BIRMINGHAM CITY University

Assessment and Feedback Policy

Effective from September 2026

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1. Introduction

1.1 This policy sets out the University's principles and procedures relating to the assessment of students. It has been designed to take full account of Principle 11 (Teaching Learning and Assessment) of the QAA Quality Code (June 2024). The policy aims to ensure academic standards, rigor and fairness through the application of consistent and transparent assessment processes.

1.2 The policy complements and should be read in conjunction with the following policies and procedures:

- Academic Appeals procedure
- Academic Misconduct Procedure
- Admissions Policy
- AI Guidance
- Course Approval Policy and Procedure
- Course monitoring and enhancement Policy and Procedure
- Extenuating Circumstances Procedure
- External Examining and External Expertise Policy
- Periodic Review Handbook
- Retention of Assessed Work Policy

1.3 The policy also supplements and expands upon the information and requirements set out within the University's Academic Regulations in respect of assessment.

1.4 This policy addresses all aspects of the assessment process from fundamental principles underpinning the assessment process and the development of assessment tasks to marking, feedback to students, external moderation and Module Assessment Boards (MABs) and Progression and Award Boards (PABs).

1.5 The policy applies equally to Birmingham City University (BCU) and its approved UK and international academic partner institutions/organisations (except where otherwise agreed) and BTEC Higher National awards conferred under the University's licence agreement with Pearson Education Ltd.

1.6 Any queries regarding matters of interpretation and application of this policy should be referred in the first instance to the Director of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Department. If a formal interpretation is required, the matter will be referred on to the Pro Vice Chancellor Education and Student Experience as Chair of the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC).

1.7 Quality assurance processes such as course approval and course monitoring and enhancement will ensure that the design of assessments and the assessment process are carried out in accordance with this policy. Support for designing assessment is provided within the assessment packages (see 1.10).

1.8. The policy focuses specifically on the assessment of taught provision. Assessment and examining in respect of postgraduate research provision is governed by separate regulations and policies. Further information can be obtained from the Doctoral Research College.

1.9 A glossary of terms used in the assessment process is provided at Appendix 1.

1.10 A suite of packages is available for colleagues to support with the design of assessment, feedback and application of the University's standardised marking criteria. Details of the packages are as follows:

- BCU Package of Assessment: Design and Delivery
- BCU Package of Feedback: Design and Delivery
- BCU Standardised Marking Criteria and Guidance

2. Definitions of assessment

2.1 This policy establishes the following definitions of assessment:

- Formative assessment refers to assessment for learning. It is an informal evaluation process designed to support students' academic development by providing constructive feedback on their work and guidance on areas for improvement. The primary purpose of formative assessment is to enhance learning rather than to contribute to final grades. Accordingly, marks awarded for formative assessments do not contribute to the final grade for a course, module, or award.

- Summative assessment refers to assessment of learning. It is used to evaluate the extent to which a student has successfully met the assessment criteria and achieved the intended learning outcomes. Summative assessments provide a measure of academic performance, and the marks obtained contribute to the final grade for the course, module, or award.

3. Principles of assessment

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all aspects of the assessment process align with the principle that all students are given a fair and equal opportunity to demonstrate academic achievement.

3.1. The following core principles apply to assessment at Birmingham City University:

(i) Assessment is fair, equitable and inclusive:

3.1.1 In developing courses leading to a BCU award, schools and academic partner institutions/organisations are required to take full account of the Office for Students Provisions and, where applicable, the requirements of any professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB).

3.1.2 Assessment strategies for courses measure student achievement of approved learning outcomes for individual modules, in accordance with the following:

- A common set of regulations governing assessment contained within the Academic Regulations, which are published annually by the University and made available to students on the Student Contract page of the website;
- Assessment methods for a module and weightings are clearly stated in the module specification;
- Marking standards, comprising bands of marks outlined in the University's Standardised Marking Criteria (see BCU Standardised Marking Guidance), are used to distinguish between grades of student achievement;
- The determination of award classifications and other levels of overall student achievement are clearly defined in the Academic Regulations;
- The format of assessments and the range of assessment types used are designed to ensure participation by all students at all locations taking account of the needs of students from different cultural/ educational backgrounds, with additional learning needs, or with protected characteristics;
- The assessment process and procedures and individual assessment methods are sufficiently flexible to allow for individual reasonable adjustments so that every student has an equal opportunity to demonstrate their achievement.

3.1.3 The Academic Misconduct Policy procedure considers any allegation of an assessment offence by an individual student or group of students. Information about assessment offences and the procedure governing them is made available to students when they first register at BCU. Further detail on academic integrity and academic misconduct is provided in Section 10.

3.1.4 The ASQC is responsible for keeping the above under review and for approving and securing the implementation of appropriate assessment procedures.

3.1.5 In carrying out this responsibility the ASQC is informed by the outcomes of the course monitoring and enhancement process.

(ii) Assessment is reliable, consistent and valid:

3.1.6 In their delivery of courses leading to a BCU award at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, schools and academic partners are required to ensure that assessment is reliable, fair and valid by adhering to the following key principles:

- the academic standards for each course and its constituent modules are set and maintained at the appropriate level, in accordance with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and are comparable with other courses/awards at the same level;
- assessments should be designed to enable students to demonstrate achievement of the intended module and course learning outcomes;
- formative and summative assessments are fully integrated into the learning process (the T2 template for the formative activity schedule should be used across all appropriate areas)
- marking criteria inform the assessment process to ensure parity between the judgements of different markers (see BCU Standardised Marking Criteria and Guidance)
- the validity of assessments and their ongoing suitability is reviewed through the Course monitoring and enhancement process.

3.1.7 The ASQC is responsible for keeping the above under review. In carrying out this responsibility the ASQC is informed by the outcomes of the Course Approval/re-approval and Course monitoring and enhancement processes.

3.1.8 Coursework submissions are normally planned outside of the formal assessment periods (APs). This is to ensure that only exams are timetabled during the AP, thus avoiding overload of assessments and exam timetable clashes.

(iii) The assessment process is objective and transparent

3.1.9 In their delivery of courses leading to a BCU award at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, Schools and academic partners are required to ensure objectivity and transparency in the assessment process by adhering to the following key principles:

- all examination scripts are subject to anonymous marking;
- all other items of assessment are subject to anonymous marking wherever possible. In cases where this is not possible the Module Leader and course team must ensure that there is a sufficient measure of independence in the marking and moderation process (e.g. second marking, sample moderation) (see also paragraph 9.4.4 below);

- all items of assessment (including those for level 3 and 4 modules) are subject to internal moderation where an approved award is made;
- the determination of award classifications and other levels of overall student achievement are defined in the Academic Regulations. There is no discretion to alter marks or awards once these have been approved respectively by the progression and award process (see sections 14 and 15 below) and internal and external moderation is completed.

(iv) Independence in the assessment process

3.1.10 In their delivery of courses leading to a BCU award at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, schools and academic partners are required to ensure independence in the assessment process by adhering to the following key principles:

- the assessment methods for individual modules are agreed through an approval process which normally includes a subject specialist external to the University;
- approval of a student's assessment outcome for individual modules is made by the MAB in conjunction with one or more appointed external examiners;
- all items of assessment which contribute towards a student's individual award are subject to external moderation by an external examiner(s);
- awards are made by the Progression and Award Board (PAB), attended by one or more external examiners (alternative arrangements are made if unforeseen circumstances exceptionally prevent an external examiner from attending such a meeting – see Guide on the Operation and Conduct of Exam Boards
- student appeals in relation to assessment processes are considered in accordance with the Academic Appeals Procedure. Similarly, student extenuating circumstances claims are considered in accordance with the Extenuating Circumstances Procedure.

4. Academic governance

4.1 Academic Board is ultimately responsible for the academic standards of BCU awards. The Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) supports it in meeting this responsibility.

4.2 ASQC has responsibility for the approval of procedures for assessment, marking and moderation. It is also responsible for the approval of any amendments to the regulations. ASQC periodically reviews the effectiveness of the arrangements for marking and moderation and recommending changes where appropriate.

4.3 School Education and Quality Committees (SEQCs) are responsible for ensuring that schools and the taught courses for which they are responsible operate in accordance with the University's requirements for assessment, marking and moderation as set out in this policy.

4.4 SEQCs also maintain oversight of the course monitoring and enhancement process for all courses within the school. It is responsible for identifying themes, trends and priorities that contribute to the ongoing enhancement and development of modules.

4.5 Birmingham City University staff and appointed external examiners are responsible for carrying out their designated roles in accordance with the requirements set out within this policy, the Academic Regulations and the External Examining and External Expertise Policy.

5. The Academic Calendar

5.1 The University operates an academic calendar based on a standard September start date. Where courses do not follow the standard calendar, students should be provided with an alternative calendar. Most courses are delivered in a standard pattern of learning and teaching periods based on:

- two periods in the academic year (September – January and January – June) known as Semesters 1 and 2 or;
- three periods in a complete 12-month period (September – January, January – June and June – September) known as Semesters 1, 2 and 3;
- variations from a standard September start date are approved by the Commercial and Academic Portfolio Committee and then ASQC on behalf of Academic Board at the point of initial approval of the course.

