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Assessment and IV Procedures for Higher National Qualifications		HEPRO002	1.0
DEPARTMENT	Higher Education		
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# ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES FOR HIGHER NATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

## Procedure Statement

The Assessment Procedures for Higher National programmes are designed to safeguard the quality and academic standards of assessment practice for the benefit of learners and to ensure that learners have access to redress if they require it. The procedures also have the following aims:

- To create fairness and consistency in the assessment of all HN programmes
- To ensure that assessment is carried out in line with the requirements of the awarding body as published in the BTEC Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment (level 4 to 7)
- To ensure that assessment is conducted in line with the expectations, practices and guiding principles of the Quality Assurance Agency's UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Assessment)

## Definitions

- **Formative assessment:** Assessment with a developmental purpose, designed to help learners learn more effectively by giving them feedback on their performance and how it can be improved and/or maintained.
- **Summative assessment:** Used to indicate the extent of a learner's success in meeting the assessment criteria to gauge the intended learning outcomes of a module or course. Typically, within summative assessment, the marks awarded count towards the final mark of the course/module/award.
- **Internal verification** is an approach to quality assurance which is used to ensure that the assessment of an individual's competence meets relevant quality standards.
- **Lead Internal Verifier (IV)** of a programme is the appointed person on the programme who is notified to the awarding body, and who organises the internal verification activity on the programme. If the IV is also an assessor, there may be another member(s) of staff who also acts as internal verifier so that the assessments of the Lead IV can be checked. The Lead IV is usually, but not always, the Programme Coordinator of a programme.
- **External verification** is the process used by the awarding body to assure the quality of internal assessment, including internal verification.
- **Feedback** relates to any information, verbal, written, or in any other form, that is given to students relating to their performance.
- **Standardisation** is the process by which assessors ensure that their assessment practice is based on a similar interpretation, understanding and application of stated criteria; and is intended to lead to assessment decisions that are accurate and within agreed tolerances.
- **Academic Misconduct, plagiarism or collusion** relate to attempts to present work that is not the student's own, as if it were.
- **Learning outcomes** are a statement by the awarding body of what needs to be demonstrated by the student to pass a unit.
- **Grading criteria** are the generic descriptors provided by the awarding body for all Higher National Qualifications for the award of Pass, Merit or Distinction grades.
- **Resubmission** is the outcome given to a piece of assessment work which has not met the pass criteria on first submission.
- **Repeat Units** is awarded as a result of failing to achieve a Pass for that unit specification following a Resubmission or non-submission of a piece of work at the first assessment opportunity.
- **Compensation** Compensation can only be granted once the grade decisions have been processed and approved by the Assessment Board. The student must have been given the opportunity of resubmission in the first instance and processed accordingly at the next board. If the student has failed to pass the unit at that stage, they can either repeat the unit or take it as compensation. If a student accepts compensation this should be evidenced in writing and confirmation kept in student records and updated on the Assessment Board minutes and action log.

## Scope

These procedures cover all Higher National Certificate and Higher National Diploma programmes that are delivered by Activate Learning including those that form part of a Higher Apprenticeship. It does not cover those HE programmes that are run under franchise arrangements with a partner HEI, which are subject to the assessment policies, procedures and regulations that operate within the partner HEI.

## Assessments

Activate Learning is committed to ensuring that all students have access to formative and summative assessment, which enables them to reach their full potential of achievement within the qualification they are studying.

Assessment will:

- be carried out against assessment criteria laid down by the awarding body
- be fair and free from discrimination and malpractice
- be in line with relevant awarding body procedures
- be transparent in process
- be undertaken at appropriate intervals throughout the learning programme
- result in timely and constructive feedback to inform the student's learning and encourage improvement
- meet all awarding body requirements and regulations
- allow for appeals against internal assessment decisions
- conform to the Expectations and Practices detailed within the UK Quality Code for Higher Education

In order to achieve the aims of its procedure statement on assessment, Activate Learning will:

### a) On-programme

**Formative assessment** – Assessment with a developmental purpose, designed to help learners learn more effectively by giving them feedback on their performance and how it can be improved and/or maintained. Reflective practice by students sometimes contributes to formative assessment.

