Policy on Assessment and Feedback

Aims

1. The aim of the policy on assessment and feedback are to provide a framework for:
   a. Designing, writing and reviewing assessment and to ensure a common understanding of the purposes of assessment and feedback.
   b. Ensuring consistent and equitable arrangements for the submission and recording of summative assessment.
   c. Ensuring the provision of effective and timely feedback on assessed work.
   d. Ensuring the timely and efficient disclosure of marks and retention of all assessed work.

Scope

2. This policy applies to all assessed work which contributes to an undergraduate or postgraduate taught programme of study. Exemptions from the core requirements may only be granted by the relevant Faculty Dean.

Assessment Design Principles

3. Assessment and feedback are integral to supporting effective student learning.
   - Assessment is a tool for guiding learning and for judging performance and the level of attainment
   - Well thought out assessment and feedback can influence student learning through guiding study practices and developing skills, knowledge and ability.
   - Assessment and feedback should be appropriate to the level of the module and be designed to allow the student to demonstrate their performance against the assessment criteria.

4. Effective and efficient assessment and feedback must be central to the curriculum design process.
   - Assessment and feedback should relate clearly and directly to programme or module aims and learning outcomes. Assessment components should encourage effective learning and require students to engage with the subject material.
   - Effective assessment results where programmes ensure that proper consideration is given to assessment across the breadth of the programme.
   - Efficient assessment results where assessments are scheduled appropriately throughout the academic year to avoid bunching and overloading students and staff at any time.

5. Assessment must be valid, reliable and consistent.
   - Assessments should be designed to ensure that they assess the appropriate learning outcomes and for the information on the individual assessment components to be clear, explicit, accurate and timely. The standards expected of the student should reflect the level of the module.
• Valid assessments are ones which measure all or part of the stated learning outcomes of the module or programme.
• Reliable assessment will produce the same or very similar results with a student or cohort of students if they were retested, meaning it is consistent in its methods and criteria.

6. Opportunities for feedback and formative assessment will be included in all programmes.
• Students should have the opportunities to receive feedback on their progress to date and have the opportunity to use that feedback to close any gaps between current and desired performance in summative assessment.
• Feedback can be delivered by staff and student peers and which can be written, electronic and verbal and either to an individual student or group.
• Modules can have a mixture of diagnostic, formative and summative assessment.

7. Feedback must be high quality and timely.
• High quality feedback is constructive and encourages self-assessment, reflection and making judgements against criteria and standards.
• Feedback should reflect performance on the specific piece of work, and be forward looking to support on-going student learning.

8. Forms and methods of assessment and feedback must be varied and appropriate.
• Programmes should ensure a range of assessment and feedback methods are utilised across modules for both summative and formative assessment.
• Where new methods of assessment are introduced students should be given the opportunity to practice the form of assessment to ensure that any summative assessments are measuring their subject knowledge and skills rather than the proficiency in the assessment method.

9. The University will provide the appropriate environment and resources to ensure staff and students are supported adequately.
• Generic and tailored workshops and individual pedagogic support will be provided by the Learning and Teaching Development Service.

10. Roles and responsibilities for both staff and students will be communicated clearly.
• For assessment and feedback to work effectively both staff and students have clear roles and responsibilities which will be clearly communicated at the beginning of each semester.

Summary of Core Requirements

11. Academic units must set specific and firm deadlines, naming the date and time of submission, for all summative coursework assessments.

12. All deadlines must be clearly communicated to staff and students within or before the second week of teaching each academic term/semester. Academic units must maintain internal evidence of deadline dates and the means by which staff and students are notified of them.

13. Academic units must have reliable and consistent procedures in place to record the date and time of the submission of assessed work and to provide evidence of submission date and times if and when requested.
14. Requests for extensions must be managed through the University Personal Extenuating Circumstances process. A central record of PEC applications received and extensions granted must be kept for annual review by Boards of Studies.

15. The normal maximum allowable extension is two weeks for all full-time undergraduate and postgraduate students, with proportionate allowance for part-time students.

16. Academic units must record any summative assessment submitted after the published deadline as late (unless a PEC has been granted).
   - Work submitted within 7 calendar days of the deadline can only be given a maximum mark of 40% for undergraduate modules and 50% for postgraduate modules.
   - Work submitted after 7 calendar days should be given a mark of zero.
   - If the piece of work is marked on a non-discriminatory marking scale or given a categorical grade (i.e. pass/fail or merit/pass/fail), then work submitted past the set deadline will receive a mark of zero. If student fails to submit a re-sit assessment by the established deadline, academic units must record the mark as zero.

17. All feedback on coursework assessments must be returned to students within 20 working days of the submission date, this includes non-term/semester periods (i.e. student holidays) but excludes University closure periods and Bank Holidays.

18. Feedback on examinations and provisional marks should be returned to students within 20 working days from the end of the exam period.

19. Academic units should devise procedures to release provisional marks awarded on any summative assessment to students as soon as they are available and within the stated turnaround deadline. Provisional marks should be disclosed to students, whenever practicable, as an integer on the appropriate University common mark scale.

