12. ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

This section of the Student Regulations Framework applies to all taught programmes of Plymouth Marjon University, whether undergraduate or postgraduate, and to all apprentices enrolled on the University's apprenticeship programmes, who are classified as 'students' and referred to accordingly throughout this Procedure.

12.1 Introduction

1. Plymouth Marjon University has defined a range of assessment regulations and procedures that underpin the maintenance of standards within the University. These are detailed in Section 3 of this Framework. All its assessment and classification conventions are in the public domain, including the procedures of Module Assessment Boards (MABs), the procedures of Progression and Award Boards (PABs), the work of External Examiners and procedures relating to the disclosure of marks to students.

    Assessment design, approval and review

2. Identifying appropriate assessment opportunities and criteria is important when designing a programme. The University has adopted programme design criteria which are informed by the expectations and practices set out in the UK Quality Code For Higher Education and OfS B conditions. The University's approach to assessment is also aligned to the QAA advice and guidance relating to assessment.

3. Responsibility for the quality and standards of assessment lies with the designated members of academic staff. The University's Strategies and Policies provide the supportive framework.

4.   Validation and review of programmes involves scrutiny of assessment processes. The Periodic Review and Validation Panels follow the guidelines on assessment published by the University. As good practice, during the review, the amount and type of assessment should be addressed.

5.   The collection of feedback from students, through a number of routes, is an integral part of programme review. Informal feedback can occur through the Programme Leader or Programme Area Leader, through module tutors, and/or through Personal Development Tutors. Formal feedback is via mid-module review and semester/term evaluations, which specifically ask for feedback on assessment methods and loads. In addition, Programme Voice Panels provide further opportunities for assessment issues to be addressed and to consider External Examiner reports. Student feedback is systematically referred into the University's quality mechanisms at the appropriate level.

Programme assessment procedures

6.   University-wide procedures for the smooth running of programme assessments are adopted in order to ensure that there is internal consistency and external confidence in the University's standards. These are made explicit to staff and students in the relevant University documentation.

Responsibilities for supervising assessment and related procedures

7.   At the programme level, the day-to-day responsibility for assessment lies with module teams. Individual tutors are responsible for setting, marking, making arrangements for second marking / moderating work, recording provisional marks, and returning the work to students on time.

8.   At the University level overall responsibility for assessment and related procedures lies with Senate. The University Secretary and Registrar is responsible for oversight, with appropriate devolved management, of the administration of examination processes, assessment boards and recognition of prior learning. The Academic Standards Officer manages appeals and complaints procedures within the Quality and Academic Standards Unit.

9.   The Programmes and Partnerships Office will make arrangements for examinations and for timetabled in-class tests that directly contribute to final module marks, as defined by the University's <u>Assessments Calendar</u>. Module Leaders are also responsible for ensuring that any additional arrangements for students are adhered to for practical examinations and presentations.

10.   Deans of School, Programme Leaders, Programme Area Leaders and External Examiners have significant responsibilities for maintaining standards on particular programmes. These are defined in the University's **Annual Monitoring Procedures** and in Section 3 of this Framework.

12.2 Module assessment

All taught modules have a set content and form of assessment (including the weighting of elements of assessment). Students are provided with information relating to assessment, at the beginning of their module, by their programme teams through the programme/module information available on the University's Virtual Learning Environment. The content of this information conforms to the approved Programme Specification and Module Descriptors. Students must attempt all components and elements of a modules assessment in order to pass the module - this includes all elements of a portfolio where this is an assessment mode of the module.

12.3 Programme Assessment

1. Submission dates for all programme assignments are provided by programme teams at the start of each module, and are published in the programme/module information available on the University's Virtual Learning Environment. Changes to the published submission date may only be changed if:

   - there is good reason for doing so
   - that doing so will not impact adversely on students' assessment schedules
   - all registered students have been informed in writing in advance

2. Students will be given target word counts or equivalents for programme assessments. The instructions for the assessment should make the consequences of exceeding or failing to reach the word count clear before the student undertakes the assessment and this should be further noted in the Programme Specification.

3. Word counts include footnotes, quotes and reference citations within the text of the work. The reference list, bibliography and appendices are excluded, as are captions for images, figures or tables.

4. Programme assessments must be submitted via the appropriate means in a format agreed by the Module Leader, normally via Turnitin. Submissions made in the absence of Turnitin must have the University's signed programme assessment report form or agreed equivalent attached. A receipt recording the student number and the exact time of submission will be issued or recorded via the electronic audit trail inherent to a Turnitin submission. Where required the receipt should be retained by the student as proof of submission until after publication of the results relating to that module.

