

New Assessment Regulations: notes for departments

New Regulations governing the Assessment of Students on Taught Programmes have been approved by Senate for introduction at the beginning of the 2012/13 academic year for all students on all taught programmes. The Regulations were approved following extensive discussion across the academic Colleges. A number of important changes have been made, or areas clarified and formalised, in order to meet the expectations set out in the QAA's Quality Code, and to ensure equivalent student experience across our programmes. This document highlights the most important changes for departments, and provides some background and guidance.

<http://www.le.ac.uk/sas/regulations/documents/2012-13/senatereg7-assessment.pdf>

Further help and advice

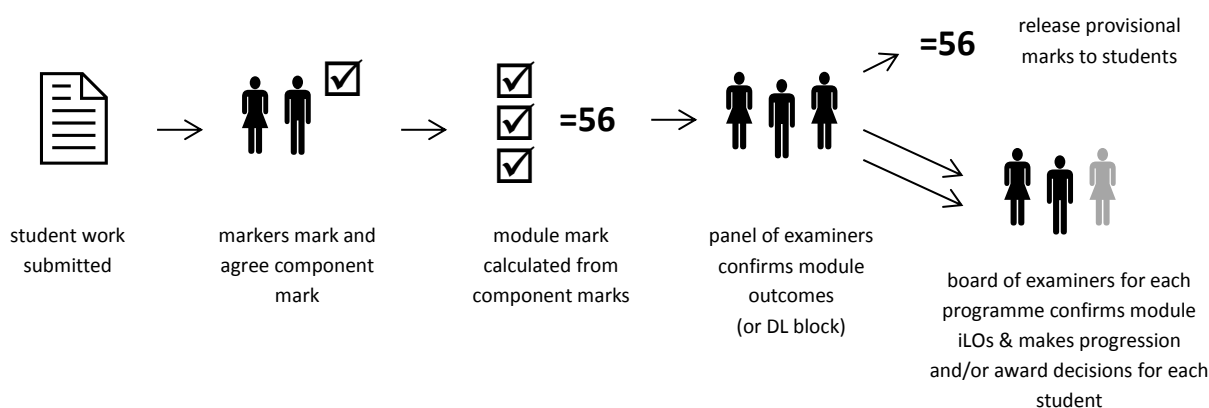
- For questions relating to the new regulations, contact your College Academic Advisor in the Quality Office or e-mail: qualoffice@le.ac.uk
- For assistance in redesigning assessment, preparing criteria, or other design support, contact the Course Design and Development Unit: cddu@le.ac.uk ; tel 5749

Key changes to note:

Sequence of assessment

The way component and module marks are agreed, reported and confirmed has changed – placing the emphasis on getting marking practice right at the source, so that marks are set and agreed at point of marking. A new internal *panel of examiners* has been introduced at 'cognate module' level (normally one panel covering several modules across similar programmes), to check overall marking standards against intended learning outcomes (iLOs) for the modules and release provisional marks to both the students and board of examiners.

The *board of examiners* then look at broad standards of achievement (by ensuring that the standards set by the examiners are appropriate in the context of the iLOs for modules/programmes, and that student achievement against these standards as expressed by the run of marks/grades is appropriately reflected) and then apply detailed regulations to the profiles of individual students to determine progression or award decisions.



Note that provisional module outcomes can now be published after the panel of examiners have met.

Deadlines for assessed work

In developing the new regulations, it was recognised that the previous processes lacked consistency and fairness with students being treated differently across the University, particularly with regard to granting of extensions. In addition, extensions used to introduce 'flexibility' were actually causing students to miss further deadlines in the future and ultimately delay or never complete their studies (more effective flexibility can be provided through timetabling, teaching and learning methods and suspension periods). The regulations therefore no

longer make provision for extensions to submission dates: all students must submit assessed work on time and standard penalties are applied to any late submissions:

- a deduction of 10% of the maximum mark available from the actual mark achieved by the student shall be imposed upon expiry of the deadline;
- a further deduction of 5% of the maximum mark available from the actual mark achieved by the student shall then be imposed on each of the next subsequent working days, until the pass mark for the assessment is reached;
- Where a piece of work would have received the pass mark if penalties had not been applied for late submission credit will be assigned and re-submission will not be permitted and the mark that is used is the lower mark;
- Any piece of work submitted 11 or more days after the expiry of the deadline will not be marked but will be assigned a mark of zero and deemed to be a non-submission.

