De Montfort University

Assessment and Feedback Policy 2025/26

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to ensure formative and summative assessment is used to develop students' learning and to ensure consistency across all academic practice/programmes. The policy is reviewed annually and agreed by Academic Board. The policy takes into consideration policies from external regulatory bodies, such as the Office for Students *Assessment practices in English higher education providers* (2021) and Quality Assurance Agency *The Quality Code for Higher Education* (2023)

The policy sets out the key principles and expectations of assessment design and clarifies the core frameworks for operating the assessment and feedback policy which underpin the key principles, namely: anonymous marking, moderation procedures, expected levels of feedback quality, and academic integrity. A list of key contacts, a glossary of terms and the generic marking criteria at undergraduate and postgraduate level are provided in the appendices.

Key principles of assessment design

- Principle 1. Assessments will be designed to assess the learning outcomes as set out in the module and programme specifications.

- Principle 2. Assessments will be designed to minimise opportunities to commit academic misconduct.

- Principle 3. All parts of the formative and summative assessment and feedback process should be clearly defined, accessible, transparent and take into consideration the need for reasonable adjustments where appropriate

- Principle 4. Academic programmes of study will include a range of diverse assessment methods that ensure tasks and procedures are fair, inclusive and equitable and do not disadvantage any group or individual.

- Principle 5. All assessment should be fair and operate through the consistent application of clearly published marking criteria to enhance student learning.

- Principle 6. The volume of assessment should be manageable for students and staff and reflect assessment design at a programme level.

- Principle 7. Formative and summative assessment should form an integral part of the student learning experience.

- Principle 8. Students should receive feedback on summative coursework in a timely fashion, which should be no later than 15 working days after the submission deadline, for work that was submitted on time.

- Principle 9. Assessment judgements should be moderated in accordance with this Policy agreed by markers, and ratified at Assessment Boards, and students should receive timely feedback, normally in electronic form via the LearningZone VLE.

Expectations of assessment design

The following expectations are intended to ensure consistency and the enactment of the principles listed above.

Principle 1. Assessment design and learning outcomes

1.1 All assessments should be designed to enable students to demonstrate the intended programme and module learning outcomes through the process of constructive alignment. Students should be fully aware of what is expected of them through the knowledge, understanding, competencies, behaviours and attributes that they are expected to demonstrate.

1.2 Where permissible and appropriate, students should engage in the co-creation of their assessment, for example through negotiated briefs, titles or projects.

1.3 Where appropriate, assessment design should take into consideration the implications of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) tools such as ChatGPT and Sora.

Principle 2. Assessments should be designed to ensure academic integrity

2.1 All assessments should be designed to minimise opportunities for students to commit academic misconduct, including cheating, plagiarism and self-plagiarism.

2.2 Where appropriate, a variety of assessment tasks should be used so as to minimise the opportunities for students to incorporate work produced by another student, both within the same level of study as well as across other levels of study.

2.3 Students should be provided with clear and transparent guidance on the university's regulations relating to academic integrity, including the implications of using Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) tools.

Principle 3. Assessments should be clearly defined, accessible and transparent

3.1 Information about module assessments will be published on the LearningZone virtual learning environment (VLE) module shell. This information includes the assignment topic, weighting, submission and feedback return dates, and whether the work is subject to agreed exemption from anonymous marking.

3.2 Faculties shall maintain and monitor a database of all assignment deadlines and return dates.

3.3 Students should be invited to develop a greater understanding of assessment, for example, through the use of exemplars to evaluate the grading of previous students' work, or through peer assessment to enhance their assessment literacy.

Principle 4. Assessments should be fair, inclusive and equitable

4.1 Students must be able to engage with a range of assessments across their academic programme to ensure that there are equal opportunities for all students.

4.2 Academic programmes should use a range of assessment types to enable the diverse abilities of students to be developed and demonstrated, taking into account a wide range of differences that include, for example, declared disabilities, full-time or part-time status, sexual orientation, as well as cultural and ethnic background.

