

Introduction

Assessment and feedback are integral to learning. In a Higher Education (HE) context assessment measures student achievement of learning outcomes within a programme of study. Feedback aims to create change in students. It helps them to reflect and realise what they know and can do, and most importantly how to improve their future performance. Feedback can be completed in a variety of ways, including self or peer review or verbal and written dialogue with tutors.

This policy applies to all staff, students and other stakeholders who are involved in higher education assessment.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Academic Regulations in relation to assessment for Staffordshire University and in accordance with associated Pearson BTEC Guides. It should also be read alongside the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy, HE Academic Appeals Policy, the Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and the Extenuating Circumstances Policy.

Purpose and Scope:

The purpose of this policy is to:-

- Inform students of the expectations and processes surrounding HE assessment and feedback at Shrewsbury Colleges Group.
- Support academic staff in designing and facilitating assessment on HE programmes.
- Outline for other stakeholders, the assessment and feedback mechanisms of this college in relation to HE.

Shrewsbury Colleges Group will ensure:

- Consistent management of assessment and feedback across all HE provision.
- HE assessment is fit for purpose and measures student achievement against the identified learning outcomes.
- HE assessment measures student achievement objectively and equitably against learning outcomes.
- Staff provide students with a timely assessment schedule and procedure for the submission of work as stated in the student charter
- Staff enable students to perform to the best of their abilities and effectively fulfil the learning outcomes through assessment which is inclusive in design.

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- Staff provide students with written assignment briefs clearly stating the evidence to be produced.
- Staff provide guidance on expected standards and consequences of malpractice.
- Staff provide appropriate feedback to assist students learning.
- Staff are assisted to undertake self-assessment to appraise the effectiveness of their students learning.
- Staff are encouraged to be reflective in consideration of their professional and subject specific practice.
- Staff promote equality of opportunity that is reliable and consistent.

The operational responsibility for assessment lies within the college curriculum teams.

General Principles of Assessment**1. Assessment will be reliable**

Reliability refers to the need for assessment to be accurate and repeatable. This requires clear and consistent processes for the setting, marking, grading and moderation of assignments.

2. Assessment will be valid

Validity ensures that assessment tasks and associated criteria will effectively measure student attainment of the intended learning outcomes. All staff engaged in assessment will be competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities.

3. Information about assessment will be explicit, transparent and accessible

Clear, accurate, consistent and timely information on assessment tasks and procedures will be made available to students, staff and other external assessors or examiners. Assessment plans for the whole year must be agreed by the Curriculum Leaders, the Head of Quality and the Head of Higher Education and should be distributed to students at the beginning of the academic year before teaching commences. This information will inform Assessment and Award Board dates.

4. Assessment will be inclusive and equitable

Through inclusive assessment design and individual reasonable adjustments (where appropriate) assessment will provide every student with an equal opportunity to demonstrate their achievement.

HE - Assessment & Feedback Policy**5. Assessment will address all of the programme and module aims and learning outcomes.**

Assessment tasks will reflect the nature of the discipline or subject but will also ensure that students have the opportunity to develop a range of generic skills and capabilities.

6. The volume, timing and nature of assessment should enable students to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes

The scheduling, amount and weighting of assessment types must be appropriate to the level of the award, the programme of study and the delivery mode. The scheduling of assignments and the amount of assessed work required will provide a reliable and valid profile of achievement without overloading students.

7. Assessment will be included in each programme and module.

Assessment will be incorporated into programme stages to ensure that the purposes of assessment are adequately addressed. Assessment briefs, if developed on site, will be moderated by internal verifiers before they are distributed to students to ensure learning outcomes are clearly covered and standardisation of weighting across levels and subjects are in coherence with assessment criteria.

Assessment will fall into one or more of the following categories:

- Initial/Diagnostic assessment, where appropriate, will determine the level of support needed at the start of the course or during the module
- Formative assessment which is designed to provide learners with feedback on progress and informs development.
- Summative assessment which provides a measure of achievement or lack of attainment respect of a learner's performance in relation to the intended learning outcomes.

