ROBERT GORDON UNIVERSITY ABERDEEN

ASSESSMENT POLICY

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ASSESSMENT POLICY

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1. Introduction

> The purpose of assessment is to enable students to demonstrate that they have fulfilled the learning outcomes of a course and achieved the standard required for its associated award. All courses are subject to University Regulations that relate assessment requirements to the course learning outcomes; it is on the basis of these requirements that the examiners judge students' performance.
>
> The assessment should provide both an objective and a comprehensive measure of individual student achievement and relate it to the national standard of awards.
>
> *[Academic Regulation A4: Assessment and Recommendations of Assessment Boards]*

The University's *Academic Regulations* and *Organisational Regulations* provide the regulatory framework for the conduct of summative assessment.

> www.rgu.ac.uk/academicregulations
>
> www.rgu.ac.uk/organisationalregulations

The *Assessment Policy* relates to summative assessment, which means an assessment leading to the award of credit, formal award or qualification. For further guidance on summative assessment please contact the Department for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Access.

Assessment terminology used in this policy is defined in an Appendix 1.1: Glossary of Assessment Terms.

Further guidance on aspects of the Policy is available from DELTA where indicated in this document.

2. Preparing for assessment

- The Head of School has overall responsibility for the management of course/programme assessment which may be delegated to other staff in the School.

- At the start of each session the Head of School should establish internal procedures for all summative assessment so it is clear where responsibilities rest with individual staff in the School, including for the management of reasonable adjustments and alternative assessments where applicable.

2.1 Production of summative instruments of assessment

Based on the Academic Calendar which specifies the examination periods during the year, and the course/programme assessment schedule, the course leader or his/her representative should establish timescales for the production of summative instruments of assessment and their model answer(s)/grading scheme(s).

The following three key processes must be implemented. Individual Schools may adopt their own methods of organising the implementation. Where the assessment instrument is developed on an individual student basis, for example for a project, the processes for communication with external examiners may be adapted provided that these processes remain compliant with *Academic Regulation A5, paragraph 4.2(i)* [refer paragraph 2.4].

2.2 Preparation of summative instruments of assessment and associated model answers/grading schemes

The module coordinator, who will be a member of academic staff teaching on the course/programme, has overall responsibility for the development and sign off of accurate summative instrument(s) of assessment and their model answer(s)/grading scheme(s) for a module(s). The module coordinator must:

- co-ordinate the input of relevant members of staff to ensure the form and content of summative instrument(s) of assessment are appropriate;

- forward draft (first diet and referral) summative instrument(s) of assessment and model answer(s)/grading scheme(s) for internal scrutiny;

- produce finalised versions of summative instrument(s) of assessment and model answer(s)/grading scheme(s);

- ensure that any additional materials permitted for the assessment (e.g. calculators in an examination) are clearly defined;

- ensure comments made by external examiner(s) are properly considered and incorporated;

- ensure that the final summative instrument(s) of assessment is proof read;

- be accountable for the formal sign-off of the instrument of assessment, which is going to be distributed to students, to satisfy him/herself that the copies, to be received by individual students, are accurate and complete.

2.3 Internal scrutiny of summative instruments of assessment and associated model answers/grading schemes

The process of internal scrutiny must ensure that instruments of assessment are: unbiased; of an approved standard; reflect learning outcomes, and are in the standard format. Guidance on the preparation of summative instruments of assessment is available from DELTA.

2.4 Communication with external examiner(s)

External examiners must approve the instruments of assessment in award-bearing stages. In the case of undergraduate courses which also have sub-degree exit awards, this shall apply only to degree and honours degree stages.

External examiners shall have the following authority and responsibilities:

(i)   to approve, as appropriate, the form and content of draft examination papers, coursework and/or other forms of assessment that contribute to the assessment in award-bearing stages;

[Academic Regulation A5, paragraph 4.2(i)]

The approval process must include:

a. the scrutinised summative instrument of assessment and its model answer/grading scheme to be sent to the external examiner at least one month before the date of the assessment;

b. comments made by external examiner to be considered by the module coordinator for incorporation into the final drafts of summative instrument of assessment and its model answer/grading scheme;

c. the external examiner to be notified, in writing, as to what action has been taken on his/her comments;

d. the external examiner to be informed, as appropriate, of any changes made to the summative instrument of assessment and its model answer/grading scheme after his/her approval.

