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Higher Education Assessment and Verification Procedures

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1. Procedure Statement

1.1. This procedure applies to all staff and students who are involved in any way in the assessment, and/or verification process within Activate Learning.

1.2. Higher Education (HE) Assessment and Verification Procedure is designed to safeguard the quality and academic standards of assessment practice for the benefit of students and to ensure that learners have access to redress if they require it. The procedures also have the following aims:

- To create fairness and consistency in the assessment of all HE¹ programmes
- To uphold any standards required by our awarding organisation
- To ensure alignment with our [Learning Philosophy and our Values](#)

¹ Students studying a Higher National Certificate, Higher National Diploma, Foundation degree, or BA/BSc (Hons) top-up Degree.

- To ensure that assessment is conducted in line with the expectations, and [Sector-Agreed Principles of the Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code for Higher Education June 2024](#)
- To ensure that assessment is carried out in line with the requirements of the awarding bodies as published in the [BTEC Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment \(level 4 to 7\) for Higher Nationals \(HNC, HND\)](#) and Regulation for validation awards of the Open University [\[HYPERLINK\]](#)

2. Definitions

- 2.1. **Assessment** is a generic term for a set of processes that measure the outcomes of students' learning, in terms of knowledge acquired, understanding developed, and skills gained. It serves many purposes. Assessment provides the means by which students are graded, passed, failed or referred. It provides the basis for decisions on whether a student is ready to progress, to qualify for an award or to demonstrate competence to practise. It enables students to obtain feedback on their learning and helps them improve their performance. It enables staff to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching.
- 2.2. **Verification** is a generic term for a set of processes that ensure the quality of all internal assessment in a framework that is scrutinised by external awarding organisations. The purpose of internal verification/moderation is to appraise and support assessment delivery to ensure that it is valid, reliable, fair, consistent and meets with awarding organisation standards.
- 2.3. **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.
- 2.4. **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.
- 2.5. **Internal verification/moderation** is an approach to quality assurance which is used to ensure that the assessment of an individuals' competence meets relevant quality standards.
- 2.6. **Lead Internal Verifier (IV)** of a programme is the appointed person on the programme who is notified to the awarding body, and who organises the internal verification activity on the programme. If the IV is also an assessor, there may be another member(s) of staff who also acts as internal verifier so that the assessments of the Lead IV can be checked. The Lead IV is usually, but not always, the Programme Coordinator of a programme.
- 2.7. **External verification / examination** is the process used by the awarding body to assure the quality of internal assessment, including internal verification/moderation.

- 2.8. **Feedback** relates to any information, verbal, written, or in any other form, that is given to students relating to their performance.
- 2.9. **Standardisation/Moderation** is the process by which assessors ensure that their assessment practice is based on a similar interpretation, understanding and application of stated criteria; and is intended to lead to assessment decisions that are accurate and within agreed tolerances.
- 2.10. **Academic Misconduct, plagiarism or collusion** relate to attempts to present work that is not the student's own, as if it were.
- 2.11. **Learning outcomes** are a statement by the awarding body of what needs to be demonstrated by the student to pass a unit.
- 2.12. **Grading/Marking criteria** are the generic descriptors agreed by the awarding body for the award of Pass, Merit or Distinction grades and/or marks (a percentage scale of 0-100).
- 2.13. **Resubmission/Resit** is the outcome given to a piece of assessment work which has not met the pass criteria on first submission.
- 2.14. **Repeat/Retake Units** is awarded as a result of failing to achieve a Pass for that unit specification following a Resubmission or non-submission of a piece of work at the first assessment opportunity.
- 2.15. **Compensation:** A means of allowing marginal failure in a limited number of modules, within a programme of study, on the basis of an overall performance which is sufficient to merit the award of the qualification concerned. Compensation can be applied to the results of a student who has failed to attain the required pass mark/grade.

3. Scope

- 3.1. These procedures cover all Open University, Higher National Certificate and Diploma programmes including units/modules thereof that are delivered by Activate Learning including those that form part of a Higher Apprenticeship.
- 3.2. For HE programmes awarded by one of our university partners, students follow the academic regulations for their programme which outline the standards and procedures for assessment, progression and awards. These can be accessed here:
- University of Reading - [Academic guidance and regulations | University of Reading](#)
 - Oxford Brookes University - [Regulations for Study - Oxford Brookes University](#)
 - Middlesex University - [University-Regulations-for-Undergraduate-Taught-Programmes.pdf](#)
 - Kingston University - [Policies and regulations | Kingston University London](#)

4. Recognition of Prior Learning

4.1. Where permitted by the awarding body, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) enables students to have their prior learning and experience formally recognised and gain credit for previous learning that meets the required standards for their chosen programme of study.

