Assessment policy for taught provision (2012)

Version: 14 May 2012

Status: University policy statement; approved by Senate on 26 March 2008 (with an amendment to Paragraph 3.34 on 31 March 2010, the addition of a new Paragraph (2.10) and amendments to Paragraphs 1.3, 1.4, 1.6 and 2.9 on 30 May 2012). This policy statement has been superseded by a revised Assessment Policy (2015), but with certain elements of the 2012 policy being applicable to continuing students until the end of AY 2017-18 (described in the implementation plan for the revised policy). Some of the web links in this 2012 policy have been updated (August 2015). The statements in 2012 policy have not been updated to reflect the new University structure from AY 2015-16.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Applicability

1.1 This policy applies to all elements of taught provision (programmes and modules), both undergraduate and postgraduate, that lead to the award of a degree or credit by the University.

Aims

1.2 Recognising the wide range of disciplines taught within the University, the role of accrediting bodies in providing guidance on assessment, and the devolved nature of the University, this policy statement aims to strike a balance between:

- broad issues of principle, with scope for local interpretation and definition at College and School levels; and
- common, detailed requirements and procedures (e.g. reporting scales) that are generally applicable.

Questions and suggestions

1.3 Questions on implementation, or suggestions for improvement of assessment policy, should be directed, in the first instance, to the relevant school secretary. They may then refer the matter to the Director of Policy, Governance and Legal Affairs. Students may also direct comments to their school president or to the President of DUSA.

Responsibilities

1.4 This policy statement assumes the following basic allocation of responsibilities:

- academic staff at school level have the primary responsibility for implementation of assessment, reflecting the nature of the subject;
- boards of examiners, moderated by external examiners, have the primary responsibility for assuring the academic standards of awards and the effectiveness of assessment in the subject;
- College boards, reporting to Senate, have the responsibility to oversee all aspects of assessment within the schools including where relevant, liaising with external professional or statutory bodies (PSBs) to seek clarification of competence standards for academic programmes (in light of the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, which places duties on qualifications bodies to review competence standards and to determine the extent of flexibility to accommodate disabled students’ needs);
- Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) has the responsibility to maintain and develop this policy, and to oversee its implementation across the University including consideration of compliance with the Equality Act;
- staff have the responsibilities: to design and implement assessment in ways that encourage and promote effective learning, and that measure student achievement effectively with reference to stated intended learning outcomes; to make reasonable adjustments to the design and conduct of assessments to meet disabled students’ needs; to provide constructive feedback on assessed work to students; and
to review assessment methods as part of annual and periodic quality assurance procedures;

- Deans and School secretaries have responsibility for ensuring that relevant information about assessment is included in module or programme handbooks (as deemed appropriate). Appendix 2 details a set of minimum requirements.
- students have the responsibility to engage effectively with assessment, as a vital component of their learning.

General principles of assessment

1.5 Assessment is an important part of the learning and teaching process. In addition to providing an indication of the final achievement of students on academic programmes, it also provides information that guides both students and academic staff in the ongoing improvement of learning and teaching. To contribute usefully in both of these areas, it is important that assessment:

- is fair, in that students are entitled to parity of treatment and comparable assessment demands in modules of equal level and credit;
- is reliable, in that assessment decisions are made consistently throughout the University;
- is valid, in that the assessment relates to the intended learning outcomes of the modules studied;
- is transparent, in that it is clear to students, staff and examiners the criteria and methods by which students' work is being judged. This is particularly important for the purpose of determining the "reasonableness" of any adjustments to the design and conduct of the assessment;
- recognises and respects equality and diversity.

Types of assessment

1.6 Whilst assessment tasks within higher education can take a wide variety of forms, they are commonly understood to serve 3 distinct functions: diagnostic, formative or summative. These have been defined in the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning as:

"Diagnostic assessment: Used to show a learner’s preparedness for a module or programme and identifies, for the learner and the teacher, any strengths and potential gaps in knowledge, understanding and skills expected at the start of the programme, or other possible problems. Particular strengths may lead to a formal consideration of accreditation of prior learning;

Formative assessment: Has a developmental purpose and is designed to help learners learn more effectively by giving them feedback on their performance and on how it can be improved and/or maintained. Reflective practice by students sometimes contributes to formative assessment;
Summative assessment: Used to indicate the extent of a learner's success in meeting the assessment criteria used to gauge the intended learning outcomes of a module or programme."

