The Higher Education Assessment Cycle

This assessment cycle covers all Higher Education taught curriculum, including provision delivered by Collaborative Partners. The Academic Standards and Enhancement Committee has oversight of this cycle to ensure it operates effectively.

For an introduction to the purposes of assessment see QAA Quality Code Chapter B6 which explains that assessment (and particularly feedback) forms part of the learning process, as well as being the means by which academic staff form judgements about the extent to which students have met the intended learning outcomes. It also explains the concept of "assessment literacy" and how that should be developed in students.

Stage of cycle	Details
Stage 1	**Curriculum Design** 1. Module specification assessment strategy sets out clearly how the assessment will enable demonstration of the learning outcomes. 2. An "**assessment *for* learning**" approach will use a strategy which links with the Teaching, Learning and Scholarship Strategy to facilitate the process of reaching the outcomes rather than being merely after the event measurement. 3. Assessment strategies should (a) take account of the diversity of the student body and promote inclusivity (b) encourage sound academic practice and "design out" assessment offences (c) support the student to become 'employment ready' and (d) take a programme level holistic view of the assessment experience of students (including a range of assessment types and opportunities for formative feedback, whilst avoiding over-assessment). 4. Timings of assessment, type and feedback to be considered at curriculum approval stage at a programme level (including any consequent resourcing issues). To be supported by a programme level assessment map within the programme specification template and a calendar of assessments within the Programme Handbook. There would not normally be more than one assessment due within a single teaching week.
Stage 2	**Assessment setting** 1. An **internal verifier** will be allocated to every module to support the content, level and student's experience of the module's assessment in accordance with processes agreed by the Academic Standards and Enhancement Committee (which will have oversight of this process to ensure it is meeting expectations). Either the module leader or internal verifier would normally be qualified to the academic level above that of the module. An inexperienced module leader will be supported by the allocation of an experienced internal verifier.

	2. **Stage one of the internal verification** process (IV1) will be completed by the allocated internal verifier reviewing all draft assessment documents (including the assessment brief). Evidence of this scrutiny is included within Module File. 3. An **assessment brief** will contain assessment criteria, marking criteria (an explanation of the criteria to which the work will be marked), submission date and guidance, statement indicating if marking is not going to be completed anonymously and the date a student may expect feedback. 4. **External examiners** have opportunity to scrutinise all assessment briefs as part of the preparation for Module Examination Boards and controlled conditions assessment briefs at levels 5, 6 and 7 (HE levels 2, 3 and M) prior to publication to students. The involvement of the external examiner in assessment setting is captured in the Module Enhancement Report within the Module File. Assessments from modules at levels 3 and 4 (HE levels 0 and 1) will only be scrutinised by an external examiner on specific request, e.g. from Academic Standards and Enhancement Committee or a PSRB. 5. Following publication of the HE Academic Calendar the programme team agree an assessment calendar to ensure feasibility of assessment return for staff and that the calendar is supportive of student achievement, e.g. normal to have no more than one assessment per teaching week. 6. For Collaborative Provision – the timings and requirements may differ depending on the agreed assessment calendar for that partnership, however the internal verification process should still be evidenced consistently. The Programme Link Tutor should have oversight of a staged process of delegation according to the development of the partnership.
Stage 3	**Assessment Information Publication** 1. The following assessment information is published on the module's HE Moodle page: • Module specification (including information on Reasonable Adjustments. • Assessment brief and associated documentation. • Information on the type of feedback (formative/summative) that can be expected during the module, e.g. assessment template with feedback summary sheet for online submission). 2. The SEEC Marking Criteria are published on the programme's HE Moodle page.
Stage 4	**Assessment Submission** Student completes and submits assessment/takes exam/does presentation etc. following the guidance on the assessment brief.

