



University
of Glasgow

Assessment Policy

**(approved by Senate on 3 February 2011)
(Section 11 added following approval at Senate on 2 June 2011)**

Assessment Policy for the University of Glasgow

1. Overview

- 1.1 This assessment policy provides information on the ways in which the University of Glasgow undertakes to assess its students, and the principles which underpin these. Assessment is the property of all stakeholders in the educational process. These include the state as funder of much of the process, higher education managers, consumers who as end users benefit from graduate skills, employers and validating professional agencies, all of whom have interacting interests with academics and students. This policy outlines the roles and responsibilities that inform assessment practices in this institution.
- 1.2 In some areas of assessment practice, the principles which shape the policy are translated into regulations. These regulations are contained in the Code of Assessment which is published in the University Calendar [<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/senateoffice/policies/calendar/>] and reproduced with explanatory notes and examples in the Guide to the Code of Assessment [<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/senateoffice/policies/assessment/codeofassessment/guide/>]. The assessment regulations which are gathered in the Code of Assessment are principally concerned with maintaining academic standards while ensuring fairness, consistency and transparency through the process leading to the award of degrees and other qualifications. The Code and Guide should be read in conjunction with this policy.
- 1.3 Standards are adhered to, through the design of our curricula according to Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework and QAA Subject Benchmark statements. These standards are then maintained through a range of monitoring processes, for example at Learning and Teaching Committees, Annual Monitoring Reports, Reviews of Programmes of Teaching Learning and Assessment and ultimately Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR) and by using a range of stakeholders, such as external examiners and accrediting bodies.

2. Underlying principles

- 2.1 In addition to being enshrined in regulations, the University believes that assessment should be:
 - Fair and equitable
 - Reliable
 - Valid
 - Evidence-informed
 - Academically defensible
- 2.2 In addition, the University believes that assessment processes should
 - Maintain standards
 - Provide feedback on learning
 - Report performance against the intended learning outcomes
 - Be regularly evaluated (with feedback from staff, students and others)
 - Demonstrate progression
 - Develop self-regulation in learning
 - Recognise the value of technology to provide enhancements to the assessment process, where appropriate.

3. The Policy

- 3.1 At the heart of assessment policy is the design of assessment, in terms of where, when, how and by whom assessment and feedback occurs within a course, and how these relate to course and programme intended learning outcomes (ILOs). Design processes can be supported by the University's guidance document: Course and Programme Design [<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/leads/goodpractice/coursedesign/>]. Assessment design necessarily includes evaluation and monitoring at course and programme level.
- 3.2 Programmes are designed such that students are given an opportunity to develop aptitudes for, and be assessed on, learning outcomes that have been defined for the programme they are undertaking. Assessment tasks in courses are designed to assess one or more of the course learning outcomes, and are regularly evaluated to determine that the task is appropriate. The assessment in courses reflects a balance of formative and summative requirements in that students must be guided in their learning as well as being given information on ways in which they can improve their attainment. There must also be clear development of, and information about, progression through the programme of study, in terms of both attainment and demonstration of skills and attributes.
- 3.3 The University of Glasgow welcomes innovation in assessment that demonstrably serves and adds value to the Intended Learning Outcomes of the course. Innovation in the tools and techniques of assessment can enhance the student learning experience, open up particular areas of the curriculum, and ensure a better match with subject and discipline benchmarks.
- 3.4 Assessment should be designed with a view to student progress, both in terms of subject knowledge and in terms of skills and attributes. The assessment design should indicate a progression over time and from formative assessment to summative assessment, through courses and across programmes. A focus on student progress requires that assessment is understood as being part of the learning process, as well as a summative endeavour, as described below:
- assessment **of** learning is essentially summative and is evidenced in the assessment of the knowledge, skills and disposition/abilities of a learner
 - assessment **for** learning relates to providing formative feedback on performance which will aid further learning
 - assessment **as** learning can be defined as students engaging in self assessment with the gathering and interpretation of evidence to inform and plan future personal learning strategies, and the development of students as self-regulated learners.
- 3.5 The transition from assessment of learning to assessment as learning reflects a commitment to placing student learning at the centre of assessment design. Students are encouraged to see their own role in assessment as one of active engagement, rather than passive response. Given the increased level of technology available to, and used by our students, the University of Glasgow believes that the use of appropriate technologies will enhance student engagement in the assessment process.

4. Choosing assessment methods and approaches

- 4.1 Assessment can have a number of purposes and these are communicated fully to students, staff and others, including professional bodies. In a context in which assessment is for learning, students are given directions on how to approach their assessment tasks, as well as the ways in which they should engage with the feedback that is provided.