As an example: a report (worth a maximum of 100%, pass mark 40%) is due at 5pm on Fri 30th November, and a student submits their report at 11am on Tuesday 4th December without any mitigating circumstances. They receive a mark of 62%, which is reduced by penalties: 10% for the first working day (to 5pm Mon) and 5% for the second part-day (to Tues 11am): their final penalised mark is 47%. If the student had handed in two days later, on Thursday at 11am, they would be subject to (2x5%=) 10% further penalty, taking them to the pass mark

Students who have valid mitigating circumstances, which are defined as unforeseen and unpreventable and which could have significantly impaired the academic performance of a student in one or more assessed activities, possibly over a period of time (such as medical matters or events directly affecting the student or someone close to them), should complete the assessment as soon as they can, and then submit appropriate evidence to have any penalties removed. Evidence must bear a direct relationship, time-wise, to the actual period of delay.

Disabilities and long-term conditions should be considered before assessment takes place, and on advice from the AccessAbility Centre and/or an external assessor reasonable adjustments should be made to the assessment arrangements (ensuring that overall academic standards are met). This replaces any previous practice of extensions to deadlines, coursework coversheets, etc.

In order to implement these processes, departments will need to establish mitigating circumstances panels to consider the submissions and make recommendations to the boards of examiners.

Marking practice: use local context

Practice in a number of departments has included local requirements that are not incorporated within the regulations, including a 'requirement to double mark everything' and 'all marking must be anonymised' – neither of these have been policy requirements, nor are they in the new regulations.

What is required in the new regulations is marking practice which is **clear, fair**, and produces **reliable outcomes**. In particular, marking should be focussed on comparing the work to the required learning outcomes and written marking criteria. How this is implemented in your own department depends on your learning and teaching methods, subject requirements, staffing, administrative team, and any professional or accreditation requirements. As examples, all of the following are appropriate within the new regulations:

- *work is anonymised and marked to standard criteria independently by two internal markers (anonymous double blind marking)*
- *work is anonymised and marked to standard criteria by a first marker. A second marker then looks at a random sample of marked work, and the full set of marks, to test the reliability of the marking against the criteria (anonymous single moderated marking)*
- *work is submitted named, to allow first markers to compare progression from earlier work by the same student, and provide both a portion of marks and detailed feedback on this progression. A second marker then marks a stratified random sample independently, and marks are compared (single sampled marking)*

Note that double marking increases marking time considerably, and should be used only where close scrutiny of either the student work (for example, a dissertation or thesis) or the first marker (for example, where postgraduate research students are being used) is needed; and that anonymity should be upheld except where there is a good pedagogic or developmental reason not to (as in the third example). Evidence of all marking practice should be retained for quality purposes.

Postgraduate markers

Postgraduate research students can assist with assessment on taught programmes, but cannot be members of panels or boards of examiners, and **must not be sole markers on any work leading to degree classification** (so, they can be markers in a double marking practice, but cannot be the single markers in a single moderated/sampled practice). Postgraduates marking work *not* leading to degree classification are not subject to this restriction. In programmes where there are multiple pieces of assessment for each module (for example in relation to practical work) postgraduate research students may act as markers providing there is sufficient sampling to ensure marking standards.

External examiners

QAA expectations have affected rules around external examiners quite dramatically. Departments should read the new assessment regulations (sections 18-60) carefully when appointing new external examiners, noting the new eligibility rules. The HEA have also produced a handbook for external examiners which outlines the new expectations well: see <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/external-examining> . In particular, note that:

- external examiners (EE) **cannot alter individual marks**; rather, they take a wider view and endorse (or not) the decisions of the Board of Examiners and the conduct of the assessment process;
- outgoing EEs cannot be replaced by a colleague from their own department;
- EEs cannot normally hold more than two external examiner appointments for taught programmes at any one time.