

Assessment and Feedback Policy 2023/24

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).

It is acknowledged that there are many forms of feedback, but in the context of this Policy, feedback is linked to assessment submissions.

Key principles

- All parts of the assessment and feedback process should be clearly defined and accessible.
- All assessment should be fair and operate through the consistent application of criteria.
- Assessments will be designed to assess the learning outcomes as set out in the module and programme specifications.
- Academic programmes of study will include a range of assessment methods that test student learning in a fair and equitable manner.
- Where appropriate, assessment design should take into consideration the implications of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) tools such as ChatGPT.
- Formative assessment should form an integral part of the student learning experience.
- The outcomes derived from assessment should be verifiable and refer to clearly published marking criteria.
- 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.
- 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.
- There should be effective mechanisms to resolve [appeals against assessment board decisions](#).

Expectations

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

1. Assessment design

- 1.1. All assessments should be designed to enable students to demonstrate the intended programme and module learning outcomes.
- 1.2 Where appropriate, assessment design should take into consideration the implication of GenAI tools such as ChatGPT to ensure that the work submitted by students is their own.

- 1.3. Formative and summative assessments are fully integrated into the learning process.
- 1.4. Students are provided with regular feedback to enable them to reflect on their learning and further development.
- 1.5. The format of assessments are designed to enable participation by all students and take account of the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL).
- 1.6. A range of assessment types are used to enable the diverse abilities of students to be developed and demonstrated, taking into account differences in learning styles.
- 1.7. The amount of assessment required is commensurate with the needs and learning outcomes of the module/programme.

2. Student engagement

- 2.1. Where permissible and appropriate, students should engage in the co-creation of their assessment, for example through negotiated briefs, titles or projects.
- 2.2. Students should self-evaluate their work, both before and after receiving feedback.
- 2.3. 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 (where appropriate).

3. Assessment map

- 3.1. An annual calendar of all assessments is published which includes details of formative and summative assessments in each programme, including deadlines. This should include the mode of assessment (e.g. e-assessment).
- 3.2. Assessments are reasonably distributed across the programme to minimise the 'bunching' of deadlines.
- 3.3. Information about module assessments is 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.

4. Submission and marking of work

- 4.1. The LearningZone VLE or another appropriate e-portal is normally used for written work submissions. Such submissions should be made in electronic format and students will receive an electronic receipt to acknowledge the submission.
- 4.2. E-submissions are timed for midday on the date of submission.
- 4.3. Students are treated consistently for the late submission of work as determined by the University regulations.
- 4.4. 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). If necessary, an alternative method of submission will be made available and/or a new deadline set.

5. Feedback promptness

- 5.1. 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.

- 5.2 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.
- 5.3. Students should have the opportunity to reflect upon feedback as part of the learning experience.
- 5.4. Once internal moderation has taken place, the agreed indicative marks will be provided to students. This should be completed within the 15 working day turnaround period.
- 5.5. 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.

Faculties shall:

- 5.5. Maintain and monitor a database of all assignment deadlines and return dates.
- 5.6. Ensure prompt investigation in cases where the 15 working days maximum was not met.

6. Feedback quality

- 6.1. Feedback should 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 comments.
- 6.2. Marks and feedback on summative coursework will be communicated to students in a timely manner within 15 days, preferably via the LearningZone VLE or another appropriate mechanism.
- 6.3. Varied means of providing feedback, such as audio, video or tutorials, should be developed and used where appropriate.
- 6.4. If feedback is in a written format, it will be legible, 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.
- 6.5. Where possible, programmes use a single pro forma report for each assessment type (e.g. essay) 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.
- 6.6. Students can request to view their exam scripts and have a right to do so as part of a tutorial discussion with an academic member of staff.
- 6.7. It is good practice for generic exam feedback to be provided via the VLE.

7. Anonymous marking

- 7.1. 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.

