



GUIDANCE ON ASSESSMENT FOR STUDENTS

2014/2015

Issued by the Standards and Enhancement Office, September 2014

This document relates to the current year. If you become aware of any previous versions that are available on line please notify SEO@bolton.ac.uk so that action can be taken to remove the document(s).

The notes here apply to most of the provision in the University. You will find some variations on some courses. Any variations should be in your programme handbook.

All such explanations are based on the University regulations located on the university web site. If there is any discrepancy the University Regulations take precedence.

1 Understanding the assessment requirements of your modules

There will be plenty of help available to ensure you know what you will be assessed on, how you will be assessed, and how tutors will judge your work.

Each module has a “module specification”, which is a type of self-contained syllabus. These are to be found in your programme handbook as links and, for all programmes validated since 2011/12, on the module database at <https://modules.bolton.ac.uk>.

The module specification has a number of useful sections, including one on “Learning and Teaching Strategy” that will explain the approach used.

There is also an especially important section on “Learning Outcomes”. Each learning outcome (what knowledge / skill / ability you should be able to demonstrate) will be attached to an assessment (how your performance in that learning outcome will be judged). 20 Credit modules will normally have a maximum of 5 Learning Outcomes and 2 Summative Assessment (assessments that count towards your grade for the module).

Finally there’s a table listing how many assessment items the module has, and how they are weighted. The higher the weight, the more the item influences the overall module mark.

Other information you will typically receive is a written “assessment brief” (or similar document) that clarifies and amplifies the assessment of the module as set out in the module specification.

Finally, most programmes will do group and or individual briefing sessions, depending on the nature of the assessment.

2 Concessionary assessment arrangements

Published procedures exist in the University’s Examination Regulations and the Code of Practice for students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties, which allow for concessionary variation in the assessment of students under appropriate circumstances. These make it clear that students must register with Student Services, produce valid evidence and seek appropriate concessions well in advance of the assessment (6 weeks). Appropriate concessions are arranged between the chair of the Assessment Board and the Academic Registrar.

Tutors are not able to vary the assessment themselves without such authority.

3 Assignment submission, grades and feedback

ALL written coursework submissions must be made electronically unless you are informed otherwise by your Programme Leader. Electronic submission of assignments is available through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) that your module uses. Also, plagiarism tools that allow electronic submission such as Turnitin may be used. Plagiarism detection tools will be accessed via the VLE that your course uses.

Some coursework can't be submitted electronically, in which case your tutors will have received approval for submission by another means from the Academic Group Leader and they will inform you what the submission arrangements are.

Please note that once you make your final submission you will not be able to submit a modified version. Depending on how your tutors set the system up, you may or may not be able to make a draft submission.

It is important that you understand that plagiarism detection tools will check what you submit against a vast database of sources including the Internet, books, magazines, journals and work submitted by students at this university and any other university using the system. It identifies suspected cheating (e.g. plagiarism – trying to pass off somebody else's work as yours). See the section on avoiding plagiarism starting on the academic misconduct website for important advice about avoiding plagiarism.

4 Assignment feedback

Feedback on individual items of assessment can be formal (such as on a signed grade / comments form) or informal (such as advice from a tutor in a tutorial). So feedback is not just your grade, nor even just the comments written on your grade/comments form: it is advice you get from your tutor and sometimes your peers about how your work is progressing, how well you have done, what further things you might do. It might be spoken advice, or written on a form, or it might be in and email or a text: it's all feedback, and it's all vital to your development.

5 Prompt feedback: "How long will I have to wait for feedback on my assignment"?

We recognise the value of prompt feedback on work submitted. Other than in exceptional circumstances (such as might be caused by staff illness) all our students can expect their assignment work to be marked and feedback provided to them not less than **three working weeks** from the date of submission. However, note that that such feedback will be provisional and unconfirmed by the Assessment Board and may change (see section 8, below, about this issue).

6 Collecting marked work – time limits

You are able to collect "physical" (i.e. non-electronic) marked coursework, examination scripts and related feedback comments for a period of up to three months, commencing forty days after the date your results are published (the 'start' date).

