



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE  
NEW UNIVERSITY

EST. 1891



# Assessment and Feedback Policy

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<b>Approved by:</b>	Senate	<b>Date first published:</b>	Sep-2017
<b>Owner:</b>	Director of Learning Enhancement and Academic Practice	<b>Date updated:</b>	Sep-2025
		<b>Review date:</b>	Jul-2026

## Introduction

- 1 The University is responsible for ensuring that the academic standard of each award and/or award element is set at the appropriate level and that student performance is properly judged against this, in line with subject benchmark statements and the national qualifications framework as appropriate.
- 2 The University bases its assessment methods, practices and procedures on the principles of: transparency; consistency; validity; reliability and fairness as required by the QAA Quality Code and OfS Condition of Registration B4 (Assessment and awards) and B5 (Sector-Recognised Standards).
- 3 The purpose of assessment is to enable students to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes of the module. Students' performance in the assessment of modules contributing to their programme of study is the major source of evidence used in determining progression and recommendation for awards of the University.
- 4 This policy sets out the principles, processes and basic procedures by which assessment will be designed, scrutinised, disseminated, marked, and moderated.
- 5 In certain instances, for example due to the requirements of an accrediting body such as a Professional, Statutory, Regulatory Body (PSRB), variations to this document may need to apply. These changes will extend the requirements of the University, which are not permitted to be lessened or bypassed.

## Applicability and Scope

- 6 This document applies to all credit bearing programmes (including short courses) delivered in the UK or overseas by whatever mode or regime, including that provided at or by our partners to students registered with the University.
- 7 Programme teams are charged with applying this policy for all aspects of their provision.

## Definitions

Definition	Meaning
<b>Assessment</b>	A designated assignment/task set in order that a student can demonstrate the achievement of specific learning outcomes. Full details of the specific assessment types can be found at appendix 1.
<b>Assignment Brief</b>	Details of the coursework task to be undertaken provided to students. Should include reference to the task type, title, and parameters, to enable students to successfully complete the assessment (assessment criteria), the relevant learning outcome(s), how marks will be awarded, and the weighting towards the overall mark for the module.
<b>Assessment Criteria</b>	Statements which make clear to the student what is expected of the assignment and the measures against which they will be assessed.
<b>Unseen double marking</b>	Where two markers grade student work independently and usually concurrently.
<b>Buddy marking</b>	Process by which a new marker is teamed with a more experienced member of staff to complete the marking process with support. This may be concurrently, either blind or collectively, or through second marking.
<b>e-submission, marking and feedback</b>	Where students submit work and receive feedback electronically, with tutors marking and grading work online.
<b>Examination Paper</b>	The question paper set for students to complete under examination conditions and is not made available to students beforehand. A Seen Examination Paper is one where students are given details of the questions in advance, but sit the paper under examination conditions.
<b>Examination Script</b>	Answers provided by the student to the examination paper. For some forms of examination, such as multiple choice, answers may be written on the paper.
<b>External Scrutiny of Assessments</b>	The process by which external examiners review all assessment tasks (assignment briefs and examination papers) to ascertain if the standards are comparable with other institutions in the sector, and that they have been through an internal approval process.
<b>Formative assessment</b>	Assessment set which is developmental in purpose, and is designed to provide students with feedback on their progress but does not count towards the module grade. While students are encouraged to undertake formative work, it is not compulsory (see summative assessment).
<b>Hard-copy submission</b>	Submission of work in paper format, where e-submission is not feasible or allowance has been made for paper submission.

<b>Definition</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<b>Internal Scrutiny of Assessments</b>	The process by which assessments tasks are scrutinised to ensure that they are appropriate and of a consistent standard across modules/courses.
<b>Marking Guidance</b>	Specification of how the students' work is to be marked against the assessment criteria, for the guidance of markers and to inform internal moderators and external examiners. To be produced with the assessment brief/criteria, but not given to students.
<b>Moderation</b>	The process by which a sample of student work is considered by an appropriate person (other than the marker) to ensure the level of marking is of an acceptable standard, is fair, and that constructive feedback is given.
<b>Module Plan</b>	A week by week programme of lectures/seminars/workshops and other activities including assignment brief release dates, submission deadlines, and dates for expected return of feedback to be made available to students at the start of a module.
<b>Module Descriptor</b>	The specification for a module, confirmed at validation and including details of the learning outcomes, indicative content, assessment description and weightings and teaching, learning and assessment strategy.
<b>Reassessment work</b>	Assignments or examinations/TCA's set for those students who have failed the elements at their first opportunity and who are confirmed as being in a referral position at the Board of Examiners.
<b>Second Marking:</b>	The process where all assessment elements are marked by a second marker after having sight of the original marks and feedback from the first marker. Considered good practice to support new staff/ partner staff.
<b>Summative assessment</b>	Assessment designed to measure the achievement of the learning outcomes as specified in the module descriptor. Summative assessments carry a weighting (or are classed as pass/fail) and contributes to the overall module mark/achievement.
<b>Third marker</b>	A third independent marker, used when blind double markers cannot agree a grade
<b>Time Constrained Assessment (TCA):</b>	A piece of coursework to be undertaken within specified time constraints. Where a TCA follows an exam format it normally takes place within a scheduled taught sessions and is invigilated by the tutor.
<b>VLE</b>	Virtual Learning Environment such as Blackboard™ or Moodle™. This includes integrated third party tools such as Turnitin™.
<b>Working day</b>	Working days are Monday to Friday, excluding Bank Holidays and days when the University is officially closed to students e.g. the Christmas closure period.

