St Mary's University Assessment Policy

September 2020

Key changes

A brief overview of the key changes made to the Assessment Policy is provided below:

Changes to internal and external context (Sections 2 & 3)	Updates are required in both sections to reflect changes in the University's structure and key committees, and internal innovations such as the new Curriculum Framework, and external developments such as the new UK Quality Code and emergence of a new HE Regulator.
Section 6: Principles of assessment has been enhanced	More detailed information and examples are provided, which illustrate how principles might be exemplified in practice. This ensures that they are not just abstract principles but 'grounded' in realities of good practice.
Substantive amendments to Principle 4 (Amount of Assessment)	Further clarification added
Substantive amendments to Principle 5 (Good academic practice)	Further clarification added
Substantive amendments to Principle 6 (Marking practices)	Further clarification added
Substantive amendments to Principle 9 (Student outcomes clear)	Clarification re 'exit awards' on certain programmes
Substantive amendments to Principle 12 (Support for resit students)	Greater detail on expectations regarding the support provided to resit students and communications with these students by academic and professional services staff.
Addition of 2 new 'Principles '	**Assessment Literacy** (Principle 3) – which explains how programme teams will build assessment literacy with students. This is important as an addition since Assessment Literacy is one of the 'Fundamental Literacies' within our new Curriculum Framework **Inclusive Assessment** (Principle 15) – which explains how inclusive assessment can be developed at the programme level. It includes an Inclusive Assessment Checklist for programme Teams. Inclusive practices feature prominently in our new Curriculum Framework, so building an alignment here within the Assessment Policy is very important.
Addition of 4 new appendices	**Appendix 1** – Exceptions to the Online Submission Policy **Appendix 2** – Exceptions to the 3 working weeks submission requirement **Appendix 3** – NUS Assessment & Feedback Benchmark Tool. Assessment and feedback remain one of the weaker areas within the University's NSS scores, and the NUS Benchmark provides a VERY usable reflective tool for programme teams to measure their practices in relation to sector best practice. **Appendix 4** – Link to the revised Online Submission Policy.
Amendment to Principle 15	The University's assessment policy stipulates what is included/excluded in word limits – e.g. whether headings, quotations etc. contribute towards the word count to avoid any inconsistencies in practice across the university and potential lack of parity in students' experience and outcomes

1 Introduction

The Assessment Policy sets out University's principles for systematically managing the processes and procedures for the assessment and feedback of students' work. The Policy applies to all taught programmes at Levels 3 to 7, including those taught through collaborative arrangements.

The importance of assessment to the student learning experience is well established across the Higher Education (HE) sector. Students regard assessment as essential and as such assessment is commonly considered to be a key driver of the curriculum. St Mary's recognises that high-quality assessment practices are an essential element of the student experience and that the outcomes of assessment can influence the student experience, opportunity and success. Student assessment takes several forms, principally diagnostic, formative and summative modes of assessment.

The purpose of assessment is to enable students to develop and demonstrate their potential. To achieve this assessment should:

- motivate and challenge the learner;
- stimulate learning and provide feedback;
- test achievement and accredit learning objectively against intended learning outcomes;
- provide a mechanism for ensuring quality assurance;
- provide a consistent and reliable mechanism for the recommendation of an award;
- assist staff in evaluating the effectiveness of their teaching.

The role of assessment is complex and interdependent, and it is important to note that the differing purposes are often at odds with each other. This can create tension, in particular between assessment as a vehicle of measurement and to promote learning. This tension may be challenging to resolve and balancing the importance of the opposing elements presents an ongoing challenge for academics in assessment design. The necessary focus on assessment as a measurement tool by students, academic staff and programmes (through module results and overall degree attainment achieved) places a high level of importance on the marks achieved by students.

The fundamental challenge facing academic staff in designing an assessment strategy at the programme and/or module level is, therefore, ensuring that the focus on student learning and student satisfaction is balanced with the need to provide a means of measuring student achievement and attainment. Overall, the University believes that achieving this balance and maintaining it on an ongoing basis is likely to be facilitated by programme teams regularly reflecting critically on their approach, and draw on tools such as the NUS Assessment & Feedback Benchmarking Tool (See Appendix 3).

2 Internal Context

St Mary's has a strong reputation for providing high-quality learning opportunities within a supportive environment. The institutional vision for teaching and learning is to provide a distinctive and high-quality academic experience for students in an inclusive, focused learning community that allows students to fulfil their academic and career potential, and which is highly regarded across the sector for its excellence in teaching and learning.

Over the last decade, the University has undergone significant changes to align with the sector expectations (i.e. Revised Quality Code, Ofs) and more recently the need, highlighted in the Higher Education Review (HER) 2015, for the University to embrace an embedded, university-wide and systematic approach to enhancement of the student experience. The introduction of new curriculum framework reflecting the University's focus on inclusivity is central in helping the University to address its commitments in recent Access & Participation Plans (e.g. that for 2019/20, and that for 2020-2024/5) in terms of improving access and outcomes for widening participation (WP) students, and closing our existing attainment gaps.

A bold curriculum framework is crucial to developing our institutional and subject-level narrative around enhancement as we approach the next iteration of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) in 2021/22. St Mary’s has a realistic ambition to achieve a ‘Gold’ rating in the next TEF exercise, but this will be partly influenced by our strategic approach to enhancement. The new curriculum provided a particular opportunity for staff to review and refresh their programme/module aims and objectives, and to consider their assessment strategy in relation to this fully.

The Programme approval (i.e. Validation/Revalidation) process has also been updated, which has provided the impetus for students to be involved in the design of the programme at an early phase, providing an opportunity to place students at the heart of curriculum development in a more systematic manner across the institution. Students’ involvement as full panel members to University Validations and Re-validations and emphasis on focussed meetings on design of Assessment and Feedback at programme development phase will place students, more than ever before, at the heart of assessment design.

St Mary’s results in the 2019 National Student Survey (NSS) reveal that while students rate their overall experiences at St Mary’s very highly (St Mary’s was ranked No.1 and No.2 in London for student satisfaction in 2018 and 2019 respectively) the NSS scores on assessment and feedback are lower than for other areas. Assessment and feedback have been deemed a priority area for continued enhancement from 2019/20 onwards.

In response to the 2019 NSS results, the Centre for Teaching Excellence and Student Success (CTESS), in consultation with the Associate Deans responsible for Student experience within the faculties, will be planning a review of the Annual Monitoring Processes to identify good practice in the area of assessment and feedback which serves to enhance this aspect of the student experience.

The revisions to this Assessment Policy will assist in enhancing the student learning experience in relation to both assessment and feedback.

The Assessment Policy puts reasonable constraints on assessment to avoid inappropriate diversification or proliferation; however, staff are free, within these constraints, to design flexible and creative methods of assessment and of aligning assessments with learning outcomes.

3 External Context

The nature and role of assessment and feedback have come under increasing scrutiny over recent years, mainly due to the introduction of the National Student Survey, and the creation of the Office for Students. Key areas of concern nationally include the timeliness of student feedback and the role of feedback in enabling future student development. Universities are working hard to diversify assessments, to build in ‘authenticity’, and to improve the impact of feedback as a driver for enhancement. St Mary’s is mindful of these sectoral changes and the importance of ensuring that the assessments undertaken by our students drive the development of sound subject (domain) knowledge as articulated in QAA subject benchmark statements, but also the skills literacies, graduate qualities and graduate attributes highlighted in our Curriculum Framework.

4 Relationship to Internal and External Frameworks

This Assessment Policy provides information on the ways in which St Mary's undertakes to assess its students and the principles which underpin these. The Policy outlines the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in the assessment of students.

Some areas of assessment practice, such as the extenuating circumstances system, are managed through the Academic Regulations. The Academic Regulations are updated annually and are made available to all staff via StaffNet. The Academic Regulations also form the basis of relevant information in programme handbooks and module guides for students.

The Academic Regulations relating to assessment are primarily concerned with maintaining academic standards and ensuring fairness, consistency and transparency through the assessment process, with the outcomes of assessment leading to the award of degrees and other qualifications. The assessment guidelines within the Academic Regulations should be read in conjunction with this Policy.

The design of curricula and assessment at St Mary's is in line with a number of external reference points. These include:

- QAA Quality Code for Higher Education (2018), in particular Advice and Guidance on Assessments
- The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) (October 2014);
- QAA Subject Benchmark statements;
- Relevant Professional and Statutory Regulatory Body (PSRB) accreditation guidelines;
- Southern England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer (SEEC, 2019) credit level descriptors.

