Assessment and Feedback Process 2023-24

This document is designed to accompany the Assessment and Feedback Policy.

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The Assessment and Feedback approach at the University of Northampton is comprised of five stages:
Standardisation
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External Verification.
These processes are required to be adopted for all items of assessment that contribute towards a final module grade, including non-written submissions such as presentations, performances, audio or video assessments and portfolios. Internally unverified grades should not be given to students. Verified grades should not be released to individual students in advance of the cohort.

1.0 Standardisation

1.1 The purpose of a standardisation process is to establish that all assessors are applying the agreed grade criteria consistently and is an essential part of the assessment process where there are multiple assessors. In practice, this involves the relevant group of assessors (e.g., a module marking team) each independently marking sample pieces of student work and assigning grades using pre-agreed criteria. It is considered good practice to use an assessment rubric or marking grid for this purpose. The marking team then compare and discuss the outcomes to standardise their approaches. Following this exercise, the assessors continue to mark student work in the usual manner.

1.2 It is also possible to undertake standardisation using samples of work from previous years where the assessment item is the same. This can include assessment items where the deliverable is a presentation, and these have been recorded for internal moderation and verification purposes.

2.0 First Marking

2.1 First Marking is typically carried out by the module tutor (the first assessor). It is acceptable for large numbers of assessment items to be marked by module teams. In these cases, standardisation activities should be undertaken prior to marking. The first assessor will provide both feedback and feedforward to the student (i.e., feedback to justify the allocated grade, and feedforward to support learner development). If the assessment item has been internally moderated the grade and feedback/feedforward must be agreed with the moderator prior to release to students.

2.2 Where assessments are highly numerical or broken down into several constituent parts, it is the responsibility of the first assessor to ensure that the summation of all grades awarded is accurate by checking all submissions and calculations.

3.0 Internal Moderation

3.1 Internal Moderation is the process whereby student work is moderated in preparation for internal verification of the grades and feedback.

3.2 The purpose of Internal Moderation is to corroborate the reliability of the marking standards applied by the first assessor. It can be undertaken in one of two ways: by second marking all student

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work for that submission (full moderation); or by sampling. Both options require a second assessor to review the grade and any feedback/feedforward provided using the published assessment criteria. The second assessor can suggest awarding a different grade to that allocated by the first assessor as well as offer additional or different feedback/feedforward. There is no requirement for second marking to be undertaken unseen as our sample sizes provide sufficient robustness.

3.3 In the case of fail grades at the first sit, feedforward must be provided in addition to the feedback that justifies the grade to enable the student to benefit from this advice during their resit.

3.4 Internal moderation must be carried out on a sample basis for all non-principal modules, and on all assessment, items submitted as part of a principal module.

The **internal moderation process** must:

3.5 Include second marking of at least 10% of the total number of assessments, or 100% where the total number of assessments submitted is less than eight or the assessment forms part of a principal module (dissertations/projects etc). This is known as moderation by sample.

3.6 Include second marking of 100% of submissions for all principal modules (dissertations/projects etc). This reflects the nature of the relationship between the student and the dissertation/project supervisor who is typically also the first assessor and the likely knowledge differential between the first and second assessors arising from the first assessor's supervisory responsibilities. It is also appropriate given the additional weight allocated to principal modules in the final degree classification algorithm. This is known as full moderation.

3.7 Comprise assessments (i.e., assignments and examinations) from across the range of grades. The exception is assessments at Levels 3 and 4, where only fail and borderline pass/fail scripts will be included in the sample the processes of marking and internal verification of Level 3 and 4 assessments are otherwise standard.

3.8 Require that all assessment fails will be considered by two assessors except at Levels 3 and 4 where a sample will be considered. The processes of marking and internal verification of Level 3 and 4 assessments are otherwise standard.

4.0 Internal Verification Process

4.1 Internal Verification is the process whereby grades and feedback are confirmed to ensure that they are appropriate, fair, and reliable across all items of assessment.

