ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK POLICY

Version No.	Description	Author	Approval	Effective Date
1.2	Assessment and Feedback Policy – applicable to both undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses	Assessment and Feedback Working Group	Senate	From academic year 2019-20

Version 1.2

1. RATIONALE

In higher education, "assessment" describes any process that involves the evaluation or appraisal of a student's knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes or abilities. In line with the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education, assessment is taken to be an integral component of teaching and learning, and serves multiple purposes. In addition to enabling evaluation and measurement of students' learning, effective assessment shapes and enhances student learning. Assessments should therefore be designed to facilitate students' attainment of intended learning outcomes, and permit the measurement of such attainments against explicit criteria. A holistic approach to assessment at course level can also support the development of distinctive Strathclyde graduate attributes: graduates that are engaged, enquiring, enterprising, and ethically and globally aware. Recent publications on assessment and feedback in higher education suggest a 'transformation' is required to ensure that assessment and feedback practices enable students to develop such attributes and the skills needed to be lifelong learners in the 21st century.[1]

This approach recognises that assessment is central to learning and teaching, and is not designed solely to measure student learning. Also essential to enhancing learning, is the provision of continuous feedback to students on their learning; it is recognised that feedback takes different forms (e.g. replies to posts on a discussion forum), but in relation to assessment, *useful* feedback is feedback that is specific in informing learners the extent to which they have met published assessment criteria, and explains to them what they need to do to improve. Ensuring feedback is clear, specific, and adopts a supportive tone is most likely to foster student engagement with feedback. The role of feedback in effectively supporting student learning should be recognised at the assessment design stage, where factors such as the timing of the release of feedback and the scheduling of subsequent assessments are considered (particularly where feedback can be used by students to improve the development of future work), as well as the provision of opportunities for students to clarify feedback.

The University expects that feedback will normally be returned to students within 15 working days of assessment submission[2]. The University's VLE, Myplace, provides a platform for the electronic return of grades and feedback, and where permitted by the nature of an assessment, staff are expected to implement the submission of assessments online through Myplace, in order to promote effectiveness and efficiency in each stage of the assessment and feedback process. In addition, Myplace should be used to manage assessments that are submitted offline in order to implement the Policy and Procedure on Extensions to Coursework Submission and Procedures for the Recording and Publication of Marks. Staff should also be cognisant of specific issues relevant to equality, diversity and inclusion in designing assessments and providing feedback, which may affect particular groups of students.[3]

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[1] For example: Boud, D. & Falachikov, N. (Eds.). (2007). *Rethinking Assessment in Higher Education.* Oxon: Routledge; Higher Education Academy. (2012). *A Marked Improvement. Transforming assessment in higher education.* York: The Higher Education Academy; Merry, S., Price, M., Carless, D. & Taras, M. (Eds.). (2013). *Reconceptualising Feedback in Higher Education. Developing Dialogue with Students.* Oxon: Routledge; Carless, D. (2015). Excellence in university assessment: learning from award-winning practice. London: Routledge.

[2] Exceptions to this are dissertations or assessments with credit weightings of 40 credits or higher, and where double marking is required. (See the Policy on Moderation and Double Marking).

[3] Staff are advised to consult the University's equality impact assessment information where relevant.

Previous work on assessment at Strathclyde (through the Re-Engineering Assessment Practices[4] and Peer Evaluation in Education Review[5] projects, together with the work on Peer and Community Personal Development Planning), have emphasised the importance of providing students with opportunities to self- and peer-assess, and for students to develop the capacity to evaluate, reflect on[6] and manage their own learning through the effective use of feedback. Published research also highlights the importance of developing students' understanding of the criteria and standards by which their work is assessed, and suggests that providing students with the opportunity to analyse and discuss the qualities of carefully selected exemplars is an effective learning activity to achieve this[7]. It is widely recognised that these will, in the long-term, help develop attitudes and skills that foster engagement and independence in learning.

