**For the avoidance of doubt, it should be noted that this document carries regulatory force and supersedes any rules and guidance on assessment released by the University prior to its publication.**

**Assessment Regulations Framework**

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# Purpose and Scope of this Regulatory Framework

* 1. The regulations on assessment set out in this Assessment Regulations Framework are intended to provide clarity to staff and students on the format, design and marking of assessment as conducted on modules and courses leading to University credit or a University award.
  2. The Assessment Regulations Framework should be consulted by those professional services staff and academic staff involved in the design, approval, conduct and evaluation of assessment practices at the University and its partner providers.
  3. “**Assessment**” refers to any component of a course used to assess student achievement―and the level of achievement demonstrated―of the intended learning outcomes specified for modules and course of study that contribute to a specific academic award.
  4. Assessment on HE courses is subject to regulation by professional bodies and by the Office for Students. The purpose of this document is to establish the underlying principles of national regulation that must be observed in the format, design, delivery and conduct of assessment and to rearticulate these as regulatory requirements of the University. By doing so, the intention is to ensure that the University remains compliant with the conditions set by the national regulatory authorities for managing assessment.
  5. This Assessment Regulations Framework is applicable in full to:
     1. All modules and all taught and research courses delivered by the University at levels 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8[[1]](#footnote-2), regardless of whether or not these courses lead to an award of the University of Kent.
     2. To level 3 courses where these form an integrated part of a course of study leading to a Kent award.
     3. To any standalone module that may contribute to a University course at FHEQ levels 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 or an integrated course at level 3.
     4. They also apply to all modules and courses delivered and / or assessed by domestic and international providers under a partnership arrangement with the University regardless of whether these modules and courses contribute to a Kent award.
  6. Academic judgement is exercised within the context of each discipline, but the University requires markers to exercise their judgement rigorously and competently within this regulatory framework. Marks or grades resulting from that exercise of academic judgement must be dealt with consistently within the University’s standardised procedures as set out here.
  7. The University uses a number of different types of assessment, which are set out in Annex 1: Types of Assessment[[2]](#footnote-3).

# Index of Annexes

Annex 1: Types of Assessment [TBA]

[Annex 2: Qualification Level Descriptors](https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/documents/assessment-regulations-framework/assessment-regulations-framework-annex-2.docx)

[Annex 3: University Grade Descriptors](https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/documents/assessment-regulations-framework/assessment-regulations-framework-annex-3.docx)

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# Principles for Effective Assessment

The following principles underpin the national regulatory requirements for assessment:

## Principle 1: Students are assessed effectively.

This means that means students are assessed in a challenging and appropriately comprehensive way, by reference to the subject matter of the higher education course, and includes but is not limited to:

* + 1. Providing **stretch** and **rigour** consistent with the level of the module / course.

This means that course design, development, standards and assessment are effective **in stretching** students to develop independence, knowledge, understanding and skills that reflect their full potential.

* + 1. Testing **relevant knowledge, understanding and skills**.

Relevant knowledge, understanding and skills encompass:

1. **The knowledge and understanding** relevant to the subject matter and level of the course; and
2. Other **skills** relevant to the subject matter and level of the course including, but not limited to, cognitive skills, practical skills, transferable skills and professional competences.
   * 1. Scheduling assessments in a timely fashion to **avoid ‘bunching’**, allow for the **consolidation of learning** and for the **provision of feedback** on students’ performance in time for them to learn from it before the next assessment; and
     2. Assessments being designed in a way that minimises the opportunities for **academic misconduct** and facilitates the detection of such misconduct where it does occur.

## Principle 2: Each assessment is valid and reliable.

* + 1. ‘**Valid**’ in this context requires that an assessment in fact takes place in a way that results in students demonstrating **relevant knowledge and skills** in the way intended by the design of the assessment.
    2. ‘**Reliable**’ means that an assessment, in practice, requires students to demonstrate **relevant** **knowledge, understanding** **and skills** in a manner which is **consistent** as between the students registered on a course and over time, as appropriate in the context of developments in the content and delivery of the course of study.

## Principle 3: Assessment ensures that academic awards are credible at the point of being granted and when compared to those granted previously.