- If the learning outcomes for a unit / module are met and achieved, the use of RPL can be used for admissions purposes, subject to any rules set by the awarding body. For more details, please refer to the [Higher Education Recognition of Prior Learning Policy & Procedure](#)

4.2. Any assessments completed through RPL will be recorded in our student record system and noted by the assessment / examination board.

5. Reasonable adjustments

5.1. In compliance with the Equality Act 2010, we are committed to ensuring that students with disabilities, long-term health conditions, mental health difficulties, or specific learning difficulties that affect their studies receive effective support.

5.2. This support is further extended to students facing accessibility issues for other reasons. We aim to provide necessary accommodations and adjustments to create an inclusive learning environment where all students have equal opportunities to succeed.

- If you may require reasonable adjustments and multiple deferral requests in order to accommodate serious/long term circumstances (long term illness, accident, disabilities etc), advice should be obtained from the HE Study Support team, regarding consideration of putting appropriate reasonable adjustments to assessment in place. These might, for example, include additional time for assessment or the use of alternative assessment methods. Please refer to the [Extenuating Procedure](#) for other unexpected circumstances.

5.3. Where appropriate individuals may be advised to make an application for Disabled Students Allowance.

6. Assessment of learning

6.1. Activate Learning is committed to ensuring that all students have access to formative and summative assessment, which enables them to reach their full potential of achievement within the qualification they are studying. Assessment will:

- be carried out against assessment criteria laid down by the awarding body
- be fair and free from discrimination and malpractice

- be in line with relevant awarding body procedures
- be transparent in process
- be undertaken at appropriate intervals throughout the learning programme
- result in timely and constructive feedback to inform the student's learning and encourage improvement
- meet all awarding body requirements and regulations
- allow for academic appeals against internal assessment decisions
- conform to the Expectations and Practices detailed within Sector-Agreed Principles of the Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code for Higher Education

6.2. Types of assessments

6.2.1. **Formative assessment** – assessment with a developmental purpose, often informal and ungraded, designed to help you to learn more effectively by giving you feedback on your performance and how it can be improved and/or maintained. Reflective practice can sometimes contribute to formative assessment.

6.2.1.1. Formative assessment ensures that:

- you are actively involved throughout the assessment process
- you are aware of assessment criteria, methods, standards and marking / grading systems
- you are given the opportunity to measure yourself against the assessment criteria.
- individual learning needs are considered throughout the assessment process.
- regular self-directed learning is scheduled as appropriate
- regular, formative assessment takes place to enhance and support the learning process
- where formative feedback is verbal, teaching staff make every effort to ensure that you record the information and guidance received

6.2.2. **Summative assessment** shows how well you have met the assessment criteria and the intended learning outcomes of a module or course. The marks you receive in summative assessments usually count towards your final grade for the course, module, or award.

6.2.2.1. Summative assessment requires teaching staff:

- to issue you with a schedule of summative assessments at the beginning of the programme. Such schedules should be included in the student's programme handbook and published on the ALO. Best practice dictates that summative assessments should take place twice per term as a minimum.

- to provide you with comprehensive details on assessment including assessment criteria and regulations, so that you understand the purpose of assessment and what is expected
- to draw up an assessment plan for each unit which should be passed to the Lead Internal Verifier in advance of issue. All such assessment plans should show details of assignments, the coverage of intended learning outcomes, and identify the formative and summative assessment points.
- to ensure that each programme sets deadlines for the submission of summative assessments, in line with this policy and its procedures, and that these are adhered to and you are informed of such rules, particularly those relating to late or non-submission including the opportunity to request an extension.
- to ensure that students are advised of the academic appeals procedure

6.3. Submission of assessments

6.3.1. Assessment evidence submitted should be authenticated as your own work. If evidence/assignments are submitted in paper copy, then an authenticity statement should be included and learner sign and date their work.

6.3.2. Your assessments should be submitted through the ALO (Activate Learning Online) platform, where possible, as this system automatically asks you to confirm the work is entirely your own as a part of the submission process.

6.3.3. Submitting assessments via ALO will allow tutors checks for plagiarism and identifies text that is also contained in other students' work, on the internet (will provide the source of that text) or generated fully by AI (Artificial Intelligence i.e. ChatGPT) by using the built-in software (Turnitin)

- You are expected to maintain academic integrity throughout your period of study. Any instance of suspected academic misconduct, such as plagiarism or collusion, will be addressed in accordance with the [HE Academic Misconduct Procedure](#).
- Late submissions are only permitted with formally approved extensions. In such approved cases, your work will be marked as if it had been submitted on time. For more details, please see the [HE Extenuating Circumstances Procedure](#). Late submissions without approval will incur penalties in accordance with the awarding body regulations. Please see the awarding body regulations links under the 3. Scope, page 3 of this procedure.

