Higher Education Assessment of learning and Competence Policy (Staffordshire University and Pearson)

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Policy Statement for Higher Education Assessment of Learning and Competence

1   Purpose

1.1   The purpose of this policy is to ensure that students studying on a Higher Education programme are made fully aware of the criteria and standards against which student progress and success will be judged.

1.2   To ensure that all students are informed of:

- The timing of assessment, in order that they can prepare work schedules to meet deadlines
- The criteria against which they will be assessed, in order that they can ensure that they are adequately prepared
- The standards to be applied to measure success
- The method(s) by which they will be assessed, to see that these are fair
- The outcome of assessment and the reasons for that outcome, in order that they can judge their own performance for future reference.

2   Principles

2.1   This policy is underpinned by the following principles:

- That all assessments will be carried out in fair and equitable ways, without prejudice or favour
- That any deviation from this policy in favour of one student must be fair to all other students
- That it is the responsibility of the student to ensure understanding of the assessment criteria and standards before presenting for assessment
- That a student has the right of appeal against any outcome of assessment or against the process as long as any appeal falls within the College's Academic Offences Policy. It is the duty of HE Course Leaders to ensure that students are aware of the Higher Education Academic Appeals Policy, to give appropriate guidance to the students and co-operate in the appeals process
- Access and support for exams allow students with special educational needs, disabilities, or temporary injuries to access the assessment without changing the demands of the assessment.

3   Responsibility

3.1   It is the responsibility of the Course Leader and their team to ensure that this policy is applied accurately, and that all appropriate information is made available to Academic Award Boards. Course Leaders must also refer to Staffordshire University and Pearson guidelines for mandatory assessment requirements. The criteria and standards of higher education qualifications delivered as part of an apprenticeship standard, or from an awarding organisation other than Staffordshire University or Pearson are covered by the College's non-HE Assessment of Learning and Competence Policy.

4. Principles of Assessment

4.1   Assessment provides a measure of student performance but also provides students with exposure to a range of assessment methods, informs student development through feedback and acts as a tool to monitor student progress.

4.2   The purpose of assessment is to enable students to demonstrate that they have fulfilled the learning outcomes of the programme of study and achieved the standard require for the award they seek.

4.3 The assessment requirements of each programme must therefore relate to its learning outcomes, reflect the achievement of the individual student in fulfilling programme learning outcomes, and at the same time relate that achievement to a consistent national standard of awards.

4.4 During a normal course of study students will undergo different types of assessment including:

- o Formative: enabling students to obtain feedback on progress and pointing out areas and strategies for improvement.
- o Summative: providing clear statement about performance in relation to stated objectives.

4.5 Summative assessment counts towards the final element/module/unit mark and must therefore be marked, independently marked, and moderated in accordance with the partner university or awarding body requirements.

4.6 Summative assessment must always be carried out by competent and impartial examiners, using methods which enable them to assess students fairly and provide timely and effective feedback on their performance.

4.7 Summative assessment components must be adhered to by staff and clearly communicated to students. The formally defined elements of assessment, their weightings and size for each module/unit are outlined in course documentation and must be adhered to.

4.8 In addition to summative assessment, formative assessment can be set to promote effective learning. Formative assessment provides students with feedback on their performance before summative assessment takes place. It does not count towards the final element/module/unit mark and may not always be marked. Formative assessments do not need to be independently marked or moderated.

4.9 The process for administering assignments and examinations must be secure and ensure that all students are treated fairly.

5. Assessment Design and Planning

5.1 Students will be provided with a variety of assessment methods.

5.2 The design of assessments should be informed by effective pedagogic practice and take into account feedback received from peers, students, and external examiners.

5.3 Assessment tasks must be changed sufficiently from year to year to account for students that may be repeating modules/units

5.4 Programme induction should include information on assessment practices and understanding marking criteria.

5.5 Module/Unit guides should give precise details of each assignment, including length/workload equivalence, format, style, weighting, submission deadline, resources available, LOs tested, clear assessment criteria and the referencing protocol in line with the approved Module/Unit Specification.

5.6 Assignment deadlines and return dates will be established at the start of the academic year with a balanced assignment schedule where assignment deadlines, are carefully planned so as to avoid excessive 'bunching' for students and staff.

5.7 Module/Unit Tutors will not change the deadlines published in the assignment schedule without the agreement of the Course Leader.

5.8 Updated and approved copies of assignment schedules will be published to the students via Canvas.

6. Assessment Feedback and Return of Assessed Work

6.1 Principles:

6.1.1 Students at Burton and South Derbyshire College have the opportunity to use originality checking software (Turnitin) prior to submitting their work.

6.1.2 Students should have access to face-to-face feedback for at least the first piece of assessment each academic year.

6.1.3 Students should be supported to review their own work and that of fellow students. Peer review and self-reflection is an important skill for future employment as well as deepening their own learning.

6.1.4 Where possible students work should be marked anonymously. Anonymous marking provides reassurance for students and staff against the perception of discrimination. Where anonymous marking is not possible there should be stringent measures to blind double mark.

6.1.5 Students should be given the opportunity to submit their assessments electronically providing a clear and secure system has been established to ensure that work is not lost, and confidentiality is retained.

6.1.6 Receiving feedback should not be exclusive to certain forms of assessment. Students should receive a mark and feedback for every piece of work submitted as a formal summative assignment and for all formal summative examinations (as specified in the Module/Unit Specification).

6.1.7 Feedback must be clear and detailed to enable the student to comprehend their mark and to learn from the comments provided. Written feedback must be legible and oral feedback should be clear and understandable and conducted in an appropriate manner/setting etc. The format for providing feedback (e.g. written, verbal, audio, video or electronic) should be appropriate to the assessment.