5.2 Normally semesters 1, 2 and 3 each comprise of 12 weeks of learning and teaching followed by an assessment, marking and moderation period (referred to as the AP1, AP2, AP3 and AP4 assessment periods).

5.3 Re-assessment opportunities are provided at designated periods in the academic year. Semester 1 resits are held in AP2 and Semester 2 resits are held in AP3. Semester 3 re-sits occur in Semester 1 of the following academic year.

5.4 The standard academic calendar is available here.

5.5 Students studying at one of the University's academic partner institutions normally undertake assessment tasks at the same time as students studying BCU modules and courses in the UK unless otherwise formally agreed (NB: start times of individual examinations may differ due to different time zones but will nevertheless take place on the same date).

6. Module guides and assessment briefs

6.1 Module Leaders are responsible for providing students with information about the module which must include details on assessment. The information should elaborate on the detail provided in the module specification to provide students with the basic information needed about each module they are taking. This information should be provided within an Assessment Brief. The University's standard assessment brief (T1) is available in the BCU Package of Assessment: Design and Delivery and/or via the Moodle template. It is recommended that colleagues include supplementary assessment instructions (eg: assessment guidance video, case study, previous examples etc) alongside the assessment brief.

6.2 Module information, including assessment information, should be provided at the commencement of each occurrence of the module. The information should, as a minimum, include (this is not an exhaustive list):

(i) Teaching and contact information
- Teaching plan/schedule of activities (T2 formative activity and assessment schedule)
- Names and contact details of the module leader and relevant teaching staff

(ii) Assessment details (See BCU Package of Assessment: Design and Delivery)
- Summative assessment methods, including:
  - Weighting of individual elements
  - Specific requirements, including use of AI in assessment (see T1 assessment brief template and AI1 AI permission levels)
- In person assessment elements (e.g. presentations, in class tests), including scheduled dates/times where appropriate
- Group work elements to include guidance on how group assessment will be carried out and marked (see BCU's Principles of Group Work/Assessments for guidance)
- Formative assessment tasks (see T2 formative activity and assessment schedule)
- Re-assessment methods and opportunities

(iii) Assessment criteria and grading
- Criteria outlining how work will be graded
- Details of marking schemes and/or grade descriptors (refer to BCU Standardised Marking Criteria)

(iv) Submission requirements
- Submission deadlines, locations and procedures
- Consequences of late, incomplete or non-submission (refer to section 76 of the academic regulations)

(v) Additional requirements:
- Any Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements applicable to the module or its assessment
- Academic integrity guidelines or consequences of poor academic practice (refer to the University's Academic Misconduct Procedure)
- Information on the retention of assessed work (see T1 Assessment Brief Template and refer to the Retention of Assessed Work Policy)

7. Assessment setting and design

7.1 Information on the module assessment

7.1.1 The module specification describes the delivery and assessment methods approved for the module. The module specification is in effect a contract between the institution and the student and is therefore an extremely important document. Module Leaders ensure that the delivery of a module for which they are responsible conforms in all respects with the information given in the module specification. Only the definitive approved module specification held by Quality Assurance and Enhancement should be used.

7.1.2 Staff can access every module specification from the definitive course and module specification library facility on SharePoint (accessible here).

7.2. Module assessment – design stage

7.2.1 The Module Leader(s) is responsible for coordinating the preparation of assessment tasks for all locations of delivery, including academic partners in the UK and overseas. These tasks are normally identical at all locations of delivery. Where this is not possible for good reason, for example different time zones or a need to contextualize the assessment to fit the local context, the Module Leader ensures comparability and equivalence of such tasks. Module Leaders also ensure that where a separate assessment task, such as an examination paper, is required in different time zones that all papers required for that assessment period are prepared at the same time.

7.2.2 Considerations in module assessment design include (but are not limited to):

(i) Alignment with learning outcomes

- Constructive alignment between intended learning outcomes (ILOs), teaching and learning activities and assessment tasks.
- Assessments explicitly address all module ILOs.

(ii) Assessment planning

- Assessment volume, variety and timing are managed from a course-level perspective to ensure the achievement of course learning outcomes.
- The CLO Assessment Elements Mapping Template should be used to provide a holistic overview of the relationships between the CLOs and assessment elements.

(iii) Inclusivity and alternative assessment modes

- Assessment design considers inclusivity and provides opportunities for alternative assessment methods where appropriate
- Students should be provided with an assessment choice where appropriate. Different assessment choices must be the same amount of work for students. For more information on assessment choice, please contact the Quality Assurance and Enhancement department.

(iv) Use of external feedback and evaluation

- External examiners' reports and previous student evaluation outcomes are reviewed and incorporated to enhance assessment design and delivery.

(v) Academic integrity and good academic practice

- Assessments are designed to promote academic integrity and reduce opportunities for academic misconduct.

7.2.3 While the module specification outlines only the summative assessment requirements, effective learning, teaching and assessment strategies should also incorporate formative assessment. Formative assessment plays a vital role in promoting student engagement with feedback, promoting reflection and supporting deeper learning. Modules should therefore include opportunities for formative assessment alongside summative tasks, recognizing that these forms of assessment often intersect and complement one another.

7.2.4 Submission dates for assessment tasks apply equally to academic partners in the UK and overseas unless exceptionally agreed otherwise by the Collaborative Partnerships Committee ensuring that students in different cohorts are treated fairly. A single submission date must be included in the module information contained on Moodle or in a published module guide (though students may submit their work in advance of this date if they wish to do so).

7.2.5 Each school/department is responsible for determining the exact dates of submission and this information is published as part of the module information. It is strongly recommended that deadlines for modules at levels 5, 6 and 7 (which require internal and external moderation and therefore require more time to complete the marking and moderation process) are set earlier than for modules at levels 3 and 4.

7.2.6 Assessment tasks for the re-assessment periods (e.g. a further examination or set of essay questions) are set at the same time as the tasks for the main assessment period in order to ensure comparability and equivalence and to ensure more efficient use of external examiners' time. Where the assessment task is unique to the student (e.g. a case study, artistic artefact or performance, major project) the same assessment task may be used for re-assessment. In other cases, a new version of the task can be set where this is considered appropriate (e.g., a different set of essay questions). It is also acceptable to require students to resubmit a revised version of the same task (e.g., a revised version of the same essay) for re-assessment to enable reflection on feedback and to revise their original work.

7.2.7. If an assessment task cannot easily be repeated for the purposes of re-assessment (e.g. contribution to a group presentation), an alternative assessment task, which tests the relevant module learning outcomes, should be agreed by the Module Leader in conjunction with the Course Leader. Students should be informed of the re-assessment task at the earliest opportunity so that they have sufficient time to prepare in the event of failure.

<u>Coursework:</u>

7.2.8. Coursework, including portfolios can consist of a collection of tasks that assess relevant learning outcomes. Assessment components can include (this is not exhaustive): case studies, MCQs, reflective writing, exhibition pieces, artefacts, presentations, reports or video essays. The components may vary in type and format but should not overload students with multiple assessments and should be mapped to the course learning outcomes to avoid over-assessment. Written examinations cannot be included as a component within a portfolio.

7.2.9 Coursework must not have separate submission dates within it; the only submission date specified will be the final deadline. Each component within a piece of coursework does not have to be passed in its own right, unless explicitly required by a PSRB, provided the coursework is passed overall.

In-class tests:

7.2.10 For in-class assessments students should be given enough notice (e.g. a minimum of 2 weeks) and the length of time should ideally be normally no more than 2 hours).

7.2.11 If the in-class assessment is a summative assessment and the Student Lifecycle Team in Student and Academic Services has been asked by the relevant School to make the arrangements, the team must be notified no later than week 2 of the semester (and at least 4 weeks in advance of the test date). Careful consideration must be given to the scheduling, invigilation and logistics, especially for summative assessments.

7.2.12 If the in-class assessment is formative or is due to take place outside one of the main assessment periods, the school is responsible for making arrangements (including room booking, invigilation and special arrangements).

7.3 Module assessment – in-year retrieval

Please note that the availability of in-year retrieval opportunity is limited to a small proportion of students who are subject to the outgoing academic regulations in 2025/26.

7.3.1 In-year retrieval (IYR) refers to a feature of a module's assessment design where students achieving below the minimum pass mark in an assessment task at the first attempt are given an opportunity to utilise the feedback provided to improve the work originally submitted. The IYR should be completed within a short time after the initial attempt and normally no later than 30 working days from the release of the confirmed marks for the first attempt. For some assessment tasks it may be permissible for the work to be undertaken after teaching has ended, however it must be completed in sufficient time to enable marking to take place prior to the relevant MAB (or resit MAB). Marks for the IYR attempt will be capped at the pass mark for the module (40% UG, 50% PG).

7.3.2 The provision of IYR opportunities for assessments is a matter for individual schools to determine as detailed in the Academic Regulations. Although it is optional it is encouraged, in particular for assessments at levels 3 and 4 and where there is sufficient time for the IYR submissions to be marked, moderated and marks processed in time for a MAB. It must be clearly articulated to students where IYR is available for an assessment task(s) within a module. This will normally be as part of the module information provided on the Moodle site for the module and/or via an assessment brief.

