University of Staffordshire

Assessment setting, marking and review procedures

What is this Procedure for?

Why does the University have these procedures?	At Staffordshire University, assessments are the main way for you to demonstrate to us that learning has occurred. We need to make sure that you have the best opportunity to show us what you have learned. We also have to make sure that you submit your work, and that it is up to the standard we expect. We use these procedures so that we can demonstrate to you, other universities, professional bodies, and your future employers that our awards are of a high quality and standard. We also use them to make sure that your work is marked fairly and appropriately. These procedures apply to all of our taught courses, which includes the level 7 (taught) parts of Professional Doctorate courses.

What can you expect of us?

What is an assessment?	At Staffordshire University, assessments are the main way for you to demonstrate to us that learning has occurred. It's not all about traditional ways like exams and essays, these assessments can take many forms. Assessments might take place on campus, while you are on placement, or online via blended or distance learning.
Why do I need to do an assessment?	Our assessments are designed to help you to show what you have learnt. Our assessments have to be of a high standard so that any awards that we give out are of the high quality that we expect. If you complete your assessments well, it helps us to make sure that you are ready to enter the workplace or further study. If you're studying on an award that is registered with a professional body, we also have to make sure that our assessments meet their standards.

How will the University write assessments?	Staffordshire University is committed to an all-inclusive curriculum which will support our diverse population of students to have the best opportunity to succeed. We have procedures in place to make sure that all of our assessments are comparable. Assessments should be comparable between students studying on the same course, as well as on other courses, and with students on courses at other universities.
When do assessments take place?	We know that you'll do your best if you complete your assessments as close to your learning as possible. Assessments can take place at any time during the academic year. There are two groups of assessments: • Some assessments are used so that we can give you feedback before your final work. They usually take place while you are still studying on the module and help us to see how you're doing with what you've learned so far. These won't contribute to your final mark and are called **formative assessments**. • Courses are encouraged to adopt incremental assessments strategies, which include early to assist transition into university study, and with your progression through your course. Other assessments are a way for you to show us what you have learned. Many of these take place at the end of the module, but they can also happen during the module too. These assessments do contribute to your final grade, and these are called **summative assessments**. You can find more information on both of these in the University's Glossary. It will be made clear in your module handbook when you will be assessed. This will also make clear which of your assessments will be summative. You will be expected to engage with all of your assessments, as they are the most important way that we can see how you are progressing through your course. We want you to submit your work first time and on time so that you can achieve your best. If you don't engage with your assessments, you won't be able to progress through your course, and the marks that you can receive may be reduced.
Who is involved in assessments?	Lots of people are involved in assessing you, both inside and outside the University. You will always be involved in your assessment, and we might also involve your course team and your academic mentor. If you're studying on a course with a placement, your placement mentor or supervisor will be involved in the assessment. We also involve external partners and apprenticeship employers when we need to.

	When we've marked your work, another academic from the course area, and an academic from outside the University might look at your work. This is another way to make sure that work is marked fairly and consistently. A few times during the year, a University Award Board will look at your overall academic profile to check on your progress and make a decision on what you will need to do next. For more information on these, please see the Progress Review and Award Boards section below.
How does the University write assessments?	When we are writing assessments, we will decide what we will need you to do to show us you've met the requirements of the module. These are called Learning Outcomes. We will also decide what you will need to demonstrate in order to achieve a certain mark band. These are the same as the grade bands for your overall classification. We might use something called a rubric, or an assessment criteria grid to show you what we expect. These will help us to measure how well you've met the Learning Outcomes. When we create our assessments, we want to make sure that they are the best that they can be, and that they are comparable with what students across the university, and in other universities are doing. To do this, we first ask another academic inside your Department to check that the assessment meets our standards. This is part of what we call internal validation. After this, we ask an academic from another university to look at the assessment, to make sure it's going to get the best out of you. This person is called an external examiner. If you are on a course that's registered with a professional body, such as midwifery, we will also need to make sure that the assessment meets their standards too.
How do I know my work will be marked fairly?	The University has a series of robust procedures to make sure that your work is marked fairly. Wherever possible we will ask for your work to be submitted without your name on, so that it can be anonymously marked. We also ask other academics from the course area, and academics from outside the University, to check marks to ensure that they are fair and accurate. You can find more detail in the "How will my work be marked?" section below.
How will I be supported in my assessments?	Your tutors will give you support throughout your studies to help you to understand what we expect of you. This includes what you will need to understand about the topics on the module, and what you will need to do to achieve each mark band. If you're new to academic study, or if you just want a refresher, we can support you in lots of areas, like researching, structuring your work, managing your time, and showing you how to reference your work. Your tutors can help with this, and

you can also access lots of support through our Academic Skills area.