## Principles

- 8 The basic principles on which this document is based are that:
- Assessment is set in line with the validated curriculum, at the appropriate academic level.
  - Formative assessment, where set, should support students to develop their academic skills and knowledge for later summative assessment.
  - Summative assessments will be set to enable student to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes and the award of academic credit.
  - When setting assessments equality & diversity concerns such as the needs of those from a widening participation background should be taken into account and the support, as much as possible, the achievement of learning outcomes.
  - The assessment should provide the opportunity for students to demonstrate achievement beyond the attainment of the learning outcomes for higher marks/enhanced classification.
  - All assessment will be marked to the expected standard and will be free from bias or prejudice.
  - Students will receive timely feedback on their assessment that is constructive and clearly highlights areas for improvement/areas of strength.
  - Assessment will follow an appropriate moderation process. At a minimum:
    - All assessment will be internally moderated,
    - All assessment that forms part of the classification for award will be externally moderated.
- 9 When setting assessment it should be designed to reduce the possibility of Academic Malpractice (see Maintaining Academic Integrity policy). This may include but is not limited to:
- Using different questions/tasks on each occasion where possible,
  - Tailoring assessment to a specific case study, theory or period,
  - Using assessment criteria that require skills such as reflection, rather than a reiteration of facts,
  - Clearly defining permitted collaboration on any assessment,
  - Use of live briefs etc.
- 10 Assessment must be set in a timely manner so that it may be internally and externally scrutinised prior to the release to students.
- 11 Those setting assessments must use the University templates, which will ensure that all relevant information is captured and presented in a consistent manner.
- 12 The University policy is for all suitable coursework assignments to be submitted via e-submission. All work submitted electronically may be processed through plagiarism-detection software, and students will be informed of this in Handbooks, at induction, and on Assignment Briefs.
- 13 In order to provide students with the learning opportunity of developing their work through draft submissions to Turnitin™, all submissions points must be set up in a reasonable length of time in advance of the submission deadline, usually be 15 working days.
- 14 All work submitted electronically must be processed through text-matching software such as Turnitin™, as this supports the work of the Academic Misconduct Panel.

- 15 In some cases an exception to Turnitin™ use is appropriate (e.g. for submitting multimedia files or software files which are incompatible with the file sizes and formats accepted by Turnitin™). These exceptions must be agreed between the programme team and the Associate Dean of Education or appropriate representative. Where Turnitin™ use is not possible, there must be a robust mechanism in place to assess academic integrity.
- 16 Students will be informed of Turnitin™ use in Course/Programme handbooks.
- 17 Guidance on expected use of Turnitin™ and appropriate practice for exceptions is available from Learning Enhancement and Academic Practice (LEAP).
- 18 Some assessments will assess both a learning outcome and a professional competence standard defined by a PSRB. Work that is aligned to the PSRB competence standard and does not meet the requirements of that standard must be awarded a fail, even if it meets the requirements of other learning outcomes.

## Responsibilities

### Module leader

- 19 The main responsibilities of the module leader are to:
- Write the assessment brief, assessment criteria and marking guidelines in accordance with the validated curriculum.
  - Ensure that these are scrutinised internally, and externally where required, prior to dissemination to students.
  - Disseminate the assessment brief and assessment criteria to students in appropriate manner, taking into account any necessary factors such as closure days, student attendance patterns and location of study.
  - Complete/facilitate marking of the assessments once submitted.
  - Ensure that moderation is completed.
  - Respond in a timely and appropriate manner to comments, recommendations or concerns raised about the assessment.
  - Ensure that records of the scrutiny, marking and moderation are held in an appropriate, secure and accessible format.

