

Assessment Procedures: University of Northampton - Validated Degrees

2022-23

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Committee Approval

Committee	Committee Action	Date
QAEC	Recommended for approval	21 September 2022
Academic Committee		28 September 2022
	Date in force	28 September 2022

These Assessment Procedures: Validated Degrees document will be reviewed annually by our Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee. Any amendments require the approval of our Academic Committee.

1. Introduction

It is through these Assessment Procedures that Bloomsbury Institute has established and will maintain standards of quality assurance throughout the whole assessment process on our validated degrees.

The Assessment Procedures: Validated Degrees describe the responsibilities of staff, forms and timelines involved in the operational activities for the creation and implementation of Assessment Briefs and assessment activities.

These procedures are subject to any regulations, policies and procedures established by the University of Northampton (UoN).

The assessment process is monitored by the Assessment Team through the completion of an **Assessment Approval Log** and **Assessment Marking Log**. There are separate Logs which can be easily filtered at course level as follows:

- Foundation Year
- BA (Hons) Accounting and Financial Management
- BA (Hons) Business Management
- LLB (Hons) Law

These Logs record each stage of the assessment procedures set out below for each item of assessment within each module.

In the context of assessment, the Quality Code sets as a Guiding Principle a requirement that “assessment is inclusive and equitable”. This is designed to ensure that every student has “an equal opportunity to demonstrate their achievement through the assessment process, with no group or individual disadvantaged.” We have an inclusive learning approach towards teaching and assessment, and this approach enables us to ensure that no students (including those with a specific learning difficulty) are disadvantaged.

2. Related documents and procedures

The key documents and procedures which are linked to the Assessment Procedures: Validated Degrees document are as follows:

- Disability Policy
- Information Control Procedures
- University of Northampton Academic Regulations
- University of Northampton Mitigating Circumstances Policy
- University of Northampton Academic Misconduct Policy
- UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: External Expertise
- UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Assessment

3. Forms

The key forms which are used throughout the assessment process are as follows:

- Assessment Task Form: AF1T
- Marking Standardisation Form: AF2*
- Moderation Form: AF3*
- External Moderation Form: AF4
- External Examiner Assessment Task Approval Form: AF5
- Submission Date Change Request Form: AF6*
- Late Grade Change Form: AF7*

*These forms are available online for users. The forms without asterisks are made available on case-by-case basis.

4. Key definitions

4.1 Assessment

Modules can be assessed in different ways, depending upon the nature of the module, its level, content and learning outcomes. Generally, there are five types of **assessment**:

- **Assignment:** e.g. essay, problem question, case study and seen examination.
- **Presentation:** a class assessment that can occur during teaching hours. This can be an individual work, a moot or a group work.
- **Examination:** any unseen examination (i.e. where the student is not provided with the questions beforehand).
- **Portfolio:** e.g. different forms of interlinking assessments combined to evidence achievement against the learning outcome.
- **Time Constrained Assessment (TCA):** a class assessment that can occur during teaching hours.

Only a few modules will have an unseen examination and/or TCA alone. Most will be assessed by assignments, others by a mixture of all five. Assignments may be text-based or non-text based. Text-based assignments consist of essays, problem questions, case studies and seen examinations. Non-text-based assignments include presentations and moots.

4.2 Item of assessment

Each module will normally have two separate **items of assessment**.

4.3 Assessment Review Team

The Assessment Review Team (ART) is responsible for the oversight of the assessment cycle, including reviewing processes and providing final advice and guidance where assessment issues are not resolved.

The team comprises the Assessment Manager and designated Academic staff who have wide experience of higher education assessment procedures across Levels 0, and 4 to 6.

4.3.1 Assessment Review Team meetings

The team meets at least twice each academic year or, more frequently, if required, as a result of inconclusive matters, such as standardisation and/or moderation. Inconclusive matters may be referred to a member of ART, or a meeting may be called depending upon the nature of the issue.

The first meeting will take place towards the end of Semester 1 and will review and reflect on the cycle of assessment tasks and assessment brief production. The reflection will also include the External Examiners' task approval process.

The second meeting will take place in June and will review and reflect on the assessment cycles [Semesters 1 and 2] of standardisation, marking, moderation, external moderation, and grades release for both first sit and resubmission/resit.

4.4 Assessment Team

The **Assessment team** completes all the administrative elements and is responsible for the oversight of the assessment cycle. This includes supporting and reviewing processes and procedures and providing advice and guidance regarding any assessment-related matters. Where applicable, the Assessment Team may report any arising matters to the Assessment Review Team.

4.5 Assessment Task

All **assessment tasks** are written by the Module Leader (see **Section 5**).

4.6 Assessment Brief

Once the assessment task has been approved, the task is inserted into the Assessment Brief, which includes the following:

- Assessment structure and weighting
- Details of each assignment:
 - The assignment task (e.g. question(s)),
 - Guidance to complete the assignment
 - Submission requirements
- Details of any unseen examination:
 - Duration of the examination (including, if applicable, reading time)
 - Material which may be brought into the examination (if applicable)
 - Structure (e.g. number of questions set; number of questions to be answered; whether there are any compulsory questions; allocation of marks)
 - The syllabus content that will be examined
- Learning outcomes for the item of assessment
- Appendix 1: Submission Check List

- Appendix 2: Declaration of authorship
- Appendix 3: Use of external editorial or proof-reading services
- Appendix 4: Extension and Mitigating Circumstances and Word Count

4.7 Marking Scheme

The Module Leader must also provide a Marking Scheme to the Assessment team for each item of assessment.

4.8 Marking team

A Marking team is established for every module. If a module is delivered by more than one academic, the Marking team comprises the Module Leader and the Module Tutor(s). If the module is delivered by one academic, the Marking team comprises the Module Leader and an academic who will undertake, where required, standardisation and moderation for that module.

4.9 Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)

The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC) is an intermediate committee, sitting above the Course Committees and below the Academic Committee, the purpose of which is to contribute to the effective setting and maintaining of academic standards and the assuring and enhancing of academic quality.

As set out in our Corporate and Academic Governance Framework, the QAEC is responsible for, *inter alia*:

- Recommending to Academic Committee the approval and/or amendment thereto of Assessment Procedures: Validated Degrees
- Receiving reports from our awarding bodies and other external quality assurance organisations such as the QAA
- Receiving External Examiner Reports and approving External Examiner Response Forms.