6.3.4. You are advised to submit your assessment in advance of the deadline, to give sufficient time to resolve any technical difficulties that you may encounter. Technical requirements are determined by individual courses and if guidance is required it will be issued to you in programme / module handbooks.

6.3.5. It's highly recommended that you keep a copy of all your assessments and regularly back up your computer files

6.4. Assessment marking and feedback

6.4.1. Your work will be marked and returned to you, with clear, constructive written feedback and a provisional grade, normally **15** working days after the summative assessment hand-in date, provided that the student has met the submission deadline.

6.4.2. You will receive feedback explaining your provisional grade. This may be given using a standardised rubric or as a written explanation from your tutor. Sometimes, feedback will include formative aspects to help you with future assessment or modules. While feedback is usually given in writing, it can also be provided verbally, either individually or to the whole group. The format of the feedback may vary depending on the awarding bodies and may differ from course to course. Generally, feedback is made available electronically.

6.4.3. Prior to provisional grades being released, through ALO and/or ProMonitor Markbook, the marking process and grades are verified and independently moderated by another member of the teaching staff to ensure the grading criteria have been properly applied and learning outcomes have been achieved.

6.4.4. Provisional grades/marks are initial grades given for summative assessments. These grades may change after the verification and moderation process. Your grades will only be confirmed after they are reviewed by the relevant assessment/examination board and approved by the awarding body. During this process, an external verifier / examiner may also review your work and grades to ensure they meet national standards.

6.4.5. The various awarding bodies adopt different grading/marketing systems (e.g., some use pass/merit/ distinction, some use percentage grades). For details of your course grading system please see your programme handbook.

6.5. Reassessment

- 6.5.1. We are committed to providing appropriate opportunities for students who fail an assessment or unit / module to retrieve their position.
- 6.5.2. If your work does not meet the minimum criteria for a Pass on the first submission, you may be given one chance to resubmit it, following the regulations set by the awarding organisation. Additional resubmission opportunities will only be allowed if the awarding organisation's regulations specifically permit them.

6.6. Compensation

- Compensation is the practice of awarding credit for a limited number of modules that have marginally failed. It is based on a good overall academic performance in a single academic year at a specific level of study.

Compensation can be applied to enable you to progress from one complete level (minimum 120 credits) to the next, or to gain an award. Credit will be awarded for any compensated modules.

Compensation will be applied automatically by the Assessment / Examination Board once you have completed a first attempt at all the modules in the level (i.e. 120 credits).

Some modules/tasks may be designated as non-compensable, for example, those marked by pass/fail grades or due to professional, statutory, or regulatory body requirements.

For programmes of study validated by the Open University please refer to the [Open University Validation Regulations for Single Awards](#)

For HNC and HND programmes awarded by Pearson please refer to [the BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment](#) under Calculation of the final qualification grade (RQF)

6.7. Monitoring of assessment

- 6.7.1. Teaching staff are required to seek a reference point for benchmarking assessment either within the programme team or from external sources and to engage in standardisation of assessment with colleagues.
- 6.7.2. Teaching staff should monitor and record systematically, using standard systems and pro-formas, the results of the assessment process including the outcomes from internal verification, moderation and standardisation.
- 6.7.3. Teaching staff are expected to devise procedures for assessing work in such a way as to minimise opportunity for plagiarism, cheating, collusion and bad academic practice. Methods might include:
- Changing assignment tasks yearly, or at least on a 2-year cycle
 - Making less use of generic assignments in favour of tailored assignments

- Getting to know the style of students' writing/submissions, early in the programme.
- Comparing subsequent work to initial assessment tests
- Marking a class/group's coursework on a single occasion, in order to enhance the likelihood of the assessor identifying plagiarised passages.
- Making use of packages such as "Turnitin"
- Requiring students to upload their assignment via ALO (Activate Learning Online) to enable a secure record to be kept

NB. For more details on plagiarism, cheating, collusion and other examples of academic misconduct, please refer to the [HE Academic Misconduct Procedure](#)

7. Exams

- Activate Learning complies with the rules and regulations required by the Joint Council for Qualifications (JCQ) and other awarding bodies in relation to examination procedures. Further details, including invigilation, malpractice, safe storage and verification of candidates can be found in our [General Exams Policy and Directory](#)
- Activate Learning adheres to JCQ regulations and ensure it complies with its duty to provide reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010. Please refer to [HE Reasonable Adjustment Policy](#)
- Students who believe that they have been disadvantaged through circumstances beyond their control, for example temporary illness, injury or indisposition at the time of the exams, can request that special consideration is made regarding the outcomes of their exam. Please refer to the [Extenuating Circumstances Procedure](#) for Higher Education.

