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Introduction

In any module, students should be provided with both formative and summative assessment opportunities:

- **Formative assessment** is student work that, while it may be marked in some way, does not contribute to the student’s final module mark. It is intended to prepare students for summative assessment.

- **Summative assessment** is student work that does contribute to the student’s final module mark. Wherever practical, such work should be subject to anonymous marking, with student work identified only by their student ID number.

Setting effective assessment is far from a simple task. The expectations, desires and workloads of the students who will be doing the work, and the teaching staff who will set or mark the work, all need to be considered. The module learning outcomes to be assessed and the overarching assessment strategy for the course (as outlined in the validation documents) must be adhered to. Module teams are encouraged to explore the University’s Assessment and Feedback Framework in order to inform their approach.

This guidance document explores issues involved with the setting of assessments, and the formal assessment processes that module teams are required to follow.

Validated module specification and making changes

For each module, there should be a module specification which describes:

- the nature of the assessments to be used within the module
- the weightings of each assessment component in relation to the module’s total assessment
- indications of the expected length of student submissions (word count, presentation length, etc)
- whether each assessment component is core or non-core (noting that where students marginally fail non-core components, they may be eligible for in-module compensation in order to pass the module overall, in accordance with the requirements in the Framework and Regulations for the relevant type of award).

This information on module assessment is approved at the point of course validation or course re-approval. Where the module leader, in agreement with the course team, identifies a need to change the validated assessment strategy, this is possible. However, such a change will require the completion and approval of a course modification form, in accordance with the University’s procedure for the approval of changes to existing courses. As part of this process, students and the external examiner for the course should be consulted. Only once the approval process has been completed can any changes be communicated to students or implemented in University systems. Sufficient time should therefore be allowed to complete the process before the module is next delivered.
Designing assessment tasks

A module’s assessment activity should be integrated into the teaching and learning of the module, rather than being viewed as an independent part of the students’ experience. Consequently, the design of assessment tasks should be undertaken in conjunction with the planning of the module’s delivery.

In the majority of situations, the module will have been run before. While blindly repeating the previous year’s assignments is not a good approach, it is likely that the experience of running the assessment task will be useful in appraising the best approach for the current delivery of the module. Consequently, where time and opportunity allows, opinions of previous assessment tasks could be sought from previous module tutors, students, external examiner reports and module evaluations. It can also be helpful to analyse student results for the module. Based on all this evidence, it may be judged appropriate to repeat previous assessment tasks, or to adapt them in light of the feedback.

If a decision is made to repeat the assessment, you should consider how this might open out the potential for student plagiarism or collusion and how you might mitigate against this (for example by changing the assessment case study or refocusing a deliverable).

Proposing new assessment strategies

Where there are no previous assessment strategies to employ, or where previous strategies are deemed inappropriate, a new approach will need to be developed (within the limitations set by the validated module specification unless you decide to submit a request for course modification).

The following factors should be taken into consideration when devising the assessment strategy:

i) The overall student experience on the module: The assessment strategy should complement module content and should encourage effective learning. Questions to ask include:

- How can you reinforce students’ learning through the assessment activities (formative and summative)?
- Can the results of in-class discussions be used to inform or add value to students’ submissions?
- Could the students explore a case study (individually or as a group) as part of the module and then use this as a subject of assessment?
- How does the independent study that students are advised to undertake feed into their assessment? The use of marking criteria that rewards wider reading can encourage student engagement in the subject literature.

ii) Level of study: The proposed assessment task should be pitched at a similar level to other work set at the same level of study on the course. The level of study should also be reflected in the marking criteria set for the assessment.
iii) **Student workload:** Any proposed tasks (either formative or summative) should take into account overall student workload across the module and across the course as a while. It can be helpful to consult with other course team members to ensure that what is proposed in one module will not have an adverse effect on other modules. Course teams should agree and publish a schedule for summative assessment for each cohort on the course. This should include information on the date by which assessment tasks will be made available to the students, the final submission or presentation date, and when students will receive individual feedback on their work (within the standard University four week turnaround time).