- Ensure that students are actively involved throughout the assessment process, so that they are aware of assessment criteria, methods, standards and grading systems and they are given the opportunity to measure themselves against the assessment criteria.
- Ensure that individual learning needs are taken into account throughout the assessment process.
- Ensure that regular self-directed learning is scheduled as appropriate.
- Ensure that regular, formative assessment takes place to enhance and support the learning process
- Ensure that, where formative feedback is verbal, teaching staff make every effort to ensure that the student records the information and guidance received

**Summative assessment** – Used to indicate the extent of a learner's success in meeting the assessment criteria to gauge the intended learning outcomes of a module or course. Typically, within summative assessment, the marks awarded count towards the final mark of the course/module/award.

- Require all teaching staff to issue students with a schedule of summative assessments at the beginning of the programme. Such schedules should be included in the student's programme handbook and published on the VLE. Best practice dictates that summative assessments should take place twice per term as a minimum.
- Require all teaching staff to provide all students with comprehensive details on assessment including assessment criteria and regulations, so that students understand the purpose of assessment and what is expected of them.
- Require all teaching staff to draw up an assessment plan for each unit which should be passed to the Lead Internal Verifier in advance of issue. All such assessment plans should show details of assignments, the coverage of intended learning outcomes, and identify the formative and summative assessment points.
- Ensure that each programme sets deadlines for the submission of summative assessments, in line with this policy and its procedures, and that these are adhered to and students are informed of such rules, particularly those relating to late or non-submission including the opportunity to request an extension.

- Ensure that any use of Accreditation of Prior learning (APL) is carried out within the guidelines laid down by the awarding body (see appendix 7)
- Ensure that students are advised of the assessment appeals procedure (see appendix 3)

#### **b) Post-assessment**

- Require all teaching staff to return marked work, with clear, constructive written feedback and a provisional grade, normally 15 days working days after the summative assessment hand-in date, provided that the student has met the submission deadline.
- Ensure that progression to the next year of a programme will occur only when a student has fulfilled the progression requirements
- Ensure that all teaching staff encourage Higher National students to evaluate and improve their own performance
- Ensure that all teaching staff undertake action planning with students to enable improvements to be made via the use of unit evaluations.

#### **c) Monitoring of assessment**

- Require all teaching staff to seek a reference point for benchmarking assessment either within the programme team or from external sources and to engage in standardisation of assessment with colleagues.
- Monitor and record systematically, using standard systems and pro- formas, the results of the assessment process including the outcomes from internal verification, moderation and standardisation.
- Monitor the quality assurance of assessment.
- Expect all staff to devise procedures for assessing work in such a way as to minimise opportunity for plagiarism, cheating, collusion and bad academic practice. Methods might include:
  - o Changing assignment tasks yearly, or at least on a 2 year cycle
  - o Making less use of generic assignments in favour of tailored assignments
  - o Getting to know the style of students' writing/submissions, early on in the programme
  - o Comparing subsequent work to initial assessment tests
  - o Marking a class/group's coursework on a single occasion, in order to enhance the likelihood of the assessor identifying plagiarised passages.
  - o Making use of packages such as "Turnitin"
  - o Requiring students to upload their assignment via ALO (Activate Learning Online) to enable a secure record to be kept

NB. Plagiarism, cheating, collusion and other examples of academic misconduct, if proved, are grounds for invoking the disciplinary procedure.

- Require programme teams to keep records of past and current student work and marks awarded as required by awarding body, This must be in a secure place which is unavailable to students and backed up in case of fire or elimination if kept electronically for 5 years from the date of registration.
- Require programme teams to have clear guidelines which specify who is allowed to have access to assessment results and to adhere to those guidelines.
- Require all staff involved in the delivery and assessment of Higher National programmes to be aware of and abide by the requirements of the Pearson - Centre guidance: dealing with malpractice.

#### **d) Coursework Deadlines**

- Students will be given an assessment schedule showing the submission dates for all formative and summative assessments. In addition, assignment briefs will contain the dates for submitting work. Prior to the date for final submission of an assessment, it is acceptable for students to receive normal levels of formative feedback in order to assist them in improving performance. However, after the final date for summative assessment of a unit has passed, formative assessment must stop and no alteration or improvements to coursework can be made.
- Programme teams will ensure that there is a reliable process for recording the submission of an assignment for assessment. This may take the form of a physical 'receipt' if students are required to submit hard copies, or preferably students will be required to submit their assignments on-line, which in turn creates an electronic receipt.
- Assessment feedback and provisional grades will be published to the student normally within a maximum of 15 working days from the submission date. Feedback to students will not be delayed due to the late or non-submission of coursework by a minority of students.

