Assessment and Feedback Policy

2021-2022

1.   Overview

The policy establishes principles, processes and good practice in all aspects of the management of student assessment.

2.   Scope

The intended audience for the policy is academic and learning support staff, including those involved in the design, approval and review of courses. The policy is also made available to students. Whilst the majority of ESTYA International Education courses are subject to the provisions of this policy; some courses, primarily related to the requirements of professional, statutory or regulatory bodies, may operate with approved variations to assessment regulations or policy. In such cases, the specific arrangements will be clearly set out in the Programme Specification and Course Handbook and approved through the normal course approval processes.

3.   Purpose

The policy provides a comprehensive statement of the principles and processes that govern the design and management of student assessment within ESTYA International Education. It is, therefore, an essential reference point for course teams, particularly in relation to the design of assessment strategies at course and module level, and the quality assurance of assessment from the approval of items of assessment through to the marking, standardisation and moderation of student work. The policy indicates those matters where responsibility is devolved to course teams – usually within a framework of minimum requirements, and those matters where ESTYA International Education determined policy and processes apply.

4. Principles of Assessments and Feedback

Assessment is an integral part of the curriculum design process, underpinning holistic and authentic learning experiences at module and course level:

- A holistic consideration of assessment and feedback enables consistency, enhances engagement and promotes student motivation;
- Authentic and sustainable assessment and feedback means that assessment is grounded in the real world and this best prepares students to meet their future learning needs;
- Assessment and feedback supports students to make transitions at differing stages of their educational and work experiences, this encourages learner autonomy and resilience for learning and assessment;
- Assessment design considers item validity and reliability and ensures alignment with the intended learning outcomes, the learning activities and the level of study;
- Module assessment methods allow for summative assessment of each intended learning outcome.
- Assessment and feedback are an essential part in developing students' learning:

- Students and teaching teams are partners in the learning, assessment and feedback process and need to engage in a dialogue about these processes;
- Assessment processes must be made accessible, explicit and transparent for students;
- Appropriate use of peer and self-assessment strategies support students to make judgments about their own and others' work;
- Students require opportunities to discuss their assessments and feedback with the module teaching team;
- Feedback is most effective when it is accessible, constructive and timely.

5. Understanding Academic Requirements

- Opportunities to practice and develop assessment literacy are built into module and course development;
- The development of feedback literacy allows students to understand, make judgments about and use feedback effectively;
- Staff involved in the assessment processes require appropriate experience and professional development, promoting student confidence in the process and standards of assessment;
- Assessment and feedback should be fair, transparent, and consistent promoting student trust in the process;
- Annual evaluation processes provide opportunities to monitor assessment and feedback processes.

6. Choice of Assessment Opportunities

- Assessment will be equitable, acknowledging every student learns differently;
- A diversity of assessment methods, co-ordinated at a course level, provides flexibility and choice, promotes inclusivity and removes barriers to achievement;
- Assessment methods and feedback processes must provide opportunity for students to consolidate and master the skills of assessment.

6.1 Formative and Summative Assessment Strategies

A) Formative Assessments

Any task or activity that creates feedback (or feedforward) for students about their learning. It has a developmental purpose and does not carry a grade which is subsequently used for summative purposes.

All courses should have an assessment strategy that includes provision for formative assessments, and all modules/units/course elements should include opportunities for formative assessment

Formative assessments do not carry a grade contributing to the final mark or grade for the module; their primary purpose is to improve the learning of students.

Formative assessment can include peer-assessment and self-assessment as well as tutor-assessment and may include evaluation of the effectiveness of the learning process carried out while the module is in progress.

B) Summative Assessment:

Summative assessment is any assessment that contributes to the final grade/mark of a module or course to provide a measure of student achievement in relation to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

C) Assessment as Learning

Assessment enables students to learn about themselves as learners, reflecting on their learning experiences. This is particularly valuable when learning is authentic and when dialogue emerges from formative stages of the assessment process.

Assessment for learning

Assessment should engage students in valuable and positive learning.

Assessment of learning

- Assessment experiences provide a balance of formative (developmental) and summative (formal) opportunities;
- Formative and summative assessments are scheduled in a reasonable and balanced manner ensuring assessment is manageable for students and staff;
- Assessment provides a valid and reliable representation of student achievement and competencies;
- An annual assessment calendar provides an overview of the differing assessment types and weighting;
- Assessment outcomes provide an important indicator of the effectiveness of the course, the curriculum and approaches to learning and teaching in meeting the aims and learning outcomes of the course.

7. Assessment Scheduling

- Each module/unit of a course will specify the summative assessment items, together with any specific requirements for passing the modules (e.g., requirement to obtain a pass grade in each assessment item) in the module specification, as set out below. The assessment details for each module will be subject to formal approval.