In general, assessment tasks should be designed such that higher marks are not awarded on the basis of the amount of time students have taken to do the work or the volume of work that is presented. Marking criteria should primarily judge the quality of the work, and the quality of the student’s appreciation, application and use of knowledge and skills.

iv) **Student resources:** Not all students will have equal access to personal resources, or be able to access University resources as easily as others (due, for example, to personal circumstances or learning difficulties). Any assessment strategy should involve tasks for which all students will have access to adequate resources to be able to gain the full range of marks available. Where students need to investigate case studies or real life situations, will all the relevant information be available to all the students? Where there is an expectation that students will review particular books or papers, will there be sufficient copies, in accessible formats, available?

v) **Plagiarism and collusion:** While we make it clear to students that both plagiarism and collusion are prohibited, the design of assessment tasks can help to deter such academic misconduct. The following approaches may be worth considering:

- Stage the assessment tasks, with students needing to produce a number of deliverables that track their progress.
- If all students have exactly the same problem or task, collusion is much more likely. Personalising each student’s task (for example via allocating different case studies, data sets or subject focuses) forces them to produce individual work.
- Setting assessments where students have to complete the task within a supervised environment has a similar effect as an exam, but can feel less pressurised or stressful to the students.
- The use of work from essay banks can be very tempting. To alleviate the temptation, design assessment tasks to require students to make use of specific resources, scenarios or locations in their analysis. Ensure that resources are different for subsequent years to prevent the submission of previous students’ work.
- Use peer assessment – students will be much more able to spot the reuse of their own work than you are.
- Don’t hand back work until all students have made their first submissions.
vi) **Ease of marking:** It is easy to over-assess student work, getting them to produce evidence of all their working and then reviewing every element explicitly. It is often just as effective to restrict marking to significant elements of the work in order to derive a fair overall mark, thus reducing the workload of marking and reducing the number of elements that students need to provide in a polished and finalised state. Similarly, the identification of marking criteria that focus on crucial aspects rather than the entirety of the work can simplify the marking process and help students focus their efforts and skill application effectively.

vii) **Key skills:** The module specification will indicate the employability skills that are embedded within the module. Students should be given an opportunity to demonstrate their acquisition of the relevant skill set. This could be within the summative assessed work, or in either formative work or other student activities.

**Describing assessment information to students**

Assessment briefs for students should include the following information:

- assessment task title
- weighting of component of assessment as a percentage of the module’s total assessment
- whether it is a core or non-core component of assessment
- hand-out date for assessment task
- deadline for submission
- when feedback will be provided by (for complete transparency it is good practice to provide students with a copy of the intended feedback sheet along with the assignment guidelines)
- if applicable, a reminder to students of the hand-in / online submission procedure
- aims of the assessment task
- the module learning outcomes that are being assessed
- guidelines on completing the task, giving clear and specific information on the task and any special presentation requirements
- clarity on word limits (or equivalent) and any penalties that might be imposed for not adhering to these
- marking criteria (using the generic University marking criteria for the relevant level of study as a guide).

This list is not exhaustive and there are a number of other items of information that may usefully be included, for example:

- the date students are advised to start working on the task
- the employability skills that students may generate evidence for while completing the task
- guidelines on how any negotiated aspects will be approved
• processes associated with the initialisation and operation of any group work.

While there is no University-wide template for assessment briefs, the adoption of a standard format for individual courses or for groups of courses is seen as good practice.

It should be clear to each student exactly what they need to do to pass the assignment. The language in which the marking criteria are expressed should enable students to understand why marks are awarded for particular pieces of work. While there will always be a need for academic evaluation of student work, effort should be made to couch criteria in such a way that prevents students submitting work that clearly fails to meet the requirements of the assessment. From reading marking criteria, it should be clear to students where they should focus their efforts and where effort will have little effect on the mark that will be awarded.

The careful identification of marking criteria can also reduce the workload for those marking assignments. It is a requirement that an example or indicative answer is produced for all exam questions to aid the marking process. A similar approach can be useful in developing assignments and their marking criteria. Criteria stating requirements to ‘explore a range of key issues’ could be informed through the identification of the issues of which coverage would usually be expected. Thus, checking if each is mentioned in a sensible manner within a piece of work allows the marker to gauge a student’s performance within the requirements. This approach is particularly useful when the marking of work is distributed around a team, ensuring parity in terms of the marks being awarded.