7.3.3 Where an IYR opportunity is available on a coursework task, it comes into effect if a student does not achieve the required pass mark. Students receive feedback on their initial attempt and then have a choice of re-working the same assessment, with the benefit of the feedback, to improve the work to a pass standard. Tutors marking the IYR submission will be marking to threshold and will therefore determine whether the IYR submission is of a pass standard.

7.3.4 If the IYR attempt mark is lower than the original mark, then the original mark will stand and will remain as the recorded mark in SITS. This mark, together with marks from any other tasks, will be used to calculate the overall module mark.

7.3.5 Students do not have to take up the IYR opportunity. If a student chooses not to complete the IYR or completes it without achieving the pass standard, they will still be entitled to a resit opportunity as part of the standard assessment cycle for each module.

7.3.6 The following specific requirements also apply to IYR:

- IYR is not permitted for students who have already achieved a pass mark on the first submission;
- IYR is not permitted on examination assessment tasks;
- IYR is only available if a student has made a valid attempt at the original assessment task. Students who fail to submit work by the submission deadline (including the standard 7-day late submission period specified in the Academic Regulations) are classed as a non-submission and are therefore not permitted an IYR opportunity;
- Students who do not submit work by the IYR submission deadline (or submit more than 1 hour after the published deadline) will be deemed to have failed the IYR attempt in line with the late submission regulations that apply to re-assessment attempts;
- Students cannot make an extenuating circumstances (EC) claim against an IYR attempt. They may claim ECs for the first attempt within the timescales prescribed in the Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure. In exceptional cases where an EC claim has been submitted against the first attempt but a decision has not been made before the IYR submission deadline, the IYR opportunity is still available.
  If the EC claim is subsequently upheld, students have two options:
  i) Take a sit for an uncapped mark at the next available opportunity, in accordance with the regulations on extenuating circumstances (section 7 of the Academic Regulations)
  ii) Decline the EC and accept the IYR mark.
- Students do not normally receive further feedback on the IYR attempt. A student may receive further feedback in the event that they fail the IYR attempt to help them to prepare for the resit attempt.

7.4 Internal and external verification of assessment tasks

To be read in conjunction with the Guide on the Operation and Conduct of Exam Boards.

7.4.1 The process of verification ensures that the form and content of assessment tasks and assessment briefs are appropriate, fair and valid. It should measure the achievement of intended learning outcomes and ensure the standard of the assessments is commensurate with the level of study and comparable with the standard of assessments of the same level set at other UK Higher Education institutions. Please refer to BCU's Package of Assessment: Design and Delivery for verification templates.

7.4.2 Individuals with responsibility for internal verification of assessment tasks will ensure that each assessment:

- is appropriate for the module and level of study;
- enables students to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes;
- uses the correct module title, code and assessment weighting as defined in the module specification;
- contains all the information necessary for a student to undertake the task through clear, accessible language and layout;
- is accompanied by assessment criteria/grade descriptors.

7.4.3 In addition, the external verification process ensures that the standard of assessments is consistent, appropriate to the level of study and comparable with the standard of assessments set by other institutions within the sector.

(i) Timescales for verification

7.4.4 Coursework – internal and external verification should be completed by launch of the module.

7.4.5 Examinations – final versions of examination papers for examinations taking place in one of the formal assessment periods set out in the standard academic calendar, must be submitted to the Student Lifecycle Team in Student and Academic Services no later than 8 weeks prior to the assessment period. A minimum of 4-6 weeks should normally be allowed between production of the examination paper and submission to the Student Lifecycle Team. This will enable sufficient time for internal and external verification to take place. For digital examinations due to be administered by the Student Lifecycle Team, the examination must be submitted no later than 8 weeks prior to the date of the examination.

7.4.6 Although the timescales for coursework and examinations differ slightly, it is preferable for both coursework and examinations to be externally verified at the same time to enable external examiners to view all assessment tasks simultaneously.

(ii) Internal verification

7.4.7 The internal verification process for assessment tasks takes place within Departments. Verification should be undertaken independently by staff who do not have direct involvement with the assessment(s). Responsibility for the internal verification process rests with the Course Leader. Course teams should adopt one of the three approved approaches to assessment verification, either an Internal Verification Panel, Independent Peer Review process or a Buddying Approach. Course Leaders will ensure that the verification process is carried out appropriately and to the required timescales set out above.

7.4.8 Where a separate task is required for the re-assessment period this should be set at the same time (see 7.2.6 above) as the task(s) for the main assessment period and both should be internally verified together and sent on for external verification together.

7.4.9 Records of internal verification should be maintained within the Department in accordance with the Retention Schedule. The minimum requirement for internal verification is the same as that for external verification as set out in 7.4.11 below. However, departments can carry out internal verification for other draft assessments including levels of study that do not normally contribute to the final classification if deemed necessary. This may, for example, be necessary to meet the requirements of a PSRB.

(iii) External verification

7.4.10 Course Teams are responsible for ensuring that external examiners are provided with draft assessment tasks for review following internal verification in accordance with the requirements set out in the External Examining and External Expertise Policy. Course teams are also required to maintain local records to track when assessment briefs have been sent to External Examiners, confirmation of receipt, date feedback received and any actions required and completed.

7.4.11 An assessment task that contributes more than 25% of the overall assessment for a module will be subject to external verification. In most cases the modules will be at level 5 or higher. For awards such as Cert HE and HNC, modules at level 4 contribute towards classification and draft assessment tasks should therefore also be subject to external verification.

7.4.12 External examiners are expected to review the draft assessments and to comment on whether:

- there is evidence of appropriate academic standards i.e. the task set is suitable for the level of the module and is comparable to similar provision elsewhere;
- the requirements of the task are clear with no ambiguities;
- the task is fair;
- the task or combination of different tasks provides suitable coverage

of the module's intended learning outcomes and content.

7.4.13 External examiners are provided with appropriate IT access to enable them to view the relevant module specifications, assessment information and assessment criteria. All tasks should be provided to the external examiner at the same time to allow them to comment on the assessment for a module in its entirety.

7.4.14 External examiners will normally be expected to respond with any comments or recommendations within 10 working days of receipt of the draft assessment tasks. If comments have not been received within this time frame the assessment task can be released to students, or in the case of examination papers submitted to the Student Lifecycle Team. For re-sits, the examination must be submitted no later than 4 weeks prior to the date of the examination. External examiners will also have an opportunity to comment on the standard of assessments in their annual report.

7.4.15 On receipt of comments from the external examiner, the relevant Module Leader will consider the comments and any recommendations and respond/make amendments to the assessment as appropriate.

7.5 Collaborative partnerships: assessment setting and approval

7.5.1 Where courses and/or modules are only taught at an academic partner (e.g. under a validation arrangement where the curriculum is the intellectual property of the partner, or a module that is only taught at a partner institution under a franchise arrangement) the responsible Department nominates an appropriate member of academic staff to co-ordinate the assessment process, this will normally be the appointed Link Tutor. This includes the arrangements for internal and external verification and internal/external moderation.

7.5.2 For transnational education (TNE) partners the timings and requirements may differ depending on the academic calendar and assessment schedule for that partnership.

7.5.3 In cases where TNE partners are designing and setting assessment tasks for modules, the draft assessments will be checked internally at the partner before being sent by the partner Module Leader to the Link Tutor at BCU. The Link Tutor (or another appropriate member of academic staff within the department) will scrutinise the draft assessment tasks set by the partner in line with the requirements for internal verification set out in 7.4.2 above. If the assessments are considered appropriate, they are then sent on to the appointed external examiner to carry out the external verification prior to distribution to students.

8. Submission of assessment

8.1 The submission of work for assessment by the published deadline (or extension, where granted) is the sole responsibility of the student. This includes the responsibility to ensure that it is the correct version of the work that they wish to be considered for assessment. This section should be read in conjunction with the Retention of Assessed Work policy.

8.2 Online submission is the norm across the University for all levels of study. Most coursework is in an electronic form which is suitable for submission online. It is, however, recognised that there may be some specialist coursework or assessment types which cannot be submitted online, for example:

- presentations/exhibitions/installations
- in-class submissions (e.g. lab tests)
- physical artefacts
- some types of large electronic files
- some dissertations/major projects

8.3 Online submission – UG/PGT dissertations/major projects

8.3.1 Online submission will be the default position for UG/PGT dissertations and major projects where the format of the work permits. It is recognised that certain dissertations and projects will not be suitable for online submission (see 8.2 above). In such cases alternative method(s) of submission will be communicated clearly to students.

8.4 Instructions to Students

8.4.1 Students are required to submit coursework for assessment as stipulated in the assessment brief. It must be clearly articulated to students how submission is to be made and whether this is online or via another method. The deadline date and time must be clearly articulated to students in the assessment brief, as well as on the Moodle site.

8.4.2 The time set for submission should be such that staff are available in the event of any technical difficulties being encountered or students requiring access to support services regarding their submission. Submission deadlines should therefore normally be set between 9.30am and 3pm local time (local to the provider organisation) with 3pm being the norm, Monday to Thursday (there should be no weekend deadlines or deadlines set for when the University is closed). Where an assessment is to be submitted in-person the submission deadline should not normally be set on a Friday as it would conflict with the regulations on late submission (see Late Submissions Policy). The same principle applies to working days prior to a University closure day.

8.5 Submission arrangements

8.5.1 Module leaders are responsible for providing students with clear guidance on how first sit, late work and approved extension submission points operate.

