



Fairfield School of Business

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Assessment and Feedback Policy for Externally Validated HE Programmes

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Abstract:

This policy sets out how student learning will be assessed and certified on higher education programmes taught by Fairfield School of Business delivered under sub contractual agreements with external awarding bodies.

Applicability:

This policy applies to all higher education awards taught by FSB Fairfield School of Business:

- it does not apply to non-Higher Education courses, for which separate regulations are in place.
 - It does not apply to diagnostic assessments used to determine eligibility for admission to higher education programmes.
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Contents

1. Aim.....	2
2. Definitions	2
3. Working in Partnership with Awarding Bodies	3
4. Quality Assuring Summative Assessment	4
‘Academic Judgement’	4
Standardisation	5
Moderation	6
Internal Moderation	6
Internal Assessment Boards.....	7
External Moderation.....	8
5. External Examiner Reports.....	8
6. Academic Misconduct.....	9
7. Reasonable Adjustments to Assessment	9
8. Assessment Feedback Policy	9
9. Academic Appeals	12
10. Review and Update	12

1. Aim

1.1. The aim of this policy is to:

- i. clearly define Fairfield School of Business's role in the assessment process where higher education is delivered under sub contractual agreements with university awarding bodies,
- ii. outline procedures that assure the quality, reliability and fairness of assessments,
- iii. protect the integrity of the award and ensure that graduates have demonstrated learning necessary to be certified in accordance with the awarding body's awards framework.

1.2. Some areas of assessment practice, such as extenuating (mitigating) circumstances and investigation of academic misconduct are covered in separate academic regulations set by the Awarding Body.

2. Definitions

2.1. These terms have the following meanings within this policy:

- i. *Summative Assessment*: refers to any mandatory assessment element where a student must demonstrate learning commensurate with intended Learning Outcomes and which is required for successful completion of the course.
- ii. *Learning Outcomes*: refer to measurable statements that define the skills and knowledge a student should have acquired and be able to demonstrate by the end of the learning process.
- iii. *Marking*: is the process where the extent of learning is determined in a student's work by an Assessor.
- iv. *Feedback*: refers to developmental advice and guidance given to students based on their performance in formative and summative assessment exercises to encourage them to reflect on their learning and improve, this includes:
 - *Formative Feedback* which provides students with timely, constructive information on their progress and performance, identifying strengths and weaknesses; formative assessment activities (and their associated feedback) do not usually contribute to the student's final module mark.
 - *Summative Feedback* which is used to evaluate a student's achievement of the intended learning outcomes, usually in a credit bearing assessment; summative

feedback provides a rationale for the mark awarded, and clear comments explaining the student's performance against the published marking criteria.

- v. *Standardisation*: is a benchmarking process which ensures that those involved in the assessment of work have a shared interpretation of the applicable Learning Outcomes and how these must be demonstrated, to ensure a consistent approach to recognising learning achievement.
- vi. *Moderation*: is the process of ensuring that allocated marks are fair, reliable and awarded consistently and in accordance with the applicable Learning Outcomes, by sampling and reviewing assessed work.
- vii. *Credit*: Academic credit is a measure of the size and complexity of an educational course and is used to determine whether requirements for progression have been met.
- viii. *Assessor*: any member of staff who is appointed to review and assign a mark to students' summative assessment work.
- ix. *External Examiner*: refers to a person independent from both Fairfield School of Business and the awarding body who is involved in the review and ratification of marks to ensure the compatibility with sector recognised standards and peer institutions.

3. Working in Partnership with Awarding Bodies

- 3.1. Fairfield School of Business delivers higher education programmes designed and validated by external awarding bodies, that lead to an award or the award of Credit by an external awarding body.
- 3.2. Under these sub contractual arrangements:
 - the Awarding Body is responsible for all activities relating to the design and development of its awards, which includes the specification of intended Learning Outcomes and the means of assessment.
 - The Awarding Body is also responsible for the appointment of External Examiners who are suitably qualified to moderate assessments.
 - Fairfield School of Business is responsible for delivering awarding bodies' programmes and carrying out assessments in accordance with the awarding bodies' regulations.
- 3.3. The Awarding Body is ultimately accountable for assuring the reliability and accuracy of students' assessment outcomes and for all awards granted in its name. Awarding Bodies

provide support and reference points to Fairfield School of Business to ensure that assessments are carried out to the required standards.

