ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK POLICY

Version No.	Description	Author	Approval	Effective Date
1.1	Policy on Assessment and Feedback – applicable to both undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes.	Assessment and Feedback Working Group	Senate (April 2014)	Sept 2014

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1. BACKGROUND

In September 2013 an Assessment and Feedback working group was established with a primary remit of reviewing the University's Assessment and Feedback Policy and Procedures document in line with effective practice across the sector and the appropriate chapters of the new UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Chapter B3 on Learning and Teaching and Chapter B6 on Assessment of Students and Accreditation of Prior Learning).

The group's membership comprised the University's Academic Champion for Feedback and Assessment (Chair), a representative from each Faculty, the USSA Vice President for Education and Representation, a student intern from the student-led project, "Engaging Students in Delivering High Quality, Consistent, University Wide Student Assessment and Feedback" and a representative from the Education Enhancement team within the Student Experience and Enhancement Services directorate.

The starting point for the working group was consideration of the 12 Principles of Good Assessment and Feedback, adopted by Senate in 2008. The working group agreed these principles captured elements of effective practice in assessment, but felt that staff and students could be provided with clearer guidance on expected standards for assessment and feedback practices. The new Principles of Assessment and Feedback detailed in this policy were endorsed by Senate in November 2013.

2. RATIONALE

In higher education, "assessment" describes any process that involves the evaluation or appraisal of a student's knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes or abilities. In line with Chapter B6[1] of the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education, assessment is taken to be an integral component of teaching and learning, and serves multiple purposes. In addition to enabling evaluation and measurement of students' learning, effective assessment shapes and enhances student learning. Assessments should therefore be designed to facilitate students' attainment of intended learning outcomes, and permit the measurement of such attainments against explicit criteria. A holistic approach to assessment at programme level can also support the development of distinctive Strathclyde graduate attributes: graduates that are engaged, enquiring, enterprising, and ethically and globally aware. Recent publications on assessment in higher education suggest a 'transformation' of assessment is required to ensure that assessment practices enable students to develop such attributes and the skills needed to be lifelong learners in the 21st century.[2]

This approach recognises that assessment is central to learning and teaching, and is not designed solely to measure student learning. Also essential to enhancing learning, is the provision of continuous feedback to students on their learning; it is recognised that feedback takes different forms (e.g. replies to posts on a discussion forum), but in relation to assessment,

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[1] Last reviewed in October 2013.
[2] For example: Boud, D. & Falachikov, N. (Eds.). (2007). *Rethinking Assessment in Higher Education.* Oxon: Routledge; Higher Education Academy. (2012). *A Marked Improvement. Transforming assessment in higher education.* York: The Higher Education Academy; and Merry, S., Price, M., Carless, D. & Taras, M. (Eds.). (2013). *Reconceptualising Feedback in Higher Education. Developing Dialogue with Students.* Oxon: Routledge.

useful feedback is feedback that is specific in telling learners the extent to which they have met published assessment criteria, and tells them what they need to do to improve. The role of feedback in effectively supporting student learning should be recognised at the assessment design stage, where factors such as the timing and sequencing of assessments and related feedback are considered, particularly where feedback is used to improve future work.

Previous work on assessment at Strathclyde through the REAP[3] (Re-Engineering Assessment Practices) and PEER[4] (Peer Evaluation in Education Review) projects, together with the ongoing work on Peer and Community Personal Development Planning, have emphasised the importance of providing students with opportunities to self- and peer-assess, and for students to develop the capacity to evaluate, reflect on and manage their own learning. It is widely recognised that this will, in the long-term, help develop attitudes and skills that foster independence in learning. In the Strathclyde context, the virtual learning environment (VLE), MyPlace, offers various tools to support effective practice in assessment and feedback, including handling peer review/assessment activities, online assessment submission and return of feedback, and enabling efficient communication with different student and staff groups.