8.6 When IT systems are offline

8.6.1 Should a serious issue occur with the University's IT systems that results in Moodle being unavailable for the submission of student work, a business continuity plan will take effect. In respect of assessment submission the specific arrangements to be followed are set out in the University's Assessment Protocols at Appendix 3 to this policy.

8.7 Originality checking/Turnitin

8.7.1 Module Leaders must ensure that all coursework in a text or other appropriate format is checked for similarity with other sources (via Turnitin's Similarity Report).

8.7.2 Formative use of Turnitin's Similarity Report – Where Turnitin will be used to support the judgement on the originality of summative work, students must be offered a formative opportunity to upload draft work to Turnitin via the 'practice link' on Moodle and make use of the Similarity Report prior to submission of the final work. Opportunities for all students and staff to make use of Turnitin prior to final submission of an assessment should be made available where appropriate and practicable to do so.

8.7.3 After careful consideration and alignment with sector expectations, BCU decided not to renew its license for Turnitin's AI detection tool due to accuracy and fairness concerns. Student work must not be uploaded to other, third-party detectors tools as this could constitute a GDPR breach. However, colleagues should continue to use the Turnitin Similarity Report and read through the piece of work to see if there are any other factors which suggest misuse of GenAI (see appendix 3 in the AI Guidance) and follow the 5-stage approach set out in the institutional guidance.

8.8 Technical or user-error issues with submission

8.8.1 Students are expected to take all reasonable steps to adhere to University submission arrangements and instructions for individual submissions. However, there may be occasions where there is a technical or user-error issue with a student's online submission (e.g. work submitted on-time but to the wrong Moodle site, submitted file is unreadable or corrupted). The general position in these circumstances is to find in favour of the student either by accepting the submission for assessment or a replacement file where it is unreadable or corrupted.

9. Marking stage

9.1 Overview

9.1.1 Standardised marking criteria are used to define and evaluate student achievement in the completion of assessed work for an individual module. They can be customised to suit the specific subject matter being tested and the assessment method being used. Standardised marking criteria are available to use as a reference point to inform the assessment process. Please see BCU's Standardised Marking Criteria Guidance.

9.1.2 It is recognised that different disciplines lend themselves to different styles of marking regarding the annotation of student work and examination scripts. The University does not set a generic policy on how student work is annotated; however, it is strongly recommended that student work is annotated during the marking process. It is a minimum requirement that a summary piece of feedback is provided on all work which relates to the achievement of assessment tasks and refers to the assessment criteria. Colleagues are strongly recommended using the feedback form template and checklist available in BCU's Package of Feedback: Design and Delivery.

9.2 The marking process

9.2.1 Marking provides a measure of student performance which enables internal assessors to confirm whether a student has achieved the intended learning outcomes and reflects how well they have performed against the assessment criteria. Marking is carried out by one or more internal markers for all summative assessment tasks and may also be carried out for formative assessments.

9.2.2 The Head of Department is responsible for identifying adequate numbers of markers and ensuring that such staff are properly briefed and trained. Particular areas of importance include:

- preparation of new and/or inexperienced staff;
- new and innovative assessment methods;
- co-ordination and standardisation of the work of multiple markers.

In addition to moderation, 'pre-marking calibration' is considered good practice in establishing a shared understanding and consistent application of marking criteria across a marking team. Module teams may opt to use a small selection of current submissions or, alternatively, past submissions where the assessment has not changed substantially. The process often involves independent evaluation of anonymised work (weaker, average and excellent examples) before group discussion to arrive at an agreed interpretation of standards. Pre-marking calibration is particularly valuable in large marking teams to avoid uneven marking, and to support the confidence and consistency of newer markers.

9.2.3 The Head of Department, in conjunction with Course Leaders, is responsible for advising markers and external examiners of the

timescales and deadlines for the various stages of the assessment process. The Head of Department agrees with Course and Module Leaders the forms of support required for inexperienced staff who are new to marking procedures and standards. This may include increasing the size of samples for internal moderation to include all fails (or other categories) where a new/inexperienced staff member is the first marker.

9.3 Marking criteria

9.3.1 There exist standardised marking criteria at BCU for written and in-person assessments, which in most cases would be contextualised by Module Leaders to better suit the particular assessment. Colleagues should refer to BCU's Standardised Marking Criteria and Guidance for detail on written and in person rubrics.

9.3.2 Standardised marking criteria inform the assessment process by providing academic staff with a link between academic standards as set at the level of the award and academic standards at module level.

9.3.3 These standardised marking criteria should be contextualised by Module Leaders into specific module-level assessment criteria that reflect the subject being taught, and where appropriate, adapted to align with specific assessment formats or subject specific expectations. The marking criteria should be made available to students with the assessment brief and communicated through the appropriate channels. They are also communicated to external examiners when they moderate assessed work.

9.4 Anonymous marking

9.4.1 Anonymous marking is an integral part of achieving fairness in assessment and is normally adopted for all summative assessment tasks at all levels. This means that student work will be identified by ID numbers only and not by name. Anonymous marking must be applied for ALL timed written examinations and for coursework where the assessment method facilitates. There is no expectation that formative assessment or group work is subject to anonymous marking.

9.4.2 It is recognised that course teams will need to take account of a range of factors when selecting the most effective assessment tasks for modules and courses and that anonymity in the marking process may not always be practical or appropriate. It is the responsibility of each course team to identify and agree which of the assessed tasks will or will not be marked anonymously in accordance with the requirements set out within this policy.

9.4.3 The broader assessment process within which anonymous marking sits – the setting of the assessment task, development of the assessment criteria / marking scheme, marking and moderation of the completed assessment – should all be designed to ensure fairness and equity in assessment, whether or not anonymous marking applies to a specific assessment task.

9.4.4 In cases where anonymous marking is not considered appropriate or is impractical for the chosen assessment method, the Module Leader and course team must ensure that there is a sufficient measure of independence in the marking and moderation process (e.g. second marking, sample moderation) to ensure fairness and equity and to guard against the possibility of bias, unconscious or otherwise. Examples of assessment methods where anonymous marking may not be appropriate or practical are shown below (this is not an exhaustive list):

- practical assessments (e.g. laboratory work);
- observed assessments such as performance-based assessment and/or presentations (individual and group), Moots (mock court assessments);
- practice-based assessments (e.g. design portfolios, films, videos, artefacts, 'crits' etc.);
- oral examinations / viva voce examinations;
- supervised projects, dissertations, case studies, portfolios, reflective practice assignments (i.e. assessments where the supervisor/marker may recognise the author or creator of the work by the unique title and/or focus of the work);
- preliminary work which is used for a later linked piece of work (e.g. dissertation pre-reports, project proposals);
- group work where the performance of others contributes to the mark;
- tasks where feedback is given on work-in-progress;
- placement / work-based assessment, field work;
- clinical exams such as OSCEs (Objective Structured Clinical Exam), OSPEs (Objective Structured Practical Exam) etc;
- assessments that are computer marked (e.g. MCQs).

9.4.5 Anonymity applies at the point of marking only but must be retained until the mark(s) for the assessment (which are provisional until confirmed by the MAB) has been formally recorded in the student record system (SITS).

9.4.6 There may be circumstances when anonymous marking is part of the assessment process, but anonymity is limited or cannot be guaranteed due to specific circumstances. The principles of fairness, equity and inclusivity remain, even where anonymity is not possible or is limited. Such scenarios may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- small cohorts;
- reasonable adjustments made to assessments to support students' needs;
- assessment deadline extensions, deferrals and/ or re-assessment opportunities;
- academic misconduct and academic appeal cases where anonymity needs to be lifted for an investigation to take place in accordance with the relevant procedures.

9.5 Word limits

9.5.1 It is recognised that there may be subject areas who wish to set word limits for specific assessments, and to set a penalty for students who exceed the word limit. Where a limit is set and penalties are to be applied, it must be clearly articulated to students. The feedback to students on an assessment which breaches the word limit must clearly show how the penalty has been applied. It is considered good practice to have a consistent course approach to the penalties set. Assessment criteria must also be clear about the penalty to be applied to over-limit work.

9.5.2 Where a word limit is to be set for a specific assessment task, the assessment brief should clearly state the maximum word count – tariffs for word counts are available in BCU's Package of Assessment: Design and Delivery. A +/-10% margin of tolerance should be applied, beyond which nothing further will be marked.

9.5.3 The word count will normally refer to everything in the main body of the text (including headings, citations, quotes, lists etc.). Everything before (i.e. abstract, acknowledgements, contents, executive summaries etc.) and after the main text (i.e. references, bibliographies, appendices etc) is not included in the word count limit. If there is an exception to this approach, it should be clearly stated in the assessment brief and explained in full to students. Appendices should be kept to a minimum and only contain reference materials illustrating and supporting arguments made in the main body of the work. Any other materials included in appendices, except where specifically required in the assessment brief, will not be marked.

9.5.4 Students should be made aware that the marker will not consider any work after the +/-10% word count tolerance has been reached, within the allocation of marks.

9.6 Referencing

9.6.1 The University's standard referencing in written work, as far as possible, is the Harvard Referencing System. Where the Harvard Referencing System is not appropriate to particular disciplines and alternative referencing systems are to be used (e.g. APA for psychology, OSCOLA for law), this is made explicit to students in course and module information and in assessment briefs.