“**Credible**” in this regulatory context means that relevant awards reflect students’ **knowledge, understanding and skills**, any evaluation of which will take into account factors such as, for example:

* + 1. Whether students are assessed **effectively** and whether assessments are **valid** and **reliable**;
    2. The number of relevant awards granted, and the classifications attached to them, and the way in which this number and/or the classifications **change over time** and compare with other providers;
    3. The extent to which improved degree classification outcomes **over time** can be evidenced / justified by enhancements in the student learning experience.

## Principle 4: Assessment allows students to demonstrate learning at the appropriate level for the module or course.

* + 1. Assessments must give students the opportunity to demonstrate the achievement of intended learning outcomes that are appropriate for the **FHEQ level** of the module / course; and
    2. Assessments must provide criteria for calibrating levels of student achievement **below**, **at** and, unless taken on a pass /fail basis, **above** the **threshold level** for a pass.

## Principle 5: All courses must develop and assess proficiency in the use of English.

Effective assessment requires the technical proficiency in the use of the English language to be assessed in a manner which appropriately reflects the level and content of the course (see [section 3.4](#_Principle_3:_) below).

## Principle 6: Students have a voice in determining the effectiveness of assessment on their courses.

Effective engagement requires the routine provision of opportunities for students to contribute to the development of their academic experience and their modules / course, including the design, delivery and conduct of assessment, in a way that maintains the **academic rigour** and **stretch** of that course, including, but not limited to, through membership of the Student Voice committees, opportunities to provide survey responses, and participation in activities to develop the course.

## Principle 7: The design, delivery and grading of assessment is regulated effectively by the University.

Academic regulations **must regulate** the design, conduct and marking of assessment and, where relevant, the formulation of degree classification outcomes, to ensure that:

1. assessment is effective, reliable, consistent and valid;
2. academic misconduct is discouraged, detected and penalised; and
3. academic awards are credible at the point of award and over time.

# Regulations Governing Assessment

The following regulations are extrapolated from and mapped against the regulatory principles set out in [Section 2](#_Principles_for_Effective) above:

## Sector-Recognised Standards

* + 1. Assessment is the process through which the University tests **the level of achievement** by students of the knowledge, skills and understanding required for a specified academic award, as articulated in the intended learning outcomes for a course and the subset of modules of which the curriculum for that award consists.
    2. It is therefore a key function of assessment to determine if the required learning has taken place that is

1. sufficient for a threshold pass;

and, unless the assessment in question is conducted on a pass / fail basis:

1. the extent to which the student has successfully demonstrated the required learning with regard to achievement calibrated above the threshold for a pass.

## Threshold Pass

* + 1. The standard of achievement required for a **threshold pass** for assessments must be appropriate to the designated level of the module as mapped against the OfS publication [Sector-Recognised Standards: Part A: Threshold Standards for Awards at All Levels](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/53821cbf-5779-4380-bf2a-aa8f5c53ecd4/sector-recognised-standards.pdf) and articulated in the form of relevant intended learning outcomes.
    2. These standards were first articulated in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (‘FHEQ’) and as such have long been articulated in the University’s Credit Framework and have now been co-opted into this document, see [Annex 2: Qualification Level Descriptors](https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/documents/assessment-regulations-framework/assessment-regulations-framework-annex-2.docx).
    3. Assessment methods should be designed so that achievement of the pass mark or above for the module overall will demonstrate achievement of the full set of intended learning outcomes.

## Achievement Above the Threshold

* + 1. Unless an assessment is conducted on a pass/fail basis, each assessment must also provide marking criteria that specify different levels of achievement below, at and above the level of the threshold pass.
    2. This marking criteria will advise students of the level of achievement required on their assessments for the award of a mark in a specific range of marks. Marking criteria should reflect the University Grade Descriptors set out in Annex 3 and be appropriate for assessments at the designated level. (See [Annex 3: University Grade Descriptors](https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/documents/assessment-regulations-framework/assessment-regulations-framework-annex-3.docx))

Nb. Please note that the University Grade Descriptors, while relevant to awards at all levels, in particular reflect the mandatory levels of achievement prescribed for classified honours degrees at level 6 in Sector-Recognised Standards: Part B: Classification Descriptors for Level 6 Bachelors’ Degrees. Grade criteria for achievement above the threshold pass at for modules at level 6 **must satisfy** the expectations set out in the University Grade Descriptors for assessments at this level.