### External examiner

- 20 The External Examiner's role is to act as an independent and impartial adviser. Full details of the responsibilities of the External Examiner in the assessment process is provided in the External Examiner's handbook.
- 21 The main responsibilities of the External Examiner are to:
- Scrutinise the assessment brief, assessment criteria and marking guidelines to ensure that it is fit for purpose and comparable with the sector.

- Ensure through sample moderation that the marking and internal moderation process has been completed in accordance with the policy.
- Ensure that assessments set and marks awarded are comparable with the wider sector.

## Scrutiny of Assessments

- 22 The University requires all summative assessment to be considered via a formal process of approval before they are made available to students. This is to ensure that the assessments are of an appropriate and consistent standard.
- 23 Those with responsibility for scrutinising the assessments must ensure that the assessment:
- Is appropriate for the module and level of study,
  - Enables students to meet the learning outcomes,
  - Uses the correct module title, code, and assessment weighting,
  - Is complete in terms of instructions for students,
  - Uses correct grammar and spelling,
  - Refers to assessment criteria,
  - Is accompanied Marking Guidance,
  - Uses the University templates.
- In addition the external scrutiny process ensures that that standards of assessments are comparable with other institutions in the sector.
- 24 External scrutiny applies to all Level 5, 6 and 7 summative assessment, including that delivered at or by partner institutions. For specific programmes that are registered/ accredited this scrutiny will extend to other assessments (such as level 4 of an undergraduate programme).
- 25 Any suggested amendments to the assessment brief must be agreed with the module leader.

## Timelines

- 26 **Coursework:** A minimum of 6 weeks should be allowed between production of the draft documents and publication to the students to enable the internal and external scrutiny processes to be followed prior to distribution to students.
- 27 **Examinations:** A minimum of 8 weeks should be allowed between production of the draft documents and transferring to the Academic Registry, in enable internal and external scrutiny prior to the deadline set by Academic Registry.
- 28 **Time Constrained Assessment (TCA):** Where TCAs are set using an examination format, the same considerations need to be taken into account as for examinations.

## Internal scrutiny process

- 29 Whilst the exact process and procedure may differ between subject areas it is the role of the academic managers to ensure that this is carried out to an appropriate and timely manner. A suitable method for recording should be used for monitoring and audit purposes which would include details of recommended changes and alterations.

- 30 For assessments provided by partner institutions the process for internal scrutiny will differ. This may mean that it is scrutinised at the University, at the partner or in combination. Full details will be laid out in the Operations Manual for each partnership.
- 31 Where reassessment or in-year retrieval work differs to the original submission this must also be internally scrutinised. It is expected that this is set at the same time as the original assessments.

### **External scrutiny process**

- 32 External Examiners must be provided with all relevant summative assessment information prior to finalisation, including exam papers. This is the responsibility of the programme leader. Ideally all assessment information should be made available to externals at the start of the academic year. In a small number of circumstances this information may be made available part-way through the year but before the start of the relevant term to allow for appropriate scrutiny.
- 33 The External Examiner will be requested to respond with any comments or recommendations, normally within 10 working days.
- 34 On receipt of the External Examiner's comments, the module leader must consider any recommendations and respond/make amendments appropriately.

## **Distribution of assessments to students**

### **Coursework**

- 35 Students must be provided with a written Assignment Brief for every element of coursework.
- 36 Reassessment briefs must be provided in a timely manner, following the agreed procedure for doing so.

### **Examination-type TCAs**

- 37 Examination-type TCAs are managed by the programme team. This includes the secure production and dissemination of papers to students in a suitably arranged venue.

### **Examinations**

The following information applies specifically to those students taught at one of the University's campuses. For programmes taught at or by partner organisations or off site please refer to the operations manual or local documentation.

### **Timetable**

- 38 Formal University examination periods are published on the University website. All examinations are expected to take place in University agreed weeks of the semester/year within which the module is delivered.
- 39 The Examination Timetables are prepared by the Academic Registry in liaison with programme teams.

- 40 Amendments to the timetable following publication should only be agreed under extreme circumstances, and in consultation with any students on which the changes will impact.

### **At the Examination**

- 41 The Academic Registry will produce and distribute papers to students including any specific amendments/requirements of PEP students, with the aid of the invigilation teams at each venue.
- 42 The academic responsible for setting the examination paper (or their appointed nominee) will be available either in person or by telephone for at least the first half-hour the examination is timetabled to take place.

## **Submission of assignments by students**

- 43 The Assignment Brief will clearly state the procedure for submission. Further detail may be included in the Programme Handbook or equivalent.