The aim of the current policy is to develop an institution-wide approach to assessment and feedback that enhances the effectiveness of assessment in aiding students to achieve the necessary knowledge and skills described in a class or programme's intended learning outcomes. The policy is underpinned by principles of assessment and feedback (outlined in section 3) that reflect this aim and a commitment to ensuring our assessment and feedback practices are fair, transparent, and continuously reviewed. In short, to ensure they continue to be fit for purpose. This policy should be adhered to across the University. The implementation of the policy will be monitored by the Quality Assurance Committee.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes offered by the University. This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant University policies and procedures. The University website contains policies and procedures on a range of assessment-related matters, including: ensuring equality, guidance for staff on supporting students with a disability, guides for staff marking assessments in undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses, guidance for students and staff on avoiding plagiarism, guidance for staff in dealing with possible cases of plagiarism, policies on classifying honours degrees and other degree awards, and on awarding motivational merit and distinction, guidance on the compensation scheme, the role of external examiners in taught courses, the procedure for dealing with student discipline cases, guidance for staff on the appeals procedure and accounting for students' personal circumstances.

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[4] REAP Project, accessed at http://www.reap.ac.uk/

[5] PEER Project, accessed from: http://www.reap.ac.uk/PEER.aspx. The site contains a PEER toolkit containing guidance for staff on using peer review.

[6] Winstone, N. & Nash. R. (2016). The Developing Engagement with Feedback Toolkit (DEFT). The Higher Education Academy. https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/developing-engagement-feedback-toolkit-deft

[7] Carless, D. & Boud, D. (2018): The development of student feedback literacy: enabling uptake of feedback, Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, DOI: 10.1080/02602938.2018.1463354

3. ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK PRINCIPLES

These principles have been widely consulted on across the University, and must be adhered to throughout the institution.

PRINCIPLE 1. ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK PRACTICES PROMOTE EFFECTIVE STUDENT LEARNING

1.1 Assessment and feedback activities are designed to foster student engagement, to support and measure students' attainment of knowledge, understanding, and transferable skills.

1.2 A range of assessment methods are used, increasing in complexity across a programme, and taking into consideration student and staff workloads.

1.3 Assessment and feedback practices align with intended learning outcomes and assessment criteria, and provide opportunities for students to be active participants in the process, including opportunities for students to discuss feedback.

1.4 Timely, constructive, and supportive feedback helps students understand the extent to which they have fulfilled the assessment criteria, and supports students to use their feedback in the development of subsequent work.

1.5 The timing of assessments and return of feedback should be scheduled to enable students to use feedback to inform their approach to subsequent assessments. The release of feedback should consider the ability of students to gain further feedback and support, and avoid release in close proximity to periods where the university is closed

1.6 Where examinations are used, students should receive at least general feedback soon after the examination. Students who wish to view their exam scripts following the provision of general feedback should be facilitated to do so under supervision of staff.

PRINCIPLE 2. ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK PRACTICES ARE APPROPRIATE, FAIR, AND TRANSPARENT

2.1 Assessment tasks are appropriate to disciplinary and/or professional contexts.

2.2 Assessment applies rigorous academic standards related to and across, the discipline(s) or professional context and is based on clearly defined assessment criteria.

2.3 Assessment grading and feedback is based solely on students' achievement against criteria and standards.

2.4 Assessment and feedback practices are fair, inclusive and accessible to all students.

PRINCIPLE 3. ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK PRACTICES ARE CLEARLY COMMUNICATED TO STUDENTS AND STAFF

3.1 Students must be made aware at the beginning of a class of the details of assessments, including the purpose, weighting, and timing of assessment.

3.2 Students must be made aware at the beginning of a class of the nature and timing of feedback. Where unexpected problems cause a delay in the return of feedback within 15 working days, an explanation will be provided to students, along with a new date for the return of feedback.

3.3 All students and staff are made aware at the start of a class of the criteria and standards used to assess and provide feedback on students' work.

3.4 Students must be made aware of relevant policies and procedures around academic honesty in assessment, and of procedures associated with personal circumstances, extensions to the deadlines of coursework, and late submission of coursework.

3.5 There are opportunities for students and staff to engage in a dialogue around assessment and feedback, including opportunities for students to clarify feedback.

3.6 In each programme the processes for marking, moderation, and feedback are appropriate and fair and are explained to students and staff.

