Assessment and Feedback Policy

2023-2026

Assessment and Feedback Policy

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Summary

This policy establishes University processes and practices for assessment and feedback procedures for Undergraduate and Taught Masters degrees. The Policy is designed to be a key reference document for the University and has been informed by the QAA *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*, 2014 and *Annex D: Outcome Classification Descriptions for FHEQ Level 6 and FQHEIS Level 10 Degrees [1],* QAA UK *Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Assessment and relevant University* (2018)[2] and relevant Edge Hill University policies and strategies.

Glossary of Terms

Assessment: Assessment describes any processes that evaluate the outcomes of student learning in terms of knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes and abilities.

Formative assessment: Assessment with a developmental purpose, designed to help learners learn more effectively by giving them feedback on their performance and how it can be improved and/or maintained. Reflective practice by students sometimes contributes to formative assessment. (QAA, 2018)

Summative assessment: Used to indicate the extent of a learner's success in meeting the assessment criteria to gauge the intended learning outcomes of a module or course. Typically, within summative assessment, the marks awarded count towards the final mark of the course/module/award. (QAA, 2018)

Moderation: Moderation ensures that an assessment outcome (e.g. mark and / or grade) is fair, valid and reliable, that assessment criteria have been applied consistently, and that any differences in academic judgement between individual markers can be acknowledged and addressed. It ensures consistency in marking within and across cohorts.

Purpose

This policy should be applied to the assessment and feedback practices of all taught provision. Please note that the assessment of Postgraduate Research is subject to separate guidance.[3]

Policy

1. Introduction

Assessment practices at Edge Hill should be both *for* and *of* learning. Assessment should have a positive role in supporting the learning of students alongside quality

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[1] https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/qualifications-frameworks
[2] https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/advice-and-guidance/assessment
[3] https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/document/research-degree-regulations/

management and enhancement. Processes will be underpinned by transparency, supportiveness, respect and value of diversity.

Assessment will be linked to clear statements of intended learning outcomes and assessment criteria in all programmes, which will be available to staff and students. These statements will take in to account the academic level of students learning as informed by the QAA *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*, 2014 and *Annex D: Outcome Classification Descriptions for FHEQ Level 6 and FQHEIS Level 10 Degrees*.

Assessment serves the following purposes among others:

- measuring achievement at appropriate academic levels;
- motivating students by requiring them to demonstrate the knowledge, understanding, skills and competencies they have developed;
- providing a means of feedback to students;
- diagnosing student potential;
- evaluating student progress and identifying possible challenges they may be experiencing in their learning;
- providing staff with information about the effectiveness of their teaching and students' learning;
- contributing to quality assurance, by monitoring the extent to which students are achieving appropriate standards.

Most forms of assessment will serve several of the above purposes. The form of assessment will be fit for the purpose of allowing students to demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcomes.

Transparency and **active** engagement of students in understanding the principles, purposes and responsibilities associated with assessment and feedback positively influence performance. Involvement in assessment should develop students' confidence in self-assessment, evaluation of their own performance and impact upon their autonomy as learners.

All staff will receive induction into assessment practices and continuing professional development opportunities will be available. Research, debate and good practice in the sector will be considered in monitoring and development of Edge Hill's approaches. Assessment will be a key part of evaluation associated with quality management and enhancement.

Where computer aided assessment approaches are used, full cognisance will be given to ISO/IEC 23988:2007 Information Technology – A code of practice for the use of information technology (IT) in the delivery of assessments.[4]

2. Principles of Assessment Design

The principles below will be addressed in the design, validation and implementation of all modules and programmes.

1. Assessment will be *of* and *for* learning.
2. Assessment will be **inclusive at the point of design** so as to maximise opportunities for students to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do.
3. Assessment will be informed by Edge Hill's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy [5] and will seek to be inclusive and not to disadvantage specific individuals or groups of students. Where appropriate, 'reasonable adjustments' will be made to a form of assessment in accord with the Academic Regulations for students with disabilities and or learning difficulties.
4. The rationale for a particular type of assessment and grading criteria will be clear to staff, students and the wider community as appropriate.
5. Assessment tasks will be derived from, and aligned with, the learning outcomes and allow them to be measured with reliability and consistency. They should measure how well the student has achieved the learning outcomes and accommodate and encourage creativity and originality, whilst ensuring how marks/grades are awarded is transparent.
6. Assessment items will have clear grading criteria and explicit weightings of components, shared by staff and students.
7. Assessment grading criteria will explicitly foreground English proficiency.
8. The form of assessment will be appropriate to the level of the module/programme being delivered and should be both stimulating and appropriately demanding.
9. The amount and timing of assessment should be realistic and manageable and relate to notional learning hours avoiding overload, which may impede learning.
10. Consideration should be given to the balance between formative and summative assessment.
11. Summative assessment will be subject to moderation and external examination as appropriate.
12. Assessment tasks must be feasible and practicable for students, staff and for any work-based assessors.