We want to support you to achieve the best that you can. Our Student Support Services can help if you have a medical condition (including learning differences or mental health needs). They may be able to put support in place for you so that you can achieve your best, while still making sure that the assessment is robust and meets our standards. You can find out more about these Services here.

What do we expect of you?

What do I need to do?

We know that students are more likely to succeed if they complete their work on time, first time. You will need to use good time management and planning so that you can meet deadlines. Being able to do this makes you work-ready.

You are responsible for your own learning, so you need to tell us as soon as you can if you don't understand something, or if you have any questions. If you are unsure about something that you've learned, or about the assessment, talk to your module tutor so that they can help you to better understand it.

Developing good academic skills will help you achieve your full potential. Most of the skills you will learn in your studies will help with your future career, so can help you even after you have left Staffordshire University. If you need support with these skills, we have lots of help available online in our Academic Skills area.

You are expected to study and complete assessments honestly and need to make sure that the work that you submit to us is your own. You need to show us where you have sourced all your information from, and make sure that it's all your own work. This is good academic conduct. This is part of your development and without it, you are cheating yourself out of your own learning journey. Our Academic Conduct Procedure makes sure that we only give you a mark if the work is entirely your own.

The University expects you to play an active role in your learning, and these expectations are made clear in the Students' Charter.

Who owns my work?

You have the intellectual property for anything that you produce for an assessment. However, the actual physical work that you produce is owned by the University. We might need to keep this until your mark has been officially confirmed to you, or longer in the case of an appeal or University audits.

Marking your work

How will you mark my work?

The University has a variety of robust processes that make sure that your work is marked fairly, accurately, and appropriately. These include second marking, moderation and verification, which are outlined in the University's Assessment Verification and Moderation Procedure.

Once you've submitted your assessments, we will look at what you've done and see how it measures up against the criteria that we agreed when we wrote the assessment. This will help us to decide how well you have demonstrated what you've learned.

Once the first marker has looked at your work, we will use a variety of processes to make sure that the mark you've been given is fair and appropriate. Wherever possible we will ensure that your work is marked anonymously, although that might not always be possible with some assessments that involve practical work.

A certain amount of all the work completed for an assessment will be second marked. If there are 10 or more assessments, we will normally mark a minimum of 10 of these, or 10% of the total, whichever is higher. If there are less than 10 assessments submitted, we will second mark at least 50% of these. This might be different if there are professional body requirements.

There are some additional procedures that we follow if you are studying at a partner institution. For more information on this please see the "What if I'm studying at a partner institution?" section.

We will also ask an external examiner from another university to look at a selection of the work that has been submitted to us, and they will check to make sure that this sample has been marked fairly and correctly. They will also check all of the marks over the assessment, to make sure that they are spread out, and that there isn't a pattern of marks being too high or low.

The Head of Department is responsible for ensuring that the correct sample of work is second marked for verification purposes.

What about dissertation or final year project modules?

We will second mark 50% of the submissions for dissertations or final year project modules. This applies to all taught courses at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. This second marking verifies that the marks awarded are fair and consistent with what we expect for the assessment.

How do I know how well I've done?

What will you tell me about my work?	The marks that you receive will show you how well you are doing. We will also tell you what you've done well, and what you could have done better. You will have general feedback throughout your modules and your course, and we will give you specific feedback on the work that you submit. This feedback will help you to understand what you should keep doing, and what you need to change or stop doing in the future. Learning from feedback will help you to achieve your best in your future studies and help to get you ready to join the workplace. We will give you feedback and initial ("provisional") marks as soon as we can after the assessment has been completed, and no later than four weeks afterwards (excluding bank holidays and University closures). We will normally release marks for all students in a cohort at the same time. If we can't, we will let you know as soon as we can. This work and marks won't normally have been through all the steps in our assessment procedures at this point, which means that they aren't official or confirmed yet. We want to tell you how you've done as early as we can, while the work and assessments are fresh in your mind. However, it does mean that the marks are subject to change until they have been confirmed. Once we have completed our assessment procedures, like the external moderation, we are then able to confirm or "ratify" the marks through a Board. We will normally tell you what your final marks are through your eVision results profile. You can find more information about this in the Award Board section below.
What do you expect of me?	It's important that you read and listen to the feedback that your tutors give you. You will need to take the feedback on board and make changes for your next assessments. If you do this, it will help you to understand what you can do to improve and get higher marks in your next assessments.

