

# Assessment and Feedback Policy

## Contents

1.	<b>Introduction and Context</b> .....	1
2.	<b>Definitions of Assessment</b> .....	2
3.	<b>Principles of Assessment</b> .....	2
4.	<b>Roles and Responsibilities</b> .....	5
5.	<b>The Academic Calendar</b> .....	6
6.	<b>Module Guides and Assessment Briefs</b> .....	7
7.	<b>Assessment Setting and Design</b> .....	8
	7.1 Information on the Module Assessment .....	8
	7.2 Module Assessment – Design Stage .....	8
	7.3 Module Assessment – In-Year Retrieval .....	10
	7.4 Internal and External Verification of Draft Assessment Tasks .....	12
	7.5 Collaborative Partnerships: Assessment Setting and Approval .....	14
8.	<b>Submission of Assessment</b> .....	15
9.	<b>Marking Stage</b> .....	17
	9.1 Overview.....	17
	9.2 The Marking Process .....	17
	9.3 Assessment Criteria and Marking Standards .....	17
	9.4 Marking Schemes .....	18
	9.5 Anonymous Marking .....	18
	9.6 Word Limits.....	20
	9.7 Referencing .....	20
	9.8 Student Presentations.....	21
	9.9 Written Feedback to Students.....	21
10.	<b>Academic Integrity and Academic Misconduct</b> .....	21
11.	<b>Internal Moderation: Checks on Marking Standards</b> .....	22
	11.1 Overview.....	22
	11.2 Modules Delivered at Birmingham City University Only ( <b>i.e. the Module Leader, Module Tutor(s) and internal moderators(s) are based at BCU</b> ).....	22
	11.3 Modules Delivered at Birmingham City University and one or more Collaborative Partners under a Franchise or Validation [University intellectual property] Arrangement ( <b>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</b> ) .....	23

11.4	Modules Delivered at a Collaborative Partner Only under a Validation [Partner intellectual property] Arrangement ( <i>i.e. the Module Leader, Module Tutor(s) and internal moderators(s) are based at the partner</i> ).....	24
11.5	Occasions when internal moderation is not required .....	24
11.6	Resolving Differences between markers .....	24
11.7	Moderation of assessments that do not contribute to classification of an award	24
11.8	Guidance for staff .....	25
<b>12.</b>	<b>Collaborative Partnerships: Checks on Marking Standards.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>13.</b>	<b>External Moderation .....</b>	<b>26</b>
13.1	Overview.....	26
13.2	Preparation of the Sample for External Moderation: Single Marker .....	26
13.3	Preparation of the Sample for External Moderation: More than One First Marker and/or Multiple Locations of Delivery .....	27
13.4	Arrangements for Scrutiny of the Sample for External Moderation .....	27
<b>14.</b>	<b>Module Assessment Boards (MABs).....</b>	<b>27</b>
14.1	Overview.....	27
14.2	External Examiner Attendance at the MAB .....	28
14.3	Conduct of the MAB.....	28
14.4	After the Meeting .....	29
14.5	Alternative Arrangements for MABs .....	29
<b>15.</b>	<b>Progression and Award Boards (PABs).....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>16.</b>	<b>Release of Results and Feedback to Students .....</b>	<b>31</b>
16.1	Results.....	31
16.2	Feedback on Assessed Work .....	31
<b>17.</b>	<b>Arrangements for Re-assessment.....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>18.</b>	<b>Archiving of Assessed Work.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>19.</b>	<b>Assessment for Disabled Students .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>20.</b>	<b>Draft Work and Tutorial Support.....</b>	<b>34</b>
	Appendices .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
	Document Control Statement.....	34

## Assessment and Feedback Policy

### 1. Introduction and Context

- 1.1 This policy and the procedures set out within it have been designed to take full account of the Expectations for standards and quality, the Core Practices and guiding principles contained within the *Assessment* theme of the Advice and Guidance section of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) UK Quality Code for Higher Education (November 2018).
- 1.2 The policy complements and should be read in conjunction with the following policies and procedures:
- Admissions
  - Collaborative Provision
  - Course Approval / Re-Approval
  - Course Monitoring and Enhancement
  - Periodic Review
  - External Examining and External Expertise
  - Academic Appeals procedure
  - Extenuating Circumstances procedure
  - Academic Misconduct procedure
  - Fitness to Practise procedure
- 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 and its approved UK and international collaborative 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 Within this policy the University adopts the following description of assessment and the assessment process contained in the *Assessment* theme (page 2) of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance (November 2018):

