



HIGHER EDUCATION ASSESSMENT POLICY

POLICY OWNER:	Quality
AUTHOR:	Sue Toy
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1. **Policy statement**

The Higher Education Assessment Policy is designed to ensure that assessment at Birmingham Metropolitan College is *Transparent; Equitable, Valid; Reliable; Just; Sustainable*.

It has been designed in order to bring a standardised approach to the range of Higher Education courses offered at the college and the disparate awarding organisations governing these courses. It should be noted the awarding organisations may have their own requirements and these must be followed where identified.

2. **Purpose**

The purpose of the policy is to ensure an equivalence of experience for all Higher Education students, consistency of standards, and that students are treated equitably and with fairness. The college recognises the need to remain sensitive to subject specialist needs, subject benchmarks, validating/awarding organisations and professional and statutory body requirements. Accordingly, this policy provides a broad benchmark within which there is scope for flexibility in implementation by courses, both in order to maintain fairness for students within the college and to ensure parity with the conventions of individual subjects across the HE sector. The policy applies to all HE courses whether directly funded or franchised.

3. **Other Related Policies & Codes of Conduct**

HE Academic Standards Policy
Assessment Malpractice Policy
Academic Appeals Policy

Assessment Policy for Higher Education Provision

In Higher education, 'assessment' describes any processes that appraise an individual's knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills. There are many different forms of assessment, serving a variety of purposes. These include:

- Promoting student learning by providing the student with feedback, normally to help improve their performance.
- Evaluating student knowledge, understanding, abilities or skills.
- Awarding a mark or grade that enables a student's performance to be established. The mark or grade may also be used to make progress decisions.
- 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.

The way in which students are assessed fundamentally affects their learning. Good assessment practice is designed to ensure that, in order to pass the module or course, students must demonstrate they have achieved the intended learning outcomes.

1. The Principles of Assessment

The purpose of student assessment is to:

- Promote, reinforce and reward student learning
- Measure and report student progress and achievement of learning outcomes
- Provide feedback on student learning to assist in the identification of learning needs
- Enhance students' ability to assess and reflect upon their learning
- Assist in the evaluation of the design of learning
- Demonstrate the maintenance of academic standards, ensuring that these are in line with awarding organisation specifications.

2. The Assessment Policy and Practice of the college will

- Ensure parity of treatment for all students
- Identify strengths and acknowledge effort and originality of thought
- Address misconceptions and gaps in understanding through feedback and reflection

- Focus on the application and integration of learning in a variety of contexts
 - Provide the opportunity to achieve credit and progression regardless of the time, place and mode of learning
 - Create an achievable schedule of student tasks and a reasonable workload
 - Require the minimum number of assessment tasks necessary to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes of an award
 - Provide a diversity of tasks appropriate to the assessment of learning outcomes and the greatest possible opportunity for students to demonstrate their achievement
 - Ensure equitable assessment practices for all students, particularly taking into account underrepresented groups
 - Make explicit provision for procedural variation and/or alternative assessments for students with special needs
 - Effectively communicate the nature, timing and procedures of all assessments and their criteria of assessment
 - Validate through internal and, where required by regulation, external scrutiny, all assessment tasks, criteria and judgements to ensure consistency of interpretation of evidence of student achievement and conformity to national and/or professional standards.
- 2.1 The purpose of summative assessment is to enable students to demonstrate that they have fulfilled the objectives of the course of study and that they have achieved the standard required by the award (s) they seek. All courses of study should be subject to awarding organisation regulations, which relate the assessment requirements of the course to its objectives, and it is within the context of those assessment regulations that the examiners make their judgements on the students' performance.

3. Award Assessment Policy

- 3.1 All awards shall develop an assessment strategy in line with the regulations of the awarding organisation to ensure that the defined outcomes of the award are explicitly and appropriately tested through a variety of methods in the context of the course of summative modular/unit of study assessments.

4. Modular/Unit of Study Assessment Design

- 4.1 The choice of format of modular/unit of study assessment shall be appropriate to test the achievement of all of the specified module/unit of study learning outcomes and designed as an integral feature of the process of learning. When appropriate, assessment shall be also

designed to meet the requirements of external accrediting organisations

For any student with assessed additional needs, course leaders will make anticipatory reasonable adjustments to ensure that alternative comparable assessment tasks are agreed and approved.

