



# **Policy Area 3: Effective Assessment**

## **Assessment Policy**

**Revised July 2017: Open University Compliant**

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## **Assessment Policy**

### **Aims**

- To ensure that assessment methodology is valid, reliable and does not disadvantage or advantage any group of learners or individuals.
- To ensure that the assessment procedure is open, fair and free from bias and to national standards.
- To ensure that there is accurate and detailed recording of assessment decisions.

## **Strategic approaches**

The College has a clearly defined Assessment Strategy. This Strategy is focused on providing a well-resourced learning environment that enables all students to add value to their entry position. A series of clearly defined Policies provide a framework for students and staff that 'facilitate successful transitions and academic progression'. All Policies are reviewed in July/August each year, with inputs from students, staff and external organisations.

## **Facilitating development and achievement**

The College has a strong employment record in terms of recruiting and retaining academic staff. Many staff have been at Grafton College for a number of years, and are very much part of the College community. Many staff are practitioners who bring real life experience to the teaching. A CPD programme will ensure that their academic knowledge is current and focused, whilst the peer observation programme will provide opportunities for the sharing of good practice and the enhancement of the overall learning experience. (<http://uk.graftoncollege.net/course/view.php?id=159>)

The College ensures that resources for learning are fit-for-purpose and suited to student numbers. As part of its course review process the College solicits views on the adequacy of resources from students, staff and external agencies. The College are a ring-fenced budget for academic resources and ensures that they make available appropriate learning resources and enable students to develop the skills to use them

## **The basis of effective assessment**

In promoting an efficient and effective assessment regime that embodies the requirements of the UK Quality Code Chapter B6 (Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning) and promotes student achievement, Grafton College will:

- publicise and implement principles and procedures for, and processes of, assessment that are explicit, valid and reliable;
- encourage assessment practice that promotes effective learning;
- publicise and implement effective, clear and consistent policies for the membership, procedures, powers and accountability of assessment panels and Boards of Examiners;

- ensure that assessment is conducted with rigour, probity and fairness and with due regard for security;
- ensure that the amount and timing of assessment enables effective and appropriate measurement of students' achievement of intended learning outcomes;
- have transparent and fair mechanisms for marking and for (internal verification) moderating marks;
- publicise and implement clear rules and regulations for progressing from one stage of a programme to another, for accreditation of prior learning, and for qualifying for an award;
- ensure that everyone involved in the assessment of students is competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities;
- review and amend assessment regulations periodically, as appropriate, to assure themselves that the regulations remain fit for purpose
- encourage students to adopt good academic conduct in respect of assessment and seek to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities;
- ensure that assessment decisions are recorded and documented accurately and systematically and that the decisions of relevant assessment panels and examination boards are communicated as quickly as possible.

### **Developing Assessment Literacy**

The formative assessment process is central to the process of developing assessment literacy. Student Handbooks and Module Specification build familiarity with the terminology of the assessment process.

The College provides externally sourced staff and student training on the interpretation and use of command verbs in assessment criteria and learning outcomes. Posters noting the nature and scope of command verbs are displayed in every classroom and used by staff in describing student responses.

The student Induction explains the modular structure of the Programme - all of which must be passed to achieve the qualification. It further explains that each Module is divided into Learning Outcomes. The assessment criteria are characterised by the command verbs noted on the posters displayed throughout the College. The demystification of this language and practice is the focus of formative assessment.

## **Designing Assessment**

In order to ensure that learners are provided with assessment vehicles that are fit for purpose, and which enable them to prepare appropriate evidence for assessment, the College will:

- Assess learner's evidence using only the published assessment and grading criteria.
- Ensure that assessment decisions are impartial, valid and reliable.
- Develop assessment procedures that will minimise the opportunity for malpractice.
- Maintain accurate and detailed records of formative and summative assessment decisions.
- Maintain a robust and rigorous internal verification procedure.
- Provide samples for verification as required by the programme manager.
- Monitor standards verification reports and undertake any remedial action required.
- Share good assessment practice between all subject programme teams.
- Ensure that awarding body assessment methodology and the role of the marker are understood by all programme staff.
- Provide resources and regular training to ensure that assessment can be performed accurately and appropriately.

## **Types of Assessment: Formative assessment**

This is informal assessment in that the level of achievement does not contribute to the end qualification. It allows the student and the College to track progress and the level of understanding achieved at any point in time.