In order to assure and enhance the quality of the standards of programmes and modules, a range of monitoring processes takes place across the academic year using both internal and external review. These include the following:

- Scrutiny of Annual Programme Review reports by the Faculty and University Academic Development Committees;
- Consideration of institutional statistics and survey data by relevant University committees;
- Updating of relevant strategies, action plans and policies, which are approved and/or monitored by the University Academic Development Committee (and also by Academic Board);
- Regular scrutiny of programmes by external examiners;
- Involvement of external reviewers (and PSRBs and/or employers as appropriate) in the validation and revalidation of new and existing programmes;
- QAA Quality and Standards Review
- Review and inspection by other regulatory bodies such as Ofsted.

The Assessment Policy is one of the documents related to the core processes for teaching and learning quality and enhancement at St Mary's, and therefore informs the internal monitoring and review mechanisms outlined above.

5 Changes to Assessment Policy since 2016

Over the 2018/19 academic year, the Dean of Learning and Teaching (CTESS) with support from Quality & Standards (QS) commenced a review of the University's Assessment practices and to propose changes which are intended to improve the student experience, align assessment with the expectations set out in the Curriculum Framework, while reflecting best practice in the sector. The Review Group had strong academic representation from the Faculties/Institutes, professional services (including Registry) and also a strong student voice via membership of the SMSU President and an independent student member.

As a result of the feedback received, the principles and process outlined in Section 6 remain primarily unchanged from the 2012 version of the Assessment Policy. The most significant changes are the updating of the narrative on the implementation of Principle 13, which reflects changes in staff development since 2012, plus the addition of Principles 13-15 in response to the sector changes.

6 Principles of Assessment

The University believes that the assessment should:

- promote student learning – promoting deep as opposed to surface learning
- be fair and equitable – providing opportunities for all students to engage effectively
- be transparent – the purpose and relevance of the assessment should be explained clearly in plain English
- be reliable and valid – they should be robust and appropriate (i.e. properly aligned) to the learning outcomes being assessed
- be evidence-informed – draw on examples of good practice and/or assessment research in the subject or the sector
- be accessible – they should be in a format that all students can engage with irrespective of their disability or background
- be sustainable. - they should take into account likely future changes in the student body and be pertinent to more than one cohort or year group
- be inclusive – providing a level playing field for students and reflecting the diversity of the student body
- be authentic – be relevant to the subject taught, to the students' future career ambitions, and to the kinds of challenges likely to be faced in the future workplace
- be timely – the design should reflect the stage of the course, build on previous assignments and feedback should be provided at the point where its impact is likely to be maximised – especially in cases where the students are required to draw directly on the feedback on one assignment to inform their completion of a subsequent exercise.

Inclusive assessment practice means:

- Ensuring that an assessment strategy includes a range of assessment formats
- Ensuring assessment methods are culturally inclusive
- Considering religious observances when setting deadlines
- Considering school holidays and the impact on students with childcare responsibilities when setting deadlines
- Considering students' previous educational background and providing support for unfamiliar activities, e.g., for students inexperienced to group work or exams
- Considering the needs of students with disabilities

(JISC, Feb 2016)

The principle of Inclusive Assessment is addressed in greater detail in **Principle 16** of this Policy.

The University believes that assessment processes should:

- maintain standards;
- provide timely and effective feedback on learning;
- evaluate performance against the intended learning outcomes;
- be evaluated regularly (with feedback from staff, students and others);
- demonstrate progression;
- develop student self-regulation in learning;
- recognise the value of technology to enhance the assessment process, where appropriate (e.g. e-submission via Turnitin)

In order to aid programme teams to self-evaluate the effectiveness of their assessment strategies at the programme level, and to align with identified best practice in the sector, all programme teams are encouraged to draw on the NUS Assessment & Feedback Benchmarking Tool which is provided as an appendix to this Policy (See Appendix 3)

Principle 1: Assessment practice should promote effective learning.

Implementation of Principle 1:

- The design of the assessment should not be separated from the design of the overall curriculum. Learning and teaching methods and assessment should be fully integrated to promote student learning;
- Assessment should be designed to build upon and consolidate knowledge, understanding and skills;
- Assessment should provide an appropriate and varied range of both formative and summative methods across different subject areas which enables students to demonstrate how they meet the intended learning outcomes of the module or programme;
- Students should be provided with timely, constructive and formative feedback (from staff or peers) which allows students to improve performance in the next assessment, including feedback on oral assessments;
- Students should experience a variety of assessment methods to accommodate different learning and communication preferences;
- In some areas which are required to fulfil requirements of PSRBs, assessments are designed to assure the practitioner’s fitness to practise and to safeguard the public.
- Assessments should be designed with due consideration to inclusivity and diversity

Aspects which support student learning may include:

- Extended assignments that involve students researching a topic and producing work based on their research;
- Peer assessed activities during formal teaching sessions or practical sessions where students can undertake peer review or peer marking, to enhance their understanding of an assessment task and how to improve their performance;
- The use of reflective accounts on student performance provided by the student or informed by feedback from others;
- The involvement of students in the evaluation of assessment practices;
- The use of assessment outcomes in a positive manner to provide advice on improving the performance of a student.
- The use of exemplar work of previous students to explore and clarify the characteristics of high-quality submission

Principle 2: Appropriate and timely feedback should be provided to students on assessed work in a way that promotes learning and facilitates improvement but does not increase the burden of assessment.

Implementation of Principle 2:

- Feedback should be sufficient, constructive and timely in respect of all types of assessment;
- Feedback should be provided at a time when students can make most use of it, preferably during a module in response to a formative assessment task, rather than at the end of the module – in order to promote this; academic staff may like to consider fully the resources committed to feedback to ensure that an emphasis is placed on formative modes;
- All feedback should be provided to students as soon as possible, and generally within 15 working[1] days/ 3 working weeks after submission of a summative piece of work;
- It is strongly recommended that staff provide an element of electronic feedback to all students to ensure that feedback is received promptly;
- Staff must ensure that marks, even if the marks are provisional and have yet to be ratified, are provided to students alongside the electronic feedback;
- In order to manage resources effectively, the use of a hierarchy of feedback may be appropriate – with students requesting more detailed one-to-one follow-up on an individual basis;
- Student learning may be facilitated by opportunities for self and peer assessment during the assessment process;

In managing student expectation of feedback on their progression and attainment, staff are expected to:

- Publish details regarding the timing, nature and extent of feedback that students can expect in programme and module handbooks (including electronic handbooks);
- Relate feedback to intended learning outcomes and assessment criteria, in order to help students, identify areas for improvement as well as commending them for achievement;
- Implement oral feedback, either on a group or individual basis, as a means of supplementing or replacing other forms of feedback;
- Provide guidance about the point in the module or programme where it is no longer appropriate for a member of staff to continue providing feedback on student work.
- Provide feedback on examinations in one of two forms determined by the module convenor or Programme Director:
    - Generic group feedback that highlights what made for good and poor performance for each of the questions in the examination. This feedback is made available on Moodle/VLE for all the students on the module

    OR

    - Individual feedback for each script/student

Principle 3: Provide students with the assessment literacy to undertake assessments effectively and to achieve desired outcomes
One of the key elements required for assessment to be effective is that students understand how and why they are being assessed and how to maximise their performance in the assignments, for example, their understanding of assessment criteria and how to act on feedback. Assessment literacy is one of

[1] Working days are all those except Saturdays, Sundays, public holidays and periods when the University is closed

the key ‘Literacies’ contained in our new Curriculum Framework. It, therefore, needs to be at the heart of a programme-level approach to designing assessment and feedback in the future. It is a well-established phenomenon in the sector that students’ understanding of assessment and the assumptions they make in relation to assessment and feedback are different from those of teachers/lecturers.

Implementation of Principle 3:

- Staff should ensure that students are able to understand the language of marking criteria and standards by which they will be evaluated.
- Students should receive advice and guidance on how to manage group work[2] exercises before formal assessment. How individual grades are derived should be set out clearly with due consideration to the fairness of assessment outcomes.
- The University marking scales should be unpacked and explained/discussed with students.
- Assessments should include clear purpose and rationale, and opportunities for clarification, building common understanding and development either in class, online or via some online audience response system or even post-it notes where students have the opportunity to ask questions anonymously.
- Staff should explain how the assignments will be marked and how the Programme Team will maintain the rigour and consistency of marking standards. This should include an explanation of any standardisation exercises conducted by the team, any moderation processes, and the role of the external examiner in reviewing marking standards.