*“Assessment is a fundamental aspect of the student learning experience. Engagement in assessment activities and interaction with staff and peers enables learning, both as part of the task and through review of their performance. It is a vehicle for obtaining feedback. Ultimately, it determines whether each student has achieved their course’s learning outcomes and allows the awarding body to ensure that appropriate standards are being applied rigorously. Deliberate, systematic quality assurance ensures that assessment processes, standards and any other criteria are applied consistently and equitably, with reliability, validity and fairness”.*

- 1.7 Any queries regarding matters of interpretation and application of this policy should be referred in the first instance to the Assistant Director, Quality Enhancement and Inclusion. If a formal interpretation is required, the matter will be referred on to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) as Chair of the Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Quality Committee.
- 1.8 Quality assurance processes such as Course Approval, Course Monitoring and Enhancement and Periodic Review will ensure that the design of assessments and the assessment process are carried out in accordance with this policy.
- 1.9 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.
- 1.10 A glossary of terms used in the assessment process is provided at **Appendix 1**.

## 2. Definitions of Assessment

- 2.1 This policy adopts the following definitions of assessment contained in the *Assessment* theme (page 1) of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance (November 2018):
  - **Formative assessment (assessment for learning):** *assessment with a developmental purpose, designed to help learners learn more effectively by giving them feedback on their performance and how it can be improved and/or maintained. Reflective practice by students sometimes contributes to formative assessment.*
  - **Summative assessment (assessment of learning):** *used to indicate the extent of a learner's success in meeting the assessment criteria to gauge the intended learning outcomes of a module or course. Typically, within summative assessment, the marks awarded count towards the final mark of the course/module/award.*
- 2.2 This policy is primarily concerned with summative assessment.

## 3. Principles of Assessment

- 3.1 The University's Academic Regulations are governed by a series of principles. The purpose of this policy is to supplement the requirements set out within the regulations and to ensure that all aspects of the assessment process align with the principles, in particular Principle 1 which requires that:
  - *All students are given a fair and equal opportunity to demonstrate academic achievement.*

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

(i) Assessment is fair, equitable and inclusive

3.2.1 In developing courses leading to a Birmingham City University award, faculties and collaborative partner institutions/organisations are required to take full account of the QAA's UK Quality Code for Higher Education and, where applicable, the requirements of any professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB).

3.2.2 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;
- Assessment methods for a module and weightings are clearly stated in the module specification;
- Marking standards, comprising bands of marks, are used to distinguish between grades of student achievement in completing an item of assessment for a module;
- The determination of award classifications and other levels of overall student achievement are clearly defined in the *Academic Regulations* and cannot be altered by individuals or Progression and Award Boards (PABs).
- 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.

3.2.3 The Academic Regulations and Policy Committee and the Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Quality Committee are collectively responsible for keeping the above under review and for approving and securing the implementation of appropriate assessment procedures.

3.2.4 In carrying out this responsibility the LTAQC is informed by the outcomes of the Course Monitoring and Enhancement process and Periodic Review of taught courses.

(ii) Assessment is reliable, consistent and valid

3.2.5 In their delivery of courses leading to a Birmingham City University award at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, Faculties and collaborative 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;
- assessment is criterion-referenced not norm-referenced;
- assessment criteria inform the assessment process and will be sufficiently robust to ensure reasonable parity between the judgements of different markers (see Section 9 below and the Generic Assessment Criteria and Marking Standards at **Appendix 2**);
- the validity of assessments and their ongoing suitability is reviewed through the Course Monitoring and Enhancement process and Periodic Review, informed by external examiners and external subject specialists (External Advisers)

3.2.6 The Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Quality Committee is responsible for keeping the above under review and for approving and securing the implementation of appropriate assessment procedures. In carrying out this responsibility the LTAQC is informed by the outcomes of the Course Approval, Course Monitoring and Enhancement and Periodic Review processes.

(iii) The assessment process is objective and transparent

3.2.7 In their delivery of courses leading to a Birmingham City University award at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, Faculties and collaborative 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**) is adopted (see also paragraph 9.5.4 below);
- all items of assessment (including those for level 3 and 4 modules) are subject to **internal moderation**;
- the determination of award classifications and other levels of overall student achievement are based on a University-wide system of arithmetic calculation, as defined in the *Academic Regulations*, with no subjective element of discretion to alter marks or awards once these have been approved respectively by the appropriate MAB and PAB (see paragraph 3.2.8 below) following a process of internal and **external moderation**.