8. Feedback will be timely, constructive and developmental.

Feedback will be integral part of the assessment process and students are entitled to feedback on all submitted assessment tasks to assist in improving their assessment practices. The nature, extent and timing of feedback for each assessment task should be clear to students in advance. Curriculum teams must ensure that constructive and timely feedback is provided to students on assessed work within timescales outlined in Appendix One in order to promote effective learning and facilitate improvement. Feedback should be based on clear assessment criteria and it should be sufficient to provide students with an understanding of the way the indicative mark/grade was derived and the extent to which the learning outcomes have been

met. In addition, it should enable students to see clearly how to develop their work further. Summative marks/grades/competences may be given in advance, where appropriate, but will be formally confirmed to the learner after the full internal and external verification and assessment board processes have taken place.

9. Workplace learning

Workplace or related learning should be regarded as integral to a higher education programme. Learning and work are closely interlinked within the HE curriculum, this is demonstrated through engagement with a workplace environment and by the assessment of reflective practice or the use of real working examples in the classroom. The workplace learning may be met by different means dependent on the opportunities available to the programmes and students at a period in time, for example the activities might be met by a placement within the workplace, simulated projects, case studies or realistic working environment. The activities selected will provide students with opportunities to meet the relevant programme learning outcomes. The student will be expected to keep a record of the work-related activity and reflective thoughts and actions taken. On completion of the activity the student will be debriefed and complete the reflective record which may be in the form of a personal/professional development plan with an evaluation of the activities undertaken. This evaluation may involve key stakeholders and this evaluation will inform assessment of the relevant modules.

10. Submission of assessment

All submission of assessment will take place in line with internal procedure as indicated within the Programme Handbook and stated by the module tutor. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that assessments are authenticated and submitted by the deadline published. Under unique conditions where submission is not possible, students should refer to the Extenuating Circumstances Policy for further information.

11. Conflict of Interest

Assessment staff may encounter a potential conflict of interest in their work. Examples of these may include:

- A close relation, spouse or partner within the centre who is either a student or another member of staff.
- A close relation, spouse or partner acting as a Standards Verifier or other external quality assurance role.
- Member of staff undertaking a programme of study who has access to their personal information and is able to influence assessment outcomes.

Individuals must always disclose an activity to their Curriculum Leader if there is any doubt about whether it represents a conflict of interest. A formal log of potential and actual conflicts of interest is kept within the Quality Team, in line with the Conflict of Interest policy. This record

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must be made available on request. Any additional conflict of interest must be declared at Assessment and Award board if it becomes apparent.

12. Assessment

All assignment briefs must be in line with the awarding bodies' requirements and be accessible by all. All assignments will be assessed by appropriate qualified assessors

13. Assessment of Group or paired work

Group projects can be included in the assessment schedule for a unit only where one or more learning outcomes of the unit indicate that they might be appropriate. In other words, does the learning outcome naturally fit the device of a group assessment? Students should be informed, in detail and in advance, of the basis for assessment of group projects, including the methods to be used to measure the content of individual contributions. If there is to be peer assessment of the contribution of the students to a group project, then the process for collecting feedback should be confidential between the individual student and the Assessor. If peer assessment includes the measurement of the contribution, the methods should be clear and simple to use and self-assessment should also be included.

A common group grade should not be assigned to all members of the group; individual contributions should be measured and graded against the learning outcomes, the assessment and grading criteria. Evidence of observation of presentations and discussions (with peers, with Assessors etc.) should be detailed and mapped to criteria in order to provide evidence of achievement of individual contributions and the students submission should further evidence this.

14. Internal Moderation and Verification

Verification of decisions and second marking must adhere the awarding organisations guidelines.