Guidance for academic staff
Academic staff can address the principle of building students’ assessment literacy by:

1. Developing clear and concise assessment briefs – e.g. in which the rationale for the assessment (i.e. why it is ‘authentic’) and marking criteria for the assessment in question are both explicitly addressed.
2. Explaining assessments in greater detail in class and providing opportunities for anonymised collective ‘seeking of clarification’ – e.g. by using online tools like audience response systems (Mentimeter, Vevox, Poll Everywhere, etc.).
3. Unpacking assessment marking scales/descriptors – e.g. taking time to collectively review, discuss and interrogate the University’s published marking scales for coursework, dissertations, presentations etc.
4. Making use of ‘exemplars’ – e.g. use of anonymised examples of student work to exemplify both strong and weak practices and effective and less effective means of addressing the assessment criteria.
5. Carrying out student-led mock marking exercises – e.g. getting students to collectively ‘mark’ and provide feedback on past examples of good and poor student coursework.
6. Involving students in the ‘design’ or negotiation of assessment criteria for the assignments they are going to have to engage with – e.g. empowering students to take ownership of both the design of assessments and the criteria their work will be assessed against. An example of co-creation or ‘partnership-working’ in action.

Principle 4: The amount and timing of assessment enable effective and appropriate *measurement of students’ achievement of intended* learning outcomes.

Implementation of Principle 4:

[2] The policy on group work is currently under development

- Staff are expected to link the organisation and delivery of the curriculum, including formal teaching, to opportunities for students to demonstrate the extent of their achievement of the intended learning outcomes through appropriately scheduled assessment;
- Excessive amounts of summative assessment should be avoided. No more than two summative assessments are typically expected for each 20-credit module;
- Except for work placement modules, attendance should not be a component of any assessment which contributes to the overall module mark;
- Staff should promote and support student learning through appropriately designed and timed formative assessment. Formative assessment should provide opportunities for students to self-monitor their progress, and should provide students with feedback likely to impact positively (if acted upon) in their summative assessment(s).
- Staff to employ early 'diagnostic' assessments' that help to identify students who may benefit from additional support (e.g. referral to study skills support via Student Services, the Library or via Learning Development Lecturers in the Faculties).
- Staff should ensure that the assessment burden for students and staff is manageable while ensuring that students have sufficient opportunity to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes;
- In addition to the publication of the nature and timing of programme and module assessments, care should be taken to ensure that the assessment schedule is fully available for students on single and joint honours programmes;
- Staff should ensure that where possible, assessments conform to the Assessment Tariff. Although not prescriptive, the proposed word length or time limits should be supported by clear rationale normally stemming from discipline-specific or PSRB requirements.
- The assessment burden for students taking single and joint honours programmes should be comparable and consistent;
- The overall time is taken between completion of an assessment by a student, and the date at which the results are required, either by the student or the institution should be kept under review to ensure that those involved in marking student work have enough time to complete it satisfactorily.

Principle 5: Students are expected to adopt ethical academic conduct in respect of assessment and seek to ensure they are aware of their responsibilities.

Implementation of Principle 5:

- Staff should ensure that students are aware of the principles of good academic practise in relation to assessments. This should include any specific requirements imposed by PSRBs or specific adaptations pertinent to a particular subject/discipline.
- Students must receive information at institutional, programme and module-level about the consequences of academic misconduct;
- Procedures regarding academic conduct must be applied consistently across faculties in line with the Academic Regulations (Section G Part 30);
- Assessments should be designed in order to reduce the opportunity for academic misconduct by students – requiring students to draw on data specific to the programme/module or to address current/topical issues pertinent to the subject can help in this regard.
- In order to promote the equitable management of student submissions of written coursework, all coursework must be submitted online via Turnitin in order to provide scrutiny by staff – staff training for Turnitin is ongoing to enhance consistency in applying this method. Exceptions to this rule can be approved for assessments where this is not possible, such as examinations and artefacts. Exceptions are approved by the Head of Registry Services following guidelines approved by the Academic Development Committee. Students should not be asked to submit an additional hard copy unless also approved by the Associate Dean Student Experience such

circumstances are expected to be rare. Indicative exceptions are set out in Appendix 1 of this Policy. A new Policy on Online Submission of Coursework is in place for 2019/20 and can be found on the Registry Simmspace/StaffNet pages. A copy is provided in **Appendix 4** of this Assessment Policy.
- Students on programmes that are regulated by partner institutions, i.e. collaborative partners like PCP SCITT are free to deploy their plagiarism detection mechanisms supported by these partners.
- Students must receive guidance on the Ethics application process (which is intended to provide students with opportunities to review any significant ethical risks) in cases where this might apply (e.g. certain dissertation research methodologies).

Principle 6: The mechanisms for marking and moderating marks are fair and transparent.

Implementation of Principle 6:

- Assessment criteria must be clearly publicised to ensure that marking is carried out fairly, consistently and anonymously[3] across all subjects – this relates equally to students submitting work as well as staff involved in the marking process;
- For the written summative assessment, students would normally be expected to adhere to a word count not exceeding 10% of the specified word limit. A penalty may be imposed for exceeding the specified word count set out for each programme. Details of such penalties must be clearly publicised in programme handbooks and module guides;
- It is expected that the quality assurance mechanisms relating to the marking process (e.g. internal and external moderation) are also publicised and explained so that students can be reassured that appropriate checks and balances are in place to support consistent marking practices, equity and fairness;
- Internal moderation processes must be applied and evidenced appropriately (see Appendix C (Marking and Moderation Practices) of the Assessment Policy and Section G (Assessment Regulations) of the Academic Regulations).
- Student assessment is anonymised utilising the student ID number or other means. Exceptions to this rule are for assessments where this is not practical, such as presentations and artefacts. All exceptions to the rule of anonymity must be approved by the Head of Registry Services.

Principle 7: Assessment is conducted with rigour, probity and fairness and with due regard for security.

Implementation of Principle 7:

Clear policies and regulations are provided in covering all aspects of the conduct of assessment as part of the Academic Regulations (see Section G) which include the following:

- Extenuating circumstances;
- The accommodation of students who need additional assessment arrangements (for instance, those with disabilities or temporary medical condition(s) or injuries;
- Guidance for invigilators;
- Penalties for late submission of assessed work;

[3] Anonymity is at the point of marking only.

- The management of assessment results arising from different learning situations such as, for example, study abroad and accredited prior learning;
- Capping of marks at 40% for re-assessments.
- Security and the retention of student assessed work by the University (including the duration of the retention period)
- Academic misconduct process
- Academic appeals

Principle 8: Assessment decisions are recorded and documented accurately and systematically and that the decisions of relevant assessment panels and examination boards are communicated as quickly as possible.

Implementation of Principle 8:

- It is expected that students are provided with information about who will provide them with results and how and when this will occur;
- Students should know who to contact if they need clarification of their results;
- When disclosing assessment results to students, staff must ensure that clear guidance is provided about whether the result is final, or whether it is subject to confirmation by an assessment panel or examination board whose decision may include input from an external examiner;
- Where provisional results are provided for students, it is essential that they are not in any doubt about the standing of the results and, if they are not final, how and when they will be ratified;
- If the GradeMark grade aggregation tool is used in individual modules, students must be made fully aware of the standing of the results, particularly when the results on GradeMark are not in line with the overall module results;
- Overall it is important that all individuals concerned in the assessment process, especially the student, are aware of the different stages of the process and are aware that results may be provisional if released before formal approval by the relevant committee.

Principle 9: Clear information must be provided to staff and students about specific assessment outcomes or other criteria that must be met to fulfil the requirements of PSRBs.

Implementation of Principle 9:

All applicants and students must receive, as soon as possible, information about how PSRB accreditation affects any module or programmes for which they are applying or are registered.

This should comprise the exact terms on which the accreditation is based including:

- Where appropriate, the modules that must be passed, and at what levels, to meet the requirements of the relevant PSRB;
- Whether the institution is in the process of seeking accreditation from a PSRB;
- Details regarding the status of overseas applicants as soon as possible;
- Where appropriate, applicants and students may find it helpful to be made aware of relevant contacts in PSRBs whom they can approach for further information;
- Expectations after graduating from an accredited programme.
- Fitness to practice at the point of registration with PSRBs
- In cases where students fail to complete all the assessments/tests required to meet the requirements of the PSRB, it must be explained what sub-degree or alternative ‘awards’ may

be offered to or conferred upon the student by the Exam Board (e.g. on programmes such as the PGCE)

Principle 10: Clear rules and regulations for progressing from one stage of a programme to another and for qualifying for an award are publicised and implemented.

Implementation of Principle 10:

- The results required to pass each stage and to progress to the next stage of a programme need to be clearly stated and explained to students at the beginning of the programme;
- It is vital to make clear the effect that passing or failing an individual module will have on the student's eligibility to take other modules, as well as the overall implications for progression and completion;
- The procedures for combining individual marks and/or grades to come to a final programme mark and rules for progression are available for students, staff and examiners (see Academic Regulations Section G).
- In cases where sub-degree exit awards are in place on undergraduate or post-graduate programmes, the circumstances in which students might qualify for such an award – e.g. at the end of a stage of study - should be clearly articulated and explained.