4.2   Internal Verification is usually carried out by the first and second assessors discussing and agreeing the grades and any feedback/feedforward. Where agreement cannot be reached between the first and second assessors, the Programme or Subject Leader will adjudicate.

4.3   All Internal Verification discussions regarding first, second and agreed marks, as well as information regarding the assessment sample must be recorded in NILE where it can be viewed by the External Examiner.

4.4   If there are any substantive queries about the reliability of the grading arising through the marking or moderation processes, particularly where this arises from a change in grades as part of the internal moderation process, the Programme or Subject Leader will provide oversight to ensure that one of the following will be undertaken:

4.4.1   Second marking of a larger sample

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4.4.1.1   Agreed revisions to the markers' interpretation of assessment criteria.

4.4.1.2   Use of a third assessor

4.4.1.3   Remarking or adjustment of grades for the whole batch of scripts

4.4.1.4   Where provision involving collaborative partners relates to a programme that is not run at the University, the named Academic Adviser in the partner institution will work in collaboration with the Programme/Subject Leader to identify the practicalities of how internal verification will take place.

4.5 Once the appropriate method of internal moderation has been completed, any feedback/feedforward must be combined into a single set of feedback/feedforward and one agreed grade that will be provided to the student. This is the responsibility of the first assessor.

4.6 Internal Moderation and Verification of 'live' assessments (e.g., presentations, vivas, performances, exhibitions etc) can be either synchronous or asynchronous via a recording. Assessment of in-class contributions (e.g., student-led seminars) does not count as a 'live' assessment although both assessors are likely to be present.

4.7 Synchronous Moderation and Verification occurs when both the first and second assessors are present during the 'live' assessment. Synchronous Moderation and Verification should always occur for 'viva voce' assessments. Synchronous Moderation is often referred to as 'live' double marking. Synchronous Verification follows almost immediately when the assessors discuss and agree the feedback and grade during a face-to-face discussion. The first assessor retains responsibility for providing the feedback and grade to the student and for recording the outcome of the moderation discussion in NILE where it can be viewed by the External Examiner.

4.8 Asynchronous Moderation and Verification occurs where it is not possible or necessary for both assessors to be present for the live assessment. In this situation, all presentations should be recorded by the first assessor and the second assessor will review a sample (sample size determined according to the nature of the module and the cohort size). This enables the selection of an appropriate sample for Moderation and Internal and External Verification purposes, drawing from all submissions.

The recording of live assessments for asynchronous moderation is not considered to change the nature of the assessment into a public performance. Responsibility for making and storing the recording rests with the first assessor.

Once Internal Verification has occurred, grades will be provided to the Student Records team for input onto the student records system. Once graded, all assessments must be stored for external scrutiny, in line   with the University's policy on data storage.

5.0 External Verification

5.1 Following a robust process of Internal Verification, a sample of assessment items will be reviewed by the External Examiner. All items reviewed by the External Examiner will have been subject to Internal Verification, although not all items scrutinised by the External Examiner will have been Internally Moderated. The role of the External Examiner is to provide an objective, external engagement with the assessment items to ensure that they have been graded reliably and reflect the required academic standards set by the University in line with sector expectations.

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5.2 External Examiner (EE) scrutiny should occur as follows. All External Examiners are given access to NILE to undertake EE moderation. These parts of NILE module sites should allow EE's to see materials related to EE moderations only.

5.3 The sample size within a module will be at least 10% or at least six pieces of work from each assessment item, whichever is greater. Where a cohort comprises eight students or fewer, all items will have been second marked.

5.4 The sample should be taken from all modules in those levels which contribute to the final award classification. In addition, the sample should include material from Levels 3 and 4 of any new course.

