



Title: Assessment
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20: Assessment Policy

Introduction

1. Assessment describes any processes that appraise an individual's knowledge, understanding, abilities or skills. There are many forms of assessment, serving a variety of purposes. These include:
 - i. promoting student learning by providing the student with feedback, to help improve his/her performance;
 - ii. evaluating student knowledge, understanding, abilities or skills;
 - iii. providing a mark or grade which enables a student's performance to be established. The mark or grade may also be used to make progress decisions; and
 - iv. enabling the public (including employers), and higher education providers, to know that an individual has attained an appropriate level of achievement that reflects the academic standards set by the awarding institution and agreed UK norms, including the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications. This may include demonstrating fitness to practice or meeting other professional requirements.
2. The way in which students are assessed fundamentally affects their learning. Good assessment practice is designed to be aligned with teaching and learning opportunities and to ensure that, in order to pass a unit and the overall programme, students have to demonstrate they have achieved the intended learning outcomes.
3. To test a wide range of intended learning outcomes, diversity of assessment practice between and within different subjects is to be expected and welcomed, requiring and enabling students to demonstrate their capabilities and achievements within each unit and programme.
4. Students need to be aware of the purposes and implications of different assessment tasks, especially the opportunities provided for them to show the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes of a unit or programme. It is important that students know whether the outcomes of each assessment are to be used for formative and/or summative purposes.
5. Assessment is usually construed as being diagnostic, formative or summative. An assessment process can, and often does, involve more than one of these assessment purposes. For example, an assessment element submitted during a unit may provide formative feedback designed to help students improve their performance in subsequent assessments. An end-of-

unit assessment normally results in a summative judgement being made about the level the student has attained, but any feedback on it may also have an intended formative purpose that can help students in assessments later in their programme, or on another programme.

Purpose

6. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that assessment practices at Southampton Solent University:
 - i. are fair, equitable, valid, reliable, explicit and consistent across the University;
 - ii. are secure and safeguard the standards of the awards made;
 - iii. compare to standards within the University and with other universities in the UK;
 - iv. are of equal rigour and robustness across disciplines and subject areas with varying cultures;
 - v. are aligned with the precepts of the Quality Assurance Agency UK Quality Code for Higher Education and other relevant codes;
 - vi. are aligned with the principles and conform to the requirements of the University's Academic Framework and Assessment Regulations; and
 - vii. reflect the requirements of legitimate stakeholders external to the University e.g. employers, national occupational standards, professional, statutory and regulatory bodies.
7. The policy covers all the University's credit and award bearing courses and units.
8. Annex 1 contains the regulations under which credit is awarded and progression and award decisions are made.

Assessment of work based learning

9. All the principles set out in the paragraphs above apply to assessment of learning gained in the workplace and from learning activities derived from the working environment. Such assessments should be integrated fully into the assessment strategy for each programme. Further guidance on the design and integration of assessment of work based learning is provided in Section 4 of the Academic Handbook.
10. Where assessment takes place in the workplace an appropriately qualified and experienced member of University staff with the relevant subject expertise must be identified to moderate any assessments on behalf of the University.
11. Agreed and clearly documented arrangements for such assessment must be put in place between the University and employer or other partner as part of the wider partnership agreement or contract which covers the provision.
12. Practice-based standards and requirements of professional bodies may be reflected in learning outcomes where appropriate.
13. More detailed guidance on the necessary processes is set out in Section 4 of the Academic Handbook.

Responsibilities

14. The Learning, Teaching and Student Achievement Committee (LTSAC) is responsible for reviewing this policy and for ensuring that assessment practice supports this policy. Schools/services, in collaboration with Academic Services, are responsible for the implementation of this policy.

15. Individual members of staff delivering each unit are responsible for ensuring that the quality of the teaching and learning opportunities provided will facilitate students in attaining the standard set. Staff are expected to use both formative and summative assessments that promote effective learning and are encouraged to use a range of assessment methods.

16. Course/programme teams are responsible for ensuring that:

- i. the amount, timing and type of summative assessments enable effective and appropriate judgements of a student's achievement of intended learning outcomes to be made;
- ii. students have clear information about the expected standard of individual assessments and assessments are timed to ensure students have adequate time to reflect on learning and/or practical skills;
- iii. feedback on assessments is provided in a timely fashion; and
- iv. student marks are recorded accurately on the student record system and by the date specified by Academic Services.

17. Effectiveness of assessment practice will be monitored via student feedback, external examiner reports, course review, periodic review and Assessment Boards.