### **Submission dates**

- 44 Submission dates should be set within the recognised term time, excluding Bank Holidays. It is considered good practise to ensure submission dates correspond to normal patterns of attendance particularly for programmes that are part-time or work-based.
- 45 Submission dates should be set in a timely manner to ensure that there is a sufficient period between submission and the Board of Examiners so that marking and moderation can take place.
- 46 Changes to submission dates should only be made where it would be in the best interests of the students, for example forced closure of the University due to adverse weather conditions.
- 47 Submission dates for reassessment are agreed by the Board of Examiners; these may be provisionally advertised in advance of the Board to aid students in managing their studies.

### **Submission deadlines**

- 48 The University submission deadline is that all coursework must be **received before 14:00** on the due date.
- **E-submissions:** work must be **received by the server before 14:00** (last received time is 13:59:59) UK time whether GMT or BST on the due date.
  - **Hard copy submissions:** must be **received before 14:00** either by registered delivery or to the agreed submission point/space.
- 49 For part-time or evening courses a suitable alternative time may be set, following the protocols above.
- 50 In the event that University systems are not accessible on the due date/time, the due date will be extended by 24 hours. Students should not use alternative methods to submit their work.
- 51 In the event of a technical problem preventing a student from submitting an assignment, (which is not caused by a failure of the University's systems), the onus is on the student to seek support and guidance and submit as soon as practically possible.

- 52 Students are expected to submit according to the assessment brief, however it is acknowledged that mistakes may occur. Judgement should be exercised to 'receive' a submission where possible.

### **Late submission**

- 53 Assessment received up to 10 working days beyond the original submission date will be accepted as a late submission. This does not apply to pass/fail assessments, or to referral work.
- 54 A late submission will be marked and the actual mark gained recorded. If the work is of a pass standard, it will be capped to a mark of 40% (or pass mark if different).
- 55 Assignments received more than 10 working days beyond the original submission date, for pass/fail assessments, or for referral work will not be accepted and a non-submission will be recorded.

### **Marking of assessments**

- 56 All assessment will be marked against agreed Marking Guidance and Assessment Criteria, using the categorical marking scale unless an exemption is appropriate (e.g. for multiple choice tests).
- 57 Whilst it is normal practice for assessment to be marked by a single marker, alternative practice may apply, particularly for larger cohorts.
- 58 All final year projects/dissertations should be double marked and the supervisor will be one of the markers unless there are exceptional circumstances such that the supervisor is unavailable during the marking period.
- 59 The University operates a policy of anonymous marking for all examinations and for coursework where the method of assessment would facilitate this.
- 60 For assessments that are presentation/studio based the marking process should be conducted in a clear and transparent way, and to enable moderation.
- 61 Where a marker suspects academic malpractice by a student or group of students within an assessment the Maintaining Academic Integrity policy should be followed.
- 62 Marks for assessments will be provided as percentages, except where assessment has been validated as pass/fail.
- 63 All marks are provisional until ratified by a duly constituted Board of Examiners.
- 64 Written assignments should have an expected word limit specified. Where work is considerably longer than the specified limit (e.g. More than 10% over), only the first portion of the work that falls within the word limit should be marked and given feedback. Mark penalties should not be applied for over length work.

### **Feedback to Students**

- 65 Students will receive written feedback on all summative assessment. Where oral feedback is given, for example following a presentation, this should be considered supplemental.

- 66 Feedback should:
- Support the judgement of the marker and the mark awarded,
  - Enable the student to identify deficiencies in the work and specific areas for improvement,
  - Highlight strengths in the assessment,
  - Be digital rather than handwritten.
- 67 Markers may also make annotations on exam scripts, if these are to be returned to students.
- 68 For examinations, feedback may be either:
- Individual feedback using the University Assessment Feedback form, or
  - Generic feedback on the performance of each examination provided to all students registered for the assessment.
- 69 In addition, students may request to see their marked examination paper under controlled conditions. Originals or copies of examination scripts must not be given back to students.
- 70 Marks and feedback will be returned to students within 15 working days. Feedback should not be withheld while internal and external moderation takes place if this would delay the return of feedback to students beyond this timeframe.
- 71 If there is a delay, for whatever reason, this must be clearly communicated to all students, with a revised date when this will be available.
- 72 It should be emphasised to students that the marks remain provisional until confirmed by a Board of Examiners.