In addition to the QAEC, we have a Senior Academic Leadership Team (SALT), the role of which is to support effective operational management and leadership throughout the Academic Division. Information which relates to maintaining academic standards and the enhancement of academic quality is disseminated and discussed within the SALT. Issues relating to assessment and the operation of these Assessment Procedures will be considered by the SALT and (if appropriate) referred to the QAEC.

5. Setting the Assessment Task

We set the dates for assessments and write the assessments for all our validated degrees.

As stated at **Section 4.1** above, modules can be assessed in different ways, depending upon the nature of the module, its level, content and learning outcomes.

Each module will normally have two separate **items of assessment**: (i) two assignments; or (ii) one assignment and one unseen examination/TCA.

5.1 Assessment task, examination paper and marking scheme

An assessment task is written by the Module Leader for each item of assessment. The tasks are submitted for approval using the Assessment Task Form [AF1T].

The Module Leader must also provide a marking scheme for the assessment task and examination, to include the academic disciplinary content that should be included within the assignment.

5.1.1 Examination paper

Examination questions are written by the Module Leader. These are converted into an examination paper by the Assessment team using the standard Examination Template. The Examination Template includes the following:

- Front Page
 - Date, time and duration of the examination (including, if applicable, reading time)
 - Number of questions to be answered (including, if applicable, any compulsory questions)
 - Allocation of marks
 - Material which may be provided during the examination
- Examination Questions

A reserve examination paper must be produced by the Module Leader in case there is a security issue with one of the papers.

Note: If a past examination paper is not available (e.g. because this is the first time the module has been delivered), a sample examination paper must also be provided. The sample examination paper may be made available to students at the start of the semester, together with the Assessment Brief.

5.2 Approving assessment tasks and examinations

The Assessment team draws up and distributes the *Assessment Tasks and Briefs Timeline* and the Course Leaders allocate reviewers, proofers and senior reviewers to each module. At this stage, the Assessment team also distributes the up-to-date Module Specification (sourced from the Quality team) to the Module Leaders. This is to ensure the most relevant specifications are being used to create the tasks.

The Module Leader writes all assessment tasks, including examination/TCA papers (first take and re-sit/resubmission) and marking schemes, using the Assessment Task Form [AF1T].

The Assessment Task Reviewer reviews the assessment tasks and marking schemes and completes the relevant section of the Assessment Task Form. The Assessment Task Reviewer liaises with the Module Leader (and Assessment team) over amendments (if any), with feedback recorded on the Assessment Task Form. All changes to assessment tasks must be recorded with the use of “track changes” and supported by a commentary using the “New Comment” function. Any assessment subcomponents should also be flagged in the form. This process continues until the assessment task and examination are agreed.

The tasks are then proofread. The proof-reader liaises with the Module Leader over any changes required. The proof-reader completes the relevant section of the Assessment Task Form. Once the tasks have been finalised, the Module Leader sends the Assessment Task Forms, examination or TCA papers and marking schemes to the Senior Reviewer who will carry out a review to ensure that the

proposed items of assessments are in line with the Module Specification “assessment section”. This will be followed by a check by a member of the Assessment/Quality team to confirm alignment with Learning Outcomes before the assessment tasks are sent to External Examiners for approval.

The Assessment team will upload the internally approved tasks in the relevant folder and forward the completed AF5 them to the External Examiners for approval, (if applicable). The Assessment team records this on Log 1. The External Examiners review the assessment tasks and send feedback/comments to the Assessment team.

The Assessment team sends the External Examiners’ comments and feedback to the relevant Module Leader to action, saves the External Examiner Assessment Task Approval Form [AF5], and logs receipt on Log 1. Outcomes from this process are made available to the Assessment Review Team.

If applicable, the Assessment team returns amended Assessment Tasks to the External Examiners for final approval. The External Examiners send the final version of the External Examiner Assessment Task Approval Form to the Assessment team.

The Assessment team embeds the final agreed Assessment Task into the Assessment Brief.

In Week 0 of the academic year, the Module Leader publishes the Assessment Brief on Canvas, together with the Module Study Guide.

5.3 Presentation to students

Assessment Briefs will be presented to students at the beginning of the semester, by Week 1. Assessment Briefs should be posted in the Syllabus area of each module area in Canvas. AS1 and AS2 should be posted at the beginning of the semester, by Week 1. The resit Assessment Briefs should be published to students once the final submission date for first sit has lapsed.

5.4 Submission date changes

The Assessment team create the Assessment Calendars and share these with Course Leaders and Module Leaders before the start of the academic year for approval. If a Module Leader wishes to change the submission date for any item of assessment after the approval, the Module Leader needs to complete a Submission Date Change Request Form [AF6] and get the form approved by the Course Leader. Once received, the Assessment team will review the viability of the change and either accept it or, if the planned change does not align with administrative assessment activities, reject it.

5.5 Examination and TCA arrangements

Examinations and TCA papers must be securely stored by the Assessment team unless they are seen examinations.

Working with IT and relevant academic staff, the Assessment team will be the overall lead for making all necessary examination and TCA arrangements.

For paper-based examinations/TCA, the responsibilities of the Assessment team include:

- Setting the examination and TCA timetable (to include any special arrangements for any students who are eligible for a reasonable adjustment to the standard examination)
- Arranging and training invigilators
- Printing copies of all examination and TCA papers
- Setting up each examination and TCA room on the day of the exam
- Collecting completed examination and TCA scripts

- Recording attendance
- Receiving invigilator reports and taking any action, as required
- Distributing examination and TCA scripts for marking
- Receiving marked scripts
- Arranging internal moderation if requested by the Module Leader and External Examiners' moderation (if applicable)

For online examinations/TCAs, the responsibilities of the Assessment team include:

- to provide IT with data to set up Assessment Shells
- to create Examination Papers and Answer Sheets, and share them with MLs
- Module Leaders are required to set up the examination/TCA and upload papers to Canvas
- Setting the examination and TCA timetable and arranging any computer labs if necessary
- to deploy arrangements of extended times where relevant
- Informing the Module Leaders of the students entitled to special arrangements
- Checking the exam for technical issues
- Arranging internal moderation if requested by the Module Leader and External Examiners' moderation (if applicable)

6. Marking the assessment and ensuring standards

To ensure that the standards of assessment are maintained, and the required level of achievement reached with regards to learning outcomes at an item of assessment level and subsequently at module level, marking schemes and grade criteria are agreed and distributed. Where appropriate to do so, assessments are marked anonymously.