Principle 11: The policies for the membership, procedures, powers and accountability of assessment panels and boards of examiners are clear and consistent, and publicised and implemented effectively.

Implementation of Principle 11:

Guidance relating to this Principle is provided in the Academic Regulations (see Section G Parts 9 and 10).

Principle 12: The information on resits and reassessments should be clear, personalised and provided in a timely manner. This should include additional support arrangements offered to resitting students

Implement of Principle 12:

- Module Leaders with resit students should embed appropriate revision/support/guidance sessions for these students into their modules. If Module Leads believe that additional support for resit students can or should be provided by central services, they should liaise with these services promptly to ensure the necessary support is in place.
- Resitting students should be communicated within a clear and timely manner. Staff should make use of positive messaging/tone in their communications. This principle applies to programme staff and staff in the relevant professional services
- Staff should make effective use of repeated, tailored 'reminders' with enhanced personalisation of content.in order to ensure that the nature, duration and timing of the resit is clearly explained
- Staff to support students through University-wide initiative like "Resit Ready."
- All Students (including Home and International) who find it difficult to cope with the costs of returning to the University for Resit exams should be offered the option of an alternative assessment.
- Students who fail in autumn semester exams (requiring to resit them) should be able to resit then with the main May exam period

- Students should be made aware of the academic regulations around reassessments/resits and the procedure to submit an academic appeal in case of a procedural error or irregularity on the part of the University.
- Staff should explain to students what the consequences of a resit failure might be.

Principle 13: All individuals involved in the assessment of students must be competent to undertake their roles and responsibilities.

Implementation of Principle 13:

- All new staff at St Mary's involved in the assessment of students will be required to attend an Academic Induction event and a follow-up session on assessment, which covers key aspects of the Assessment Policy;
- All new academic staff without a HE teaching qualification or with less than two years of experience in HE delivery/teaching will be required to complete one of two Higher Education Academy (HEA) accredited pathways at St Mary's:
    - Staff with less than two years' experience - PGCert Academic Practice (Higher Education) programme which leads to Fellowship of the HEA upon completion;
    - Experienced staff not holding a teaching qualification - The Accredited Individual Route (AIR), in which staff can achieve Associate Fellowship, Fellowship or Senior Fellowship of the HEA depending on their experience and level of responsibility.

  The PGCert and the AIR are mapped to the UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning, which includes assessing and providing feedback to students as one of its five Areas of Activity.

- Professional development opportunities will also be offered to staff, including those in collaborative partner institutions, through the St Mary's Academic Development Framework. The types of sessions offered include the following:
    - Optimising the effectiveness of staff time spent on assessing students' work;
    - Assessment design;
    - Requirements and purposes of formative and summative assessment;
    - Assessment and feedback;
    - Minimising plagiarism and other forms of unfair practice;
    - Cultural differences and how these may affect student perceptions of assessment and their ability to perform assessment tasks successfully.

Principle 14: The University systematically evaluates and enhances its Assessment Policy, Assessment tariffs, Academic Regulations, and other associated regulations, policies and processes.

Implementation of Principle 14:

- The Assessment Policy and its associated appendices will be reviewed formally by the University every four years but will be monitored regularly by the Centre for Teaching Excellence and Student Success (CTESS), with enhancements proposed as and when necessary between the formal review;
- The Academic Regulations will be updated annually by Registry Services;
- Other associated policies, such as the Research-Enriched Teaching and Learning Policy, will usually be reviewed every four years with regular monitoring by the responsible department or officer in the interim.

- The Quality Assurance and Enhancement handbook will be reviewed annually;
- The information which may be used to evaluate and enhance the Assessment Policy includes
  - Academic Regulations and other associate documents:
  - Data on student retention, progression and attainment;
  - Data from the NSS, module evaluations and the national HEA surveys (UK Engagement Survey at the undergraduate level, Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey at postgraduate level);
  - Feedback from staff, employers and other stakeholders;
  - New Regulatory or PSRB developments or requirements
  - New external requirements or policy developments within the HE sector.
  - Staff to make use of sector-wide resources like NUS Benchmarking Tool to aid in the design of assessments, feedback and assessment-related processes (See Appendix 3)

Principle 15: The University's assessment policy stipulates what is included/excluded in word limits – e.g. whether headings, quotations etc. contribute towards the word count to avoid any inconsistencies in practice across the university and potential lack of parity in students' experience and outcomes.

Implementation of Principle 15:

For consistency of student experience across the University, all written assignments should adhere to the following guidelines on how to calculate word count (and thus whether a student's assignment falls within the word limit):

- The word count for an assignment includes everything in the main body of the text, including headings, quotations and in-text citations.
- The word count excludes the bibliography / list of references and any supporting appendices.
- The use of tables, figures and footnotes will vary according to subject of study; therefore course teams should specify in programme/module handbooks whether these will be included in or excluded from word counts**.**

Supporting evidence

The proposed text is based on common practice at other universities, for example:

- https://www.uwe.ac.uk/-/media/uwe/documents/about/policies/word_count_policy_2012.pdf
- https://www.soas.ac.uk/registry/degreeregulations/file142335.pdf
- https://my.cumbria.ac.uk/media/MyCumbria/Documents/3c.pdf
- https://handbooks.bmh.manchester.ac.uk/2019-20/snippet/faculty-assignment-word-count/

There is widespread consensus that headings, quotations and citations are included in word counts; and that references/bibliography and appendices are excluded. There is more variation in practice regarding the inclusion/exclusion of tables and footnotes, for example, hence our proposal that course teams be given discretion to set local policy on these elements.

Principle 16: Assessment should be inclusive

St Mary's is committed to addressing the attainment gaps between certain demographic elements in our study body. This commitment is enshrined in our Access & Participation Plan 2019/20, and in our five year APP for 2020-2025. Research in the sector indicates clearly that these different levels of attainment are the product of structural issues in the way that assessments are designed and deployed. The University is therefore committed to ensuring that the assessments we set for our students are more inclusive in their design such that all students have opportunities to engage with them effectively and to achieve their potential.

The University is committed to the principle that inclusive assessment is about fairness and equity and not reducing the ‘challenge’ associated with assessment: ‘Inclusive assessment does not compromise academic standards. It instead improves the chances for all students to demonstrate their ability to meet the learning outcomes’ (Plymouth University 2014).

Implementation of Principle 16:

Inclusive assessment goes beyond these fundamental principles referred to in Section 6 of this Policy and also encompasses the following:

- Purpose and rationale – Tutors explain the purpose, key features and rationale of each assessment and the criteria associated with each.
- The use of exemplars – Tutors, provide examples of previous student work (exemplars) where it is appropriate to do so, so students can explore and clarify the characteristics of high-quality submissions and develop their own approaches accordingly.
- Opportunities for clarification – Tutors build-in opportunities for students to seek clarification about the assessments they have been set, either in class, online or via some other means.
- Clear Assessment Briefs – Tutors ensure the assessment 'brief' is clear, accessible and (where possible) written in plain English, such that students understand precisely what it is they have been asked to 'do'.
- The balance between formative and summative – Tutors develop an appropriate balance between formative and summative assessments - give students opportunities to 'practice' their skills, understandings and build their confidence.
- Use 'feed-forward' – Tutors make effective use of feed-forwards - research suggests feedback is likely to be one of the most important drivers of students' learning, as long as it is focused, and strongly 'actionable' (i.e. students can take specific actions to address it).
- Diagnostic assessment – Tutors employ early 'diagnostic' assessments' that help to identify students who may benefit from additional support (e.g. referral to Study Skills Plus).
- Reflection on feedback – Tutors provide opportunities for students to explore the feedback they have received and to seek clarification about it - especially how they can 'action' any constructive criticisms or recommendations.
- Use of online assessment formats – Tutors enable students to engage with a wider variety of online assessments (e.g. MCQs) so that students can engage with assessment anytime, anywhere (e.g. using their mobile devices).
- Use of assessment tools that build flexibility and clarity - Tutors use existing assessment tools that facilitate improved clarity (e.g. Assessment Rubrics in Turnitin), and forms of feedback (e.g. Podcasts and Video clips) that are easier for students to engage with, understand and ‘action’.
- Emphasis on ‘authentic’ assessment – Tutors design assessments that reflect real-world societal problems and challenges and equip students with the right skills to be effective in the 21st-century workplace.
- Support for reassessment – Tutors to draw plans to support students who have been referred to reassessment - what additional 'scaffolding', resources, guidance or face-to-face discussion may be necessary to maximise their chances of engaging successfully with the reassessments they are required to complete.