(iv) Independence in the assessment process

3.2.8 In their delivery of courses leading to a Birmingham City University award at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, Faculties and collaborative 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 in accordance with national academic standards by a formally constituted MAB in conjunction with one or more appointed external examiners;
- all items of assessment which contribute towards a student's individual award (normally level 5 modules or higher) are subject to external moderation by an external examiner(s);
- the determination of a student's eligibility for an award is made by the School Progression and Award Board (PAB), attended by one or more external examiners, reporting to LTAQC (alternative arrangements are made if unforeseen circumstances exceptionally prevent an external examiner from attending such a meeting – see *section 8 of the Academic Regulations*);
- student appeals in relation to assessment processes are considered in accordance with the *Academic Appeals procedure* using procedures which are independent of individual members of staff involved in the assessment process. Similarly, student extenuating circumstances claims are considered in accordance with the *Extenuating Circumstances procedure* by Student Governance team staff who are independent of the assessment process (visit [www.bcu.ac.uk/student-info/student-contract](http://www.bcu.ac.uk/student-info/student-contract)).

3.2.9 An independent *Academic Misconduct 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 Birmingham City University. Further detail on academic integrity and academic misconduct is provided in Section 10.

#### 4. Roles and Responsibilities

- 4.1 **Academic Board** – is ultimately responsible for the academic standards of Birmingham City University awards and has established an Academic Regulations and Policy Committee and Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Quality Committee to support it in discharging this responsibility.
- 4.2 **Academic Regulations and Policy Committee (ARPC)** – is responsible for the day-to-day management and operation of the Academic Regulations and for the approval of any amendments to the regulations. ARPC is also collectively responsible, along with the Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Quality Committee (LTAQC) for approving appropriate procedures for assessment, marking and moderation.
- 4.3 **Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Quality Committee (LTAQC)** – in addition to its responsibility for the approval of procedures for assessment, marking and moderation, LTAQC is also responsible for periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the arrangements for marking and moderation and recommending changes where appropriate.
- 4.4 **Faculty Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Quality Committee (FLTAQC)** – is responsible for ensuring that Schools/Institutes 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.



4.5 **School Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Quality Committee (SLTAQC)** – ensure that all courses operate in accordance with University requirements for assessment, marking and moderation and report on the effectiveness of these arrangements to FLTAQC and LTAQC on an annual basis through the Course Monitoring and Enhancement process.

4.6 **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 for external examiners the External Examining and External Expertise policy.

## 5. The Academic Calendar

5.1 The University operates a Standard Academic Calendar which applies to all courses and modules unless exceptionally approved otherwise by the Academic Regulations and Policy Committee.

5.2 All courses and their constituent modules 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;
- an exceptional (non-standard) delivery pattern approved by LTAQC or the Collaborative Partnerships Committee (CPC) on behalf of Academic Board at the point of initial approval of the course.

5.3 Semesters 1, 2 and 3 are identical and comprise 12 weeks of learning and teaching followed by an assessment, marking and moderation period (referred to as the A1, A2 and A4 assessment periods in the Standard Academic Calendar).

5.4 Re-assessment opportunities are provided at designated periods in the academic year. Semester 1 and Semester 2 are re-assessed during the summer vacation in late July / early August (referred to as A3). Semester 3 re-assessment occurs in Semester 1 of the following academic year.

5.5 Each learning and teaching period is explicitly linked to a particular assessment period (eg: a set of MAB and PAB meetings).

5.6 The Standard Academic Calendar is published in advance by the Academic Board and normally covers a period of five academic years. The calendar specifies designated periods for learning and teaching, assessment, MABs and PABs, re-assessment and deadlines for the confirmation of award records for graduation. The Standard Academic Calendar is available at <https://icity.bcu.ac.uk/Quality-Enhancement-and-Inclusion/Index>

5.7 Students studying at one of the University's collaborative partner institutions normally undertake assessment tasks at the same time as students studying Birmingham City University 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 is provided through the publication of a Module Guide or Assessment Brief, or both. The information should be published on the relevant VLE page for the module rather than as separate documents, thus ensuring the core information is accessible to all students.

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):

- a teaching plan/schedule of activities;
- names and contact details of the module leader and of staff involved in module delivery;
- details of the summative assessment methods, including the weighting of individual elements of assessment and any specific requirements for each such as length/duration and any applicable penalties (eg exceeding word limits or referencing errors);
- details of any in-person assessment elements (eg presentations, in-class tests etc.) including dates/times (where applicable);
- details of any formative assessment tasks including timing;
- methods and opportunities for re-assessment (eg within-year retrieval opportunities);
- assessment criteria – setting out the basis on which the quality of a student's work will be graded;
- details of any marking scheme (if used) and/or grade descriptors;
- submission date(s) and time(s) for assessment elements, together with submission location/arrangements and the consequences of late, incomplete or non-submission (*with reference to section 6 of the Academic Regulations*);
- any additional requirements of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies that apply to the module and/or its assessment;
- information on academic integrity and the consequences of poor academic practice including reference to the University's Academic Misconduct procedure.