3.   Examination, coursework and practical examination

Staff and student responsibilities are embodied in *Academic Regulations*:

▪ *Academic Regulation A3: Student Conduct and Appeals*

▪ *Academic Regulation A4: Assessment and Recommendations of Assessment Boards*

Examinations, coursework and practical examinations together with other assessment related terms are defined in Appendix 1.1: Glossary of Assessment Terms.

Students must be informed if anonymous marking will be used. Anonymous marking will normally be used for examinations. Refer: Examination Procedures.

Students must receive a schedule of assessment at the beginning of each academic semester.

Students are expected to produce material for assessment by the deadline for submission.

Students should expect the provisional outcome of assessment to be made known to them within a reasonable timeframe after submission, normally within 20 working days of the date of submission.

Students must be advised in advance if assessment may involve audio and/or visual recording.

3.1 Examination

Written examinations are conducted according to Examination Procedures.

Students and staff are required to familiarise themselves with arrangements for written examinations, in particular *Guidance for Candidates of Written Examinations*. Refer: Examination Procedures.

i Calculators

Calculators should only be used in accordance with the assessment brief. Calculators used in examinations will be subject to spot checks. Refer: Examination Procedures.

ii Translation Dictionaries

Electronic dictionaries are not permitted in examinations.

Paper-based, translation dictionaries only should be used. These are subject to prior approval by the relevant School and will be subject to spot checks.

Refer: Examination Procedures.

iii Other resources

Other resources, such as notes, text books, case studies, case law, or specific pieces of equipment may be permitted in examinations only in accordance with the assessment brief.

iv Computer aided assessment

Refer: Examination Procedures.

v Examination venues

Arrangements for examinations held outwith the University's normal examination venues are as follows. All alternative arrangements must be approved by the Head of School in liaison with the Department for Governance and Academic Quality.

- <u>For students studying at the University's Aberdeen site or at a collaborative partner institution</u> a re-assessment will be arranged outwith the normal University/partner venues only in exceptional circumstances and by prior approval.

- <u>For students studying by Online Distance Learning mode of delivery</u> full information about the need to attend any examinations and what the validated arrangements are for these must be detailed in the *Course Specification*. It is anticipated that only in exceptional circumstances, where students are unable to undertake examinations within the arrangements approved at validation, will exceptional alternative arrangements be made.

Examination procedures contain further details of arrangements for examination venues and approval requirements for exceptional circumstances.

3.2 Coursework

i   Coursework information

The coursework assessment brief should be provided with clear instructions about the task and *all* assessable criteria (such as word count, referencing, format, style).

ii   Mode of submission

The coursework submission mechanism must be clearly specified in the coursework assessment brief and the submission mechanism must be secure. It is the responsibility of students to submit as specified in the coursework assessment brief.

Further guidance on submission methods is available from DELTA.

Students should be advised to keep a copy of all coursework and any material demonstrating how the coursework was produced until after receipt of a confirmed result from the Assessment Board.

The School should keep a record of submissions. This will be retained until a minimum of 20 days following the meeting of the Assessment Board in accordance with the policy for retention of assessed work [refer paragraph 5i].

iii   Late submission

Coursework received after the specified date and time will be regarded as late.

Further guidance on late submission is available from DELTA.

> 4.2   Coursework received after the specified date and time for submission shall only be accepted if there is a valid reason which is accepted by the academic staff member issuing the coursework (refer also *Extension Request Form* and *Deferral Request Form)*. Late coursework, accepted because of extenuating circumstances, shall be assessed in the normal way.
>
> 4.3   Coursework received late without valid reason shall not be accepted and shall receive no grade, but shall count as one of the assessment opportunities prescribed in paragraph 9 of this Regulation.
>
> *[Academic Regulation A4: Assessment and Recommendations of Assessment Boards]*

iv   Excess wordage

If the word count of an assessment is considered critical, then this should be reflected within the assessment brief, ensuring consistency within a discipline. Schools should discuss this issue in order to ensure the standardisation of the marking process in the event that a student exceeds the required word count, and the application of penalties

within Schools. A penalty would not normally be appropriate unless the deviation was at least plus 10%. Students should be informed of any penalties.