The aim of the current policy is to develop an institution-wide approach to assessment and feedback that enhances the effectiveness of assessment in aiding students to achieve the necessary knowledge and skills described in a module or programme's intended learning outcomes. The policy is underpinned by new principles of assessment and feedback (outlined in section 5) that reflect this aim and a commitment to ensuring our assessment and feedback practices are fair, transparent, and continuously reviewed. In short, to ensure they continue to be fit for purpose. This policy should be adhered to across the University. The implementation of the policy will be monitored by the Quality Assurance Committee.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Procedures on Assessment and Feedback.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes offered by the University. This policy should be read in conjunction with other relevant University policies and procedures. The University website contains policies and procedures on a range of assessment-related matters, including: ensuring equality, guidance for staff on supporting students with a disability, guides for staff marking assessments in undergraduate and level 5 programmes, guidance for students and staff on avoiding plagiarism, guidance for staff in dealing with possible cases of plagiarism, policies on classifying honours degrees and other degree awards, and on awarding motivational merit and distinction, guidance on the compensation scheme and student progress, the role of external examiners in taught programmes, the procedure for dealing with student discipline cases, guidance for staff on the appeals procedure and accounting for students' personal circumstances.

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[3] REAP Project, accessed at http://www.reap.ac.uk/
[4] PEER Project, accessed from: http://www.reap.ac.uk/PEER.aspx. The site contains a PEER toolkit containing guidance for staff on using peer review.

4. COMMENCEMENT

This policy commences on 1st September 2014.

5. ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK PRINCIPLES

The following assessment and feedback principles were endorsed at Senate at its meeting on 6th November 2013. The accompanying points have been revised following further discussion. These principles have been widely consulted on across the University. It is expected that these principles will be adhered to throughout the institution.

PRINCIPLE 1. ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK PRACTICES PROMOTE EFFECTIVE STUDENT LEARNING

1.1 Assessment and feedback activities are designed to foster student engagement, to support students' attainment of knowledge, understanding, and transferable skills.
1.2 A range of assessment methods are used, increasing in complexity across a programme, and taking into consideration student and staff workloads.
1.3 Assessment and feedback practices align with intended learning outcomes and assessment criteria, and provide opportunities for students to be active participants in the process, including opportunities for students to discuss feedback.
1.4 Timely, constructive, and supportive feedback is required to help students understand the extent to which they have fulfilled the assessment criteria, and supports future development of students' work.

PRINCIPLE 2. ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK PRACTICES ARE APPROPRIATE, FAIR, AND TRANSPARENT

2.1 Assessment tasks are appropriate to disciplinary and/or professional contexts.
2.2 Assessment applies rigorous academic standards related to and across the discipline(s) or professional context and is based on clearly defined assessment criteria.
2.3 Assessment grading and feedback is based solely on students' achievement against criteria and standards.
2.4 Assessment and feedback practices are fair, inclusive and accessible to all students.

PRINCIPLE 3. ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK PRACTICES ARE CLEARLY COMMUNICATED TO STUDENTS AND STAFF

3.1 Students are made aware at the beginning of a class of the purpose, weighting, and timing of assessment, and of the importance of academic honesty in assessment.
3.2 Students are made aware at the beginning of a class of the nature and timing of feedback.
3.3 All students and staff are aware of the criteria and standards used to assess and provide feedback on students' work.
3.4 There are opportunities for students and staff to engage in a dialogue around assessment and feedback, including opportunities for students to clarify feedback.
3.5 In each programme the processes for marking, moderation, and feedback are appropriate and fair and are explained to students and staff.

PRINCIPLE 4. ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK PRACTICES ARE CONTINUOUSLY REVIEWED

4.1 Assessment and feedback activities, and the outcomes of assessment, are reviewed via the class review and external examining processes.

4.2 Assessment and feedback activities are continuously reviewed to ensure effective alignment with a programme's intended learning outcomes and graduate attributes.

4.3 Opportunities to develop effective practice and innovation in assessment and feedback are available to all staff involved in assessment.

6. ANONYMOUS MARKING

6.1 Anonymous marking (when the identity of a student is not known to a marker and/or exam board) will be used for all assessments wherever possible and appropriate, including formal written examinations at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

6.2 Where anonymous marking is not possible, for example where an alternative method of assessment has been used for a student with a disability, additional scrutiny by a second marker may be appropriate.

6.3 Other exceptions will be where the mode of assessment (e.g., presentations or oral examinations) prevents anonymity, or where there is pedagogical justification (e.g., the use of ipsative feedback).

