the course/subject team or other group established by the Institute for this purpose. Such post-examination board scrutiny does not alter marks, but seeks to assure the consistent application of marking standards, the identification of issues, and quality enhancement of learning, teaching and assessment practices, to inform the annual course evaluation.
- 14.20 A report on the outcomes of any post-examination board review should be presented to the Head of Institute (or nominee) and to the next meeting of the relevant Subject Assessment Board.

## **15 Review of Student Performance**

- 15.1 There is a two-stage process for considering the assessment taken by a student in any given year or other defined period of study.

**Stage 1** involves staff from a cognate subject area reviewing the results for the modules taken, to make recommendations regarding the grade achieved by each student to the

appropriate Board of Examiners. This stage normally takes place at the end of each semester. The recommendations remain provisional until approved by the Board of Examiners

**Stage 2** involves the Board of Examiners who review the student's entire profile of module results, confirm grades achieved, make decisions regarding reassessment and progression, and recommend to Academic Board any award and, if appropriate, the classification of each student. Boards of Examiners normally meet at the end of the academic year. In the case of programmes which are part of a 'scheme', eg the UMS, FD or HN scheme, Boards of Examiners operate in a two tier process, whereby Subject Boards of Examiners make recommendations on grades and re-assessment, with Scheme Boards of Examiners recommending to Academic Board any award and classification.

- 15.2 Reassessment decisions may only be taken by a Board of Examiners.
- 15.3 Normally work set for re-assessment should only be made available to the student after the Board of Examiners has confirmed the grade and any reassessment decision, in order to prevent students from being overloaded with reassessment at the same time as commencing new modules. Where exceptions to this are necessary, such as courses involving professional placements when the reassessment must take place immediately after the original assessment, either the Board of Examiners should be convened or Chair's action should be taken and approved at the next meeting.

## **16 Publication of Results**

- 16.1 The Registry Services Officer present at a Board of Examiners will record the Board's decisions on the progression of students and the awards for which they are recommended.
- 16.2 Registry Services is responsible for the publication of official results to students following the meeting of Boards of Examiners. Publication of results will be made electronically via the secure student portal (SOLE) and will include allow access to individual module results, the progression decision and the award agreed by Boards of Examiners.
- 16.3 It is the student's responsibility to ascertain his or her results.
- 16.4 As exam results are personal data, Institutes should not display student results on notice boards and students should be encouraged to access their results via their SOLE pages. Results should not be disclosed over the telephone, unless a suitable security system is in place to ensure that the caller is in fact the student concerned.
- 16.5 Registry Services will publish student awards in the awards ceremony programme and provide details to newspapers. Students will be provided with an opportunity to exercise their right to object to their results being published in this way.
- 16.6 Registry Services will provide the student with an official transcript when a student completes their studies.
- 16.7 For students who do not satisfy the Board of Examiners that they have fulfilled the requirements of the assessment process, Registry Services shall communicate the decision of the Board of Examiners in writing to the student concerned, with instructions on any reassessment permitted.

## **17 Ownership and Archiving of Students' Assessed Work**

- 17.1 Students hold the intellectual property inherent in all work produced for assessments, but the material produced by students for assessment (essays, projects, examination scripts, dissertations, artworks, computer disks, etc) is the property of the University, and may be retained pending confirmation of marks awarded by Examination Boards, possible appeals and quality audits. With the exception of examination scripts, the University will endeavour to return to students assessed work whenever a student explicitly requests this. Arrangements for returning assessed work to students are the responsibility of individual tutors.
- 17.2 Each course should maintain an archive of sample marked student work that is representative of the range of assessment tasks and grades awarded, for the purposes of quality audit, staff induction and development, and monitoring and benchmarking of standards. The sample should be periodically updated at least every three years.
- 17.3 Assessed coursework that has not been collected by the student will be retained by the University for six months after the relevant Examination Board, after which time it may be disposed of. Arrangements for the disposal of such work is the responsibility of the Institute.