## **Moderation of assessments**

- 73 Each module will be internally moderated. External moderation will apply to modules contributing to the classification of an award.
- 74 The purpose of moderation is to ensure that the marking process:
- Conforms to the required standard for the level of that assessment,
  - Accords with the disseminated assessment criteria,
  - Reflects accurately the marking guidance,
  - Demonstrates consistency,
  - Is not simply the result of an individual judgement,
  - Provides students with constructive feedback.
- In addition, in relation to external moderation, that the marking process:
- Conforms to standards and expectations across the wider sector.
- 75 The purpose of moderation is not to 'remark' the work, and care should be taken by the moderator to ensure that this does not occur.
- 76 The following basic principles apply:

- Moderation will be completed using a sample pre-selected by the internal moderator that covers the range of marks,
  - No individual mark should be altered on the basis of a sample moderation,
  - Where there are discrepancies, they are resolved through discussion.
- 77 The moderation process will be captured on the template provided for this.
- 78 For all final year projects/dissertations, which are blind double-marked, the internal moderation process should record the original marks of each marker, the agreed mark, and the rationale for the agreement and if a third marker needed to be employed.
- 79 Issues identified through moderation will be reported to the relevant Board(s) of Examiners for consideration.

### Scaling of Marks

- 80 Scaling is a measure of last resort after other moderation methods have failed, but may be appropriate in a small number of circumstances. Scaling of marks may occur through multiple models, and it is up to the course leader and external examiner to agree on the most appropriate model within the following parameters:
- 81 Scaling should not result in unjustified grade inflation, so any scaling process should ensure that the final number of pass/fails and grade classifications are appropriate.
- 82 Rank ordering of students must be preserved through the scaling process.
- 83 Scaling is done at the assessment element level, not module level.
- 84 Scaling of marks applies to the full range (0 - 100%) and scaling should go to the next relevant point of the categorical marking scale.
- 85 Scaling can be in an upwards or downwards direction
- 86 Potential scaling models include but are not limited to:
- 87 Uplift or downlift of all marks by an agreed percentage to align with the most relevant point on the categorical marking scale.
- 88 Removing one component from calculation of the final mark (e.g. removing marks for one exam question where there were serious concerns about the fairness of that question).

### Retention and Return of Assessment Scripts

- 89 Where assessments are submitted as hard copy, these may be returned to students following ratification of the results. Examination scripts are not returned to students.
- 90 In line with OfS [guidance related to Conditions](#) of Registration B4 [and B5](#), student work must be kept securely for a period of five years after the end of the student's course of study. This should be done in anonymised form where possible, but all of the work of an individual student must be able to be identified for regulatory purposes.

## Artificial Intelligence

- 91 Artificial Intelligence (AI) is an agile and fast developing platform and BNU have created [this guidance](#) to ensure learners use AI appropriately within their studies. Misuse of AI should be treated as Academic Misconduct, and dealt with under the requirements of the Academic Integrity Policy.
- 92 In practice, detection of work that has been authored by AI is challenging, and will be based on academic experience, following by the Academic Integrity process for building evidence. BNU does not support the use of independent 'AI detection software' by staff as these are unreliable and potentially biased, and a potential breach of the Data Protection Policy.

## Appendix 1: Assessment Types

The table below provides following is a list of assessment activities.

Assessment Type	Definition	
Examination (Exam)	Formal type of assessment that takes place under timed conditions and in a controlled environment. Candidates may be asked a question or set of questions relating to the area of study. These may take the form of essays, short answer questions, problems, or multiple-choice answers.	
	Seen exam	Questions/scenario are made available in advance of the exam.
	Unseen exam	Questions are only revealed on the day in the venue.
	Open-book exam	The use of a limited selection of reference materials is permitted during the assessment. These must be clearly identified in the brief provided to students and on the exam paper.
Time-constrained assessment (TCA)	Any assessment in which a limited timeframe for completion of the assessment task is given. Examples include a test or report which must be completed in a short timeframe or an in-class test/examination	
Essay or written assignment	A written exercise in which the student must answer a question or scenario provided in the assessment brief. This would be written in the academic style and would draw on academic literature to support the argument presented by the student.	
Report	A description, summary or other account of an experience or activity. This may require a prescribed format or template, and usually follows the requirements of the particular industry.	
Dissertation	A substantial piece of writing based on independent research, taken under direction of a supervisor, normally completed at the end of a programme leading to an Honours degree or Master's qualification.	
Portfolio	A collection of work related to a topic or theme which has been produced over a period of time. It will consist of a number of pieces of work (often practical in nature), and may be supported by other work such as a reflective account.	
Project output (other than Dissertation)	Output of a project (other than a dissertation or written report) and will often be of a practical nature, especially in creative disciplines. Examples may include the staging of a play or other performance, a piece of artwork, a new product or a poster.	
Presentation or other form of oral assessment	An individual or group based presentation or conversation on a particular topic, including an individual contribution to a seminar or 'crit', or a debate. This may also include the 'viva' or 'viva voce' which is used under various circumstances to support or clarify assessment decisions reached via other means, e.g. in support of a piece of major project work.	
Practical skills assessment	Assessment of the students' practical skills or competence, focusing on the demonstration a specific practical skills or techniques. This may include clinical skills, or demonstration of practical skills learned in a workshop environment.	