5.5 Attention should focus on those items that have been awarded:

5.5.1   A fail

5.5.2   A borderline pass/fail

5.5.3   A mark at an interface between grades

5.5.4   Extremes of grade boundaries

5.5.5   The sample will contain items that were chosen for Internal Moderation and those that were not.

5.3 A copy of the Assessment Moderation Form is available to all External Examiners via the External Examiner area in each NILE site.

5.4 External Examiners must be provided with a sample of student work clearly identified as coming from provision involving collaborative partner institutions, including where provision is delivered at multiple sites and/or where students studying different levels of award are studying the same module (e.g., HNC, HND, BSc).

5.5 In situations where more than one cohort of the same module is delivered on site within an academic year, the sample provided to the External Examiner will include assessments from one of those cohorts but not from each cohort. It is normally expected that this will be the first cohort of the academic year. It remains the case that the External Examiner will moderate assessments from each module every year.

5.6 The same principle will apply to situations where the module is delivered by or at the same collaborative provider within an academic year i.e., the sample provided to the External Examiner will include assessments from one of the cohorts at the collaborative provider, but not from each cohort. The External Examiner will continue to moderate assessments from each module delivered by or at each collaborative provider every year. The External Examiner will review the assessment data across partners/locations and cohorts and may request additional samples should the data cause concern.

5.7 External Examiners can view other pieces of students' assessed work, beyond that which is included in the sample, if they wish.

5.8 External Examiners will not be asked to adjudicate in cases of disagreement between internal assessors. Such disagreements will be referred to the Programme and Subject Leader. If the Programme and Subject Leader were involved in the disagreement the case would be referred to the Dean or Deputy Dean of the Faculty.

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6.0 Anonymous Marking

6.1 Anonymous marking is the standard approach to marking UON.

The following assessments should be anonymously marked:

- Standard essay questions, reports, assignments where all students are answering the same question, or selecting from a constrained brief or set of questions.
- Exams
- Multiple-choice / time-constrained assessments
- Projects where all students or groups of students are completing the same assignment (or selecting from a constrained set of briefs)

6.2 Assessment where anonymous marking is not appropriate:

- Presentations, performances, practical assessments, or exhibitions where the student is physically involved during the assessment activity.
- Reflective assignments where the content of the assignment makes it possible for the marking tutor to identify the student.
- Dissertations
- Where a student has an Academic Inclusion Report (AIR) that recommends a particular type of feedback and the student agrees to waive their anonymity to facilitate this. This may also involve a separate submission point for those students.

Guidance is available from the Learning Technology team on how to mark anonymously.

7.0 Marking and Moderation Processes for UON Programmes delivered at Partner Institutions

7.1 First Cohorts: For standard partners, the Programme and Module Leader checklists contained in the Partner Resource Centre (PRC) should be followed in full. In short, this means full second marking (100% sample size) by the UON Module Leader for the first cohort of students on a programme at each partner institution and continuous full second marking of principal modules. The UON Module Leader will provide the partner institution link tutor with feedback on the implementation of the UON Assessment and Feedback Policy and associated processes.

7.2 Second and Subsequent Cohorts: First marking will be undertaken by the partner institution. Internal Moderation and Verification will be undertaken by the UON Module Leader.

7.3 Second Marking: UON reserves the right to revert to full second marking where appropriate e.g., significant staff changes at the partner institution or where there are significant concerns about the reliability of the first marking, identified through the UoN Internal Verification processes.

8.0 Multiple Sub-component Assessments (MSAs).

8.1 There are two main types of MSA:

8.1.1 MSAs that are marked 'by hand' e.g., a series of journal reflections, blog entries or practical sessions built up over the duration of a module; and

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8.1.2 MSAs that are computer marked (e.g., a series of online multiple-choice tests that combine to form 1 assessment). Where assessments contain multiple sub-components, the following information must be available to students in NILE:

- An explanation of what is meant by a Multiple Sub-Component Assessment
- Information on the weighting of each sub-component
- Information on how the overall grade for the assessment item will be calculated.
- Guidance on Extensions, Resits and Mitigating Circumstances

8.2 All MSA assessment deliverables must be clearly listed in the Module Specification in such a way that the assessment comprises multiple sub-components.