## **18 Failure and Reassessment**

- 18.1 Reassessment is not available to improve upon a mark or grading above the pass level required for an award.
- 18.2 A candidate for reassessment may not demand reassessment in elements that are no longer current within the programme. However, the Board of Examiners may exercise its discretion in providing special arrangements where it is not practicable for students to be reassessed in the same elements or by the same methods as at the first attempt. Such arrangements shall be subject to the principle that an award is only made when a candidate has fulfilled the objectives of the programme and achieved the required standard.
- 18.3 In order to ensure consistency and fairness to all students, there should be no vivas to determine marks for borderline students. The only circumstances in which viva voce examinations are permitted are in the examination of research degree candidates. In cases where a viva forms part of the formal assessment, this should be termed an 'oral exam'.

## **19 Late Submission of Assignments**

- 19.1 Students will be permitted to submit course assignments late in accordance with the Procedures approved by the Academic Board, which are published in Part 3 of the Academic Regulations and included in the Student Handbook. The Procedures establish the acceptable grounds for late submission and the process, which must be followed by students. They also refer to special arrangements for individual cases.

## 20 Mitigating Circumstances

- 20.1 Students who believe that their assessment performance has been affected by exceptional mitigating circumstances may bring forward claims for consideration by the Mitigations Committee. Such claims must be submitted and considered according to the procedures which are approved by the Academic Board and which are published in Part 3 of the Academic Regulations and included in the Student Handbook.

## 21 Allegations of Cheating

- 21.1 The University will investigate all cases of alleged cheating and where upheld will impose penalties as appropriate. All cases will be investigated according to the Procedures approved by the Academic Board, which are published in Part 3 of the Academic Regulations and included in the Student Handbook.

## 22 Appeals Against the Decisions of Boards of Examiners

- 22.1 Students will be allowed to appeal against the decisions of Boards of Examiners on the following grounds:-
- a material administrative error in the conduct of the assessment
  - a misinterpretation of the current assessment regulations
  - some other material irregularity relevant to the assessment(s) concerned which has substantially prejudiced the results of the assessment
  - and, in the case of postgraduate research students only, that there has been a bias or inadequacy in the assessment of their work on the part of one or more of the examiners.
- 22.2 Disagreement with the academic judgement of an Examination Board in assessing the merits of an individual piece of work, or in reaching any assessment decision based on the marks, grades or other information relating to a student's performance cannot in itself constitute grounds for appeal.
- 22.3 Appeals must be submitted and considered according to the Procedures approved by the Academic Board, which are published in Part 3 of these Academic Regulations and included in the Student Handbook.

Version reference: Final AP3.2

Date document was approved and comes into effect: 28 June 2005

Author of the document: Director of QED/Head of Registry Services

Approved by: Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee

Date document is due for review: annually

### Revision History

| Committee | Date                        | Change  |
|-----------|-----------------------------|---|
| ASQEC     | 22 <sup>nd</sup> June 2011  | Insertion of Appendix 3 Guidance re numeric marks |
| ASQEC     | 14 <sup>th</sup> April 2010 | Various sections renumbered                       |
| ASQEC     | 14 <sup>th</sup> April 2010 | 2 Terminology - insertion of new section          |
| ASQEC     | 14 <sup>th</sup> April 2010 | 4 Principles of Assessment at Level 4 – insertion |