PRINCIPLE 4. ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK PRACTICES ARE CONTINUOUSLY REVIEWED

4.1 The timing of assessment activities at cohort level, including the timing of examinations, are monitored and reviewed, in order to minimise bunching.

4.2 Assessment and feedback activities, and the outcomes of assessment, are reviewed via the class and course approval and/or review processes, and external examining processes.

4.3 Assessment and feedback activities are continuously reviewed to ensure effective alignment with a programme's intended learning outcomes and graduate attributes.

4.4 Opportunities to develop effective practice and innovation in assessment and feedback are available to all staff involved in assessment.

4. ANONYMOUS MARKING

4.1 Anonymous marking (when the identity of a student is not known to a marker and/or exam board) will be used for all assessments wherever possible and appropriate, including formal written examinations at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

4.2 Where anonymous marking is not possible, for example where an alternative method of assessment has been used for a student with a disability, additional scrutiny by a second marker may be appropriate.

4.3 Other exceptions will be where the mode of assessment (e.g., presentations or oral examinations) prevents anonymity, or where there is pedagogical justification (e.g., the use of ipsative feedback).

4.4 Double marking is effective practice for assessments that are not marked anonymously and for dissertations, or comparable assessments.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

5.1 The **University** assumes responsibility for:
- Providing staff with opportunities to develop effective practice in assessment and feedback through the Organisational Staff and Development Unit (Strathclyde Teaching Excellence Programme) Education Enhancement (the University's VLE, Myplace offers various tools to support effective practice in assessment and feedback, including handling peer review/assessment activities, online assessment submission and return of feedback, and enabling efficient communication with different student and staff groups; the Sharing Practice in Enhancing Learning and Teaching (SPELT) platform, and

TESTA), the Disability and Wellbeing Service (for ensuring assessments are accessible to all students), and the Equality and Diversity Office;
- Providing adequate resources, including information technology systems, to support effective practice (Information Services Directorate, Student Business, Education Enhancement); and
- Monitoring implementation of this policy through the Quality Assurance Committee (Education Enhancement).

5.2 **Faculties** are responsible for: overseeing and receiving reports from programme exam boards; scrutinising external examiners' reports and responding to them; ensuring consistency in the implementation of this and other related policies across programmes, and sharing effective practice within and between faculties.

5.3 **Heads of Department/School** are responsible for: instructing colleagues within their Department/School to note and adhere to the Assessment and Feedback Policy and Procedures for Recording and Publication of Marks, Procedures on Preparing and Conducting Exams, and other related policies such as the Policy on the Late Submission of Coursework, Policy on Extensions to Coursework Submission, the Policy on Moderation and Double Marking, and Guidance on Marking Assessments in Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught courses; and for ensuring that marking of assessments is sufficiently resourced to enable feedback to be returned within 15 working days of assessment submission.

5.4 **Programme Exam Boards** are responsible for: making sure assessments across a programme are marked fairly; ensuring university and faculty regulations are adhered to; and responding to points made by External Examiners.

5.5 **Programme Leaders/Directors** are responsible for ensuring a coherent and effective approach to assessment and feedback is taken across a programme of study. This approach will involve:

- Ensuring a range of assessment methods are used throughout a programme of study, as appropriate to the discipline;
- Monitoring the intensity and equity of assessments across and between programmes, with due consideration to joint honours degrees;
- Designing and reviewing the Assessment Schedule and Exam Timetable within a programme and requesting amendments where there is assessment/exam bunching;
- Developing effective moderation and/or double marking procedures, in line with the Policy on Moderation and Double Marking;
- Ensuring procedures are in place for monitoring students' use of the Policies and Procedures on Extensions to Coursework Submission and Late Submission of Coursework, as a mechanism for identifying students who may require support; and
- Ensuring procedures related to assuring fairness in assessment, such as moderation and the role of External Examiners, are communicated to students.