Grades should be released no later than 20 working days after submission.

The following stages are completed before and after grades are being released to students.

- Marking of assessment
- Standardisation
- Internal moderation
- External moderation
- Grade Distribution Report is produced for each module which informs completion of the Module Monitoring Report (MMR) and subsequent Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report (AMER).

These stages are now considered in further detail.

6.1 Marking Scheme and Grade Criteria

The Module Leader must distribute a marking scheme to the Marking Team, to include the academic subject content that should be included within an answer. Academic subject content is an outline indicator of what is expected from the students in terms of the content.

The grade criteria (see Appendix 1) are presented to students in the Student Handbook.

All written assignments will include clear guidance in the Assessment Brief on the 'word limit' to address the requirements of the assignment. If a student's work exceeds the stipulated word limit by more than 10%, it will only be marked up to and including the additional 10% (i.e. the excess will not be considered when awarding a grade for the assignment). Abstracts, footnotes, reference lists, bibliographies and appendices are excluded from any word limit requirements.

If a student's work is under the word limit, the full work will be marked on the extent to which the requirements of the assignment have been met. If a student's work is substantially under the word limit it will fall short of the requirements of the assignment.

6.2 Standardisation

Standardisation ensures there is a shared understanding of the marking criteria, and the awarding of grades is clear and in line with module's level learning outcomes.

Standardisation is carried out on a sample of scripts, before the marking and moderation process starts. The sample is selected by the Module Leader. A Marking Team will be established for every module. If a module is delivered by more than one academic, the Marking Team will comprise the Module Leader and the Module Tutor(s). If the module is delivered by one academic, the Marking Team will comprise the Module Leader and an academic who will undertake moderation for that module.

There is no standardisation when there is only one academic delivering the module, unless the module is being delivered for the first time, or the academic delivering the module is new to Bloomsbury Institute and is therefore marking the module for the first time. In such cases, standardisation must take place.

The Marking Team completes a standardisation exercise through which the Marking Team agrees the grades for a sample of between three and five assessments before the marking starts. This exercise is completed as follows:

- The Module Leader (ML) provisionally marks the sample of assessments
- The ML circulates the assessments [without revealing what grade the ML awarded the assessments] to each member of the Marking Team who are required to mark each assessment
- The members of the Marking Team submit the marked assessments to the ML
- The ML convenes a standardisation meeting between the members of the Marking Team to agree the grades for the sample
- If the Marking Team cannot agree the grades for the sample, the matter is referred to a member of the Assessment Review Team [through the Assessment team] and ultimately to a formal meeting of the Assessment Review Team

All the above stages are recorded in the Marking Standardisation Form (**AF2**) and sent to the Assessment team within 7 working days of the assessment submission date.

6.3 Moderation

Once first marking has been completed, moderation is completed as follows:

- The Assessment Team and/or Module Leader collate(s) a sample of assessments for moderation, to include all assessments at grades A and F and 10% of assessments at grades B, 10% of assessments at grades C and 10% of assessments at grades D. Each grade should include a range of grades within the same grade boundary, e.g. the moderated sample of B grades should include at least one B+, one B, and one B-.

Note: If the total number is 8 or less, then all assessments will be moderated.

- In cases where multiple markers have marked the same assessment, the sample selection method would apply to all markers. In other words, the sample selection should take place for each marker as per the above-mentioned percentages.
- For Foundation Year modules, the sample is reduced to 25% of assessments at grades A and F and 5% of a range of assessments at Grades B, C and D. If the total number is less than 8, then all assessments will be moderated.
- For examinations, the moderated scripts should be submitted with the moderation form to the Assessment team.
- A different member of the Marking Team (referred to as the “moderator”) will moderate an assessment. The moderator will state whether the awarded grade is agreed or not.
- ‘Live’ assessments (e.g. presentations, assessed seminars, moots) moderation can be either synchronous or asynchronous:
 - Synchronous moderation occurs when both the first and second marker are present during the ‘live’ assessment. It is carried out almost immediately when the markers discuss and agree the feedback and grade during a face-to-face discussion.
 - Asynchronous moderation occurs where it is not possible or necessary for both markers to be present for the ‘live’ assessment. In this situation, all ‘live’ assessments should be recorded by the first marker and the moderator will review a sample.
- If the moderator disagrees with the grade awarded, a discussion must be held between the first marker and the moderator. Once agreement is reached, a note of the discussion should be kept in the moderation form. This note should include a record of how the grade difference was resolved. If an agreement is not reached, then it will be referred to a member of the Assessment Review Team.
- All Principal Modules (i.e. research projects and dissertations) are second marked and, therefore, the moderation carried out by the Module Leader only needs to include 3 assessments at grade A and 3 assessments at grade F, and 1 assessment at each grade B, C and D. respectively. If the total number is less than 8, then all assessments will be moderated.

6.3.1 Difference in grades

At **Levels 0 and 4**, if grades awarded by the moderator differ from those of the first marker by one full grade or greater, all scripts marked by the first marker must be moderated.

Example 1:

- First marker: A+
- Second marker: A-

Outcome: No requirement for all scripts to be moderated.

Example 2:

- First marker: A+
- Second marker: B+

Outcome: All scripts to be moderated.

At **Levels 5 and 6**, if grades awarded by the moderator differ from those of the first marker by more than one grade boundary, all scripts marked by the first marker must be moderated.

Example 1:

- First marker: A+
- Second marker: A

Outcome: No requirement for all scripts to be moderated.

Example 2:

- First marker: A+
- Second marker: A-

Outcome: All scripts to be moderated.

All the above stages are recorded in the Moderation Form (**AF3**), which is sent to the Assessment team.

6.4 External moderation

The External Examiner's role is to moderate marking standards, not to re-mark assessed work. Where marking standards are judged to be acceptable, the External Examiner will confirm this.

Once internal moderation has been completed for all modules at Level 5 and above (also for Level 4 modules if required by a professional body), external moderation will take place on a smaller sample, which will contain scripts that were internally moderated and those that were not. This process is completed as follows:

- The Assessment team collates a sample including 25% of scripts at grades A and F, and 10% of scripts at Grades B, C and D. If the total number of assessments is 8 or less, then all assessments should be moderated.