9.7 Student presentations and other in person assessments

9.7.1 Since anonymity cannot be maintained, a sample of student presentations/in person assessments contributing more than 25% of a module's assessment (either 10% or ten assessments) are second marked, either by another lecturer attending the presentations or by moderating marks based on recordings. Where they contribute towards the classification of an award a sample is also moderated by an external examiner.

9.7.2 Module Leaders intending to use student presentations counting for 25% or less should discuss with the Course Leader an appropriate way of second marking their assessment. This might range from full second marking to sample second marking; it might include student notes or PowerPoint handouts, assessment criteria and a coversheet specific to the presentation, which can be discussed with students and archived. The objective is always to ensure that students are marked fairly and consistently so that they understand (via feedback) the basis on which marks have been awarded (assessment criteria) and that written evidence (notes and coversheet) of the assessment process is available if required.

9.8 Written feedback to students

9.8.1 It is extremely important for the first marker to provide students with adequate levels of feedback on the marks awarded. Feedback should correlate with marking criteria and any contextualised marking scheme for the assessment task so that students can be provided with an explanation of how marks were allocated and an indication of how they could have achieved a better mark. Feedback is given within 15 working days of the submission deadline, except for major projects/dissertations where 25 working days are allowed (see also Section 16 below).

10. Academic integrity and academic misconduct

10.1 Assessment processes and tasks promote academic integrity and will be developed with due regard to preventing academic misconduct. The University is a signatory to the Quality Assurance Agency's Academic Integrity Charter for UK Higher Education and has implemented the principles and commitments set out within it which include protecting and promoting academic integrity and taking action against academic misconduct.

10.2 Appropriate support for the development of good academic practice will be provided to all students. Mechanisms for promoting the development of good academic practice should be incorporated within the curriculum, such as the provision of adequate opportunities for students to prepare for and clarify their understanding of the assessment (e.g. using exemplars, mock exams, discussions of an assignment brief etc.), and detailed course and module information provided to students. Under the Academic Misconduct Procedure students who have committed offences can be required to meet Personal Tutors to discuss their academic practice or can be signposted to the Building Academic Skills and Excellence (BASE) team for support on developing skills to ensure students know how to avoid academic misconduct in future.

10.3 The University now uses three AI usage levels for AI use in assessment: Option A: AI use allowed with conditions, Option B: AI Prohibited (only available for proctored assessments) and Option C: AI required.. Module Leaders are advised to select the appropriate option and contextualise the statements accordingly before adding to their assessment brief. Please add to the relevant assessment task in T1 and communicate to students during the launch of the assessment and during the dedicated assessment session(s). The usage levels can be found in AI1 as part of BCU's Package of Assessment: Design and Delivery. For more guidance on Artificial Intelligence Use at BCU, please visit our AI Innovation Hub.

10.4 Assessed work will normally be submitted online via Turnitin, unless it is inappropriate to do so, and will be checked for similarity with other sources. Opportunities for all students and staff to make use of academic misconduct e-detection software (Turnitin's Similarity Report) prior to final submission of an assessment should be made available where appropriate and practicable to do so.

10.5 Where a marker suspects academic misconduct by a student or group of students within an assessment the Academic Misconduct Procedure should be followed. If AI misuse is suspected, the 5-stage approach outlined in the Academic Misconduct Procedure should be followed. For certain courses leading to professional registration where the University has a duty to ensure that students are fit to practice a suspected case of academic misconduct may be investigated under the Fitness to Study Procedure rather than the Academic Misconduct Procedure. Where academic misconduct is suspected the mark, and the work should not be released to the student (or students) until the suspected academic offence is resolved.

11. Internal moderation: checks on marking standards

11.1 Overview

Moderation is employed to ensure that academic standards are maintained and are secure, that marking is consistent across a marking team and is aligned with the University's marking criteria. It permits comparison between markers and between different locations of delivery and ensures that the assessment outcomes for students are fair and reliable. It is undertaken both internally and externally (see also Section 13 below on external moderation). These principles are operationalised in the following ways:

11.2 Modules delivered at Birmingham City University only (i.e. the Module Leader, Module Tutor(s) and internal moderators(s) are based at BCU)

11.2.1 First markers complete Part A of the standard moderation form (see Assessment Package) and include it with the sample of student work along with the overall mark list and marking scheme and forward the complete sample to the designated internal moderator. The internal moderator should not be part of the marking team. It is advisable for the first marker to keep a copy of the mark list, mark scheme and student work. The first marker selects a sample for internal moderation which:

- comprises a minimum of eight items or 10% (whichever is the greater) of the assessed work which he/she has marked for each assessment element contributing 25% or more of the overall assessment for a module. These minima may be exceeded in order to address the remaining criteria below;
- covers the range of marks identified within the marksheet including examples of fails and borderline assessments;
- addresses any external requirements such as those of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs);
- takes account of any support required by the Head of Department for new and/or inexperienced first markers (see paragraph 9.2.2 above).

11.2.2 The minimum sample size set out above applies to modules with cohorts of up to 200 students. For modules with larger cohorts (i.e. above 200 students) the sample will not normally exceed 20 items of assessed work provided that it addresses the other criteria set out above. This applies equally to 11.3 and 11.4 below.

11.2.3 Once the internal moderator has agreed the marking standards of the sample provided, he/she signs the moderation form to confirm this and then forwards the complete sample to the Module Leader.

11.2.4 The internal moderation process leads to an agreed set of marks. Where agreement cannot be reached, the matter is referred to the Head of Department who determines how to resolve the matter and who may exceptionally request the assistance of the relevant external examiner (see also 11.6 below 'resolving differences between markers').

11.2.5 The internal moderation process may identify minor inconsistencies or errors in the marking process, such as the incorrect addition of marks by markers, which require changes to be made. In these circumstances changes are made by the Module Leader on a recommendation from the internal moderator and must be documented.

11.2.6 Once the module marksheet is confirmed the Module Leader submits the electronic marksheet to the department administrative team responsible for the data entry of marks to SITS.

11.3 Modules delivered at Birmingham City University and one or more academic partners under a franchise or validation [University intellectual property] Arrangement (i.e. the Module Leader is based at BCU but the Module Tutor(s) and internal moderators(s) are based at multiple partners and delivery locations):

11.3.1 First markers complete the relevant part of the standard moderation form (see Assessment Package) and attach it to the sample of assessed work along with the overall mark list and marking scheme.

11.3.2 First markers at BCU follow the process outlined in paragraphs 11.2.1 and 11.2.2 above.

11.3.3 First markers at an academic partner select the sample for internal moderation and send it to either the designated internal moderator at BCU or the internal moderator at the partner institution where responsibility for internal moderation has been formally delegated to the partner (see Section 12 below). The sample for internal moderation:

- comprises a minimum of eight items or 10% (whichever is the greater) of the assessed work which he/she has marked for each assessment element contributing 25% or more of the overall assessment for a module. These minima may be exceeded in order to address the remaining criteria below;
- covers the range of marks identified within the marksheet including examples of fails and borderline assessments;
- addresses any external requirements such as those of PSRBs;
- takes account of any support required by the Head of Department for new and/or inexperienced first markers (see paragraph 9.2.2 above).

11.3.4 All internally moderated assessed work, together with a marksheet and the standard moderation form are sent to the Module Leader. The Module Leader completes the internal moderation procedure by checking the comparability of marking standards across different locations of delivery.

11.3.5 The internal moderation process leads to an agreed set of marks. Where agreement cannot be reached the matter is referred to the Head of Department who determines how to resolve the matter and who may exceptionally request the assistance of the relevant external examiner.

11.3.6 The internal moderation process may identify minor inconsistencies or errors in the marking process, such as the incorrect addition of marks by markers, which require changes to be made. In these circumstances changes are made by the module leader on a recommendation from the internal moderator and must be documented.

11.3.7 Once the module marksheet is confirmed the Module Leader submits the electronic marksheet to the department administrative team responsible for the data entry of marks to SITS.

11.4 Modules delivered at an academic partner only under a validation [partner intellectual property] arrangement (i.e. the Module Leader, Module Tutor(s) and internal moderators(s) are based at the partner):

11.4.1 First marking and internal moderation is conducted in accordance with paragraph 11.2.3 above.

11.4.2 Once the module marksheet is confirmed the Module Leader submits the electronic marksheet to the school administrative team responsible for the data entry of marks to SITS.

11.5 Occasions when internal moderation is not required

11.5.1 As outlined in section 9.5 above, on occasion second marking may be used instead of internal moderation when student anonymity cannot be maintained (e.g. student presentations, major projects, practice assessment). In such cases, further internal moderation should be unnecessary but does occur to check marking standards between different marking teams when the module is delivered at multiple locations.

11.6 Resolving differences between markers

11.6.1 Any differences between markers that are identified through internal standardisation/moderation must be resolved through consultation between the Module Leaders and moderators in the first instance. In instances of internal disagreement between first and second markers or the internal moderator, then a third internal marker should be used to resolve the situation. If agreement still cannot be reached the matter should be referred to the Head of Department (see 11.2.3 above).