Progress Review and Award Boards

How do my marks affect what happens next?	As you are progressing through your course, we will review your progress. After your work has gone through all of the relevant processes, the University will consider your entire academic profile at a Board. If we are looking at your results at the end of the year, this is an Award Board. The Board will look at all of your academic profile, and particularly at the current academic year, or level of study. The Board will confirm your marks, and so these are your "ratified" marks for those assessments. If you haven't been able to pass an assessment or module, a Board will decide if you need to redo your assessment, normally called a referral or re-sit. The Board will also decide when you will need to submit this referral, your progression to the next level of study or confirm any final or exit awards. To find out more about Award Boards and how they operate, you can see the Terms of Reference in Appendix A.
Where do I access my results?	Before your marks have been confirmed, your tutor will let you know your provisional marks. How they will do this depend on how you submitted your work. It might be through Blackboard, or they might send you an email. However they do it, the marks will be private. Only you will be able to see your marks, no other students will be able to access them. Once your marks have been confirmed by a Board, you will be able to view these through your eVision portal. You will be sent an email to let you know when these are ready to view. We will normally make results profiles available for all students in a cohort at the same time. If we can't, we will let you know as soon as we can.
What if I think my mark is wrong?	We have these Assessment Procedures in place so that we can make sure your work is marked fairly and in line with our expectations. If you have evidence to show that these processes haven't been followed, and that this has affected the mark that you have been given, there is a University process for students to raise a concern. You will only be able to appeal once your marks have been officially confirmed to you following consideration by a Board. You can find more information in the Complaints and Appeals Procedure. When your work is marked by an academic, they will use their knowledge and expertise. This is called academic judgement. The University does not allow students to appeal because, in their opinion, this judgement is wrong.

What if my assessment doesn't go well?

What if I haven't passed my assessment?	We always want you to pass your assessment first time, but if your work hasn't met the standards we set, you might be asked to submit it again. It's very important that you learn from the feedback that you have been given on your assessment and use this to improve your work for next time. We will normally give you a short deadline to work on your assessment and hand it in again. This early retrieval is because we need you to complete your assessments as close to your studies as possible. The length of time we give you to complete these assessments might be longer if you have a lot of work to do, for example, for an artifact or dissertation. It's important for you to demonstrate everything that you have learned. However, in some circumstances sometimes we might decide that you have done enough for us to record a module as complete, even if you haven't passed everything. This is called condonement, and you can find more about this in the University's Academic Regulations.

What if I'm studying at a partner institution?

Who marks my work if I am studying at a partner institution?	Normally, your work will be first and second marked by staff members who work at the institution delivering your course. Once this has been done, a lecturer at Staffordshire University will also review a selection of assessments before asking the external examiner to look at the work.

Other Stuff

What do the letters on my results profile or transcript mean?	When you are looking at your results profile, final transcript or Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR), you might see some letters next to your grade. These are just there to give some more information about the mark. The more common letters that you might see are: R- This means that one or more of the assessment marks was awarded at a referral attempt, and the mark has been capped at the minimum pass mark. C- This means that the module has been condoned. Please see the Academic Regulations for more information. When you receive a copy of your transcript, there will be a full list of these on the back.

Appendix A- Terms of Reference of Single-Tier Awards Boards

Each named course will have a single-tier Award Board to receive module results and confirm progression and award decisions. The Award Board will normally meet at points of progression and completion within a course and will operate within the Staffordshire University Academic Regulations.

Constitution

The constitution of the Award Board comprises:

- Dean or Director of School/Institute or nominated senior manager for the courses under consideration (Chair)
- The Course Director(s) and/or Leader(s) for the courses under consideration
- A representative of each subject area contributing core or option modules to the courses under consideration
- The Award External Examiner(s) for the courses under consideration
- A member of staff from the Registry (Secretary)

Terms of Reference

The Award Board is empowered to:

a) Receive confirmation of module results, following moderation, to ensure that standards are comparable to those of cognate subjects both within the University and in other higher education institutions

b) Confirm decisions on progression and awards

c) Confirm decisions on termination of registration, along with any intermediate awards

d) Approve, for release to students, results and any associated recommendations on the retrieval of assessments

e) Confirm the application of condonement

f) Receive the outcomes of Academic Misconduct cases and to confirm the agreed recommendation

g) Receive the outcomes of Exceptional Circumstances claims and confirm the recommendation

h) Inform the External Examiner Annual Report regarding the health and standards of the courses under consideration

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