- 3.4. Awarding bodies have their own procedures for checking and ratifying the marks awarded by Fairfield School of Business' Assessors.
- 3.5. Where FSB delivers programmes on behalf of an Awarding Body, it is FSB's policy to:
 - Uphold our awarding bodies' Academic Regulations in full,
 - Implement internal quality processes which minimise the need for the awarding body rectification,
 - Use blind marking and anonymisation wherever appropriate,
 - Use feedback about assessments from external examiners, moderators, students and other credible sources to evaluate and improve our approach.
- 3.6. Students are entitled to feedback on all assessment work to help them to understand their mark and identify areas for improvement. The nature, extent and timing of feedback for each assessment task will be clear to students in advance. Refer to Section 8 of this Policy for more information about formative and summative feedback.

4. Quality Assuring Summative Assessment

'Academic Judgement'

- 4.1. Decisions about assessment outcomes will be based on the Academic Judgements of Assessors.
- 4.2. Academic Judgment is a term used in Part 2 of the *Higher Education Act 2004 (Review of student complaints, 12: Qualifying complaints)*. It has been defined as 'the professional and scholarly knowledge and expertise which members of academic staff and external examiners draw upon in reaching an academic decision'.
- 4.3. A decision about an assessment mark, poor academic practice, academic misconduct or ethics will normally involve Academic Judgment.
- 4.4. FSB's Staff Recruitment and Staff Development policies ensure that academic staff members who are Assessors are appropriately qualified to make sound Academic Judgements. As a matter of general principle, all FSB Assessors will:
 - ✓ be qualified (as a minimum) at, or above the level at which they teach and assess;
 - and,

- ✓ have, or be working towards a recognised teaching qualification; and,
- ✓ have relevant experience and currency with their field of professional practice; and,
- ✓ demonstrate continuing professional development and engagement with academic communities; or,
- ✓ be subject to enhanced training and monitoring where there are any of the above requirements are not met.

4.5. An Assessor will usually be an experienced lecturer who teaches the assessed unit. Where a trainee lecturer is assigned to assess work, they will first undergo specific training and review within the Standardisation Process set out below.

4.6. Complaints about Academic Judgments *per se* are likely to be dismissed or otherwise deemed ineligible for consideration under the FSB's or the Awarding Body's formal complaint, review and appeal procedures.

Standardisation

4.7. Where there are new or multiple Assessors assigned to mark a module, a Standardisation Meeting should be held **in advance of marking**. This is to ensure that all Assessors have a common understanding of the module Learning Outcomes, marking standards and conventions in relation to allocation of grades and the provision of feedback.

4.8. A Standardisation Meeting is held:

- whenever there is more than one assessor assigned to a module,
- where there are new and/or multiple assessors for a defined assessment,
- for all items of summative assessment no less than once per semester,
- where there is any substantial change in the assessment activity of a module,
- whenever the awarding body requires a standardisation event to take place.

4.9. Standardisation Meetings may be led by the Programme Leader and/or Module Leader, or by the Awarding body depending on the sub contractual agreement in place.

4.10. During a Standardisation Meeting, Assessors may be shown exemplar works at different graded levels to demonstrate how marks should be determined with regard to the awarding body's assessment conventions, grading structure, academic (FHEQ) level and the Learning Outcomes for the assessment.

4.11. A Standardisation Meeting may, at the discretion of the Programme Leader or Awarding Body, involve Assessors marking a sample piece of work to calibrate a consistent approach. The Meeting should also confirm and clarify other issues concerning marking

and feedback, for example penalties for omitting key items. Arrangements for moderation and method and quality of feedback should also be discussed so that it is as consistent as possible.