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[4] https://www.iso.org/standard/41840.html
[5] https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/document/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-edi-strategy/

13. Students will receive induction into assessment practices as a function of the University's focus on '**Assessment for Learning and Assessment Literacy'.**

14. Opportunities for formative assessment will be provided, particularly in preparation for assessment tasks with which students are unfamiliar.

15. Students will receive constructive feedback on all summative assessment, which identifies these key areas: **What students have done well, where they have missed/lost marks against learning outcomes and assessment criteria, including for errors in English proficiency, and how to improve in future.**

16. All assessment will be monitored and evaluated as part of module and programme quality management and enhancement.

17. Due consideration should be given to an appropriate variety of assessment, and programme-relevant authentic assessment should be utilised at every opportunity.

It should be noted that the Programme Learning Outcomes should include the achievement of Graduate Attributes[6]. As part of ongoing induction and transitions, students should be prepared in relation to academic integrity, which includes academic conventions and referencing, avoiding malpractice, and understanding similarity reports.

3. Marking and Moderating Assessed Work

When setting a specific piece of assessment and its related assessment guidance, the tutor should ensure that these have been checked with another internal examiner and, in the case of Levels 5, 6 and 7 (Levels 4 and 5 for Foundation Degrees) with the external examiner. Departments/Areas should ensure that they have procedures in place for assuring that there is no unplanned overlap between coursework and examination questions. See **Appendix 1** for student guide: 'What you need to know about assessment'.

3.1 Marking/Grading

Examinations are marked anonymously (i.e. the script does not have the name of the candidate on the front sheet). A programme or module marking team may determine whether to mark other forms of assessment, such as essays, anonymously **where it is deemed necessary to do so**. However it is recognised that practice and practical forms of assessment, **including those with a focus chosen by students** often exclude the possibility of being marked anonymously, and formative development support similarly precludes such anonymity. All students (where practicable) will be given the opportunity to submit their work online, and receive feedback electronically in typed or other appropriate form.

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[6] https://wiki.edgehill.ac.uk/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=91391413

When marking any assessed piece of work the course team/programme leader will ensure that an assessment brief has been prepared. This would contain indications of the types of features within the assessment submission that students may include in order to demonstrate all of the module learning outcomes. As such it is a guide to markers, moderators and students. This would not normally be a list of 'answers' but should relate to the indicative scope of answers, other than when closed responses are required. This is conducive to the complex nature of higher education study and allows for contestation and creativity.

The assessment brief and marking criteria will have been notified to students and will be shared and understood by all those involved in marking a specific piece of work. It will also be available to any internal moderator and to external examiners if the assessment is at Level 5 or above (Level 4 and 5 in the case of Foundation degrees).

Since assessment briefs and marking criteria are available, and all assessed work will be moderated (see below) there is no reason for unsighted second marking to be the norm.

It is important that the reasons for awarding a particular grade are made explicit in the feedback for a piece assessment or on an examination script. Samples of work will be moderated in line with the guidance in the sections below. Course teams may decide to use unsighted second marking as part of their own moderation process, for staff development of members of their course team who are less experienced assessors, and/or for the first run through of any new or innovative form of assessment.

3.2 Feedback

Feedback on assessment items should be timely and will be provided to students within a maximum period of 4 weeks. This includes time for marking and any associated internal moderation. Dates of submissions and release of feedback will be made available to students in module handbooks. Due consideration should be given to the scheduling of assessments to avoid bunching of deadlines and to avoid significant gaps in return of feedback due to holiday periods.

All feedback will be made available in 'type' on departmental coversheets or online through the appropriate mechanisms on the VLE and should make specific reference to learning outcomes and assessment criteria for each component. Feedback should be timely, and some form made available for all students for all items of graded assessment.

All examinations will be followed by feedback to students. As a minimum, this will

be in the form of a general feedback to students indicating common strengths and weaknesses exhibited, advising upon how performance could be improved.

Staff should agree and publish dates by which they will return assessed work with relevant grades and detailed feedback to students. The time period may vary depending on the nature of the piece of assessed work (e.g. a short essay compared with a lengthy dissertation) and on the number of pieces of work to be assessed, but within a maximum **period for feedback to students of 4 working weeks and always in time for students to learn from feedback.**

3.3 Moderation

All assessed work will be internally moderated. Departments should ensure that all work is checked for any incorrect calculation and should moderate a sample of coursework, other forms of assessment, and examination scripts for each module or, ensure equivalent sampling is in situ for non-modular delivery. An appropriate sample here is taken to be the square root of $n,$ rounded up to the nearest integer, where n = the number of students undertaking the piece of assessment. For example, for 100 students, the sample size would be 10. Any such sample should include examples of firsts and fails and may, on occasions deviate from this formula, by exceeding the formula sample size. For assessment with less than 25 students the sample will be at least 5 students and fails and 1sts should be similarly included in the sample, and the range of performances across classes should also be represented, thus the sample size will be, on occasions, greater than the indicative sample size. Consideration of representation of such a range should also be made for cohorts smaller than this. All being said, sampling across the full range of marks is the key consideration for internal and external moderation/examining. This also applies to taught postgraduate assessment where fail/pass/distinction modes apply.

