

## FRAMEWORK AND REGULATIONS FOR HIGHER NATIONAL AWARDS

### Introduction

1. The following paragraphs provide assessment regulations for BTEC Higher National awards delivered by the University of Suffolk Partner Colleges and awarded by Pearson. The two awards covered by these regulations are:

- Higher National Certificate
- Higher National Diploma

2. All Pearson BTEC Higher National courses will be delivered and assessed in accordance with the guidance and regulations set out by Pearson and published on their website (<http://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/btec-higher-nationals/about.html>). Key documents to refer to include the UK Guide to Quality and Assessment and the Specification for each named award.

3. Courses are managed by Course Committees constituted within the terms of reference of the *Management of Courses Policy*, which also defines the role and responsibilities of course leaders, module tutors, and personal tutors.

4. Course delivery and planning should be undertaken in accordance with the *Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework*.

5. Where work-based or placement learning is an integral part of a course, and unless otherwise stated in the course documentation, the University of Suffolk shall not be responsible for securing a work placement or work-related experience for students. Such arrangements should operate in accordance with the *Work-Based and Placement Learning Framework*.

6. These regulations apply to all Higher National courses offered by the University of Suffolk Partner Colleges. Any exceptional exemptions or variations to these regulations for individual courses (for example to meet the requirements of Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) in relation to assessment) are subject to approval by the Quality Committee, via the submission of a variation request form. A central record of all approved variations is maintained by Registry Services and published as an annex to these regulations.

## Registration

7. All students enrolled on a BTEC Higher National Certificate (HNC) or Higher National Diploma (HND) course which is delivered by a University of Suffolk Partner College will be registered by the college for the relevant award with Pearson.

## Unit selection

8. Within BTEC Higher National awards, course structures are specified in terms of units. The units that can be taken to achieve each award are set out in the relevant Pearson BTEC Programme Specification.

9. The units that will be offered to the University of Suffolk Partner College students will be specified within the student course handbook and the Definitive Record for that course.

10. Normally, a student who is registered for a unit and wishes to transfer to another unit may do so at any time up to the end of the second week of the commencement of delivery of the unit, subject to the agreement of the unit leaders concerned and provided that the alternative unit forms part of the relevant Programme Specification. A student who is registered for a unit and completes a unit withdrawal form, with appropriate approval, by the end of week two of delivery will be deemed not to have attempted the unit for the purposes of this regulatory framework. Students who fail to complete a unit withdrawal form within this timescale will remain registered on the unit. In this case, failure to submit coursework assessments or to sit examinations will normally constitute failure in the unit, unless extenuating circumstances are approved in accordance with the *Extenuating Circumstances Policy*.

## Credit requirements for achievement of awards

11. Specific credit requirements for each award are set out in the relevant Pearson BTEC Programme Specification. The minimum amount and level of credit that must be successfully achieved for an award to be granted is outlined below.

Award	Credit requirement
Higher National Certificate (HNC)	To have completed study of 120 credits at Level 4 or above and to have achieved at least a pass in 105 credits
Higher National Diploma (HND)	To have completed study of 120 credits at Level 4 and 120 credits at Level 5, and to have achieved at least a pass in 105 credits at each level.

In addition to meeting these credit requirements, students are required to pass all units designated as 'Mandatory Core' within the relevant Programme Specification in order to be eligible for the award.

12. Students must not accumulate credit in excess of that required to achieve their intended award, except where required as a consequence of a course change or similar circumstance approved by the Course Leader.

### Assessment of individual units

13. Assessment shall be undertaken in accordance with Pearson expectations, including the use of Pearson-set assignments as specified for each individual course. Course teams should also operate in accordance with the University's *Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework* and related policies (including *Academic Appeals*, *Academic Misconduct*, *Assessment Board Procedure*, *Assessment Moderation*, *Extenuating Circumstances*, *Preparation and Conduct of Examinations*, and *Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)*) which shall be amended from time to time.

14. The methods of assessment will be in accordance with demonstrating the achievement of all intended learning outcomes for a unit. Each unit shall normally be assessed by one of the following methods:

- (a) wholly by coursework
- (b) wholly by examination
- (c) by project or by dissertation or by research activity
- (d) by combinations of the above.

### Grading of units

15. Each unit will be awarded an overall grade as outlined in table 1 below.

**Table 1: Unit Grading for Higher National Awards**

Grade	Description
D	Distinction
M	Merit
P	Pass
Refer	Submitted work not pass standard
NWS	No work submitted
Defer	Submission of work deferred because of approved extenuating circumstances

16. Each component of summative assessment (i.e. assessment used to indicate the extent of a student's success in achieving the intended learning outcomes of the unit) will be assessed in order to determine whether the student has achieved all allocated outcomes against the specified assessment criteria. A grade of pass or above is only awarded if **all** outcomes have been achieved.