5. Volume of Modular/Unit of Study Assessment

- 5.1 Module/unit of study assessments shall occupy a specified proportion of the notional learning time allocation of the module/unit of study in line with the awarding organisation.

6. Assessment Practice

- 6.1 Academic staff are to produce and/or implement assignments, which comply with the awarding organisation requirements, in line with the assignment calendar.
- 6.2 Students will receive, as a minimum, an assessment calendar for their course at the appropriate level in week one of the academic session so that they are aware of the assessment demands being made of them and can plan accordingly.
- 6.3 Assignment briefs are to contain the following:
- Title
 - Mark allocation
 - Grading criteria
 - Submission date
 - Penalty and appeals process
- 6.4 Details of assessed coursework will be published in good time with a clear statement as to what is required, in what format and by when. All arrangements for the submission of coursework shall be detailed in the Course Handbook and Course Leaders will take reasonable steps to ensure that all students are aware of the procedures and process with regard to claims for extenuating circumstances.
- 6.5 Course Leaders will ensure that information on the date, time and location of all examinations is published in good time. Students are responsible for making themselves aware of the date, time and venue for all examinations that they are required to take and for presenting themselves at the examination room in good time before the examination is due to begin.

- 6.6 Student work must be submitted in adherence to hand in procedures.
- 6.7 A copy of the assignment calendar must be retained and made available to the Quality Team as required.
- 6.8 A log will be kept by the Course Leader of all student work received and all work will be receipted. Where appropriate, the use of electronic submissions will be deployed in line with awarding organisation regulations. A submission log will also be required for electronic submissions.
- 6.9 For tracking and monitoring purposes all logs must be retained for the duration of the course and made available to the Quality Team on request.
- 6.10 There will be no provision for draft submissions.
- 6.11 Modules and units of study will have summative assessment with a formative function. A summative assessment may also provide the necessary formative function if the student receives detailed written feedback. Written feedback will be given no later than 5 weeks (excluding days on which the college is officially closed) after submission and at least 2 weeks prior to the deadline for any end of year/teaching block summative assessment. This will apply unless the regulations of validating/awarding organisations state a more limited time frame.

Such feedback must be given against the published performance criteria for the assessment. Students must be made aware that all grades are provisional until confirmed by Examination/Assessment Board.

- 6.12 Alternatively, students may receive purposeful and systematic feedback on their learning and progress through participation in other activities. Such feedback will be made available no later than 4 weeks (excluding days on which the college is officially closed) after the activity has taken place and at least 2 weeks prior to any end of year/teaching block summative assessments. It may be provided in a variety of oral, written and electronic formats to individuals or to groups of subjects.
- 6.13 Included with the returned work should be a feedback sheet giving full details of how the marks/grades have been allocated and an indication of areas for improvement. All spelling and grammar errors should be identified and corrected in the piece of work.

- 6.14 A hard copy of the assessment policy must be given to the students with an electronic version also made available.
- 6.15 Assessment must comply with the college's Assessment Malpractice Policy.

7. Extensions to assignment deadlines

- 7.1 Students will be encouraged to submit all work in time and college staff should ensure that students are aware of assessment submission dates. Late submissions will be assessed 'without penalty' in the first instance, the late submission recorded and the student made aware that the lateness of submission may impact on their grade. Where appropriate students should utilise the extenuating circumstances process.

8. Extenuating circumstances

- 8.1 Requests for extensions to assignment deadlines are to be submitted at least a week before the submission deadline and may be granted for a maximum of ten working days unless this is in conflict with awarding organisation regulations. Requests must be submitted and authorised using the college's Higher Education Extenuating Circumstances document.
- 8.2 Requests for extensions are to be submitted to the Course Leader. The Course Leader will assess the application for an extension against the prescribed course criteria of acceptance or in line with the course's awarding organisation regulations and make a recommendation. Recommendations relating to request for extensions of between 1 and 10 working days will be forwarded to the relevant Department manager for approval.
- 8.3 Applications for extenuating circumstances to be considered by the Award/Examination Board following the non-completion of an assignment/non-attendance at a timed assessment are to be submitted in line with the validating/awarding organisation regulations.