<b>Assessment Type</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Set exercises	Questions or tasks designed to assess the application of knowledge, analytical, problem-solving or evaluative skills. This might include data interpretation and data analysis exercises and problem-based or problem-solving exercises

## Appendix 2: Generic Undergraduate Degree Grade Descriptors

Level	Work will show:
First Class (70% - 100%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A thorough engagement with the wider practice of your discipline beyond the university</li> <li>• A sophisticated understanding of your discipline</li> <li>• Consistently excellent intellectual or creative abilities, or both</li> <li>• An extensive capacity for sustained, critical, independent thought</li> <li>• A sophisticated grasp of technical, research, analytical and other transferable skills</li> <li>• The set learning outcomes have been achieved to a very high standard</li> </ul>
Upper Second Class (60% - 69%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A significant engagement with the wider practice of your discipline beyond the university</li> <li>• A very good understanding of your discipline</li> <li>• Excellent intellectual or creative abilities, or both</li> <li>• A very good capacity for critical, independent thought</li> <li>• A very good grasp of technical, research, analytical and other transferable skills</li> <li>• The set learning outcomes have been achieved to a high standard</li> </ul>
Lower Second Class (50% - 59%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A satisfactory appreciation of the wider practice of your discipline beyond the university</li> <li>• A good understanding of your discipline</li> <li>• Significant intellectual or creative abilities, or both</li> <li>• A good capacity for critical, independent thought</li> <li>• A sound grasp of technical, research, analytical and other transferable skills</li> <li>• The set learning outcomes have been competently achieved</li> </ul>
Third Class (40% - 49%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A basic understanding of your discipline</li> <li>• A basic level of intellectual or creative competence, or both</li> <li>• Basic grasp of technical, research, analytical and other transferable skills</li> <li>• The set learning outcomes have been achieved</li> </ul>
Fail (0% - 39%)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An inadequate understanding of your discipline</li> <li>• Insufficient intellectual or creative competence, or both</li> <li>• An insufficient grasp of technical, research, analytical and other transferable skills</li> <li>• The set learning outcomes have not been achieved</li> </ul>

## Appendix 3: Policy on Reading Draft Summative Work

### 1. Assignment Briefs

- 1.1 The assignment brief must provide students with the information necessary for them to understand the assessment task to be undertaken, the format in which the task must be completed and the deadline date by which the assessment has to be submitted.
- 1.2 Module leaders should ensure that the assignment briefs are clear and sufficiently detailed for students to understand what is expected of them.

### 2. Guiding Principles

- (i) The degree of support for assessment will vary according to the academic level of the module and the specific learning and support needs of the student and may include:
- Enabling the student to develop a clearer and deeper understanding of the assessment task;
  - Providing further clarification of issues relating to the assessment task;
  - Helping the student to organise their thoughts around the structure of the assignment;
  - Facilitating the student's approach to planning and structuring the assessment;
  - Providing feedback on a student's assignment plan or essay outline.
- (ii) The purpose of the assessment is to test the student's achievement of the learning outcomes. Therefore, the level of support must not extend to reading a full draft of the student's summative work in order to give feedback on the standard of performance, as this would be tantamount to first marking and place the student at an unfair advantage over other students.
- (iii) Guiding Principle 2(ii) applies to all summative work, including final projects/dissertations. Supervisors must not read a draft of the entire project/dissertation. The level of support that supervisors should give to students completing final year projects and dissertations when reading and commenting on sections of the student's work should comply with the following:
- portions of drafts that are no longer than 2000 words may be sent for feedback at any one time;
  - supervisors will provide written feedback comments on a draft section/chapter once;
  - supervisors will normally provide their written feedback comments within 10 working days.
- Students would then be expected to take account of, and incorporate into their final work, earlier comments from the supervisor on the various sections of the project/dissertation.
- (iv) On no account should students be told, or any indication be given, as to the possible outcome of the assessment.

## Appendix 4: Categorical Marking

### 1. Context

1.1 Categorical marking restricts the scale of available marks for an element of assessment to a number of points within each classification across the 0-100% range. Categorical marking recognises that highly granular approaches to marking that attempt to differentiate individual percentage points (i.e. the difference between 61% and 62%) are unreliable and do not support high-quality actionable feedback.

