

ASSESSMENT PRACTICE AND POLICY

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[Assessment Regulations for Undergraduate Programmes of Study](#)
[Assessment Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Programmes of Study](#)
[Curriculum Design](#)
[Definitive Document Template \(including guidance\)](#)
[ARPH Appendices](#)
[Centre for Learning and Teaching Assessment Resources](#)

New for 2008/09:

- **Inclusion of section on University Assessment Framework**
- **Inclusion of section on Student Assessment Workload**

1. MMU Assessment Framework

Assessment at Manchester Metropolitan University is an integrated and integral part of learning and teaching. It is the principal instrument with which we recognise and reward student progress, provide motivation for further achievement, identify areas for development in both teaching and student learning, monitor levels of achievement and maintain academic standards and help to prepare students for professional life.

The University recognises the importance of both formative and summative assessment in the student experience and expects it to be integrated into all curriculum planning and to be directly aligned with intended learning outcomes. Assessment practice is informed by reflection and research across the university as well as by reference to external bodies and projects.

The [University Assessment Framework](#) was adopted by Academic Board in May 2008 and provides a reference for programme teams as they design and implement both formative and summative assessment tasks and feedback strategies.

2. Principles of Assessment

Formative and summative assessment should be:

Valid: the specified assessment should test specific learning outcomes

Reliable: the specified assessment should be able to measure student achievement against learning outcomes accurately and consistently

Achievable: assessments and assessment regimes should be designed so that the threshold requirements are achievable by any student admitted on to the programme of study

Gradable: it should usually be possible to grade student performance for a specified assessment using a full range of marks.

The University regulations on assessment support these principles and aim to make the processes of summative assessment inclusive, fair, consistent and clear to both staff and students. The regulations also reflect the QAA Code of Practice, particularly Section 6: Assessment of students, precept 5 of which states that institutions should ensure that assessment is conducted with: **rigour, probity and fairness, and with due regard for security.**

The Centre for Learning and Teaching can provide resources, professional development opportunities for programme teams who wish to review and develop their assessment practice. In addition, the University has a network of Faculty Senior Learning and Teaching Fellows and an active Community of Practice for Assessment which can offer support across all faculties to programme teams who would like to develop particular areas of assessment.

3. Alignment of Assessment Strategies with Programme and Unit Learning Outcomes

Programme teams must ensure that the assessment strategies which are approved in the Programme and Unit Specifications will enable the assessment of all programme and unit

learning outcomes.

Assessment should be fully integrated with the learning and teaching strategies which are adopted by the programme team. Teams should be able to show how their learning and teaching strategies relate to the assessments which are required, and explain how they prepare students for these assessments. Assessment strategies and criteria, grading schemes and their arrangements must be based on a shared understanding of the academic standards students are expected to achieve.

4. **Student Assessment Workload**

Unit and programme teams should design one or more assessment tasks for each unit which best enable a student to demonstrate his or her achievement of the unit learning outcomes. Across a programme, there should be a balance of assessment tasks to ensure that programme learning outcomes can be demonstrated and that there is an appropriate blend of tasks across each level of the programme.

Programme teams need to ensure that they can show that there is consistency in rigour and workload in units of the same credit rating and level across the programme. When deciding the size of a particular task, teams may wish to take into account:

- The threshold requirements to achieve the unit learning outcomes
- Custom and practice in the particular subject area
- Benchmarking with similar subjects and tasks in other institutions
- The amount of work allocated in the unit to private study
- Student feedback on the time needed to complete similar tasks in previous years.

There is a guidance note on this topic on the [Centre for Learning and Teaching website](#).

5. **Summative Assessment and Grade Descriptors**

All work which counts towards students' progression through an award or towards the final classification of the award is subject to the University's [Assessment Regulations for Undergraduate Programme of Study](#) or [Assessment Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Programmes of Study](#).

Both sets of Regulations state that all elements of summative assessment within a unit shall be marked out of 100. The weighted average mark for the unit shall then be calculated from the marks for the individual elements of summative assessment.

For Undergraduate Programmes the weighted average mark for the unit shall also be expressed as a mark out of 100, in accordance with the marking scheme below, making explicit reference to descriptors employed to denote achievements within at least each of the grading bands.