6.3 It is an expectation that module information, incorporating the minimum requirements set out above, will be available to students during or before the first week of teaching for each module. However the information is provided to students it should also be published on the VLE page for the module.

## 7. Assessment Setting and Design

### 7.1 Information on the Module Assessment

7.1.1 The Module Specification details 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 the Quality Assurance and Enhancement team is used.

7.1.2 Staff can access every Module Specification from the definitive Course and Module Specification library facility on SharePoint (accessible [here](#)).

7.1.3 Detailed guidance for students begins with preparation of the module information. As described above, this is prepared by the Module Leader and used by all Module Tutors and students at all locations of delivery. It is made available to students before the beginning of the module. The assessment task(s) is normally distributed to students at the same time and no later than four teaching weeks before the task is scheduled to be completed by the students (eg: the details and specification of a task due to be submitted/completed in Week 10 must be provided to the students no later than week 6). If any assessment task occurs within the first four weeks of the delivery of a module, the assessment task must be published in the Module Guide.

### 7.2 Module Assessment – Design Stage

7.2.1 The Module Leader(s) is responsible for co-ordinating the preparation of assessment tasks for all locations of delivery, including collaborative 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 contextualise 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. See also paragraph 5.7 above).

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

- constructive alignment between intended learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities and assessment tasks designed to test students' achievement of intended learning outcomes;
- addressing all the module intended learning outcomes;
- managing assessment volume, variety and timing by taking a course level view, ensuring achievement of the course learning outcomes (NB: each course must have a **curriculum map** which explicitly shows the contribution of individual modules to the course intended learning outcomes);
- inclusive assessment design and consideration of alternative assessment modes;

- comparability and equivalence of assessment volumes (in accordance with the module credit rating);
- referring to external examiners' reports and outcomes of previous student evaluation mechanisms in order to enhance delivery;
- promoting academic integrity and good academic practice by reducing opportunities for plagiarism and assessment offences;
- anonymous marking and moderation procedures (e.g. for student presentations).

7.2.3 While the Module Specification only details summative assessment, the module's learning, teaching and assessment strategies may also include the use of formative assessment. These terms are defined in paragraph 2.1 above. Modules may include formative as well as summative assessments to encourage students to obtain and act on feedback, reflect on their learning and thereby learn more effectively. It is recognised that these types of assessment often overlap.

7.2.4 Submission dates for assessment tasks apply equally to collaborative 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 Faculty/School is responsible for determining the exact dates of submission by level 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 (eg: a different set of essay questions). It is also acceptable to require students to resubmit a revised version of the same task (eg: 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.

### Portfolios

- 7.2.8 Portfolios can consist of a collection of tasks that assess relevant learning outcomes, ultimately a folder of evidence. Tasks can include (this is not exhaustive): case studies, MCQs, reflective writing, exhibition pieces, artefacts, presentations, reports or video essays. The tasks may vary in type and format but should not overload students with multiple assessments and should be mapped to the module learning outcomes to avoid over-assessment. Written examinations cannot be included as a task within a portfolio.
- 7.2.9 The portfolio must not have separate submission dates within it; the only submission date specified will be the final deadline. Each task within a portfolio does not have to be passed in its own right, unless explicitly required by a PSRB, provided the portfolio assessment is passed overall. In the event that the portfolio assessment is failed overall, for re-assessment a student should only be expected to repeat the number of failed tasks necessary in order to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes.
- 7.2.10 Where Module Leaders wish to use sub-tasks (e.g. individual tasks within a portfolio or individual patches within a patchwork assessment), this is managed within the School. Sub-task marks will be recorded and managed locally by Module Leaders. Portfolio assessments will therefore result in a single mark calculated from the sub-tasks. The formal University regulations and procedures governing extensions, within-year resits (in-year retrieval), resits and extenuating circumstances do not apply to sub-tasks.