4.2 Decisions about the assessment tasks to choose take into account:

- Fitness for purpose
- Competency standards
- Developing graduate attributes
- Professional frameworks
- Matching subject and discipline benchmarks
- The degree to which the task can provide formative feedback and encourage student self-reflection

5. Mapping of ILOs and assessment over courses and programmes

5.1 Intended learning outcomes for programmes and courses encompass development of knowledge, intellectual skills and transferable or key skills. Assessment of the attainment of intended learning outcomes must align constructively with published course aims. The relationship between outcomes and the selection of test items must ensure consistent, fair and transparent sampling of course material, including directed self study materials in addition to that which is transmitted by staff. This is especially pertinent to practice-based disciplines, where there are links to professional accrediting bodies, but is important across all disciplines.

5.2 There must be a range of assessment tasks to reflect the variety of skills that are required to be assessed across programmes. It is expected that some assessment may be designed to define a threshold level of attainment but there will be others that reveal evidence of progression. The important requirements are that:

1. skills are embedded in the curriculum.
2. skills are supported by formative assessment, but contribute to summative outcomes.
3. skills are developmental (i.e. built over the course of the degree programme).
4. skills are conceptualised in a general and strategic, rather than narrow and specific, manner (i.e. an example might be the ability to identify and develop proficiency in an appropriate range of software applications, rather than high level skills in one specific software application. Obviously, the former encompasses the latter).
5. students are encouraged (and supported) to identify and reflect on the skill elements or achievements of particular courses or programmes.
6. the structure of the assessment scheme for any course (or programme) must ensure that the ILOs for the course (or programme) are adequately assessed.
7. workload requirements must also relate to credit rating and level of course, though there is no assumption of formulaic relationships between these elements.

6. Assessment criteria

6.1 A key feature of assessment is the criteria against which pieces of work are assessed. An understanding of these criteria must be shared by all markers as well as by the students. Feedback must relate to these criteria, and students should be invited to self-assess against the criteria before submitting work. The relevant information is contained in the Code of Assessment which is published in the University Calendar [<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/senateoffice/policies/calendar/>].

7. Feedback

7.1 Feedback is most helpful when it provides information on a student's learning and how they can improve. Students also have a part to play in this, in terms of reading the

feedback in conjunction with the assessment criteria, to determine the areas in which they can improve.

7.2 Feedback can be derived from many sources, staff, peers, self and others such as employers, and may be given in written or oral form, whether formally in a one-to-one meeting, or more informally in a tutorial session. Some key issues as regards feedback are that:

- Feedback must relate to the criteria that have been used in the assessment.
- Staff should be explicit about the time it takes to give good quality feedback. Students must be informed when they are likely to receive feedback and in what format. The feedback on coursework should be prompt and normally within 15 working days, with the expected date communicated to students. Any changes to the timetable for feedback must be communicated to students promptly. The University's Learning & Teaching Committee has developed a policy on feedback provided to students following summative examinations (https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_383677_en.pdf). The provision of individual feedback to all students after exams is not expected to be the norm. However, the policy requires each School and Research Institute to establish a series of minimum standards of feedback on summative examinations to be applied to all courses for which it is responsible.
- Students are expected to read and analyse the feedback in terms of what it says about their learning on the course, and be given the opportunity to discuss feedback with the assessor.
- The format should be chosen to maximise student engagement with the process. Technologies should be considered in this context.

7.3 Self assessment is useful in informing students' learning behaviours and in developing the skills needed for the final summative assessment. This process can be formalised by:

- Designing self assessment to be similar in scope and standards to final assessment
- Providing feedback of self assessment outcomes (for example a student has to know what level of attainment indicates good progress)
- Engaging students in the design of at least the self assessment process if not the final assessment task
- Documenting self assessment procedures in the formal approval of courses
- Ensuring in course design a schedule of progressive self assessment tasks
- Using peer assessment to allow students to see and evaluate the work of others.

8. Providing information about assessment

8.1 The modes of assessment must be clearly conveyed through course materials and through discussions between students and their teachers. This information must be conveyed in pre-course material, so that students can make choices about the assessment which suits their particular learning needs. However, to ensure that programme intended learning outcomes are assessed there must necessarily be a limit to the extent of the choices that can be made.

8.2 Staff can encourage good academic practice in assessment through good assessment design. Students also have a responsibility to ensure that they understand the rules and regulations relating to academic conduct in assessment. In this regard, students are referred to University information regarding plagiarism, to be found on the university

website: <https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/leads/students/plagiarism/> in addition to information provided by their School or Subject.

