

Assessment Issues 3 – Design and Review of Examinations

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of the Guidance

Assessment of students' learning is a key issue for students, those who teach and those who are responsible for the design, accreditation, quality assurance and review of modules.

Faculties and Departments will understand the importance of ensuring effective systems are in place both to safeguard the integrity of the assessment and examination process and to ensure the maintenance and enhancement of quality standards. The same expectation will be found in the codes and processes developed by the UK Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education and by validating or professional bodies.

To safeguard and maintain the integrity of the assessment and examination process, and to ensure the maintenance and enhancement of quality standards, Faculties and Departments are required to ensure that all assessments and examinations meet a set minimum requirement and conform to BUE Regulations as set out in the University's Examination and Assessment Regulations.

The Assessment Guidance applies a minimum standard for assessments and examinations that all Faculties/Departments should adopt in relation to three key areas:

- a. design of assessments and examination papers;
- b. marking;
- c. the scrutiny of final marks.

The Assessment Guidance has been developed as a result of the consolidation of good practice within the University since its foundation including recommendations from different working groups, and in particular the 2012 working group on Academic Honesty. Furthermore, the Assessment Guidance is based on best UK practice and reflect UK policy and norms as set out by the QAA, The HE Academy as well as a number of UK universities from which the Guidelines have been derived.*

** See Appendix for a full list of sources from which the Assessment Guidelines have been derived.*

2 DESIGN AND REVIEW OF EXAMINATIONS

2.1 General principles

The development of independent learning and the use of textbooks

It is a principle of British Higher Education that a variety of sources is strongly recommended for the setting of examination questions, to further the development of independent learning.

Material should only be taken from textbooks or from the internet for use in assessments when a graphic such as a graph is required, which is hard for the Module Leader to produce.

When a textbook question or material taken from the internet is used in an assessment:

- a. the sequence of numbers or other data must be altered;
- b. there must be acknowledgment on the inner face of the exam paper using an appropriate form of words. For example:
 - *This problem is taken from ... when the textbook question is reproduced with no changes*
 - *This problem is based on... when the textbook question is merely a model*
 - *This problem is adapted from... when the textbook question is used except for changes of the numbers or other precise components*

Copyright

Those setting assessments must comply with British and Egyptian Copyright laws. The unacknowledged use of textbook questions in examinations is a breach of copyright.

Fit for purpose

Examination questions should be “fit for purpose”. They should not simply be lifted from a textbook or from a website: this is to avoid the risk to the security of an examination when questions are taken from textbooks or websites to which students have access.

Examination questions should:

- a. meet the specific assessment purpose of the exam in the module;
- b. support the role of the module in the programme;
- c. specifically test the relevant intended learning outcomes (ILOs).

Repetition of past questions

Avoid repetition or “self-plagiarism” in setting examination questions and assessments by:

- a. never setting the same question year after year;
- b. never setting the same examination question and resit question in the same year.

2.2 Role of Module Leaders in the design and review of examination papers

Module Leaders must:

- a. draft appropriately designed examination paper(s) for their module;

- b. ensure all examination papers adopt the standard University format;
- c. draft the requisite model answers;
- d. draft the requisite marking criteria customised from BUE's generic marking scales and criteria;
- e. arrange with another competent staff member to proof the paper using the checklist given below;
- f. review and modify examination papers according to the observations of the External Examiners and provide a short report to the Faculty Examination Officer to indicate how the paper has been modified;
- g. ensure that the correct number of examination papers is printed.

2.3 Format of examination papers

All examination papers should be produced according to the agreed BUE Format. All Exams should:

- a. include a BUE Cover Sheet
- b. use font size 12
- c. be written in Arial
- d. have page numbers centred on the bottom of each page in the format (i.e. page 1 of 4)
- e. be double spaced
- f. have clear numbering of questions
- g. have clear numbering of sections if applicable

2.4 Review of assessments and examination papers

It is good practice to review assessments and examination questions with colleagues to ensure the validity of the examination paper and assessment tasks. In reviewing assessments and examination papers the following checklist can be used.