Where the External Examiner disagrees with one or more grades, one of the following may be applied, at the request of the External Examiner:

- An individual grade can be changed provided the External Examiner moderates all the assessments.
- The External Examiner requires all the assessments to be remarked (and then re-moderated by the External Examiner).

The External Examiner will be provided, upon request, with access to all assessments to enable the External Examiner to increase the size of the sample.

All the above stages are recorded in the External Moderation Form (**AF4**).

6.5 Re-sits / Resubmissions

Where an assessment comprises two or more subcomponents and the student has failed the assessment overall, the student must resubmit all subcomponents.

6.5.1 Standardisation

The standardisation for re-sits/resubmissions must be carried out if the item of assessment is new (i.e., AS1r or AS2r), or the designated marker has not marked the item of assessment before.

If the student is submitting the same item of assessment and the marker has marked this within the first sit/submission assessment cycle, then standardisation is not required.

Standardisation of re-sits and resubmissions must be recorded on the Marking Standardisation Form (**AF2**).

6.5.2 Moderation

For re-sits/resubmissions, moderation is only carried out on all F grades, all initial merit D- grades, and any scripts that have been submitted after mitigating circumstances at first sit [i.e., the grade will not be capped]. Moderated scripts are recorded on the Moderation Form (**AF3**).

6.5.3 External moderation

It is not necessary for re-sit/resubmission scripts to be sent to the External Examiners for moderation.

6.6 Students Resubmitting / Re-sitting assessments

A student who attempts and fails, or does not submit, an assessment item has the right to resubmit/resit that item on one further occasion, except where students have their resit/resubmission rights removed as a result of academic misconduct.

Students with Mitigating Circumstances upheld may be permitted to have a second resubmission opportunity (third sit).

If a student fails an item of assessment (i.e. achieves an F+, F or F-), the student needs to rework their original submission. If a student receives any G grade (i.e. G, NG, LG or AG) or an H grade for an upheld mitigating circumstances claim, then the student will need to use the Resubmission Assessment Brief (e.g., AS2r).

For resit examinations and TCAs, a new exam or TCA paper will be used. The resubmission/re-sit period will be published in the Academic Calendar and Module Study Guides.

If the student passes at the second attempt, the mark will be capped at 'D-', unless the student has successfully applied for mitigating circumstances. Students are strongly advised to resubmit/re-sit when they receive a fail grade (i.e. F+, F, F- or G), have had a mitigating circumstance claim approved

and/or have a holding grade (i.e. ZZ) as there will be no further opportunities to resubmit/re-sit after the deadline for resubmission/re-sit.

If a student gets a G, LG, AG or NG grade **for both items of assessment at the first opportunity**, the student **may lose** any opportunity to resubmit/re-sit for that module.

Note: No extensions can be granted for resubmission/re-sit work, and, therefore, all resubmission/re-sit work must be completed by the deadline given.

Outstanding resubmissions may affect a student's ability to graduate, even if the work has been marked and grades provisionally released.

6.6.1 Resubmission / Re-sit support sessions

Support sessions will be timetabled for students who must resubmit an assignment and/or re-sit an examination.

If a student has failed an assignment and wants to complete the resubmission assignment early, the student will be provided with in-year support by the Learning Enhancement Team, Module Leader and/or Module Tutor. However, the student can only formally resubmit the assignment during the resubmission period assigned to their intake.

6.7 Canvas grades

The Module Leader is responsible for inserting grades into Canvas. The numerical value specified in the Grade Distribution Table (section 7) should be entered in Canvas. The following rules apply:

- First Sit/Submission grades should be inserted in the columns in Canvas as follows:
 - Initial column: merit grade
 - Moderated column: moderated grade
 - Final column: initial grade or agreed grade between first marker and moderator

Note: if the submission is late, then **only** the Final grade should be capped at D-. If the submission is being investigated for academic misconduct, the holding grade (ZZ) should be inserted **only in** the Final column.

- For all re-sits/resubmissions, grades should be inserted in the columns in Canvas as follows:
 - Initial column: merit grade
 - Moderated column: moderated grade
 - Final column: capped grade (D-) or merit fail grade, or a merit grade in the case of Mitigating Circumstances being upheld for the first sit.

6.7.1 Canvas cut-off deadlines

The Assessment team will provide Academics with Canvas cut-off dates. Academic staff or any other professional services staff will not be able to make any changes to grades after these dates.

It is accepted that there could be instances where a change may be required after the deadline has lapsed; however only the Assessment team has authorisation to make such a change. For more details, please see below.

Changes to grades after Canvas cut-off

There could be instances where changes to the grades are required after the Canvas cut-off deadline has passed.

Members of the Assessment team are the only authorised individuals who can make a change to grade/s after the deadlines. The following are examples of when such changes may be required:

- Outcomes received for academic misconduct. This will result in the need to change the grade from ZZ to the grade awarded as per the outcome. This could take place after a student has attended a viva and an outcome has been confirmed at this stage, or where the academic misconduct case has been referred to a Panel at the University of Northampton and an outcome has been received.
- Outcomes received for mitigating circumstances. This will result in the need to change the grade from ZZ to the grade awarded as per the outcome.

(Further details of the Academic Misconduct Process can be found in Appendix 2 of this document.)

- Grade change because of moderation activity
- Missed grade as per the original cut-off deadline
- Late marking of assessment
- Incorrect grade

All the above changes must be reported to the Assessment team as a matter of urgency using the AF7 form.

Any grade changes after the Canvas cut-off deadline where the AF7 form has not been used will not be considered for the purposes of Assessment Boards and the grade change may not be considered. This will ultimately impact the student's progression. If any grade change is requested after the Module Boards, then the grade should be processed through Chair's Action.

If any changes are required, the Late Grade Changes Form (**AF7**) must be completed and submitted to the Assessment team.

6.8 Grade Distribution Report

Following completion of the marking process, a Grade Distribution Report (i.e. a marks' matrix) is provided for each module cohort indicating:

- student grade scores
- aggregate scores including average and standard deviation statistics
- year-on-year comparison statistics

The Grade Distribution Report informs completion of the Module Monitoring Report and the subsequent Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Report.

