

Undergraduate 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:
 - 1.1. Promoting student learning by providing the student with feedback to help improve his/her performance
 - 1.2. Evaluating student knowledge, understanding, abilities or skills
 - 1.3. Providing a mark or grade which enables a student
 - 1.4. 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 course and the overall programme, students have to demonstrate they have achieved the intended learning outcomes.
3. The term 'programme' is used to refer to the curriculum route that leads to a named award as defined in each programme specification. The term 'course' is used to refer to each 30 or 15 credit component of study as defined in each course descriptor.
4. 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 course and programme.
5. 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 course or programme. It is important that students know whether the outcomes of each assessment are to be used for formative and/or summative purposes.
6. 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

course may provide formative feedback designed to help students improve their performance in subsequent assessments. An end-of-course assessment normally results in a summative judgment 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

7. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that assessment practices at New College of the Humanities (the College):
 - 7.1 Are fair, equitable, valid, reliable, explicit and consistent across the College
 - 7.2 Are secure and safeguard the standards of the awards made
 - 7.3 Compare to standards across the College faculties and with other universities in the UK
 - 7.4 Are of equal rigour and robustness across disciplines and subject areas with varying cultures
 - 7.5 Are aligned with the precepts of the Quality Assurance Agency UK Quality Code for Higher Education and other relevant codes
 - 7.6 Are aligned with the principles and conform to the requirements of the College's Academic Framework and Assessment Regulations as approved by Solent University (the University)
 - 7.7 Reflect the requirements of legitimate stakeholders external to the College, e.g. employers, national occupational standards, professional, statutory and regulatory bodies
8. The policy covers all the College's credit and award-bearing programmes and courses validated by Solent University.
9. Annex 1 contains the regulations under which credit is awarded and progression and award decisions are made.

RESPONSIBILITIES

10. Academic Board is responsible for reviewing this policy to ensure that it aligns to the University's requirements, and for ensuring that assessment practice supports this policy. The College faculties are responsible for the implementation of this policy.
11. Individual members of staff delivering each course 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.
12. Programme teams are responsible for ensuring that:

- 12.1 The amount, timing and type of summative assessments enable effective and appropriate judgments of a student's achievement of intended learning outcomes to be made
- 12.2 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
- 12.3 Feedback on assessments is provided in a timely fashion
- 12.4 Student marks are recorded accurately on the student record system and by the date specified by the Registrar
13. Effectiveness of assessment practice will be monitored via student feedback, external examiners' reports, annual programme monitoring, periodic academic review, and Assessment Boards.
14. At the beginning of each academic year of the programme, students will be provided with the details and planned timings of the summative assessments (number, type, weighting) for all courses studied during that year.

ASSESSMENT OF COURSES

15. All students registered for a particular course 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.
16. All courses must be summatively assessed and will normally be marked using the Grade Marking scale. A grade or a mark must be produced for each assessment element such that an overall course mark can be determined.
17. Assessment strategies must be designed to ensure that all course learning outcomes are assessed at least once and all level learning outcomes are assessed at least twice.
18. All summative assessment elements must be assigned a weighting.
19. All courses will be assigned to an External Examiner as per the University's requirement.
20. Students must be provided with feedback opportunities on all assessments.
21. The marks/grades for all elements of assessment will normally be aggregated to determine the overall course 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 course descriptor.
22. Students are responsible for managing their own assessment workload, but the amount, type and timing of assessments needs to be taken into account when course and programme assessment schedules are designed.
23. Students must be provided with full details of all summatively assessed in-course assessments, including a clear statement of the task, the learning outcomes being assessed and the assessment criteria.

24. In all assessment elements, students will normally be able to choose, for example, between topics for in-course 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 course descriptor assessment strategy.

PRODUCTION AND INTERNAL MODERATION OF ASSESSMENTS

25. Academic staff teaching on a course are responsible for the design and production of:
 - 25.1 Assessments (i.e. assignment briefs, examination papers) that:
 - 25.1.1 are explicitly aligned with the student learning experience and the intended learning outcomes
 - 25.1.2 are clear and equitable
 - 25.1.3 will facilitate students in demonstrating achievement of the course
 - 25.1.4 meet the assessment strategy as defined by the course descriptor in terms of type and weighting of assessment
 - 25.2 Clearly defined assessment criteria for students, within the specified quality standards, and timescales set by the College to allow all staff involved in the internal moderation process sufficient time to fulfil their duties
26. The assessments and assessment criteria will be subject to Internal and External Peer Review, including the University's link tutor.
27. All assessments are confidential until released to the students, and the College faculties must ensure they have appropriate procedures in place to assure the security of assessments.