4.3 Assessments should be designed to be inclusive and equitable and do not lead to bias or advantage some students more than others. Inclusive assessments should consider a variety of learning needs and develop assessment literacy by enabling all students to engage with their academic programme in a meaningful way that enables them to achieve their full potential.

Principle 5. Assessments should enhance student learning

5.1 Assessments tasks and the feedback provided should be reflective of the academic discipline of study, taking into consideration the need to enhance student learning and enable academic improvement as well as the development of a range of general skills and abilities.

5.2 Feedback should be individualised to provide students with the opportunity to understand the mark awarded and enable them to evaluate their own performance and motivate them to act on their performance through guided and constructive feedback and feedforward comments.

5.3 Assessments should enable students to understand how they are progressing in relation to the intended learning outcomes and should reflect the expectations in relation to disciplinary knowledge as well as generic skills and abilities.

Principle 6. The volume of assessed work should be manageable.

6.1 Assessments should be designed and scheduled to ensure that they provide a range of opportunities that offer a reliable profile of academic performance without overburdening students and staff.

6.2 The amount of assessment required should be commensurate with the needs and learning outcomes of the module/programme, taking into account both the content and weighting of the assessment.

6.3 Assessments should be reasonably distributed across the programme to minimise the 'bunching' of deadlines. An annual calendar of all assessments should be published which includes details of formative and summative assessments in each programme, including deadlines. This should include the mode of assessment (e.g. e-assessments and alternative assessments in the case of deferrals and resits).

Principle 7. Formative and summative assessment should be an integral part of the student learning experience

7.1 Across all modules and academic programmes there should be a range of formative and summative assessments.

7.2 Formative assessments should be used by staff to enable students to understand areas of strength and weaknesses and therefore identify where additional work and support is

required to ensure that students are prepared to undertake summative assessments. As formative assessments tend not to have any graded comments that impact on final marks, it is important that the value of receiving feedback and guidance is communicated to students.

7.3 Summative assessments are used to measure the extent to which a student has met the assessment criteria and the learning outcomes. Summative assessments are subject to moderation and external marking to ensure the consistency of marks awarded within and across modules.

Principle 8. Students should receive timely feedback on their assessment which feeds forward to their future work

8.1 Students should be provided with regular feedback to enable them to reflect on their learning and further development. A varied means of providing feedback, such as audio, video or tutorials, should be developed and used where appropriate.

8.2 Students should have the opportunity to reflect upon feedback and feedforward comments as part of the learning experience. Feedback and feedforward should take the form of formal and informal comments, where students should appreciate that feedback is not solely limited to formal written comments on an assessment. Feedback should also be provided in informal settings, such as in laboratory and practical settings as well as in seminar discussions, with students being made aware that such comments are feedback on their work.

8.3 Marked work with feedback will be returned no later than 15 working days after the submission deadline, for work that was submitted on time. This period includes vacations when the university is open. The return of marked work to students should only take place once internal moderation has taken place. When marks are returned to students this must be with the caveat that they are provisional until they have been ratified by the appropriate Assessment Board. Where there are unforeseen circumstances that mean an extension to the 15 working days is unavoidable, a new return date needs to be agreed with the Associate Dean Academic (ADA), or nominee, and communicated to students as soon as possible.

Principle 9: Assessment submission and marking

9.1 The LearningZone VLE should normally be used for the submission of student work, with submissions usually timed for midday on the date of submission. Students should have the opportunity to submit multiple submissions to enable them to gain familiarity with the assessment submission portal and to receive feedback on similarity reports.

9.2 The requirements for the submission of non-written coursework, such as performances or objects, will be communicated at a subject discipline level.

9.3 Students are treated consistently for the late submission of work as determined by the University regulations. Where late submissions and re-submissions have been granted, academic staff must ensure that appropriate assessment links have been set-up and communicated to students. Students will not be penalised for the late submission of work if

there is a technical failure in the mechanism for submission (e.g. the VLE). Screenshots should be taken of the technical failure and communicated to the module leader. If necessary, an alternative method of submission will be made available and/or a new deadline set.

The following points provide clarification on the core frameworks for the operating assessment and feedback which underpin the key principles, namely: anonymous marking, moderation procedures, expected levels of feedback quality, and academic integrity.