5. The University may make and authorise third parties to make copies of any work submitted for assessment but only for the following purposes:

- assessment of work

- comparison with databases of earlier answers or works or other previously available works to confirm that a student's work is original

- addition to databases of works used to ensure that future works submitted at this institution and others do not contain content from a student's work

The University will not make any more copies than are necessary for these purposes, will only use copies made for these purposes and will only retain such copies as remain necessary for those purposes.

6. The Programme Leader or Programme Area Leader will provide students with further details concerning the arrangements for the submission of programme assessments, including resit work, at the beginning of the academic session. The feedback is returned to students, either on the programme assessment report form or other agreed format. A copy of the feedback is also made available to the appropriate office.

7. The University requires marked work to be returned to students with feedback within twenty working days of the submission deadline. If there are reasons beyond the marker's control why this will not be possible, the Module Leader must inform all students of the reason for the delay, and state the date by which students can expect to receive their returned programme assessments.

8. **N.B. - all marks remain provisional until recommended by the relevant Module Assessment Board.**

9. Non-submission of programme assessments will be awarded a mark of zero (in accordance with the University generic grade descriptors, as set out in Section 12.6 of this Framework).

12.4 Penalties for Late Submission

1. Extensions to submission dates for programme assessments for individual students are not permitted. A student who is unable to meet a submission date for a programme assessment (and this includes an approved flexible submission date), must consult the Extenuating Circumstances procedures described in Section 4 of this Framework.

2. Programme assessments submitted after the published submission time and date, but within seven calendar days of that date, will be marked. The mark awarded will be subject to a reduction of ten marks per day (or part of a day, and by this anything received after the deadline will be considered to be a day late and so on), for a maximum of seven calendar days or until the module pass mark has been reached. In each case, the mark the work merits will also be shown on the programme assessment. This does not apply to resit work, which is already capped at the module pass mark. Resit work submitted after the deadline will receive a mark of zero.

3. Work submitted manually more than seven calendar days after the published submission date will be marked for formative purposes only, but a mark of zero will be awarded and recorded.

4. The assessment penalties described above may only be waived if the student has successfully applied for Extenuating Circumstances. Therefore the marks, as described above, remain until the Module Assessment Board meets and responds to Registry's recommendations.

5. If Extenuating Circumstances have been deemed valid, the Module Assessment Board will take the appropriate course of action. All actions will be recorded in the MAB minutes.

6. All work will receive written feedback, irrespective of whether or not the work can achieve its actual grade.

7. These late submission penalties apply only to standard numerically marked assessment. For all non-standard assessment, students should refer to the relevant Module Descriptor.

12.5 Marking Procedures

1. The University's approach to marking is shaped by the expectations, practices and guidance set out in the UK Quality Code For Higher Education, OfS B conditions and by practice across the sector as communicated by its External Examiners.

Anonymous marking

2. The general marking practice for modules delivered at Level 5 or above is that for summative assessment, where possible, the identity of the student should be unknown to the marker(s).

3. Every examination script for modules delivered at Level 5 or above should be marked anonymously wherever possible. Any exemption to this requirement at programme level should be recorded on the programme specification.

4. Where possible, programme assessments for modules delivered at Level 5 or above will be marked anonymously. At the beginning of a module, students will be notified via programme and module information of those assessed activities for which their anonymity will be preserved and those for which it will not.

Double marking

5. Double marking is where two markers assess the work. The purpose of double marking is to ensure the accuracy and consistency of marking, and thus to verify the marks. A sample reflecting the range of marks and classifications should enable the two markers to ensure that they are marking consistently and accurately against assessment criteria and grade descriptors.

6. Student work for assessment is sample double marked internally and made available to external examiners. The minimum sample is either the square root of *n* (where *n* is the number of students on the module), rounded up to the nearest whole number, or a sample of 5 assignments where this is greater. Marks are usually only recorded on the work once the double marking process is complete. It is the expectation that all Level 6 and 7 dissertations and honours projects are double marked.

7. Blind double marking is where the student work is independently assessed by two markers, neither of which is aware of any comments made or mark awarded by the other. Any assessment may be double blind marked on a discretionary basis, although this is more likely to apply to individual pieces of work constituting at least 75% of the assessment of modules which are greater than 20 credits and where the credits contribute to the final award.

8. Once double marking (including blind double marking) has taken place, first and second markers agree marks for each assessment. Ordinarily, if the marks are within a 5% tolerance band, the first marker's grade should be maintained. Where the double marking process reveals that markers are more than 5% apart, they will need to agree the grade for the individual piece of work. Should the double marking process result in marks falling outside the 5% tolerance band for all assessments within the sample, then the entire corpus of grades should be reconsidered, and moderated as necessary, to ensure that a consistent approach is maintained across all assessments on a module.