Inclusive assessment checklist

When designing a programme-level assessment strategy, the programme team should address a number of questions. An example ‘checklist’ is provided below:

- Is there an assessment brief in an accessible format for each task? Does the brief provide clear information relating to:
    - The purpose of the assessment – i.e. why students have been asked to do it, and the value it will have in terms of enabling them to build skills, knowledge and understandings.
    - The parameters of the assessment – what should be included, excluded etc.
    - The marking criteria – the rubric against which the assessment will be formally marked. Is this the generic University marking scale/descriptor, or something specific to the programme or the assessment itself?
    - The link with programme outcomes and/or module outcomes (& QAA benchmark expectations) – this is crucial for students to understand how the assessment relates to their achievement of the programme/module outcomes.
    - The degree to which the learning might be applicable in the ‘real world’ – i.e. To what extent is the assessment an ‘authentic’ assessment in the sense that it addresses skills or builds knowledge that students are likely to need in a graduate role?
    - Word count, length and other limits to the scale of the assessed work.
    - Submission deadline.
    - The method of submission – i.e. is it to be submitted electronically or in hard copy? Is the end product an ‘object’ or ‘artefact’ or a ‘performance’? This needs to be clear.
- If beneficial, does technology simplify and enhance the assessment process?
- Has previous work prepared students for all elements of the assessment?
- When appropriate: have you provided demonstrations, exemplars, and previous attempts to support the scaffolded learning further?
- Where appropriate: does the content reflect a broader cultural focus, e.g. .incorporating international research/resources?
- Is the assessment situated strategically at the appropriate point in the module?

- Does it fit into a balanced programme of assessments on the module/course, avoiding under- or over-assessing?
- Does it take into account the timetable of other modules/course assessments to avoid bunching as much as possible?
- Does it fit into an overall scheme of diagnostic, formative and summative assessments on the module/course?
- Does this task reinforce key concepts of assessment literacy?
- Does the assessment brief make effective and considered use of the instructive verbs of assessment?
- Have students had the opportunity to review and question the requirements of this task?
- Have students been exposed to examples of good writing and/or other relevant assessment skills, well-composed arguments, and proficient task completion?
- Where appropriate, does the assessment promote real-world learning?
- Has assessment literacy training prepared students to understand the language of the marking criteria and the standards by which they will be evaluated?
- Are marking criteria unambiguous?
- Are students given the specific weighting percentages/points on individual criteria before the assessment, e.g. research, interpretation, analysis, grammatical/spelling errors.
- Does the task lend itself to feedback which can focus on learning and content?
- Is there a clear indication within the task of how feedback can be used formatively?
- Does the assessment build on previous assessments and their feedback, accentuating the progression of learning and skills?

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Appendix 1

Indicative exceptions to the policy

The Assessment policy recognises that some assessments cannot practically or reasonably conform to all aspects of the policy for example Anonymous Marking.

The below is not an exhaustive list, but is an indication of the types of assessment that may be exempt from particular aspects of the policy. Additional exceptions should be formally are approved by the Academic Development Committee.

On-line submissions
The following forms/formats of assessment may be exempt:

- In-class tests[4]
- Examinations
- Oral examinations
- The production of a piece of physical work/artefact/portfolio
- Presentations and other observed assessment such as lab work, fieldwork, contribution/debating/discussions, vivas.

Appendix 2

Exemptions for feedback being returned within 15 working days of the deadline.

The policy ensures that feedback is returned within the expected deadlines. However, there may be times when it is practically not possible, for instance, when the university is closed, students submitting assessment after the deadline, students with extenuating circumstances and students with learning support. Other exemptions may include unexpected circumstances for staff such as illness. Where this is the case efforts will be made to provide feedback as soon as practically and reasonably possible.

Collaborative partners are also expected to reflect the University policy and provide meaningful feedback to students within reasonable time, however the means by which they can is subject to local approval.

[4] Some In-class tests can be online

Appendix 3

NUS Benchmarking Tool on Assessment & Feedback

https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/2/2533/NUS_Assessment_and_feedback_benchmarking_tool.pdf

Assessment and feedback benchmarking tool

nus national union of students

Principle	First steps	Developing	Developed	Refining	Outstanding practice: Partnership
1 Diverse forms of assessment designed to assess a range of skills and knowledge	There is little variety in the forms of assessment used on each programme. Assessment is not clearly linked to learning objectives and little thought has been given to the skills and knowledge tested. Summative assessments may require different skills than those developed during the course.	Some thought has been given to how the mode of assessment is chosen to best demonstrate the learning outcomes of the course. Students are adequately prepared for summative assessments with the skills they learn on the course.	Assessment methods are chosen through a clear link to the learning outcomes of the course. Several different types of assessment are used throughout the course, e.g. exam, written essay, poster presentation, group presentation, reflective log.	Programmes are planned so that the diverse forms of assessment will cover skills that are desired in the wider world, e.g. by employers. Students have some choice in the assessment methods they are offered.	Students are empowered and given the tools and support to co-design their assessment methods in partnership with academic staff. Programmes are planned holistically to assess a broad range of skills and knowledge through a variety of forms of assessment. Students are able to articulate the skills they have developed through the various forms of assessment on their programme.
2 Assessment criteria	Assessment criteria are vague, confusing and often contradictory. They are hard to find and students are not directed to them.	Assessment criteria are mostly clear and detailed enough to be of use, but students may not know about them or use them.	Assessment criteria are clear and easy to understand, and students are aware of where to find them. They are clearly linked to the learning outcomes of the course.	Assessment criteria are linked to learning outcomes and referred to throughout the course. Students fully understand what is expected of them in order to achieve each grade.	Assessment criteria are clear, easily accessible and linked to learning outcomes. Students fully understand and are supported to use them. They are designed in partnership with students to ensure accessibility.
3 Submission processes	Submission procedures are inflexible, complex and inaccessible, usually involving a set date and time to return paper copies to the institution. There is no provision for students to submit their work in any other way, even if they are on a year abroad.	Submission procedures are relatively simple, although largely paper-based. Year abroad students may experience problems depending on which department they are in. There are some access issues that haven't been dealt with very well.	Submission is largely electronic, although some departments may do things differently. Feedback may or may not be provided online. There is provision for year abroad students to submit electronically in all departments.	Submission is electronic where possible, and feedback is provided online. Submission processes are the same across all departments.	Submission is simple and flexible, through an online system that confirms receipt and delivers online grades and feedback. Accessibility for students is the paramount concern. Processes are reviewed frequently in partnership with students.
4 Workload distribution	Deadlines are clustered together, often all at the end of the year. Students are poorly informed about deadline dates at the start of their course.	Deadlines are slightly more spread throughout the year, but there is little planning and clustering may occur depending on what modules students choose.	Assessments are planned within departments to avoid clustering. Deadline dates are made available to students at the start of their modules.	Assessments are planned across programmes to avoid clustering, including for joint honours students. Deadline dates are made available at module selection.	Assessments are planned so that all programmes have their workload spread fairly across the year. A calendar of deadlines is available before module selection. There are on-going discussions with students throughout the year, with the option to change deadlines if necessary.
5 Anonymity and externality	Summative work is routinely not anonymised. There is little externality in the process.	Practice on anonymity varies across departments, although the UK Quality Code requirements for externality are met.	The institution has a policy on anonymous marking that is mostly well implemented. Course reps are aware of the role of external examiners. Moderation or non-blind double marking is the norm.	All summative work is anonymous as far as is possible. There is a strong use of externality, with high use of blind double marking. Course reps refer to external examiners' reports in meetings.	Departments' approach to anonymity for formative work is agreed in partnership with students. Any centralised policies are based on principles and allow enough flexibility for Departments to work in partnership with students. All summative work is anonymous as far as is possible. There is a strong use of externality, with blind double marking as standard. Course reps have the ability to meet external examiners.
6 Marking consistency and distribution	Marking is not consistent within departments: some teachers are known to be "easy markers".	Marking is consistent within departments, but joint honours students within cognate disciplines may see disparities. Many subjects do not use the full range of marks.	Marking is consistent within departments and cognate subjects, but may differ across the institution. Active steps are being taken to encourage all markers to use the full range of marks.	Marking is broadly consistent across every student's programme of study. There is an expectation that all markers will use the full range of marks. Guidance and clear grade/classification descriptors are provided.	Marking is consistent across every student's programme of study. Use of the full range of marks is regularly reviewed, including students in the process, and support is provided for staff to ensure it happens.
7 Feedback timeliness	Students receive feedback too late to use it for improvement. Some students do not receive any feedback at all.	Students receive feedback that they can use to improve, but often not in time to complete a summative assessment.	There is an institutional policy in place that is mostly well implemented. Students receive at least one piece of feedback before they complete a summative assessment.	All students receive feedback in time to act on it in their next piece of work. Feedback is returned within three weeks, including on summative assessments.	Feedback timeliness above an institutional minimum standard is agreed in partnership between staff and students in departments. Students receive continuous verbal, written or email feedback throughout their course and understand that feedback encompasses more than just comments on assignments.
8 Feedback Quality	Feedback is poor and does not help students to improve. Often, only grades are provided, or comments such as "Good" with no explanation of why the mark has been awarded.	At least a sentence of feedback is given for each piece of work, with some justification of the mark awarded or areas for improvement. Feedback on exams is hard or impossible to get hold of.	Feedback quality varies across departments, although there is an institutional policy or guidance in place that is generally adhered to. Feedback, although not detailed, clearly identifies areas for improvement. There are mechanisms in place for feedback to be given on exams, although this may be generic or group feedback.	Individual feedback is provided on all forms of assessment, including exams. Feedback is detailed enough to clearly identify areas for improvement and examples of good practice. There are opportunities to discuss the feedback individually with a tutor, although this may not be the marker.	Detailed, constructive feedback is provided on all forms of assessment, including exams. The opportunities to receive feedback are clearly explained to students at the start of the course, and students can choose the format in which they would like to receive feedback. There are opportunities to discuss the feedback individually with the marker.
9 Formative assessment and feedback	There is no formative assessment, and little opportunity for informal formative feedback.	Most modules include formative feedback, although this may be informal and ad hoc. Students may be provided with past papers but they are unlikely to be marked.	Formative feedback is planned into every module. There is at least one opportunity for formative assessment before undertaking a summative assessment of the same type.	Formative assessment is a key aspect of learning and encourages students to reflect on their performance and develop their skills. Peer learning is part of formative feedback.	Formative feedback is considered holistically as part of students' personal development. There are opportunities for students to design their own formative exercises, in which criteria are linked to learning outcomes.
10 Self-reflection and peer learning	There are no opportunities for peer learning and no formal self-reflection.	There is some peer interaction, for example through seminars or discussion groups, available for most students. Self-reflection is mainly discussed by the careers service and has little formal role in students' academic lives.	Peer learning is encouraged and common within the institution, although it plays less of a role in formative assessment. Feedback encourages students to reflect on their performance in order to improve.	Formative feedback regularly includes peer input and self-reflection. Students are encouraged to reflect on the feedback they have been given by peers and tutors and to develop their skills holistically.	Peer learning and self-reflection are embedded in the curriculum. Students' personal development takes account of all the feedback they have received throughout their course. Discussions are regularly held between staff and students to ensure the balance of taught, peer and self learning is accurate.