15. External Moderation and Sampling

Following internal moderation and verification, an agreed sample of assessments that contribute towards an award must be moderated or sampled by a standards verifier or external examiner. The sample selected for external moderation or sampling should normally include all summative work for an agreed selection of students from a given cohort, based on the marks agreed by internal assessment process. In fairness to students, any amendment to the marks of the sample as a result of external moderation or sampling should result in reconsideration of marks awarded to the rest of the cohort. Final grades cannot be confirmed to students until external moderation and sampling has been carried out, Assessment Boards have taken place and certification claimed.

Please refer to comparison table at end of document.

16. Extenuating Circumstances

Applications for extenuating circumstances will be considered every six weeks by the Head of Higher Education or Group Vice Principal for Quality and Curriculum Management through an Extenuating Circumstances Award Board, if the course is awarded by Pearson, or by request to Staffordshire University which should be applied for by the student following the guidance in the Programme Handbook. Notification of the outcome of the request for Extenuating Circumstances will be provided by the course tutor for Pearson or directly by the University.

17. Assessment/Award Board System

The main purpose of an Assessment/Award Board is to:

- Receive the outcomes of Academic Misconduct Panels and confirm the agreed recommendations
- Receive the outcomes of Extenuating Circumstances Panel and confirm the agreed recommendations
- Receive cases of intermittance or withdrawal and confirm intermediate awards if applicable
- Comment on the conduct of the assessment process and implementation of assessment regulations and report on this if appropriate
- Receive confirmation of module results, following moderation

- Confirm the grades achieved by students on the individual modules or units
- Confirm decisions on progression
- Confirm final awards to be made to students
- Agree arrangements to advise students of their results

Conflicts of Interest must be declared at the commencement of the meeting if previously undeclared.

Shrewsbury Colleges Group have adopted the following model for their HNC and HND Assessment and Award Boards:

Autumn Term (September) Re – submission Board
Spring Term (Jan-Feb) Module Assessment Board
Summer Term (June) Assessment and Award Board

The Board will be made up of:

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- Chair – Head of Higher Education or Group Vice Principal for Quality & Curriculum Manager
- Curriculum Leader responsible for the award or his/her nominee
- The Course/ Award Leader
- Staff with substantial teaching/assessment responsibilities
- The approved External Verifier for the Award
- Examinations Officer

The role of the External Verifier is to ensure that the Awarding Body regulations are applied consistently and objectively to all candidates.

A minimum of five members need to be present for valid decisions to be taken.

Marks determined by Module Assessment Boards shall **not** be subject to revision by Award Board.

Final grades cannot be confirmed to students before confirmation has been received from the Awarding Body.

18. Staff development and training

Shrewsbury Colleges Group requires that all staff involved in the assessment of HE students are competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities. Assessors will be appropriately qualified and meet the requirements of the awarding body. It is the responsibility of the Curriculum Leader to ensure that any training needs are identified and provided in a timely manner. Tutors new to HE will be allocated a mentor/coach within their first twelve months to support them in all aspects of teaching learning and assessment.

19. Regulatory requirements of awarding and professional bodies

Shrewsbury Colleges Group requires that all staff are aware of and operate under the specific regulatory requirements of its awarding bodies and where appropriate, professional bodies.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

Recognition of Prior Learning Policy
HE Academic Appeals Policy
Malpractice and Maladministration Policy
Extenuating Circumstances Policy
Conflict of Interest Policy
Student Charter

HE - Assessment & Feedback Policy**Appendix One**

Awarding Body Assessment Guidelines

	Shrewsbury Colleges Group	Staffordshire University
Issuance of assessment plan	During induction	At the start of the academic year/start of each module
Typical 1st marking deadline & I.V	15 academic working days	10 academic working days
Typical 2nd marking deadline	N/A	10 academic working days
Re-Submission of work if referral. Only pass can be achieved.	If re-submission granted working must be resubmitted within 15 working days and in time for assessment board.	In time for assessment board
Recording of grades	Must be recorded and retained for 3 years.	Must be recorded and retained.
Method of Submission	As indicated in the Programme Handbook	Turnitin