- o Assessment Item
- o Indicative word count
- o Learning outcomes to be assessed

- In determining the assessment for a module, consideration must be taken in relation to the assessment loading, design, and schedule for the course as a whole;

- Where courses utilise end-of-course/module/unit formal examinations as a part of their assessment strategies, such examinations should follow the schedules given by regulated bodies;

- Where courses utilise 'within module' or 'in class' tests, the arrangements for the organisation and management of such assessments must ensure the assessment is conducted with rigour, probity and fairness and with due regard to security. This will mean consideration of:

  - arrangements for disabled students;
  - arrangements for preparation and verification of the test papers/activities and associated security at all stages;
  - arrangements for students with mitigating circumstances, for example who may not be able to attend the assessment;
  - arrangements for recording results;
  - in the case of multiple choice tests, determination of the pass mark.

- Course teams should keep under review the assessment loading on students across modules within a level to try to avoid unnecessary 'bunching' of hand-in dates. Hand-in dates should normally be set within semester/term dates taking account of designated assessment weeks, and examination dates where relevant;

- Course teams should agree protocols for when and where course work assignments will be published (e.g., at the start of the module via the module outline, or x weeks in advance of the submission deadline via the VLE). Students should also be provided with a calendar or schedule of submission and feedback dates for assignments.

8. Feedback to Students and Return of Student Assessments

- Effective and timely feedback (i.e., commentary on performance identifying strengths and ways in which improvements could be made with an emphasis student learning for future assessments) should be given to students for all formative and summative assessments, including examinations;

- Timely feedback means that students should have feedback on one assignment before they submit the next assignment, and feedback on summative assignments should be provided electronically within 20 working days;

- In addition to the written or oral feedback provided to individual students on their work, other types of feedback include, but are not limited to:
  - model answers
  - generic written or oral feedback
  - peer feedback
  - discussion of exemplars.

- Where appropriate, feedback may be given in advance of the return of individual assessment items to students. Staff are particularly encouraged to use generic forms of feedback in class or via other media, where appropriate, to ensure students receive speedy feedback whilst assessments are still fresh in their mind;

- Feedback to students on their assessments should:
  - promote learning, and enable students to improve their performance in subsequent assessments, by indicating areas for improvement and/or setting specific targets or goals for improvement;
  - be clearly linked to learning outcomes and assessment criteria;
  - provide the students with an understanding of the way in which their grade was derived and their relative success in meeting the learning outcomes;
  - iv. be based on a consistent course team approach to providing assessment feedback to students ;
  - be provided electronically.

- The details of all assessment items should be included in module outlines, together with the deadline for submission and the date by which students will be able to access feedback and/or collect the marked assessment item;

- In normal circumstances assessment items should be marked, internally moderated, and returned to students with personalised feedback within twenty working days of the date of submission. Where, for valid reasons, this cannot be achieved, the member of staff concerned should consult with the course leader and inform the students affected of the delay and the revised date of return;

- Staff should enter grades for marked assessment items onto the student record system within the twenty working days turnaround period;

- Feedback on performance in examinations should be provided for students. Additionally, and/or alternatively students may be offered the opportunity to discuss their examination scripts and receive personal feedback. With the exception of multiple-choice examinations and tests where questions are drawn from a question bank, students are entitled to see their marked examination script; however, this remains the property of ESTYA. The arrangements for providing feedback on examinations should be specified in the module outline.

9. Assessment Briefs and Assessment Criteria

▪ Students must be provided with written assessment guidelines describing the nature of the task, the format for presentation and the assessment criteria for all items of assessment. This normally takes the form of an assessment (or assignment) brief and provides clear information for students on what they are expected to do, how they are expected to go about it, and how their work will be marked;

▪ Assessment briefs should include:
  o an explanation of how the particular item of assessment relates to the learning outcomes and skills requirements of the module;
  o any specific constraints or requirements, e.g., word limits, and the need for good academic practice, e.g., referencing of sources;
  o assessment criteria - the basis upon which the quality of a student's work will be graded;
  o details of any marking scheme (if used) and/or grade descriptors v. submission procedures and deadlines, and the consequences of late, incomplete or non-submission;

▪ Assessment criteria can be specified at different levels: for example, criteria can be set for each individual item of assessment, for each type of assessment (e.g., essays, laboratory reports, presentations), for each module, or they can be set at the level of the discipline (although in such cases it is usual to establish specific criteria for individual assessments also). There is no right approach to establishing assessment criteria and a variety of approaches are acceptable; however, course/subject teams should have a consistent approach to assessment criteria, for example whether they are specified at the assignment or module level and how they are presented to students;

▪ In establishing assessment criteria, course teams should ensure they are benchmarked to the Campus's grade descriptors, and subject benchmark statements as appropriate;

▪ Assessment criteria should be subject to internal verification in order to assure academic standards;

▪ Assessment criteria should be discussed with students, and feedback to students on their assessments should be informed by assessment criteria.

10. Reassessment

▪ Students should be given guidance about the completion of reassessments alongside undertaking study for new modules;

- This guidance establishes principles for dealing with the situation where students are required to re-take modules, but the module is no longer running, so that students, partner institutions and course/staff teams are clear about the action to be taken, and decisions can be made on an equitable and transparent basis;

- It should be remembered that within the regulations, students may be required to re-take modules because they have failed two assessment opportunities, because they have failed to submit assessments or not met the attendance requirements of the module, or alternatively because they have submitted a successful claim of mitigating circumstances.