



## Higher Education Assessment Policy 2018-2023

### Context

This Higher Education (HE) Assessment Policy sets out the primary purpose of HE assessment at City College Plymouth. It applies to all of our HE programmes; it is therefore respectful of and aligned to the assessment policy, regulations and guidance of our validating HEI and Awarding Body. However, in accordance with our partnership agreements, the relevant awarding body or validating HEI specific assessment regulations and guidance should be considered and adhered to alongside this policy.

Assessment in HE must also be understood as part of a wider, national framework which is set out within the relevant sections of 'The UK Quality Code for Higher Education'.

### 1. Introduction

City College Plymouth works in partnership with a number of HEIs and awarding bodies for Higher Education I. Each awarding body and validating HEI has their own specific assessment requirements and guidelines which constitute part of the partnership agreements within the context of QAA's UK Quality Code. Supported by staff development, it is the responsibility of the HE Programme Leaders and their teams to familiarise themselves with these specific requirements in order to fully comply with all expectations.

Programme Leaders and their teams must ensure that this policy is applied accurately and that all appropriate information is made available to assessment panels and academic boards to safeguard academic standards.

### 2. The Purpose of HE assessment

Assessment is a fundamental part of all HE programmes giving students a clear opportunity to demonstrate general and specific subject skills, knowledge and understanding, linked to learning outcomes and future progression both personally and professionally. Formative assessment, summative assessment and constructive assessment feedback are critical to the learning experience and enable and empower every student to fulfil their individual potential. The purpose of HE assessment at City College Plymouth is to:

- Support students' learning and uphold academic standards  
Inspire, challenge and motivate the learner to fully engage with the learning opportunities presented through assessment that is inclusive and supports their future learning and progression
- Enable every student to monitor their progress and further their academic development through the provision of regular opportunities to reflect, through timely and constructive feedback
- Measure students' performance, knowledge and skills objectively against module learning outcomes, FHEQ characteristic statements for graduates at the appropriate level and professional body expectations.
- Help students to demonstrate that they have fulfilled the intended aims and learning outcomes of the programme of study
- Empower students to develop further as active and independent learners who recognise and take responsibility for their own learning
- Provide a basis for reflection and dialogue between staff and students (emphasising the importance of 'assessment **for** learning', as well as 'assessment **of** learning')
- Provide opportunities for feedback that promotes learning and personal challenge
- Give our stakeholders confidence that a student has achieved the necessary level of achievement, giving a reliable and consistent basis for their award

### **3. Programme Specifications**

A programme specification must be in place for all HE programmes and owned by the programme team. It is a concise description of both the intended outcomes of learning from a HE programme and the means by which these outcomes are achieved and demonstrated, also defining the local dimensions that the programme is intended to capture. The programme specification is the core document from which assessment structures for each unit/module of every programme of study must be based. No deviation from these specifications is permissible unless formally approved by the awarding body. The Programme Specification is located within the Programme Quality Handbook which is made available to students via the DLE.

### **4. Assessment Design**

Assessment is a fundamental part of the programme giving students a clear opportunity to demonstrate general and specific subject skills, knowledge and understanding, linked to all learning outcomes and future employment. Assessments are reliable, inclusive, and authentic and designed to minimise the use of modified assessment and over-assessment of learning outcomes. Assessments are valid and aligned to clear and realistic learning outcomes, as defined in the programme specifications and professional body requirements. The assessments designed should collectively ensure coverage of all intended learning outcomes and provide opportunities for the evidencing of level descriptors; clearly indicating the targeted assessment criteria. Formative assessment, innovative and creative assessment

design which inspires, challenges and motivates the learner to fully engage with the learning opportunities presented through assessment is encouraged.

Assessment design follows a key set of principles which are governed by each awarding body, validating HEI or relevant professional body assessment regulations and should be appropriate to the level of study and weighting of assessment.

Assessment briefs are not all formatted in a standardised way for the range of HE provision offered by the College due to the differing requirements of individual awarding bodies, and in some instances the differing requirements of faculties within our partner institutions. All HE assessments are internally verified (*in accordance with the College's guidelines for the internal verification of assessment – prior to issue*) and verified by the External Examiner prior to issue to students. Programme Leaders are responsible for ensuring that assessments are internally and externally verified prior to release to students.

## **5. Assessment in Practice**

Formative and summative assessment will be included in each programme, stage and module to ensure the purposes of assessment are adequately addressed. Students should also be given the opportunity to take part in pre-assessment activities, guidance and support to help them understand what assessment is and how it works. Assessment will fall into one or more of the following categories:

**Diagnostic assessment** which provides an indicator of a learner's aptitude and readiness for a programme of study and identifies possible learning problems or study needs.