Although these describe quite different functions of assessment, in practice, any assessment task may serve more than one function. For example, the emphasis within much coursework may be formative assessment but it will generally also contribute towards a summative statement of achievement.

2. CONDUCT OF ASSESSMENT

Appropriateness of assessment

2.1 Assessment should be designed to reflect the intended learning outcomes of the module, which in turn should take account of:

- the intended learning outcomes of the programme;
- relevant QAAHE subject benchmark(s);
- the relevant level descriptors of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework;
- any relevant professional / statutory body (PSB) requirements;
- the principles of inclusive assessment practice.

Scheduling and amount of assessment

2.2 The student workload associated with assessment, both completion of coursework assignments and preparation for examinations, should be considered in relation to the credit rating of the module. For example, a 20 credit module relates to 200 hours of notional student effort on all activities associated with the module; assessment should be designed to fit within this total.

2.3 Scheduling of assessment, in particular coursework assignments, should take account of students’ overall workload in the context of the semester structure.

2.4 Students should be provided with clear information regarding the scheduling of all assessment, including submission dates for coursework, etc. They should be provided with this information sufficiently in advance to enable them to plan and prepare effectively. Schools and module leaders should assist students to time-manage their assessment workload through effective induction, publicity, reminders and where possible, by liaison between schools.

Assessment at Levels 1 and 2 in the modular structure

2.5 Level 1 (SCQF Level 7), Semester 1 modules should be assessed normally within class times and not by traditional unseen examinations.

2.6 If summative examinations are used at Level 1 (SCQF Level 7), Semester 2, or Level 2 (SCQF Level 8), there shall be no more than one examination, of no longer than two hours for each module.

Marking criteria
2.7 Criteria for assessment should be explicit and available to students and examiners before assessed work is undertaken. This should include the following:

- explanation of the University's grade descriptors (Excellent, Very good etc, see 'Assessment reporting scale') in the context of the subject;
- explanation of the assessment weighting and criteria to be applied for each module;
- explanation of the weighting and criteria to be applied to each separate component of assessment (e.g. coursework assignment, or examination paper).

**Language of assessment**

2.8 All assessment of modules or programmes leading to an academic award of the University must be in the English language, apart from the following exceptions:

- foreign-language modules provided by the University's School of Humanities (Communication & Language Studies);
- modules or equivalent provided and assessed by another university associated with a student exchange approved by the relevant School/College board;
- provision within another higher education organisation that contributes to a University award under an articulation arrangement, or via accreditation of prior learning (APL) – with specific agreement of AAD;
- profoundly deaf students may need assessments to be presented in British Sign Language.

**Re-assessment, re-submission and re-sitting**

2.9 Students have no automatic right to retrieve a failed module and Schools may set criteria which students must fulfil in order to qualify for a retrieval attempt. Students must be provided with clear information for each module regarding the opportunities and requirements for re-assessment including resubmission of coursework and re-sitting examinations. Such information should adhere to the general principle that, normally, undergraduate and postgraduate taught programme modules should allow for one earned summative resubmission or resit with two exceptions:

- no resit or resubmission is allowed for final year modules which count towards Honours classification; and
- where a College Board has approved a module specification which excludes a resit or resubmission opportunity because the nature of the assessment is predicated upon longitudinal performance and participation (e.g. some laboratory based modules and personal academic study skills modules).

2.10 There should be no capping of passing grades for re-sits or re-submissions at level 1 (SCQF Level 7) or level 2 (SCQF Level 8).

**Disabled Students**

2.11 The curriculum, including assessment and examination policies, practices and procedures should be designed to:
• proactively consider accessibility for disabled students in the design and conduct of the assessment;
• allow reasonable adjustments to provide disabled students with the same opportunity as their peers to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes. This may involve making adjustments to the type, scheduling or marking of the assessment in the context of maintenance of academic standards.

2.12 In addition, these should:
• recognise the needs of all types of disability, including physical and mobility difficulties, hearing impairments, visual impairments, specific learning difficulties including dyslexia, medical conditions and mental health problems;
• be widely publicised in an accessible format and easy for students to follow;
• operate with minimum delay;
• allow flexibility in the conduct of the assessment;
• not be dependent on students’ individual funding arrangements;
• be agreed with individual disabled students and all appropriate parties.

2.13 Adjustments and/or alternative assessment and examination arrangements reflecting the needs of disabled students should be implemented when necessary. Such arrangements are dependent upon registration with Disability Services, formal agreement and the development of an agreed learning support plan. Inclusive assessment practices will reduce the need for individual adjustments to be made.