20. Academic units must maintain student confidentiality in the disclosure of marks, regardless of whether marks are distributed electronically (e.g. through Blackboard, NESS or email) or physically (e.g. scripts or marks sheets, posted in a central location using student numbers).

21. Academic units must retain any summative examination scripts and coursework submissions which contribute 30% or more of a final module mark for a period of one year after the award of the degree.

22. Boards of Studies are responsible for reviewing records of submission and feedback turnaround to monitor the consistency and equitability of practice. Information on this will be provided in Annual Monitoring and Review reports and in Faculty Annual Strategic Plans.

23. Internal and external review processes will ensure that academic units have developed and are maintaining policies and practices that incorporate all the core requirements.

Assessment and Feedback Policies

General

24. Details of the core requirements must be published in Degree Programme Handbooks and the schedule for deadlines and return of feedback should be published on the virtual learning environment

Submission of Assessed Work

25. Academic units must set specific and firm deadlines which provide details on the date and time of submission for all summative assessed work.
• Where an academic unit requires submission both in hard copy and electronic format the normal expectation is that students should submit both identical versions prior to the deadline. However, discretion may be taken by Academic units to determine whether one or both versions must be submitted by the deadline to be considered on time.

26. The schedule of deadlines and examination dates should be coordinated by the Academic Unit before the start of the academic year to prevent conflicts or bunching of deadlines.

The finalised assessment deadlines should be communicated to all staff and students within or before the second week of teaching each semester.

Submissions dates should not be scheduled for University closure days and normally not during student holiday periods.

Academic units should ensure that students from other academic units who are registered for their module are made explicitly aware of the arrangements for submission of work of the academic unit that ‘owns’ the module.

• Academic units are recommended to have standardised submission times.

27. Academic units must have reliable and consistent procedures to record the date of time of the submission of assessed work and to provide evidence of submission times/dates if requested.

• The date of time of physical submissions should be recorded, for example, by supervised sign-in sheets or time-stamped cover sheets and mechanisms put in place to provide evidence of the submission to students.

• Email and electronic submission (e.g. through Blackboard, Turnitin, NESS) should be set to contain a date/time stamp that can be recorded and a means put in place to provide evidence of the submission to students.

28. Academic units should compile a list of late or non-submissions against the list of those expected to submit.

• Stage co-ordinators and personal tutors of students who have a pattern of late or non-submission should be informed for monitoring purposes.

29. Anonymous marking should normally take place and submission procedures should be put in place which facilitate this practice.

Extension requests

30. Requests for extensions must be managed through the University’s Personal Extenuating Circumstances application process (http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/staff-resources/PEC/)

• Academic units must put in place consistent and transparent arrangements for the submission and management of PEC extension requests.

• Students should be made aware of the application process in advance of any submission deadline. It is recommended that students are reminded of the process at the beginning of modules and when assignments are circulated.

• PEC decisions are made in the home academic unit of the student rather than the owning academic unit of the module where an extension is being requested. The home academic unit should liaise with the module owning academic unit in decision making.
• Academic units must maintain a central record of all PEC applications received and applications granted. Boards of Studies are responsible for reviewing records annually to ensure a consistent and effective approach is taken.

31. The normal maximum allowable extensions is two weeks for all full-time undergraduate and postgraduate taught students, with proportionate allowance for part-time taught students.

• The length of the extension granted will vary according to the individual circumstances submitted in the PEC application.
• PEC Committees can approve extensions beyond these guidelines in exceptional circumstances.
• Extension deadlines may fall within closure or holiday periods as long as there are appropriate arrangements in place to record and confirm the submission date and time.

Late Submissions

32. Academic units must record any summative assessment submitted after the published deadline as late.

• Distance learners must submit by the UK date and time published, not their local time zone.
• If a student fails to submit work by an agreed extension deadline the work will be recorded as late and the penalties for late submission be applied.
• If a student fails to submit a re-sit assessment by an established re-sit deadline a mark of zero must be applied.

33. Group coursework is subject to the policy on late submissions and any late submissions will receive a capped mark unless a prior extension is granted.

• PEC applications from groups of students are not permissible but individual students may make reference to related PEC applications from other students if appropriate.

34. In marking late submissions, the mark which would have been received had the work been submitted on time should be recorded alongside the capped mark.

• In borderline cases the Board of Examiners may wish to take account of the mark which would have been received, in addition to other factors to consider the support of the award of a higher classification.
• Feedback to the student should be provided as normal and include information on the grade the student would have achieved if the work had been submitted on time.
• In the case of submissions that are more than seven days late and received a mark of zero, Academic units should exercise discretion as to the amount and type of feedback given.

Feedback on Assessed Work

35. Academic units are responsible for maintaining and publicising to students a clear statement on the delivery of feedback to cover the following:

• The various ways in which students will receive feedback on their assessed work.
• The schedule for the return of feedback on assorted types of assessment.
Guidance on how student should make effective use of feedback.
This statement should be included in degree programme handbooks and posted on the virtual learning environment.