|                |                             |   |
|----------------|-----------------------------|---|
|                |                             | of new section  |
| ASQEC          | 14 <sup>th</sup> April 2010 | 10 Feedback to Students and Return of Student Assessments - insertion of new section  |
| ASQEC          | 14 <sup>th</sup> April 2010 | 11 Assessment briefs and assessment criteria - insertion of new section   |
| ASQEC          | 14 <sup>th</sup> April 2010 | 13 Approval of Assessment Items and Assessment Criteria - insertion of new section replacing previous section moderation and verification of assessments                                |
| ASQEC          | 14 <sup>th</sup> April 2010 | 14 Moderation of Marking – revised section  |
| ASQEC          | 14 <sup>th</sup> April 2010 | Appendix 2 Guidance on implementation of principles of assessment - insertion of new section  |
| ASQEC          | 14 January 2009             | 3 Word Counts: insertion of new section   |
| ASQEC          | 14 January 2009             | 4 Academic Referencing: insertion of new section  |
| ASQEC          | 25 June 2008                | 2 Assessment scheduling and loading: Section re-drafted, with associated guidance set out in appendix 1   |
| ASQEC          | 25 June 2008                | 5 Feedback and return of student assessments: Section re-drafted to make more explicit policy on providing feedback on examination performance  |
| ASQEC          | 25 June 2008                | 6.4 Moderation and verification of assessments: Clarification regarding the timing of external moderation of assessments;   |
| ASQEC          | 25 June 2008                | 7.1 and 7.2 Anonymous marking: Insertion of rationale for anonymous marking, and confirmation of the point at which anonymity ends  |
| ASQEC          | 25 June 2008                | 8 Replacement of 'should' with 'must' throughout where appropriate.<br>8.6 Verification and moderation of marking standards: Insertion of rationale for external moderation sample size |
| ASQEC          | 25 June 2008                | 10 Publication of results: Section updated  |
| ASQEC          | 25 June 2008                | Appx 1 Guidance on designing course and module assessment strategies: New guidance section  |
| ASQEC          | 25 June 2008                | Generic undergraduate grade descriptors: Removed to become a separate 'stand alone' document.   |
| AQSC           | 6 June 2007                 | Add:<br>Appendix 1: Generic Undergraduate Grade Descriptors with effect from 1 <sup>st</sup> September 2007   |
| Academic Board | 28 June 2005                | New policy Approved   |

## Appendix 1

### Guidance on designing module and course assessment strategies

#### 1 Taking a course overview

As set out in the general principles for assessment it is essential that the assessment for an individual module or unit is aligned with the learning outcomes. However, it is also essential that an overview is taken of the assessment design, schedule and loading for the course as a whole:

- a) diversity of assessment modes and tasks and innovation are integral to good assessment practice
- b) the assessments taken together should ensure that the course learning outcomes are tested
- c) students following different pathways or specialist routes through courses should not be able to avoid certain assessment modes/tasks if these are testing course level learning outcomes
- d) the balance of assessment over the course of a semester/academic year should be carefully considered
- e) at level 4 especially, students should benefit from early (within the first 4-6 weeks) formative feedback on assessment whether from early summative assessments or informal assessments
- f) care should be taken to ensure that students are not completing multiple assignments for the same deadline
- g) good practice is to publish both the assignment submission deadline and the date when marked and graded assignments may be collected.

The use of assessment maps can assist in taking a course level overview.

#### 2 Taking the module view

In designing the assessment details for a module or course unit, account should be taken of the following:

- a) the total student effort hours represented by the credit weighting of the module, and the proportions of this total available for formal taught sessions, independent study and assessment
- b) although students' motivation, background, skills and abilities will make any assessment task more difficult and time-consuming for some than others, as a rough guide a 2,000 word essay might represent 20 – 25 hours of student effort time for the 'average' student (taking into account research, planning, drafting and editing and proofreading)
- c) reliance on a single assessment for a module – eg a single examination or one extended piece of course work will mean that a student's fate in the module depends on that single item of assessment – in such cases the teaching and learning strategy for the module should be designed so that student may benefit from formative feedback before the single summative assessment
- d) to avoid the above, it is recommended that 15/20 credit modules are assessed by 2 items of assessment (both of which contribute to the overall module grade), and that these are scheduled such that the student can receive feedback on the first assessment before they complete the second assessment
- e) the alignment of the assessment task(s) with the learning outcomes and the rules for passing the module:
  - where passing the module is based on aggregated results from 2 or more assessments, it may be appropriate to test the learning outcomes through more

than one assignment – to permit a student to redeem an initial failure by an improved performance in a second task;

- where the learning outcomes for a module are tested through 2 or more different assessment tasks each testing different learning outcomes, then it may be appropriate to specify that students must achieve a minimum pass grade in each assessment – however, this means that there are additional points at which a student may fail the module;
- f) the weighting of an individual assessment item should normally reflect its value as contribution to the total amount of assessment for the module as indicated in the assessment table and guidance below
- g) normally no single assessment task should contribute less than 20% to the overall mark.