### In-class tests

- 7.2.11 In-class assessments take place during seminar or lecture periods and tend to be formative but may also include summative assessments (e.g. an OSCE). Students should be given enough notice of the test (e.g. a minimum of 2 weeks) and the length of time should ideally be short (e.g. normally no more than 2 hours). Careful consideration must be given to the scheduling, invigilation and logistics, especially for summative assessments.
- 7.2.12 If the in-class test is a summative assessment and the Student Lifecycle Team in Academic Registry has been asked by the relevant School to make the arrangements (including room booking, invigilation and special arrangements), the Student Lifecycle Team must be notified of the in-class test no later than week 2 of the semester (and at least 4 weeks in advance of the test date).
- 7.2.13 If the in-class test 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

*To be read in conjunction with Section 2 (specifically 2.8.4) of the Academic Regulations*

- 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 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 accepted, 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 Draft Assessment Tasks

*To be read in conjunction with Section 8 of the Academic Regulations (specifically 8.6.2 which sets out the responsibilities of the Deputy Chair of the examination board for internal and external verification of draft assessments)*

7.4.1 The process of verification ensures that the form and content of draft assessment tasks and assessment briefs are appropriate, fair and valid, will effectively measure the achievement of intended learning outcomes and that the standard of the assessments is consistent, commensurate with the level of study and comparable with the standard of assessments of the same level set at other UK Higher Education institutions.

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.

##### Timescales for verification

7.4.4 **Coursework** – a minimum of 6 weeks should be allowed between production of the draft assessment tasks and publication to students to enable the internal and external verification process to be completed prior to distribution to students. As set out in 7.1.3 above, the assessment task is distributed to students at least four teaching weeks before the task is scheduled to be completed (eg: details of an assessment task due to be submitted in Week 10 would need to be provided to students no later than Week 6 – the verification process would therefore need to commence by Week 1 at the latest to meet this timeframe).



- 7.4.5 **Examinations** – final draft 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 Academic Registry no later than 8 weeks prior to the date of the examination in accordance with requirements for submission specified by the Student Lifecycle team. A minimum of 4-6 weeks should normally be allowed between production of the examination paper and submission to the Student Lifecycle team to enable internal and external verification to take place. For digital examinations due to be administered by Success+, the Digital Assessment Centre, the examination must be submitted to the Success+ team 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.

#### Internal Verification

- 7.4.7 The internal verification process for draft assessment tasks takes place within Schools. The exact process and procedures may differ between Schools and it is a matter for Schools and Faculties to determine the most appropriate approach according to the subject area and discipline. Verification is normally undertaken by staff who do not have direct involvement with the assessment(s) subject to scrutiny. Responsibility for the internal verification process rests with the Deputy Chair of the Examination Board as set out in the *Academic Regulations*. Deputy Chairs, supported by Heads of Course Oversight and School administration teams 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 School, overseen by the Deputy Chair of the Examination Board and Head of Course Oversight on behalf of the MAB. The minimum requirement for internal verification is the same as that for external verification as set out in 7.4.11 below. However, Schools are able to carry out internal verification for other draft assessments including levels of study that do not normally contribute to the final classification and set this out in their process and procedures. This may, for example, be necessary to meet the requirements of a PSRB.

#### External Verification

- 7.4.10 The Deputy Chair of the Examination Board, supported by Heads of Course Oversight and School administration teams, is responsible for ensuring that External Examiners are provided with draft assessment tasks for review and comment following internal verification in accordance with the requirements set out in the *External Examining and External Expertise policy*.
- 7.4.11 Any assessment tasks that contribute more than 25% of the overall assessment for modules that contribute towards the classification of the award 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 normally provided with appropriate IT access to enable them to view a range of information about the delivery of modules which includes the relevant module specifications, assessment information and assessment criteria. Ideally, all tasks will be provided to the external examiner at the same time in order to allow the external examiner 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 timeframe the assessment task can be released to students, or in the case of examination papers submitted to the Student Lifecycle team in Academic Registry. 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 a collaborative 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 School nominates an appropriate member of academic staff to co-ordinate the assessment process, on behalf of the School, this will normally be the appointed Link Tutor. This includes the arrangements for internal and external verification and internal/external moderation, ensuring that all University regulatory and policy requirements are satisfied.

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. However, the internal and external verification process, where required, should still be evidenced consistently.

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 School) 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.

8.2 Online submission is the norm across the University for all levels of study. The vast majority of coursework prepared in an electronic form will be 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/PG Dissertations / Major Projects**

8.3.1 Online submission will be the default position for UG/PG 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, for example physical artefacts. 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 by the Module Leader 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. Whichever method of submission is stipulated, the deadline date and time must be clearly articulated to students in the assessment brief, as well as on the Moodle site for the module during the academic year.

8.4.2 To ensure consistency of experience for students, the standard deadline for submission will be 3.00pm on the day of submission for all summative coursework assessment.

