POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

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Policy No	**Wlcb002**
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ASSESSMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES

CONTENT

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SECTION 1: **PRINCIPLES**

Assessment is a vital part of the learning and teaching process. In addition to providing a measure of the students' achievement on qualification based courses, it also provides diagnostic information that assists both staff and students in the ongoing improvement of the learning and teaching process.
Student progression is a core element of the College's assessment strategy and allows the staff to reflect and evaluate their own teaching performance. Both formative and summative assessments are central to the College's core processes. This policy is not intended to supersede or replace the assessment procedures of the College's awarding organisations but is based on the assumption that the College will be complying with the requirements of its awarding organisations in every respect. This policy is aligned to the Quality Code, in particular Part A, Expectation A 3.2 (Assessment) and Part B, Expectation B6 (Assessment and the recognition of prior learning).

SECTION 2: **CONTEXT** (including regulatory responsibility)

The policy applies to all programmes offered by the College where all or part of the programme is formally assessed.

Key standards
To contribute usefully to the principles, it is essential that assessment:
- Is *fair* and ensures parity of treatment and comparable assessment demands in subjects of equal level. Assessment methodology developed and delivered by College staff must be conducted by reference to open and defined standards described in marking/assessment schemes, covering the required skills, knowledge and understanding.
- is *reliable*, ensuring that assessment decisions are made consistently throughout the College
- is *valid* and conducted rigorously and accurately and in accordance with the awarding body's published criteria and standards.
- Is *transparent* in that it is clear to students, staff and external auditors. Assessment materials must be presented in clear and unambiguous language and must differentiate only on the basis of a student's knowledge, skills and understanding. Such materials must be free from any overt or covert discrimination against an individual, either in wording or content.
- Is *relevant* to the intended outcomes of the subject(s) studied
- methods by which students' work is marked recognises and *respects equality and diversity*
- provides each student with feedback that is *consistent* with marking

Assessment feedback to students must also be inclusive of the key standards and a standard format of reporting is employed by the College *(appendix 1 feedback forms).*

The chosen format and method of assessment must be appropriate to the qualification and any conditions specified in accordance with UK national governing body regulations and the QAA **external reference points.** These regulations and procedures are in accordance with the QAA UK Quality Code, Chapter A6: Assessment of Intended Learning Outcomes, which requires higher education providers to meet the following expectation:

'Higher education providers ensure the assessment of students is robust, valid and reliable and that the award of qualifications and creditws are based on the achievement of the intended learning outcomes'

In addition, these regulations and procedures are in accordance with the QAA UK Quality Code, Chapter B6: Assessment of students and Accreditation of Prior Learning which requires HE providers to meet the following expectation:

'Higher Education providers ensure that students have appropriate opportunities to show they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the award of a qualification or credit.'

SECTION 3: **ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES for VOCATIONAL COURSES**

1. Planning assessment:

Plans are developed by the course team and agreed by the Programme Head and Dean of Teaching and the following key areas must be completed prior to the programmes starting:

- Unit/module sequencing
- Assignments and projects
- Resource planning
- Events, shows and trips
- Schemes of work
- External resources
- Assessment calendar: of assignment submission dates (B6 Indicator 8). This calendar will be drawn up with careful attention to the even spread of assignment dates through the academic year so as not to unduly burden students at any particular time of the year

2. Planning internal verification

Internal verification is the quality assurance system used to monitor assessment practice and decisions for assignments, examinations and for assessment of student work. Internal verification must be planned for the start of the programme with an agreed schedule in place, covering every unit, every assignment and every Assessor, with proposed dates. Course files must contain a calendar of planned internal verification at the start of the programme.

3. Programme specifications

The College works closely with awarding organisations to ensure that we evaluate processes for programme approval and take action to improve where necessary (B1 Indicator 4), for instance in response to external examiner, student and employer feedback.

4. Planning Delivery

 A unit by unit (or module by module) delivery is valid although a unit/module can be broken down into two or more assignments: however units can be integrated to provide assessment relevant to a specific project – (for Pearson programmes, ensure that the outcomes are carefully mapped.). Plan the delivery to ensure that learning is vocational, academic, active, motivational and progressive (B3 Indicator 3) and closely linked to assessment.