2.14 Further information and guidance is available from the University’s Disability Services (http://www.dundee.ac.uk/disabilityservices/) and in relevant references.

Assessment of flexible, distributed or distance learning

2.15 Appropriate systems must be in place to ensure the effectiveness of assessment for programmes or modules that are offered in flexible, distributed, distance or blended modes. These must ensure that:
• assessed work is properly attributed to students;
• there is confirmation that a student’s assessed work is the original work of the student only;
• that any mechanisms, such as web-based methods or correspondence, for the transfer of work to assessors, are secure and reliable.

Computer aided assessment (Online assessment)

2.16 Procedures concerning online assessment are addressed in the University’s Online Assessment Policy and Procedures.

Plagiarism and academic dishonesty

2.17 Matters concerning plagiarism and academic dishonesty are addressed in the University’s Code of Practice on Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty.
Anonymous marking

2.18 It is University Policy to carry out anonymous marking for written examination papers. This does not include other forms of assessment such as course work, laboratory or clinical assessment. Extension of the policy to such areas is at the discretion of Schools.

Feedback to students on their performance

2.19 Schools should ensure that appropriate and timely feedback is provided to students on all assessed work in ways that promote learning and facilitate improvement. Students should also be given information on the opportunities for receiving feedback.

2.20 Feedback on examination performance at levels 1, 2 and 3 of undergraduate degree programmes, should be an integral part of formative assessment. Colleges should agree with Schools the means by which students are provided with feedback on their performance in each diet of examinations. This should include the opportunity for supervised review of completed examination scripts, wherever possible.

Academic appeals

2.21 Appeals are dealt with in accordance with the University's appeal procedures:

- Undergraduate Appeals
- Postgraduate Appeals

Retention and disposal of assessed work

2.22 Schools should ensure that all assessed work is securely retained within the department for a time period sufficient to:

- facilitate internal moderation and moderation by external examiners;
- be available as evidence in case of a student appeal.

2.23 The normal expectation is that assessed work should be retained for one calendar year following the date of the board of examiners at which grades were awarded.

2.24 Schools should ensure that all assessed work is disposed of in an appropriate manner either by:

- returning it to the student;
- shredding or burning.

3. MARKING AND REPORTING ASSESSMENT

Principles

3.1 The principles guiding assessment reporting include:

- maintaining a system of reporting that is easy for students and other interested parties to understand;
- ensuring that assessment reports are fair, consistent and broadly comparable across different subject areas;
- representing a range of discriminations that are both manageable and meaningful.
3.2 The nature of the assessment process for any particular module (or programme) is considered in the normal module approval process and reviewed periodically as part of the programme review process. In the case of modules not contributing to Honours classification, it is the responsibility of the relevant Programme Board and then School/College Board to determine which marking or reporting scales should be adopted.

3.3 All assessment data held on school databases or spreadsheet should be administered according to principles published by the Registry (see URL), having due regard for relevant law and University policy.

**Use of assessment marking scales**

3.4 Use of appropriate marking scales is a key mechanism for:

a. enforcing discipline-related assessment standards – so schools can ensure that attainment within the grade spectrum is compatible with discipline traditions and external references (such as accrediting bodies, QAA benchmark statements, and the views of external examiners);

b. sustaining uniformity across disciplines – the adoption of appropriate relationships between the marking scale and the standard reporting scale means that the latter can be preserved across disciplines.

3.5 School Boards should decide the appropriate marking scale to use for each assessment element, which may be numerical (e.g. a percentage scale) or literal (i.e. the assessment reporting scale used as a marking scale). Different marking scales may be used for different assessments and their relationship to the assessment reporting scale(s) may differ, as deemed appropriate by school/college boards.

3.6 Where the marking scale or scales differ from the assessment reporting scale, the relationship(s) between these scales and the assessment reporting scale must be made clear to students, e.g. through the module or programme handbook (Appendix 2).