A wide range of assessment methods are used, many of them time limited. The final formative assessments will help a student undertake the summative assessments which conclude the programme. These formative assessments will build familiarity with the summative assessment process.

Grafton College utilises the formative assessment process to positive effect, providing a range of reflective experiences that allow the student to manage their own learning, and the College to monitor progress and provide help and remedial support to individuals as appropriate.

Students are provided with detailed feedback on aspects of formative assessment, enabling them to reflect on performance and refine skills and knowledge to improve performance.

All staff will provide formative assessment opportunities at a number of set points during the semester. These formative assessments develop skills and competence related to the end summative assessment, but will utilise material unrelated to the summative assessment which follows. The practice will develop skills related to responding to unseen material, often in a time constrained situation. These assessments develop skills for employment and for further study.

### **Types of Assessment: Summative Assessment**

This is the formal assessment process. Its purpose is to measure student understanding against a set of predefined learning outcomes as found in the module specification. It measures student competence in terms of Threshold Academic Standards and in terms of levels of understanding above that level.

The timing of assessment is within the control of the College and will be planned and communicated to students. The distribution and submission of assignments will be spread over time in order to encourage planning and facilitate the best possible outcome.

The assessment timetable is contained in the Student Handbook and is discussed at Induction. Further copies are available on the Moodle.

### **Marking and moderation**

#### **Learning Outcomes**

Individual lesson plans are required to identify learning outcomes for each session related to the Scheme of Work, and specific measureable learning outcomes linked to those objectives. The learning objectives and outcomes provide a mechanism for both students and tutors to track individual learning progress. They provide an objective student focused mechanism to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of individual teaching approaches.

The learning outcomes for individual lesson plans assist students to demonstrate the extent to which they meet the assessment and progression criteria of the course in respect of both subject knowledge and required skills. They are readily available for all modules on the Moodle.

## **Assessment Criteria**

The College seeks to ensure best practice for assessment and compliance with the relevant indicators across all courses and validating organisations. This requires two markers (a first and second marker) for each assessment in addition to external examiner involvement.

The College best practice for assessment requires markers to provide constructive feedback to students against the assessment criteria to promote and encourage effective learning.

Feedback given to students will:

- be provided in a timely and efficient manner – within 10 working days of submission;
- highlight areas of achievement, areas for improvement, and areas of concern, on the part of the student;
- indicate areas for further development that could have earned additional marks;
- offer comments on style and/or structural issues that are restricting achievement;
- be related to each specific Learning Outcome in the assessment;
- reflect the marking scheme and/or levels of performance issued to the students.

## **Assessment Activities and Evidence**

Assessment may be conducted using various methods and it may be formative or summative. Tasks will be linked to a specific assessment criteria and result recorded accordingly. Assessment methods may include but are not limited to:

- Observation of activities e.g. presentations, role play, practical activities;
- Group discussion;
- Questions and answers session;
- Written assignments e.g. essays and reports;
- Test or examination.