Stage 5	**Assessment Marking**
	A. Guiding principles
	The purpose of these processes is to ensure that marks appropriately reflect the standard achieved (a particular issue around borderlines) and are consistent across the cohort of students. *"Processes for marking assessments and for moderating marks are clearly articulated and consistently operated by those involved in the assessment process." (from QAA Code B6 indicator 13)*
	• In all instances marking should be recorded and evidenced consistently within the Module File for audit trail purposes and for the benefit of successor module leaders and external examiners.
	• New markers (to either the institution or higher education marking) should be mentored by an experienced marker.
	• Normally the internal verifier will remain the same for internal verification one (assessment setting) and internal verification two (assessment marking).
	• An exception for practical reasons to internal marking processes includes the practice component of professional practice modules.
	B. Which internal marking and verification process is appropriate?
	1. If an assessment has a team of markers the module leader (or nominee) should lead Process D Standardisation (see section C below) before further internal verification is completed.
	2. Oral assessment and/or presentation
	- which contributes 100% of module grade and outcome at levels 5, 6 or 7 (HE levels 2, 3 or M) shall be assessed by more than one member of staff (Process B Double Marking for internal verification). Presentations, where possible, should be recorded.
	- that make other contributions shall normally be assessed by a single marker and all recorded. Process C Sample Moderation shall be utilized during internal verification, normally from the recording.
	3. Practical examinations and practical skills assessments:
	- which contribute 100% of module grade and outcome at levels 5, 6 or 7 (HE levels 2, 3 or M) shall be marked and a second member of staff circulating for the duration of assessments completing Process B Double Marking.
	- that make other contributions shall be marked by a single marker and all recorded with Process C Sample Moderation completed from the recordings or a second member of staff circulating and completing Process B Double Marking.
	4. Assessments within project modules:
	- that contribute 100% of the module grade and outcome at levels 5, 6 or 7 (HE levels 2, 3 or M) of 45 credits or larger require Process A Double Blind Marking.

- that contribute 100% of the module grade and outcome at HE levels 2, 3 or M of less than 45 credits require Process B Double Marking.
- that are other than the two above examples shall be marked by a single marker and internally verified using Process C Sample Moderation.

5. Written assessments not within project modules require Process C Sample Moderation.
6. Collaborative provision: as agreed with the collaborative partner, but usually this would follow the same procedures as above.

C. Internal Marking and Verification Processes' Descriptions

A   - Double Blind Marking: first marking by two different markers for each assessment who cannot see the feedback and mark allocated by the other marker. The two marks are recorded and if both are within a grade boundary the first marker's mark becomes the final mark; if they differ across a single grade boundary then the two markers have a discussion (with a record completed of key points) to determine a final mark (and appropriate feedback); if they differ across more than one grade boundary or they cannot agree a final mark then the assessment is marked by a third experienced marker to produce a final mark. Following double blind marking a student will receive a single assessment grade and a single set of assessment feedback taking into account the comments of all markers.

B   – Double Marking: each assessment is marked (with feedback and a grade) by a first marker. A second marker (usually the module's internal verifier) then reviews the assessment, the feedback and the grade to confirm the suitability of the feedback and mark awarded. If they agree with the grade boundary then they add any feedback to the feedback summary sheet; if they differ by one grade boundary then the two markers have a discussion to determine a final mark (and appropriate feedback); if they differ across more than one grade boundary or they cannot agree a final mark then the assessment is third marked to produce a final mark. This process is recorded on an IV2 form. Following double marking a student will receive a single assessment grade and a single set of assessment feedback taking into account the comments of all markers.

C   – Sample Moderation: following each assessment being marked by a first marker the distribution of marks for all assessments and a sample of the assessments will be scrutinised by the module's allocated internal verifier to confirm the suitability of the feedback and grade boundary awarded. The sample is the square root of the number of assessments submitted for marking, with a minimum of 6 (or all the assessments if less than 6) and a maximum of 12 ensuring a representative spread from the lower, mid and high range of marks, including a sample of borderline marks. N.B. If a computer marked the assessment the sample should be double that indicated above. If the internal verifier identifies an arithmetic error (most commonly with examinations with multiple questions) or believe the mark should be in a different grade boundary (and retain this belief following discussion with the module leader [or main first marker if the internal verifier is the module leader]) the sample should be increased to 50% of the submitted assessments. If a further error/difference is identified all assessments should be revisited. If no further error/difference is identified then the sample moderation stops at

