



## Assessment Policy

### Introduction

There is consensus in the College that the assessment of student performance is integral to a dynamic learning and teaching process and not separate from it; the quality of the learning experience cannot be guaranteed unless the quality, reliability and appropriateness of the assessment of that experience are assured.

It is of paramount importance that students, staff, external awarding bodies and employers have confidence in the College's standards and assessment procedures. The College is committed to ensuring that student assessment and its consequences are managed effectively and consistently. The recruitment of an increasingly diverse student population for whom value for money is a growing concern requires vigilance at programme level to prevent assessment overload, particularly where programmes draw on modules from different fields and faculties. Lack of coherence in the selection, implementation and management of assessment can lead to unnecessary student dissatisfaction. The adoption of a College-wide assessment policy and strategies for implementation such as double and anonymous marking is designed to ensure equity and fairness.

The College constantly reviews why and how it delivers its programmes, for example by pursuing the current initiative to promote ICT in learning and teaching; ICT is no less relevant to assessment. There must be flexibility whilst ensuring that rigorous standards are maintained. The circumstances of many learners now increasingly encourage them to invest most effort in activities which yield the most substantial and reliable reward - those which count towards the qualification. If, as evidence appears to show, assessment has a backwash effect on student learning and if learners are inclined to adopt a strategic approach, it is in the interests of all concerned that assessment is reliable, realistic in form and coverage, educationally sound and that it has a positive effect on the learner. To achieve this it must be part of learning and not distinct from it.

### Faculty responsibilities

Faculties have prime responsibility for devising and implementing assessment strategies. These should be informed by:

- consideration of the purposes of assessing students
- consideration of the appropriateness of what is assessed
- the integration of assessment with learning and teaching
- exploitation and evidence of a range of valid assessment methods
- innovation and creativity in assessment
- a balance between external, tutor, peer, and self assessment
- consideration of the timing of assessed activities
- attention to the management of assessment across the fields owned by a faculty
- attention to the management of assessment within each programme
- the needs of the 'consumers' of assessment outcomes (student, potential employer, external agencies)

Provision in the Modular Assessment Regulations for "assessment under controlled conditions" and "assessment under other conditions" emphasises the importance of each faculty actively seeking to ensure that there is correspondence between the stated learning outcomes and the assessment



strategies employed, whilst offering the necessary flexibility to do so. Specifically, each faculty is expected to keep under review:

- the assessment regime for each module against its learning outcomes, credit level and credit value
- the "fitness for purpose" of the methods of assessment employed for each module
- the balance between formative and summative assessment in relation to the overall student experience at programme level, across compulsory modules in particular
- the application of a range of assessment methods deemed to be appropriate for each module
- the scope and rationale for innovative assessment methods
- the appropriateness of alternative assessment methods to improve, for example, the turn-round time for marking assignments and the quality of feedback to a student population which is constantly growing both in size and in the demands it makes on staff
- its mechanism for ensuring the comparability of assessment demands across modules at the same level and of the same credit value in different fields within the faculty
- its provision for staff development activities concerning the definition of learning outcomes and devising and applying assessment criteria, including the development of key skills.

Consideration of these matters must be automatic in the faculty processes which determine and approve assessment requirements.

#### **Comparability of assessment demands across the College**

The basis for such comparisons needs careful consideration; a word limit on assignment length, for example, is inadequate. A more valid and acceptable measure might be the notional time taken by the 'average student' to prepare and execute an assignment, taking into account experience with previous student groups. An internal tariff using such criteria has already been developed by one faculty and adopted by others; it is designed to promote coherence and to avoid making unreasonable demands on students through assessment overload and duplication - which are common criticisms of modular schemes where the assessment implications have not been thoroughly followed through at programme level.

Variations in the assessment demands of different disciplines are apparent and in many cases justified. From the student's perspective it is important that the justification for significant variations is made explicit and understood. For example, where the method of assessment is the same or similar, the reasons for significant differences between the broad requirements in different fields should be clearly explained.

Where such variations are not justified they will be increasingly perceived as unfair by students, particularly those on professional and other interdisciplinary programmes. Of greater concern is that such variations may exist between modules with the same weighting within fields belonging to the same faculty. A "notional time to complete" criterion might help, although individual differences between learners mean that this could not be the sole criterion for comparability.

It is well documented that students learn in different ways and respond differentially to different assessment methods. It is unrealistic to anticipate a variety of assessment methods within each module, but this is highly desirable at programme level if equality of opportunity and the maximisation of student potential are to be fully addressed by the College.