If you wish to have access such material after this three month period has elapsed, then under the provisions of the Data Protection Act you will be required to make a 'data subject access request' to the University and pay the prevailing charge.

After twelve months has elapsed from the defined start date, the University can permanently destroy your uncollected assessed work and related feedback comments by shredding or incineration.

7 A guide to what's expected in assessment

On the assessment web-pages there are tables at each of the academic levels FHEQ 4,5,6 (corresponding to years 1, 2, 3 of a full-time undergraduate degree) and level FHEQ7 (corresponding to master's level). These are general guidelines for use by staff and students. They try to communicate what's expected in a range of academic skills at the different levels. They may help you understand what is expected and marks you are given. However, a note of caution: because the courses within the University are so diverse, they may only be a rough guide. Also note that they relate best to written work (essays, reports etc.) and not to practical work. Some programmes are developing their own tables of a similar type to better capture the essence of what's expected in their subject areas.

8 Unconfirmed marks / grades / feedback should not be relied on as finalised

Please note that for some courses you may be given feedback and a mark / grade **before** the Assessment Board has met to officially confirm results. Such marks / grades / feedback are provisional, unconfirmed, and may change.

Any verbal or written mark / grade / feedback given before the assessment board is provisional and subject to change. You must not rely on such an indication given to you before a board as being in any way confirmed. It is not. It may change because of the normal operation of processes of internal moderation (a process involving tutors comparing each other's marking) and external examination (independent examiners from other universities inspecting student work and comparing standards on this course with their knowledge of standards elsewhere). It is normal for these processes to cause marks / grades / feedback to change. See section 0 below for an explanation of internal and external moderation.

In particular please note that individual tutors do not have the authority to confirm your mark / grade / feedback. Only the assessment board has that authority. Tutors make recommendations to the assessment board, they do not decide themselves.

9 "Moderation" – what it is, and how it affects your assessment

Moderation is a process used to ensure that the marks awarded for coursework and examinations are as reliable and fair as possible. It involves obtaining second opinions on students' work. Usually, a sample is chosen for this process, but sometimes (for example if a programme or a member of staff is new) all work might be moderated.

Internal moderation is where a second opinion is sought from another tutor belonging to the programme. In cases where a programme is offered at partner colleges, that other tutor might be from a different institution, but teaching the same programme.

External moderation is where an "external examiner" (a person independent of the university, usually from another university, with considerable experience of the

subject) inspects students' assessed work and reports formally on standards being applied.

External moderation follows internal moderation. Either might cause a mark, a grade, or feedback to change. How this change is determined is not predictable: it does not, for example, involve any kind of average being calculated from the original grade, moderated grade and externally examined grade.

For this reason, you must understand that marks, grades and feedback given to you early (because prompt feedback is beneficial) may subsequently change.

You can find details of your programme's current External Examiner in your Programme Handbook.

10 Extension of deadlines for coursework

Normally an extension up to seven days can be granted by the relevant Academic Group Leader (your tutors can tell you who that is) if you are based at Bolton or your Link Tutor/Course Manager if you are based at a partner institution. Extensions longer than seven days will require you to apply for Mitigating Circumstances (further information can be found about the Mitigating Circumstances process and how to apply on the University website).

11 Penalties for the late submission of assessed work

If coursework is submitted later than permitted without accepted mitigating circumstances or an extension approved by the Academic Group Leader then a penalty will be applied. This is outlined in the undergraduate and postgraduate assessment regulations and is summarised below.

Up to 7 calendar days late	= 10 marks subtracted but if the assignment would normally gain a pass mark, then the final mark to be no lower than the pass mark for the assignment.
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Up to 10 calendar days late	= 20 marks subtracted but if the assignment would normally gain a pass mark, then the final mark to be no lower than the pass mark for the assignment.
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More than 10 calendar days late	= 1 mark awarded.
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If coursework is not submitted at all it will be recorded as unsatisfactory (mark of 0).

Late submission for assessments that use pass / fail grades only

For modules that use pass / fail only (i.e. where no percentage grades are used) late submission penalties cannot be applied and so a student who submits after the due date / time will have their work returned unmarked and a fail for non-submission will be recommended to the assessment board.