3.3 Practical examination

Appendix 1.1: Glossary of Assessment Terms provides further details of the assessment types which are defined as practical examinations.

i Practical examination information

An assessment brief should be provided to students with clear instructions about *all* assessable criteria together with details of where and when the assessment will take place.

ii Record

Where a practical examination is a summative assessment a record of the assessment submission must be made. This will be retained until a minimum of 20 days following the meeting of the Assessment Board in accordance with the policy for retention of assessed work [refer paragraph 5i].

4. Marking

Marking processes should be fair, valid, reliable and consistent and must ensure that the standards applied are appropriate for the level assessed.

Marking must be undertaken either in the University defined grades or aligned to the University's grades if a numeric or other scheme is used, and this must be specified as part of the module assessment information provided to students. Grades are defined in the University's *Academic Regulations*.

> Each grade within the University Grading Scheme has both a definition and description.
>
> *[Academic Regulation A4: Assessment and Recommendations of Assessment Board, Schedule 4.1: University Grading Scheme]*

Further guidance on marking is available from DELTA.

4.1 Moderation

As a minimum, all summative assessments at award stage will be moderated internally prior to moderation by external examiners to ensure consistency. The School will determine the appropriate method of moderation for its own modules. Moderation must always include an element of double or second marking. [Appendix 1.1: Glossary of Assessment Terms includes definitions of double and second marking and moderation.]

4.2 Double and second marking

All summative assessments for undergraduate and postgraduate stages of courses contributing to an award will be double or second marked on a sampling basis, the sample size being 10 students for cohorts of up to 100, with the sample size increased by 2 for each additional 50 students in the cohort. Normally, all failed work should be double or second marked. This represents the **minimum** expected within the University.

For the sample, double marking should normally be undertaken in preference to second marking where possible and appropriate.

The sample of work to be double/second marked must be selected after first marking has been completed. The selected sample for double/second marking must include all borderline fails and a sample from each grade band.

All project or dissertation work which is first marked by the student's supervisor must be double marked (i.e. with first marking unseen).

Double/second marking must be recorded and provided as evidence to external examiners. Further guidance on marking and moderation is available from DELTA.

4.3 Marking inconsistencies

Where significant inconsistency or disagreement is identified during any form of internal moderation including between first and second markers where double/second marking is used, a meeting must take place to reach a resolution.

All inconsistencies and disagreements must be resolved internally before samples of work are forwarded to external examiners.

Detailed records should be kept regarding:

- the marks and comments of all markers;

- the resolution of disagreements;

- any concerns regarding marking practice and the remedial mechanisms adopted.

This information should be appropriately monitored at School level.

Further guidance on marking and moderation is available from DELTA.

4.4 Team marking

Where a team of markers is used (usually for a large cohort) and each marker is acting as an individual marker, marking will be moderated in accordance with the policy outlined at paragraphs 4.1 and 4.3. Second markers will be selected from the team of first markers.

Where markers are marking simultaneously and will reach consensus about a student's mark through discussion, this is regarded as double marking which will then be subject to moderation at module level to ensure consistency across grade bands.

4.5 Marking penalties in relation to submission mechanism

Coursework submitted using a different mechanism from the mechanism clearly specified in the assessment brief will be marked only with the agreement of the module coordinator in consultation with the relevant course leader(s).

4.6 Marking penalties for late submission

Late submissions will not normally be marked [refer paragraph 3.2iii].

4.7 Marking penalties for excess wordage

Excess wordage will be penalised provided this is indicated in the assessment brief [refer paragraph 3.2iv].

4.8 Penalties for academic misconduct, including plagiarism

Academic misconduct including plagiarism is not penalised directly by the marker.

> When a case of suspected misconduct has been identified, the Head of School shall be informed in the first instance.
>
> *[Academic Regulation A3 - Section 2: Student Misconduct Procedure]*

Students should be strongly advised to keep a copy of all coursework planning and development materials in addition to the submission. Refer Guidance: Academic Honesty.