**Formative assessment** which is designed to provide learners with feedback on progress and informs development.

**Summative assessment** which provides a measure of achievement or failure in respect of a learner's performance in relation to the intended learning outcomes of a programme of study.

Programme teams are expected to include formative as well as summative assessment so that students are able to benefit from such developmental activities and feedback. The design and delivery of learning and teaching activities, including assessment, provide opportunities for feedback that promotes learning. The activities are informed by an understanding that, while the purpose of formative assessment is to facilitate learning, summative assessment also has a formative element which may relate to the development of transferable knowledge and skills beyond the specific subject matter of the assessment task itself. Students can expect to take part in a range of assessment methods.

Each awarding body/validating HEI has specific assessment regulations and operational guidance on how assessment should be conducted which must be

adhered to. As an overview all assessments are subject to the following:

### **5.1 Scheduling of assessment**

The volume, timing and nature of assessment should enable students to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes. The scheduling, amount and weighting of assessment types must be appropriate to the level of the award, the programme of study and the delivery mode. The scheduling of assignments and the amount of assessed work required will provide a reliable and valid profile of achievements without overloading staff or students. Therefore:

- Each HE programme should have a published assessment schedule at the start of the year which must be clearly communicated to all students.
- The assessment schedule should contain clear information about the date of issue for each assessment, method of assessment, assessment title, the unit/module of which it is part, date for hand-in and the date students can expect feedback on their work, links to the intended learning outcomes and staff marking the work.
- Schedules of assessment must spread formative and summative assessment deadlines across the programme.
- The schedule of assessment should be effective both in supporting learning and safeguarding academic standards.
- The intended learning outcomes for the programme of study should map directly to the summative assessment, with the methods being appropriate to offer variety of assessment types and every student an equal opportunity to demonstrate achievement.
- The scheduling of assessment of a programme and/or module should consider the dual needs of assessment for learning and assessment of learning. It should facilitate feedback, reflection and dialogue, taking into account the value of students having time to put their learning/feedback into practice, including in the next applicable summative assessment.

### **5.2 Distribution of assessments**

- Assessments should be distributed in accordance with the assessment schedule and the method of distribution should be clear to all students.
- The Programme Leader/Module Leader will ensure that all examinations are arranged and managed by the College's Examinations Team.

### **5.3 Information for students**

- Information communicated to students on assessment must be clear, timely and relevant. Any changes to published information about assessment must be discussed and confirmed with the students, the HE Team, and where applicable the EE, awarding body / validating HEI, should also be notified of any changes.
- Students must be given clear and transparent assessment guidelines and

briefs, and marking criteria for each assignment, through programme and module guides/handbooks.

- Each individual module has a detailed scheme of work and assessment strategy that reflects that module's aims and learning outcomes (contained within their Teaching, Learning and Assessment Module Guide).
- The range of assessment techniques / methods are to be clearly outlined to students at the start of the year.
- Students should understand how assessments are to be released (e.g. online, hardcopy, date, etc.), how and when they are to submit their completed work and when feedback can be expected.
- Students should be clear about any required formatting or presentation of their work (including any stipulated word count).
- Students should understand what plagiarism is and how to correctly reference their work.

#### **5.4 Submission of assessed work**

- There should be a clear system in place which is clearly communicated to all HE students to follow when handing in their work for assessment.
- Students should submit all summative work anonymously by a specified date and time electronically via the designated DLE (unless agreed otherwise due to logistical arrangements) in hardcopy centrally via the HE Office. For hard copy submissions:
  - students must submit work with a completed standardised front cover sheet and complete the plagiarism declaration on submission of coursework.
  - A receipt system should be in place to track received assessments.
- Students should understand that they should always keep a copy of any work submitted.
- Late submission of work / re-submission of work will be dealt with in accordance with the awarding body / validating HEI regulations.
- Students should be clear on the standard process they should follow if there are technical and/or access problems with the DLE which impact on the successful submission of an assessment.

#### **5.5 Assessment marks**

- Assessments are marked fairly, using the published marking and grading criteria and appropriate second marking and moderation to ensure consistency and fairness of practice.
- Work must be assessed and marked in accordance with the guidelines published by each awarding body/validating HEI.
- External Examiners will sample marked work to ensure quality and standards are being maintained across all assessments on behalf of the awarding body / validating HEI.
- It is the responsibility of the Programme Leader to ensure that all agreed

marks for summative assessments are communicated in a timely manner to the HE Administrative Team responsible for processing the marks for Subject Assessment Panels and Academic Award Boards.

## **6. Assessment Feedback**

Feedback will be an integral part of the assessment process and students are entitled to feedback on all (submitted) formative and summative assessment tasks. The critical role of assessment feedback in motivating students must not be underestimated. Programme teams must ensure that timely and constructive feedback (including provisional marks and grades where appropriate) is provided to students on assessed work as soon as possible and within a maximum of 20 working days (in exceptional circumstances students and the Head of HE will be told of any reason for a delay and a revised date will be issued) in order to promote effective learning and facilitate improvement.