Checklist 1: Review of assessment and examination papers

Does the assessments/exam paper.....	
a	deliver the assessment strategy as outlined in the Module Specification?
b	assess the ILO's for the examination component as stated in the assessment strategy of the Module Specification?
Do the questions.....	
a	assess skills and knowledge at an appropriate level? (Questions will need to present increasingly complex problems to students as they move up the levels.)
b	allow students to demonstrate that they have achieved all the intended learning outcomes for the examination component as stated in the assessment strategy of the Module Specification?
c	provide a range of question formats that discriminate between the more able and less able students?
d	"stretch" the good candidates and expose those who have not worked. (Do not set easy questions to help weaker students.)
e	ensure consistency across modules offering similar credit at the same level?
f	assess the students' knowledge of the subject as well as their:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding • ability to apply knowledge • ability to develop a logical argument • ability to synthesise and analyse
g	require students to draw on material from across the syllabus (i.e. not one question on one topic or chapter).
Are the questions.....	
a	unambiguous, clearly written and presented in good English?
Are marking standards available for each question which provide.....	
a	clear marking criteria that are customised from BUE's generic marking scales and criteria?
b	model answers for all questions?
c	a clear description of what is expected for ranges of marks for each question?
d	clarity on the weighting of marks between questions & sections?
Does the exam paper.....	
a	conform to the BUE examination style format?
b	have clear numbering of questions and of sections?
c	have clear, concise instructions?
Has the assessments/exam paper been reviewed and proofread.....	
a	to check that it is clearly written, in good English?
b	to check that all questions are well formulated and unambiguous?
c	to confirm that allocation and weighting of marks is appropriate?
d	to confirm that the appropriate ILO's have been assessed?
e	to check for consistency with other examination papers for modules of the same level?
If appropriate, has the exam paper been reviewed by the External Examiner.....	
a	to confirm that questions & weighting of marks are appropriate?
b	and has the examination paper been revised to reflect feedback from the External Examiner?

2.5 The role of External Examiners

External Examiners play a key role in scrutinising both the quality and standard of examination papers and the consistency in marking.

External Examiners must be asked to approve all draft examination papers at levels 5 and 6 (having regard to the level, range, design and structure of questions set), together with model answers and marking schemes where appropriate.

External Examiners are also entitled to see any examination scripts in order to reach judgments on standards and consistency of internal marking at Levels I and H. They will normally be provided with a sample of student work across a range of results. They should agree with the faculty concerned a basis (method and extent) for sampling student work, to ensure they have sufficient evidence.

External Examiners may request marks to be amended and if this is required it should be carried out for all examination papers within a given cohort.

Faculty Examination Officers are also responsible, through monitoring of Module Leaders, for ensuring that all feedback received from External Examiners is acted upon and that examination papers and model answers are appropriately amended to reflect the recommendations.

Faculty Examination Officers should record the response to all feedback as evidence that action has been taken to address all issues raised by External Examiners.

2.6 Sending examination papers to UK validating universities

Faculty Examination Officers are responsible to ensure that the transmission of Exam papers is in accordance with approved University protocols.

3 APPENDIX: KEY REFERENCES

The Assessment Guidance has been derived from a number of sources.

plagiarismadvice.org

<http://www.plagiarismadvice.org/>

Plagiarism, A Good Practice Guide, By Jude Carroll and Jon Appleton, May 2001

<http://www.plagiarismadvice.org/resources/good-practice-guide>

QAA

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education: A brief guide

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/default.aspx>

The Higher Education Academy

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/home>

Supporting academic integrity: Approaches and resources for higher

education http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/academicintegrity/SupportingAcademicIntegrity_v2.pdf

Policy works

http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/academicintegrity/policy_works.pdf

An Introduction to Assessment, The Higher Education Academy HE in FE: Teaching and Learning, Written and prepared by Gary Hargreaves EIAT, Consultancy Ltd, December 2006

<http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/subjects/engineering/intro-to-assessment.pdf>

Assessment: A Guide for Lecturers, George Brown, Generic Centre, Learning and Teaching Support Network

<http://www.bioscience.heacademy.ac.uk/ftp/Resources/gc/assess03Lecturers.pdf>

Designing assessment to improve Physical Sciences learning, Phil Race, March 2009

http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/ps/documents/practice_guides/practice_guides/ps0069_designing_assessment_to_improve_physical_sciences_learning_march_2009.pdf

University of Bath

<http://www.bath.ac.uk/>

Student Disability Advice

<http://www.bath.ac.uk/disabilityadvice/index.html>

University of Ulster

<http://www.ulster.ac.uk/>

Assessment Criteria - Appendix 2 and 3

<http://www.ulster.ac.uk/academicoffice/download/Handbooks/Assessment%20Handbook.pdf>

Oxford Brookes University – Assessment Standards Knowledge exchange (ASKe)

<http://www.brookes.ac.uk/aske/index.html>

Reduce the risk of Plagiarism in just 30 mins!

http://www.brookes.ac.uk/aske/documents/2576_123-ReducePlag.pdf

Using Turnitin to provide powerful formative feedback

http://www.brookes.ac.uk/aske/documents/2700_123-Turnitin.pdf