**Aggregation of part-assessment marks**

3.7 Where the overall assessment of a module is comprised of several pieces of assessed work, a means of aggregating the grades is required.

a. Where a numerical marking scale is used, aggregation should occur using these data, before translation into the assessment reporting scale bearing in mind any weightings that individual assignments may have within a module assessment scheme.

b. Where the University's literal assessment reporting scale has been used directly for marking, aggregation should be carried out using the associated numerical aggregation scale (Table 1), bearing in mind any weightings that individual assignments may have within a module assessment scheme. The numerical scale uses 21 points in order to maintain linearity across the grades and minimise aggregation anomalies (i.e. it is not required that Marginal Fail, Clear Fail and Bad Fail be more finely discriminated, but recognition needs to be made that they in effect span 3 points when aggregating with A1 – D3 grades).
c. Where both numerical and literal assessment scales have been used within a module, the School Board should agree an appropriate aggregation procedure.

3.8 The Registry should be consulted on the most appropriate means of submitting marks and carrying out aggregation, which should occur, whenever possible, within the Registry database. Schools may carry out aggregation on their own databases if this is not possible.

3.9 It should be recognised that whatever means of aggregation is used, there are also qualitative issues that should be taken into account by boards of examiners to ensure that the grade given represents the appropriate achievement of the learning outcomes of the module.

Assessment reporting scale

3.10 Two scales may be used to report assessment, depending on the type of module.

Type 1. In certain modules, a simple pass/fail grade for each area and for the module overall is appropriate. This is often where it is a requirement that students pass a range of pre-specified areas of competence or where more finely discriminated grading is judged unsuitable. This type of assessment may include the award of distinction for students whose performance is outstanding according to specified criteria. This type of assessment may not be used for modules that contribute to Honours classification.

Type 2. In all other modules, a 15-point literal scale should be used, with a sixteenth category (N) representing 'no attempt' (Table 1). The points on the scale have the following general descriptors, though these should be more fully described within the context of a particular programme or area of study. Table 1 also indicates the corresponding Honours classification in the case of undergraduate degrees.

Disclosure of provisional marks and results

3.11 Guidelines published by the Registry should be followed in relation to the release of assessment marks. Any information on marks or performance that is provided to students (e.g. for formative purposes) prior to completion of moderation and approval by Boards of Examiners must include an explicit statement that the marks are provisional, and subject to change by moderation, and the decision of the board of examiners. When an individual student's grade or grades have been released on a provisional basis and are later adjusted on intervention of the external examiner and exam board, that student has the right to ask the relevant school to provide him/her with the relevant extract from the minute of the Board of Examiners.
### Table 1 The Fifteen-point Literal Assessment Reporting Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reporting Scale*</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Honours class (where appropriate)</th>
<th>Associated aggregation scale*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A1</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B1</td>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>2(i)</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>2(ii)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D1</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MF</td>
<td>Marginal fail</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CF</td>
<td>Clear fail</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BF</td>
<td>Bad fail</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QF**</td>
<td>Qualified fail***</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* In certain qualitatively marked assessments, the reporting scale will also be used as a marking scale; the associated aggregation scale only applies in such cases (see 3.7(.b))

** QF indicates that a student has not met the conditions required to have obtained an overall pass. Any queries should be directed to the school concerned.

*** Relevant descriptor selected from: CA (Certified Absence); AB (Unauthorised Absence); MC (Medical Certificate); WD (Withdrawn); DC (Discounted); ST (Stopped).

**Honours classification**
3.12 The Honours classification spectrum (see Table 2) represents the minimum criteria to establish consistency for the award of a particular class of Honours degree across the University. It does not reduce the responsibility of Colleges and Schools and their Boards of Examiners to devise their own marking and assessment schemes and to justify on academic grounds and record clearly the exercise of proper academic judgement and discretion.

Table 2 Honours classification spectrum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Honours class</th>
<th>Minimum criteria for award</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1st           | grades at A3 or above in at least 50% of total assessment  
grades at B3 or above in at least 75% of total assessment  
grades at C3 or above in 100% of total assessment |
| 2(i)          | grades at B3 or above in at least 50% of total assessment  
grades at C3 or above in at least 75% of total assessment  
grades at D3 or above in 100% of total assessment |
| 2(ii)         | grades at C3 or above in at least 50% of total assessment  
grades at D3 or above in at least 75% of total assessment |
| 3             | grades at D3 or above in at least 75% of total assessment |

3.13 For every Honours programme the School will specify the modules and the examinations which contribute to the final Honours classification, and the basis of classification. This information must be made available to all students prior to their selecting honours options and commencing study of any Honours components.

3.14 Each School will specify the weighting given to each module and examination or other form of assessment which contributes to the final Honours classification and make that information available to its Honours candidates at the start of their Honours programme.

3.15 Each School will establish more detailed descriptors additional to the basic University descriptors for the award of grades and classes of degree and make that information available to students at the start of their Honours programme.