## Technical Proficiency in Use of English Language

* + 1. For all courses delivered and /or assessed in English, marking criteria **must reflect** the requirement for students to express themselves in assessments to a technically proficient standard, as appropriate to the subject matter and level of the course.
    2. As relevant to the nature and level of the assessment, marking criteria must calibrate appropriate use of grammar, spelling and punctuation in English and indicate the standard of technical proficiency that must be demonstrated in order to achieve an overall mark in the relevant class-bands of marks for the assessment in question.

**(See** [Annex 4: Technical Proficiency in English](https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/documents/assessment-regulations-framework/assessment-regulations-framework-annex-4.docx)**)**

Nb. See note below on exemptions to this requirement with regard to students with certain characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010.[[3]](#footnote-4)

## Course Assessment Strategies

* + 1. An assessment strategy for each **course of study** will be set out in the relevant course specification.
    2. The Course Assessment Strategy will reflect the underlying principles of the national regulator (see [Section 2](#_Principles_for_Effective) above) and will ensure the effective testing of the achievement by students of the knowledge, understanding and all the skills set out in the course specification.
    3. Course Assessment Strategies will therefore detail how the use of assessment on the course will:

1. Provide stretch and rigour in line with the level of the course;
2. Consistently result in students demonstrating relevant knowledge, understanding and skills in the way intended by the design of the assessment;
3. Give students the opportunity to demonstrate the achievement of intended learning outcomes that are appropriate for the FHEQ levelof the module / course;
4. Require assessment outcomes to be mapped against the University Grade Descriptors for calibrating levels of student achievement below, at and, unless taken on a pass /fail basis, above the threshold level for a pass;
5. Ensures that the timing of assessments allows for the consolidation of learning and for the provision of feedback on students’ performance in time for them to learn from it before the next assessment;
6. Effectively tests the standard of students’ technical proficiency in English (see exemptions in Footnote 3);
7. Through effective design, minimises the opportunities for academic misconduct.
   * 1. Course Assessment Strategies must also reflect the requirements of the University Assessment and Feedback Strategy, as available here (See: [Annex 5](https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/documents/assessment-regulations-framework/assessment-and-feedback-strategy-annex-5.docx)).
     2. Course Assessment Strategies will be approved by CASC at
8. the point of the approval of a new course; and
9. at the point of approving a significantly revised course (See [Annex B: Approval of Taught Courses of Study, Suspensions and Withdrawals](https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/documents/code-of-practice-taught/code-of-practice-taught-annex-b-approval-of-taught-courses.docx) of the Codes of Practice).
   * 1. The diet of assessment **for each module** will be published in the relevant approved module specification. The components of assessment for the module will be designed to meet the requirements set out in 3.5.1 – 3.5.3. above and will therefore reflect the overarching Course Assessment Strategy. Further detail on the requirements for establishing the diet of assessment for a module is set out in [Annex 5: University Assessment and Feedback Strategy.](https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/documents/assessment-regulations-framework/assessment-and-feedback-strategy-annex-5.docx)

## Marking

* + 1. The design of assessment tasks should be clearly aligned with the University Grade Descriptors (see [Annex 3](https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/documents/assessment-regulations-framework/assessment-regulations-framework-annex-3.docx)).
    2. Except where assessment is conducted on a pass/fail basis, discipline-specific marking schemes should provide students with the opportunity to be rewarded for achievement both at the threshold level and also, progressively, to the highest levels at the top of the marking range.
    3. The University Grade Descriptors should be used as a guide in writing intended learning outcomes at the appropriate level. They can assist in ensuring that intended learning outcomes should be based not only on content knowledge but also around skills and capabilities, both generic and professional.
    4. The Grade Descriptors should also be used to generate assignment–specific marking schemes and marking criteria that reflect the level of achievement required for individual assessment tasks.
    5. Assessments must be geared to testing the achievement of learning that is appropriate for the level of the module.
    6. Where students registered on cognate modules at different levels are taught together, the assessment marking criteria for any shared assessments **must be differentiated** and designed to test the achievement of learning as appropriate to the separate levels of the respective modules of registration.
    7. For each student and each module the outcome of assessment must be recorded as a mark out of 100 except where it has been agreed that a module will be assessed on a pass/fail or a fail/pass/merit/distinction basis.
    8. A component of assessment that is marked on a pass/fail basis should only be treated as pass-compulsory where the assessment in question tests a unique module learning outcome for that module.
    9. Use of the **Categorical Marking Scale** set out in [Annex 6: Marking](https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/documents/assessment-regulations-framework/assessment-regulations-framework-annex-6.docx) is **compulsory** for all modules for relevant assessments. **Relevant assessments are those assessments that require a qualitative judgement by the marker against criterion-referenced standards, such as essays, dissertations, reports, individual examination questions.**
    10. **Examples of assessed work that are not suitable for marking with reference to the Categorical Marking Scale include assessment:**