8.3 The sub-component parts of 'hand marked' MSAs must remain 'formative', that is, fully editable up until the final, summative, submission date. Students who do not engage with any of the sub-components can catch up with the assessment before the final summative deadline and complete the assignment.

8.4 The tutor must ensure that students have an opportunity to benefit from feedback / feedforward on at least one occasion over the duration of the assessment. Formative 'due dates' may be set over the module duration to facilitate this. Students may lose the right to receive formative feedback where they do not meet the formative 'due dates.

8.5 Each sub-component will receive a numerical score: letter grades are reserved for when the sub-components are combined, and the final grade calculated and recorded in NILE. Guidance on this process is available from the Learning Technology Team, checking of the calculation remains the responsibility of the marking tutor.

8.6 Each sub-component of computer marked MSAs (e.g., Time Constrained or Multiple-Choice Tests) may function practically as a summative assessment with a final 'due date'.

8.7 Letter grades for both 'hand-marked' and computer marked MSAs must only be assigned after all sub-components have been submitted and marked and the assessment is completed. It remains the responsibility of the marking tutor to ensure the accuracy of the final grade that is returned to Student Records.

8.8 Other MSA Scenarios

8.8.1 MSAs and Extensions: The formative nature of 'hand marked' MSAs means that the provisions of the Extensions Policy only apply to the overall assessment (at the final, summative submission date) and not to individual sub-components. Discretionary extensions can be provided for the sub-component parts of computer marked MSAs if appropriate (e.g., where the sub-components are not directly linked). This is possible on the basis that these assessments operate, in practice, as summative assessments with a final 'due date'.

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8.8.2 MSAs and Resits / Mitigating Circumstances: The following principles, governing Resit and Mitigating Circumstances, are consistent for both standard assessment items and assessments with multiple sub-components in line with this Policy and with the Mitigating Circumstances Policy. Decisions on whether to award Mitigating Circumstances are made in accordance with the provisions of that Policy.

8.8.3 Resit opportunities for all assessments with multiple sub-components will only be granted if the student fails the assessment item overall, at which point the resit opportunity will be provided after the summative due date for the final sub-component.

8.8.4 To comply with the provisions, the process to be followed for students who wish to apply for **mitigating circumstances** in respect of MSAs is as follows:

8.8.4.1 Mitigating Circumstances will only be applied to a whole assessment item, not to individual sub-component parts. Mitigating Circumstances applications can therefore only be considered where there is genuinely no engagement with any of the sub-component parts (a true 'G' grade for no submission).

8.8.4.2 Any attempt to sit one or more of the sub-component parts is considered as a declaration by the student that s/he is 'fit to sit' the whole assessment. The summative assessment grade will reflect the fact that only part(s) of the assessment were completed even though circumstances giving rise to a later need for Mitigating Circumstances are not present at the time of completing the earlier sub-components. The comparison is only completing a proportion of a written assessment or exam.

8.8.4.3 Guidance on the implications of this provision must be provided by module tutors when introducing assessments of this nature and included in the Assessment Information area on NILE. Standard text to address this provision can be found on the Support for Students ASPIRE reading list.

8.8.9.5 It may be necessary to offer an alternative form of assessment to students who are awarded Mitigating Circumstances for a MSA where the nature of the assignment is a group task or a reflection on a series of activities conducted over the duration of the module.

8.9 The following table highlights the similarities and differences between the two types of MSA in respect of feedback/feedforward, extensions, resits and mitigating circumstances.

