ASSESSMENT POLICY

1. Purpose

1.1 Assessment is a set of processes and procedures designed to measure learning outcomes, including knowledge acquired, understanding developed, and skills gained. It should also serve as a tool for student learning, promoting educational gain through meaningful feedback and feedforward opportunities.

1.2 This Policy establishes the principles, processes, and procedures that guide assessment across all programmes and short courses.

1.3 The Policy aligns with assessment practices, which are published separately, in the section of the Student Regulations Framework entitled 'Assessment Practices'.

1.4 The aim is to ensure that all students are able to engage in the assessment process, assessments clarify the standards required for success, students develop competence, confidence and skills applicable to their programme of study and professional journeys.

2. Principles

2.1 The University recognises that assessment serves many purposes:

- It plays a central role in student learning, ensuring their progression through programmes.

- It provides appropriate and timely feedback and feedforward, supporting student development.

- It enables staff to evaluate teaching effectiveness and learner progress.

- It provides a measure of student achievement and forms the basis of decisions on whether a student is ready to proceed, to qualify for an award, or to demonstrate competence to practise.

- It provides the main basis for recognition of student achievement leading to the recommendation of an appropriate award of qualification and / or credit.

2.2 These principles are closely informed by the Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance chapter *Assessment* (2018) and the OfS Quality and Standards condition B4 Assessment and Awards.

2.3 *Assessment should be explicit and transparent*

Assessment processes and procedures need to be clear, consistent and accessible. To this end the University publishes generic level and grade descriptors to aid this process and requires programmes to use these to inform their own assessment guidelines. All programmes are expected to produce personalised level and grade descriptors from this. All assessment must be appropriate to the level of study (FHEQ level) and informed by reference to relevant external publications (e.g. subject benchmarks or PSRB requirements). The assessment processes and procedures used by a programme must be made available to its students.

2.4 *Assessment should be valid*

There should be a direct link between programme aims, programme level outcomes, level learning outcomes, module learning outcomes, level teaching and learning strategy, and assessment tasks. There should be constructive alignment between these intended outcomes, teaching and learning activities, and assessment tasks. Different assignments may be focused on specified module or level learning outcomes. Overall, assessment should provide evidence of what the student has learnt (assessment *of* learning), be used to inform teaching, learning and assessment (assessment *for* learning), and develop students to become independent learners by taking responsibility for their learning (assessment *as* learning). Validation and external examining procedures ensure that learning outcomes are assessed appropriately and in relation to mode, quantity, level and content. Valid assessment ensures that students demonstrate knowledge and skills in the way intended by the design of the assessment.

2.5 *Assessment should be reliable*

Assignments should be marked to defined standards with assessors being able to consistently apply these standards. This requires clear, consistent processes for the setting, marking and moderation of assignments which encourage effective learning. External confirmation of the standards comes through external examination and periodic review / validation. The standards are made clear through the programme specific marking frameworks, and level / grade descriptors.

Whilst generic marking frameworks and level and grade descriptors have been developed, in order to promote comparability across all University programmes, each programme needs to adapt these to ensure that they closely reflect the nature of the programme / subject (i.e. they are relevant to the programme of study and written in a style which reflects the programme aims and outcomes).

Assessment should be designed and marked in a manner which consistently demonstrates achievement of knowledge and skills over time and between students on the programme as appropriate. This ensures that the value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualification and over-time is in line with sector recognised standards and comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.

Assessments should be designed with agreed levels of collaboration through artificial intelligence and this should be made explicit to students through module and assessment guidance.

2.6 *Assessment should demonstrate continuity and progression*

Students will deepen and improve their knowledge, understanding and skills as they progress through their programme. In addition, they should be able to identify links between learning at different levels and become progressively more independent in their learning. The learning outcomes of the modules should enable the developing subject specific and generic graduate skills to be met. University-wide generic level descriptors guide the work of programmes in building continuity and progression into their courses. The nature of the assessment should reflect this progression.

English language proficiency should be built into the assessment of the programme in a manner which appropriately reflects the level and content of the programme. Mapped to

transferable learning outcomes student proficiency in English language should progress through the levels of the programme.

2.7 Assessment should be equitable and inclusive

Assessment processes and procedures must ensure that the tasks set do not discriminate between students or disadvantage any group or individual. Within any programme there should be a range of assessment methods that reflect differences in students' learning preferences and student needs. As a general rule, the assessment tasks should provide sufficient flexibility to remove the need for a student to apply for an alternative assessment. Validation procedures ensure that assessment opportunities are closely aligned with University Policies / Procedures and all relevant legislation.