17. Each unit will provide students with opportunities to demonstrate the relevant merit and distinction grade descriptors at first attempt. To be awarded a merit for a unit overall, a student must be eligible for a pass as set out above, and have achieved all the merit grade descriptors. To be awarded a distinction for a unit overall, a student must be eligible for a pass as set out above, and have achieved all the distinction grade descriptors.

18. Where students have passed a unit, they cannot re-take it in an attempt to achieve a higher grade.

#### **Non-completion of assessment (leading to referral and reassessment)**

19. Students must submit all work for summative assessment by the notified deadline. Failure to submit work by the deadline without valid reason (i.e. without having requested and been granted an extension to the deadline or having presented acceptable extenuating circumstances under the terms of the *Extenuating Circumstances Policy*) will result in the term NWS (no work submitted) being recorded for the relevant component of assessment and will result in referral in the unit overall.

20. Where students, in the opinion of the Assessment Board, fail to attend an examination without demonstrating a valid reason in accordance with the terms of the *Extenuating Circumstances Policy*, the term NWS (no work submitted) will be recorded for the relevant component of assessment and will result in referral in the unit overall.

21. In both cases (non-completion of coursework or non-attendance at examinations), the student will have the opportunity to be reassessed once only in the components not completed. In such cases, for coursework this reassessment will be for the same assignment brief, whilst in the case of examinations this will be for a different examination than employed for the first attempt.

#### **Failure to pass a unit (leading to referral and reassessment)**

22. Where a student submits work but fails to achieve all associated learning outcomes, the overall unit outcome will be recorded as a referral and the student will have the opportunity to be

reassessed once only in those components of assessment not passed. The overall unit grade will be capped at Pass.

23. Opportunities to demonstrate distinction and merit grade descriptors will not be provided through the reassessment process.

#### **Failure in a unit (after a reassessment opportunity)**

24. If, after the reassessment opportunity, the student does not achieve all associated learning outcomes, the student will be deemed to have failed the unit. In such circumstances, the relevant Assessment Board would normally permit the student to retake the unit with attendance one further time, subject to the student having demonstrated sufficient engagement with their studies. In such cases, the overall unit grade will be capped at a Pass.

#### **Deferral in a unit**

25. Consideration of deferral cases is undertaken in accordance with the *Extenuating Circumstances Policy*.

26. If the Extenuating Circumstances Panel deems that a student has presented acceptable evidence of extenuating circumstances in relation to one or more components of assessment, those components of assessment will be deemed “deferred” and the student will be given the opportunity to present (or re-present) those assessment(s) without penalty (i.e. the same range of grades will be available). The relevant Assessment Board will determine the timescale for presentation/re-presentation of the component(s) in question.

27. If a student is submitting a referred piece of work but extenuating circumstances are presented and accepted by the Extenuating Circumstances Panel, the student will be given a further opportunity to re-present the assessment, under the terms of the original referral.

28. Continuation or repetition of deferral status will be considered only if the relevant Assessment Board is advised by the Extenuating Circumstances Panel that it has received what it deems to be further acceptable evidence of extenuating circumstances.

#### **Notification of results**

29. An Assessment Board will be constituted in accordance with the *Assessment Board Procedure* for each course (or cognate set of courses as agreed with the Academic Registrar). The purpose of such Boards will be to consider and determine the unit grades of all candidates and recommendations for final awards. Schedules for Assessment Boards will be published to students along with dates for results publication.

30. In line with the good practice of providing timely feedback to students, the provisional outcomes of marked and moderated assessment may be given to students before the Assessment Board has formally approved results. Such feedback must be clearly identified as subject to final ratification by the Assessment Board, and therefore subject to potential amendment by the Board.

31. The early release of unratified marks is to facilitate an early opportunity for students to begin to address referred work that will need to be redeemed after the Assessment Board has ratified the result. It is not an opportunity for students to resubmit referred work as a first attempt before the Board ratifies the mark.

32. The results agreed by the Assessment Board will be reported to Pearson in a timely manner.

### **Qualification Grade**

33. HNC and HND awards may be made 'with merit' or 'with distinction', the criteria for which is set out in the relevant Pearson BTEC Programme Specification. The overall qualification grade will be determined by Pearson.

### **Academic appeals**

34. Students have a right to appeal against decisions of the Assessment Board in accordance with the *Academic Appeals Policy* which is available, together with appeal forms, on MySuffolk.

35. Any appeal should be made within fifteen working days of the date of written publication of results by the relevant Assessment Board.

### **Academic misconduct**

36. Allegations of academic misconduct, including cheating and plagiarism, will be dealt with as outlined in the *Academic Misconduct Policy*. In the first instance, all allegations will be reported to the Academic Registrar. In cases where investigations into allegations of academic misconduct are ongoing, Assessment Boards will record a deferred decision (DD) grade in respect of any component grades implicated in the allegations, and in respect of the units which the component(s) form part.