1. **that take the form of** tests of complex calculation; or
2. **that take the form of** knowledge that allow for an accumulation of marks on an objective basis; or
3. which are composed of a large number of questions; or
4. questions where there is a single correct answer (such as numerical questions).

In such case the Categorical Marking Scale should not be used.

* + 1. When devising marking schemes, Divisions must map **grade criteria on to the University Grade Descriptors and apply these to all assessments that are suitable for marking under the scale.**
    2. The Categorical Marking Scale contains a fixed number of percentage points in each class band, one of which might be assigned by a marker for a piece of assessed work.
    3. **The grade criteria will differentiate levels of achievement within each classification band as relevant to the several marking points available for allocation.**
    4. **Markers should award the appropriate mark from the scale to assessed work as best fits student performance in relation to the grade criteria.**
    5. **Use of the scale is intended to:**

1. **encourage markers to make firm decisions about assessed work in relation to class band grade; and**
2. **encourage markers to use the full range of the marking scale, particularly in the first class band.**
   * 1. Grade criteria for assessments should be supplied in advance to students. As relevant to the nature and level of the assessment, the criteria must indicate the standard of technical proficiency in English that must be demonstrated in order to achieve an overall mark in the relevant class-bands of marks for the assessment in question.
     2. Further detail on the University’s requirements for the marking of assessments is set out in [Annex 6: Marking](https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/documents/assessment-regulations-framework/assessment-regulations-framework-annex-6.docx).

## Feedback on Assessed Work

* + 1. A commentary explaining the basis of any mark awarded must be returned with all assessed coursework.
    2. The nature and extent of feedback will be determined by the needs of the assessment type and student performance(s) but should be sufficient to explain strengths and weaknesses in the performance(s) and explain and justify the mark(s) awarded. [Annex 7](https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/documents/assessment-regulations-framework/assessment-regulations-framework-annex-7.docx) provides some guiding principles for student feedback.
    3. Students must be provided with feedback on their performance in assessed coursework on a module in time for them to learn from it before the next assessment.
    4. Staff members will return written work that students have submitted in accordance with published requirements and deadlines unless the work is to be held for further examination as part of the assessment process.
    5. Work will normally be returned **within three calendar weeks** of the published deadline, except where this period is interrupted by the Winter or Spring vacations, in which circumstance the work in question will be returned by the end of the first week of the following term.
    6. Individual modules may be permitted a deadline for the return of marked work outside of the standard three week period, subject to the following:

1. Any such variation will be on an exceptional basis only and must be agreed in advance by the Director of the relevant Division (or nominee);
2. The agreed variation for the return of marked work must not be excessively different from the norm;
3. The agreed variation for the return of marked work must be in place and students must be given clear notification of the new deadline at the commencement of the module in question.
   * 1. All modules should include at least one opportunity to provide students with evaluative feedback on their work from which they can judge how they have performed and how they can improve.
     2. Where a module is assessed exclusively by written examination(s), or extended coursework representing a single unit of assessment, there is a requirement for formative assessment prior to the summative examination(s)/coursework submission.
     3. Feedback on student work submitted for formative assessment should be directed to supporting the learning process. It should additionally provide an explanation of why any indicative mark was applied and, where appropriate, how the student’s performance could be improved.
     4. Feedback on coursework returned to students that had been submitted for summative assessment must explain the grounds for the mark or grade awarded. It should additionally, and where appropriate, indicate how the student’s performance could be improved. Academic staff should consult the checklist of good practice prompts provided at [Annex 7: Designing Assessment and Feedback for Learning](https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/documents/assessment-regulations-framework/assessment-regulations-framework-annex-7.docx)) in order to ensure that their assessment and feedback design is effective and in line with the University’s principles and expectations.
     5. Students are entitled to receive **examination feedback**. Schools must therefore provide feedback at key stages in the programme to support successful progression for students.
     6. In order to provide this in a timely fashion (e.g. prior to re-sits; by the beginning of Autumn term at progression between stages), Schools should advise students of the timeframe for providing generic examination feedback and for responding to requests for feedback on an individual basis. For further detail see the University’s policy on [providing feedback to students on examination scripts](https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/documents/policies-procedures-examination-guidance/examination-feedback-policy.docx).
     7. Further detail on the University’s requirements for providing feedback on assessments is set out in *Annex 6: Assessment, Marking* *and Feedback.*