1.2 The aim of categorical marking is to rationalise the marking structure in order to clarify learner performance and improve the consistency, reliability, validity and transparency of assessment. It also avoids borderline or threshold marks (such as 59% or 69%) for an element of assessment, as well as supporting a clearer articulation of the grades within each grade range (e.g. between 50 to 59%) so that feedback that supports assessment *for* learning is more precise.

1.3 Categorical marking leads to improved constructed alignment by enabling clearer differentiation for markers and learners regarding the standard of work in relationship to the achievement of learning outcomes. It also improves consistency and equity in marking processes and promotes the better use of the full range of marks. In addition, it helps to ensure that there is a shared understanding across a teaching team of the standards expected of learners, enhancing consistency and reliability of assessment and feedback. In turn, these all support improved marking and moderation processes, with greater transparency for learners around marks awarded.

### 2. BNU's Categorical Marking Scale

2.1 The 26-point categorical marking scale aims to accommodate a broad enough range of grade points that reflect a high, middle and low point within each 10% grade bracket (between 30% to 100%).

2.2 This 3-point scale within each 10% range from 30% to 100% avoids marks on grade boundaries (such as 59%, 60%, 61%) and positions the outcome of each assessment definitively within a mark range associated with a degree classification. This in turn supports approaches to feedback that will clarify performance and reduce opportunities for ambiguous or unclear feedback that is not actionable (i.e. not supporting learner growth) and is not aligned with the mark awarded.

26-Point Scale	Percentage (%)
25	100
24	98
23	95
22	92
21	88

20	85
19	82
18	78
17	75
16	72
15	68
14	65
13	62
12	58
11	55
10	52
9	48
8	45
7	42
6	38
5	35
4	32
3	25
2	15
1	5
0	0/NS

2.3 Please note that as the current regulations regarding the capping of marks for assessments have not changed, a mark of 40% can be used to denote a capped mark for an assessment. The pass marks of 40% for undergraduate degrees and 50% for postgraduate degrees have not changed and remain the same.

2.4 Categorical marking should be used for each element of assessments across all levels of study. However, if the type of assessment demands a raw score on the 0-100% scale – for example, a multiple-choice test – then a raw score can be utilised.

## Categorical Marking – Key Questions & Answers

- **Why are we introducing categorical marking?** Categorical marking is already widely used across the Higher Education sector, and it has already been used within some Schools at BNU. We are introducing a university-wide categorical marking scheme to rationalise and standardise our marking structure in order to clarify learner performance and improve the consistency, reliability, validity and transparency of assessment. It will also help to avoid borderline or threshold marks (such as 59% or 69%), as well as supporting a clearer articulation of the grades within each grade range (e.g. between 50 to 59%) so that feedback that supports assessment *for* learning is more precise.
- **What are the anticipated benefits of categorical marking?** There are many anticipated benefits of categorical marking including, alignment with sector standards; better clarity of learner performance; improved consistency, reliability, validity and transparency of assessment; support for clearer, actionable feedback; and better use of the full range of marks across the grade range.
- **Are we changing the way we mark?** No. We will continue with our rigorous marking and moderation processes.
- **Are we changing degree classifications?** No. These will remain the same. In fact, categorical marking makes it easier to see where an individual mark is in relationship to a degree classification.
- **Are we changing the way in which overall degree classifications are calculated?** No. This will remain the same.
- **Are we changing the pass mark?** No. These will remain the same at 40% for undergraduate programmes and 50% for postgraduate programmes.
- **Are our assessment regulations changing?** No. These will stay the same.
- **What has changed?** Instead of using 1% increments from 0 to 100, we are now using a 26-mark scale across the 0-100% range. The marks across the scale are: 100, 98, 95, 92, 88, 85, 82, 78, 75, 72, 68, 65, 62, 58, 55, 52, 48, 45, 42, 38, 35, 32, 20, 10, 1, 0/NS.
- **Why are we using a 26-mark scale?** As part of the development of our approach to categorical marking, we undertook sector horizon scanning to better understand how different Universities across the UK use categorical marking. We compared different models – some with fewer points on the grade scale, some with more – and consulted with BNU colleagues and the SU on a preferred approach. BNU's categorical marking scale is focused on consistency with an

internal logical to the scale that was reflected through the range of marks and the associated low, middle and high points within each 10% of the grade range. This approach is best suited to supporting assessment feedback that supports learner growth.