Moderators should review the assessment items with the sight of the marker's feedback and grade; but should focus on establishing the appropriateness of the grade/class of each item rather than being excessively concerned with the precise numerical score. Individual marks should not be changed within a sample. Discussion between marker and moderator/s should also review the appropriateness of the marking scheme (see above). Where the moderator identifies a consistent variance (over or under) across the majority of the sample, they should request an additional sample and consider re-marking/re-grading if necessary. Moderators will consider the involvement of the External Examiner if such process does not lead to mutual agreement. In extreme cases, where there is large and consistent deviation, marks may be scaled. This will be undertaken in close communication with the External Examiner, where appropriate.

Evidence of moderation should **be clearly recorded for presentation to the**

External Examiner. Moderated work should clearly show the names of the tutors involved. This record of outcomes of the moderation process should be kept and used to inform evaluation of the module, and where appropriate, modifications to assessment guidance and/or marking scheme. This record of the moderation process should be available for internal and external examiners.

Following internal moderation, a sample of work will be sent to the External Examiner for Levels 5, 6 and 7 (and Levels 4 and 5 for Foundation Degrees). The precise nature and number of the sample will be negotiated with the external examiner concerned, following the general institutional guidance on the size of the sample (see above).

3.4 Supporting Colleagues

Where new staff have joined a course team; where staff inexperienced in marking assessed work join a team or where part-time members of staff are involved in assessment, the module/programme leader will have a responsibility to ensure that the member of staff is fully aware of the assessment criteria and marking scheme for the course. Staff development opportunities will be offered centrally to support new staff, and course teams are required to initially moderate all or a high proportion of that member of staff's assessment.

Key to Relevant Documents

QAA UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Assessment and relevant University (2018) https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/advice-and-guidance/assessment

QAA *Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*, 2014 and *Annex D: Outcome Classification Descriptions for FHEQ Level 6 and FQHEIS Level 10 Degrees:* https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/qualifications-frameworks

Research Degree Regulations:
https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/document/research-degree-regulations/

ISO/IEC 23988:2007 Information Technology – A code of practice for the use of information technology (IT) in the delivery of assessments:
https://www.iso.org/standard/41840.html

Edge Hill University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy:
https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/document/equality-diversity-and-inclusion-edi-strategy/

Taught Degrees Framework (TDF): Taught Degrees Framework (TDF) - Centre for Learning and Teaching (CLT) - Taught Degrees Framework - Edge Hill University Wiki

Annexes

Appendix 1

What You Need to Know About Assessment: A Student Guide

What is assessment and what is it for?

Assessment measures your learning and allows you and your tutors to monitor your progress. We design assessments so you can demonstrate what you have learned in terms of skills, knowledge and understanding. As well as receiving marks, feedback from tutors recognises your achievements and gives guidance on how to develop and improve your learning in the future.

How will you be supported?

Tutors will explain how each assessment works. You can also find this information in the Programme Handbook, which includes details of the following:

- Learning outcomes – what you are expected to learn
- Assessment criteria – the standards your work will be marked against
- The schedule and instructions for submitting work
- The schedule for receiving feedback for each piece of work.

Your tutors will discuss assessment with you during induction and in teaching sessions. They will give you guidance and help you prepare for assessment. This process is known as 'formative assessment'. Your Personal Tutor is also a source of guidance.

Feedback on each assessment will explain how your grade was awarded and how well you met the learning outcomes against the assessment criteria. It will also provide advice on how to develop and improve your learning for the future. We provide feedback in a timely way, within four working weeks of work being submitted.

What do you need to do with Feedback?

You are expected to read and consider any feedback carefully. You may also want to discuss it with your tutor/s. We give you feedback so that you can develop and improve your learning for the future and produce your best work. If you do not understand your feedback or why you have been given the mark you have, arrange to speak to your tutor who will explain it to you.

How do you know assessment is fair?

When we create a programme, learning outcomes and assessment criteria are carefully designed to match the level of your study. These are checked by external experts from another university.

Assessment tasks (coursework, exams, presentations etc.) are also checked and approved by an external examiner from another university before they can be used.

Marks are based on how well you perform against the learning outcomes and assessment criteria. They are focused solely on the quality of *your* work and are not a comparison or competition with other students work.

A process called assessment moderation makes sure marking/grading is fair and consistent. This involves tutors having their marking/grading checked for fairness and consistency by other tutors, followed by further scrutiny by external examiners. This helps us ensure our standards are appropriate and our feedback is of high quality.

Endmatter

Title	Assessment and Feedback Policy
Policy Owner	Dean of Teaching and Learning Development
Policy Manager	Dean of Teaching and Learning Development
Approved by	Learning & Teaching Committee
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