- 4.12. Where the assessment does not involve written work (e.g. presentations), a film or recording of a previous assessment may be used. Where this is not available, other methods to ensure a consistency of approach should be used.
- 4.13. Where members cannot attend a Standardisation Meeting, alternative means of communicating should be used.

Moderation

- 4.14. Moderation is the process to assure assessment criteria have been applied consistently and that assessment outcomes are fair and reliable.
- 4.15. All summative assessments will be subject to Internal and External moderation for quality control purposes.
- 4.16. The exact approach to moderation that FSB uses will be specified by the relevant Awarding Body, based on its academic regulations and policies for marking work.

Internal Moderation

- 4.17. Internal Moderation involves audit sampling and reviewing assessment work to ensure marks assigned are fair, accurate and consistent; it takes place after the round of first marking and before an FSB Internal Assessment Board is held.
- 4.18. Moderation is normally completed by the module leader. The moderator will look over the sample of marked scripts with the feedback provided. The moderator's role is to check that marking and feedback are consistent and align with the criteria set for the assignment.
- 4.19. If the module leader is teaching the module under review, the moderator's duty will fall to the relevant Course Coordinator of the campus the module leader teaches in.
- 4.20. Where the Awarding Body does not provide internal moderation guidelines, FSB will apply the following conventions for each assessment:
 - All failing grades will be moderated,
 - A 20% sample, or a minimum of 8 students (whichever is greater) covering a range of work across grade boundaries.
 - Borderline grades (i.e. grades awarded within 2 points of a classification threshold) will be moderated,

- Where a trainee lecturer is appointed as an assessor, an appropriate sample of their work will be moderated.
 - Work from every delivery location is selected for moderation at each grade range,
 - All methods of assessment are included in the moderation process,
 - All markers will be included in the moderation process.
- 4.21. The internal moderator will also reflect on the quality of Feedback provided by the Assessor and whether this is of sufficiently high quality and meets any particular requirements set by the Awarding Body.
- 4.22. Where the moderator determines the mark should be more than 5 percentage points away from the Assessor's mark and/or crosses a classification threshold (especially a pass/fail threshold), the discrepancy should be resolved by discussion and agreement in the first instance. Where agreement cannot be reached, the assessment will be re-marked, usually by the Module Leader or the Programme Leader; the new mark will replace the previous mark.
- 4.23. Where the outcome of moderation requires that a different mark is assigned to the work, the Programme Leader may consider whether the marking practices of the Assessor requires further investigation and/or action.
- 4.24. The Module Leader will compile a moderation report for each module/unit marked during the assessment period, including sample sizes and any concerns arising from the moderation process. This report will be presented to the Internal Assessment Board.
- 4.25. Students may receive a provisional grade and constructive feedback following the internal moderation stage.

Internal Assessment Boards

- 4.26. FSB will hold an Internal Assessment Board following an assessment period and prior to the Awarding Body's Assessment Board. This is an internal quality step intended to give assurance of the competence of assessors and the reliability of grading to the awarding body.
- 4.27. The purpose of the Internal Assessment Board is:
- to ensure that internal moderation has taken place in accordance with agreed procedures,
 - to identify any assessments outcomes or trends that would indicate a quality issue with the assessment, or underperformance by students that would need to be addressed,
 - to review any concerns arising from the internal moderation process,

External Moderation

- 4.28. External moderation is undertaken by experienced academic peers (External Examiners), independent of both FSB and the Awarding Body.
- 4.29. The role of External Examiners within the External Moderation process is to ensure:
- the comparability of the standards and student achievements with those in other higher education institutions and sector-recognised standards,
 - the extent to which the assessment processes are rigorous, ensure equity of treatment for students, and have been fairly conducted within institutional regulations and guidance,
 - whether the academic standards have been upheld in the assessment process,
 - whether internal moderation by FSB has effectively ensured the consistency of marking practices,
- 4.30. The vetting, appointment, training and dismissal of External Examiners is the responsibility of the awarding body; Fairfield School of Business will facilitate any specific requests (such as access to FSB's virtual learning environment) required by External Examiners.
- 4.31. External Examiners may make recommendations to the External Assessment Board about whether marks awarded by FSB should be accepted by the Awarding Body.
- 4.32. External Examiners will then participate in the External Assessment Board in the manner specified by the Awarding Body's Terms of Reference.