6.1.8 Feedback to students should be constructive and include the assessed mark. Feedback should:
   o be appropriately critical, highlighting areas of strength and areas for development
   o focus on how an improved mark could have been achieved and should help students to improve on their performance in subsequent assessments
   o explain why the students gained the mark awarded
   o be directly related to the intended learning outcomes and relevant generic assessment criteria as well as more specifically to the marking criteria as set for the assignment and detailed within the assignment brief
   o refer students to additional/further support when and where appropriate.

6.2 Feedback:

6.2.1 Feedback on all written assignments will be provided to students within 20 working days from the submission date.

6.2.2 Feedback should be given on an appropriate feedback form as outlined by Staffordshire University or Pearson.

6.2.3 Feedback on summative assessments should normally be given to students on an individual basis but may be supported by more generic feedback for the whole group.

6.2.4   Written feedback must be legible and normally word processed but may be hand-written on the feedback template, and oral feedback should be clear and understandable and conducted in an appropriate manner/setting etc.   Written feedback should normally be returned electronically providing a clear and secure system has been established to ensure that feedback is not lost, and confidentiality is retained.

6.2.5   The agreed mark awarded for each assessment should be provided to students as part of any summative assessment feedback. Students should be made aware that no mark, for coursework or examination, is final until ratified by the appropriate Assessment Boards or External Examiner.

6.2.6   Any student dissatisfied with the process or outcome of an assessment has the right of appeal as outlined within the Higher Education Academic Appeals Policy.

6.3   Penalties for late submission of work:

6.3.1   Staffordshire University Courses: Summative assessed work submitted after the published deadline, will be penalised in accordance with Staffordshire University Assessment Regulations (available at https://www.staffs.ac.uk/students/course-administration/academic-policies-and-regulations/home). However, staff are advised to mark late submissions and provide feedback to students, including the mark they would have received had they submitted their work on time.

6.3.2   Pearson HN courses: Summative assessed work submitted after the deadline will be capped at a Pass

6.4   Resubmission of Work (Pearson HNs Only) A student may request or be offered a resubmission:

6.4.1   One resubmission is allowed if a student does not achieve a Pass on first submission for the overall unit (same assignment)

6.4.2   The reassessment opportunity will be capped at Pass for that unit

6.4.3   A student will not be entitled to be reassessed in any component for which a Pass or higher has already been awarded

6.4.4   Arrangements for resubmitting assessments must be made in such a way that it does not adversely affect other assessments and does not give the student an unfair advantage.

6.4.5   Resubmissions can be authorised by the Course Leader or the Award Board.

6.4.6   A list of all resubmissions authorised by the Course Leader must be submitted to the Award Board and made available to the External Examiner (EE) for review and discussion to ensure that the Award Board and EE have oversight of all authorised resubmissions.

6.5   Pearson Guidance on awarding of higher grades:

- Merit and Distinction criteria are already contextualised in the specification grading criteria.
- They are a qualitative extension of the assessment criteria for Pass.
- Merit and Distinction cannot be awarded if Pass has not been achieved.

6.6   Repeated Units Staffordshire University:

- Please refer to Staffordshire Assessment Regulations (available at https://www.staffs.ac.uk/students/course-administration/academic-policies-and-regulations/home).

6.7   Repeated Units Pearson HN (if a student does not achieve a Pass on first or resubmission):

- A unit can be repeated if the assessment board decide it is an appropriate course of action
- The unit will be studied again in full
- The unit will be capped at a Pass grade
- Units can only be repeated once.

7. Mitigating/Extenuating Circumstances

7.1   Extensions, without penalty, may be allowed in cases of illness or genuine mitigating personal circumstances provided that the relevant 'mitigating/extenuating circumstances form' accompanied by evidential paperwork where necessary has been completed prior to the assessment deadline.

8. Additional Learning Support

8.1   Students who have an identified support need and who are in receipt of a Disability Student Allowance may be entitled to adjustments to the examination process. Details of DSA reports outlining specific needs are held by Learner Services/MIS.

8.2   In addition to this staff should also consider the guidelines from their relevant awarding body regarding considerations for the marking the work of a deaf or hearing impaired student, a student with dyslexia or any other student with specific learning differences, whose disability affects language processing and written academic English.

9. Academic Offences

9.1   Suspicion of an academic offence (for example, plagiarism or cheating), whether in a coursework assignment or an examination, must be investigated as soon as identified in accordance with the relevant awarding body or the Burton and South Derbyshire Malpractice and Maladministration Policy

9.2   Apart from any initial discussions between the student and the Course Leader informing them that their work is still under consideration by internal markers (an issue has been identified) all direct contact with a student under suspicion of an academic offence should be formal and documented.

9.3   When designing assessments, staff should endeavour to use strategies which minimise opportunities for plagiarism including the misuse of AI. These could include:
- changing the format and nature of the assessment e.g. poster, letter
- linking the brief to specific primary data, students' personal experiences, current news items/themes in the discipline
- using assignments that integrate learning activities e.g. classroom tasks, field work, research
- avoiding where possible assignments with only one solution
- asking for drafts of work to be kept by the student and made available if required; providing opportunities to share work in progress.

9.4   Students must be advised about the consequences of plagiarising, self-plagiarising and the misuse of AI on their assessment brief and be supported to develop appropriate skills to avoid this.

10. Publication of End of Year Results

10.1   Staff should not provide or discuss any information directly or indirectly to any candidate regarding overall performance until after the results have been formally ratified and published after the assessment boards. Results must not be communicated to students by telephone. Students will be sent their results by agreed methods within the agreed deadlines outlined in the assessment boards. It is not permitted to discuss results with anyone other than the candidate unless they have given their express permission.