Students are to be encouraged to reflect on the formal and informal feedback they receive and use it to engage in a dialogue with staff to help plan their future learning. To get maximum benefit students need to receive timely feedback in a manner that is supportive, yet includes some personal challenge to facilitate their improvement. Returned work should include feedback on the extent to which the marked work has met the intended learning outcomes and meets expectations of the appropriate FHEQ level descriptors. The student should be given a written indication of where good points have been made. It is also good practice for assessors to either correct (at the formative feedback stage) or note (at the summative feedback stage) spelling and grammar mistakes on student work. Effective feedback should be an on-going dialogue.

## **7. External Examiners**

Each HE programme will have an External Examiner (EE) either allocated by the awarding body or approved by the validating HEI. The EE will be selected and allocated based partly on their specialist subject knowledge. In general EEs can provide a source of support, advice and guidance in the setting of assessments and are expected to:

- Visit the College to meet with the Programme Leader and students on their allocated programme(s)
- Check the management of the programme is effective and meets the requirements of the awarding body/validating HEI and those of the UK Quality Code for HE
- Ensure the fitness for purpose of assessment and verification processes
- Undertake sampling of assessed work
- Check consistency of the interpretation of national standards by each Assessor
- Identify whether assessment decisions meet national standards
- Confirm student work has been accepted as authentic by the Assessor
- Check that timely and effective internal verification has been carried out on

- assessments, assessment decisions and feedback to students
- Confirm that student evidence meets the grading criteria awarded
- Agree actions, if appropriate

Usual practice by EEs would include at least one interim engagement per year (which may take the form of a 'virtual' visit by video conference/skype in recognition of the logistical difficulties presented by the geographical location of the University and its partners) and at least one face to face visit during his/her term of office.

The Programme Leader is responsible for liaising with and coordinating the visit, the verification of assessments prior to issue, and the sampling of students' work as requested by the EE. A written report will be submitted by the EE to the College/awarding body/validating HEI for comment and possible action to help inform continuous improvement and enhancement. It is the responsibility of the Programme Leader to respond to this report and submit a copy to the HE Team.

Students have the right to view the EE report and subsequent response by contacting the HE Team ([HE@cityplym.ac.uk](mailto:HE@cityplym.ac.uk)). The reports are available to all existing students via the College's Digital Learning Environment.

### **Assessed coursework**

Moderation of coursework on all programmes will take place in accordance with the requirements of the awarding body/validating HEI, the College's guidelines for internal verification/moderation and under direction of Programmes Leaders/Heads of Academy. Programme Leaders/Heads of Academy will ensure that those involved in moderation are:

- Conversant with the assessment criteria to be applied
- Know when and how frequently moderation should take place
- Know when moderation is to be completed and to whom to report
- Given opportunities to discuss moderated work.

### **Other assessed work**

Examination scripts will be marked against the intended learning outcomes/marketing schemes by the named first marker. Moderation will be ensured through internal verification with a sample being reviewed by the EE. In programmes where assessments include evidence from work placement activities first and second markers will undertake assessment and moderation activities. Other types of assessed work, for example oral presentations, will need to be recorded against the intended learning outcomes to allow for a moderation activity based on these records.

## **8. Subject Assessment Panels and Academic Award Boards**

The achievement of relevant learning outcomes (module learning outcomes in the case of credit and programme outcomes in the case of qualifications) is demonstrated

through assessment. The Subject Assessment Panel (SAP) is responsible for reviewing the standards of assessment in the subjects and to compare academic standards across modules. The Panel reports any problems affecting the assessment of all students in a module and, if necessary, reports any assessment offences and/or inconsistencies prior to confirming/modifying marks. The Academic Award Board (AAB) makes decisions on progression and awards for all students. The Board(s) ensure that decisions are arrived at fairly and democratically and in accordance with awarding bodies or HEIs regulations, maintaining the standard and integrity of the Award. The panels and boards have specific membership and terms of reference in line with awarding body/validating HEI requirements. The process may include sub-boards where incidences of academic offence, mitigating/extenuating circumstances or appeals are considered for recommendation at the formal board.

Programme Leaders and programme team members are expected to attend these meetings in accordance with the specific membership requirements to confirm each student mark has been inputted and represented correctly.

Student marks and outcomes are not final until they have been approved by the Academic Award Board (or equivalent) and published in the agreed format.