Ratification and Release of Marks

- 4.33. All marks will be ratified, and all progression decisions shall be confirmed by the Awarding Body's Assessment Board.
- 4.34. The Awarding Body will keep records of all decisions made by the External Assessment Board; minutes and actions will be shared with FSB.
- 4.35. Students will receive their confirmed grades after they are ratified by the External Assessment Board.

5. External Examiner Reports

- 5.1. In addition to their duties above, External Examiners will report annually to the Awarding Body, highlighting any concerns or good practice in assessment setting and marking processes; these reports will usually contain recommendations for enhancement.

- 5.2. Where the External Examiner Report's recommendations concern the ways in which FSB and the Awarding Body conduct student assessment, FSB will give due consideration to any recommendations in these.

6. Academic Misconduct

- 6.1. 'Academic Misconduct' broadly covers a number of behaviours where students may seek to gain unfair academic advantage. It includes plagiarism, collusion, contract cheating, and fabrication of data as well as unauthorised use of artificial intelligence.
- 6.2. Under its sub contractual provisions, FSB shall be responsible for detecting and flagging up instances of Academic Misconduct.
- 6.3. Depending on the terms of the sub contractual agreement, either FSB or the Awarding may investigate suspected academic misconduct.
- 6.4. Sanctions to be applied where Academic Misconduct is proven shall be determined and enforced by the Awarding body, or FSB Academic Misconduct Panel, depending on the terms of the partnership agreement.
- 6.5. More information about how FSB deals with Academic Misconduct can be found in FSB's *Academic Misconduct Policy*.

7. Reasonable Adjustments to Assessment

- 7.1. All reasonable adjustments to assessment conditions must be agreed in advance with the Awarding Body and will be applied in accordance with the Awarding body's policies and procedures.
- 7.2. FSB will ensure that those who may require reasonable adjustments to be made to assessments are advised of the correct guidance.

8. Assessment Feedback Policy

- 8.1. This section of the policy outlines the principles and expectations relating to the provision of feedback on student assessment at FSB, ensuring it is a consistent, meaningful, and effective part of the learning process.
- 8.2. Formative and Summative Assessments are designed by FSB's awarding body partners. FSB's policy to follow the awarding body's own guidelines and policies when providing formative and summative feedback, to preserve the integrity of the awarding body's

assessment strategy. This includes timeframes for the release of feedback to students and constraints on the amount and type of provision of feedback available on students' draft work.

8.3. With out prejudice to 8.2, those giving Feedback to students should ensure that:

- all feedback should be individual to the student and tailored to their performance, avoiding generic statements and vague praise or criticism,
- all feedback should support students to reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses, giving students the ability to critically evaluate their own work and future professional performance,
- all feedback should be focussed on the relevant assignment/submission/work and not the student personally (for example their general participation with the course or attitude towards their studies),
- all feedback should clearly and explicitly relate to the learning outcomes for the assessment and marking criteria, and support students to achieve beyond a basic passing grade,
- all feedback should be mindful of the academic level of the assessment and should be appropriate to the degree of challenge at that level,
- all feedback should be constructive, balanced, and motivational, it should foster confidence, motivation, and a positive mindset toward improvement,
- formative feedback should preserve the integrity of the assessment processes by giving an appropriate amount of assistance, ensuring that the work submitted will be the students' own and not a collaboration between the student and the tutor,
- formative feedback must be returned to students in good time to allow them to process and fully reflect on the guidance prior to the final summative submission,
- formative feedback should seek to prevent students committing self-plagiarism, i.e. submitting previous work (whole or in part) from another course or module; self-plagiarism is an academic offence and subject to academic sanctions under the awarding bodies' Academic Misconduct policies,
- summative feedback must be returned to students, along with their provisional mark, within the awarding body's specified timeframes, or within 15 working days of the submission deadline for the assessed work where the awarding body does not specify a timeframe. Dissertations and extended projects may have different deadlines, which will be clearly communicated.