7. Assessment Grading

The University of Northampton marks in letter grades rather than numerical marks. This is considered to deliver the most accurate and fair outcomes for students. The table below shows how each letter grade could be converted to a numerical mark:

Letter Grade	Percentage Mark
A+	90
A	78
A-	73
B+	68
B	65
B-	61
C+	58
C	55
C-	51
D+	48
D	45
D-	41
F+	38
F	27
F-	13
H	5 [Mitigating Circumstances Approved]
ZZ	4 [Holding Grade]
G	0 [Non-Submission]
LG	3 [Late Submission]
NG	2 [Nothing of Merit]
AG	1 [AMP Outcome (Academic Misconduct Panel)]

Each assessment [assignment and exam] that a student completes will be marked using the common grading system: The Grade Criteria (see **Section 6.1** above and **Appendix 1**).

In addition to the above criteria-based grades, there are two grade indicators which represent either a withheld decision or an upheld decision:

- If the student has either applied for mitigating circumstances (MCs) or is under investigation for suspected academic misconduct (AM), a holding grade of ZZ will be used. This holding grade can also be used for other administrative reasons.
 - A ZZ grade for suspected academic misconduct is added by the marking tutor during the marking process in the Final grade column in Canvas.
 - A ZZ grade for pending mitigating circumstances is added by the Academic Administration team in the Final grade column in Canvas.
- If a mitigating circumstances application has been upheld, then a grade of H is used. The Academic Administration team adds the H grade in the Final grade column in Canvas.

A note should also be added by the Marking Tutor and/or Academic Administration team in the note column in Canvas if a submission is under academic misconduct investigation and/or is an application of MCs has been made.

Academic misconduct or mitigating circumstances outcomes will only be applied to a whole assessment item, not to individual sub-component parts (i.e. presentation and submission).

Note: If the student has applied for MCs, then there should **not** be a submission. If the student makes a submission, then the MCs will not be considered and a general rule of 'fit to submit/sit' applies.

7.1 Passing a module

To pass a module, a student must normally achieve an overall grade of at least D- in the assessment of that module. The items of assessment for each module and their weightings are published in the Assessment Brief. The weighting of the assessment gives an indication of its significance, and below are two examples of assessment patterns:

- 2-hour exam (weighted at 60%) and a 2,000-word essay (weighted at 40%)
- Portfolio (100%)

Because a student only needs to achieve a D- overall, it is possible for the student to pass the module even if they achieve a fail grade in one item of assessment provided they achieve a pass in another item of assessment. However, if the item of assessment which is failed is weighted at (for example) 70%, it may be very difficult to pass the module.

Note: Some modules carry a professional body exemption and have a different pass requirement:

- To pass modules in AFM and ensure they have gained the professional body (ACCA and CIMA) exemptions, students must obtain a minimum grade of F+ in each item of assessment and a minimum overall grade of D- for the module. If they obtain a D- overall but have one item of assessment with lower than an F+, they will have passed the module, but not gained the exemptions.
- To pass LLB CILEx modules and ensure they have gained the professional body requirement for admission as a Graduate Member, students must obtain a minimum overall grade of C- for the module. There is no minimum requirement for individual elements of assessment. If students obtain a D- overall, they will have passed the module, but not gained the CILEx requirement. Note that the application of these rules on new students from Academic Year 2021-22 will be diminished.

7.1.1 Condonement for Foundation Year modules

For Foundation Year students that started on or after AY 2019-20, the condonement rule will not apply. Students studying Foundation Year modules must pass all Level 0 modules before taking any Level 4 modules.

For students that started in 2017-18 and 2018-19, Foundation Year modules up to a credit value of 40 may be condoned. In other words, a student passing three FY modules and achieving F+ in the fourth module will be condoned for the F+ grade and will not have to repeat that module.

7.1.2 Calculating the overall module grade

To calculate the overall module grade, for each item of assessment the University of Northampton converts each letter grade (e.g., A+) to a number (referred to as the “item value”). The following steps are then completed:

- the relevant weighting is applied to the “item value”
- the weighted item values for each item of assessment are added together
- the total is converted back to a letter grade (using the “total module value”)

The number (i.e., the item value) to which grades are converted are not percentages. See columns 1 and 2 in the table below for the number (i.e., the item value) to which each grade is converted.

Taking the example of the module above with a 2-hour exam (weighted at 60%) and a 2,000-word essay (weighted at 40%), if a student passed the exam with a D+ and the essay with a B-, the overall grade will be calculated as follows:

- 60% of 14pts (see [1] in the table below) = 8.4pts
- 40% of 18pts (see [2] in the table below) = 7.2pts

- $8.4\text{pts} + 7.2\text{pts} = 15.6\text{pts} = \text{C}$ (see [3] in the table below)

ITEM GRADE	ITEM VALUE	TOTAL MODULE VALUE	MODULE GRADE
A+	25	24.0 or more	A+
A	23	22.0 - 23.99	A
A-	21	20.5 - 21.99	A-
B+	20	19.5 - 20.49	B+
B	19	18.5 - 19.49	B
B-	18	17.5 - 18.49	B-
C+	17	16.5 - 17.49	C+
C	16	15.5 - 16.49	C
C-	15	14.5 - 15.49	C-
D+	14	13.5 - 14.49	D+
D	13	12.5 - 13.49	D
D-	12	11.5 - 12.49	D-
F+	11	9.50 - 11.49	F+
F	8	6.00 - 9.49	F
F-	4	2.00 - 5.99	F-
G	0	0.00 - 0.99	G

The table includes three callouts: '1' points to the 'D+' row, '2' points to the 'B-' row, and '3' points to the 'C' row. The 'TOTAL MODULE VALUE' for the 'C' row is 15.5, which is circled in blue.

A student may have passed the module overall but may still have an opportunity outstanding for an item of assessment; this may be a referred or deferred item. In this situation, a student is allowed or can be allowed to undertake the outstanding failed item of assessment to improve their overall module grade.

If a student takes the resubmission/resit opportunity, the highest grade between their first sit and resit grades will be taken into consideration when calculating the overall grade for the modules. For example:

- First sit grade: F- and resubmission grade: F+. The resubmission grade F+ will be used to calculate the overall module grade.
- First sit grade: F+ and resubmission grade: F-. The first sit grade F+ will be used to calculate the overall module grade.