Other factors that should be considered when drafting assignment guidelines include:

• **Student comprehension of the task:** Are the tasks set out in a way that students will be able to understand what is expected of them? Will they be familiar with the terminology used, and has the requisite knowledge been covered in taught sessions? The explicit linking of assessment tasks to the times in the course when elements will be covered can reassure anxious students. Where multiple tasks are to be undertaken, possibly resulting in a number of elements to be submitted, how these relate to each other should be clear. Providing advice on the amount of time or effort that should be put into different elements of the assessment work can prevent students making bad decisions in planning their work.

• **Clarity of deliverable:** For new students, a task involving the production of a report or essay may provide them with a new experience. Are there clear instructions available to the students on what is meant by the particular deliverable required? For standard assessment deliverables, these may be explored within the course handbook and further guidance may be available on the virtual learning environment or via Learning Services (for example, through the University’s [assignment toolkit](#)). If so, clear pointers to these resources can be beneficial. For more specialised or unusual deliverables, the provision of templates or examples can be very helpful to students. If a student can visualise what they are supposed to do, they are much more likely to be successful.
Pre-issue moderation of assessment tasks

Before an assignment or an exam paper is released to students, it should be checked both internally and by the external examiner for the course to ensure that it meets the assessment needs and is fit-for-purpose. This is known as pre-issue moderation, and the process is described in the University's Moderation Policy. Completion of the moderation process should be recorded via the use of the assignment pre-issue moderation form or the exam pre-issue moderation form, both of which are available on the learning, teaching and assessment pages on the University website.

These forms are intended to fulfil two roles:

✓ To act as a checklist for the peer review of assignments / exams to ensure the validity and effectiveness of the process.

✓ To act as a formal record of the process, available for inspection within course files and to the external examiner as appropriate.

In addition, it is expected that the process will facilitate the identification of good practice that could be shared with fellow practitioners within the University. Many course teams may produce and agree their own versions of these forms, adapted to suit their local situations. Use of these will be with the agreement of their external examiner.

The major difference between exam and assignment pre-issue moderation is that exam pre-issue moderation should involve the convening of a panel of peers to review exam questions, where pre-issue moderation of assignments involves a single moderator reviewing the proposed assignment. All assignments and exams should be approved by the course’s external examiner.

Pre-issue moderation process for exams

The following process should be adopted for pre-issue moderation of exam papers:

1. The person responsible for writing the exam produces a draft exam paper and companion retake paper, along with sample or indicative solutions to each question, and marking schemes where appropriate.

2. A panel is convened, made up of a minimum of three peers, to review the exams. A copy of the validated module specification should also be available to the panel. The exam pre-issue moderation form should be employed to guide the moderation process, ensuring all relevant issues are taken into consideration.

3. Any issues are identified and mutually resolved, resulting in a proposed version of the exams.

4. The exam pre-issue moderation form is completed, signed off and sent with the proposed exam papers to the external examiner for approval. This should be done at
least five working weeks before the date set for the examination. Any issues raised by the external examiner are resolved, resulting in the finalisation of the exam papers.

5. Copies of the completed exam papers and signed pre-issue moderation form are put in the course file, and the exam papers should be submitted to the Business Administration Team (or the equivalent office in partner colleges). This should be completed at least ten working days prior to the examination date.

It is worth noting that within some course teams, the peer review panel of stage 2 above is done in a single session by the whole course team, reviewing all the exams the team is responsible for.

**Pre-issue moderation process for assignment briefs**

The following process should be adopted for pre-issue moderation of assignment briefs:

1. The person responsible for writing the assignment produces a draft assignment brief and student feedback sheet.

2. This is passed on to an independent course team member (usually allocated by course leader), along with a copy of the validated module specification for review. The assignment pre-issue moderation form should be employed to guide the moderation process, ensuring all relevant issues are taken into consideration.