3.16 Final Honours classification should be based upon performance across the Honours programme as a whole. (Honours programme meaning that part of a degree programme which contributes to Honours classification.)

3.17 In addition, the overall average grade (calculated via the aggregation scale) for each class of Honours must be equal to or higher than one grade below the class boundary: that is B1 for a first, C1 for an upper second, D1 for a lower second and MF for a third.

3.18 The classification criteria above shall be those normally applied. In exercising judgements at the margins, Boards of Examiners may take account of the following advice:
• markedly improved performance in final year may be taken into account where a contribution from an earlier year is an approved element of Honours classification;

• compensation between high and low classes should not necessarily be applied mechanically to candidates with very good first class modules nor to candidates with clear or bad fail modules;

• non-completion of an element of Honours assessment without good cause should result in a grade of N being used in the classification process.

3.19 Where level 3 (SCQF Level 9) modules or level 4 (SCQF Level 10) modules taken in the third year of study count towards Honours classification, any passing grade achieved at a re-sit or re-submission will be considered as a D3 for Honours aggregation purposes.

3.20 However, Boards of Examiners retain the final discretion in the award of an Honours class. This discretion includes compensation for, or condonement of failing grades where a board of examiners is satisfied that programme level intended outcomes have been achieved. (See sections 43-47 below regarding policy for compensation and condonement).

3.21 In cases where programmes are aligned with PSRB requirements, compensation and condonement may not be appropriate depending upon the nature of the requirements of the PSRB.

Assessment for taught postgraduate courses (see also 3.34 below)

3.22 Assessment for taught postgraduate courses should follow the principles and procedures outlined here, and may be reported using either a Type 1 or Type 2 scale (paragraph 3.10 above refers)

3.23 Schools should decide what resit and/or resubmission options are appropriate, taking special account of the needs of international students, for whom resit opportunities are clearly important, especially in one-year programmes.

Reporting results of re-sits or re-submissions

3.24 If a module is not passed at first attempt, the student transcript will show the number of attempts at the module. Re-sit or re-submissions will be marked and the grade reported as normal. Special rules apply for aggregation of re-sit results for any level 3 (SCQF Level 9) modules or level 4 (SCQF Level 10) modules taken in the third year of study that count towards Honours classification (see paragraph 38).

3.25 Re-sits are not allowed for final year modules that count towards Honours classification.

Compensation and condonement

3.26 The University definitions and interpretations of the terms 'compensation' and 'condonement' are noted below. These have been informed by external references.

• Compensation is defined here as the process by which a board of examiners may decide that a strong performance by a student in one part of the curriculum may be used as the basis for the award of credit in respect of a failed performance elsewhere.
Condonement is defined as the process by which a board of examiners, in consideration of the overall performance of a student, decides that without incurring a penalty, a part of the programme that has been failed need not be redeemed.

3.27 Boards of examiners may exercise compensation or condonement based on discretion informed by professional judgment and specific information relating to each case. The following procedures must be applied in any case of compensation or condonement:

- each case must be considered on an individual basis;
- the external examiner(s) must agree with each proposal;
- individual decisions, and the basis of justification, must be recorded in the minutes of the board of examiners;
- the "original" grade (i.e. the mark allocated to the module prior to any discussion of compensation or condonement) will be reported to the Registry, with a suffix "flag" indicating compensation / condonement.

3.28 The student's transcript will show the 'original' grade plus suffix 'flag', and the award of credit for the relevant module, with a footnote explaining that credit was awarded by compensation/condonement within the University's Assessment Policy;

3.29 In considering approaches to compensation and condonement, Examination Boards should also consider any accreditation requirements of relevant professional or statutory bodies (PSBs) regarding compensation or condonement. These may:

- restrict or prevent application of compensation or condonement;
- or require additional procedures, e.g. submission of additional, specific information to the board of examiners.

Policy on penalty points

3.30 In June 2007, Senate approved the following policy on penalty points for either non-attendance at events prescribed by Schools or for the late submission of assessed work:

- the introduction of a penalty system is the responsibility of each of the Colleges;
- it should be equitably and consistently applied within whichever academic unit (College, School) it is introduced;
- it should be transparent to students (and to staff) and published at the start of each module or programme to which it applies;
- it should be amenable to local appeal (Dean or College Vice-Principal);
- particular care should be taken to ensure that there is consistency of application within degree programmes: for example a candidate taking modules from three different Schools (in the MA – Psychology, Geography and History) should not be subject to three different schemes without very good reason; and
- Boards of Examiners must be informed of any incidences of the application of the policy and those incidences recorded in the minutes of Board meetings.
3.31 The extent and nature of compensation and condonement will be monitored annually, as part of annual programme review procedures (see also 5.4).