8.4.3 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 3.00pm local time (local to the

provider organisation) with 3.00pm being the norm, Monday to Friday (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 Section 6 of the *Academic Regulations*). 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 submission points operate. The University's submission model for online submission of work is that a single submission point is used for first sit assessments to allow submission of work up to the deadline as well as submission of any late work or work with approved extensions, or to allow for in-year retrieval (where applicable).

## 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 should ensure that all coursework in a text or other appropriate format is checked for originality (by Turnitin).

8.7.2 **Formative use of Turnitin** – 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 and make use of the originality 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.

## 8.8 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 and to adopt a consistent approach which is not overly punitive towards individual students.

## 9. Marking Stage

### 9.1 Overview

9.1.1 Generic Assessment Criteria and Marking Standards are used to define and evaluate student achievement in the completion of assessed work for an individual module. Both can be customised to suit the specific subject matter being tested and the assessment method being used. University level-specific Generic Assessment Criteria and Marking Standards are available to use as a reference point to inform the assessment process. At Level 6 these have been mapped against *Annex D: Outcome classification descriptions for FHEQ Level 6 degrees* published by the QAA. These are located in **Appendix 4** of this policy.

9.1.2 It is recognised that different disciplines lend themselves to different styles of marking with regard to the annotation of student work and examination scripts. The University does not set a generic policy on how student work is annotated; such approaches are determined at School level, usually based on norms in the subject area and the assessment method being used. However, it is a minimum requirement that a summary piece of feedback is provided on all work which relates to the achievement of learning outcomes and refers to the assessment criteria (see paragraph 16.2.1 below).

### 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 School 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.

9.2.3 The Head of School, 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 School 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 Assessment Criteria and Marking Standards

9.3.1 There are two types of Assessment Criteria: Generic and Specific. The former serves as a guide to writing the latter.

9.3.2 **Generic Assessment 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. Assessment criteria are written in a language that is both generic and general (see **Appendix 2**).

9.3.3 These generic or institution-wide Assessment Criteria are translated by Module Leaders into **specific module-level Assessment Criteria** that reflect the subject being taught, and are communicated to staff and students through Moodle sites for individual modules and where published in Module Guides and/or assessment briefs. They are also communicated to external examiners when they moderate assessed work.

9.3.4 **Marking standards** comprise bands of marks, normally on a percentage scale (e.g. 60-69%, 50-59% etc.) or occasionally 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.

#### 9.4 Marking Schemes

9.4.1 **Marking Schemes** are designed to support consistency in marking.

9.4.2 Marking Schemes are used at module level to inform the first marking and internal and external moderation of each item of assessment. Marking schemes identify the knowledge and skills which students must demonstrate to achieve the learning outcomes of the module, and are used to calculate the total mark to be awarded for an individual item of assessment. The University's Generic Assessment Criteria and Marking Standards are intended to inform the development of marking schemes, ensuring that they are broadly comparable across the institution.

9.4.3 Marking Schemes customise the Generic Assessment Criteria and Marking Standards to fit a specific item of assessment for a module, identifying the basis on which marks are awarded. A marking scheme may range from the fairly general to the highly specific. In relatively open-ended assessments (e.g. where students are asked to select one of a range of essay questions) a Module Leader is not necessarily expected to provide a detailed marking scheme specifying a 'model answer' to each specific essay question, but rather to provide a general marking scheme which identifies the characteristics of a good essay and can be applied to any of the essay questions set. The same would apply to many aspects of practice, performance or studio work. In contrast, less open-ended assessment tasks may require both a 'model answer' and a detailed marking scheme.

9.4.4 To facilitate consistency first markers constantly refer to the marking scheme when marking student work. The marking scheme is then passed on to the internal moderator (or second marker) and eventually to the external examiner with the assessed work. This enables all parties involved in the assessment process to understand the basis on which marks are awarded and lends a fundamental transparency to the process. It should always be clear to the internal moderator and external examiner how marks have been determined.

#### 9.5 Anonymous Marking

9.5.1 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.

- 9.5.2 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.
- 9.5.3 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.
- 9.5.4 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).
- 9.5.5 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).
- 9.5.6 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.

## 9.6 Word Limits

9.6.1 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 how the word limit is managed. 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.

9.6.2 Where a word limit is to be set for a specific assessment task, the assessment brief should clearly state the maximum word count. A +10% margin of tolerance should be applied, beyond which nothing further will be marked.

9.6.3 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.

9.6.4 There is no fixed penalty for exceeding the word count, but 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. Students may therefore be penalised for a failure to be concise and for failing to conclude their work within the word count specified.