4.9 Viva voce

A viva voce is essentially a moderation tool.

An oral assessment which is specified in the Module Descriptor or as part of the assessment regime for the course is not a viva voce under the University's *Academic Regulations*; it is simply a form of assessment. Refer Guidance: Viva Voce Examinations for Taught Courses.

> For taught (not research) students the University defines a viva voce as "in addition" to assessment specified in the Course Specification.
>
> *[Academic Regulation A4: Assessment and Recommendations of Assessment Boards]*

4.10 Feedback on assessment

Further guidance on summative assessment is available from DELTA.

The Course/Programme Leader should ensure that work is marked and feedback returned to students, normally no later than 4 weeks (20 working days) from the submission date.

Students must be informed about:

- when they can expect their assessment grades and feedback;

- any delays to the expected date for their assessment grades and feedback;

- the mechanism for giving feedback to students

4.11 Grades for re-assessment

Marking of re-assessed work is in accordance with the *Academic Regulations*.

> For both undergraduate and postgraduate provision, the actual grade obtained for a re-assessed module, including the attempt at which this is achieved, shall be recorded on the student's transcript. When a grade contributes to the determination of the classification or grading of an award, including the determination of Distinction or Merit, then for this purpose the re-assessed module shall be attributed the maximum of a threshold pass of Grade D.
>
> *[Academic Regulation A4: Assessment and Recommendations of Assessment Boards, para 9.6]*

4.12 Student access to examination scripts

The Data Protection Act gives students the right of access to information held about them including examiners' comments on examination scripts or assignments and any feedback sheets. However the university is not obliged to provide students with copies of examination scripts. Scripts will only be made available on the production of the student's enrolment card or photographic identification.

Students who wish to see their marked examination scripts may do so, providing they give prior notice to the School so that supervised access can be arranged. When a script is viewed outwith the University, the student will be responsible for the payment of any fees charged by the External Centre at which the script is viewed.

Refer: Guidance: Student Access to Examination Scripts.

5.   Assessment results

> Refer:
>
> - *Academic Regulation A4: Assessment and Recommendations of Assessment Boards*
>
> - *Organisational Regulation O7: Assessment Boards*

Refer: Procedures for Meetings of Assessment Boards.

5.1   Retention of assessed work

All summative assessment materials will be retained for a minimum 20 day working period from the date of publication of results relevant to an Assessment Board. Any exceptions to this must have the prior approval of the Head of School.

In the event of an academic appeal, in terms of progression or award, or misconduct appeal, all summative materials (to which the appeal relates) will be retained for a period of six years from the date the case concluded.

Where professional, statutory or regulatory bodies (PSRBs) require retention of assessed work, for a longer period than specified above, then this requirement should be met.

5.2   Student debtors and assessment results

The University's current sanction is to withhold the conferment of awards to students who are either in academic debt to the University and/or have not enrolled. Results will be released to such students but these data do not constitute official conferment of an award. Data protection rights of the student to access these personal data will still be upheld.

Schools shall take responsibility for ensuring that all candidates for assessment are fully enrolled students of the University.

Appendix 1.1: Glossary of Assessment Terms

QAA Glossary of Terms

	Word/term	Meaning
A	academic appeal	A process outlined in Academic Regulations through which a student seeks a review of the decision of an Assessment Board relating to progression or award
	aide - memoire	An aid to remembering
	anonymous marking	The marking of students' submitted work without their identity being revealed to the person carrying out the marking at the time the work is marked, so that the assessment is unbiased [source: QAA]
	artefact	A manufactured article normally produced for an assessment or as part of work in progress
	assessment	Method by which the achievement of the learning outcomes of a course/module are tested
	assessment board	The formally constituted meeting which confirms students' results including awards and where an External Examiner is normally in attendance
	assessment brief	A guide to the assessment
	assessment committee	A subsidiary meeting preceding an Assessment Board at which the External Examiner is not in attendance and where initial discussion of the pattern of results takes place
	assessment component	A part of the assessment task
	assessment criteria	The knowledge, understanding and skills that markers expect a student to display in an assessment task, and which are taken into account in marking the work. These criteria are based on the intended learning outcomes [source: QAA]
	assessment element	A subdivision of an assessment component
	assessment type	The mode of assessment. This will be an examination, a coursework or a practical examination. Refer below: coursework, examination or practical examination
	assessment task	What the student is expected to do for the assessment
	award	A qualification, or academic credit, conferred in formal recognition that the student has achieved the intended learning outcomes and passed the assessments required to meet the academic standards set for a programme or unit of study[source: QAA]
C	case study	A learning object based on a described situation or set of circumstances
	cohort	A group of students undertaking the same assessment(s) at the same time
	computer-aided assessment	An interchangeable term with computer-assisted assessment
	computer-assisted assessment (CAA)	Assessment practice that relies in part on computers
	computer-based assessment (CBA)	Assessment delivered and marked by computer