18. At the beginning of each academic year of the course students will be provided with the details and planned timings of the summative assessments (number, type, weighting) for all units studied during that year.

Assessment of Units

19. All students registered for a particular unit should follow the same assessment strategy and consequently take the same number of assessment elements and assessment types, although the precise assessment task may legitimately vary between student groups and students.

20. All units must be summatively assessed and will normally be marked using the Grade Marking scale (see Annex 3). A grade or a mark must be produced for each assessment element such that an overall unit mark can be determined.

21. To enable students to make good any failed assessments as early as possible students will be provided with referral coursework briefs no later than when their work is returned. Students failing any examinations held in the first 15 weeks of the academic calendar will be offered the opportunity to take the referral examination before week 27.

22. All units that start in weeks 1-10 of the traditional academic calendar and have more than one summative assessment element must schedule an assessment date before the start of week 16 to enable the assessment to be considered by the mid-session Unit Boards.

23. Assessment strategies must be designed to ensure that all unit learning outcomes are assessed at least once and all level learning outcomes are assessed at least twice.

24. All summative assessment elements must be assigned a weighting.
25. All units must be assigned to a Unit External Examiner.
26. Students must be provided with feedback opportunities on all assessments.
27. The marks/grades for all elements of assessment will normally be aggregated to determine the overall unit result. Exceptionally, there may be a requirement for individual assessments to be passed in their own right. Such exceptions must be approved through the course approval/ modification process and stated on the unit descriptor.
28. Students are responsible for managing their own assessment workload, but the amount, type and timing of assessments needs to be taken into account when unit and course assessment schedules are designed.
29. Students must be provided with full details of all summatively assessed in-unit assessments, including a clear statement of the task, the learning outcomes being assessed and the assessment criteria.
30. In all assessment elements, students will normally be able to choose, for example, between topics for in-unit assessment tasks or between examination questions. Where all or part of an assessment is compulsory the rationale for this should be clearly stated in the unit descriptor assessment strategy.

Production and internal moderation of assessments

31. Academic staff teaching on a unit are responsible for the design and production of:-
 - i. assessments (i.e. assignment briefs, examination papers) that:
 - a. are explicitly aligned with the student learning experience and the intended learning outcomes;
 - b. are clear and equitable;
 - c. will facilitate students in demonstrating achievement of the unit; and
 - d. meet the assessment strategy as defined by the unit descriptor in terms of type and weighting of assessment.
 - ii. clearly defined assessment criteria for students, within the specified quality standards and timescales set by the University to allow all staff involved in the internal moderation process sufficient time to fulfil their duties.
32. The assessments and assessment criteria will be subject to Internal and External Peer Review.
33. All assessments are confidential until released to the students and schools must ensure they have appropriate procedures in place to assure the security of assessments.

Submission, receipt and return of assessments

34. Students must be clearly informed of the submission date of assessments and the date of examinations. No extensions to submission dates will be granted unless approved through the Extenuating Circumstances policy or Special Action.
35. Students must submit their own work and, where practical, keep a copy of all assignments.
36. Academic Services must ensure the safe submission of all assignments and the availability of receipts.
37. Where work is returned to students, the mechanism by which it will be returned should be clearly explained to students and the work returned in a safe manner.
38. Feedback to individual students will be provided via e.g. comments on the assignment sheet, either hard copy or electronically. In addition, generic feedback on all assessments including examinations will be made available.

Marking of assessments

39. All assessments must be marked by appropriately qualified staff according to the specific assessment criteria and the University's generic grading and classification criteria. (See annex 2). Moderation must be undertaken by an appropriately qualified and experienced member of University staff with the relevant subject expertise.
40. All schools/services and partners are subject to the Anonymous Marking policy. The policy must be adopted for all examination scripts, and for all **summative** course work submitted for assessment at Levels 3-7, with the exception of those areas identified as exempt from the process.
41. Non-performance based assessments must be subject to moderation by a Moderator with appropriate academic knowledge and experience.
42. The moderation sample must be properly representative and include borderline cases between each band of award classification and an example of a first class/distinction piece of work and a clear fail where appropriate.
43. Where a moderator identifies a potential issue, a larger sample should be scrutinised and a second moderator requested to arbitrate if appropriate.
44. Moderators cannot change individual student marks but can recommend that changes are made to the whole cohort of student marks.
45. Performance based assessments (e.g. presentations, shows, concerts etc.) should normally be marked and moderated or double marked (if required) at the time of the performance. See Section 40 for further information.
46. Double Marking of assessment elements must take place at Level 6 and Level 7:
 - i. on all major projects, dissertations and portfolios, and
 - ii. on any assessment which constitutes 100% of the weighting for units of 20 credit points or more for undergraduate programmes, and for 30 credit points or more for postgraduate taught courses.