## 9.7 Referencing

9.7.1 The University's standard referencing in written work, as far as possible, is the BCU Harvard Referencing System. Where the BCU 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.



## 9.8 Student Presentations

- 9.8.1 Since anonymity cannot be maintained, all student presentations contributing more than 25% of a module's assessment are second marked, either by another lecturer attending the presentations or by moderating marks on the basis of recordings. Where they contribute towards the classification of an award a sample is also moderated by an external examiner.
- 9.8.2 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 (given that a seminar group's presentations may extend over several weeks), 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.

## 9.9 Written Feedback to Students

- 9.9.1 It is extremely important for the first marker to provide students with adequate levels of feedback on the marks awarded. Feedback should correlate with Generic Assessment Criteria and Marking Standards and any customised 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 **20** working days of the submission deadline, except for major projects/dissertations where **30** 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 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 be referred to the Centre for Academic Success (or equivalent) to attend a mandatory workshop on academic practice/integrity.
- 10.3 Assessed work will normally be submitted online via Turnitin, unless inappropriate to do so, and will be checked for originality. Opportunities for all students and staff to

make use of plagiarism e-detection software (Turnitin) prior to final submission of an assessment should be made available where appropriate and practicable to do so.

- 10.4 Where a marker suspects academic misconduct by a student or group of students within an assessment 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 practise a suspected case of academic misconduct may be investigated under the **Fitness to Practise 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 regulated within agreed norms and against the University's Generic Assessment Criteria and Marking Standards and predetermined marking criteria across modules and courses. 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 **Appendix 5**), 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. 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 School 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 School 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 Head of Course Oversight and the School Administrative team responsible for the data entry of marks to SITS.
- 11.3 Modules Delivered at Birmingham City University and one or more Collaborative 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 Part A of the standard Moderation Form (see **Appendix 5**) and attach it to the sample of assessed work along with the overall mark list and marking scheme.
- 11.3.2 First markers at Birmingham City University follow the process outlined in paragraphs 11.2.1 and 11.2.2 above.
- 11.3.3 First markers at a Collaborative Partner select the sample for internal moderation and send it to either the designated internal moderator at Birmingham City University or the internal moderator at the partner institution/organisation 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 School 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 School 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 Head of Course Oversight and the School Administrative team responsible for the data entry of marks to SITS.
- 11.4 Modules Delivered at a Collaborative 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 paragraphs 11.2.1 – 11.2.3 above.
- 11.4.2 Once the module marksheet is confirmed the Module Leader submits the electronic marksheet to the Head of Course Oversight and 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, practise assessment). In such cases, further internal moderation may 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 School (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 in particular at 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.

#### 11.8 Guidance for staff

11.8.1 A flowchart showing the essential requirements of the marking and moderation process is available at **Appendix 6**.

### 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 Schools and/or Faculties). The sample of 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 a collaborative partner.
- 12.2 Where the internal moderation process identifies issues or concerns with the standard and consistency of the marking undertaken by the partner organisation, this must be addressed immediately and the Faculty (i.e. Associate Dean with responsibility for quality assurance) and the Apprenticeship and Partnerships Unit should be notified of the issues or concerns.
- 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 organisation. Any issues with marking standards at a partner organisation 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, taking into account feedback from the appointed External Examiner, 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 may determine that the partner can assume more responsibility for internal moderation. The outcomes of Course Monitoring and Enhancement (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. Schools 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 Collaborative partner academic 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 Collaborative Partners operating under franchise or validation arrangements.

#### 13.2 Preparation of the Sample for External Moderation: Single Marker

The Module Leader checks and forwards the complete sample to the Head of School (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/marketing 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 minima 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 Part B of the Moderation Form. He/she collates, checks and forwards the final sample to the Head of School (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 MDF;
- the Generic Assessment Criteria and Marking Standards/marketing scheme for each assessment task;
- Part B of the Moderation form.

### 13.4 Arrangements for Scrutiny of the Sample for External Moderation

External moderation can be achieved through a variety of practices, usually depending on the nature of the assessed work and the medium of its expression. The Head of School, supported by the Deputy Chair of the relevant exam boards, discusses the detail of the moderation process with all new external examiners on appointment and, in particular, how the moderation process is conducted (e.g. how samples are made available to external examiners, moderation meetings at BCU and/or Collaborative Partners before the MAB, electronic moderation of work or a combination of these). Within reason, the Head of School endeavours to accommodate the system(s) which best suits the individual external examiner and allows him/her to fulfil his/her moderation duties.