**Extenuating circumstances including medical evidence**

3.32 Boards of Examiners must take account of extenuating circumstances affecting a candidate's performance. In the case of illness, a medical certificate must be submitted to the School Secretary or the Dean either before an assessment or within seven days thereafter.

**Non-Honours degrees – definition of Distinction**

3.33 The standard definition for the award of all non-Honours degrees with distinction with the exception of the MBChB, BDS and LLB degrees is as follows:

'The Degree may be awarded "with distinction" to candidates who have undertaken a programme of studies which consists of at least 120 credits at SHE level 3 (SCQF Level 9) in any one year of full-time study (or the equivalent in the case of part-time candidates) and who have achieved a grade of B3 or better in each of those level 3 (SCQF Level 9) modules.'

**Merit and Distinction Awards for Taught Postgraduate Programmes**

3.34 (i) for the award of distinction, at least 50% of credits at A3 (i.e. 90 credits for a 180 credit programme) or above plus an overall average of B1 or better with, normally, no module mark below C1;

(ii) for the award of merit, at least 50% of credits at B1 (i.e. 90 credits for a 180 credit programme) or above plus an overall average of B3 or better with, normally, no module mark below C1.

4. MODERATION AND EXTERNAL EXAMINING OF ASSESSMENT

**Internal moderation**

4.1 Internal moderation should be applied to all elements of credit rated assessments, i.e. all assessment that counts towards a student's degree award. This should include the involvement by an academic (the 'internal moderator') other than the module leader / first marker. This internal moderator should have a reasonable knowledge of the subject at the level in question.

4.2 Internal moderation should include consideration of the design of proposed assessment (i.e. coursework assignments, draft examination papers and marking schemes). Specific consideration should be given to use of IT; assessment should use the technology rather than the technology driving the assessment. The process should check:

- does assessment reflect the intended learning outcomes of the module?
- does assessment promote and encourage learning?
- fairness and clarity of assessment.

4.3 Internal moderation of assessed work should consider:

- is the marking fair, rigorous and does it reflect the intended learning outcomes of the module and hence standards?
• comments on general performance by students. What did they do well? What did they do not so well?

Comments should cover samples of all types of work that count towards credit, i.e. all examinations and all coursework assignments. The output should be an agreed set of marks to be submitted to the board of examiners for consideration by the board and external moderation. Feedback provided by the second marker to the first marker may be included as an input to annual module monitoring.

4.4 A variety of approaches may be adopted in terms of:
• approach, ranging from second marking, either open- or blind- through to review and comment;
• extent of work considered, ranging from all work for all students, through to sampling.

4.5 College Boards should approve and monitor the approaches to be used within Schools.

4.6 The following factors should be borne in mind in determining the extent of second marking required:
• the reliability of assessment within the field (assessment tasks which involve a limited range of right answers and which can be objectively assessed will require less scrutiny than assessment tasks that involve interpretation and evaluation);
• the extent to which any one assessed item, or the overall weighting of work assessed by any one examiner, contributes to degree classification or an awarding decision;
• sampling should be guided by the principle that staff time and expertise should be used to best effect to assure standards. The extent of and basis of sampling should depend on the number of students, the number of elements of assessed work, level, conventions in the subject and the nature of the subject and module;
• sampling should at minimum include a strong focus on the margin -where the pass / fail line is drawn. Also the top end to consider how the module encouraged and recognised high achievement. Additionally it would be helpful to focus on any problems or outliers - e.g. problem questions, students taking a specific interpretation of a question or assignment that wasn't originally envisaged, performance by specific groups of students;
• occasionally there may be other factors which may need to be considered, for instance where a less experienced examiner is involved, or where a member of staff is examining outside their main field of expertise.

4.7 Internal moderation should be constructive and developmental. Besides being an element of assurance of standards and quality, it should be seen as both a form of peer support and staff development for academic staff.

External examining
4.8 Policies and guidelines for external examining are covered by a separate policy statement 'Policy and Code of Practice on External Examinining of Taught Programmes'.