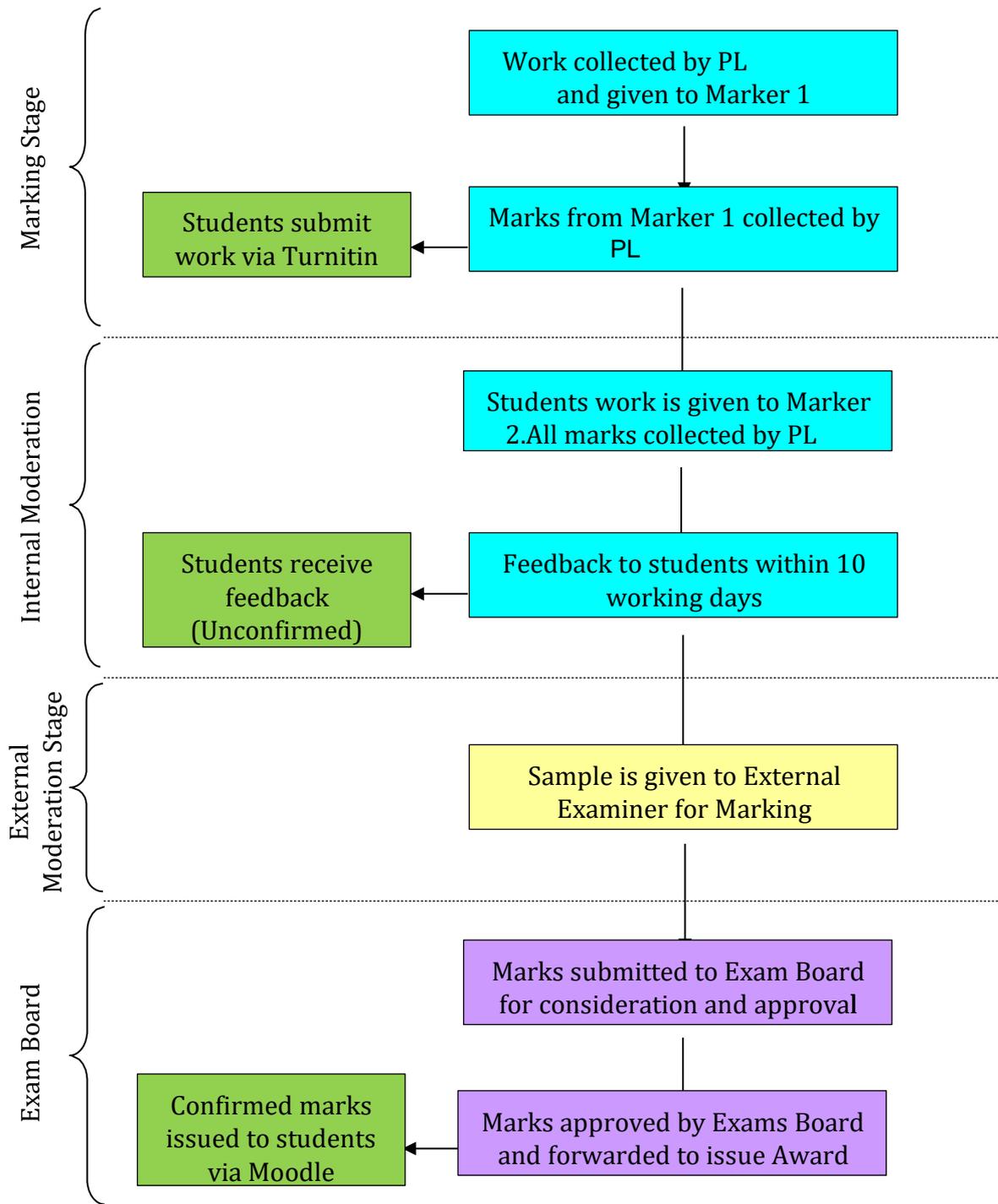
Whenever group work is encouraged during assignments, not least as part of the preparation for the world of work, the emphasis in the assessment is at individual learner level. The use of Witness Statements, Observation Record sheets or other paperwork that records achievement at criterion level against the activity will be completed by the Marker.

The Programme Leader is responsible for keeping assessment records up to date by updating Assessment Tracking Records (Trackers) and keeping copies of all assessment feedback forms, internal verification reports, observation sheets and other paperwork that records students' achievement. Assessment records are available throughout the duration of the course to student, staff, internal and external verifiers.

Students' work is retained in the College until certification is approved and released. Work can be retained in several ways, preferably electronic copies, whenever hard copies are stored these should be organised in folders, each student having their own assessment folder containing all their work submitted during the entire duration of the course. All assessment folders are to be stored in a secure place and arranged alphabetically per course. Assessment records in form of feedback forms, observation record sheet, internal verification records and other paperwork should be retained for at least three years after certification. This includes soft copies and hard copies with all relevant signatures and dates.

Flow chart of the assessment process here showing what happens to the work from submission to notification of results including examination boards etc

### Flowchart of Marking Process



**Disabled Students**

The College is fully aware of its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and will make every effort under the requirement of 'reasonable adjustment' to ensure that all assessment opportunities are fully inclusive and do not discriminate against any disabled student.

**Accreditation of Prior Learning**

Students who have successfully completed a 240 credit Higher National Diploma in Business Studies can apply for direct entry to Level 6 (final year) of the BA in Business and Management Degree Programme.

### **Reasonable Adjustments permitted by the College may involve:**

- Changes to Assessment Conditions;
- The use of mechanical and electronic aids;
- Modifications to the presentation of assessment material;
- Alternative ways of presenting responses;
- Use of access facilitators.

Please note that a reasonable adjustment must never affect the validity or reliability of assessment, influence the outcome of assessment or give the Learner(s) in question an unfair assessment advantage.