	Word/term	Meaning
	conferment	The formal process of making an award
	coursework	An assessment which is not time limited except by a deadline for submission and which involves the submission of written work or an artefact. If an assessment comprises of work in the form of artefacts such as sketchbooks, large scale design work, exhibitions or portfolios, produced in either a classroom or self-study environment it is considered to be coursework. This includes work that counts towards continuous or examinable work.
	crit	A review of work between staff and student or staff and a group of students; normally in art, design and architecture disciplines to review work in progress
D	defer	Where consideration of an assessment result does not take place because the student has extenuating circumstances. The student's attempt at the assessment is deferred.
	diagnostic assessment	Evaluation of how well a learner is prepared for a given programme or unit of study within it, identifying any strengths, gaps in knowledge, or shortfall in necessary understanding and skills [source: QAA]
	dialogic assessment	Using dialogue to assess an aspect of student learning
	diet	A collection of examination events, e.g. the Semester 1 examination diet started in January
	dissertation	A written study based on primary or secondary research
	double marking [see also second marking]	Assessment of students' work by two or more independent markers as a means of safeguarding or assuring academic standards by controlling for individual bias [source: QAA]. Double marking is normally undertaken with the first marking unseen.
	draft	A piece of work in unfinished form
E	essay	A written submission as a form of assessment
	e-assessment	The end-to-end electronic assessment process where ICT is used for the presentation of assessment activity, and the recording of responses. This includes the end-to-end assessment process from the perspective of learners, tutors, learning establishments, awarding bodies and regulators, and the general public [JISC 2007] comprising e-Submission, e-Marking and e-Feedback
	e-feedback	Comments on an assessment provided on e-copy of the work or via an e-feedback sheet
	e-marking	Where the assessment is marked online
	e-submission	The first step of an e-assessment process and is the process of delivering coursework from student to marker
	examination	A question or set of questions relating to a particular area of study [source: HESA]
	examination venue	The place where the examination is undertaken
	experiment	A trial or investigation

	Word/term	Meaning
	extension	The permitted delay, for a set period of time, of the submission of an assessment
	extenuating circumstances	Exceptional, serious, acute and unforeseen problems or events impacting upon a student's performance/ability to undertake an assessment
	external examiner	An independent expert appointed to comment on student achievement in relation to academic standards and to look at approaches to assessment.
	external scrutiny	The mechanism(s) for External Examiners to review and confirm that instruments of assessment are fit for purpose and that assessments produced by students are of an appropriate standard
F	feedback	Comments by staff/peers on a student's work
	formative assessment [see also summative assessment]	Feedback on the student's performance, designed to help them learn more effectively and find ways to maintain and improve their progress. It does not contribute to the final mark, grade or class of degree awarded to the student [source: QAA]. Formative assessment can also be described as 'assessment for learning' since an assessment that is entered into voluntarily, and on which no final qualification depends, can prompt learners to adjust their own performance
G	grade	The value attributed to the assessment
	grading	The process of evaluating the student's assessment submission
	grading scheme	The framework for awarding credit for summative assessment. Refer A4: Assessment and Recommendations of Assessment Boards, Schedule 4.1: University Grading Scheme
	group assessment	A submission made by a group of students who will all receive the same grade
I	instrument of assessment	The method or tool used for assessment
	internal Assessment Committee	See Assessment Committee
	internal moderation	The process by which marks are reviewed for consistency and standards by an internal group of markers.
	internal scrutiny	The mechanism for checking internally by academic peers that the instrument of assessment is fit for purpose
	internal verification	Refer internal scrutiny
J	journal	A collection of articles with editorial content
L	laboratory work	Study and research carried out in a controlled environment
	late submission	Submission of assessment after the set deadline without prior permission
	learning agreement	A contract of study or work between a student and a host agency
	learning outcomes	What a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning [source: QAA]