7.2 Extensions and mitigating circumstances

Applications for extensions and mitigating circumstances, with supporting evidence (such as medical certificates), should be made through the Student Self-service Portal (SSP).

7.2.1 Extensions

If a student experiences unforeseen circumstances that may prevent him/her submitting an assignment at the first opportunity, it is possible to request an extension of up to two weeks (14 calendar days). The length of extension requested will be evaluated by the Academic Administration team.

The granting of an extension will depend upon the nature of the difficulty the student is experiencing, whether the difficulty could and should have been anticipated, and the extent to which the circumstances were outside of the student's control. For example, health difficulties would usually provide legitimate grounds for an extension; last minute computer issues or clashing deadlines would not. If an extension of up to two weeks is not enough the student should make a claim for mitigating circumstances. Any subsequent requests to extend the length of an extension that has already been granted after the original submission deadline cannot be granted.

Note: No extensions can be granted for examinations/TCAs, presentations, and no extensions can be granted for resubmission/re-sit. Extensions are only permitted for the whole item of assessment and not to any subcomponents.

7.2.2 Mitigating circumstances

Mitigating circumstances (MC) are defined as a serious or acute problem, or an event beyond a student's control or ability to foresee, which has prevented completion of assignment/s or attendance at examination/s. If a student is experiencing unforeseen or unexpected events – such as serious illness or severe disruption to their personal life – that may affect the student's ability to take assignment/s or sit examination/s, the student should meet with their Module Leader, Course Leader, Academic Administrator or a Success Champion to discuss available options.

If a student is unable to sit an exam or submit an assignment, the student may be able to claim MC, which, if accepted, would allow the student to complete the assessment for the first time later, and receive an uncapped mark for it. If the MC are upheld for a first sit item of assessment, the assessment would be taken at the next sitting or the assignment would be submitted at the next submission opportunity (resubmission/resit). The outcome of MC application will determine whether the grade is capped or not. If the MC is upheld for a resubmission/resit item of assessment, there will be no further opportunity to resubmit/resit that assessment. The University of Northampton will consider the MC at the Award Board and the module will be disregarded both from the accumulated failure count and from the number of opportunities a student must repeat a module.

A claim for MC, should normally be submitted within ten working days either side of the assessment deadline. It is however encouraged that the application is submitted as soon as practically possible.

Note: The University of Northampton has a 'fit to sit' policy, under which mitigating circumstance (MC) cannot be applied for. Please refer to the policy for information. The University of Northampton's Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedures can be accessed through [Section 3: All Policies](#) of the Quality and Enhancement Manual.

7.3 Students with disabilities

If a student has a disability or specific learning difficulty and requires additional support, they are advised to contact the Disability Office at disability@bil.ac.uk.

7.4 Plagiarism and cheating

Plagiarism is passing the work of another off as the student's own, whether by copying from a textbook, an internet site, another student etc. In the latter case, the student whose work is copied is liable to be regarded as having colluded in the plagiarism and is therefore also liable to the imposition of a penalty. This is regarded by us, the University of Northampton (and all universities) and professional bodies as a very serious matter. Instances of suspected plagiarism will be investigated by one of our Academic Integrity Officers.

Procedures are in place to deal with both suspected and proven plagiarism.

Cheating or attempting to cheat in exams is also regarded as a serious matter. This will be reported, and the student will be dealt with in accordance with the relevant procedures.

Online guidance to help avoid plagiarism is available through the University of Northampton's Skills Hub¹, within the 'Academic Skills' section. Additionally, the Learning Enhancement service provides students with support, guidance and tuition in all areas of academic skills and English language. The service is aimed at improving academic performance, regardless of existing level, and can be accessed by emailing: lee@bil.ac.uk.

8. External Examining

As per the UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: External Expertise, external examining provides one of the principal means for maintaining UK academic standards within autonomous higher education providers. External examining is, therefore, an integral and essential part of institutional

¹ skillshub.northampton.ac.uk/

quality assurance. External Examiners are individuals [drawn from academia and from industry, business and the professions], who are appointed in accordance with the criteria set out in Indicator 5 of the QAA Code for External Examining. Not every External Examiner is necessarily required to meet all the criteria.

External Examiners are appointed to provide each degree-awarding body with impartial and independent advice, as well as informative comment on the degree-awarding body's standards and on student achievement in relation to those standards. The specific responsibility of each External Examiner is dependent on the role allocated by the degree-awarding body on appointment and may be at different levels depending on the nature of the provision and the way in which a degree-awarding body's decision-making processes about assessment are structured.

In principle, External Examiners should test that:

- The types of assessment are appropriate for the subject, the students, the respective level of study and the expected outcomes.
- The marking scheme/grading criteria have been properly and consistently applied, and that internal marking is therefore of an appropriate standard, fair and reliable.

In viewing samples of students' work, External Examiners are not normally able to expect or encourage an Examination Board to raise or lower marks for individual students, on the basis that such a practice would be unfair to those candidates whose work is not part of the sample.

Degree awarding bodies ensure that External Examiners are clearly briefed to carry out the role. Briefing includes confirmation of the module(s), programme(s) or award(s) to which the External Examiner is appointed; the evidence that he/she requires to provide oversight; clarity about his/her precise role in respect of scripts sent (for example, sampling or adjudicating in cases of disagreement); his/her remit in relation to endorsing the outcomes of the assessment process; and the type of commentary that he/she is expected to provide on the outcomes of the assessments conducted within those programmes / modules.

The University of Northampton (UoN) operates a two-tier examination system and appoints Module External Examiners and a smaller group of Framework (or Principal) External Examiners. The External Examiners for programmes at Bloomsbury Institute are Module External Examiners. All External Examiners are appointed for a period of four years.

To fulfil their role, External Examiners view students' work. The volume of assessment samples is of enough size to enable the External Examiners to form a view as to whether the internal marking process has properly assessed students' performance against standards. External Examiners are not responsible for the assessment of individual students to the point that External Examiners do not carry out marking of assessed work.

External Examiners are required to submit an Annual Report (using UoN's Annual Report Form template) by the deadline indicated in their letter of appointment. The standard deadline for Undergraduate programmes (Levels 4-6) is 31 July of each academic year.