- Coursework submitted after the published summative assessment deadline, without mitigating circumstances being approved, will not be assessed. An opportunity to repeat the unit will be provided (including payment of relevant fees), but the unit will be capped at a Pass grade. A unit can only be repeated once. A repeated unit must be clearly recorded on the relevant assessment documentation.
- Only one resubmission is allowed if a student does not achieve a Pass on first submission (same assignment). The reassessment opportunity will be capped at Pass for that unit. A student will not be entitled to be reassessed in any component for which a Pass or higher has already been awarded.
- Students are required to resubmit work within 15 working days of being notified that a resubmission is required. The resubmission must be clearly recorded on the relevant assessment documentation.

#### **e) Requests for Extension and Deferral**

- Activate Learning has a duty in its maintenance of academic standards to ensure that students who take additional time to complete assessments do not have an unfair advantage over others.
- Any student has the right to draw the attention of Activate Learning to personal extenuating circumstances which seriously impair his/her ability to undertake an assessment, and to request an extension to the submission date of an assessment. Requests for an extension to the submission date on grounds of extenuating circumstances may only be made using the procedure outlined in the next paragraph and must be accompanied by verifiable and current third party evidence. No requests for this shall be considered after the deadline for work submission or examination date has passed unless there are valid and exceptional reasons (such as physical incapacity due to a serious accident).
- A short term extension of up to one week from the set deadline can be requested by a student, prior to the set deadline, by completing the online Request for Mitigating Circumstances form which can be found on the programme's ALO page. The Programme Coordinator will make a decision upon receiving the request and notify the student whether the grounds are acceptable or not. If acceptable, the Programme Coordinator will inform the student of the date by which the coursework should be submitted, which should be no longer than one week from the original deadline.
- No capping of grades will take place if coursework is submitted within the extended deadline.
- Where a student requests an extension of between one to five weeks, the student completes the online Request for Mitigating Circumstances form and submits evidence of the circumstances to the HE Liaison Coordinator, who then sends it to the HE Learning Partnerships office (this is done automatically if submitted on-line). The Mitigating Circumstances Panel considers all requests of this type and decides whether the grounds are acceptable and the duration of the extension (up to a maximum of five weeks). The HE Liaison Coordinator then writes to the student informing them of the decision and requesting them to contact the Programme Coordinator for a date to submit the assignment, which must be within the allowed time.
- Where an extension request is not approved, a student may request a meeting with the Programme Coordinator, to explain the decision. If the student is not satisfied with the explanation the student must be provided with a copy of the Complaints Procedure policy document, which is also available on the intranet. The student may then decide to engage with the complaints procedure from Stage 1.
- For longer term deferral requests based on more serious circumstances (long term illness, accident etc), a meeting should ideally be held with the student to try and ascertain the best course of action. If this is not possible, then the Programme Coordinator should write to the student outlining the various options open to them.

## Internal Verification

Activate Learning is committed to providing high quality services for all our learners and clients. The organisation undertakes to meet Pearson BTEC, Office for Students (OfS) and Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) requirements by ensuring, through a process of internal verification, that all students are fairly, accurately and regularly assessed in a consistent manner.

Activate Learning recognises the essential role of the Internal Verifier in the quality assurance process and undertakes to give appropriate support and guidance to Internal Verifiers.

### Role of Programme Coordinators

Programme Coordinators are required to make appropriate arrangements to ensure that:

- All programmes subject to the Internal Verification process operate within the approved framework and criteria whilst also meeting their awarding body requirements,
- Consistency with institution-wide practice & procedures is maintained when carrying out Internal Verification,
- Availability of time to complete internal verification is facilitated. This might be achieved through a variety of methods according to the needs of the programme e.g.
  - o Assessment weeks - as conducted in some areas
  - o Study weeks - as organised by some programmes
  - o Use of non-contact time in negotiation with the line Manager

### Coverage of internal verification on programmes

- The Internal Verification plan should be drawn up using the assessment plan and should show:
  - o Which assessment activities cover which Units/Elements/outcomes etc.
  - o Assessor responsibilities for unit/module etc
  - o IV responsibilities
- Internal Verifiers should follow guidelines given by Edexcel on the amount of internal verification to take place on Higher National programmes. The table below indicates the approach which should be taken.