## **9. Expectations of Students**

The College encourages HE students to take ownership for their own learning and adopt high standards of academic conduct at all times. The College expects students to:

- Engage with formative and summative feedback and put in place any suggested improvements.
- Meet the professional and ethical standards appropriate to the subject.
- Comply with assessment regulations, including those on assessment offences/academic misconduct (for example, plagiarism).
- Be aware of the protocols surrounding the submission of assessments (for example, extenuating circumstances, late submission, etc.).
- Fully engage in self and peer assessment activities

City College Plymouth does not tolerate actions (or attempted actions) of malpractice / academic misconduct. Cases will be investigated and where appropriate, the College's disciplinary procedures and Awarding Body process will be applied.

## **10. Assessment Appeals and Complaints**

Students have the right to appeal if they believe they have not been assessed fairly. Any appeal should follow the appeals procedure of the relevant awarding body/validating HEI. Where the College's procedure should be followed in the first instance details of this are located within the College's Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Centre Handbook.



If students are dissatisfied with the conduct of assessment they also have the option to make a complaint and should do this via the College 'Talkback' process. In line with this process the awarding body/validating HEI will be informed as appropriate.

## **11. Quality Assurance / Internal Verification**

The College recognises that high quality student assessment practices are an important component of the overall learning experience. Student assessment, both formative and summative, is vital in supporting student achievement and ensuring the maintenance of academic standards. The College conducts regular reviews of assessment practice, quality of staff feedback and external examiner input, and invites students to comment on how assessment is provided. In addition to this HE Assessment Policy the College has specific guidance in relation to internal verification/moderation of HE programmes (*guidelines for internal verification / moderation and guidelines for the internal verification of assessment prior to issue*). City College Plymouth requires Internal Verifiers to oversee the process of standardisation / verification. The Internal Verifier's role involves, but is not limited to,

- Acting in an advisory capacity, providing feedback at all stages of the assessment verification process
- Monitoring assessment tasks and the way they are undertaken; ensuring the validity of internal assessment and checking that they conform to awarding body/validating HEI requirements
- Sampling assessed work in accordance with the awarding body/validating HEI requirements to ensure the quality of feedback and consistency of grading decisions
- Facilitating the process of successfully meeting EE requirements
- Amending the outcome of marks/grades awarded, if necessary
- Cascading information to relevant parties
- Confirming records are accurate and authentic
- Ensuring, alongside the Programme Leader and the HE Quality Assurance team that quality assurance systems and associated procedures are in place.

The processes of internal and external verification are determined by the quality assurance guidelines set by the College, awarding bodies and HEIs. The responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of these lies with the relevant Faculty Director and Head of Academy, although is operationally delegated to HE Programme Leaders and Module Leaders. Programme Leaders are responsible for ensuring that appropriate Internal Verifiers are allocated across the programme. Module Leaders are responsible for ensuring up-to-date internal verification/moderation records are kept in their respective programme files. The HE Team is responsible for ensuring all EE reports are centrally recorded and distributed and that required action is taken and recorded within the relevant annual programme monitoring processes. This is also monitored by Subject Assessment Panels and Award Assessment Boards for all HE programmes and through the process of Annual Programme Monitoring. In addition, the College assures quality through self-evaluation, mid-year reviews and internal mini

inspections and programme reviews.

Students are involved in the review process and attend programme committees and student focus groups. Feedback is also gathered through internal and external student surveys.

**This Policy is underpinned by:**

- The expectations of the designated quality body for Higher Education
- FHEQ Characteristic Statements for awarding undergraduate degrees
- The SEEC Level descriptors which describe the generic characteristics of learning at each level, and are used in programme and module assessment design.
- University of Plymouth Academic Regulations which must be upheld when conducting assessments.
- University of Plymouth Assessment Policy 2014-20
- Pearson/BTEC Centre Guide to Assessment Levels 4–7 (QCF)
- Pearson/BTEC Centre Guide to Enhanced Quality Assurance and Assessment
- City College Plymouth’s HE Assessment Regulations and Operational Guidance for BTEC Higher National Awards
- City College Plymouth’s Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Centre Handbook incorporating Policy and Procedure
- Student feedback
- HE Student Learning Agreement

**POLICY CONTROL**

Policy Title: **Higher Education Assessment Policy 2018 – 2023**

**Issuing Authority: Senior Leadership Team**

**Issuing Officer: Head of Higher Education**

**Monitoring Authority: Senior Leadership Team**

**Monitoring Officer: Vice Principal, Curriculum & Quality**

**Monitoring, Review and Evaluation:**

This policy will be monitored and reviewed through: reports to Senior Leadership Team

**Dates of review:**

<b>Issue Date</b>	<b>September 2018</b>
<b>First Review</b>	<b>September 2019</b>

<b>Second Review</b>	<b>September 2020</b>
<b>Third Review</b>	<b>September 2021</b>
<b>Fourth Review</b>	<b>September 2022</b>
<b>Full Review and Reissue</b>	<b>September 2023</b>