5. DEVELOPMENT, REVIEW AND ENHANCEMENT OF ASSESSMENT

Staff training and development

5.1 Staff training and development, at University, College and School levels should provide comprehensive development support and opportunities related to assessment. This should include:

- innovative approaches;
- assessment approaches for specific situations and categories e.g. on-line assessment; assessment for flexible and distributed learning; assessment for disabled students;
- training for specific groups of staff, in particular recently-appointed or staff with limited experience of assessment.

Enhancement of assessment

5.2 Colleges, schools and individual staff are encouraged to enhance approaches to assessment, by reference to reported effective practice both internally and externally, and by innovation. Innovative approaches may involve risk. These risks should be managed in ways that protect students' interests, e.g. by initial small-scale pilots, and by discussing proposed approaches with other staff (within the school, college or from the University's support services).

Monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of assessment

5.3 Effectiveness of assessment should be considered within the following routine procedures: external examining; Annual monitoring; Programme Review.

5.4 School secretaries (or alternative nominee) should scrutinise minutes of all boards of examiners, and submit an annual summary report to School board highlighting significant issues, suggestions for improvement, and examples of any effective practice highlighted in the minutes. The report should include an anonymised summary of all cases of compensation or condonement. These reports should be forwarded to the Director of Policy, Governance and Legal Affairs who shall make an annual report on this topic to the Learning & Teaching Committee.

5.5 The Learning & Teaching Committee may request a thematic review of assessment in general, or any specific aspect.
APPENDIX 1

Glossary of terms and definitions

**Summative assessment** is that which counts towards a module grade and **formative assessment** is that which is produced largely to provide feedback to students on their level of attainment. In practice, the distinction between the two is blurred as some **in-course assessment** (sometimes called continuous assessment) may satisfy both criteria. End of module exams are usually regarded as summative in nature. However, at levels 1-3 the grade obtained also has some formative value.

**Marking** is the application of the professional judgement of an internal or external examiner to provide a **grade** for a piece of student work using a set of **marking criteria**. This judgement generally applies at the point of allocating a grade to a student answer, but may also occur when creating a task or question, if the marking scheme is defined at the same time. A **marking scale** is the scale used for marking and this is not always the same as the aggregation or reporting scales (q.v.). Marking scales can be numerical, alphanumerical or alphabetical.

Generalising, disciplines and/or schools assess in three main styles:

a. **competence-based assessment**, where the student is set a task related to the learning objectives of the course and is allocated a pass with distinction, a pass, or a fail, according to defined criteria;

b. **qualitative assessment**, where the assessor sets exam questions that require (typically) an essay-style answer, and arrives at a professional judgement on a grade for each answer, bearing in mind the learning objectives and marking criteria (qv);

c. **quantitative assessment**, where the assessor sets exam questions that (typically) require selection from options, a calculated answer or a short-form answer. The professional judgement of the assessor is largely applied at the point of creation of the question, and the mark obtained is somewhat mechanically obtained thereafter, often by reference to a marking scheme or set of model answers. In some cases, the marking may be automated. A numerical marking scale is usually employed with this type of assessment.

A key difference between the qualitative and quantitative assessment styles is that the marking and reporting scales are easily treated as the same in the former case, but can only be treated as the same with difficulty in the latter case.

**Aggregation** is the statistical process where two or more assessment components are taken into consideration when arriving at an overall module grade (generally at sub-honours level). A numerical **aggregation scale** is used to carry out this process, employing an algorithm that defines the weightings used for each component. A translation is required between an alphanumerical or alphabetical marking scale and the aggregation scale. A numerical marking scale can be used directly for aggregation. At honours level, a scheme of allocating degree awards operates that specifies, for the range of component assessments, the relative proportions of marks of different grades that may result in a degree of a particular honours
classification. This is specified in the **honours classification spectrum** within the Assessment Policy.

**Reporting** is the process of publication of marks. A **reporting scale** can be numerical, alphanumerical or alphabetical. Grades appearing on a **transcript**, the official University report on a student's attainment, are always in terms of the assessment reporting scale. **eVision** and the **My Dundee 'My Academic Summary' building block** are mechanisms whereby students may view their developing transcript and academic summary online.

**Moderation** is the process whereby the academic validity of the assessment and grading is appraised by a second party - internal (double or multiple marking) or external examiner(s). Marks provided by **internal examiners** and aggregated internally are **provisional** until moderated by colleagues and the **External Examiner(s)** and discussed and agreed at a **School Examination Board**. This is indicated by signature of the External Examiner(s) and Head of School on an official exam mark sheet provided by the Registry. In most cases at level 1-3, this means that Semester 1 module marks are provisional until Exam Boards meet in Spring.