Anonymous marking

A. Where possible, coursework will be anonymously marked and any exception to this must be approved by the relevant Programme Management Board or Subject Academic Committee, with any changes approved by the faculty Development and Review Committee.

Moderation procedures

A. All assessments will be subject to moderation to ensure that the marking is fair, valid and reliable and that the assessment criteria have been consistently applied across students' work as well as across marking teams.

B. Moderation is the process of reviewing a sample of summative assessments to ensure that the grades and feedback are aligned to the methods of assessment and the level of study.

C. Moderation processes are documented and evidence of this is made available to external examiners. The samples of work provided for internal moderation, and to the external examiner must be accompanied by the full mark sheet(s) for the assessment(s) under review.

D. External moderation must also be undertaken by an external examiner in accordance with the requirements set out in the Guide to External Examining at DMU.

E. The appropriate method of moderation will depend on the academic discipline. Double marking is where the second marker does not normally see the first marker's marks and comments. Second marking differs in that the marker sees the marks and comments of the first marker. The method to be used for moderation of an assessment will be agreed by the Programme Management Board or Subject Academic Committee.

F. The minimum sample for moderation should include assessments from all sites where the module is delivered. It will normally include the assessment(s) marked highest and lowest overall, any problematic assessments (e.g. where there has been disagreement between first and second markers) and a sample of failed assessments.

G. For cohorts of up to 100 students the sample size for internal and external moderation shall normally be a minimum of 10 assessments (this would require all items in the case of very small modules). For cohorts of over 100 students the minimum sample size should be the square root of the number of assessments (e.g. if the cohort size is 260 the sample will be 16 items).

H. Students are provided with an agreed indicative mark once moderation has taken place.

Feedback quality

A. The feedback provided to students should clear and if in a written format legible. Feedback should always be dated and include the name of the marker. It will be available and accessible to all students no later than the end of the 15 working day maximum period.

B. Programmes should adopt a consistent feedback approach for each assessment type (e.g. essay pro forma) to ensure:

- Consistency in the presentation and detail of written feedback.

- Consistency between modules within the same programme.

- That feedback provides an explanation of mark awarded with reference to learning outcomes and the marking criteria.

- That feedback includes comments regarding areas of strength, areas needing improvement and recommended actions to improve academic performance.

C. Students can request to arrange a tutorial discussion with an academic member of staff to gain feedback on their exam scripts.

D. It is good practice for generic exam feedback to be provided via the VLE.

Academic offences

A. Written coursework will be checked for originality using Turnitin. This includes all submissions with a written component, including presentations, that are normally submitted via the LearningZone VLE or another appropriate e-portal. Failure by students to submit written coursework to Turnitin will be regarded as a non-submission where they are normally expected to do so.

B. Reference will be made in student handbooks to the various academic offences defined by the university and the available tariff of penalties.

Approved by Academic Board July 2024

Appendices

- Appendix 1: further information and guidance

- Appendix 2: glossary

- Appendix 3: DMU generic mark descriptors

For further information or queries

Please contact the DMU Education Academy: dmuea@dmu.ac.uk

Appendix 1: further information and guidance

- PMB Chair or Head of School/Department
- Associate Dean (Academic)
- Associate Professor (Quality)
- Associate Professor (Student Experience)
- Academic Quality Service
- DMU Education Academy

The above individuals are key contacts at a Faculty and university level and can be contacted regarding assessment related professional development opportunities.

Appendix 2: glossary of key terms

Term	Definition
Anonymous marking	Anonymous marking is where students' work is marked without the marker having access to the students' names. Some assessment tasks cannot be anonymously marked, for example performances and the production of artefacts.
Academic offence	An academic offence is where a student commits any act which is intended to evade and undermine the university's processes for rigorous and fair assessment. Academic offences include plagiarism, cheating, collusion, copying work and reuse of your own work, among others. These are identified under the university's academic integrity policy.
Assessment	Assessment is the way that students' learning and understanding is tested, and the way in which the university is assured that students have met the module learning outcomes. Each module has one or more assessment tasks, linked to one or more of the module's learning outcomes. Successful completion of module assessment tasks, as measured by a pass mark in the module, leads to the award of credit.
Assessment: formative	These are module assessment tasks which are designed to help students learn more effectively and to improve their performance. Formative assessments do not normally contribute to the marks awarded for the module and this must be clearly delineated.
Assessment: summative	These are module assessment tasks that are designed to test students' ability to meet the module learning outcomes. Summative assessments always count towards the module mark which a student achieves and towards the award of credit.