36. Feedback must be provided to students for all assessments both summative and formative, including written and practical examinations.
   - Feedback should be appropriate to the type of assessment and should explicitly address the assessment criteria in order to justify the mark awarded and to demonstrate how to improve in future assessments.
   - When whole cohort feedback is provided students should be made aware of the opportunity to receive individual feedback on request.
   - In the case of formative assessments, feedback can be provided on a sample of the work submitted by a student.

37. Feedback must be provided in a timely manner to ensure that it is received by students early enough to influence their future assessment tasks.
   - All feedback on coursework must be returned to students within 20 working days of the submission date, including non-term/semester periods.
   - In cases of official University closures turnaround deadlines should be extended for the same number of days as the closure days.
   - Feedback should be provided to those students who had late submissions at the same time feedback is provided to the rest of the cohort. Where this is not possible feedback to those students with late submissions should receive feedback within 20 working days of their actual submission.
   - Students who submit work early will receive feedback within 20 working days from the date of submission alongside the rest of the cohort.

38. Undergraduate and Postgraduate dissertations and final stage projects constituting 40 or more credits are exceptions to the 20 day return of feedback requirement, as long as students receive timely feedback on earlier drafts.

39. Feedback and provisional marks examinations should be returned to students within 20 working days from the end of the exam period. For semester 2 examinations feedback should be provided by the start of the next semester.

40. If feedback will, because of unforeseen circumstances be returned after the 20 working day deadline, students should be notified as soon as possible and be informed on when to expect their feedback.
   - If feedback is late only on a small sub-set of the cohort for a given assessment Academic units should use discretion in deciding whether or not to delay the return of feedback to all students.

Feedback on Written and Practical Examinations

41. In cases of large cohorts taking written or PC examinations academic units may choose to provide group feedback. Potential methods of providing group feedback are:
   - Designated times to provide oral feedback to a cohort, highlighting general strengths and weaknesses as well as strategies for improvement
• Personal Capture videos which provide oral feedback to the cohort posted on the VLE
• Written feedback posted to all students in the cohort via the VLE

Where group feedback is provided students can request individual feedback. Potential methods of providing individual feedback are:

• Designated times when module leaders are available to provide feedback in their offices or a suitable room
• Designated feedback sheets that can be removed from an examination script and returned to students
• Designated times when students may under the direction of a marker or module leader, see their examination script and any comments provided.

Feedback on non-written/PC examination can take the following potential methods:

• Oral feedback on presentations and oral examinations to demonstrate potential responses and provide suggestions for improvement.
• Visual and/or physical hands-on feedback on practical examinations, performances and observations of professional practice to provide guidance and demonstrate suggestions for improvement.

42. Academic units may use discretion in deciding whether or not to return copies of examination scripts to students. Under the Data Protection Act Academic Units are not obliged to provide students with access to original exam scripts or copies of those script.

• Students have a legal right to request access to the breakdown of marks and to marker’s comments.
• If students are given the opportunity to view examination scripts or receive copies of scripts it should be explained that the aim is to provide feedback and not to challenge marks or examiner’s comments.

Disclosure of marks and return of assessed work

43. Academic units should devise procedures to release provisional marks awarded on any summative assessment to students as soon as they are available and within the deadline of 20 working days.

• It is good practice to disclose provisional marks at the same time as feedback to encourage students to value both and to use feedback effectively.
• Student confidentiality in the disclosure of marks should be maintained regardless of whether marks are distributed electronically (e.g. Blackboard, NESS, email) or physically (e.g. on scripts or mark sheets, posted in a central location according to student numbers).
• Students must be informed that provisional marks on summative assessments are subject to review and potential moderation prior to Board of Examiners.
• Where a case of plagiarism is currently being investigated the Academic unit should not enter a mark for that student but should return marks as usual to the rest of the cohort.
• Information on the disclosure of provisional marks must be published in degree programme handbooks and reiterated when feedback and provisional marks are returned to students.
44. Academic units should retain copies of assessments as follows:

- Summative examinations and coursework which contribute 30% or more of a final module mark for a period of one year after the award of the degree
- Representative samples of formative coursework from each cohort for one year. Samples can be photocopies or scans and should include the assessment and the feedback provided.

**Monitoring and Review**

45. Academic Units are responsible for keeping central records of all PEC applications received and extensions granted. Boards of Studies are responsible for reviewing these records annually to monitor consistency and develop effective practice.

46. Academic Units must maintain evidence of the deadlines dates and times for coursework submissions and of the means by which staff and students are notified of them and of the individual submission times.

47. Academic Units must devise and implement procedures for documenting the date of return of feedback to students for each assessment and, when practicable, for retaining a copy of the feedback in accordance with the University Retention Schedule. Board of Studies are responsible for reviewing these records annually and monitoring adherence to core requirements for equitability and consistency.

48. Internal and external review processes will ensure that academic units have developed and are maintaining policies and practices that incorporate all applicable core requirements. Annual Monitoring and Review (AMR) will review adherence to the core requirements and Learning and Teaching Reviews (LTR) will include random module checks to ensure implementation at the module level.

49. Faculty Annual Strategic Reports should include consideration of performance against the 20 working day turnaround requirements for feedback on assessed work.