5. Planning Assessment

Assessment is required to be valid, reliable, fair and manageable to develop skills and knowledge in line with assessment criteria as specified by the awarding organisation. The teaching team should use a wide variety of assessment methods on each programme so as not to disadvantage a range of students with different learning styles and will make every reasonable adjustment for those with disabilities whilst maintaining academic standards.

6. Plagiarism

- All suspected cases of plagiarism will be considered very carefully in compliance with the College Plagiarism Policy.

- The authentication of student work is the responsibility of the College. Students must authenticate the evidence they provide for assessment and where applicable sign a declaration stating that it is their own work when they submit. All written student work may be submitted through *Turnitin* to confirm any similarities.

- Student induction will include an introduction to assessment and plagiarism and the methods for assessment to be used during the course of their studies and will be supplemented with study skills and technique sessions throughout the year (B4 Indicator 8, B6 Indicator 7).

7. Assignment Design

7.1. Place an emphasis on providing a realistic scenario for students, making maximum use of work related practical experience for the relevant sector. Tasks should be challenging rather than easily achievable, with differentiated outcomes.

7.2. All assignment briefs and examinations which form part of a student's final award will be internally verified by another member of the teaching team, reviewed by Dean of Teaching and approved by the EAB before being issued to students and a record kept confirming that this took place (A 3.2, B6 Indicator 4).

7.3. Assignment briefs will be made available to the awarding organisation if requested in order to engage in a constructive and supportive dialogue thereon for further development.

7.4. All assignment briefs will be written in clear and concise language and will include as a minimum:

- Details of title(s) of programme/module
- The learning outcomes which the student is expected to evidence in their work
- Assessment criteria
- Hand-out date
- The deadline for submission
- The deadline for feedback to the students within two working weeks
- Name of unit/module
- Assessor/Internal verifier name
- A statement on plagiarism that is signed by students on submission (B6 Indicator 7)
- There is an expectation that all assignment briefs are prepared and available at the start of the academic year
- All assignment briefs, even those provided by published sources, must be internally verified and approved by examination and assessment board, prior to issue to the student or placed on the VLE.

8. Assessment

8.1. New staff will be given appropriate training and support as part of their induction to assessing at higher education level, which may include further training, depending on the requirements of the individual and awarding organisation. In their first term their line manager and Dean of Teaching will ensure that their marking is moderated on an ongoing basis.

8.2. Assessment trackers should be in place, regularly updated and must be available at all times for the course team, Head of department, Dean of Teaching, Quality Assurance Officer and Deputy Principal.

8.3. All assessment will follow as laid down in the awarding organisation document in every respect and without deviation, unless with prior agreement from the awarding organisation that the proposed alternative is acceptable.

8.4. Formative Assessment involves the assessor and student and takes place prior to summative assessment. Formative feedback should identify where students can improve their performance and should be clear, targeted guidance that takes place during a tutorial. This activity should be planned in the schemes of work as a tutorial and where appropriate, additional group feedback may be needed if all students require guidance and clarification on similar areas. Every student should have at least one formative feedback opportunity during an assignment/module delivery.

8.5. Summative Assessment - This is the final assessment decision on an assignment task in relation to the assessment criteria of each unit. It is the definitive assessment and recording of the student's achievement. It is not expected that students are offered opportunities to revisit assignments at this stage unless approved by the internal verifier, the EAB or the awarding organisation. Students need to be absolutely clear on the assessment criteria and differences between grading criteria to achieve higher grades (B6 Indicator 6).

8.6. Following summative assessment, students are not able to re-submit work to achieve a higher grade. If there are specific reasons that impacted on the assessment, students can apply for mitigating circumstances. In order to achieve a qualification, a student must achieve every learning outcome.

8.7. It is good practice to identify (not correct) spelling and grammatical errors in formative feedback and expect students to correct this in summative feedback. Students are expected and encouraged to submit their work suitably presented, including giving due regard to correct spelling and grammar to foster the skills which they will need to succeed in employment (B6 Indicator 7).

8.8. The student assessed work will be kept securely for 3 months after certification and assessment feedback and a record will be kept by the College for 3 years.

9. Grading

Grading Higher National Units for Pearson Programmes

Each successfully completed unit will be graded as a pass, merit or distinction.