Assessment tasks/methods	These are the types of assessments which are used to test students' knowledge and understanding. Examples include essay; examination; presentation; portfolio; laboratory.
Assessment weightings	These define how much each module assessment task is 'worth' in the module. For example a module's assessment weightings might be as follows: Essay 30% Portfolio 70%
Collusion	Collusion is the deliberate attempt to gain advantage by presenting work that is not solely the student's own as if it were, where the source of the unreferenced work is that of another student who is aware of and involved in this attempt.
Coursework	This is a generic term for assessment tasks which are not formal exams.
Credit	Credit is a way of quantifying student achievement in terms of the volume of study undertaken, and the level of challenge of the study. Credit is associated to modules which have both a credit value and level, e.g. 30 credits at level 6. Credit is awarded to a student on successful completion of the module. The levels of credit are defined by the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies. Levels 4, 5 and 6 equate to an undergraduate honours degree and level 7 denotes postgraduate-level study.

Double marking	Double marking is where the second marker does not normally see the first marker's marks and comments. It is the responsibility of the Programme Management Board or Subject Academic Committee to decide if moderation of an assessment is undertaken via double or second marking. See also 'Second marking'.
Education Committee	The Education Committee oversees the development and implementation of strategies, policies and processes relating to learning and teaching.
Exam/Examination	An exam is a time-limited assessment usually occurring at the end of the module. Exams can be seen, where the student is provided with the question(s) in advance, or unseen.

External examiner	External examiners are subject experts appointed from other universities or from industry to review the curriculum, including assessment process and students' work. They ensure that the university's awards are comparable in standard to awards granted by other institutions and confirm that they comply with national threshold standards and that the assessment of students is fair.
Faculty Academic Committee	The Faculty Academic Committee (FAC) has overall responsibility for assuring the quality and standards of the faculty's undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes.

Feedback	Feedback is provided to students either verbally, in writing, or in a digital file on the assessments they have submitted. Feedback is intended to explain the mark which the student has achieved and to highlight strengths and areas for improvement.
Feedforward	Feedforward is information provided to students to help them improve their future work – it is forward looking rather than focused on assessments which have already been completed. It is not quantified in this Policy.
Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI)	Popular Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT and Gemini are able to generate text such as essays and summarise documents through a process where they are trained on gaining information from very large data sets. Whilst the responsible and ethical use of AI has the potential to have a significant impact on all academic disciplines, the use of AI in assessed pieces of work without prior approval constitutes academic misconduct.
Mark descriptors	Mark descriptors are criteria which explain the requirements a student should meet in their assessed work in order to achieve a mark in a particular band, e.g. 50-59%, 60-69%. Mark descriptors can be contextualised to make them more relevant to a specific academic subject.

Moderation	Moderation is the review of the marks awarded to a particular assessment across the student cohort. It is done to provide assurance that there is a calibration of marks to ensure consistency of marking against the agreed mark descriptors. The process involves an evaluation of the distribution of marks and a discussion of the marks awarded to an appropriate sample of work.
Module	A standalone learning package with defined content, learning outcomes and one or more assessment tasks.
Module learning outcomes	Module learning outcomes define the things which students should be able to do on successful completion of the module – for example the application of specific skills and knowledge. They are linked to the module assessment tasks which test students' ability to meet the learning outcomes.

Peer assessment	An assessment task, either formative or summative, in which students provide feedback and/or an indicative mark on the work of other students and reflect on their own contributions and evaluate themselves
Personal tutor	A student's personal tutor is an academic member of staff who is a key point of contact and support. Personal tutors provide guidance on academic and professional issues and can signpost other university services for support with personal issues.