- **Are we only using the categorical marking for the individual elements of assessment?** Yes, it only applies to the individual elements of assessment (e.g. CW1, CW2 etc). For example, a mark from the scale could be provided for two pieces of assessment which when combined would give a mark that is not on the 26-point scale. This is expected and acceptable.
- **What mark will a capped piece of work receive?** As we are not changing our assessment regulations and the pass mark, a capped assessment will still receive a mark of 40%. This mark of 40% cannot be awarded for non-capped assessments.
- **Can I still use a 'raw score' on the 0-100% scale?** Yes, if it is essential, because for example the type of assessment (e.g. a multiple-choice test) requires it, then a raw score can be utilised.
- **Does the way that I provide feedback change?** No. High-quality feedback that promotes learner growth, explains how learners can improve and closes performance gaps should continue to be provided. BNU's categorical marking scale, with its low, middle and high points, helps markers to provide more precise feedback in relationship to the marks awarded.
- **Will our partner colleges be using categorical marking?** Yes, but it will be introduced alongside C23. For most partners, the use of categorical marking will start at the beginning of the 2025-26 academic year.

## Appendix 7: Equality Impact Assessment

As a university, we are committed to enhancing equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). We have a legal (Equality Act 2010) and ethical obligation to ensure our policies, systems and processes are fair, inclusive and ensure every member of the BNU community can thrive.

Whilst we all have protected characteristics, we know there are certain characteristics and communities that are marginalised and underrepresented in Higher Education and the workplace. These are: different ethnicities (including Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showmen and Boaters (GRTSB), migrants, refugees and asylum seekers); Disabled individuals; neurodiverse individuals; pregnancy (including maternity and paternity impact); the LGBT+ community; carers; people of different faiths; people impacted by menopause and individuals from a range of backgrounds including: socio-economic disadvantage, homeless, alcohol and/or substance misuse, people experiencing domestic and/or sexual violence, ex-armed forces, looked after children and care leavers. We also know individuals have multiple intersectional experiences and different points in their lives and careers.

### 1. **With reference to the above characteristics, in what ways does this policy enhance equality and the access of opportunity at BNU?**

Robust assessment practices are a key tool to ensuring equity of outcomes for students from marginalised and disadvantaged backgrounds. Inequity of assessment results in inequity of degree continuation, completion, degree classification awarded and progression to postgraduate study. BNU has committed to addressing inequity in student outcomes through the institutional Access and Participation Plan (APP), and this policy is a key piece of infrastructure to support the APP.

All students benefit from clear expectations around assessment, including assessment briefs, marking criteria and advance notice of assessment deadlines. However, inclusive, robust and fair assessment practices are particularly important for the following groups:

1. **Disabled and neurodiverse students.** Students with disabilities may face disproportionate barriers to succeeding in assessments. All students benefit from clear assessment briefs and expectations, but these are particularly important for neurodiverse students.
2. **Students from different ethnicities.** Implicit or explicit bias against students from Global Majority backgrounds can result in inequity of marking and feedback. Use of standardised assessment briefs and pre-agreed assessment criteria reduces bias, making standards clearer to students and staff.
3. **Students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds.** Students from socioeconomically deprived backgrounds or with poor experiences of education prior to university (e.g. care leavers, GRTSB communities) are more likely to be affected by the 'hidden curriculum' i.e. the components of success that are implicit and not explicitly

discussed. Use of standardised assessment briefs and pre-agreed assessment criteria makes expectations clear to all.

**2. In what ways does the policy adversely impact individuals from marginalised and underrepresented communities?**

The policy is designed to ensure assessment is inclusive by design. However, there may be some adverse effects on the following groups:

- 1. Disabled staff.** While the three-week assessment turn-around time is important for students to get timely feedback on their work, it may be disproportionately onerous for some disabled staff. Achieving the turn-around may require careful workload planning for these staff, who should be supported by managers to achieve this expectation.
- 2. Neurodivergent students and students for whom English is a second language.** There is evidence that these student groups are more likely to be accused of academic misconduct and misuse of Generative AI. While this mainly falls under the scope of the Academic Integrity policy, staff should be aware of this potential bias, and ensure that their approach to assessment and academic integrity is not unduly punitive to students from these groups.

**3. How does this proposal work towards achieving the BNU Equality Objectives as outlined in the Equality Strategy 2023-2028? Please signpost objectives and actions in the BNU Equality Strategy.**

The following objectives from the Equality Strategy align with this policy:

**Priority 2, Objective B: Uphold our Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showmen and Boater (GTRSB) into HE Pledge.** Inclusive, robust and fair assessment practices support the success of GTRSB communities within the institution.

**Priority 2, Objective C: Make continuous progress against our Access and Participation Plan for students.** Inclusive, robust and fair assessment practices support closure of outcome gaps, particularly the degree classification awarding gaps identified in the APP (Target demographic groups = Asian students, Black students, Students from Index of Multiple Deprivation Quintiles 1+2 [IMDQ1+2]).



Signed:

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Date: 17<sup>th</sup> September 2025