- A pass is awarded for the achievement of all outcomes against the specified assessment criteria
- Merit and distinction are awarded for higher-level achievement
- Merit and Distinction grades are not awarded for individual assessment criteria

10. Submission of Late Work and Referrals

The ability to meet a deadline is an important part of preparing students for employment and it is important that some students are not advantaged by having additional time to complete assignments. The consequences of late submission of work must be made clear to students. The late work can achieve no more than a Pass grade. Tutors will not mark student work that has been submitted late, unless accompanied by a sanctioned Mitigating Circumstance (B6 Indicator 5). Any referred work should be resubmitted within 2 weeks of the results and will be limited to a Pass grade.

11. Mitigating Circumstances

Students may be given authorised extensions for legitimate reasons such as illness and they must complete the Mitigating Circumstances Form. A learner must formally apply for an extension for not meeting a deadline which should then be approved by the EAB.

12. Resubmissions for Pearson Higher National Programmes

If a student meets an initial deadline and has had the opportunity for formative assessment, but does not meet the pass criteria, a student may be given a further assessment opportunity by the EAB. However the assessment must not give the student an unfair advantage over other students and will not contain Merit or Distinction criteria.

13. Repeat years and Re-sits

Decisions are made at the EAB as to whether to agree progression to the next year, award a qualification, to permit students to repeat modules during the summer recess, to repeat a year or partial year or to withdraw from the programme. Where the offer of summer re-sits is agreed, students are written to with details of the assessment/s and a date for submission. The marked work will be capped at a pass unless supported by mitigating circumstance evidence, which was agreed at the EAB. If students do not pass at this point, a decision is made as to whether to repeat the modules in the next academic year or to trail modules. No more than 25% of the programme can be trailed in the following year and the EAB will make a decision based on the individual student circumstances whether to permit a 'trail'. If students have to repeat a year students are charged standard tuition fees.

14. Internal Verification of Assessment Decisions

14.1. Internal verification is a process undertaken to check that:

- assignments are fit for purpose
- assessment and grading is consistent across the programme and that assessment decisions are accurate against the assessment criteria

14.2. Resources needed to internally verify:

- The module/unit specification outlining the module/unit content and assessment criteria
- The assignment brief
- The learners' work which has been assessed, showing a range of achievement wherever possible
- Record of assessment decisions and feedback to the learner
- The internal verification form for assessment decisions.

14.3. Internal verifiers will sample assessed work from every assignment and every assessor; they are required to be a subject-specialist and familiar with the awarding body and level of the programme.
A well-constructed sample size ranges from 20% to 100% depending on a full range of assessment decisions; new assessors should have more work internally verified than an experienced assessor; new programmes or units should have more samples; the size of the group of learners; any previous known issues with assessment or quality assurance. Comprehensive feedback is provided to the assessor concerning the quality of student feedback and documentation. This process should be clearly recorded and any actions completed. If any inaccuracies are identified by the Internal Verifier, these can be corrected by the Assessor before results are made known to learners

14.4. Internal verification must take place immediately after assessment, therefore throughout the academic year and not end-loaded.

14.5. Standardisation is a process where two or more assessors sample learner work to agree standards, normally prior to formal assessment and internal verification. Standardisation can also be used as a staff development tool. For all new staff assessing, standardisation is essential and all of the student work should be internally verified in the first assessments.

15. Credit Transfer and RPL/RPEL

The College positively encourages students to claim credit in their current course of studies for any relevant qualifications and/or experience gained previously.
A claim for Recognition of Prior Learning, Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning or Credit Transfer should initially be made to the Admissions Manager who, if satisfied of the validity of the claim, will forward it to the appropriate Head of Department for assessment. All the awards based on RPL must go through full assessment and IV process as directed by the awarding body. The full record of RPL should be kept for 3 years.

16. Assessment of students with special needs

Assessment must be available to all those who have the potential to achieve the standards required for a particular qualification. However, some students may need access to alternative means of providing evidence and/or additional support. Care must be taken that any proposed assessment methods are of equal quality and rigour to those for mainstream students and demonstrate that the student has achieved the national standard. Students may be identified as having particular assessment requirements in relation to, for example, learning difficulties, a visual or hearing impairment, a mental illness, or English as an additional language.

This means that they will need appropriate support in their development to help them meet the required standards such as:

- help with communication and number skills
- adapted equipment and physical environment
- special information technology
- confidence building

Awarding body guidance in relation to special assessment requirements must be strictly adhered to. All the cases of special needs should be referred to the Dean of Teaching.