### **3 Assessment load: guidance on equivalence and weighting**

- 3.1 The assessment table below is intended to provide guidance for course teams, validation and review panels in constructing and approving assessment strategies for modules. It should be interpreted flexibly, taking account of the general principles outlined above. Where proposed assessment schedules depart significantly from the guidance, a rationale should be provided – for example, where contact time is relatively low as in some work-based or distance learning programmes, or block study programmes, then more assessment effort might be expected.
- 3.2 The guidance relates to all modules of 15 credit or 20 credit size. Postgraduate study which is normally based on 20 credit module size, and undergraduate programmes using 20 credit modules, particularly at level 6, will be expected to specify assessments towards the upper limits of the guidance provided in terms of word length/time, unless there is a specific rationale for doing otherwise. Undergraduate programmes which are normally based on 15 credit modules will be expected to specify assessments towards the lower limits of the guidance provided in terms of word length/time – again unless there is a specific rationale for doing otherwise.
- 3.3 The assessment loading can be scaled up for higher credit modules of 30 or 40 credits; however, a 30 credit module may not need as much as double the amount of assessment as a 15 credit module.
- 3.4 The table is based on the principle of equivalence, where for a 15 or 20 credit module a 3-4,000 word essay or report is regarded as equivalent to a 3 hour formal examination or a 5,000 word reflective learning journal or a set of laboratory reports representing practical work over a semester.

## Guidance on module assessment loadings

| Assessment type  | Weighting |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Examinations</b>  |           |
| 3 hour formal examination  | 100%      |
| 2 hour formal examination  | 60/50%    |
| 1 hour formal examination or test  | 40%       |
| <b>Essays/Reports</b>  |           |
| 3,000 – 4,000 (max) words essay /report                                  | 100%      |
| 2,000 – 2,500 (max) words written assignment                             | 60/50%    |
| 1,000 – 1,500 words written assignment                                   | 40%       |
| <b>Reflective journals/logs</b>  |           |
| 4-5,000 words (max)/12 week reflective journal /learning log             | 100%      |
| 2,500 words (max)/6 week reflective journal/learning log                 | 50%       |
| <b>Laboratory/practical reports</b>                                      |           |
| 12 week equivalent Laboratory/practical report file                      | 100%      |
| 6 week equivalent Laboratory/practical report file                       | 50%       |
| 1 or 2 week equivalent Laboratory/practical report file                  | 15-20%    |
| <b>Oral presentations</b>  |           |
| 30 – 45 minute oral examination  | 50%       |
| 20 – 30 minute individual oral /poster presentation                      | 50%       |
| 10 – 15 minute individual oral/poster presentation                       | 25/20%    |
| <b>Group presentations</b>   |           |
| Group presentation + report (10 minutes + 750 words (approx) per member) | 50%       |
| Group presentation (10 minutes per member)                               | 30%       |
| Group poster presentation  | 30%       |

Ms/assessment loading guidance/June2008

## Appendix 2

### Guidance on implementation of the assessment principles at level 4

|   | Principle  | Discussion and elucidation  |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | Is a key priority in the overall curriculum design process.  | This urges that assessment be considered explicitly at programme-design level in an holistic way; thus recognising its value and importance. The suggestion is that, by focusing more clearly on assessment, we acknowledge the importance of assessment and the way it shapes student perception of the curriculum. It is expressed in response to concerns that, in the past, assessment could sometimes be left out of programme design and only considered at module level. |
| 2 | Is fundamentally concerned with assessment <i>for</i> learning.  | There is general agreement that assessment at level 4 is fundamentally formative and about promoting student learning, development and improvement. Hence this principle that assessment at level 4 be conceptualised as part of the learning process rather than a separate, summative process of judging and grading achievement.   |
| 3 | Promotes provision of timely feedback that enhances learning.  | This principle suggests we need to make decisions about assessment methods at level 4 based, in part, on which methods encourage speedy provision of formative feedback that will be of immediate benefit to student learning. For example, we should seek to adopt assessment methods that provide immediate formative feedback to students and use assessments which provide 'feed-forward' in support of learning.   |
| 4 | Encourages dialogue and interaction with peers and tutors so that shared conceptions of the subject, criteria and standards are developed. | A statement that one of the key purposes of assessment at this stage in the student life-cycle is to engender social construction of an understanding of what is required of assessed work in the discipline in HE. A key aspect of level 4 should be helping students grasp the requirements of HE study.  |
| 5 | Prepares students for the methods and modes of assessment, as well as the technologies and ways of learning, at level five.                | This relates to the previous principles in that it is based on seeing level 4 as preparatory for later levels. It should therefore provide the opportunity for students to practice the assessment types they will come up against later and seek to promote approaches to learning that will be effective at later levels.   |
| 6 | Provides students with some choice as to their mode of assessment, within an overall structure.  | This was shaped by discussion about inclusive practice and balancing that with the need to provide a balanced assessment diet. The principle therefore suggests some student choice of mode – an assignment that meets the learning outcomes but could do it in writing or through video or audio formats – but the need to maintain an overall structure which provided students with a range of assessment types.   |
| 7 | Enhances aspirational engagement and intrinsic motivation.   | This would suggest the need to design assessments which tap into student motivation for engagement in the programme in the first place; capture and celebrate student achievement; and raise aspirations. There was concern that previous practice might have taught strategically-minded students that getting a D- was good enough at level 4, so thought should be given to promoting the value of work above pass level and enhancing more aspirational engagement.         |