	Hand Marked MSAs	Computer Marked MSAs
Nature of sub-components	Formative until final summative due date	Each sub-component functions practically as a summative assignment
Provision of feedback / feedforward	At least 1 opportunity for feedback / feedforward over the duration of the module	Supported by formative feedback / feedforward as part of learning activities, but not possible for each sub-component due to their 'summative' nature

Provision of grades	No score or grade available until the final summative due date has passed and the assignment has been marked	Numerical scores to be used for each sub-component part out of a combined total of 100
Letter grades	Reserved for the summative grade for the whole assignment	Reserved for the summative grade for the whole assignment
Extensions	Can only be applied to the final summative due date	Can be granted for sub-component parts if appropriate
Resits	Only available if the assignment is failed overall	Only available if the assignment is failed overall
Mitigating Circumstances	Only awarded in respect of the whole assignment where there is no engagement with any of the sub-components; cannot be applied to sub-component parts	Only awarded in respect of the whole assignment where there is no engagement with any of the sub-components; cannot be applied to sub-component parts

9.0 Feedback and Feedforward

9.1 The University recognises the importance of supporting students to retrieve academic failure in a timely way that secures engagement with the current programme of study, to support continuation and progression. Therefore, on the next working day after the Due Date for an assignment has passed, Module Leaders are required to identify all non-submissions and contact those students to advise on the opportunity to submit up to a week late for a bare pass grade, in line with the agreed process (see: Assessment Workflows at: https://libguides.northampton.ac.uk/Learntech/staff)

9.2 Module Tutors should provide scheduled assessment coaching sessions for all students who fail or who fail to submit at the first opportunity to support achievement and progression.

9.3 The University recognises timely feedback for all formative and summative assessments (including examinations) as best practice, and this is central to the University's approach to learning and teaching. Therefore, students must receive feedback on all summative assessment in a timely manner. Module tutors are required to provide feedback on all assessments to students within four working weeks of the submission deadline. For students who submitted after the deadline, but within the permitted timescale for late submission, this will be adjusted accordingly. 'Four working weeks' relates to when the University is open, and not to the student term or semester dates. Thus, Bank Holidays and University Closed Days are not included as part of the four working weeks. Where staff annual leave falls within the four working weeks, this must be taken account of as part of routine workload planning. Mechanisms exist to monitor the timeliness of feedback and to manage instances of late feedback.

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9.4 In addition to written or oral feedback provided to individual students on their work, other types of acceptable feedback include, but are not limited to: model answers, generic written or oral feedback, for example an assessor's report, peer feedback and a discussion of exemplars.

9.5 Feedback must include elements of advice for action i.e., feed forward, which is information communicated to the learner that is intended to modify the learner's thinking or behaviour for the purpose of learning.

10.0 Other points of note:

10.1 Alternative means of assessment which still ensure the learning outcomes are met must be agreed and made available for those students who require this because of additional needs or disability.

10.2 Guidelines for professional standards (e.g., work placements), statements of ethical practice (e.g., dissertations) and/or professional codes of conduct (e.g., healthcare) in assessed work must be made explicit to students.

10.3 Partner Input - where anyone other than the UON Module Leader (including, but not limited to, a collaborative partner) has some opportunity to input into the design of an assessment (e.g., a localised case study), the proposed assessment item must be pre-approved by the Module Leader and the External Examiner prior to it being released to students to ensure standardisation of the assessment items across all instances and modes of delivery.

10.4 Learning Outcomes

10.4.1 All summative assessment must be constructively aligned with learning outcomes and assessment criteria, meaning that the components in the teaching system, especially the teaching methods used, and the assessment tasks are aligned to the learning activities assumed in the intended outcomes.

10.4.2 Prior to releasing grades to students, marking tutors must undertake a final sense check to identify anomalies that may suggest contract cheating or commissioning has occurred. In these cases, the requirements of the Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy must be followed.

10.4.3 Both the learning outcomes for the associated assignment, and a link to the University grade criteria should be made available to students in advance via the assignment brief. This should include information on weighting of the learning outcomes where appropriate. If a detailed rubric is to be used in marking, this should also be made available beforehand.