17. Work placement Assessment

Assessment of student performance on placement contributes to personal and professional development. The college has developed a comprehensive student work placement handbook. Work placement aims to encourage and assess the development of professional knowledge and skills during the placement period. It also aims to develop independent learning and communication skills. Each student is allocated a workplace tutor and assessor. The assessment is based on the assessment criteria explained in the work placement handbook to demonstrate the breadth of learning and skills acquired during the placement period and is compiled by the student throughout the placement through day to day activities. Student show their level of engagement with the placement and it builds upon the reflective skills that are introduced prior to placement. Performance reviews are carried out by the student and work place assessor at different points during the placement

18. Assessment Appeals

- All students must be informed of the College's Academic Appeals Procedure at the start of their course.
- The Academic Appeals Procedure must be followed in all cases where a student disagrees with the outcome of an assessment.
- Rights of appeal against a decision involving academic judgement are limited. Academic appeals will be considered only on matters of procedure, competency and/or prejudice.
- A student may be able to appeal the result of an external examination depending on the regulations of individual awarding bodies. Where an appeal is allowed, it may be originated either by the student or the College, again depending on the awarding body.
- Students should seek advice from the Staff Student Liaison Officer.
- All internal processes for appeal must be exhausted prior to appealing to the awarding body or OIA.

SECTION 4: ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES EXAMINATION COURSES

1. Conduct of Examinations

Students are registered for examinations during the normal registration process that takes place at the beginning of each term. The timetabling of written examinations for undergraduate courses is the responsibility of the awarding body.

2. Invigilation

The Registrar/Examinations Officer selects examination supervisors. They are fully trained with regard to their details and responsibilities, including procedures with regard to late attendance at an examination, academic impropriety in an examination session, taking attendance records and collection and return of the scripts to the Examinations Office. All invigilators are required to conduct examinations in strict accordance with the guidelines provided by the Registrar/Examinations Officer/ Awarding Body.

3. Conduct of Students in Examinations

All students presenting for examination must have in their possession their current college identity card, passport or any other form of ID as required by the awarding body. Students will not be admitted to an examination after the first half hour has elapsed from the time of commencement of the examination and may not leave the examination venue during the last half hour of the examination.
Students are required to abide by the instructions given by invigilators. Breaches of the Guidelines for students at Examinations are regarded as serious offences for which students may be dealt with under the College and awarding organisation's disciplinary procedures.

4. Absence from Examinations

Where a student becomes ill prior to the commencement of the annual examination or where illness prevents a student from completing any part of the examination, the student needs to complete a special consideration form and sent to the awarding body.

5. Collection of Scripts

At the conclusion of each examination, the invigilators take scripts to the Administration Office where they are logged in and held for dispatch to the awarding body or Assessors.

6. Security of Scripts

Examination Officer is responsible for ensuring the security and integrity of scripts in their possession and must inform the Deputy Principal of the location of and means of access to, any scripts removed from College.

7. Issuing Results

The Awarding Body will release results in accordance with their quality assurance.

8. Safe Storage

The College will retain candidates' work securely between assessment sessions (if more than one) , to prevent unauthorised access to student records that are stored as paper files in secure locked storage or on IT systems in the form of database spreadsheets in a locked secure room which can only be accessed by authorised persons. On completion of an examination the College retains students work securely or posts to the awarding organisation through secure postage.

SECTION 5: ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES (in relation to assessment)

Role of the Deputy Principal

- Overall responsibility for the management of all assessment

Assessor

- Set tasks which allow students to demonstrate what they know, understand and can do so that they have opportunities to achieve the highest possible grades on their courses
- Embed schemes of work in the College assessment strategies and ensure that they are understood by students
- Ensure that learners are clear about the criteria they are expected to meet in their assignments and that they are fully briefed on the skills which need to be demonstrated in the coursework / portfolio components of a subject
- Encourage students by giving detailed feedback and guidance on how to improve work
- Set interim deadlines for coursework and advise students on the appropriate amount of time to spend on the work, ensuring it is commensurate with the credit available
- Mark and return drafts within two weeks of submission
- Adhere to the Awarding Body's specification in the assessment of student assignments
- Record outcomes of assessment using appropriate documentation
- Ensure each candidate signs to confirm that the work is their own

Internal Verifier (IV)

The IV is at the heart of quality assurance on BTEC programmes.