3. Any issues are identified and mutually resolved resulting in a final version of the assignment brief.

4. The assessment pre-issue moderation form is completed, signed off and sent with the proposed assignment brief to the external examiner for approval. This should be done at least five working weeks before the assignment is due to be issued. Any issues raised by the external examiner are resolved, resulting in the finalisation of the assignment brief.

5. Copies of the completed assignment brief and pre-issue moderation form are put in the course file.

**Pre-issue moderation of repeated assignments / exams**

It is not uncommon for assignments that are found to be effective one year to be repeated for the same module in a following year, particularly where the students determine the focus of their work (such as a specific case study), thus reducing the opportunity for collusion between year cohorts. Where this is the case, the moderation process should still be followed to ensure that:

- any changes in the validated programme have been taken into consideration
- the assessment dates for this particular use of the assessment are in agreement with the course assessment schedule
• any feedback from previous use of the assessment has been taken into consideration.

**Moderation checklists**

On the pre-issue moderation forms there is a checklist of issues that the moderator should consider. These are explored in detail below:

• **Are module and assignment/exam details accurate?** The course and module titles, and the level, should be correct. The assessment proposed should be in accordance with the validated module specification, for example in terms of weighting percentage, assessment type, core or non-core, and size (exam duration, assignment word count, or presentation length).

• **Has this assignment been used previously?** If yes, issues as described in the preceding section should be considered.

• **Are the stated learning outcomes assessed?** Does the assessment task provide adequate opportunities for students to demonstrate achievement of intended module learning outcomes?

• **Are marking criteria appropriate and clear for students?** The marking criteria specify what a student’s submission needs to demonstrate in order to achieve the associated learning outcomes and be awarded a pass mark. These criteria can be generic, or may be contextualised to match the assignment task and deliverables. The marking criteria should be appropriate to the level of study and presented in a manner that is clear to students.

• **Are the student tasks clearly stated, realistic in the allotted timeframe, and appropriately resourced?** The moderator should think through the tasks that the students are being asked to complete and consider their ability to succeed given their level of study, the time available (given the overall student workload, not just this individual piece of work), and the resources that are available to the students. If the student cohort includes part-time students, will they be disadvantaged? In exams, is there ample time for an average student to complete all required questions? Will weaker students still be able to produce successful submissions in the time allowed?

• **Is there clear guidance for submission of all deliverables?** For many courses this information is the same for all assignments and therefore need not be stated each time an assignment is issued. However, where the task requires submission of more unusual deliverables, specific guidance may be needed. The assignment description should ensure that students are informed of any required formats. For example, the form of electronic submissions (online submission, datastick, etc) and any size limits (for posters, art work, video productions, musical compositions, etc) should be stated. Dates and locations of demonstrations or presentations should also be made clear, along with any appropriate arrangements to allow students to prepare for such deliverables.
• *Is the process for agreeing any negotiated elements of the work clearly specified?* In some assignments, students are encouraged to identify case studies or subject areas on which to focus their work. Where this is the case, the assignment description should define how agreement should be reached with tutors, and any timescales that students should meet to be able to reach agreement.

• *Are the employability skills available clearly indicated?* All assignments should indicate to students which of the University’s employability skills could be evidenced through the activities involved in the assessment work.

• *Are the timeframes clearly indicated and in agreement with course assessment schedules?* All courses should have an assessment schedule (available to students to enable them to plan their workloads). Assignment deadlines should be in agreement with this, and should clearly state the date by which feedback will be provided (within the University’s four week maximum turnaround time).

• *Is the assignment brief or exam paper in a format conforming with any applicable course / departmental / university format?* The University’s policy for the preparation and conduct of examinations specifies how an exam should be formatted and this should be adhered to. There may be a standard format for the presentation of assignments in the particular course that is to be used: this could be an agreed departmental, college or course specific format.

• *General comments:* This area can allow the moderator to identify issues or concerns that may require the module leader to review the assessment process while in use, or practices that could be useful for dissemination within the University or beyond.