10.5 Academic Integrity - If a member of staff involved in the process of grading and moderation suspects academic misconduct s/he must contact a faculty-based Academic Integrity Officer, who will follow the appropriate procedure, outlined in the Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy.

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10.6 External Examiners - Examination papers will be approved by External Examiners and produced according to agreed University schedules and formats.

10.7 Process Quality - The University is assured of the quality and reliability of its assessment, grading, feedback, and verification processes through its External Examiner system and through its processes for validation, annual review, and periodic subject review.

10.8 Resits - Resit questions are to be determined by the following:

10.8.1 As the maximum grade a student can receive for a resit is capped, those students who fail their first sit are expected to rework their failed submission based on the feedforward and 'advice for action' received to prevent a situation of 'double jeopardy' from occurring.

10.8.2 This approach is not considered to be self-plagiarism in contravention of the Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy as the fail grade means the student has not actually received any academic credit for this work.

10.8.4 Exceptions may occur in the following situations:

Where there are PSRB requirements. This should be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Where there is a justifiable, pedagogic need for a new assessment. In this case, the question itself should differ, but the primary content on which the question is based should not. This is determined on a case-by-case basis.

For online MCQs / short-answer TCTs/TCAs it is good practice for the first submission to draw from a random bank of questions. The resit submission, as the final sit, should, in contrast, be a fixed number of new questions that remain the same for all students.

To enable students to maximise their use of any feedforward received, all students who have submitted and failed an assessment, are entitled to additional, focussed academic support prior to the resit submission deadline.

10.8.5 Normally, students with a resit opportunity should have a minimum of 4 weeks. between the receipt of feedback and the resit deadline to allow engagement with any coaching from the module tutor or with additional support services e.g., Learning Development. (This doesn't include formal Vacation weeks as listed in the University calendar).

10.8.6 Where the first sit is an exam or a time-constrained assessment or test (TCA/TCT) and the outcome is still underway (e.g., by Academic Misconduct processes), students should still complete the standard resit as normal.

10.9 Word Limits - where appropriate, members of staff are expected to provide clear written guidance in the assessment brief on the maximum amount that should be written to address the requirements of the assessment brief (a 'word limit'). This should state that where the submission exceeds the stipulated word limit by more than 10%, the submission will only be marked up to and including the additional 10%. Anything over this will not be included in the final grade for the

assessment item. Abstracts, bibliographies, reference lists, appendices and footnotes are excluded from any word limit requirements.

10.9.1 Where a submission is notably under the word limit, the full submission will be marked on the extent to which the requirements of the Learning Outcomes, as explained in the associated assessment brief have been met.
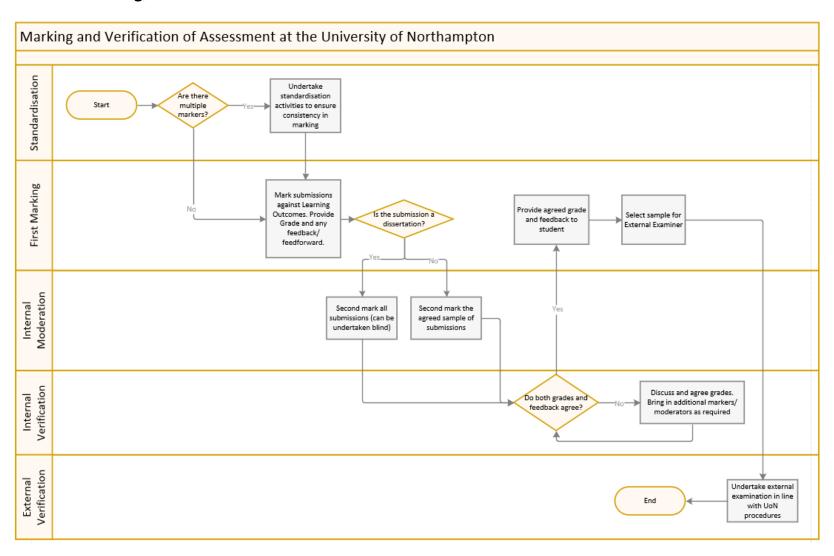
Use of a third assessor