As with all other programmes, programme leaders can grant a five calendar day extension as above.

12 Penalties for Exceeding Specified Word Limits in Written Assignments

This section is a summarised version of the University regulations. You should refer to the relevant part of the undergraduate or postgraduate assessment regulations for the definitive versions.

If there is a word limit for an assessment you will be informed about it in the brief you receive for the assessment together with information about whether penalties will be applied for exceeding the word limit. The word limit does not normally include references, rubric associated with tables, figures, diagrams or appendices and reference lists at the end of the assessment but will include any direct quotations.

You may be required to include the number of words used at the end of the assessment.

The standard penalties for exceeding the word limit are listed below:

Up to 10% over the specified **word length** = no penalty

10 – 20% over the specified indicative word length = 5 marks subtracted but if the assessment would normally gain a pass mark, then the final mark to be no lower than the pass mark for the assessment.

More than 20% over the indicative word length = if the assessment would normally gain a pass mark, then the final mark to be the pass mark for the assessment.

13 Marks, grades and degree classifications for undergraduate courses

The undergraduate regulations can be found at:

<http://www.bolton.ac.uk/Students/PoliciesProceduresRegulations/AllStudents/Taught-Programmes.aspx>

Honour degree, Higher National Diploma and Certificate and Foundation Degree Classifications

Grade Descriptor HND/HNC/FD	%Mark	BA/BSc (Hons)	
		Class	Class
Work of Exceptional Quality Distinction	70+	First Class-1 st	
Work of Very Good Quality	60-69	Upper Second Class-2i	Merit
Work of Good Quality	50-59	Lower Second Class–2ii	Pass

Work of Satisfactory Quality	40-49	Third Class–3 rd	Pass
Borderline Fail	35-39		

Grade Descriptor Details:

Work of Exceptional Quality

Virtually all of the relevant information/skills accurately deployed. Excellent and exceptional grasp of theoretical, conceptual, analytical and practical elements. Very effective integration of theory, practice and information in relation to the objectives of the assessment. Substantial evidence of originality and creativity as appropriate to the subject.

Work of Very Good Quality

Most of the relevant information/skills accurately deployed. Good grasp of theoretical, conceptual, analytical, practical elements. Effective integration of theory, practice and information in relation to the objectives of the assessment. Significant evidence of originality and creativity as appropriate to the subject.

Work of Good Quality

Some of the relevant information/skills accurately deployed. Adequate grasp of theoretical, conceptual, analytical and practical elements. Fair integration of theory, practice and information in relation to the objectives of the assessment. Some evidence of originality and creativity as appropriate to the subject.

Work of Satisfactory Quality

The intended learning outcomes are achieved at the threshold standard. Basic deployment of information/ skills. Some grasp of theoretical, conceptual, analytical and practical elements. Some integration of theory, practice and information in relation to the objectives of the assessment. Limited evidence of originality and creativity as appropriate to the subject.

Borderline

Deficiencies or omissions in information, skills, theoretical, conceptual, practical elements. Limited integration of these in relation to the assessed work's objectives. Some relevant content and marginal evidence of skills, knowledge or creativity which could, in the light of overall performance, constitute the basis for consideration for an overall pass grade at the examiners' discretion.

Fail

Little evidence of the information, skills, theoretical, conceptual, analytical, creative or practical elements relevant to the assessment. Mainly irrelevant and/or incorrect information provided. Scant evidence of understanding of the requirements of the assessment.

14 Postgraduate assessment regulations – the main differences

The assessment regulations for the postgraduate modular framework are presented at:

<http://www.bolton.ac.uk/Students/PoliciesProceduresRegulations/AllStudents/Taught-Programmes.aspx>

The main differences between undergraduate and postgraduate regulations are (in outline):

	Undergraduate	Postgraduate
Number of attempts	Normally up to three	Normally restricted to two
Pass mark for module	Weighted average 40% or above	Weighted average 40% or above with no component less than 40%
Awards	First, 2 i), 2 ii), 3 rd etc	Pass and in the case of some programmes Pass with Distinction

Note that for all types of programmes, the requirements of professional bodies may mean that variations to the above arrangements are in place. You will be informed by the programme team if this is the case.