• *The pre-issue moderation process:* This box, at the end of both of the forms, is provided to allow the recording of key decisions of the moderation process. The form is prepared to formally record the successful completion of the process: the availability of an exam or assignment in a format appropriate for distribution to students. In many cases this process will be fairly straightforward. However, at other times significant discussions and decision making will be involved. Where this is the case, you are encouraged to record the key elements of these discussions as evidence of a real and useful process in action. Where significant changes in the assessment descriptions or changes to the assessment strategy or process are made, these should be noted. It is not appropriate to use this recording as a means of criticising peers but as an opportunity to record peer support and team working for the benefit of each other, students, and the University as a whole.

**Distribution of assessments and submission of student work**

The earlier a student receives information on their assessment task, the greater the opportunities for them to plan their study time to meet the demands of assessment. Conversely, in some situations the provision of clear assignment briefs early in a module encourages lazy students to ignore course content that is not clearly assessed in the planned assignments.
The University’s Assessment and Feedback Framework requires that assignment briefs ‘should be given out to students as early as possible within the semester (week 1 or 2) unless there is a strong rationale/requirement to do otherwise’. Where possible, best effort should be made to distribute assignment briefs close to the beginning of the teaching period – minimally all students should be told the nature and schedule of planned assessment in their first session on the module. It is expected that all assignment briefs will be placed onto the module’s area on the virtual learning environment, Learn.

Where the course team feel that an early release of assignment briefs will have an adverse effect on the student’s engagement in the module’s teaching and learning, it is possible to couch assessment briefs in such a way that while the tasks that the students will have to undertake are clear, the particular subject matter is not.

**Submission of work**

Standard processes for student submission of assessed work should be set out in the course handbook and followed for all assignments. Where relevant, these should explain how work is submitted by hand and/or electronically. It is important to ensure that the submission is formally recorded, particularly in terms of date and time, and that students have a receipt evidencing submission. The processes should also provide mechanisms to enable anonymous marking. Where work will be subject to anonymous marking, students should only identify their work through their student ID number and should not include their name on any part of their submission.

Module leaders should review the work submitted by students to identify any students who have not submitted work. They should then attempt to contact these students to ascertain why the work has not been submitted. This will enable them to be sure that submitted work has not gone missing, and to provide advice to the students on submitting Extenuating Circumstances applications where appropriate.

**Draft work**

Each course team should have an agreed and published approach to accepting and giving feedback on draft work. This should include:

- The course tutors’ purpose in looking at drafts. This will explain what the tutors hope to achieve by looking at draft work, and may thus indicate the detail that will be looked at.
- What course tutors are prepared to look at. For example, some course teams may suggest that students submit plans or outlines rather than more complete work, enabling them to give feedback on direction at an early stage of assessment development. It is not normal to accept drafts for an assessment piece more than once.
- The level of feedback that students might expect from tutors looking at drafts. Students should not expect a tutor to look at draft work in the same detail that they look at final assessment submissions. In general, tutors will normally aim to provide comments on how the student could improve the draft work. This may include:
  - indication of particular weaknesses
  - note of aspects that are missing
comment on the presentation or style
- suggestions for further research or reading that could enhance the submission.

Staff should not provide an indication of the mark that would be expected from the work were it to be submitted, or even an indication on whether the work is up to pass standard – this is prohibited by the University. Students should not expect to receive detailed feedback on grammar and spelling – the tutor is not a proof reader! Some tutors may give some indicative feedback to point out particular weaknesses in the student’s use of language.

- Timescales for the return of feedback. It is impractical for tutors to review draft work and return it in a short period of time. This is particularly the case when they have many students on the module, or if they are teaching a number of modules at the same time. Some teams may not accept drafts within two weeks of an assessment deadline.

- Mechanisms for the submission and return of draft work.

The approach towards the submission of draft work for final year dissertations should also be made clear to students. It is considered usual for no more than a single chapter to be reviewed in detail.

Marking and internal moderation

A percentage marking scheme is used across all University of Suffolk provision, with 40% representing the pass mark at undergraduate level and 50% representing the pass mark at postgraduate level. To be awarded a pass for a module, the student must demonstrate their achievement of all the module’s learning outcomes.