11.7 Moderation of assessments that do not contribute to classification of an award

11.7.1 In addition to the requirements for moderation set out above, where assessments do not contribute to final award classifications, moderation should focus on the pass / fail threshold, as this determines progression to the next stage of the course. In cases where there are no students at that threshold, then the assessed work of the five nearest students should normally be included in the sample for moderation.

12. Collaborative partnerships: checks on marking standards

12.1 Schools should ensure that appropriate staff moderate a sample of examination scripts and a significant proportion of summative coursework marked by each partner institution to verify the standard of marking for at least the first three years of (a) a new partnership or (b) the delivery of a course(s) in a distinctively new subject area by an existing partner (e.g. courses delivered by different BCU departments and/or schools). The sample assessments must represent fully the cohort of students' work and the spread of classifications in the module. This is an integral part of assuring academic standards as a new course commences at an academic partner.

12.2 Where the internal moderation process identifies issues or concerns with the standard and consistency of the marking undertaken by the partner institution, this must be addressed immediately by the Head of Department or School.

12.3 The same approach should also be applied to any issues or concerns raised by external examiners either verbally or in their annual written report about the standard and consistency of marking at the partner institution. Any issues with marking standards at a partner institution will be reviewed in detail and, where applicable, an action plan agreed with the partner to prevent recurrence. Where serious concerns are raised, second marking may be required across all levels of the cohort, with engagement from the external examiner prior to their ratification by the relevant MAB.

12.4 Where serious concerns with marking standards are identified, second marking of all work, or a sample, should continue until there is sufficient evidence that the assessment criteria are being applied appropriately and consistently. If the issues are identified during the first three years of operation as outlined in paragraph 12.1 this may further extend the period under which School staff will moderate samples of assessed work.

12.5 Following the period of three years set out in 12.1 above, the Collaborative Partnerships Committee (CPC) may determine that the partner can assume more responsibility for internal moderation. The outcomes of CME, including analysis of student achievement data, and reports from external examiners will inform the CPC's decision, along with any issues or concerns that may have been identified or reported during the initial three-year period. Departments wishing to delegate internal moderation to partners must make a recommendation to CPC following completion of the CME process at the end of the third year of operation.

12.6 Academic partner teaching staff responsible for the assessment process and marking must be provided with appropriate staff development opportunities to ensure that they are familiar with the University's assessment policy, processes and regulations and once this has been undertaken, they may act as first marker.

13. External moderation

This section should be read in conjunction with Section 4 of the External Examining and External Expertise Policy.

13.1 Overview

13.1.1 The purpose of external moderation is to provide assurance to the University that the marking process has been conducted properly and in accordance with University policies and regulations and to confirm that the academic standards achieved by students are comparable with similar provision at other UK Higher Education institutions and sector-recognised standards.

13.1.2 Assessed work at levels 5, 6 and 7 is subject to external moderation at the initial assessment point (eg: the end of Semester 1 for modules delivered in Semester 1). Level 4 assessments contributing to the classification of awards such as the Cert HE and HNC are also subject to external moderation (other level 4 modules may also be subject to external moderation if required by a PSRB).

13.1.3 External moderation of assessed work at levels 5, 6 and 7 (and level 4 if contributing to the classification of an award) at the re-assessment point (eg: normally July for Semester 1 and Semester 2 modules) is not required unless:

- the total number of pieces of work for the module is 10 or more OR;
- external moderation of the assessed work at the initial assessment point led to re-marking OR;
- concerns were expressed at the initial assessment point by the relevant external examiner about the assessment of the module OR;
- the external examiner wishes to undertake moderation OR;
- external moderation is required at all points by a PSRB.

If any of the above circumstances pertain, the standard requirements articulated below in paragraphs 13.2 to 13.4 below are applied.

13.1.4 The requirements for external moderation outlined in this section apply equally to academic partners operating under franchise or validation arrangements.

13.2 Preparation of the sample for external moderation: single marker

13.2.1 The Module Leader checks and forwards the complete sample to the Head of Department (or nominee) for onward transmission to the relevant external examiner. The sample is accompanied by:

- a full schedule of all marks achieved by all students registered for the module, clearly indicating which examples of work have been included in the sample;
- the relevant module specification;
- the generic assessment criteria and marking standards/ marking scheme for each assessment task;
- Part A of the moderation form.

13.3 Preparation of the sample for external moderation: more than one first marker and/or multiple locations of delivery

13.3.1 The Module Leader receives complete samples of assessed work from each internal moderator. The Module Leader collates all Parts A of the moderation form and selects from the accompanying samples a final "sample of samples" for external moderation. This final sample:

- comprises a minimum of eight items or 10% (whichever is the greater) of the assessed work for each assessment element contributing 25% or more
- of the overall assessment for the entire delivery of the module (ie all locations of delivery). These minimum criteria may be exceeded in order to address the remaining criteria below;
- covers the full range of marks identified within the final marksheet;
- covers all markers;
- covers all locations of delivery;
- addresses any external requirements such as those of PSRBs.

13.3.2 The Module Leader completes the moderation form and collates, checks and forwards the final sample to the relevant external examiner. The sample is accompanied by:

- a full schedule of all marks achieved by all students registered for the module, clearly indicating which examples of work have been included in the sample;
- the relevant MDF;
- the standardised marking criteria for each assessment task;
- Part B of the moderation form.

13.4 Arrangements for scrutiny of the sample for external moderation can be achieved through a variety of practices, usually depending on the nature of the assessed work. The Head of Department discusses the detail of the moderation process with all new external examiners on appointment (e.g. how samples are made available to external examiners, moderation meetings at BCU and/or academic partners before the MAB, electronic moderation of work or a combination of these). Within reason, the Head of Department will accommodate the system(s) which bests suits the individual external examiner and fulfilment of moderation duties

14. Module Assessment Boards (MABs)

This section should be read in conjunction with the Guide on the Operation and Conduct of Exam Boards.

14.1 Overview

14.1.1 The Module Assessment Board (MAB) represents the first tier of the University's two-tier assessment process and is the body responsible for the assessment of, and academic standards achieved in, the modules which fall within its remit. Each assessment task is assessed by one MAB. The MAB does not consider the academic progress or award of individual students or personal circumstances affecting student performance. The terms of reference of the MAB are specified in the Guide on the Operation and Conduct of Exam Boards. Schools are responsible for the production of documentation to support the MAB process.

14.2 External examiner involvement in the MAB process

14.2.1 A minimum of one external examiner is appointed to each MAB. External examiners are expected to moderate module assessments in accordance with pre-agreed deadlines and provide feedback, where required.

14.3 Conduct of the MAB

14.3.1 MABS are conducted through a structured online workflow, rather than via a formal meeting. Programme Administrators prepare and upload module assessment reports, undertake initial data quality checks to ensure completeness and accuracy of marks and confirm that all required reports are available. These reports are then reviewed, via the workflow, by Module Leaders, who verify the accuracy of marks, confirm that all eligible students have been included and confirm that internal and external moderation has been completed.

14.3.2 The consideration of each module comprises:

- a full schedule of all marks achieved by all students registered for the module, clearly indicating which examples of work have been included in the sample;
- the relevant module specification;
- the Generic assessment criteria and marking standards/ marking scheme for each assessment task;
- Part A of the moderation form.

14.3.3 An external examiner may propose to the MAB, via their submitted comments, that, on the basis of his/her sample moderation:

- all marks for a particular assessment task are re-marked due to inconsistencies in the marking process (in such cases, the external examiner provides guidance on the issues that need to be addressed when the re-marking occurs).

14.3.4 The MAB cannot agree to moderate the marks of individual candidates

unless the external examiner has moderated all assessed work for all candidates.

14.3.5 Modules which are delivered over two semesters are only considered by the MAB once the delivery of the entire module, and all associated assessment, has been completed. For example, all assessments for a module delivered over Semesters 1 and 2 (a 'long-thin' module) is considered by the appropriate MAB at the end of Semester 2. The reassessment of any element conducted in the early stages of such a module does not occur until the module has been considered in full by the MAB and the module result has been confirmed.

14.3.6 The MAB considers statistical information derived from the performance of all candidates on all modules for which the MAB is responsible (e.g. mean marks and standard deviation). This allows the MAB to gain an overview of student performance and academic standards for the discipline(s) for which it is responsible and to determine where any investigation or further action is required both for individual assessment periods and/or over time (e.g. a MAB may wish to investigate a particular module whose mean mark is significantly lower or higher than others at the same level or whose mean mark has steadily decreased/increased over time). The MAB is also responsible for early identification of awarding gaps between different groups of students.

14.3.7 If awarding gaps are identified they should be reported to SEQC so they may be reviewed as part of the course monitoring and enhancement process and action agreed where necessary. The Module Leader is responsible for coordinating any such agreed action.

14.4 <u>After the MAB process has concluded:</u>

14.4.1 The MAB may delegate authority to its Chair to make decisions on its behalf, following consultation with relevant external examiners.

14.4.2 Departments are responsible for communicating the outcomes of the MAB to students and other relevant sections of the institution. Marks should be released to students within 5 working days of the MAB. Where retrieval of failed modules after the first attempt involves the re-submission of coursework, Departments should inform the students concerned of the precise details of the re- assessment task(s). This may include in-year retrieval opportunities (see section 7.3 above).