6.4 Double marking is effective practice for assessments that are not marked anonymously and for dissertations, or comparable assessments.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

7.1 The **University** assumes responsibility for:

- Providing staff with opportunities to develop effective practice in assessment and feedback (Organisational Staff and Development Unit, Education Enhancement);
- Providing adequate resources, including information technology systems, to support effective practice (Information Services Directorate, Student Business, Education Enhancement); and,
- Monitoring implementation of this policy through the Quality Assurance Committee (Education Enhancement).

7.2 **Faculties** are responsible for: overseeing and receiving reports from programme exam boards; scrutinising external examiners' reports and responding to them; and sharing effective practice within and between faculties.

7.3 **Heads of Department/School** are responsible for: instructing colleagues within their Department/ School to note and adhere to the Assessment and Feedback Policy and Procedures.

7.4 **Programme Exam Boards** are responsible for: making sure assessments across a programme are marked fairly; responding to points made by External Examiners; and ensuring university and faculty regulations are adhered to.

7.5 **Programme Leaders/Directors** are responsible for ensuring a coherent and effective approach to assessment and feedback is taken across a programme of study. This approach will involve:

- Ensuring a range of assessment methods are used throughout a programme of study, as appropriate to the discipline;
- Reviewing the Exam Timetable and requesting amendments where there is exam bunching; and,
- Ensuring procedures related to ensuring fairness in assessment are communicated to students.

7.6 **Year Coordinators and Module Coordinators** are responsible for: having an overview of summative assessment activities within a subject area to avoid where possible a concentration of assessment deadlines, placing emphasis on scheduling and sequencing of assessments and related feedback; involving students in developing effective practice in assessment and feedback; and for developing effective moderation and/or second marking procedures.

7.7 **Staff** involved in assessing students' work are responsible for:

- Designing assessments that effectively facilitate students' achievement of intended learning outcomes;
- Assessing students' work according to published assessment criteria which are aligned to intended learning outcomes;
- Providing timely, informative and helpful feedback which enables students to further improve their learning and performance wherever possible;
- Informing students when, where and how feedback will be provided;
- Engaging in dialogue with students about assessment and feedback; and
- Continuously reviewing their approaches to assessment and feedback to reflect effective practice.

7.8 **Students** are expected to be responsible for their own learning through:

- Understanding the requirements of individual assessments, and actively engaging with assessment tasks by devoting appropriate time and effort;
- Developing an understanding of the relationship between intended learning outcomes and assessment criteria, and standards in their programme of study;
- Ensuring their academic work is authentic and honestly produced;
- Finding out where, how and when work is submitted and how and when feedback is provided;
- Actively engaging, reflecting, and acting on provided feedback;
- Seeking academic support when needed, for example, if feedback needs to be clarified; and
- Participating in the development of assessment and feedback practices at class and programme levels.

8. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Assessment	The process of measuring the performance of students (as in examinations, assignments and other assessable work) that enables students to monitor their progress and contributes to their academic results.
Assessment criteria	Specific criteria against which pieces of work are assessed. An understanding of the criteria must be shared by markers and students. Feedback should relate to these criteria.
Module	The individual components of a programme, normally worth 20 or 10 credits.
Programme	The full degree programme leading to an award.
Exam bunching	The perception of a programme's exams being scheduled too closely together. The University of Strathclyde Students' Association defines exam bunching as two exams within a 30 hour period.
Feedback	Information provided to students on the quality of their performance in relation to assessment criteria, which forms the basis of improved student learning.
Formative assessment	This type of assessment normally has no or low weighting in the final mark for a module or programme. The goal of formative assessment is to provide an opportunity for students to monitor their learning and provide feedback to teachers that can be used to review their teaching.
Summative assessment	Assessment is summative when the grading of an assessment contributes to the final grade for a class or programme of study. The aim of summative assessment is to evaluate students' attainment of the intended learning outcomes within a unit of study.
Intended learning outcomes	What the student is expected to be able to do or demonstrate, in terms of particular knowledge, skills and understanding, by the end of a module or programme.
Ipsative feedback	This type of feedback compares a student's performance on a current assessment with performance on a previous assessment.
Moderation	The process of checking that assessment criteria are consistently applied across markers in marking students' work.
Second marking	Second marking is the process in which student work is independently assessed by a more than one marker.

The second marker may or may not have access to the marks and comments of the first marker.

Graduate attributes

Qualities, skills, dispositions, and understanding that students are expected to develop. At Strathclyde these are referred to as the 4 E's – engaged, enquiring, enterprising and ethically and globally aware.