Thfa benchmarkfngtoolie the lataat in a seriee of reaourcee NUS haa produced to help you to Improve the quality of feedback and aaeeaament at your Institution. You can uae ftinconjunction with the Feedback Md Aaeeaament Campaign Toolkit and other reaourcea available on NUSConnect

The tooll a based on ten princfplea of effective feedback. In 2D1Q aa part of the Student Feedback Project. NUS produced a Charter on Feedback Md AaeeaamenL Thia benchmarkfngtool ie baaed on the principles of thie charter. but this princfplee here been updated to re*j*ect *the @oA'dea* and *needs of a new* cohort of students.

How to use the tool

You can use the tool at acourse departmentat faculty or whole institution feel. Read each of the principles, arid decide which of the boxes best describes where you think your institution i9. Once you've mapped out your current feel, you may wish to choose a couple of priority area8 to work towards achieving the neXt leVel. The tool is a good starting point for di9cussion9 between staP and studente about how you can work together to imprCX/e feedback arid aasessmenL

You could al9o 9hare practice with other willing unions, perhaps on a regional baais orp mission group. You can learn from union9 thaL place their institutions higher than yours: whaL good practice couldyou borrow and adapt2 If they\ie recently made changes, what were the challenges they faced?

Things to bear in mind

- Each of the outstanding' practices irivoh/e staff and students working in partnership. This partnership needs to be meaningful in order to work, which mean9 thaL both graup9 must listen and be willing to compromis£• Some of the principles may be mutually incompatible in some institutions: for example, it may not be possible to achieve outetandin@ in bath feedback timeline99 and feedback quality if the institution cannot aPord more staff time for marking. Have honest conversations with institutional staP about whaL i9 and isn't possibl£•
- You may not be able to achieve -outstanding' in everything at once' Decide where best to target your resources: do you want to work hard to get one particular area to outetandin@ or do you want to spend that time getting three or four areas up one leVel from their current position? Are there specific departments you want to work with, or is a central minimum standard whaL is required'?
- It i9 also worth bearing in mind that many of the people who mark coursework and exam9 are postgraduate students: you may wish to discu99 the benchmarking tool with your postgraduate rep9 to make sure thaL your campaign is inclusive of allyour members This may mean ensuring that any additional work is incorporated into markers' work plana, or campaigning for beber pay and conditions for graduate teaching assistants alongside your feedback campaign.
- Your union may disagree with some of the leVels in the benchmarking tool—and that's OK! The tool waa created collaboraLn/ely by student officera, ba9ed an principles put together from research into whar students value from feedback. This doesn't mean it will work at every institution. Feel free to Ilveak it or build on it to make it more relevant to the content of your institution. You could use it to start a carlver8aLian with institutional staP— what can you take from the tool and use to enhance the quality of feedback and assessment at your institution?

I u have any on please ntact. nss us.org.uh

10 Principles of Effective Feedback and Assessment

1 Diverse forme of assessment at a variety of appropriate times

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2 Assessment criteria

Aaaeaarnent criteria atould ba clear. linked to laamktg outcomes and easily accessible to students. Students etsould baapportedtou them and to underacandwhu conaituteaacadmtlicmiacatduct.

3 Submieeion processes

Submission processes should be simple for the student and electronic where possible. Processes should be appropriate to the assessment and accessible to all students.

4 Workload distribution

Students should have their workload fairly distributed throughout the year, rather than clustering deadlines togathar.

5 Anonymity and externality

Appraachea to anonymity ehotildbadecided in partnerahtp beiweenatawandaa+dems, with the aasumptionlhxt.unleaadectdedccf›erwies, all eunatixtiue aaeeautiwnaetsould baanorg'moua{aefgraaiapaaaibley Appropriateaxtatialtnputiaeought duririgaaeaaamentto eneurefaimeaa and comparability.

6 Marking consistency and distribution

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7 Feedback timeliness

Feedback afould bagluert mamefbr audanteto acton it intheirnaxt pieoeofworl

8 Feedback quality

Feedback afould baconetructi•s helphslanddetalled,to enable a aud•nttounderacsndw hy they relzeluedd se mark they got and what to do to improve for next time.

9 Formative aeeesament and feedback

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10 Self-reflection and peer learning

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Appendix 4

ONLINE SUBMISSION POLICY

1. Purpose

This document aims to provide clear guidance, principles and operational procedures in support of online submission outlined in the University's Assessment Policy.

2. Definitions

- **Online Submission:** Work that is submitted electronically to the University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) for assessment.
- **Anonymous Marking:** A marker cannot identify the student either by name or regnum on a piece of assessment when they are marking it.
- **Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)**: An online platform with a collection of integrated tools enabling the management of online learning to deliver learning activities, resources, assessment and feedback to students.
- **Moodle:** An open sourced VLE adopted by the University to support the delivery of different teaching methods – both face-to-face and blended learning provision.
- **Turnitin:** A plugin for accepting and marking text-based submissions. It also has the functionality of matching written text against published, unpublished sources and student papers.
- **Panopto:** Online video, audio and screen capture software that integrates with Moodle and enables submission of audio/video assignments.
- **Moodle Assignment:** A submission inbox on Moodle that can accept almost any file format. This can be used to accept a variety of file formats in PowerPoint (.ppt), video, audio, images, Mahara, weblinks and etc.
- **Originality Report:** A report produced by Turnitin to indicate matches between a student's work and a series of online, published and unpublished sources.
- **TEL:** Technology Enhanced Learning team

3. Scope of the Policy

3.1 The policy applies to all programmes and modules taught, delivered and assessed by the University. This may not necessary apply to Collaborative Provision where alternative arrangement has been agreed with Partner Institutes to monitor and govern Academic Integrity.