	Word/term	Meaning
M	mark	An evaluation of the student's work in numerical terms which can be converted according to approved criteria into a grade
	marking	The process of evaluating the student's work in numerical terms. Also used generically to mean the process of evaluating the student's assessment submission against specific criteria to award a grade/mark.
	marking grid	A detailed grid assigning marks against set criteria, where a specific number of marks are given to individual aspects of the answer.
	mitigating circumstances	see extenuating circumstances
	model answer	An exemplar of the kind of answer expected for an assessment task
	moderation	The process of reviewing all the marks or grades in a group of assessments to ensure equitable marking and to make adjustments where appropriate. Double marking and second marking are examples of moderation tools.
	mooting	Simulated court proceedings which requires researching a point of law, drafting brief and argument before a moot court
O	online assessment	An interchangeable term with e-assessment
	online feedback	An interchangeable term with e-feedback
	online submission	An interchangeable term with e-submission
	open book examination	An examination where the student is allowed to take in supporting material for reference, which may or may not be prescribed
	oral assessment	Assessment in verbal form e.g. by means of oral exam, presentation, debate or verbal discussion
	OSCE	An Objective Structured Clinical Examination is a type of examination often used in health sciences to test clinical skill performance and competence in professional skills
	OSPE	An Objective Structured Practical Examination similar to an OSCE
P	peer assessment	Where work is assessed by fellow students
	peer review	Where work is reviewed by fellow students.
	personation	Where a substitute takes the place of a student in an examination; preparing coursework for assessment on behalf of another student, or submitting coursework for assessment that has been prepared by someone other than the student to whom the resulting grade would be attributed.
	portfolio	A collection of work
	practical examination	Assessment of a student's practical skills or competence. Practical skills assessment focuses on whether, and/or how well, a student performs a specific practical skill or technique (or competency). Examples include clinical skills, laboratory techniques, identification of or commentary on artwork, surveying skills, listening comprehension, and performances [source: HESA]
	practice	Learning undertaken through practical activity
	presentation	Verbal presentation on a topic or work in progress

	Word/term	Meaning
	progression	Formal progress through an academic course, meeting key academic requirements [source: QAA]
	project	A wide ranging study or exploration of a subject
R	re-assessment	Where subsequent assessment of the same module takes place; a further opportunity to pass a previously failed assessment
	refer	Where a student has a further attempt at a module. E.g. The student is referred in the module at a second attempt.
	report	An account or description or evaluation of something
	re-sit	Informal term for re-assessment, more often used for re-assessment by examination
S	safety fail	Where a student is failed on the basis that they are advocating or undertakes unsafe practice
	scrutiny	Close and thorough observation/examination
	second marking [see also double marking]	A second stage of marking, which may be for checking, sampling or moderation purposes [source: QAA]. The presumption is that second marking is undertaken by a marker who has seen the mark and/or comments of the first marker.
	self-assessment	An assessment undertaken by a student of his/her own work
	show	A display or spectacle to convey or illustrate learning
	submission	The handing in or presenting of the student's work for assessment
	submission date	The deadline for handing in finished work for assessment
	summative assessment [see also formative assessment]	An assessment leading to the award of credit, formal award or qualification
T	team marking	Where individual assessments submitted by large cohort of students are marked by more than one member of staff to an agreed set of criteria. Processes of moderation are used to ensure equitable standards of marking.
V	viva	Refer viva voce examination
	viva voce examination	For taught courses: an oral examination or assessment which is conducted "in addition" to the assessments specified in the Course Specification.
W	work experience	The knowledge, skills, understanding a person gains while undertaking work in a specific role and field
	work placement	Part of a course where students apply and develop their knowledge in a practical context