## 14. **Module Assessment Boards (MABs)**

*This section should be read in conjunction with Section 8 (8.2) of the Academic Regulations.*

### 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 as specified in Section 8 of the *Academic Regulations*. Schools are responsible for the production of documentation to support the MAB process.

## 14.2 External Examiner Attendance at the MAB

14.2.1 Although external examiners directly contribute to the assessment process and the confirmation of marks at module level, they are not routinely required to attend MABs and are not included in the membership of those Boards.

## 14.3 Conduct of the MAB

14.3.1 The MAB follows a standard agenda and receives, on a module by module, level by level basis, the proposed marks for all assessment elements and the overall module result. Prior to the MAB, the Module Leader is responsible for checking the accuracy and completeness of marks. This is frequently carried out by informal meetings of staff (e.g. a pre-MAB meeting).

14.3.2 The consideration of each module comprises:

- a brief report to the MAB, from the Module Leader, on the delivery and assessment of the module at all locations, highlighting any particular areas of concern or commendation that may be applicable;
- a brief report from the relevant external examiner (or a report of the appropriate external examiner's comments if absent);
- consideration of any proposed re-marking of individual assessment tasks (not individual candidates), based on advice from the relevant external examiner (see below);
- the award of credit for modules where students are not registered for an award;
- confirmation of the form of assessment method to be used for retrieval of modules failed at the first attempt (normally in accordance with the approved Module Specification – see paragraphs 7.2.6 - 7.2.7 above). The timescales for re-assessment follow the standard deadlines provided with the academic calendar.
- agreement of any action required with regard to the module (e.g. review of appropriateness of assessment tasks etc.).

14.3.3 An external examiner may propose to the MAB 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 assessment 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 re-assessment 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). Any such instances should be reported to the School Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Quality Committee 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 co-ordinating any such agreed action.

#### 14.4 After the Meeting

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 Schools are responsible for communicating the outcomes of the MAB to students and other relevant sections of the institution. Where retrieval of failed modules after the first attempt involves the re-submission of coursework, Schools 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 a Collaborative 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 a Collaborative Partner if appropriate) – in accordance with the ***Procedure for Overseas Examinations***.

#### 14.5 Alternative Arrangements for MABs

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 (particularly in the Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences). 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 Section 8 (8.3) of the Academic Regulations.*

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

- recommending the conferment of all Birmingham City University awards to the Learning, Teaching, Assessment 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 Section 8 of the *Academic Regulations*.

15.3 At least one external examiner must be present for the PAB to be quorate where a final award is to be made. On the exceptional occasion 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 Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) 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 Schools 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 have 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.

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

16.1.3 Academic Registry 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 School 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 Generic Assessment Criteria and Marking Standards (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 learning outcomes, assessment criteria and, where applicable, the marking scheme. Feedback should also include comments regarding areas of strength, areas needing improvement and recommended actions to improve academic performance.

16.2.3 Feedback on all assessed work is available to students within **20 working days** of the submission deadline or the date of an examination except for feedback for dissertations and major projects which is given within **30 working days** (note that working days excludes those days when the University is officially closed). *[NB: The 20 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 (eg: 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 regulations set out in Section 6 of the *Academic Regulations*, 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 20 working days. Where students submit up to one week late (5 working days) feedback will be available to students within **25 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 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 13.3.1 above. All failed re-assessment work should however be internally moderated.

## 18. Archiving of Assessed Work

- 18.1 Schools are responsible for maintaining an archive of the previous delivery of the module. The archive contains the following information:
- module guide (including the Module Specification);
  - assessment tasks;
  - specific marking schemes (if relevant);
  - examples of student assessed work, reflecting the range of performance and demonstrating evidence of internal and external moderation (usually the sample used for external moderation);
  - marking and feedback sheets evidencing comprehensive and appropriate written feedback to students on assessed work;
  - list of all marks for entire cohort on module at all locations of delivery.
- 18.2 The above is readily available for quality assurance purposes and can be used for standardisation purposes where appropriate. The archive of the previous delivery of the module 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.
- 18.3 Assessed work that is not part of the archive and has not been collected by students within six months of the relevant PAB will be disposed of by the University.

## 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.

## 20. Draft Work and Tutorial Support

- 20.1 It is the responsibility of the Module Leader to specify to students at the outset of a module the extent of formative individual/group support that is provided by the Module Tutor during the drafting of, or other preliminary work associated with, summative assessment tasks. Module Tutors make it clear to students that the final mark for the summative assessment cannot be inferred from comments (provided in writing or in other medium) relating to formative draft work. The Module Leader specifies to students a deadline for the receipt of draft work for which feedback/comments are sought.

### Document Control Statement

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