### **Assessment arrangements for students with disabilities**

There has been a significant increase in the number of students who are prepared to identify themselves as dyslexic. These students often have particular problems with written examinations. This policy provides for alternative forms of assessment for students who, due to a disability, are unable to be assessed by the usual methods. The shift to a module focus makes it appropriate to revisit the procedures for identifying and agreeing appropriate amendments to the assessment regime at module level for these students. Ways of addressing the needs of dyslexic students might include specifying in advance an alternative form of assessment to a written examination or providing all dyslexic students with computer workstations for written examinations. This would allow normal quality procedures to operate and encourage dyslexic students to look beyond tactical considerations in their choice of option modules. The same principle should apply to any other student with a disability.

### **Assessment Policy**

- The College shall ensure that all methods used to assess student performance are fair and fit for purpose.
- The College shall ensure that the assessment process is carried out by appropriately qualified and competent staff.
- The College shall ensure that academic judgement in all forms of assessment is underpinned by assessment criteria agreed and published in advance.
- The College shall ensure that student assessment is subject to anonymous marking with certain prescribed exceptions
- The College shall ensure the application of its policy on double marking
- The College shall ensure that all assessed coursework is set in a timely manner with a clear statement to students of what is required, in what form and by when, and a clear indication of the criteria by which performance will be judged
- The College shall ensure that all formative assessed work is returned to students with appropriate feedback within a reasonable period
- The College shall ensure that arrangements for the submission of work for assessment (format, deadline, location etc) are clear, communicated to all students affected and that these arrangements are as reasonable and convenient as possible for all students
- The College shall seek to ensure that students experience a variety of assessment methods which target the learning outcomes of their modules and programme, that the methods used are consistent with equality of opportunity and that, taken as a whole across a programme, they take account where appropriate of individual differences between students
- For any student with special needs due to a disability, the College shall ensure that alternative comparable assessment tasks are agreed and approved sufficiently in advance of the point at which the assessment is undertaken

**Note: statements which are relevant to more than one section are not repeated.**



## **Principles**

The Fintact College of Global Education policy governing the assessment of students is based on the following principles:

- that assessment is an integral part of a dynamic learning and teaching process and not separate from it
- that assessment plays a key part in the rigorous setting and maintaining of academic standards
- that all students are entitled to parity of treatment
- that for assessment purposes, in relation to the same module, there should be no distinction between different modes of study
- that progression is achieved by credit accumulation and the completion of prerequisites
- that due attention is paid to the assessment requirements of professional bodies
- that different module learning outcomes should be recognised by and reflected in different forms of assessment
- that controlled conditions should normally govern a significant proportion of the overall diet of assessment
- that explicit criteria against which student performance is assessed should be published to students in advance of their assessment
- that all students should be afforded maximum opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, competencies and overall strengths through a variety of assessed activities
- that assessment practice is scrutinised by external examiners in order to maintain and monitor standards and to ensure consistency and comparability across modules in the fields to which they are appointed
- that the outcome of assessment at programme level is monitored by a chief external examiner in order to ensure consistency and parity of approach across all programmes offered by a faculty
- that all students are consulted and kept fully informed about expectations, processes and the outcomes of assessment.

## **Anonymous Marking**

At the beginning of the delivery period for each module, faculties shall inform students of those assessed activities for which their anonymity will be preserved and those for which it will not.

With the exception of formative assessment which does not count towards the outcome of a module or an award and assessed activities for which anonymity of the candidate is impractical, impossible or undesirable, faculties shall implement the general marking practice whereby the identity of the student is unknown to the marker.

Examples of assessed work for which anonymity of the candidate does not apply include dissertations, projects and creative artefacts assessed by staff, who has acted in a supervisory role; individual and group presentations; oral examinations and interpreting.

Student anonymity will be maintained where the assessor or second marker of a dissertation, project or creative artefact is a member of staff or other recognised authority appointed by the College who has not supervised the work directly or indirectly

## **Double Marking**



- All level assignments shall be double marked with no marks or comments from the first marker visible to the second marker
- All level projects shall be double-marked with no marks or comments from the first marker visible to the second marker.
- All level 3 projects shall be double marked with no marks or comments from the first marker visible to the second marker.
- All level 2 projects shall be double marked with no marks or comments from the first marker visible to the second marker.
- All presentations which count for more than one quarter of the total assessment weighting of a module shall be assessed by more than one member of staff.
- Sample double marking shall be carried out at element level (or at component level where there is no sub-division into elements) for all other modules at all levels.
- The sample to be double-marked shall reflect the full range of performance for each cohort on each module version run.
- The basis for sampling shall be determined collectively under the guidance of the field leader; the process shall be organised by the module leader who shall report to the field board any action taken to moderate marks as a result of the sampling process.
- Tutor-marked coursework and examination activities undertaken for formal assessment purposes at any level by any student of the College may be included in the sample from each module which is to be double-marked, drawing on the informed judgement of at least two appropriately qualified members of staff in the field owning the module.