3.2 The University currently supports the following technical solutions for e-assessment, marking and feedback which are integrated with Moodle:

- Turnitin
- Moodle Assignment
- Mahara Portfolio
- Panopto

3.3 All written or text-based assignment submission should go through the University Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

3.4 All academic writing assignments such as essay, dissertation, reports, creative writing, reflective work, personal logs, journals that are submitted in text format i.e. PDF or Word must be put through to Turnitin on the VLE.

3.5 Practical, images, video, audio, weblinks, Mahara and other non-text based assignment should be submitted via Moodle Assignment. It is not effective use of Turnitin for this purpose as there have been known errors reported during submission, retrieving student's work and when marking.

3.6 This policy defines the settings and practices used for online submission.

3.7 This policy defines rights and responsibilities of both staff and students.

4. Student's Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of students to:

4.1 Ensure they submit the correct file and all parts of the assessment are submitted before the deadline. No amendments or additions will be permitted after the submission deadline.

4.2 Verify they have submitted their work in the required file formats and within the specified file size. Students should check files on the system after submission to ensure they are valid and correct. On opening if students discover they submitted their assignment in the wrong format or file before the deadline, they can re-submit their work **(NOTE: This ONLY applies to Turnitin. Submission inboxes setup with Moodle Assignment, Panopto or Mahara can take ONE submission only).** In instances of a student submitting a file that fails to comply with the published instructions, and the work cannot be assessed as a result (e.g. the file type cannot be opened and read) then this work will be given a mark of zero. This recognises that a submission has been made by the deadline but cannot be assessed.

4.3 Ensure their work was submitted successfully. A digital receipt will be sent to the student's University email to confirm submission and they should retain the receipt for their own record.

4.4 Submit their own work. Staff are not allowed to submit work on students' behalf. See link "Submitting to Turnitin" for support.

4.5 Submit their work according to the specified online submission method. Email is NOT a valid form of submission and cannot be assessed.

4.6 Ensure they submit their work well in advance of the deadline time. Students should not leave their submission to the last minute or very close to the deadline. Any discrepancy in the student's computer clock or slower than anticipated upload may result in the submission being rejected by the system. This will be considered a non-submission.

4.7 Ensure their own computer, browser and internet connection are in good working order, and to have a contingency plan for technical failure. Technical issues are not accepted for Extenuating Circumstances.

4.8 Check their University email account regularly before the deadline submission. In the event of any technical failure on the University system, the Module Convenor will communicate this to the students via University email.

5. Academics' Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Module Convenor to:

5.1 Ensure they create and maintain the online submission inbox. If Module Convenors are not available during the submission period, they need to make sure an alternative member of staff is nominated to update the information on Moodle if necessary.

5.2 Set up online submission inboxes for summative assessment at the beginning of the module.

5.3 Ensure TWO separate submission inboxes are correctly set up and configured to take submission from students (See link "Creating a Turnitin Assignment" for guidance):

- First inbox is set up and configured with usual deadline published in accordance with Assessment Brief.
- Second inbox is set up, configured and labelled with "[assignment title] (Extenuating Circumstances)" for students with Extenuating Circumstances. This inbox should be open to take submission after the first deadline has ended and available for 10 working days online.
- Extending, changing (except to correct), or re-opening dates of an inbox is not permitted.

5.4 Provide clear guidance for online submission using Template recommended below (See below "Section 12. Assessment Information for Students") and briefing students in lecture or on video.

5.5 Amend any administrative error in the submission inbox. Helpdesk and TEL team are unable to modify or amend any inbox that has been set up incorrectly. Helpdesk and TEL team are able to support the responsible academic in any required modification but unable to action it themselves.

5.6 Ensure students required to resit, submit their work to a separate submission inbox with the correct setup, label and configuration. Extending, changing (except to correct), or re-opening dates of an inbox is not permitted.

5.7 Communicate to students if a technical fault occurs within 12 hours prior the submission deadline; inform them of new submission deadline and revise submission inboxes with 24 hours extension. See below "Section 14. System Failure" for further guidance.

5.8 Interpret and understand the use and purpose of the Originality Report produced by Turnitin. See "Appendix 1: Interpreting Originality Report" for guidance.

It is the responsibility of the Programme Director to:

5.9 Ensure Module Convenors setup their submission inboxes in accordance with this policy.

5.10 Ensure new staff who are involved in teaching to undergo online submission training with the TEL team.

6. Submission Deadline

It is recommended that submission deadlines are set up within core support hours i.e. between Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm to ensure students are sufficiently supported. Programmes which wish to operate deadlines outside core support hours should notify the TEL Team, outlining the support they are providing for students leading up to the deadline (further training may be necessary). Further, Turnitin is a third-party service which occasionally schedules essential maintenance work throughout the academic year. Unless TEL are aware of assignment deadlines outside core hours, they are unable to notify academic staff of any possible conflicts.

7. Dual Submission

The University does not require both hard copy and online submission from students including dissertations. If dual submission or hardcopy submission is required, rationale should be clearly outlined to students in the assignment brief. Hard copy and online submission will have the same submission deadline.

8. Late Submission

The University's Academic Regulations currently does not allow for late submissions. Any work submitted after the deadline without extenuating circumstances will be marked as zero.

9. Extenuating Circumstances

Students with genuine reason who are unable to meet the deadline submission can apply for extenuating circumstance. (See "Academic Regulations"). This will be setup by Module Convenors as a separate submission inbox labelled "extenuating circumstances" and available for 10 working days.

10. Multiple submissions of the same assessment

Students have the right to re-submit any assessment up to close of the submission window in Turnitin. It is only the final submission that will be considered for assessment by staff. All other earlier submissions will be discarded from the marking process. This only applies to Turnitin submission inbox and not Moodle Assignment, Mahara or Panopto.

11. Assessment information for Students

The template below should be used when setting up any submission inbox on Moodle using either Turnitin or Moodle Assignment:

Turnitin (Summary)

Assignment Title: [name e.g. "Essay on Art History"]

Description: [About the assignment e.g. "Write a 3,000 word essay on art history in Europe"] **Deadline:** [date, time]

File type accepted: PDF or WORD (for text-based) - other file types will not be accepted **File size:** 40MB (max)

If your file exceeds 40MB, go to http://smallpdf.com to compress your file before submission.

If you have any problems submitting your work, please contact the Library Helpdesk at library@stmarys.ac.uk or call 020 8240 4097.

Moodle Assignment (Description)

Assignment Title: [name e.g. "Poster for Group Work"] **Description:** [About the assignment e.g. "Submit a poster for your presentation on…"] **Deadline:** [date, time] **File type accepted:** [List specific file format accepted e.g. PPT, PDF, EXCEL, MP4, MP3] **File size:** 256MB (max) If you have any problems submitting your work, please contact the Library Helpdesk at library@stmarys.ac.uk or call 020 8240 4097.

NOTE: If you have set up submission deadline outside core support hours, please make sure you provide a name contact (e.g. module convenor, lecturer or programme director) in the Assessment Information and outline how students will be supported if they have problems submitting their work.

12. Anonymous Marking

Anonymous marking is to be undertaken for all written assessment to ensure that the identity of students is not disclosed to markers with the notable exception of written work relating to the assessments of work placement activity, to avoid bias (either inadvertent or deliberate). There may be some forms of assessment not suitable for anonymous marking e.g. group work, presentations and dissertations but anonymous marking should be used wherever possible.

13. Academic Misconduct

Please refer to "Academic Regulations document, Section 29".

14. System Failure

If the University's electronic submission system (i.e. Moodle, Turnitin, Mahara or Panopto) or network system suffers a continuous failure or repetitive brief outage within 12 hours prior a submission deadline, an automatic 24 hours extension is granted to students. Submission deadline is extended to Monday if incident is reported on Friday. The TEL team will initiate communication with all staff and provide update of the system status. Module Convenor will be responsible to communicate to their students about the system failure with the new submission deadline, and revise the submission deadlines accordingly.

15. Review and Update

This policy will be reviewed by TEL annually.

Date Written	September 2019
Author	Bing Choong
Version Number	1
Person Responsible	Head of Technology Enhanced Learning
Review Date	31st July 2020
Impact Assessment Date	31st July 2020
History (where discussed / who circulated to / committees considered	Associate Deans of Student Experience FADC Head of Departments CTESS Academic Development Committee

Appendix 1: Interpreting Originality Report Text

The originality report is an effective way to:

- Check that online sources in an assignment have been properly cited and the text has not simply been copied without appropriate referencing.
- Identify collusion between students on their course and potentially from other institutions who use Turnitin in the UK.
- Ensure a level of equality and parity when checking the originality of students' work against the vast range of possible online sources.
- Deter students from plagiarising and encourage good academic practice.