8. Internal & External Verification

8.1. We are committed to providing high quality services for all our students through a process of moderation and verification, to ensure that all students are fairly, accurately and regularly assessed in a consistent manner.

8.2. Activate Learning recognises the essential role of the Internal Verifier in the quality assurance process and undertakes to give appropriate support and guidance to Internal Verifiers.

8.3. It is essential that internal verification is planned for at the start of a programme. An internal verification schedule must be agreed, to ensure that:

- All assignment briefs are internally verified before distribution to students
- A sample of assessment decisions is internally verified, covering every unit, every Assessor and a range of student achievement (e.g., Ungraded, Pass, Merit, Distinction).

8.4. External examiners, where specified by awarding body, are also expected to consider and approve assessment instruments in advance of being released to students.

- External verification often involves an external examiner or verifier who reviews a sample of student work to confirm the assessment decisions

9. Roles and responsibilities

9.1

HE Programme Coordinators are required to make appropriate arrangements to ensure that:

All programmes are subject to the Internal Verification process operate within the approved framework and criteria whilst also meeting their awarding body requirements

Consistency with institution-wide practice & procedures is maintained when carrying out Internal Verification

9.2

Availability of time to complete internal verification is facilitated. This might be achieved through a variety of methods according to the needs of the programme e.g. assessment weeks - as conducted in some areas; study weeks - as organised by some programmes; use of non-contact time in negotiation with the line Manager

9.3

The Internal Verification plan should be drawn up using the assessment plan and should show:

- Which assessment activities cover which Units/Elements/outcomes etc.
- Assessor responsibilities for unit/module etc
- IV responsibilities

Internal Verification should meet awarding body requirements for the qualification being assessed.

9.4

Activate Learning recommends an approach of:

Each module/unit of the qualification and each assessor should be internally verified twice each year as a minimum, and a sample at random should be taken from the cohort of students on the programme during the year and embracing the full range of grades.

- Internal Verification activity should involve verifying assessment plans/tasks/assignments/briefs as well as verifying assessment, decisions, evidence etc.
- Records of Internal Verification should be kept in the Quality or IV file.
- Internal Verification responsibility should be shared amongst suitably qualified members of the team. Where this is not possible, guidance should be sought from the line manager.

9.5 Lead Internal Verifier (IV) Role (This may be the Programme Coordinator, or another named person) is responsible for:

- Standards of Assessment on programme(s)
- Supporting Internal assessors
- Ensuring standardised documentation is used within the programme team
- Submitting IV plans to External Examiner and to Lead IV where appropriate.
- Giving guidance and supporting IV and Assessors, including identification of training needs
- Correct use of documentation by Assessors

9.6 Duties

9.6.1 Before assessment begins:

- Drawing up IV plan (to cover all Units/Elements, Assessors and the relevant sample of students)
- Ensure all assessment activities undergo IV before being distributed to students, so they are: at right level; clear, complete and consistent, and appropriate to the qualification
- Checking grading opportunities are appropriate (if relevant)
- Checking assessment activities for validity, reliability, sufficiency and compliance with awarding body requirements

NB Assessment activities MUST be planned before the programme begins.

9.6.2 *During assessment:*

- Sampling assessment standards during programme according to IV plan
- Checking quality of assessment and feedback to students
- Holding standardisation and assessment issue meetings once a term which could be part of a normal team meeting
- Keeping records of IV activities

9.6.3 *After assessment:*

- Sampling assessments for coverage and standards (as per plan)
- Checking recording of Unit achievement – tracking coverage
- Dealing with Awarding Body accreditation procedure

9.6.4 *Throughout:*

- Ensuring compliance with awarding body requirements
- Giving feedback to assessors
- Guiding assessors
- Identifying training needs of assessors
- Keeping records of IV activities
- Carrying out any action points identified by the External Examiner

9.7 External examiners are experienced academics appointed by the awarding body to ensure your assessments and overall academic experience meet national standards for higher education. Their responsibilities include:

9.7.1 **Maintaining Academic Standards:** They confirm that the academic level of your programme aligns with national benchmarks and qualification frameworks.

9.7.2 **Ensuring Fair Assessment:** They check that the way your work is marked is consistent, fair, and accurately reflects the intended learning outcomes for the module or programme.