### **Examination Boards and assessment panels**

#### **Progression and Assessment panels**

Assessment Panels comprising the Head of Academics and relevant Course Coordinators, and supported by the Registry, are convened as required to discuss any assessment issues arising from internal and/or external moderation of assessment. Assessment panel meetings are recorded and reported to the College's Academic Management Team and/or Academic Board.

The College references the relevant awarding organisation's regulations regarding student progression within a given course of study. Decisions on student progression between individual courses of study are taken with reference to the awarding organisation regulations for each course.

#### **External Assessment and Moderation**

Level 4 submissions will be internally marked and internally moderated. All Level 5 and Level 6 submissions will be internally and externally moderated. External moderation will involve a minimum of 20% of the total submission in any one module, with this percentage increased where the initial marker is relatively inexperienced. Where a group numbers 15 learners or less, the entire cohort will be subject to external moderation. The external examiner will moderate all failed assignment submissions

External Examiners liaise with the relevant Course Co-ordinators and internal verification teams. The External Examiner also monitors the consistency and validity of the College's assessment and internal verification processes. External Examiners are given access to all pertinent documentation for the assessment, as well as the

opportunity to discuss concerns or good practice with individual students and academic staff.

External examiners provide a report each year following the summer Examination Board.

### **Submission of written work**

The Programme Leader is responsible for checking all online submissions for plagiarism using Turnitin. When work is within acceptable similarity range it will be forwarded to markers for marking if not it will be investigated in further detail and student will be informed of the result of investigation. Please refer to College Malpractice Policy for further details.

Student will receive a receipt for each submission. This should be kept safe until the end of the assessment process. All complaints related to submission of work or assessment process must be accompanied by a relevant receipt.

In addition to the electronic submission, learners submit a hard copy of their work. This may also replace the electronic submission if there is any malfunction of the electronic submission system.

### **Marking and Standardisation**

Where a Module is delivered and assessed by more than one person, a standardisation of expectations and agreement occurs. Grafton College organises, for each individual Module, a meeting of all staff contributing to the teaching of that unit. They will, using the marking grid, mark a series on unseen and unmarked assignments, discussing each one in turn to determine the grade to be awarded. This process will continue until there is broad agreement on the mark awarded.

A further standardisation assignment is given to all staff to mark alongside their allocation.

All standardisation meetings are formally recorded and staff feedback sheets retained for each standardisation script. Where there is concern about an individual's marking, this will affect the later size of the IV and EE sample. This deficiency will then be the subject of training under the staff development policy.

All marking must be undertaken in compliance with the agreed marking scheme. Lecturers are responsible for initial marking of the assignments for their course. Marks will be awarded using a standard cover sheet which must be signed and dated by the tutor. The teaching team for the programme will provide an internal quality assurance check. Any queries or discrepancies will be referred to the Programme Leader or Head of Academics ([jehangir@graftoncollege.com](mailto:jehangir@graftoncollege.com)) for a final decision.

## **Sampling**

The College will quality check samples of marking from all units and each tutor. For experienced tutors the College will usually sample 20% of their marking, with a minimum of 15 assignments sampled. For intermediate tutors the College will usually sample 30% of their marking, with a minimum of 15 assignments sampled. For new or inexperienced tutors the College will usually sample a minimum of 50% of their marking, with a minimum of 15 assignments sampled. In addition to the appropriate sample, all fails will be revised by the external examiner.

The Head of Academics will ensure that::

- candidates - every student will be the subject of sampling at some point in their studies;
- markers - every marker will be sampled for every unit/module;
- methods of assessment - every assessment method will be subject to sampling;
- elements of the qualification - every element will be subject to sampling.

## **Enhancement of assessment processes**

The assessment process provides excellent opportunities for enhancement as staff (and students) share ideas and experiences. This occurs not only as part of annual review of the effectiveness of assessment practice, but also as part of staff peer observation and student feedback.

Staff meetings are a key opportunity to share ideas and experiences. In order to ensure that enhancement is a central theme of College development it is a standard agenda item on all committees. This also ensures that 'Staff and students engage in dialogue to promote a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made'.

Engagement with all key stakeholders also ensures that 'Assessment and feedback practices are informed by reflection, consideration of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship'. The College accepts its responsibility in creating and promoting a process to facilitate enhancement by sharing ideas.

This Policy area reflects and embodies:

UK Quality Code Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

UK Quality Code Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning

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