9. Exceptionally, where no agreement can be reached between first and second markers, a third party, who must have appropriate subject expertise and standing and be a member of the relevant School, should mark the work and adjudicate. The decisions of the third marker, which should be clearly recorded, are final. External Examiners must not be used to resolve marking disagreements.

10. Once double marking has taken place, the full set of marks for the assessment can be confirmed. Marks can then be entered on the programme assessment report form and the work returned to the students. Similarly, marks for examinations can be recorded on the module marksheet. No assessments, or marks, should be returned to students unless the set of marks, as a whole, has been agreed.

11. Markers should maintain clear records which should be available to other markers and External Examiners, as necessary. However, whilst markers' records identify a mark and provide a justification for this judgement, the programme assessment report form should only present the final, agreed mark, and feedback which warrants the grade, so as to provide students with clear and helpful information.

Moderation

12. Module teams should review the patterns of the full range of marks for elements of assessments within a module. The review may consider the pattern of marks in relation to

   - Other assignments
   - Previous history of the module
   - Other modules on this and other programmes
   - External norms

13. Action resulting from moderation could involve the rescaling of the entire assignment, if the pattern of marks is considered to be anomalous or, if it displays no pattern at all, remarking of an entire assessment may be necessary. Moderation should be used in annual monitoring of modules and could be taken as evidence for the need for a modification to the learning, teaching and assessment of the module. Evidence of moderation should be kept and shared with the External Examiner.

External examiners

14.   In addition to internal double marking and moderation as described above, all student work for assessment is subject to sampling by the External Examiner appointed with responsibility for the relevant cognate group of modules. The size and nature of the sample and the rights and responsibilities of the External Examiner are described in the University's <u>Handbook for External Examiners and Moderators</u>, but the External Examiner has the right of access to all assessed work at all FHEQ Levels.

12.6 Marking and Grading

1.   The following scheme is used in all summative assessment for Honours degrees.

CLASS AND NUMERICAL EQUIVALENT

First class   70-100

Upper second   60-69

Lower second   50-59

Third   40-49

Fail   1-39

No work submitted 0

2.   The following scheme is used in all summative assessment for undergraduate programmes other than Honours Degrees (or the related exit awards).

GRADE AND NUMERICAL EQUIVALENT

Distinction   70-100

Merit   60-69

Pass   40-59

Fail   1-39

No work submitted 0

3.   The following scheme is used in all summative assessment in Master's level programmes.

GRADE AND NUMERICAL EQUIVALENT

Distinction   70-100

Merit   60-69

Pass   50-59

Fail   1-49

No work submitted 0

4.   Unless an assignment has 'absolute' answers then the following grade points will apply within each classification band:

- High – threshold plus 8% (58%, 68% etc.)

- Medium – threshold plus 5% (55%, 65% etc.)

- Low – threshold plus 3% (53%, 63% etc.)

- Pass – threshold plus 0% (50%, 60% etc.)

The purpose of this is to enhance clarity and consistency across the marking process.

5. The University has developed Generic Grade Descriptors, which inform assessment across its programmes in a non-prescriptive manner. The Descriptors focus on the development of knowledge and understanding and intellectual skills. Each grade presented assumes that the lower level criteria have been achieved. Staff are encouraged to mark across the full range of grades.

LEVELS 4, 5 and 6

1st (90–100%). Outstanding work which:

- demonstrates analytical and critical acumen

- demonstrates the ability to develop and sustain a personal judgement which is well grounded in leading current research

- demonstrates the ability to present a clear, structured, articulate and persuasive argument

1st (80–90%). Exceptional work which:

- demonstrates thorough, critical understanding of current knowledge

- demonstrates a critical awareness of the principles and practices of the discipline

1st (70–79%). Excellent work which:

- demonstrates a thorough and comprehensive understanding of the discipline

- shows evidence of extensive, relevant reading which includes up-to-date research

- reveals originality and insight

- demonstrates ability to critically evaluate complex ideas

2.1 (60–69%). Very good work which:

- demonstrates a sound understanding of the discipline

- shows effective and competent use of literature

- demonstrates a clear understanding of complex ideas

- demonstrates the ability to analyse, interpret and organise information effectively

- demonstrates a wide reading base

- is a clear, concise and well-structured presentation

2.2 (50–59%). Good work which:

- demonstrates a generally sound understanding of the discipline

- makes good use of relevant literature

- demonstrates ability to synthesise information into a clear, well-structured account / argument

3rd (40–49%). Fair work which:

- demonstrates an understanding of the discipline

- shows evidence of relevant reading

- demonstrates ability to work towards tasks set, but more descriptive than analytical

- demonstrates the ability to organise work appropriately

Borderline fail (35-39%). Weak work which:

- demonstrates a basic understanding of the discipline

- demonstrates some evidence of reading

- demonstrates evidence of broadly working towards the task(s) set

Weaknesses may be identified in one or more of the following:

fragmentary coverage; errors and omissions; organisation and presentation; misconceptions; inclusion of irrelevant information; misinterpretation of instructions.