The reports are submitted to the UoN Quality Unit which then distributes them. Reports on Bloomsbury Institute programmes are sent to the Academic Registrar and the Head of Quality and Compliance while External Examiner Reports are circulated to UoN counterparts. The Head of Quality and Compliance will then distribute the reports to the relevant Programme and Course Leaders.

Course Leaders complete an External Examiner Response Form, which is approved in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee prior to submission to UoN. The final versions of the External Examiner Reports and Bloomsbury Institute's responses are posted in our Quality and Enhancement Manual on our [website](#).² Any relating actions as a result of these activities are monitored by relevant committees.

² <https://www.bil.ac.uk/qem/qaa-quality-code/external-examining/>

External Examiners are asked to submit their reports, and any other correspondence relating to their appointment, reports and payment of fees and expenses, to UoN's dedicated mailbox for External Examiners externalexaminers@northampton.ac.uk.

9. References

Biggs, J. B. (2003) *Teaching for Quality Learning at University*, Open University Press/Society for Research into Higher Education.

HEA (2014) *Assessment and Feedback*, available online at: [HEA guidance on assessment and feedback](#)

Hine, B. and T. Northeast. (2016) *Using feed-forward strategies in higher education. The terrifying novel assignment: using feed-forward to improve students' ability and confidence on assignments that test new skills*. *New Vistas*, 2 (1). pp. 28-33.

Sadiq, A. (unpublished) *Impact of self-regulated assessment and formative feedback on students' learning & performance in HE*.

Sadler, D. R. (2010) *Beyond Feedback: Developing student capability in complex appraisal*. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 35: 535-550.

[UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: External Expertise](#)

[UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Assessment](#)

10. Appendix 1: Grade Criteria

An outstanding Distinction	A+	Work which fulfils all the criteria of the grade below, but at an exceptional standard.
A very strong Distinction	A	Work of distinguished quality which demonstrates strong, convincing and consistent evidence appropriate to the task or activity. Rigorous and authoritative command of academic / professional conventions appropriate to the discipline.
A clear Distinction	A-	Work of very good quality which displays most, but not all, of the criteria for the grade above in relation to the learning outcomes.
A Distinction	B+	Work of highly commendable quality which clearly fulfils the criteria for the grade below, but shows a greater degree of capability in relation to the relevant learning outcomes.
A very strong Merit	B	Work of commendable quality which demonstrates good, robust and convincing evidence appropriate to the task or activity. Strong command of academic / professional conventions appropriate to the discipline.
A strong Merit	B-	Work of good quality which contains most, but not all, of the characteristics of the grade above in relation to the learning outcomes.
A clear Merit	C+	Work which clearly fulfils all the criteria of the grade below but shows a greater degree of capability in relevant intellectual/subject/key skills.
A Merit	C	Work of sound quality which demonstrates evidence which is sufficient and appropriate to the task or activity. Sound command of academic / professional conventions appropriate to the discipline.
A very strong Pass OR bare/basic Merit	C-	Work of capable quality which contains some of the characteristics of the grade above in relation to the relevant learning outcomes.
A strong Pass	D+	Work of satisfactory quality which demonstrates evidence of reliably achieving the requirements of the learning outcomes, but to a limited degree. Acceptable command of academic / professional conventions appropriate to the discipline.
A Pass	D	Work of broadly satisfactory quality which demonstrates evidence of achieving the requirements of the learning outcomes, but to a limited degree. Broadly acceptable command of academic / professional conventions appropriate to the discipline.
A bare Pass	D-	Work of bare pass standard which demonstrates evidence of achieving the requirements of the learning outcomes, but only to a limited degree. Broadly acceptable command of academic / professional conventions appropriate to the discipline.
A marginal Fail	F+	Work which indicates some evidence of engagement with the learning outcomes, but which contains some significant omissions or misunderstanding, or otherwise just fails to meet threshold standards.
A Fail	F	Evidence included or provided but missing in some very important aspects. Poor command of academic / professional conventions appropriate to the discipline.
A comprehensive Fail	F-	Negligible or inappropriate evidence. Unsatisfactory command of academic / professional conventions appropriate to the discipline.
Academic Misconduct	AG	Work submitted, but academic misconduct proven, and penalty given was to award AG grade.
Late submission	LG	Work submitted but given an LG grade due to late submission.
Work of nil value	NG	Work submitted, but work comprises no value.
Non-submission/Nil attempt	G	Nothing presented.

11. Appendix 2: Suspected Academic Misconduct Process

1. While marking, Module Tutor (MT) suspects academic misconduct (AM) took place and so the MT:

- Marks the work on *face-value*.
- Inserts the 'face-value' grade in the *INI* column on Canvas.
- Inserts ZZ in the *Final* column on Canvas and adds a note in the Note Column on Canvas for Academic Administrators (AAs) to be aware of the reason why the grade is withheld.
- Tries to find evidence that AM took place.
- Before the grades are moderated/released, flags the suspected assignment and provides supporting evidence to the Module Leader (ML) asking for advice on procedures. This is to gain ML's support in moving the case to the formal stage. It may be that the ML advises a small grade reduction and clear feedback rather than referral to the formal stage based on a judgment of poor scholarship (see below).

2. ML checks the suspected assignment while moderating (i.e. before grades are released to students).

i. Suspected Plagiarism

- If poor scholarship is found:
 - ML advises MT to penalise the assignment according to marking criteria without referring the assignment for formal procedures.
 - MT inputs the grade on Canvas and provides the student with feedback along the lines of:

Although you presented many good and relevant ideas, and supported them with citations and references, the problems with paraphrasing heavily impacted on your grade. Large sections were copied from sources.

It is clear that you worked on structuring your work and embedding information from sources into your assignment. However, you needed to spend more time paraphrasing.

In future, make sure you upload your work more in advance so that you can check your similarity report and work on improving the sections highlighted by Turnitin. You are strongly advised to contact lee@bil.ac.uk for additional support with paraphrasing to avoid academic misconduct in future.