Plagiarism	Plagiarism is the deliberate attempt to gain advantage by presenting any work, data or concepts that are not the student's own as if they were.
Programme	A programme is a collection of modules at defined levels of study which form a coherent learning experience. Successful completion of a programme leads to the conferment of an award, e.g. BA (Hons) English; MSc Computing. Programmes may also be called courses.
Programme Management Board	Responsible for the overall academic management, development and quality assurance/enhancement of academic programmes at a subject level.
Programme Learning Outcomes	Programme Learning Outcomes convey the level of intellectual demand and challenge set by the programme, with reference to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies. They identify what a typical student should know and be able to do when they finish the programme. The university identifies four distinct types of programme outcomes: Knowledge and understanding Cognitive skills Subject specific skills Key (transferable) skills

Second marking	Second marking is where an assessment task is independently marked by more than one member of academic staff. The second marker has access to the mark and feedback given by the first marker. See also 'Double marking'.
Turnitin	Turnitin is a piece of software which integrates with the LearningZone virtual learning environment (VLE). It detects whether electronically submitted student work includes material copied from sources in its database, and to what extent. Turnitin provides students with an opportunity to learn about their paraphrasing and referencing skills and to improve their work.
Virtual learning environment (VLE)	The virtual learning environment (VLE) is web-based and is used to support students' learning. Each module has a shell on the VLE which is populated with learning materials. The VLE currently in use is LearningZone.

Appendix 3: DMU generic mark descriptors

Undergraduate mark descriptors

Modules are marked on a range of 0-100%. Mark descriptors are given in the table below. **A mark below 40% indicates a Fail grade** (the shaded boxes).

When marks awarded in one band, it will be assumed that the work has met the requirements of the bands below.

When marking an individual piece of work there is an expectation that it will clearly demonstrate most of the criteria within each band.

When marking using an electronic rubric, the scale will align to the mark descriptors below.

Mark range	Criteria

90-100% **First class honours** **Distinction**	• Responds to all of the assessment criteria for the task. • Displays exceptional degree of originality. • Exceptional analytical, problem-solving and/or creative skills. • No fault can be found with the work other than very minor errors, for example minor typographical issues.
80-89% **First class honours** **Distinction**	• Responds to all of the assessment criteria for the task. • Work of outstanding quality, evidenced by an ability to engage critically and analytically with source material. • Likely to exhibit independent lines of argument. • Highly original and/or creative responses. • Extremely wide range of relevant sources used where appropriate.
70-79% **First class honours** **Distinction**	• Responds to all of the assessment criteria for the task. • An extremely, well developed response showing clear knowledge and the ability to interpret and/or apply that knowledge. • An authoritative grasp of the subject, significant originality and insight. • Significant evidence of ability to sustain an argument, to think analytically, critically and/or creatively and to synthesise material. • Evidence of extensive study, appropriate to task.
60-69% **Upper second-class honours (2:1)** **Merit**	• Responds to most of the assessment criteria for the task. • A detailed response demonstrating a thorough grasp of theory, understanding of concepts, principles, methodology and content. • Clear evidence of insight and critical judgement in selecting, ordering and analysing content. • Demonstrates ability to synthesise material, to construct responses and demonstrate creative skills which reveal insight and may offer some originality. • Draws on an appropriate range of properly referenced sources.

50-59% **Lower second-class honours (2:2)** **Pass**	• Responds to most of the assessment criteria for the task. • An effective response demonstrating evidence of a clear grasp of relevant material, principles and key concepts. • An ability to construct and organise arguments. • Some degree of critical analysis, insight and creativity. • Demonstrating some conceptual ability, critical analysis and a degree of insight. • Accurate, clearly written/presented.
40-49% **Third class honours** **Pass**	• Responds to some of the assessment criteria for the task. • A response demonstrating an understanding of basic points and principles sufficient to show that some of learning outcomes/assessment criteria have been achieved at a basic level. • Suitably organised work demonstrating a reasonable level of understanding. • Covers the basic subject matter and is appropriately presented but is rather too derivative and insufficiently analytical. • Demonstrates limited conceptual ability, levels of evaluation and demonstration of creative skills. • Demonstrates adherence to the referencing conventions appropriate to the subject and/or task.
30-39% **Fail**	• Overall insufficient response to the assessment criteria. • A weak response, which, while addressing some elements of the task, contains significant gaps and inaccuracies. • Indicates an answer that shows only weakly developed elements of understanding and/or other skills appropriate to the task. • May contain weaknesses in presentation that constitute a significant obstacle in communicating meaning to the assessor.
20-29% **Fail**	• Overall insufficient response to the assessment criteria. • A poor response, which falls substantially short of achieving the learning outcomes. • Demonstrates little knowledge and/or other skills appropriate to the task.