14.4.3 Where the MAB has approved the outcomes of modules where the internal and/or external moderation process has resulted in changes to marks for modules delivered at an academic partner, the Module Leader provides an explanation of the changes to staff at the partner in order to ensure that any issues identified during the internal and/or external moderation process are understood. Where required, further staff development may be considered necessary to address the issues identified for future assessment cycles.

14.4.4 Where it is considered unreasonable to expect an international student to return to the UK to present him/herself for re-assessment, and the form of re-assessment is an examination, then the relevant School can agree to permit the student to undertake invigilated re-assessment in another country (eg: the offices of the British Council or an academic partner if appropriate) – in accordance with the Procedure for Overseas Examinations.

14.5 Alternative arrangements for MABs

14.5.1 Special alternative arrangements for the conduct of MAB business are permitted in the following circumstance:

- confirming the outcomes of the initial assessment of modules including placement assessment in order to facilitate re-assessment where necessary. MABs may, for example, confirm the marks for an academic element of assessment before both the academic and clinical elements of assessment have been completed.

15. Progression and Award Boards (PABs)

This section should be read in conjunction with the Guide on the Operation and Conduct of Exam Boards.

15.1 The Progression and Award Board (PAB) is responsible for:

- recommending the conferment of all Birmingham City University awards to the Academic Standards and Quality Committee;
- formal consideration of progression of students from one level/stage to the next at undergraduate level;
- the formal consideration of extenuating circumstances recommendations submitted to it;
- considering academic performance and awarding academic credit in accordance with the
- Academic Regulations;
- determining resit or repeat requirements in accordance with the Academic Regulations in the event of failure of a stage or the award

15.2 The terms of reference of the PAB and details of its operation are detailed in the Guide on Operation and Conduct of Exam Boards.

15.3 At least one external examiner must be present for the PAB to be quorate where a final award is to be made. This can be an external examiner from a cognate subject if the appointed external examiner is unable to participate. In exceptional circumstances only, when no external examiner is present (usually due to sudden and unforeseen circumstances such as illness), the meeting may still go ahead but, prior to the publication of the outcomes of the Board being published, the approval of the award decisions must be sought from the Pro Vice Chancellor Education and Student Experience to ensure that awards are not unduly delayed. Endorsement of award decisions should be sought simultaneously, and in writing, from the relevant external examiner(s) wherever possible.

15.4 The PAB cannot change the decisions made by a MAB with regard to module results (eg: marks and pass/fail decisions cannot be amended in light of a student's overall performance). With the exception of certain discretionary decisions including the granting of further assessment attempts where claims for extenuating circumstances have been upheld, as set out in the Academic Regulations the PAB's function is a mechanical one, ensuring the correct and consistent application of the Academic Regulations as they pertain to each student (e.g. the PAB does not have the discretion to raise or lower the classification of awards).

15.5 The PAB may delegate authority to its Chair to make decisions on its behalf, following consultation with relevant external examiners.

15.6 Departments are responsible for communicating the outcomes of the PAB to students and other relevant sections of the institution. This includes communicating progression and award decisions and any resit or repeat requirements where students have failed to progress to the next stage of study.

16. Release of results and feedback to students

16.1 Results

16.1.1 Schools are responsible for communicating module results to students. Module results are provisional until internal and external moderation has been completed and the marks have been confirmed by the relevant MAB. Schools are also responsible for communicating progression and award decisions to students following meetings of the relevant PAB. These decisions should be communicated to students within 5 working days of the PAB.

16.1.2 Once agreed by the MAB or the PAB, students can view their formal results via the mySRS system.

16.1.3 Student and Academic Services provides all students with a final transcript at the completion of their studies. Transcripts are not provided as a matter of course at any other stage although students can request an interim transcript which provides details of assessment outcomes to date, at any stage.

16.1.4 If students highlight any errors regarding the transcript or other queries regarding the assessment process, this is brought to the attention of the relevant Module Leader/Tutor and Head of Department for investigation and, where necessary, action.

16.2 Feedback on assessed work

16.2.1 Students are entitled to written feedback on their performance for all assessed work and this is provided through the completion of an assignment coversheet (or equivalent) on which markers relate feedback to the achievement of the module learning outcomes and the marking criteria (or marking scheme developed for specific assessment tasks).

16.2.2 Feedback on assessed work should support the learning process. It should provide an explanation of the mark(s) awarded with reference to the assessment criteria. Feedback should also include comments regarding areas of strength, areas needing improvement and recommended actions to improve academic performance. For more guidance around feedback and feedforward, please see BCU's Package of Feedback and Feedforward.

16.2.3 Feedback on all assessed work is available to students within 15 working days of the submission deadline or the date of an examination except for feedback for dissertations and major projects which is given within 25 working days (note that working days exclude those days when the University is officially closed). [NB: The 15 working days requirement refers to when feedback must be available to students. It is NOT an allowance for the marking and moderation processes to be completed. All work for the designated period (e.g., Semester 1) is marked and moderated in sufficient time for consideration at the (Semester 1) MAB meeting. When setting submission dates for assessed work, Module Leaders take account of the published final dates for submission (see 7.2.4 – 7.2.6 above) and are advised to work back from the date of the MAB to ensure that sufficient time is allowed for marking, internal and external moderation].

16.2.4 In cases where assessed work is submitted late, in accordance with the Late Submission Policy, the standard timescales for the return of work are adjusted accordingly. Where the assessed work is submitted within 24 hours of the original submission deadline, feedback should still be provided within 15 working days. Where students submit up to one week late (5 working days) feedback will be available to students within 20 working days of the original submission deadline.

16.2.5 Examination scripts are retained and are not returned to students. However, students are entitled to receive notification of the mark and feedback within the prescribed time period. Feedback on examinations can be provided in one of the following ways:

- provision of generic feedback to all students at a scheduled session;
- provision of online or written generic feedback to all students on the examination;
- a meeting with a Module Leader/Tutor for students to see their examination script(s) and to discuss their performance.

16.2.6 Some student assessed work is required to be seen by external examiners as part of the external moderation process. In such cases, copies of the student work are made by the faculties (where necessary) for the attention of external examiners and the original work with the mark and feedback is therefore given within the prescribed time period.

16.2.7 Whenever feedback is provided for summative assessment tasks before the marks have been moderated and agreed by the appropriate MAB, Module Leaders/Tutors are required to state clearly that the mark awarded is unconfirmed and is subject to internal and external moderation processes and approval by the relevant MAB.

17. Arrangements for re-assessment

17.1 Re-assessment is always task-for-task and should normally be of the same form and content as the initial assessment task. Where the assessment task is unique to the student, for example a case study, artistic artefact or performance or a dissertation the same assessment task may be used for re-assessment. In all other cases a new version of the task can be set for re-assessment where this is considered appropriate (eg: a different set of essay questions). It is also acceptable to require students to resubmit a revised version of the same task for re-assessment to enable reflection on feedback to revise their original work (see also 7.2.6 above).

17.2 There may be instances where an assessment task cannot be easily repeated (e.g. contribution to a group assessment, the initial assessment required use of facilities which are not currently available etc.) and variation is therefore necessary. In such cases, an alternative assessment task of the same weighting should be agreed by the Module Leader in conjunction with the Course Leader. Students should be informed of the re-assessment task at the earliest opportunity so that they have sufficient time to prepare in the event of failure. (see also 7.2.7 above).

17.3 As all first-sit student work will have already been internally and externally moderated, and the same marking criteria is normally employed for re-assessment, it is not usually necessary to send re-assessment work to external examiners. Specific circumstances under which external moderation of re-assessment is required are set out in paragraph 13.1.3 above. All failed re-assessment work should however be internally moderated.

18. Archiving of work

18.1 Schools are responsible for maintaining an archive of teaching materials used in the delivery of modules at all levels.

18.2 Schools are responsible for retaining student assessed work in accordance with the Retention of Assessed Work Policy.

18.3 The above is readily available for quality assurance purposes and can be used for standardisation purposes where appropriate. The archive of previous versions of the teaching materials is retained until the next delivery of the module is complete. Schools are responsible for organising appropriate storage for the archive. The University's VLE (Moodle) should not be used to store the archive.

18.4 Work that is not part of the archive or retained under the Retention of Assessed Work Policy and has not been collected by students within six months of the relevant PAB, will be disposed of by the University in accordance with the Retention Schedule.

19. Assessment for disabled students

This section should be read in conjunction with the Student Disability and Mental Health Policy.

19.1 The Academic Regulations take account of the University's legal obligations towards disabled students, as defined by the Equality Act (2010). Where students disclose details of an evidenced disability, their needs are assessed by the Disability Support Service and/or the Mental Health and Wellbeing Service and reasonable adjustments are put in place to enable them to overcome disadvantage and access learning activities and course assessment on an equal basis to their peers.

19.2 Where the timing of disability disclosure means that there has not been an opportunity for reasonable adjustments to be put in place, extensions to coursework deadlines or extenuating circumstances may be appropriate until reasonable adjustments are arranged. Extensions are not normally given on the basis of a disability once support and adjustments are in place. A claim for extenuating circumstances on the basis of disability may be made at the first point of assessment after disclosure or until reasonable adjustments have been arranged. Subsequent claims for extenuating circumstances can be considered for acute episodes of ill health or a sudden deterioration of an underlying condition.