8.3 It is important to convey the expectations for the assessment task and provide resources (discussion or web-based) to support students to understand the standards that are expected for particular assignments. This may take the form of an extended version of the descriptors contained in the Code of Assessment to define standards relating to particular assessment types. Alternatively, the provision of exemplars of work can help students to understand the standards required for their work. In addition, students should be made aware of the Guide to Students on Understanding the Marking system [https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_106264_en.pdf]

8.4 Communicating the developmental approach to the assessment of skills and knowledge, is of fundamental importance, to indicate to students, staff and others the standards and requirements at different levels.

9. Additional requirements for the award of credit

9.1 It is possible to include additional requirements in courses requiring students to, for example, attend a fieldcourse or complete a series of exercises. These additional requirements will be linked to the aims, ILOs and mode of delivery of the course.

10. The concept of competence

10.1 The University of Glasgow's definition and concept of competence is based around the skills, knowledge and attributes of an individual that enable them to be fit for practice within a particular vocational discipline. Assessment of student performance that certifies competence must therefore authentically reflect the expected behaviours of individual professions. These behaviours are published by both professional organisations and their statutory regulatory bodies at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Schedule B of the Code of Assessment should be used for the assessment of competence.

11. Treatment of Assessment from Study Abroad

11.1 Increasing student mobility is a strategic priority for the University in the context of a significantly increased focus on internationalisation. The benefits of spending some time studying abroad to the students themselves are clear and well accepted. One of the challenges for the University associated with student mobility is determining how to treat marks, grades and credits for assessments completed during study abroad. A short-life working group² was established with a remit to develop fair and transparent procedures for dealing with this. The group reported the range of current practice across the sector and within the University and noted significant variation. They concluded that a single conversion scheme would be unworkable and agreed the following set of principles³ to promote fair and transparent process and reassure students considering study abroad. It is intended that these principles will be applied by programme leaders, or those best placed to determine appropriate arrangements for a particular programme, when

¹ Also available via the senate office page for assessment guidance

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/senateoffice/policies/assessment/codeofassessment/guide/>.

² The Treatment of Assessment from Study Abroad Working Group was chaired by Professor Jill Morrison, Dean of Learning & Teaching for the College of Medical, Veterinary & Life Sciences.

³ The principles were discussed and approved at Learning and Teaching Committee on 19 April 2011, Education Policy & Strategy Committee on 3 May 2011 and Senate on 2 June 2011.

considering potential host institutions and programmes, and when dealing with assessment outcomes from periods of study abroad.

The principles

- 11.2 The overarching principle is fairness to students, whether they study abroad or at home, while encouraging mobility.
- i. School and subject coordinators or committees that have responsibility for arranging periods of study abroad should obtain as much information as possible about the course content and assessment processes in the host institution, before students go there, to judge comparability of their marks, grades or credits with those awarded in Glasgow.
 - ii. There should be clarity and transparency about how an assessment during a period of study abroad is treated.
 - iii. Students should be informed, in advance of choosing a course of study abroad, how their marks, grades or credits will be treated when they return to the University of Glasgow. Students should also be encouraged to find out for themselves as much as they can about study and assessment in a host institution they intend to visit, including the availability of any support services they might require.
 - iv. Systems of translation should be developed at programme level and these should be approved at programme or School level before students undertake a period of study abroad. It is the responsibility of programme boards/committees to apply the system of translation and periodically review it to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose.
 - v. Information about these systems of translation should be included in the minutes of Boards of Examiners meetings. Reports about agreed processes should also be forwarded to College Learning and Teaching Committees to ensure consistency of approach across the College.
 - vi. No assessments undertaken abroad will be marked again by assessors in the University of Glasgow.
 - vii. Students should receive full recognition at the appropriate level for an assessment undertaken during a period of study abroad.
 - viii. Exam Boards will continue to exercise their judgment in discretionary cases.

12. Summary Table

| Aspects | Staff | Students |
|----------------|--|--|
| Design | - design valid assessment tasks that assess achievement of the stated intended learning outcomes | clarify understanding of intended learning outcomes and purposes of assessment |
| Administration | - provide clear information about assessment demands - set clear and reasonable timelines - provide results and feedback in a timely manner, normally within 15 working days | adopt good academic conduct in respect of assessment and make themselves aware of responsibilities and adhere to timelines |
| Judgement | - make sound judgements consistently based on evidence presented against the stated criteria | clarify understanding of criteria and use to inform learning |
| Feedback | - provide constructive feedback that delineates what was achieved and what can be achieved | review and use feedback in future learning |
| Review | - monitor and evaluate assessment processes - contribute to reviews on assessment and learning | provide constructive feedback to staff on experiences |