Where students fail to submit work on time, a mark of ‘RN’ (refer, no work submitted) is recorded. If work is submitted late without approval of an extension to the submission deadline (in accordance with the extenuating circumstances policy), it should not be marked. Students who have been granted extenuating circumstances should be marked as ‘DM’ (defer through mitigation). In exceptional circumstances, where the mark for student work is not available for submission to the Assessment Board due to situations outside the student’s control, the mark of ‘DD’ (delayed decision) can be awarded. Such awards should be clearly explained at the Assessment Board and recorded in the Board’s minutes for transparency.

Involvement of a second marker

Once students’ work has been marked, we need to ensure that the marks awarded are fair and unbiased, and to check that the work is marked appropriately for the level of study. There are two checking mechanisms in operation at the University:

- **Double marking:** The independent repetition of the marking process for every piece of work by two people, followed by the meeting of the markers to agree the mark to be awarded.
• **Sample moderation**: The review of a sample of the marked work by an independent individual to ensure that the assessment process has been carried out appropriately and that the marks awarded are fair.

For most assignments it is expected that sample moderation will be carried out. However, double marking should be used:

• when the first marker is assessing at the particular level of study for the first time
• for all final year dissertations
• where directed by the chair of the Assessment Board.

The course leader should identify where double marking is to be employed and communicate this to the staff involved (usually through the assessment schedule).

Where the assessed student work includes presentations, demonstrations or other elements that require the presence of the assessor at a particular time, how the double marking or sample moderation will be facilitated should be considered at an early stage. This is further discussed later in this section.

*The double marking process*

Where double marking is to take place, each piece of student work must be independently marked by two appropriate markers. Where both markers will mark the same script, comments and marks should be recorded in such a way as to ensure that the second assessor will have no indication of the previous assessor’s judgements. Usually two people will do this for all the work, but there may be situations where the volume of student work requires more than two markers to be employed.

*The sample moderation process*

For sample moderation, the first assessor is the person who has the responsibility for marking all the student work (usually the module leader) and the second assessor (allocated by the course leader) is the person responsible for inspecting a sample of the work. When large groups of students are to be assessed, there may be more than one first assessor. In such cases, the second assessor should be an individual who is not one of the first assessors. In such a case, by careful selection of their sample they should ensure that the marking of the different first assessors is consistent across the student group.

When sample moderation is to be employed, the first marker(s) will initially mark the whole set of student work. This will result in a feedback sheet for each piece of work that clearly indicates the mark awarded, how the work has been marked against the marking criteria and any appropriate student feedback. The second assessor should check that all elements of the work have been assessed and then agree on an appropriate sample for inspection with the first assessor. This sample should include:

• a minimum of 5 pieces of work
• a minimum of 15% of the submissions
• all submissions awarded marks of 70%+
• all submissions awarded marks below the pass mark (<40% at undergraduate level and <50% at postgraduate level)
• a representative selection of work from each mark band
• where multiple first markers were involved, representative samples from each marker.

The second assessor should inspect the sample of work to ensure each has been marked appropriately and to check whether the mark awarded is in accordance with the marking criteria and the level of the work. This process of inspection should be recorded on a moderation report form on which, where appropriate, the second assessor may comment on the marking and add further student feedback.

Once the sample has been inspected, the first and second assessors should meet together to review the results of the moderation process. At the end of this review, both assessors should initial all the sampled work’s mark sheets. In addition, a number of further actions may need to be followed through and recorded:

• if the second assessor generally agrees with the marks awarded, then no further action is required
• if, following initial divergence of marking, the two assessors reach agreement on the marking which result in no changes to the first assessor’s marks, then no further action is required
• if, following initial divergence of marking, the two assessors reach agreement on the marking which results in changes to the first assessor’s marks, then the marking of other students who were awarded a mark within the same mark band(s) by the first marker should also be inspected by the assessors to check to see if they too should have their marks changed
• if, following divergence of marking, the two assessors are unable to reach agreement on one or more student marks, double marking of all work in the same mark band(s) as the disputed marks should be undertaken, followed by a further meeting of the assessors. Should the two assessors still fail to agree marks, the course leader will nominate a third assessor who will double mark the disputed work and then meet with the other assessors to agree the marks to be awarded.