8.4. Where support is available for tutors to give feedback on draft work, this will be limited to the number of opportunities that students studying directly with that awarding body would

usually get; where this is not stipulated, students will usually have no more than **two** appointments per assignment, or **four** for a dissertation.

The scope of feedback will be formative in nature and focus on:

- Structure and Argument: Clarity of the thesis, logical flow, and organisation,
- Engagement with Criteria: Identifying areas where the work does or does not meet the published summative learning outcomes,
- Feed-forward: Specific, actionable advice on how to improve the work for the final submission.

8.5. The draft will **not** be given an indicative mark and tutors will **not** undertake detailed line-by-line proofreading or editing of language.

8.6. No Guarantee of Mark: Receiving feedback on a draft does not guarantee a particular final mark. The ultimate responsibility for incorporating the feedback and producing the final summative submission rests with the student.

8.7. In upholding its Assessment Feedback Policy, FSB will:

- work with tutors and assessors to ensure consistency of feedback by providing training and guidance sessions at regular intervals, which explicitly refer to the expectations given above,
- work with awarding bodies to ensure their expectations and constraints around formative and summative feedback are incorporated into FSB's processes and briefed to tutors and assessors,
- routinely audit the quality of feedback provided to students in respect of the principles outlined above,
- use and reflect upon External Examiner commentary on the consistency and helpfulness of feedback against stated module criteria and institutional policy,
- incorporate questions about feedback within student surveys to track the usefulness and actionability of feedback.

Staff Training and Development

8.8. Mandatory Foundation Training

- **Assessment and Feedback Literacy:** FSB will require all new and existing staff involved in marking complete training on the FSB and awarding body policy, focusing on the distinction between formative and summative feedback.

- **Calibration Exercises:** FSB will institute mandatory **marking and feedback calibration sessions** before a module is taught for the first time or if a team has multiple markers. Markers review the same sample student script and compare their feedback, ensuring a shared understanding of standards.
- **VLE and Digital Tools:** FSB will Provide technical training on how to efficiently use digital tools (e.g., Turnitin's Feedback Studio, audio/video feedback features) to deliver richer, more personalized, and accessible feedback quickly.

8.9. Pedagogical and Skill-Based Enhancement; FSB will periodically provide:

- **Developmental Feedback Workshops:** Focus on coaching-style feedback delivery. Training will cover how to:
 - Craft **feed-forward statements** that prompt future action.
 - Use the "**praise-critique-action**" (or similar) structure to maintain a supportive tone.
 - Employ **dialogic feedback** techniques (asking students guiding questions instead of giving direct answers) to promote self-regulation.
- **Inclusivity and Accessibility:** Ensure training covers making feedback **inclusive**, addressing diverse learning needs, and ensuring accessibility (e.g., providing audio feedback transcripts or being mindful of culturally loaded language).

9. Academic Appeals

- 9.1. The grounds upon which a student may appeal against an assessment decision are set out within the Appeals Policy applicable to that awarding body.
- 9.2. Appeals procedures may vary depending on the awarding body's requirements; Fairfield School of Business will make it clear to all students how they can appeal an assessment decision.

10. Review and Update

- 10.1. This policy will be updated annually by the Dean of Teaching and Learning and reviewed by FSB's Academic Board. Updates to this policy will be approved by the Board of Governors.

Document governance

Document owner	Dean of Teaching and Learning
Consulted parties	Vice Principal, Learning and Teaching Forum core members
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**Responsible for updates to this content.*

*** To be consulted on updates to this content.*

Versions

Version no.	Description of Changes	Approved by	Date
0.1 - 0.3 (D)	First drafts for consultation.	-	-
1.0	Approved for publication.	Board of Governors	Apr2025
1.1	Addition of Assessment Feedback provisions.	Board of Governors	Feb 2025