5.6 **Year Coordinators and/or Module Coordinators** are responsible for:

- Having an overview of summative assessment activities within a programme of study to avoid, where possible, a concentration of assessment deadlines, including examinations;

- Making sure the details of all assessments are provided at the start of a class;
- Ensuring assessment criteria that is aligned to intended learning outcomes and the University's Guidance on Marking Assessments in Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught programmes, is transparent and made available to students at the start of a class;
- Providing opportunities for students to use feedback prior to the submission of any subsequent related assessments;
- Working with students to develop effective practice in assessment and feedback, including: providing students with opportunities to develop their understanding of the criteria and standards used to assess their work and supporting students to engage with and use feedback;
- Obtaining feedback from students in relation to assessment and feedback for module(s) for which they are responsible, and for communicating any actions on this feedback to students; and
- For undertaking effective moderation and/or double marking procedures.

5.7 **Staff** involved in assessing students' work are responsible for:

- Designing assessments that effectively facilitate and measure students' achievement of intended learning outcomes;
- Assessing students' work according to published assessment criteria which are aligned to intended learning outcomes and the University's Guidance on Marking Assessments in Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught programmes;
- Providing timely, informative and helpful feedback which enables students to further improve their learning and performance wherever possible;
- Informing students when, where and how feedback will be provided;
- Engaging in dialogue with students about assessment and feedback; and
- Continuously reviewing their approaches to assessment and feedback to reflect effective practice.

5.8 **Students** are expected to be responsible for their own learning through:

- Understanding the requirements of individual assessments, and actively engaging with assessment tasks by devoting appropriate time and effort;
- Developing an understanding of the relationship between intended learning outcomes and assessment criteria, and standards in their programme of study;
- Ensuring their academic work is authentic and honestly produced;
- Finding out where, how and when work is submitted and how and when feedback is provided;
- Actively engaging, reflecting, and using provided feedback;
- Understanding the academic policies and procedures related to assessment and feedback, including Personal Circumstances Procedure, Policy and Procedures for the Late Submission of Coursework, Policy on Moderation and Double Marking, Policy on Extensions to the Submission of Coursework, and Compensation and Motivational Merit;
- Seeking academic support when needed, for example, if feedback needs to be clarified; and
- Participating in the development of assessment and feedback practices at class and programme levels.

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6. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Assessment	The process of measuring the performance of students (as in examinations, assignments and other assessable work) that enables students to monitor their progress and contributes to their academic results.
Assessment criteria	Specific criteria against which pieces of work are assessed. An understanding of the criteria must be shared by markers and students. Feedback should relate to these criteria.
Assessment bunching	The perception of assessments within a programme of study being scheduled too closely together.
Assessment schedule	A timeline of all cohort level assessment.
Exam bunching	Where the scheduling of two exams falls within a 23 hour period.
Feedback	Information provided to students on the quality of their performance in relation to assessment criteria, which forms the basis of improved student learning.
Formative assessment	This type of assessment normally has no or low weighting in the final mark for a module or programme. The goal of formative assessment is to provide an opportunity for students to monitor their learning and provide feedback to teachers that can be used to review their teaching.
Graduate attributes	Qualities, skills, dispositions, and understanding that students are expected to develop. At Strathclyde these are referred to as the 4 E's – engaged, enquiring, enterprising and ethically and globally aware.
Intended learning outcomes	What the student is expected to be able to do or demonstrate, in terms of particular knowledge, skills and understanding, by the end of a module or programme.
Ipsative feedback	This type of feedback compares a student's performance on a current assessment with performance on a previous assessment.
Moderation	The process of checking that assessment criteria are consistently applied across markers in marking students' work.
Module	The individual components of a programme, normally worth 20 or 10 credits.
Module evaluation	The process of obtaining feedback from students on all aspects of teaching, learning, and assessment within a

module.

Programme   The full degree programme leading to an award.

Seen double marking   Where an assessment is independently marked by two markers, but where the second marker has access to the marks or comments of the first marker.

Summative assessment   Assessment is summative when the grading of an assessment contributes to the final grade for a class or course. The aim of summative assessment is to evaluate students' attainment of the intended learning outcomes within a unit of study.

Unseen double marking   Where an assessment is independently marked by two markers who do not have access to the grades or comments of the other marker.

Working days   The University's standard working week is normally Monday to Friday, covering five working days. Fifteen working days would normally equate to 21 calendar days, but may be longer where the period includes University closure days.