Assessing non-reproducible work

Some student work may involve them in making some kind of presentation or demonstration to evidence their abilities. In such situations, all students should be witnessed and marked (effectively double marked) by both the first and second assessor. In some situations, the recording of presentations to allow the second assessor to view a sample is a valid alternative approach.

In order to allow the external examiner to be able to inspect the assessment process, it is good practice to record all presentations or demonstrations for their benefit. Alternatively, the external examiner may be invited to attend performances or scheduled teaching sessions where appropriate. This is particularly valuable when assessing final year students’ dissertation presentations. The course leader is advised to seek guidance from the external
examiner to clarify what they would like to have available to them in order to be confident of the appropriateness of the assessment process.

**Recording the marking and internal moderation process and decisions**

The initial marking, double marking and sample moderation processes need to be recorded in such a way that:

- the course administrators are able to formally record agreed marks in preparation for Assessment Boards
- the external examiner (and any subsequent quality audit process) is able to see that the processes have been followed appropriately
- students are able to see how their marks have been arrived at by the marker, and are able to receive constructive feedback on their work.

Double marking will result in two completed mark sheets for each piece of work. Where the two assessors disagree on marks, when agreement is finally reached this should be recorded on both mark sheets and initialled by both assessors. If a third assessor was brought in to resolve disagreements in marking, their mark sheet should also have the agreed mark recorded on it.

The final agreed marks resulting from sample moderation should be recorded on a moderation report form.

A new mark sheet should be prepared for each piece of work that is either double marked or in the moderation sample. This will only show the agreed mark, along with an amalgamation of the two assessors’ comments. However, where the two assessors initially agreed on the mark awarded, the first assessor’s feedback sheet, with added comments from the second assessor, may be presented to the student.

A double marking / sample moderation summary report form should be used to record any significant elements of discussion or mark adjustment involved in either process. This should be signed by both assessors and passed on to the course leader along with the mark sheets and student work, and so be made available for inspection by the external examiner.

The marks that each assessor initially award (whether through double marking or sample moderation), along with the agreed mark for all students, should be recorded on the Assessment Grading Record sheet, as supplied by the course administration team. This should then be passed to the course administrator for formal recording ready for the Assessment Board. The module leader is responsible for ensuring that their administrator receives all marks in time for input to University systems prior to the course’s pre-Board. To reduce the load on administrators at Assessment Board time, reporting assessment marks as soon as they are agreed rather than waiting until the end of the teaching period is helpful.
External moderation of marking by the external examiner

The external examiner has the right to inspect any documentation used in the recording of the assessment processes, and to look over the student work submitted. In practice, for many courses it is more practical for the external examiner and course leader to agree to a sampling approach. For example, where sample moderation has been applied to a set of student work, the sampled work could form the external examiner’s sample too. However the external examiner has the right, upon inspecting a provided sample, to require the provision for inspection of further examples of student work and their assessment.

Prior to the Assessment Board meeting, external examiners should be given ample opportunity to inspect samples of student work along with evidence of the assessment and moderation processes employed. This may take place through the attendance of the external examiner prior to the Assessment Board, through the delivery of assessment material to the external examiner via mail, or through the use of online technologies. It is the responsibility of the module leader to liaise with the course leader to ensure that the external examiner is able to fulfil their duties to their satisfaction. This arrangement should be communicated to the assessors on the module so that they can ensure appropriate samples are made available to the external examiner.

Assessment Board procedures (including pre-Boards)

Before any Assessment Board, the course leader should arrange a ‘pre-Board’ at which all those involved in summative assessment gather to review all results and to agree deferral, progression and award proposals for presentation at the Assessment Board. The pre-Board should consider results in the same format as they will be presented at the Assessment Board, checking for accuracy. There is an expectation that there will be clear proposals presented at the Assessment Board: no situation should come before the Board without a proposed decision. In effect, the Assessment Board’s function is one of formal ratification of proposed assessment and progression decisions. While there may be some limited discussion of individual cases at the Assessment Board to draw the Chair’s attention to the decisions that have been proposed, and provide opportunities for the external examiner to make pertinent comments, the intension is for any lengthy discussions to be limited to the pre-Board.