### Key features of internal verification

WHY IV	HOW TO IV	WHAT TO IV	WHEN TO IV	WHO'S INVOLVED
Quality audit trail	Reviewing of assessment briefs	The assessment schedule and strategy	Annually as part of the review process	Locally appointed internal verifiers
Requirements of centre	Reviewing of assessment decisions	Number of assessments	Assessment briefs before work is distributed to students	External Examiners
Awarding body requirements	Providing commentary/feedback to assessors	All assignment briefs	Assessment decisions after grading and ideally before disclosure of achievement to students	
Maintain academic standards		Selection of assessors		
UK Quality Code		assessment decisions		

Activate Learning recommends an approach of:

- Each unit of the qualification and each assessor should be internally verified twice each year as a minimum, and a sample at random should be taken from the cohort of students on the programme during the course of the year.
- Internal Verification activity should involve verifying assessment plans/tasks/assignments/briefs as well as verifying assessment, decisions, evidence etc.
- Records of Internal Verification should be kept in the Quality or IV file.

- Internal Verification responsibility should be shared amongst suitably qualified members of the team. Where this is not possible, guidance should be sought from the line manager.

## Roles and responsibilities

**Lead Internal Verifier (IV) Role** (This may be the Programme Coordinator or another named person)

Responsible for:

- Standards of Assessment on programme(s)
- Supporting Internal assessors
- Ensuring standardised documentation is used within the programme team
- Submitting IV plans to External Examiner and to Lead IV where appropriate.
- Giving guidance and supporting IV and Assessors, including identification of training needs
- Correct use of documentation by Assessors

Duties

(a) *Before assessment begins:*

- Drawing up IV plan (to cover all Units/Elements, Assessors and the relevant sample of students)
- Ensure all assessment activities undergo IV before being distributed to students so they are;
  - o at right level
  - o clear, complete and consistent
  - o appropriate to the qualification
- Checking grading opportunities are appropriate (if relevant)
- Checking assessment activities for validity, reliability, sufficiency and compliance with awarding body requirements

*NB Assessment activities MUST be planned before the programme begins.*

(b) *During assessment:*

- Sampling assessment standards during programme according to IV plan
- Checking quality of assessment and feedback to students
- Holding standardisation and assessment issue meetings once a term which could be part of a normal team meeting
- Keeping records of IV activities

(c) *After assessment:*

- Sampling assessments for coverage and standards (as per plan)
- Checking recording of Unit achievement – tracking coverage
- Dealing with Awarding Body accreditation procedure

(d) *Throughout:*

- Ensuring compliance with awarding body requirements
- Giving feedback to assessors
- Guiding assessors
- Identifying training needs of assessors
- Keeping records of IV activities
- Carrying out any action points identified by the External Examiner

Below is an example of an assessment and internal verification schedule for a unit from an HNC in Electrical Engineering. However, this template could easily be adapted to suit other programmes.

Date	Unit N° & Title / Assignment N° & Title	Learning Outcome	Hand out Date	Hand in Date	Summative Assessment Date	IV Sampling Date	Assessor Name	IV Name
10/02/14	<b>Assignment 1</b> Case study 1: Engineering analysis, modelling and problem solving: algebraic methods and calculus	LO1,2,3	10/02/14	12/04/14	12/04/14	20/04/14	D. Smith	R. Brown

Date	Unit N° & Title / Assignment N° & Title	Learning Outcome	Hand out Date	Hand in Date	Summative Assessment Date	IV Sampling Date	Assessor Name	IV Name
20/04/14	<b>Assignment 2</b> Case study 2: Engineering analysis modelling and problem solving: statistics and probability	LO4	20/04/14	25/05/14	25/05/14	06/06/14	D. Smith	J. Davey
18/06/14								
	Programme Coordinator Signature:						Date:	

**Internal Verifier (IV) Role** (The IV team should consist of all those involved in assessment on the programme)

Responsible for:

- Standards of assessment on the programme
- Ensuring standardised documentation is used by assessor(s)
- Giving guidance and feedback to assessor(s), where needed
- Correct use of documentation by assessor(s)

Duties

(a) *Before assessment begins:*

- Undertake IV of assignment briefs before being distributed to students so they are;
  - o at right level
  - o clear, complete and consistent
  - o appropriate to the qualification
- Checking grading opportunities are appropriate (if relevant)
- Checking assessment activities for validity, reliability, sufficiency and compliance with awarding body requirements

*NB Assessment activities MUST be planned before the programme begins.*

(b) *During assessment:*

- Sampling assessment standards during programme according to IV plan
- Checking quality of assessment and feedback to students