19.3 The University recognises that assessment methods may need to be amended in circumstances where, due to a disability, the approved form of assessment for a module is unsuitable. Where adjustments to existing assessments are required (e.g. additional time in examination), these are included in the Disability Support Summary produced by the Disability Support Service. In circumstances where a change to the form of assessment may be required, the Disability Support Service makes recommendations to the appropriate Course Leader on possible alternative forms of assessment. If agreed, the Course Leader is responsible for communicating the details of the revised arrangements to the appropriate Module Leader(s) for implementation.

19.4 Any adjustment to an existing assessment method or any agreed alternative assessment method must continue to provide students with a suitable opportunity to demonstrate achievement of the module learning outcomes. It is the ultimate objective of any agreed revised assessment arrangements to ensure that the student is assessed on equal terms with other students.

Appendix 1 - glossary of terms

Anonymous marking – the marking of students' submitted work without their identity being revealed to the person carrying out the marking at the time the work is marked.

Assessment criteria – the knowledge, understanding and skills that markers expect a student to display in an assessment task, and which are taken into account in marking the work. Student achievement of intended learning outcomes is measured through assessment tasks using clearly aligned assessment criteria.

Academic integrity – is the expectation that academic staff, students, researchers and all members of the academic community act with honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. Breaches of academic integrity, such as plagiarism, collusion etc. are referred to as academic misconduct and are dealt with under the Academic Misconduct Procedure.

Assessment verification – ensures that the form and content of draft assessment tasks and assessments briefs are appropriate, fair and valid, will effectively measure the achievement of intended learning outcomes and that the standard of the assessment is consistent, commensurate with the level of study and comparable with the standard of assessments of the same level set by other UK HEIs. It refers to the practice of peer review of assessment briefs both internally and externally. Internal verification of draft assessment tasks is usually carried out within the academic School in accordance with the process defined by each School. External verification of draft assessment tasks is carried out by external examiners in accordance with the External Examining and External Expertise and Assessment and Feedback Policies.

Academic Regulations – the University's principal set of regulations governing all aspects of assessment, progression and award and are the definitive statement of the regulatory framework for courses leading to a Birmingham City University award at all levels. They are approved by the Academic Board and reviewed annually by the Academic Regulations and Policy Committee

Assessment brief – guidance provided for students on how to complete a specific item of assessment, to include information about the nature of the task, the format for presentation, method of submission, deadline date and time for submission and the assessment criteria, and, where applicable, the marking scheme (paragraph 6.2 of the policy provides further details of information to be included).

Assessment methods - the range of assessment instruments used by a teaching team to evaluate the level of a student's knowledge, understanding, skills and competencies when taking a module, successful completion of which results in the award of credit for that module.

Assessment type (or mode) – the high level description used to categorise the specific assessment methods for individual modules. Assessment methods will normally fit within one of three distinct assessment types (i.e. coursework, exam, in-person). On occasion a particular assessment method may span more than one assessment type. For example a portfolio may contain both coursework and in-person sub-tasks. The three assessment types are defined as follows:

i. **Coursework** – is a generic term for written or practical work undertaken by students during a course of study for the purposes of assessment. It includes all assessment tasks which are not formal examinations or in-person assessments (defined below) and includes tasks such as essays, reports, portfolios, artefacts, projects, dissertations, practice-based assessments, etc. Assessments that take the form of examinations but fit the definition of 'time constrained assessment' (see below) rather than examination are classed as coursework.

ii. **Examination** – is a time-limited assessment completed under controlled conditions (e.g. invigilation). Controlled conditions may include remote proctoring (see definition below). Exams can be seen, where the student is provided with the question(s) in advance, or unseen. In-class tests where these are undertaken in controlled conditions, such as in a taught session invigilated by a tutor, also fit the definition of an examination. There may be other assessments that take the form of 'examinations' and that are time-limited but are not undertaken in controlled conditions, for example an examination paper that students complete in their own time and without direct supervision. These assessments are not classed as examinations (see 'time-constrained assessments' below).

iii. **In-person** – is the term used to describe tasks that involve assessment of students in- person, either physically or virtually. In–person assessments typically take place at specified times and are therefore generally time constrained by their nature, for example recitals, performances, individual in-person presentations (live or pre-recorded), poster presentations, group or individual critiques etc. As in-person assessments typically take place at a specified time, the regulations on late submission do not apply. Other types of in-person assessment may include viva voce examinations. Although the term 'examination' is commonly used to describe such assessments, they do not fit the definition of examination used above and are therefore classed as in-person assessments.

Course – an approved programme of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads towards a qualification. UK higher education courses must be approved by UK degree-awarding bodies.

Course specification – a published statement about the intended learning outcomes of a programme of study, containing information about teaching and learning methods, support and assessment methods and how individual modules relate to levels of achievement.

Extenuating circumstances – are sudden, unforeseen and temporary circumstances which may have affected a student's performance in an assessment(s). The Extenuating Circumstances Procedure sets out how the University takes into account the impact of these circumstances on a student's ability to perform in an assessment(s).

Feedback (on assessment) – is the process of providing students, either verbally, in writing, or in a digital file, informed comment on the assessment tasks they have submitted. Its purpose is to explain the reasons for the award of given marks and to highlight strengths and areas for improvement to assist students in preparing for future assessments. Feedback is therefore intended to be developmental and should be sufficiently detailed and informative so that a student can easily understand how they could improve their performance in subsequent assessments.

In-class tests - refers to assessment activity undertaken during scheduled class time under the supervision of the tutor, which could include assessed seminars, debates, presentations, problem-solving, tests, MCQ quizzes etc.

Learning outcomes – what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning. Assessment is used to judge the extent to which the learning outcomes have been achieved as evidenced by specific assessment criteria, which are clearly communicated to students.

Marking scheme – a detailed framework for assigning marks, where a specific number of marks is given to individual components of the answer. Marking schemes identify the knowledge and skills which must be demonstrated to achieve the learning outcomes of the module and are used to calculate the total mark to be awarded for an individual assessment task.

Marking standards – comprise bands of marks, normally on a percentage scale (e.g. 60-69%, 50-59% etc.) or sometimes on a pass/fail basis. They are accompanied by descriptors and are used by markers to distinguish between grades of student achievement in completing an item of assessment for a module.

Moderation – is a process designed to assure that an assessment outcome is fair and reliable and that assessment criteria have been applied consistently.

- Internal moderation – is the process whereby an internal moderator (i.e. a member of BCU academic staff) reviews and moderates a defined sample of student work for a module which has been anonymously (wherever possible) marked by a first marker. The sample draws on all items of assessment contributing to the overall assessment of the module, including written assignments and examination scripts (where relevant). The sample also includes student work associated with delivery of the module by academic partner institutions. The internal moderator will have access to the assessment criteria / marking scheme for each assessment task within the sample, will know the mark awarded by the first marker and will have access to any written feedback given by the first marker. The purpose of internal moderation is to check the consistent application by the first marker of the assessment criteria / marking scheme / marking standards for the items of assessment in the sample.

- External moderation – is the process whereby an external examiner reviews and moderates a defined sample of student work for a module. The sample draws on all items of assessment contributing to the overall assessment of the module, including written assignments and examination scripts. The sample includes student work associated with delivery of the module by academic partner institutions. The purpose of external moderation is to check that appropriate standards of assessment are being set and maintained by the internal marker(s) and that these are comparable to those set on similar programmes at the same level at other higher education institutions in the UK.

Module – a self-contained, formally structured unit of study, with a coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

Module specification – the definitive descriptor for a module, confirmed at the point of initial course approval or re-approval (validation / re-validation) and including details of the learning outcomes, indicative content, assessment description and weightings and teaching, learning and assessment methods.

Remote proctoring – the term proctoring effectively means invigilation. The term is usually applied (in the UK) to remote, digital invigilation. Through the use of proctoring software this can take place via regular webcam photographs, a live webcam and desktop feed or a recorded video stream that is viewed by a proctor (invigilator) to verify a student's identity and guard against academic misconduct.

Second marking – is the second stage of marking which may be for checking, sampling or moderation purposes. This is separate and distinct from 'double marking' which involves second marking of a whole cohort. Second marking results in a single agreed mark. This is a thorough second marking of student work and may be carried out unseen (where the second marker does not have access to the marks and comments of the first marker) or seen (where the second marker can view the marks and comments of the first marker).

SEQC – School Education and Quality Committee – the SEQCs have overall responsibility for assuring the quality and academic standards of the School's undergraduate and taught postgraduate courses.

Standardisation – describes a variety of activities that may be employed to ensure the consistency of marking in modules where there are multiple markers.

Time constrained assessment (TCA) – describes coursework assessment tasks that are to be undertaken within specified time constraints (see also definition of 'coursework' above). TCAs may include other types of assessment in an exam format, such as open-book or take-home exams where students will typically have between 24 and 48 hours to complete the exam paper but it is not invigilated or completed under controlled examination conditions either in-person or via the use of remote proctoring software. Open-book or take-home exams could therefore be defined as either an exam or a TCA, dependent on whether they are undertaken in controlled conditions or not. TCAs are, by definition, time constrained and the late submission regulations (see Section 6 of the Academic Regulations) therefore do not apply other than the standard 1 hour grace period.