9.7.3 **Comparability Across Institutions:** They help ensure your results are comparable with those of students on similar programmes at other colleges / universities

9.7.4 **Reviewing Good Practice:** They also advise on best practices and ways to improve teaching, learning, and assessment for future students.

9.7.5 External examiners review a sample of your work, including various grades and levels, and attend assessment boards where final results are confirmed. They also submit an independent report (EE report) which highlights any strengths or areas for improvement, helping programme teams enhance the student experience.

9.8 HE Academic Registrar is responsible for overseeing assessment processes, academic regulations, student records, and compliance to:

9.8.1 ensure that assessment policies and procedures are correctly followed across all programmes.

9.8.2 coordinate the operation of assessment boards and confirm student results

9.8.3 review Academic Appeals and Extenuating Circumstances

9.8.4 ensure accurate recording and reporting of assessment outcomes, grades, and academic progression data.

10 Assessment Board

10.5 The Assessment Board is essential in ensuring the quality and credibility of academic assessments. It assures students, teachers, and external stakeholders that the assessment process is rigorous, fair, and transparent.

10.6 The Assessment boards take place in line with awarding organisation guidance.

Students on Higher National programme awarded by Pearson will follow the

[Assessment Board Procedure for Higher Nationals](#)

For programmes of study validated by the Open University please refer to the [Open University Validation Regulations for Single Awards](#) (G. Boards of Examiners)

- The board verifies provisional assessment results before they are released, checking for errors and anomalies, and ensuring that all students have been graded fairly and consistently.
- There should be a minimum of one Assessment Board per year to confirm student programme provisional results (normally June/July). However, if a programme operates on a semester system there may be Interim Board at the end of the first semester, also where candidates are undertaking Resubmissions/Resits over the summer, then a resit board will be constituted (normally in early September).
- The Assessment Board will be chaired by the Director of Higher Education and meetings must be quorate.

10.7 All staff involved in assessment are expected to attend the Assessment Board.

Where a valid reason prevents attendance, a unit report and all results must be passed to the Programme Coordinator in good time and notification of non-attendance should be recorded. In the event of the unavailability of some of those listed above, the Director of Higher Education (or designate) shall have authority to decide if the Assessment Board may take place.

- External examiners will be invited to attend all assessment boards where decisions regarding final awards are made. If they are unable to attend, then a written report should be submitted to the Board summarising the outcomes of the external examiners visit. Minutes from the assessment board(s) should be sent to the external examiner regardless of whether they attend or not.
- The assessment board will include the following standard agenda items:

10.7.1 A declaration of Conflicts of Interest

10.7.2 Minutes of previous meeting(s), matters arising

10.7.3 Consideration of academic misconduct

10.7.4 Consideration of extenuating circumstances

10.7.5 Mark sheets that contain all assessment components completed by students

10.7.6 Confirmation of final awards, progression, resubmission and repeat units

10.7.7 Comments from the External Examiner (if applicable)

10.7.8 The regulations for the programme

10.8 Where appropriate, and with the agreement of the Board, Chair's Actions may be carried forwards. These will be reviewed at the next Exam Board. Where there are many Chair's Actions, it may be deemed more appropriate to call an additional exceptional Board meeting to review these outstanding actions.

11 Complaints and Academic Appeals

11.5 If you wish to appeal against a decision relating an assessment, please refer the [HE Academic Appeals Procedure](#)

11.6 If you wish to complain about academic standards or a college service, please refer to the Activate Learning's [Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy and Procedures](#)

12 Confidentiality

12.5 We take your privacy seriously and will treat any assessment data with strict confidentiality.

12.6 Details will not be shared beyond those directly involved in the assessment process, except where required by appeals procedures or professional body regulations.

12.7 Records will be securely stored and managed in line with our [Information Security and Data Protection Policy & Procedure](#), and relevant legislation (the Data Protection Act 1998)

12.8 We recognise that information shared may include sensitive personal data (such as health or disability-related details), and this will be handled with particular care.

References

Other policies or procedures referring to this procedure include:

- [Activate Learning Assessment and Verification Policy](#)
- [Higher Education Recognition of Prior Learning Policy & Procedure](#)
- [General Exams Policy and Directory](#)
- [Exam Access Arrangement Procedure](#)
- [HE Reasonable Adjustments Policy](#)
- [HE Academic Misconduct Procedure](#)
- [HE Extenuating Circumstances Procedure](#)
- [Assessment Board Procedure for Higher Nationals](#)

If you require this document in an alternative format, please email

compliance@activatelearning.ac.uk