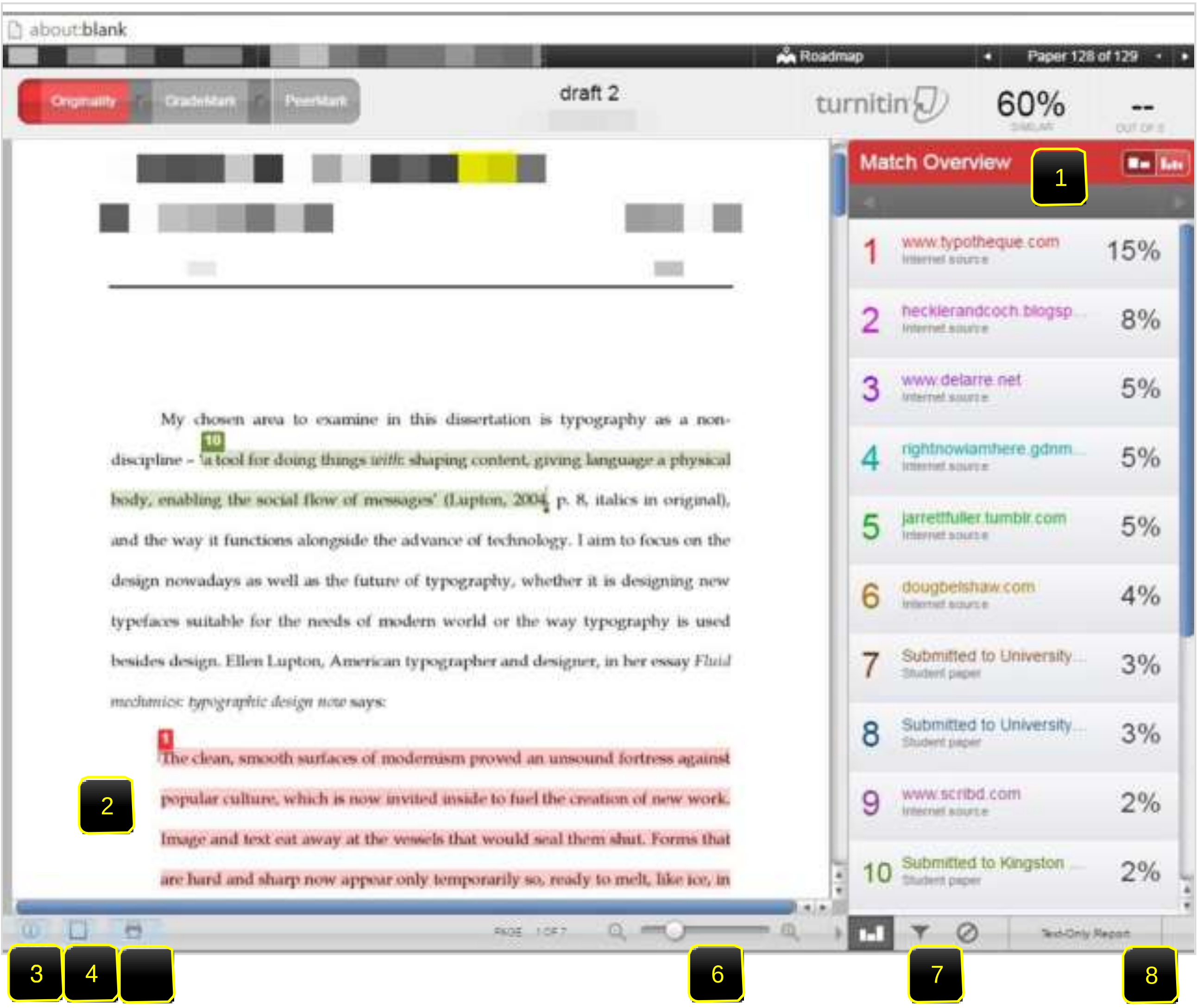
What does the Similarity Index percentage indicate?

An overall percentage score (with colour code) is shown next to a student's name under the Similarity column in the Assignment Inbox. This shows the total amount of matched text as a proportion of the assignment.

IMPORTANT: This 'at a glance' guide should not be used as a measure of plagiarism. Even a 1% score could potentially be plagiarised.

There is no ideal percentage to look for. Students' work is bound to contain some words from other sources. The percentage will vary depending on the type and length of assignment and the requirements of the work involved. If it is a **long assignment,** then **even 1% matches will need to be checked** to see if they have been referenced properly. Individual matches need to be investigated by opening the student's paper and viewing the match overview and breakdown panel.

Blue: no matching text	Blue indicates no text has been matched. This could mean that the work has no references at all and that there is little or no use of direct quotes. Depending on the nature of the assignment this is not necessarily an issue but a Blue score is worth checking just in case the student has simply submitted a paper with text that Turnitin cannot recognise.
Green: one word to 24% matching text	Green indicates matches between 1% and 24% and is the most common. It is simply an indication of the amount of matched text, so potentially, up to 24% of the document could still have been copied without referencing.
Yellow: 25% – 49% matching text	Yellow, Amber and Red denote percentage matches in bands above 24%. Higher percentage matches may indicate: • An over reliance on direct quotation as a result of poor academic writing. • Cutting and pasting from other sources
Orange: 50% - 74% matching text	
Red: 75% - 100% matching text	100% match means the assignment has no original work. It has most probably been submitted previously to Turnitin. This can happen if the student is making a re-submission of their work and the file had already been submitted to the Turnitin database. It could be a student error and they submitted to another assignment area by mistake. It can also indicate collusion or copying an essay from another student, either in their class, from a previous year or another institution. If this isn't a match to the student's own work submitted to another submission point (e.g. as a draft) then a request can be made to see the other student paper if you aren't already an instructor on the area it was submitted to.



1. This is the Primary Source View panel; **all matching sources are listed here by percentage and are referenced (by colour and number) in the main body**

2. **This highlighted text means that Turnitin has found a matching source in its database**. The number and the colour of the highlight relate to the Primary Source View panel on the right of the page.

3. This icon will give you **information about the assignment** (Assignment No, word count, date submitted etc) and information regarding the originality.

4. This icon will allow you to **print the Originality Report**.

5. This icon will allow you to **download the Originality Report**.

6. Use this slide bar zoom in and out of the text for the assignment and **make the text larger or smaller.**

7. These two icons allow you to change the view of the Primary Source panel to Overlapping Source which **enables you to see if Turnitin has found multiple sources that match the same section in your assignment.**

8. This icon allows you **to filter out Bibliography and quotations** that may be increasing the Originality score.

Types of frequently found 'acceptable' matched text
There are certain types of matched text that Turnitin will find, which can be safely excluded or ignored with discretion. These matches will be included in the overall similarity score for an originality report and be highlighted as a match on a student's paper. These include:

- Quotations: Properly referenced quotations can be ignored. These can be excluded using the filter.
- References and Bibliography: Other students will have used the same references at some point, and these will show up.
- Matching formats: e.g. the same essay title.
- Tables and Charts showing shared or copied data or statistics.
- Appendices may also have a large amount of matching text as other students may well have used the same sources.
- Small matches that form common phrases in a sentence or subject terminology will be detected. These can be removed using the small match filter.

Paraphrasing text from a source will be highlighted even where words in the phrase have been changed. If the source has been cited, it remains the academic judgment of the tutor to decide if the text has been suitably paraphrased.

What Turnitin Originality Reports do not detect?
Reports DO NOT pick up matches to images, drawings, diagrams or plans; print books and journals, translated foreign language works and password protected content on websites.

It is also important to state that reports do not detect plagiarism, they merely show the amount of matched text that Turnitin has found by highlighting the matched text on a student's paper and identifying sources for the matched text. This will include correctly referenced and quoted text.

The decision as to whether this is plagiarism remains an academic judgment.

Update to Assessment Policy

Proposed clarification of word limits – CTESS, April 2022

Context

The University's assessment policy does not stipulate what is included/excluded in word limits – e.g. whether headings, quotations etc. contribute towards the word count. This has led to inconsistency in practice across the university and potential lack of parity in students' experience and outcomes.

Recommendation approved by ADC

To add a section to the Assessment Policy clarifying the University's position on what should be included/excluded in word limits. Proposed text below:

Assessment tariff: word count inclusions and exclusions

For consistency of student experience across the University, all written assignments should adhere to the following guidelines on how to calculate word count (and thus whether a student's assignment falls within the word limit):

- The word count for an assignment **includes** everything in the main body of the text, including headings, quotations and in-text citations.
- The word count **excludes** the bibliography / list of references and any supporting appendices.
- The use of tables, figures and footnotes will vary according to subject of study, therefore course teams should specify in programme/module handbooks whether these will be included in or excluded from word counts.

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