Mark range	Criteria
10-19% Fail	• Overall insufficient response to the assessment criteria. • A very poor response demonstrating few relevant facts. • Displays only isolated or no knowledge and/or other skills appropriate to the task.
	• Little adherence to the task.
0-9% Fail	• Overall insufficient response to the assessment criteria. • Displays virtually no knowledge and/or other skills appropriate to the task.
	• Work is inappropriate to assessment task given.

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• Little evidence of argument and/or coherent use of material.

Further guidance on the use of these descriptors is available on a separate information sheet.

Where Faculties have developed specific mark descriptors for their academic disciplines, and they are provided in programme handbooks issued at the start of the session, these take precedence over the generic mark descriptors given above.

Postgraduate mark descriptors

Modules are marked on a range of 0-100%. Mark descriptors are given in the table below. **A mark below 50% indicates a Fail grade** (the shaded boxes).

Mark range	Criteria
90-100% Distinction	• Demonstrates an exceptional ability and insight, indicating the highest level of technical competence. • The work has the potential to influence the forefront of the subject, and may be of publishable/exhibitable quality. • Relevant generic skills are demonstrated at the highest possible standard.

80-89% Distinction	• Demonstrates an outstanding ability and insight based on authoritative subject knowledge and a very high level of technical competence. • The work is considered to be close to the forefront of the subject, and may be close to publishable/exhibitable quality. • Relevant generic skills are demonstrated at a very high level.

70-79% Distinction	• Demonstrates an authoritative, current subject knowledge and a high level of technical competence. • The work is accurate and extensively supported by appropriate evidence. It may show some originality. Clear evidence of capacity to reflect critically and deal with ambiguity in the data. • Relevant generic skills are demonstrated at a high level.
60-69% Merit	• Demonstrates a sound, current subject knowledge. No significant errors in the application of concepts or appropriate techniques. May contain some minor flaws. • The work is well developed and coherent; may show some originality. Clear evidence of capacity to reflect critically. • Relevant generic skills are demonstrated at a good level.
50-59% Pass	• Demonstrates satisfactory subject knowledge. Some evident weaknesses; possibly shown by conceptual gaps, or limited use of appropriate techniques. • The work is generally sound but tends toward the factual or derivative. Limited evidence of capacity to reflect critically. • Relevant generic skills are generally at a satisfactory level.
40-49% Fail	• Demonstrates limited core subject knowledge. Some important weaknesses; possibly shown by factual errors, conceptual gaps, or limited use of appropriate techniques. • The work lacks sound development. Little evidence of capacity to reflect critically. • The quality of the relevant generic skills do not meet the requirements of the task.
30-39% Fail	• Demonstrates inadequate subject knowledge. • The work lacks coherence and evidence of capacity to reflect critically. • The quality of the relevant generic skills do not meet the requirements of the task.

20-29% **Fail**	• • Demonstrates seriously inadequate knowledge of the subject. The work contains minimal evidence of awareness of relevant issues or theory. • The quality of the relevant generic skills do not meet the requirements of the task.
10-19% **Fail**	The work is almost entirely lacking in evidence of knowledge of the • subject. No evidence of awareness of relevant issues or theory. The quality of the relevant generic skills do not meet the requirements of • the task.
0-9% **Fail**	The work presents information that is irrelevant and unconnected to the • task. No evident awareness of appropriate principles, theories, evidence and • techniques.

For further information or queries

Please contact DMU Education Academy