**Double marking** or multiple marking is the internal moderation process where the judgements of two or more markers are taken into account; this may be **blind**, where earlier marks are hidden from a later marker. **Anonymous marking** is where the identity of the student is masked from the marker(s). The former takes place in many schools, but is not mentioned in the assessment policy; whilst the latter is obligatory in written examination papers.

**Grade descriptors** describe the level of attainment at the different grade levels in any assessment scale, which may be banded for this purpose. These may also correspond to the 5 traditional **honours classification** divisions used in most (but not all) HE institutions: first class (1), upper second class (2:1), lower second class (2:2), third (3) class and unclassified.

**Compensation** is defined as the process by which a board of examiners may decide that a strong performance by a student in one part of the curriculum may be used as the basis for the award of credit in respect of a failed performance elsewhere. **Condonement** is defined as the process by which a board of examiners, in consideration of the overall performance of a student, and any extenuating circumstances, decides that without incurring a penalty, a part of the programme that has been failed need not be redeemed. Assessment **penalties** may be exacted for such offences as late submission, academic deceit and plagiarism. The Assessment Policy indicates procedures to be adopted when these adjustments to grades are deemed necessary.

**School** is used to refer to the academic unit responsible for a specific academic programme. In parts of the University, the term 'school board' or 'programme board' may be applicable. A **Programme** is the complete set of modules or elements leading to a degree award. **Learning outcomes** represent the statement of learning intentions, and hence assessment expectations, set-out in the relevant programme or module specification.
APPENDIX 2

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR ASSESSMENT RELATED INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED IN MODULE AND/OR PROGRAMME HANDBOOKS

- **Learning outcomes** at appropriate levels, as deemed appropriate (lecture, practical, tutorial, topic, module, programme)
- **Scheduling and submission dates for assessments and coursework**, including, potentially, an assessment timetable (or information about where this will be published, and when)
- **Details and format of assessments** – including, for example, weighting between in-course and end-of-module assessments, number and types of questions on each paper, duration of paper, word count for in coursework exercises, weightings applied to component assessments, peer assessment details.
- **Clear information on the opportunities and requirements for reassessment** including resubmission of coursework and re-sitting examinations.
- **Descriptive marking criteria** allied to the marking scale or reporting scale or both, as appropriate.
- **The scale or scales used for marking**, and their relationship to the reporting scale and descriptors (where marking does not take place using the reporting scale)
- **Details of the mark aggregation process**, where multiple assessments are involved, including weighting of elements among and within assessments or exam papers;
- **Information about opportunities to receive formative assessment and feedback**
- **A definition of plagiarism as it applies within the programme discipline and types of assessment used** (refer also to the University's Code of Practice on Plagiarism & Academic Dishonesty available at: [http://www.dundee.ac.uk/pgla/dca/discipline/plagiarism/](http://www.dundee.ac.uk/pgla/dca/discipline/plagiarism/))
- **Information about penalties to be exacted for late submission and plagiarism** and the appeal procedures that apply for extenuating circumstances
- **Contact information in relation to disabilities**
- **Information about the provisional nature of results**, especially for Semester 1 modules or assessments

Optional content to be considered for inclusion

- Details of special exam procedures, e.g. for online assessment
- Guidance on appropriate behaviour during assessments
- Model exam questions (and answers)
- Information about where to access past exam papers
- Sample forms used for submission and feedback
APPENDIX 3

LIST OF REFERENCES AND LINKS TO RELATED UNIVERSITY POLICIES

General

- The Higher Education Academy
- QAA: UK Quality Code for Higher Education - Chapter B6: Assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning
- Scottish Enhancement Themes: Assessment

Disabled Students

- University Disability Services
- Teachability web-site. In particular, Section 8 ‘Creating accessible examinations and assessment for disabled students.’
- University of Salford, University of Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan University and UMIST online staff development resource ‘DEMOS: Online Materials for Staff Disability Awareness’, module on assessment
- Equality & Human Rights Commission: 'Assessments & Examinations'

Links to useful websites

- External examining including the conduct of Boards of Examiners and reporting assessment results to the Registry
- Disability statement
- Undergraduate appeals
- Postgraduate appeals
- On-line assessment
- Plagiarism and academic dishonesty
- Equal opportunities