## Appendix 3

### Guidance on using numeric marks for undergraduate work

The generic undergraduate grade descriptors apply to all summatively assessed work within the University of Worcester Undergraduate Regulatory Framework. They are set out according to the grade system used at University of Worcester, and mapped on to the conventional categories or sub-divisions of the honours degree in UK Higher Education. It should be noted that the grade system is represented by letters rather than numbers and that no numbers are mentioned in the grade descriptors or used in the system. This is intentional and was adopted for two reasons.

1. The introduction to the grade descriptors clearly set out that the distinctions between grade bands in the descriptors are qualitative not quantitative. The theoretical frameworks underpinning them rest on students moving through a number of conceptual levels, in their approach to learning and understanding of the nature of knowledge, to achieve improved grades. In fact the grade system is built on these theories in order to explicitly reward higher order thinking about learning and knowledge. It is therefore not possible to get a C grade by doing a larger quantity of D band work, nor do two pieces of work at C band add up to give a result at a higher band. Therefore it would carry erroneous implications to use quantitative numeric labels [which imply psychometric qualities such as the ability to add them up or that the gap between each number is equal] to reflect qualitative data [where grades cannot just be summed and the distinction between a D- and an E might be considered greater than the distinction between a D and a D-].
2. The undergraduate grade descriptors are also built on the acknowledgement that grading student work is not an exact science. It is a matter for professional academic judgment. 'The complex nature of work at this academic level cannot be reduced to a clear-cut series of mutually exclusive categories and grade descriptors cannot be interpreted as such. The category descriptions indicate the general characteristics of different types of work which lead to their assignment to particular categories.' [GUGD, p. 2] There is a reasonable argument, therefore, that it is not realistic to indicate that such fine grained decisions as those between awarding 67 or 68 percent are objectively defensible but that broad descriptive bands of B+, B and B- are as specific as it is appropriate to operate.

The implication of these points is that, in most circumstances it is inappropriate to use numerical grading on undergraduate work. The grade descriptors encourage staff to assess learning and development processes as well as the more traditional focus on outputs and artifacts.

Colleagues may still find it appropriate and helpful as part of their assessment diet, to use assessment approaches which have traditionally used numeric grading, such as multiple question exams, multiple choice tests and computer based tests. The use of numerical grades in these cases is largely to arrive at an overall grade based on numerous small answers. Staff may also wish to allocate percentages to each individual sub-question to indicate their relative importance or value. The question then is whether the use of numerical grading can be avoided for these assessment types or, if not, how these numbers should be related to the generic undergraduate grade descriptors. Three examples may be helpful to illustrate different approaches:

1. Make a qualitative judgment on the overall work rather than the individual pieces – In Ecology a traditional exam is set with a number of individual questions. However, rather than awarding individual percentage points for each question and then adding them together, a qualitative judgment is made against the learning outcomes and criteria on the overall set of responses and an appropriate alphabetic grade awarded.
2. Structure the test to work through the grade descriptors – Biggs & Tang (2007) suggest the possibility of setting a multiple question test which builds through the levels of grade

descriptors. So, for example, some data is provided and the first group of questions ask for a factual or descriptive responses [grade D], the next group of questions require some analysis and grouping of the data [grade band C], the next questions asks for synthesis and evaluation of the data [grade B] and the final question(s) ask the student to relate this evaluation to external themes and make recommendations for policy and practice [grade band A]. Again an overall decision can be taken on the grade based on how well the student performs at the different levels. A similar approach could be adopted by combining multiple choice questions to identify knowledge in grade bands C & D with more evaluative open questions which allow students to demonstrate performance at grade bands B & A.