Remarking or adjustment of grades for the whole batch of scripts

Where provision involving collaborative partners relates to a programme that is not run at the University, the named Academic Adviser in the partner institution will work in collaboration with the Programme/Subject Leader to identify how internal verification will take place.

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11.0 Flowchart of Grading, Feedback and Verification Processes

Marking and Verification of Assessment at the University of Northampton

Standardisation

Start → Are there multiple markers? → Yes → Undertake standardisation activities to ensure consistency in marking

First Marking

No → Mark submissions against Learning Outcomes. Provide Grade and any feedback/feedforward. → Is the submission a dissertation? → Yes / No

Provide agreed grade and feedback to student → Select sample for External Examiner

Internal Moderation

Yes → Second mark all submissions (can be undertaken blind)

No → Second mark the agreed sample of submissions

Yes

Internal Verification

Do both grades and feedback agree? → No → Discuss and agree grades. Bring in additional markers/moderators as required

External Verification

End ← Undertake external examination in line with UoN procedures

12.0 Glossary

Assessment: any processes that appraise an individual's knowledge, understanding, abilities or skills.

First Marking: the process where the first assessor marks the student submissions and provides a grade and feedback/feedforward.

External Examination: A audit of a sample of student work by an appointed External Examiner to ensure marking standards are fair and reliable measured against external benchmarks. External examination is part of the process of External Verification.

External Verification: The process where agreed grades are checked and audited by External Examiners against external benchmarks to ensure consistency and alignment across the sector for that subject area.

Formative assessment: '…has a developmental purpose and is designed to help learners learn more effectively by giving them feedback on their performance and on how it can be improved and/or maintained. Reflective practice by students sometimes contributes to formative assessment.' (QAA, 2012)

Grading: refers to the outcome of marking an assessment submission in accordance with standard University grade criteria.

Internal Moderation: The process of moderating student submissions either through sampling or full second marking (i.e., a 100% sample size).

Internal Verification: the processes whereby the University ensures the appropriateness of academic standards within a module, and approves the summative grades, in line with the University's published grade criteria. It follows the process of Internal Moderation. Internal Verification is part of the process whereby the University ensures that assessment outcomes are fair and reliable. (See also External Verification).

Multiple Sub-Component Assessments (MSAs): These can take 2 forms: (1) MSAs that are marked 'by hand' e.g., a series of journal reflections or blog posts; and (2) MSAs that are computer marked (e.g., online multiple-choice tests). MSAs differ from project-style assessments in that the deliverables for the latter are all due for submission as part of a project, typically on the same day. 'Hand-marked' MSAs may therefore have individual submission dates across the module duration, but should remain fully editable up until the final, summative, submission date. Please note assignment briefs need to be clear if

a student misses a sub-component and it is recommended to provide a "recovery block" at the end of a module to identify what sub-components are missing and ensure students have an opportunity to complete.

Second marking: The allocation of a second mark to a piece of summative student work by a second, internal marker who fully marks the student work. It may be carried out whereby the second marker has no access to the marks and comments from the first marker or where the second marker has full access to the marks and comments from the first marker. If submissions from the whole cohort are second marked, it is referred to as 'double unseen marking'. It results in a single, agreed mark and feedback for the student.

Standardisation: Activities undertaken to ensure consistency in marking where there is more than one marker for an assessment item.

Summative assessment: is used to indicate the extent of a learner's success in meeting the assessment criteria used to gauge the intended learning outcomes of a module or programme. In other words, the grades awarded during summative assessment contribute to the final grade for the module and programme.