- To ensure that internally assessed work consistently meets national standards but can also lead to staff development and quality improvement
- Ensure that all assignment briefs are verified as fit for purpose prior to them being circulated to students (they should enable students to meet the unit grading criteria).
- Make recommendations to the assessor on how to improve the quality of the brief if necessary.
- Make all IV evidence available to the Lead Verifier (LV) and to the External Verifier (EV)
- Plan with the Dean of Teaching and Lead Verifier an annual internal verification schedule linked to assignment plans.

Lead Verifier (LV)

- Consider the assessment decisions of all units and all assessors to judge whether the assessor has assessed accurately against the unit grading criteria
- Monitor evidence of assessment decisions made by all assessors to ensure consistency in the interpretation and application of standards within the departments
- Establish record keeping systems and documentation used for assessment and internal verification
- Review and agree assessment decisions with the assessor, internal verifier and external verifier

Examination & Assessment Board

The Board of Examiners determines the results and academic progress of students and makes recommendations regarding the student final award, progression, concessions, academic appeals, re-sits and repeat years. The EAB includes:

- Academic Registrar (Chairperson)
- Deputy Principal
- Dean of Teaching
- Examinations Officer
- Business Course Leader
- Computing Course Leader

- Health & Social Care Course Leader
- Quality Assurance Manager
- External Member(s) (ESSA)
- External Quality Assurance Advisor
- External Examiner(s)
- Internal Verifier(s)
- Lead verifier
- Assessors

External QA Advisor

- External Quality Assurance Advisors gives external advice on quality assurance. EQA's have a pivotal role in providing central supportive advice in a mediatory capacity to the committees, guiding strategic developments as well as continuing to provide guidance on academic standards
- As members of the Quality Assurance Committee the EQA's also act as a central source of advice on quality assurance and standards.

External Subject Specialists (ESS)

- The College Executive Committee has appointed subject specialists as internal ESSA's. They have relevant subject area experience in Higher Education and work in an advisory capacity, complementing the work of the EQA's by supporting academic teams with quality advice at subject level in business, law, computing and health & social care.
- ESSA's comment on academic standards at the Examination and Assessment Board meetings. The ESSA's have access to a range of documentation including programme specifications and student work.
- ESSA's can advise on whether standards set are appropriate to the College's awarding body criteria, national subject benchmarks, and national qualifications frameworks.

Dean of Teaching:
- Responsible for the teaching committee to review assessment processes
- Annual Monitoring of the programmes
- Responsible for ensuring that all examination papers and other forms of assessments are submitted to the relevant external examiner (EV) for his/her approval.
- Responsible for ensuring that all relevant details of examinations, assessments, marking arrangements and grades are notified to students in writing at the commencement of each programme.
- Specifies the deadline dates for submission, assessment and internal verification within the context of the respective schemes of work.
- Presents assessment reports to the Academic Committee and EAB

SECTION 6: **QUALITY ASSURANCE**

The Examination & Assessment Board reviews pass rates and reports to the Academic Committee.
An annual audit is carried out each year by the QA Committee who review the reports and report on general standards including assessment to the Academic Committee.
The Assessment Policy and Procedures are reviewed annually by the QA Committee.

SECTION 7: **RELATED DOCUMENTS**

1. Recognition of Prior Learning Policy (Wlcb014)
2. Safe Storage Policy
3. Complaints Policy & Procedure (Wlcb018)
4. Academic Appeals Policy & Procedure (Wlcb001)
5. Plagiarism Policy & Procedures (Wlcb011)
6. Academic Misconduct & Policy and Procedure (Wlcb008)
7. Course Handbooks on the VLE contain module specification and awarding body guidelines
8. Examiner Guidelines – Pearson
9. Pearson Level 4 -7 Assessment Guide Pearson
10. BTEC Centre Guide to Internal Verification

SECTION 8:   **APPENDICES**

1. Feedback Forms (Interim and final)
2. Annual audit statements
3. Assignment brief template
4. Grading criteria and calculation
5. Assessment timetable copy
6. Work placement Assessment Handbook
7. Terms of Reference – Assessment & Examinations Board