3. Establish numerical equivalents to the alphabetic grades - It is important to note that this has to be done on a case-by-case basis and appropriate guidance to students included in the module outline as there is no assumption in the generic undergraduate grade descriptors that they represent any particular numeric or percentage figure and there is no University accepted table of percentage equivalents. For example on the FD in pre-hospital unscheduled emergency care the professional body requires student to achieve 70% on a factual examination. It is clear that this requirement for factual knowledge only equates to our broad D grade descriptor. Therefore 70% is set as equivalent to a pass for this piece of work. A similar approach is used in the new Nursing programme where practice assessment is graded by percentages and 80% is a pass. Both these examples operate on a purely pass/fail basis.

For further guidance on these matters please feel free to contact the Academic Development and Practice Unit <http://www.worcester.ac.uk/adpu/index.htm>.

The Generic Undergraduate Grade Descriptors

<http://www.worc.ac.uk/aqu/documents/GenericUndergraduateGradeDescriptors.pdf>.

The Undergraduate Regulatory Framework

<http://www.worcester.ac.uk/registryservices/documents/UndergraduateRegulatoryFramework2007entry.pdf>.

## Appendix 4

### Guidance on course closures, major changes and implications for student progression

Extract from full [guidance](#) paper:

#### 2 Guidance

2.1 This paper establishes principles for dealing with the situation where students are required to re-take modules but the module is no longer running, so that students, partner institutions and course/staff teams are clear about the action to be taken, and decisions can be made on an equitable and transparent basis. It should be remembered that within the regulations, students may be required to re-take modules because they have failed two assessment opportunities, because they have failed to submit assessments or not met the attendance requirements of the module, or alternatively because they have submitted a successful claim of mitigating circumstances, or possibly because they have intercalated.

#### 2.2 Principles

- 1 The principles of the academic regulations with respect to failure and reassessment opportunities must be applied fairly and equitably
- 2 The consequences of failure and the means by which a student can retrieve failure must be taken by the relevant examination board and recorded in the minutes
- 3 Where a student is required through application of the regulations, to re-take a module which is not running in the next academic year, the following decisions are open to an examination board:
  - a. To determine that the student should follow a specified alternative equivalent module (this should be the expected normal outcome)
  - b. To determine that the student should follow a personalised programme of supported, directed study, based on the module learning outcomes and leading to appropriate assessments
  - c. To offer the student the opportunity to transfer to a new or alternative equivalent course (particularly where the student may have failed a number of modules)
  - d. To exceptionally offer the student one further final re-assessment opportunity.

2.3 The Subject Assessment Board should make recommendations to the Board of Examiners in relation to each module failed. Since these are not normally subject to discussion, in the event that the recommendations are to vary the application of the regulations as at 2.2, this should be reported to, and confirmed by, the Board of Examiners. This means that the Board of Examiners can, if necessary, review the recommendation in the light of the full profile of student results. In the event that decisions made by the Subject Assessment and Examination Boards require amendment as a result of a late decision not to run a specific module, a revised decision must be made via Chair's action, if necessary involving the external examiner, and reported to the next meeting of the Board(s).

2.4 The Chair and officers of the Board of Examiners should be mindful of issues of transparency and equity (for students in relation to equality of opportunity and cost) in reaching decisions.

2.5 The Head of Registry Services should specifically report on this matter in the report to ASQEC on examination board minutes.

### **3 Management of course closure/suspension/major change by Institutes**

3.1 Institute Quality Committees should review at their first meeting in each academic year, any courses that have suspended recruitment, are planned for closure or major review, and identify whether there are implications for continuing students.

3.2 Where courses are undergoing major change, the approval process must explicitly address transition arrangements for continuing students.