Group work

47. The means by which marks are allocated to individual members of the group must be clearly articulated on the assignment brief and referral arrangements clearly stated on the unit descriptor.

Student peer assessment

48. Where student peer assessment is part of the summative assessment strategy, the criteria used to allocate marks must be clearly articulated and the referral arrangements must be clearly stated on the unit descriptor.

Students with special needs

49. Students are responsible for alerting the University to any special needs as part of the enrolment process or as soon as they have been diagnosed. The University will assess the needs and determine if any additional support and special arrangements need to be put in place at the time of the assessment. No additional allowance can be made at the time of marking except as detailed in the 'Dyslexia or Pre-lingual Deafness: Information for Academic Staff', available from the Learning and Information Service.

Student concerns with the assessment process

50. Students may not appeal against the academic judgement of examiners.

51. Where a student believes a mark has been recorded incorrectly, they should raise this as a query under the University Academic Appeal Policy (section 2M of the Academic Handbook).

52. Where a student is dissatisfied with their learning and/or assessment experience they should make an immediate complaint using the student complaint procedure.

Feedback on summative assessed work

53. The University believes that students need clear feedback on assessments, at the right time, so they can learn and improve.

54. Students can expect to receive feedback on all summative assessments within four weeks of the submission date, with comments that are focussed and developmental.

55. Students also have a responsibility for their learning and can ask for advice on particular aspects of their work via the assignment submission form.

56. The feedback turnaround time may vary, depending on the nature of the assignment and academic discipline.

Extenuating Circumstances and Special Action

57. Students with problems that impact on their ability to complete assessments can request that their Extenuating Circumstances are taken into account. See Section 2P of the Academic Handbook.

58. Students with permanent or long term conditions that impact their ability to study must be assessed by Student Services and an agreed support plan put in place. Such students will not be eligible for either Extenuating Circumstances or Special Action as a result of their condition,

unless they suffer an acute episode which may then fall under the criteria for Extenuating Circumstances.

59. Students who suffer an extended absence will normally be advised to suspend their studies. Exceptionally, where the period of absence has not impacted substantially on a student's ability to make good the missed learning and assessment(s), a student may request that the University considers taking Special Action to enable them to make good the missed learning and assessments. Each case will be considered on its merits and approval of any Special Action is entirely at the University's discretion and must be obtained in advance of arrangements being confirmed with the student.

60. The support for missed learning must ensure that the student is able to complete their assessments within normal course delivery timescales and to meet the Unit Assessment Board(s) deadline. The nature of resources provided will be at school's discretion and the student must confirm they believe they are sufficient to make good the missed learning.

61. Occasionally, there are other circumstances where events may impact on a student's ability to complete their assessments on time which fall outside Extenuating Circumstances or extended absences and requires immediate action by the University. In such circumstances students may request that their case is considered and Special Action taken.

62. Special Action can only be taken where the University believes it has the resources to help the student make good missed learning, the student has confirmed they are 'fit to study' and the time scales are practical for the student to complete both the necessary learning and assessment. In such circumstances a programme will be agreed by the school and the student that will provide the opportunity for the student to make good any missed learning and ensure that the student's academic profile can be presented to the appropriate Assessment Board for credit, progression or award purposes.

63. Special Action requires an exemption from the University's Assessment Regulations (e.g. an extended deadline) and must, therefore, be approved by the Academic Registrar on behalf of Academic Quality Committee.

Staff development and training

64. All academic staff are expected to keep up to date with their discipline and pedagogic developments and avail themselves of staff development opportunities offered by the University.

65. Schools/services, in collaboration with Academic Services, are responsible for ensuring that all their academic staff are fully briefed on the University assessment policies, regulations and procedures.

66. New staff should be supported by the appointment of a mentor and a larger sample of their marking should be subject to moderation.

67. These factors should be reflected in delivery and contractual arrangements with partner organisations for jointly delivered provision.

Archiving of work

68. Students are responsible for the collection of their own work and feedback.

69. The requirements for the retention of assessed material are set out in Policies, Procedures and Guidelines, Academic Services, Maintenance of Records, available on the Portal.