9. Criteria for the acceptance or rejection of claims for extensions on the basis of extenuating circumstances

- 9.1 Reasons for accepting claims for extenuating circumstances;
- Ill health which occurred at the time of assessment or during the period when the student might be expected to prepare assessment. Prolonger

periods of illness which prevent the student from studying at the rate normally expected of a student.

- If self-isolating or if advised not to attend by local Health Protection Team or NHS Test and Trace (COVID-19).
- Difficulties with assessments, including examinations, due to childcare responsibilities and/or home-schooling during periods of lockdown due to COVID-19.
- Unforeseen changes in patterns of employment experienced by students studying on part-time, block release or distance learning modes.
- Tragic personal circumstances, including the death and serious illness of friends and family members, including participation in funeral and associated rites.
- Special needs declared to the college and pursued by the student with additional support, but not provided for in the delivery or assessment of a module.
- Breakdown of a close personal relationship.
- Severe financial hardship, over and above that normally experienced by students or unforeseen at the start of the learning period.
- Criminal, intentional or negligent acts of a third party which impact on a student's ability to complete or prepare for assessment.
- Unforeseen adverse weather conditions or conditions which were not experienced upon on all campuses.
- Unforeseen transport problems.
- Unforeseen failure of computing and other equipment where the student can demonstrate that they had taken all reasonable steps to ensure that assessment was prepared in good time.
- Any other reason accepted as valid.

- 9.2 In the majority of the above circumstances the assessors of claims must be satisfied that circumstances have impacted adversely on a student's ability to undertake assessment (and the student could not have foreseen and planned for the circumstance) for which claims are submitted. Evidence such as a COVID-19 test result or notification of the need to self-isolate will be considered acceptable without the need for further evidence from a GP. Similarly, copies of emails from the school advising of school closure/home schooling.

To be considered valid, claims must relate to the appropriate assessment period and be supported by both independent **and** supporting evidence:

- 9.3 **Independent evidence** - Written evidence from a member of the medical profession, member of the college, counselling service or other professional service, or other independent organisation (e.g. Police, Social Worker, Citizen's Advice Bureau, religious leader).

9.4 **Supporting evidence** – A detailed written statement from the student explaining the nature and timing of the extenuating circumstances and how these have impacted on their ability to take part or perform well in assessment. Where a statement from the student is not possible they ask their parent, partner or other significant person in their life to write a letter of support explaining the nature of the circumstances. This statement is in addition to the independent evidence that is required. Photocopied evidence is not normally acceptable unless it has been certified by Student Services staff as a true copy of the original. A claim is unlikely to be upheld without appropriate and both independent and supporting evidence.

9.5 **Reasons for not accepting claims for extension and extenuating circumstances evidence**

- Submission of a request for an extension to a submission deadline after the deadline and a request for extenuating circumstances to be considered by an Examination/Assessment Board after the published submission date.
- Evidence which does not cover the dates relevant to assessment tasks in respect of which a claim has been made.
- Having to meet the normal demands of part or full-time work.
- Having to meet normal family commitments.
- Special needs already taken into account in the delivery or assessment of the module.
- Insufficient evidence to support the claim.
- Claims that levels of state support for undergraduate and postgraduate students, by way of grant and loan, in themselves constitute a student suffering financial hardship.

9.6 Below are some examples of circumstances which will not normally be accepted:

- Taking a holiday
- Lateness due to traffic
- Missing the bus
- Last-minute personal computer and printer problems
- Medical evidence that does not cover the period of assessment
- Lack of appropriate evidence
- Foreseeable or preventable circumstances
- Minor illnesses and ailments (e.g. colds)
- Poor planning or time management
- Not backing up computer files
- Oversleeping

- Long-standing, ongoing conditions (e.g. medical conditions known at the point of admission to the college)
- Lack of awareness of college procedures

9.7 Where a student's claim for extenuating circumstances is accepted as a valid, the student will normally be offered the opportunity to submit work for assessment, as if for the first time and without penalty, at the next available opportunity. If an extension is granted the new deadline should be recorded and adhered to. Decisions regarding extenuating circumstances will be ratified at the course's Award/Examination Board.

The duration of extensions should be consistent across students and should not be after summative feedback has been issued to other students on the course.

All extensions authorised by the Course Leader/Department Manager must be recorded and made available at the Award/Examination Board and to the External Examiner on request.