SUBMISSION, RECEIPT AND RETURN OF ASSESSMENTS

28. 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.
29. Students must submit their own work and, where practical, keep a copy of all assignments.
30. The College faculties must ensure the safe submission of all assignments and the availability of receipts.
31. 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.
32. 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

33. All assessments must be marked by appropriately qualified staff according to the specific assessment criteria and the University's generic grading and classification criteria.
34. All assessments are subject to anonymous marking in line with the Anonymous Marking policy for all examination scripts, and for all summative course work submitted for assessment at Levels 4-6 with the exception of those areas identified as exempt from the process.
35. Non-performance based assessments must be subject to moderation by a moderator with appropriate academic knowledge and experience.
36. 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.
37. Where a moderator identifies a potential issue, a larger sample should be scrutinised and a second moderator requested to arbitrate if appropriate.
38. Moderators cannot change individual student marks but can recommend that changes are made to the whole cohort of student marks.
39. Presentations should normally be marked and double marked at the time of the presentation.
40. Double marking of assessment elements must take place at Level 6 of an undergraduate award:
 - 40.1 On all major projects, dissertations and portfolios, and
 - 40.2 On any assessment which constitutes 100% of the weighting for any course

GROUP WORK

41. 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 course descriptor.

STUDENT PEER ASSESSMENT

42. 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 course descriptor.

DISABILITIES AND/OR SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTIES (SPLDS)

43. Students are responsible for alerting the College to any special needs as part of the enrolment process or as soon as they have been diagnosed. The College 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.

STUDENT CONCERNS WITH THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

44. Students may not appeal against the academic judgment of examiners.
45. Where a student believes a mark has been recorded incorrectly, they should raise this as a query following the [Academic Appeals Policy](#) which is in the NCH Academic Handbook.
46. Where a student is dissatisfied with their learning and/or assessment experience they should make an immediate complaint using the [Student Complaints Policy](#) which is in the NCH Academic Handbook.

FEEDBACK ON SUMMATIVE ASSESSED WORK

47. The College believes that students need clear feedback on assessments, at the right time, so they can learn and improve.
48. Students can normally expect to receive feedback on all summative assessments within 20 working days of the submission date, with comments that are focused and developmental.
49. Students also have a responsibility for their learning and can ask for advice on particular aspects of their work via the assignment submission form.
50. The feedback turnaround time may vary, depending on the nature of the assignment and academic discipline.

EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES AND SPECIAL ACTION

51. Students with problems that impact on their ability to complete assessments can request that their Extenuating Circumstances are taken into account.
52. Students with permanent or long-term conditions that impact their ability to study must be assessed by Student and Academic Services (who will make any necessary referrals) 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.
53. 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 College considers taking Special Action to enable them to make good the missed learning, and assessments. Each case will be considered on its merits, and where available, 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.
54. 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 relevant Course Assessment Board deadlines. The nature of resources provided will be at the College's discretion and the student must confirm they believe they are sufficient to make good the missed learning.

55. 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 College. In such circumstances students may request that their case is considered and Special Action taken.
56. Special Action can only be taken where the College 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 College 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.
57. Special Action requires an exemption from the **Assessment Regulations** (e.g. an extended deadline) and must, therefore, be approved by the University.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

58. 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 College.
59. The College faculties are responsible for ensuring that all their academic staff are fully briefed on the College's and University's assessment policies, regulations and procedures.
60. New staff should be supported by the appointment of a mentor and a larger sample of their marking should be subject to moderation.

Title	Assessment Policy	Author	Student and Academic Services
Location	NCH Handbook	Approved by	Academic Board
Version	1.0	Last updated	May 2015
Publication date	November 2014	Review date	July 2016
Related policies	Extenuating Circumstances Policy, Academic Appeals Policy, Student Complaints Policy, and Annex 1 - Assessment Regulations		
External Reference Point	UK Quality Code Chapter B6		