#### **Assessment selection, setting and feedback**

- Assessed activities shall form an integral part of, and contribute directly to, the student's relevant learning experience
- Responsibility for selecting assessment tasks shall lie with the module team, confirmed by the field owning the module
- Assessed activities shall include as wide a range of assessment methods as possible and shall be made explicit in module specifications and the specification for the programme for which s/he is registered.
- The demands of any assessed activities shall be consistent with the credit level and rating of the module or part module to which they relate.
- Each faculty shall implement mechanisms to ensure comparability of the assessment demands of modules of the same type and level within and across its fields.
- Assessment requirements shall seek to provide a balance between formative and summative assessment at each level for the programme concerned.
- All students shall be given sufficient advance notice of all assessed activities, which will be explained clearly when assignment specifications are set; submission dates and times for each assignment shall be specified at the beginning of the module delivery period. All faculties shall seek to avoid a concentration of submission deadlines and shall co-operate fully to endeavour to ensure that this is achieved for students whose programme includes modules from more than one faculty.
- With the exception of unseen examinations, the specifications of assessed assignments shall include an explicit statement of objective criteria by which each student's performance shall be assessed. Where this is impractical a broad statement shall be provided in advance of the assessment and a detailed explanation of the criteria which have been applied shall be attached when the work is returned to the student or, in the case of non-written performance, when the outcome is communicated to the student.



- Feedback on, and an outcome for, assessment shall be provided individually or in groups in an appropriate format and within a reasonable period. This period shall not normally exceed three working weeks (excluding vacation periods) following the deadline for submission of the assessment concerned and may be shorter for some forms of assessment and longer for others. Where the period is longer than three working weeks students should be informed of the deadline for the provision of feedback and the rationale for the extension. Where it is possible and practical to do so, feedback on summative assessment shall also be provided at the earliest opportunity following the assessment.

**Coursework** (including all assessments not completed under exam conditions)

- Feedback to students on coursework shall:
- inform students explicitly whether or not they have met specific threshold assessment criteria;
- inform students how well they have met specific assessment criteria;
- describe how students could have improved the current piece of work and/or how they could improve future work;
- be legible;
- be provided within the timescale indicated in the College's assessment policy and not later than the date published in advance to the students.

Additionally, where possible, feedback shall:

- provide comments on content and technique;
- act as a form of dialogue between student and tutor;
- encourage students to reflect critically on their work;
- improve students' understanding of the topic of the assignment, particularly highlighting areas where misunderstanding is evident;
- motivate students.

**Assessment methods**

The College shall endeavour to present students with as wide a range of assessment methods as possible appropriate to their modules and programme. These may include any of the following:

- tutor-marked unseen examinations under controlled conditions
- tutor-marked open book examinations under controlled conditions
- tutor-marked examinations under controlled conditions for which the question papers are issued in advance
- tutor-marked practical laboratory examinations under controlled conditions
- tutor-marked group assignments including projects, reports, presentations, exhibitions, case studies, problem-solving exercises, design tasks, poster displays, learning logs, diaries, portfolios, fieldwork, mapping exercises, notebooks
- tutor-marked individual assignments including projects, reports, essays, presentations, oral examinations, case studies, problem-solving exercises, design tasks, poster displays, learning logs, diaries, portfolios, fieldwork, mapping exercises, notebooks
- student contribution to, and management of, seminar discussions
- peer assessment of (e), (f), (g) above as appropriate
- self-assessment of (e), (f), (g) above as appropriate
- tutor-marked synoptic examinations, projects and dissertations
- multiple choice tests



- cloze tests (requiring the insertion of key terms or concepts to demonstrate understanding)
- computer-based assessment on-line
- computer-assisted assessment via optical mark or character reading technology
- negotiated learning contracts
- workplace-based assessment
- placement assessment
- assessment of professional practice by objective structured clinical examinations
- simulation exercises
- in-tray exercises
- inter-peer assessment

**SPECIAL NOTE:**

Written Examination will be taken if student cannot pass by submission of Assignment or other Assessment methods.

**Alternative forms of assessment for students with special education needs due to disability**

- Faculties shall ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure equality of opportunity in formative and summative assessment for all students with special educational needs.
- Faculties shall ensure that where the delivery and assessment methods of a module take account of students with special educational needs, this is addressed from the beginning of the module delivery period.
- Alternative forms of assessment shall be recommended by module teams approved by the field concerned and notified to students at the beginning of the module delivery period.
- The Fintact College of Global Education through the Student Welfare Officer, shall provide specialist advice to students with special educational needs. It is the responsibility of the student concerned to ensure that medical or other evidence is provided to establish the need for, and the nature of, any special arrangements which may be required.
- Where they are appropriate, desirable, possible or practical, faculties shall use any one or more of the following support mechanisms or alternatives agreed with the student and/or an approved expert in the field. In some cases the use of a computer in examinations may help to address a potential material disadvantage which may be caused by a student's disability.