2.8 Students should be assessed effectively

Students should be assessed in a challenging and appropriately comprehensive way providing appropriate stretch and rigour consistent with the level of the programme, ensuring that relevant skills are appropriately tested. Assessments must be designed in a way to minimise opportunities for academic misconduct, including plagiarism, self-plagiarism, contract cheating and to facilitate the detection of misconduct where it does occur.

In order to maintain the integrity and distinct purposes of formative and summative assessment, the University does not permit draft submissions of summative assessments to be used for formative feedback.

2.9 Assessment should promote learning

Assessment should be more than a measure of achievement; it should actively support and enhance student learning. By incorporating formative feedback, reflective practice, and scaffolded assessments, students can track their progress, develop critical thinking, and apply knowledge meaningfully. Assessment should promote engagement, motivation, and deeper understanding rather than simply test retention.

2.10 Assessment should be authentic and effective

Authentic assessment ensures students engage in meaningful, real-world tasks that mirror professional and academic challenges. Effective assessment evaluates competence, skills, and application of knowledge while promoting critical thinking and problem-solving. Tasks

should be relevant, engaging, and reflective of industry or discipline expectations, preparing students for future careers or further study.

2.11 Assessment practice should prepare students to study for, and complete, their assessments

Students should be equipped with the skills, resources, and guidance needed to navigate assessments successfully. This includes clear expectations, structured support, and opportunities for formative practice. Assessment design should ensure students develop time management, research, and academic skills, promoting confidence and readiness to engage with assessment tasks effectively.

3. Guidance

3.1 Feedback on assessment

Students are entitled to receive helpful and timely feedback on all aspects of their performance. Feedback should be provided on all assessed work and returned in good time to enable it to be used to improve performance both within a module and across the different levels of the programme. Equally, students are invited to feedback on their assessment experiences.

3.2 The amount and timing of assessed work required should be carefully monitored

The amount of assessed work required should be sufficient to provide a reliable and valid profile of achievement without being burdensome or high pressure to both students and staff. Assessment design should therefore consider the total workload and pressure of the module assessment design. Validation procedures should ensure that effective and appropriate measures of the achievement of learning outcomes can be made. Validation should also include a review of the student assessment workload including the proposed timing of assessments so that this workload is manageable and feedback on assessments can be used to further develop learning. The timing of assessment is determined by programme teams, and every effort will be made to spread the load of summative assessments across the module.

Students should be given clear instructions for assessment which include target word counts or equivalents for all assignments, and the consequences of not adhering to these in accordance with prevailing University regulations.

3.3 *Forms of assessment*

Forms of assessment used in the University may include summative, ongoing, formative and diagnostic. Summative assessment provides a measure of achievement, including failure, in relation to the intended learning outcomes of a module within a programme of study. Where ongoing assessment is included in programme design, it measures achievement, including failure, which is used by staff and students to develop for future assessments within the same module.

Formative assessment provides learners with feedback on progress and informs their development. Reflective practice by students may also contribute to formative assessment. In order to maintain the integrity and distinct purposes of formative and summative assessment, the University does not permit draft submissions of summative assessments to be used for formative feedback.

Diagnostic assessment provides an indicator of a learner's aptitude and preparedness for a programme of study and identifies possible learning strengths and problems. Diagnostic assessment is used in the assessment of additional needs and for the recognition of prior learning (RPL). Diagnostic assessment during a programme can also help students to profile their own skills and abilities (and could be useful for Personal Development Planning - PDP).

Any assessment task may combine two or more of these types of assessment.

3.4 *Diversity of assessment methods / modes*

Diversity in assessment modes is encouraged. The modes of assessment should be sensitive to the diversity of students registered on the programme (where diversity of students is used in its broadest sense to include differences in entry qualifications, differences in social and cultural backgrounds, ethnicity, gender, age, religion / belief, sexual orientation and disability).

Assessment tasks should provide sufficient flexibility for students to remove the need for a student to apply for an alternative assessment. However, where students with recognised additional needs experience difficulties with the University's normal assessment procedures, an alternative assessment may be offered. This may take the form of a change to the place, time or mode of the assessment / re-assessment, and it will be determined by the programme team in collaboration with the University's Disability and Inclusion Advice Service (DIAS). Ownership of alternative assessments offered resides with the programme team.

The modes of assessment selected should enable authenticity to be evidenced (enhancing the academic integrity of the assessment). The precise choice and balance of assessment methods is closely aligned with module and level learning outcomes and is determined by programme tutors. Programme specifications provide a summary of the teaching, learning and assessment approach.