8. Moderation

- 8.1. 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.
- 8.2. 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.
- 8.3. 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.
- 8.4. 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.
- 8.5. 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.
- 8.6. 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.
- 8.7. 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).
- 8.8. Students are provided with an agreed indicative mark once moderation has taken place.

9. Academic offences

- 9.1. 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.
- 9.2. Reference will be made in student handbooks to the various academic offences defined by the university and the available tariff of penalties.

Approved by the Academic Board, June 2023

Appendices

- Appendix 1: further information and guidance
- Appendix 2: glossary
- Appendix 3: DMU generic mark descriptors

For further information or queries

Please contact caite@dmu.ac.uk

Appendix 1: further information and guidance

- PMB/SAC Chair or Head of School/Department
- Associate Dean (Academic)
- Associate Professor (Quality)
- Associate Professor (Student Experience)
- Department of Academic Quality

The Head of Academic Development can be contacted regarding assessment related professional development opportunities.

Appendix 2: glossary

| Term | Definition | | | | |
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| 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 | <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> | | | | |
| Assessment | <p>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.</p> <p>Each module has one or more assessment tasks, linked to one or more of the module's learning outcomes.</p> <p>Successful completion of module assessment tasks, as measured by a pass mark in the module, leads to the award of credit.</p> | | | | |
| 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 | <p>These define how much each module assessment task is 'worth' in the module. For example a module's assessment weightings might be as follows:</p> <table data-bbox="523 1776 778 1861"> <tr> <td>Essay</td> <td>30%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Portfolio</td> <td>70%</td> </tr> </table> | Essay | 30% | Portfolio | 70% |
| Essay | 30% | | | | |
| Portfolio | 70% | | | | |

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| 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 | <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> |
| Double marking | <p>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.</p> <p>See also 'Second marking'.</p> |
| 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 | <p>Feedback is provided to students either verbally, in writing, or in a digital file on the assessments they have submitted.</p> <p>Feedback is intended to explain the mark which the student has achieved and to highlight strengths and areas for improvement.</p> |

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| 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. |
| Mark descriptors | <p>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%.</p> <p>Mark descriptors can be contextualised to make them more relevant to a specific academic subject.</p> |
| 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 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. |
| Personal tutor | <p>A student's personal tutor is an academic member of staff who is a key point of contact and support.</p> <p>Personal tutors provide guidance on academic and professional issues and can signpost other university services for support with personal issues.</p> |
| 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. |

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| Programme | <p>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.</p> <p>Programmes may also be called courses.</p> |
| Programme management board/Subject Academic Committee | <p>A committee which has the overall academic management, development and quality assurance/enhancement of a group of programmes or subject area. Each faculty will have a number of programme management boards/subject academic committees.</p> |
| Programme Learning Outcomes | <p>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.</p> <p>The university identifies four distinct types of programme outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge and understanding Cognitive skills Subject specific skills Key (transferable) skills |
| Second marking | <p>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.</p> <p>See also 'Double marking'.</p> |
| Turnitin | <p>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.</p> |
| University Learning and Teaching Committee | <p>The University Learning and Teaching Committee oversees the development and implementation of strategies, policies and processes relating to learning and teaching.</p> |
| Virtual learning environment (VLE) | <p>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.</p> |

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.

| Mark range | Criteria |
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| 90-100% First class honours Distinction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. |

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| <p>50-59% Lower second-class honours (2:2) Pass</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. |
| <p>40-49% Third class honours Pass</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. |
| <p>30-39% Fail</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. |
| <p>20-29% Fail</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Little evidence of argument and/or coherent use of material. |
| <p>10-19% Fail</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. |
| <p>0-9% Fail</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

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 |
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| 90-100% Distinction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. |

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| <p>40-49% Fail</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. |
| <p>30-39% Fail</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. |
| <p>20-29% Fail</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. |
| <p>10-19% Fail</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. |
| <p>0-9% Fail</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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

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