Fail (30-34%). Inadequate work which:

- demonstrates a basic and partial understanding of the discipline

- some evidence of reading

- limited focus on task(s) set

Inadequacies may be identified in one or more of the following:

assessment guidelines not followed; little engagement with the discipline; errors / omissions; poorly presented work.

Fail (20-29%). Poor work which:

- demonstrates little understanding of the discipline

Poor work may be evidenced by one or more of the following:

basic misunderstanding or misinterpretations; inability to meet the requirements of the assessment; poor organisation and presentation; inclusion of inappropriate material.

Fail (10-19%). Incompetent work which:

- demonstrates very limited evidence of understanding of the discipline

- follows few or none of the tasks set

Incompetent work may be evidenced by one or more of the following:

inclusion of irrelevant information; little evidence of engagement with the task; little evidence of engagement with the discipline.

Fail (1-9%). Unacceptable work which:-

- demonstrates minimal or no understanding of the discipline

Unacceptable work may be evidenced by one or more of the following:

work which is not presented in an acceptable manner; work which is not written in an appropriate manner; work which does not evidence appropriate reading; no evidence of engagement with the discipline.

Fail (0%). Non-submission.

LEVEL 7 PROGRAMMES

Pass with Distinction (90-100%). Work which:

- is thought-provoking, presenting challenging evidence-based insights and proposals

- work which is of publishable quality

Pass with Distinction (80-89%). Work which:

- contributes to the knowledge base of the discipline

- effectively challenges theoretical frameworks

- displays methodological rigour

- demonstrates qualities consistent with publishable material

Pass with Distinction (70-79%). Work which:

- demonstrates confident, detailed and informed knowledge of the discipline

- demonstrates qualities of self-critical, independent learning

- displays a confident / competent grasp of complex issues

- displays evidence of originality and innovation

Pass with Merit (60-69%). Work which:

- demonstrates a secure and relevant knowledge base

- is analytical in style and critical in interpretation

- demonstrates a fluent style and uses an appropriate language

Pass (50-59%). Work which:

- demonstrates a competent understanding of the discipline

- reveals knowledge and understanding of key issues

- addresses issues within a structured framework

- demonstrates analytical and critical acumen

- is well organised and presented

Condonable Fail (40-49%). Work which:

- displays relevant knowledge of the discipline

- reveals some evidence of a systematic, coherent and analytical engagement with the discipline

- is generally competent but may be conceptually weak

- contains irrelevant materials

Fail (30-39%). Work which:

- demonstrates limited understanding of the discipline

- reveals weaknesses / flaws in argument

- uses an insufficient range of sources

- has a poor style / structure

- is partially incomplete

Fail (20-29%). Work which:

- displays insufficient engagement with or lack of understanding of the discipline

- shows limitations in the ability to formulate / sustain a clear argument

- does not meet the expectations of the task set

Fail (10-19%). Work which:

- has serious errors and / or major omissions

- is poorly communicated / presented

- is incomplete / does not focus on the task set

Fail (1-9%). Work which:

- unacceptable work which lacks evidence of understanding the discipline

- includes inappropriate / irrelevant information

- lacks any evidence of an appropriate reading base

- has marginal or no engagement with the task

Fail (0%). Non-submission.

6. Transcripts record the numerical marks obtained for modules (which are presented as whole numbers with any decimal below x.50 being rounded down and any decimal of x.50 or above being rounded up).

12.7 Criteria Used in Assessment

The assessment criteria of particular assignments are based on the University's generic level and grade descriptors, UK qualification and classification descriptors and the QAA Outcome classification descriptors for FHEQ Level 6. Students should be made aware of these criteria, and of any additional criteria upon which their work is being judged.

12.8 Examination Timetables

1. The Programmes and Placements Office supports examinations organised by the module leaders, including the equivalent within a digital context. Exams will be timetabled by the module leader. **Please note that the arrangements set out below may need to be varied in a digital context, and that appropriate advice will be issued if this is the case.**

2. Module Leaders are responsible for providing assessment details, including those for in-class tests, to the Programmes and Placements Office by the start of September each academic year. Students may have examinations on consecutive days and up to two examinations on one day. Students should make sure that they are punctual for University examinations in accordance with given instructions. Examination information is posted on the University's Virtual Learning Environment.