Mark	Outcome	Descriptor
<35	Fail	Unit learning outcomes not achieved
35 to 39	Marginal fail	Most unit learning outcomes achieved at a threshold level

40 to 49	Pass	All unit learning outcomes achieved at a threshold level
50 to 59	Pass	All unit learning outcomes achieved at a good level
60 to 69	Pass	All unit learning outcomes achieved at a very good level
≥70	Pass	All unit learning outcomes achieved at an excellent/outstanding level

For taught postgraduate programmes the weighted average mark for the unit shall also be expressed as a mark out of 100, in accordance with the marking scheme below, making explicit reference to descriptors employed to denote achievements within at least each of the grading bands.

Mark	Outcome	Descriptor
<45	Fail	Unit learning outcomes not achieved
45 to 49	Marginal fail	Most unit learning outcomes achieved at a threshold level
50 to 59	Pass	All unit learning outcomes achieved at a threshold level
60 to 69	Pass	All unit learning outcomes achieved at a good level
≥70	Pass	All unit learning outcomes achieved at an excellent/outstanding level

Marking criteria shall be set out in the approved definitive document for the programme. These criteria should reflect the level at which the assessment task is set and should show clearly how each grading band can be achieved.

The use of common marking frameworks or assessment grids across a level or a complete programme will make it easier for students to judge their progress between different units and will facilitate programme team discussions about assignments. Unit teams should consider providing an explanation of how common marking frameworks will be interpreted for each of the summative assignments set in a unit.

6. Formative Assessment

Opportunities for formative assessment are known to be helpful in building student confidence and developing students' ability to assess their own work. The provision of formative assessment opportunities can be difficult to balance with staff workload and teams may find it more manageable if they integrate formative assessment with other learning and teaching strategies. Further guidance on assessment design is available on the [Centre for Learning and Teaching website](#), together with suggestions for motivating students to use formative assessment opportunities to help them to progress.

7. Feedback on Assigned Work

Feedback on assigned work is an integral part of the assessment process and has

several purposes:

- To help students to understand how others have interpreted their work against the given criteria
- To motivate students to continue to learn
- To enable students to identify areas for development

Feedback should be available for all assigned work, whether or not the work carries a mark. Feedback may take different forms but it is essential that the nature, extent and timing of feedback on each assigned activity should be clearly indicated in the unit handbook.

In order to achieve the purposes above, feedback must be structured to:

- Show how the work has been judged against the given criteria
- Identify areas for improvement
- Show how the assigned work is linked to future assessments
- Make suggestions for future work which students could do to improve their performance - eg particular sources, styles, approaches
- Be provided in a timely way so that the students can apply the learning to their next learning activities

Programme teams should consider the provision of a feedback policy for the programme which explains how feedback is provided and managed. They should also consider how assignment tasks can be scheduled to enable students to learn from feedback on certain tasks before completing subsequent tasks. Guidance on the development of feedback policies is provided on the [Centre for Learning and Teaching website](#).

The programme policy on extensions on the grounds of exceptional factors may have an effect on the timing of feedback; care should be taken not to give extensions which are so long that they prevent feedback being given to other students in a timely way. A working group is currently reviewing regulations and practice on exceptional factors and programme teams will receive updates during 2009/10.

8. Involvement of Students in Assessment

The involvement of students in the assessment process is considered to be good practice and should help towards the achievement of the University's General Educational Outcomes. Involvement in the assessment process usually takes the form of self or peer assessment; it can be part of formative or summative assessment but in either case, programme teams should explain how it is used and how such work is assessed or moderated by the programme team. For further guidance, please contact the Centre for Learning and Teaching.

9. Anonymous Marking

All formal written examinations are marked anonymously in accordance with the University scheme. In addition, programmes are required to implement a policy of the

anonymous marking of all other assessed work unless a valid case for exemption is made.

Where exception or exemption is approved, a programme is required to demonstrate a commitment to the principle through other appropriate measures, for example anonymous second marking and moderation.

Exceptions and exemptions are likely to be appropriate in situations where the student can easily be identified during the assessment – for instance in oral presentations or professional practice; when the marker has supervised the production of the work closely or has provided extensive formative feedback; or if the code of practice of a Professional, Statutory & Regulatory Body does not permit anonymous marking.

Guidance on the anonymous marking policy can be found on the [Centre for Learning and Teaching website](#).

10. Assessment of Disabled Students

The University is committed to the provision of an environment which encourages and properly supports a diverse learning community. Programme teams should show that they are aware of the [University's regulations on the assessment of disabled students](#) and that they know how and when to offer alternatives to the assessment strategies permitted by the University's regulations, guidelines and procedures on examination and assessment arrangements for disabled students. The [equalities impact assessment](#) carried out early in the process of planning a programme should explicitly cover assessment as well as other aspects of the learning and teaching strategy for the programme.