The formal approval of student marks and decisions on student progression, completion and overall award classifications take place in the Assessment Boards. The focus of Assessment Boards’ activities is to ensure that:

- all processes in assessment have been correctly adhered to
- all results are presented correctly and fully
- all decisions on deferrals, progression and final award are correct and ratified
- feedback from external examiners on the adequacy and appropriateness of the assessment processes is received.
Assessment Boards should be attended by all those who have been involved in the summative assessment that is being reported at the Board.

### Returning work and providing feedback to students

Feedback is most valuable to students if it is received in time for them to benefit from it before any further summative assessment activities. The University’s Assessment and Feedback Framework expects students to receive their marks and feedback on their work within four working weeks of the submission deadline.

Following an initial viewing of some of a cohort’s submitted work, it can also be helpful to present oral or written general feedback to the student group in which common themes and weaknesses are identified, and particular areas for further learning or skills development work are suggested.

Provisional marks and feedback can be provided to students prior to the Assessment Board, as long as:

- the internal sample moderation or double marking process has been completed (external moderation may still need to be undertaken, but this need not delay the release of provisional marks)
- it is made clear to students that marks are provisional and subject to formal ratification by the Assessment Board (and therefore may change). The following statement is suggested: “These marks and comments are released prior to Assessment Board and may be subject to change by that Board. External examiners may scrutinise and suggest moderation of these marks which may cause the Assessment Board to change them. Formal ratification of students’ results, progression and awards, and notification to students will be undertaken by the Assessment Board. The actual result is that which is stated in the official results letter.”
- student work, along with evidence of marking and moderation, is retained for inspection by the external examiner.

In general, waiting for Assessment Board ratification would not be in the students’ best interests for many assessments. The course leader’s permission is required before the return of feedback, and will only be given once the course leader is satisfied that internal marking and moderation processes are completed and fully reported to the course administrator.

Teams should be consistent in how feedback is provided to students. In all cases, students should be able to see clearly the extent to which their work is judged to have met the marking criteria.

The feedback distribution mechanism employed should ensure that all students are able to receive feedback. Thus, consideration of how feedback is provided should take into consideration:
• where the students are (for example, whether they will be on campus attending teaching sessions or out on placement)
• whether any of the students have reasonable adjustment arrangements in place
• the nature of the feedback and the submitted work (giving feedback on group work needs to be dealt with particularly carefully).

An important aspect of the assessment process is facilitating student reflection and improvement through the feedback they receive on the work they submit. While the mark that they are awarded will always be important to students, the feedback needs to be in a format that engages the students and encourages them to consider, for example:
• the effectiveness of their learning so far
• what knowledge and understanding they need to revisit to deepen their understanding
• what cognitive skills they applied well, and which they could work to improve
• which subject skills are they proficient in, which require development
• how well their presentation, writing and reporting skills meet professional or academic expectations
• their achievement of relevant employability skills.

Course teams should consider how to support students in engaging with feedback and identifying strategies and actions in order to improve their future performance. This applies to all students, even those who have been awarded high marks. Students near to the beginning of their studies may need particular help in terms of making best use of feedback. Dedicating scheduled sessions to the reception of feedback, along with activities to encourage engagement with it, can also be an effective strategy. There is also potential to make use of the VLE to provide feedback sheets and further support, for example with a presentation exploring common themes and including illustrative examples to aid students’ understanding.

Students should also be able to receive individual tutorial support to enable them to discuss feedback. It can be helpful for feedback sheets to indicate tutorial time in which further support may be provided. In particular, those students who receive a refer mark should be able to receive support to enable them to understand why the mark was awarded and to identify how they should go about recovering the work. Students should be made aware that they are not able to re-submit referred assessments prior to the ratification of their initial submission’s mark by the Assessment Board. However, they would normally be well advised to work towards recovering their referral while the work and the feedback is fresh in their minds.

Following the completion of the assessment process, and after the external examiner has had full opportunity to review work, efforts should be made to return work to students. Each course should have a statement in their course handbook explaining to students how work will be made available, and this should be adhered to.