9.8 **Re-submissions (Pearson Higher Nationals)**

The rules and procedures regarding resubmission in Pearson's BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment must be adhered to. The latest guidance can be found at [Quality Assurance - Higher Nationals | Pearson qualifications](#).

A student who, for the first assessment opportunity, has failed to achieve a Pass for that unit specification shall be expected to undertake a re-assessment:

- Only one opportunity for reassessment of the unit will be permitted.
- Reassessment for course work, project or portfolio-based assessments shall normally involve the re-working of the original activity.
- For examinations, reassessment shall involve completion of a new activity.
- A student who undertakes a reassessment will have their grade capped at a Pass for that unit.
- A student will not be entitled to be reassessed in any component of assessment for which a Pass grade or higher has already been awarded.

9.9 **Procedure for resubmissions**

If the Course Leader and/or Award/Examination Board authorises a resubmission, the following conditions apply:

- The resubmission must be recorded in the relevant assessment documentation.
- The student must be given a clear and realistic deadline for resubmission that is consistent across all students granted a resubmission. Pearson recommends that students be required to resubmit work within 15 working days of the student being notified that a resubmission has been authorised.
- The resubmission must be undertaken by the student with no further guidance.
- The original evidence submitted for the assessment can remain valid and be extended, or may need to be replaced partially or in full.
- Arrangements should be made for resubmitting the assessment in such a way that does not adversely affect other assessments and does not give the student an unfair advantage over others.

The Course Leader/delivery team may opt to conduct a resubmission of the assignment under supervised conditions, even if this was not necessary for the original assessment. For example, this may be necessary to ensure that plagiarism cannot take place.

It is anticipated that the External examiner will want to include assessments that have been resubmitted as part of their sample for review. Records should be kept and made available to the External Examiner as required.

10 Feedback

- 10.1 The college recognises it is good practice to provide students with sufficient, constructive and timely feedback on their work in respect of all types of assessment.
- 10.2 Feedback will be provided at an appropriate time in the learning process (See above paragraphs), and as soon as possible after the student has completed the assessment task.
- 10.3 The nature and extent of feedback that students can expect will be specified. It is important to consider the particular needs of students studying part-time and/or remotely.
- 10.4 It is important to adopt the effective use of comments on returned work, including relating feedback to intended learning outcomes and assessment criteria, in order to help students identify areas for improvement as well as commending them for achievement.

10.5 The role of oral feedback, either on a group or individual basis, as a means of supplementing or replacing written feedback will be explained to students.

11. Assignment feedback sheets

11.1 Assignment feedback sheets are to contain:

- Course title
- Module title
- Assignment title
- Module code
- Student number
- Student name (Unless assignment is undergoing anonymous marking)
- Tutor name
- Submission date
- Extension details
- Learning outcomes
- Assessment criteria
- Comments detailing strengths of the assignment and any improvements that would have brought about a higher grade
- Action points
- Grading
- Student declaration that assignment is their own work

Standard college assessment feedback sheets are to be used unless validating/awarding organisations stipulate the use of their own documentation.

12. Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) (Also known as Internal Verification)

12.1 IQAs must sample assessed work for **each assignment** to check the accuracy of assessment decisions. Internal quality assurance of assessment decisions should be carried out by a staff member who is familiar with BTEC assessment at the appropriate level and has subject knowledge of the qualification area.

Where new/inexperienced assessors and/or new qualifications/pathways are introduced, IQA sampling should be increased accordingly.

During the course of delivery of the qualification/pathway, internal quality assurance sampling should cover the following:

- All Assessors

- All units
- Work from every assignment
- Every assessment site (where delivery of a qualification takes place on different sites)
- Pass, Merit and Distinction achievement (Students who have not yet achieved or referred students are also valid selections).

Feedback from the IQA

Feedback from the IQA to the Assessor should comment on the quality of their feedback to the student and the effective completion of the documentation. The IQA should also give developmental feedback to the Assessor telling them what could be improved e.g. annotation of assessment evidence to show where grades are achieved. IQA of assessed work should be clearly recorded. If the IQA requires action, the Assessor should complete this and return it to the IQA for their review and sign off.

IQA of assessment decisions must not be end-loaded. It is important that it is undertaken as soon as possible after assessment as this will improve the quality of assessment practice and not disadvantage students. IQA must be undertaken before work is returned to students.