	this point. If the internal verifier identifies a concern regarding feedback then all submitted assessments should be revisited. The internal verifier does not provide feedback to the student but does sign and date the assessment to indicate that it has been part of the internal verification sample. The final marks and feedback can then be confirmed. This process is recorded on an IV2 form. **D - Standardisation:** The module leader (or nominee) will lead the standardization process. The first stage is a compulsory briefing for all members of the marking team (which ideally would involve all members attending (or viewing a recording of) the students' assessment briefing alongside reading the assessment brief (and marking scheme if appropriate). The second stage is optional and involves the team completing a pre-marking exercise using a sample of assessments to set standards. This is recommended for new modules or new marking teams. The third stage is compulsory and involves the module leader (or nominee) ensuring that the marks awarded for assessments are consistent and comparable across markers (*or that discrepancies can be explained and rationalised and this is evidenced*). If the sample is adjusted during this process, adjust all work marked by that marker(s) appropriately (sampling might identify a problem across the whole range of marks or just in particular areas of range). If sampling identifies inconsistencies in marking, all work marked by that marker(s) should be reconsidered by the module leader (or nominee) as in Process B Double Marking. Once the module leader (or nominee) is assured that the marking is consistent and appropriate across all markers then this process is complete. This process is recorded on an IV2 form.
Stage 6	**External Examiner Scrutiny of Marking** **For modules at levels 5, 6 or 7 (HE levels 2, 3 or M):** 1. The external examiner will review a sample of submitted assessments prior to confirming the grades and outcomes are appropriate at the Module Examination Board. The sample is the square root of the number of assessments submitted for marking, with a minimum of 6 (or all the assessments if less than 6) and a maximum of 12 ensuring a representative spread from the lower, mid and high range of marks, including a sample of borderline marks. 2. The following will also to be made available to external examiners: module specification, appropriate evidence of internal verification, assessment/exam briefs, marking criteria, overview of assessment marks awarded, draft module report within the Module File. **For modules at levels 3 or 4 (HE levels 0 or 1):** 3. The external examiner will only review a sample of submitted assessments and the Module File as described above on specific request, e.g. from Academic Standards and Enhancement Committee or a PSRB. 4. A member of the Higher Education Executive will review the Module File and may review a sample of submitted assessments.

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Stage 7	**Agreeing the module aggregate**
	(for modules with more than one component of assessment) *QAA Code B6 Indicator 13 …"There is clear guidance about how borderline marks or grades are defined and treated, both in individual assessments and in overall results for a module.."*
	1. The aggregate of the different assessment components for the module needs to be agreed prior to the Module Examination Board.
	2. Where the aggregate mark ends up as a borderline (see definition for sampling), module leader may need to consider whether this mark is the correct reflection of overall demonstration of how learning outcomes have been met (this is more likely to be an issue where the nature of the assessment makes accuracy to within 1% difficult).
	3. There should be an audit trail within Module File confirming that borderline marks have been considered (or that not appropriate to do so) and, where changed, rationale noted.
	4. For modules at levels 5, 6 or 7 (HE levels 2, 3 or M) external examiners should be provided with a final set of marks as signed off by module leader (including comments about changes) within the Module File.
Stage 8	**Continuous Monitoring for Enhancement and Curriculum Design**
	Assessment outcomes and external examiner reports will feed into continuous monitoring and review and inform curriculum design and assessment setting for the future.
	Module and Programme Enhancement Reports will consider the appropriateness of the assessment strategy and should be the first place to initiate a change. These include capturing discussions with the external examiner.

Log of Amendments

Version	Valid from date	Summary of amendment
1	1 Sept 2014	Cycle introduced
2	1 Aug 2016	Stage 2: Removal of external examiner scrutiny of level 0 and 1 modules, unless specifically requested.
		Stage 5: Review of IV2, including definitions and clarity over which assessments require which method.
3	1 Aug 2017	All stages: Updating levels to reflect the national qualifications framework with HE levels provided in brackets afterwards to support current students.
		Stage 5: A. Clarity that 'new markers' includes those new to the institution and/or higher education marking. C. clarity of sample used in sample moderation.
		Stage 6. Clarity of sample used in sample moderation. Make a requirement the current practice of providing an external examiner with a copy of all the marks awarded for an assessment.