3.5 *Elements of the assessment process*

The elements of the assessment process provide a basis for designing, marking and grading assignments using level descriptors, grade descriptors, learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

The positive aspects of assessment involve supporting learning, which may include peer / self-assessment activities, and access to Student Support and Wellbeing, and the services they provide.

3.6 *Level descriptors*

The University maintains generic level descriptors for all undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. These indicate the generic characteristics of learning at each level of an award and are used to define whether a student has achieved a qualification at a particular level. Personalised level descriptors based on the Universities generic level descriptors are created at validation and are expected to be made accessible to students. To achieve the qualification, students must normally demonstrate that they have reached the *threshold level* in all of the stated abilities and skills. Level descriptors are crucial in defining grade descriptors and in developing learning outcomes and assessment criteria. They provide an

indication of what is required to successfully progress from one level [of study or stage of learning] to the next.

3.7 *Grade descriptors*

The University's generic grade descriptors provide a measure of student performance within a set task. They are designed to provide a guide as to what is expected of students in order for them to gain a specific mark, or grade, for a piece of work. Personalised grade descriptors based on the Universities generic grade descriptors are created at validation and are

expected to be made accessible to students. Students should be encouraged to use grade descriptors to assist their own learning journey, by evaluating their own work against the descriptors to gain an understanding of how marks are awarded (both pre- and post-submission of their assignments).

3.8 *Learning outcomes*

Learning outcomes describe the knowledge, understanding and skills that a student studying a particular module is expected to achieve. They are derived from level descriptors but set out expectations more precisely. Learning outcomes are used to define the threshold level (the pass/fail boundary) for a module or assignment. In designing assignments, tutors select modes of assessment that relate well to learning outcomes, and the modules teaching and learning approach.

It is not always possible to make a mechanical link between all learning outcomes and assessment as there are likely to be additional, and sometimes unexpected, learning outcomes of a module. These may or may not be assessed. It is important that assessment is designed to enable the student to learn, rather than simply test outcomes.

3.9 *Assessment criteria*

The assessment criteria should be linked to the module / level learning outcomes. They should provide a description of what the student is required to do to demonstrate that the learning outcomes have been achieved. Programmes take responsibility for deriving their own criteria for marking assignments (using programme level descriptors, grade descriptors, marking frameworks / marking rubrics and learning outcomes). These are published in

programme / module information, or in a module assignment brief (which will be available on the University's VLE, Canvas). For each assignment students will need to know what is required for them (i.e. if certain criteria are being prioritised and, more importantly, if these are different from the 'normal' criteria used in the programme).

3.10 *Feedback on assessment*

Students should receive constructive and timely feedback on all aspects of their performance. Feedback on summative and ongoing assessment provides provisional marks / grades; formative feedback helps students to recognise positive aspects of their work and also identifies ways to develop. Above all, the feedback should motivate and encourage the student to improve on their performance.

Marked work should be returned to students with feedback within twenty-eight calendar days of the submission deadline. If there are reasons why this is not possible, the module leader must inform all students in writing in a timely manner of the reason for the delay and state the date by which students can expect to receive their coursework.

The nature / tone and language of feedback provided are especially important. It should be personal and, whatever the short-comings of the work might be, needs to be presented in such a way to direct the student to improving their future work. Students may also be directed to obtain help from a variety of sources, including published sources; on-line resources; Personal Development Tutors (PDTs); or other support units available.

Feedback on assignments should be completed for each assignment submitted, which should include a summary of the key points (typically this would include strengths, weaknesses and priorities for future work). It is good practice to provide additional feedback within the assignment, which is not simply 'corrective' but which highlights where the work is particularly good and where there are gaps / omissions, taking care to identify what else is required to improve the work.

Students will have the opportunity to discuss the written feedback received, especially if they have any questions about it, or do not understand what is being asked of them, through meetings with their module tutors and their PDT. It is good practice for module leaders to offer students this opportunity (and notification of this opportunity can take many forms –

for example in the programme documentation; by the tutor in the timetabled sessions; or even seminar time set aside for group discussion of assignments incorporating elements of peer feedback too).

3.11 *Grading assignments*

Module leaders are responsible for making arrangements for marking coursework, and for second marking / moderating work to ensure that the standards are being applied consistently.

An agreed minimum sample of work from each assignment must be double marked / moderated, as set out in the Student Regulations Framework.

3.12 The University recognises that distinctive approaches may be adopted to reflect the nature of the discipline, identified through a range of external reference points (e.g. Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).

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