3. Schools are responsible for issuing examination papers, where applicable, in advance for seen examinations. Papers will be available from the Programmes and Partnerships Office fifteen working days before the date of the examination.

12.9 Additional Examination Arrangement Requests

1. Additional examination arrangements are normally requested by the University's Disability and Inclusion Advice Service (DIAS) team.

2. If requests have not been made in sufficient time for the additional arrangement to be made, normally at least ten working days before the date of the examination, the student should not attempt the examination without the additional arrangements but make use of the Extenuating Circumstances procedure to seek a deferral. Additional Arrangements are put into place by the Programmes and Partnerships Office which notifies students of the details of their examination.

12.10 General information on examinations

1. Candidates will be identified on examination scripts or answer book covers by student numbers only. They should bring their library card or other photographic identification to all their examinations where physical attendance is required.

2. No unauthorised materials or equipment should be taken into Examinations Halls/Rooms.

3. Students should refer to the published Examination process and code of conduct on MyMarjon for detailed information about examinations.

4. Candidates will have access to equipment facilities appropriate to the examination type and their own additional arrangements.

12.11 Absence from an Examination

1. If a student is prevented by serious circumstances from attending any examination or part of any examination they must follow the extenuating circumstances procedure in Section 4 of this Framework.

2. In the absence of valid extenuating circumstances, a student who misses an assessment will be deemed to have failed it and a mark of zero will be awarded.

12.12 Notification of results

1. Registry will notify students of their confirmed marks, the decisions of Progression and Award Boards and the consequences of those decisions by way of a password protected page that may be accessed directly at www.marjon.ac.uk/students/resultsonline.

2. Provisional marks may also be issued in certain circumstances for **general guidance only,** but students are advised that significant changes may occur when the marks are finalised. These include the possibility of a provisional mark of 40% or more changing to a failing mark.

3.   Registry will make a transcript of module marks available to students who have successfully completed their programme. Continuing students should discuss their marks with their Personal Development Tutors at the beginning of the next academic year.

4.   The arrangements for publishing results of postgraduate taught programmes and in partner institutions will be as notified to students by the Programme Leader or Programme Area Leader or Personal Development Tutor in consultation with the University Secretary and Registrar, but will follow this procedure as closely as possible.

5.   Students should access their results immediately. If they disagree with the decision made by the Progression and Award Board and believe that they have personal extenuating circumstances, that have not been taken into consideration when making that decision, they should email registry@marjon.ac.uk within five working days of the publication of results. In the first instance, Registry will investigate and aim to resolve the query; however, this will not affect a student's right of appeal if the query is not resolved and the appeal deadline will be twenty working days from the date of receipt of the Registry response, rather than from the date when the results are published.

6.   Students should also ensure that they are able to complete any resit work that has been set over the summer.

12.13 External Examiners

1. In common with all Higher Education institutions in the UK, the University appoints External Examiners.

2. Each External Examiner considers student performance in a designated cluster of modules associated with one or more programmes. External Examiners help the University to ensure that justice is done to students, past present and future, that the standard of academic awards is maintained and that assessments are conducted in accordance with the approved regulations.

3. External Examiners submit written annual and interim reports to the University. A Progression and Award Board (PAB) External Examiner is responsible for maintaining consistency of standards across programmes and award frameworks at the same level.

4. Details of the External Examiner arrangements applicable to a specific programme can be obtained by contacting the Academic Standards Officer in writing, although please also note that the University seeks to safeguard the impartiality of the External Examiner process at all times. For this reason, it regards any unauthorised attempt by a student to contact an External Examiner as gross misconduct, the possible penalties for which include expulsion.

5. Detailed information about the role of, and for, External Examiners is contained in the Handbook for External Examiners and Moderators.

Document Title	**Plymouth Marjon University Student Regulations Framework – Section 12 Assessment Practices**
Document Reference	L:\Student Regulations Framework\Student Regulations Framework 2023-24
Version	3.18
Issuing Authority	Senate
Custodian	Academic Standards Officer
Document Date	16th October 2009
Last Amended	23rd August 2023
Sensitivity	Unclassified
Circulation	Website
Effective from	September 2023
Review Date	Ongoing
Effective until	September 2024
History	Updated annually and subject to routine ongoing revision. Subject to minor amendment on 29/09/22 and 10/01/23.
Equality Impact Assessment	Preliminary EIA conducted for SRF, December 2010. Updated Equality Analysis Form to be submitted.