- If significant sections were plagiarised:
 - ML advises the MT to raise the online Academic Misconduct form in order to complete the Referral of Suspected Academic Misconduct (SAM) form; a PDF of the similarity report from Turnitin should also be uploaded (and, if possible, source text) by the grade release date.
 - AAs accept the online Academic Misconduct form so that this is received by the Academic Integrity Officer (AIO) and schedules an Academic Integrity Interview.
 - Interview and subsequent procedures follow.

ii. Suspected Commissioning/Collusion

- If ML does not think there is enough evidence to suspect commissioning/collusion:
 - Student's grade (as given in 1.1 above) is upheld and replaces the ZZ in the Final column. This should be done prior to releasing the grades. If it is done before the Canvas cut-off deadline, the ML changes the grade on Canvas. If it is done after the Canvas cut-off deadline, the Late Grade Change Form (**AF7**) needs to be completed by the ML, and sent to the Assessment Team (AT)
- If ML agrees that there is enough evidence to suspect commissioning/collusion, the referring tutor can invite a student for a viva. Although the viva is an initial informal chat for the ML/MT to give the student the opportunity to evidence that he/she is the author of the work, the viva can result in formal academic misconduct referral. The process for conducting the viva is:
 - ML appoints the Chair of the viva (ML/MT)
 - ML writes on Canvas feedback along the lines:

Your grade has been temporarily withheld. Within one week [or a date] you will receive an email from your ML/MT inviting you to attend a viva (a meeting to discuss your assignment).
- ML/MT schedules the viva and sends the student an email at least 1 week prior to the scheduled meeting. Suggested email text:

Dear Student

I am writing to invite you to a viva (meeting) with me, as Module Leader/Module Tutor for XXXXXXXX (name of module) to discuss your assignment. The aim of the meeting is to give you an opportunity to talk about your work. Although this meeting is informal in nature, it is being held to help determine whether commissioning or collusion took place and the grade for your work. As such, there is the possibility that the outcome of the meeting could be a formal academic misconduct referral.

Please bring with you any evidence of the preparatory work you completed in advance of your submission. This could include earlier drafts, notes, sources used (e.g. pdf files of articles used either as hard copies or on a computer), tutor comments or formative feedback.

If you have had any third-party assistance with your work (e.g. proof-reader), then you should bring the original, unamended copy of the work to assist staff in assessing the extent to which this has impacted on the quality of the work you subsequently submitted.

The viva is an opportunity for you to demonstrate that you are deserving of a grading classification. You are therefore strongly encouraged to attend. The meeting will last up to 30 minutes.

Your viva (meeting) will be held at TIME on DATE in PLACE. Please let our reception staff know when you arrive, and I will come to meet you.

You may bring someone with you to the meeting; however, any accompanying person cannot take part in our discussion; they are in attendance just for moral support for you.

If you are unable to attend on the day for any unforeseen reason, for example, transport problems, you should let us know as soon as possible.

If you fail to attend the meeting, your assignment may be referred to the University of Northampton for formal consideration of suspected academic misconduct.

Please reply to this email to confirm your attendance.

Thank you.

- Viva outcomes:
 - The Chair of the viva (ML/MT) determines that NO commissioning/collusion took place:
 - Grade is released. If it is before the Canvas cut-off deadline, the ML changes the grade on Canvas. If it is after the Canvas cut-off deadline, the Late Grade Change Form (**AF7**) needs to be completed by the ML, and sent to the Assessment Team (AT)
 - ML adds a note in the feedback section:

Thank you for attending the viva. Your grade has now been released.
- The Chair of the viva (ML/MT) has grounds to believe that commissioning/collusion took place:
 - The Chair completes the Referral of Suspected Academic Misconduct (SAM) form online and follow the process as described in paragraph 2 of this appendix, second bullet point.

Note: in case of collusion, the other student must be reported too in the online form.

In case a formal referral will need to be raised, the referring tutor will need to complete the academic misconduct online form to initiate a formal investigation. The process for conducting a formal referral is:

- The referring tutor needs to add ZZ grade in the final column on Canvas and relevant notes. In addition, the below test needs to be added on Canvas:

'This assessment has been referred for further investigation on the basis of suspected academic misconduct. The marking of your work will be delayed until this process has been completed.'

- The referring tutor will need to complete and submit the online academic misconduct form and upload any evidences in support of the investigation for the Academic Integrity Officer (AIO) to consider at the time of the formal interview with student involved.
- ML is responsible to check that information added on the form is correct.
- Academic Administrators (AAs) will email student/s involved in the suspected case of academic misconduct to attend the interview with AIO. The below email is sent to students:

Dear Mr/Miss (Last Name),

Bloomsbury Institute Student: LON number

University of Northampton Student no: UoN ID number

Module: LSBMXXX ASX

An assignment that you have recently submitted has been forwarded to me because your tutor believes there is evidence that it contains work that is not your own. It is my responsibility on behalf of the Bloomsbury Institute to investigate such cases once they have been referred to me.

*In order for me to resolve this matter, I would like to invite you to **attend a formal online meeting with me through PLACE on DATE at TIME** Alternatively, you may put your case to me in writing, but you must do this within ten working days of the date of this letter.*

The evidence that has been referred to me is the Turnitin report for the above piece of work and/or a report from the referring tutor explaining why they believe academic misconduct has taken place. You may access the Turnitin report via the Canvas site for the above module. If you are unable to access

the Turnitin report, please contact your tutor for a copy. For your online formal meeting you may be accompanied by a friend.

Following our meeting I will come to a conclusion on the allegation and make a recommendation to the Assessment Board. Please be aware that failure to engage with my investigation will not prevent a decision being made on the evidence available.

If you have a legitimate reason that you cannot attend the meeting on the above date then please let me know, but please note that this meeting should take priority over other University commitments, except time-constrained assignments or examinations, and there is no automatic right to have your appointment re-arranged.

Yours sincerely,

As soon as AIO has conducted the investigation, the relevant section on the online academic misconduct form will need to be completed and submitted to the Senior Academic Integrity Officer for final approval.

If the decision of the investigation is 'academic misconduct has occurred', then any paperwork related to the case will be forward to the University of Northampton for final assessment and decision.

If AIO decides that no academic misconduct has occurred, then AAs will ask the Module Leader to confirm the merit grade and update the grade on Canvas. If this is after the Canvas cut-off deadline, the Late Grade Change Form (AF7) need to be completed by AAs and submit it to the Assessment team (AT).

For more information on how to use the online Academic Misconduct forms please download the "Academic Misconduct – Online Log Guide " document visiting Academic Administration SharePoint or alternatively by clicking this [link](#).

Academic Integrity Flow Chart can be also found on Academic Administration SharePoint or by clicking this [link](#).