## Limiting Opportunities for Academic Misconduct

* + 1. Attention must be given in the design of assessment tasks to minimising the opportunities for **academic misconduct**.
    2. As relevant to the nature of the task, staff should ensure the effectiveness of the assessment opportunities that they provide and the credibility of the outcomes that students achieve by adapting their assessment design strategies to reflect the guidance set out in [Annex 8: Deterring Academic Misconduct.](https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/documents/assessment-regulations-framework/assessment-regulations-framework-annex-8.docx)
    3. When approving modules, Divisions will take into account the extent to which the design of the assessment tasks minimise the opportunities for academic misconduct and protecting the credibility of the learning outcomes achieved by students.
    4. When approving courses, CASC will consider the effectiveness of the Course Assessment Strategy as a means of minimising the opportunities for academic misconduct and protecting the credibility of the learning outcomes achieved by students.

## Classification

* + 1. The University’s conventions for the classification of awards are set out in the [Credit Framework](https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/documents/credit-framework/credit-framework.docx)*.*
    2. The classification conventions will be designed to ensure that degree outcomes are representative of the national requirements for awards at the designated level and, where relevant, classification band, in line with the Sector-Recognised Standards published by the OfS (see [Annex 2: Qualification Level Descriptors](https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/documents/assessment-regulations-framework/assessment-regulations-framework-annex-2.docx); and [Annex 3: University Grade Descriptors](https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/documents/assessment-regulations-framework/assessment-regulations-framework-annex-3.docx)). In this way, the classification conventions will protect the credibility of the University’s awards by ensuring that student attainment as reflected in degree outcomes fully reflect the nationally benchmarked University Grade Descriptors.
    3. The University’s Education and Student Experience Board will review the outcomes of honours degrees and will report on these annually to Senate and Council in the form of the Degree Outcomes Statement, which will subsequently be published on the website of the Quality Assurance and Compliance Office.
    4. In reviewing degree outcomes awarded, the Education and Student Experience Board will consider the number of honours degrees awards granted, and the classifications attached to them, and the way in which this number and/or the classifications change over time and compare with other providers.
    5. The Education and Student Experience Board will consider the extent to which any improved honours degree classification outcomes over time can be evidenced / justified by enhancements in the student learning experience.

Where any such improvement in outcomes cannot be evidenced as deriving from enhancements in the student learning experience, the Education and Student Experience Board will propose steps to redress the unexplained increase in honours degrees’ award outcomes, to be implemented in the following academic year.

These might involve changes to assessment practices, a recalibration of marking criteria, adjustments to the conventions for classification or awarding credit, or any other measure deemed appropriate by the Board.

* + 1. Where the proportions of First Class and/or Upper Second Class honours degrees granted in any year are found to be in excess of the sector average for that year, the Education and Student Experience Board will consider what steps, if any, might be required to address the misalignment. These might involve changes to assessment practices, a recalibration of marking criteria, adjustments to the conventions for classification or awarding credit, or any other measure deemed appropriate by the Board.

## Student Engagement

* + 1. Divisions must engage effectively with students and provide opportunities for them to contribute to the development of their academic experience and their modules / course. These will include opportunities for students to participate in activities to develop the course and the way it is delivered, including with regard to the design, delivery and conduct of assessment (see Code of Practice, [Annex N: Student Engagement in Quality Assurance and Enhancement](https://www.kent.ac.uk/education/documents/code-of-practice-taught/code-of-practice-taught-annex-n.docx)).

1. As identified in the OfS publication [Sector-Recognised Standards: Part A: Threshold Standards for Awards at All Levels](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/53821cbf-5779-4380-bf2a-aa8f5c53ecd4/sector-recognised-standards.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Link to follow [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Nb. Insofar as relevant skills includes technical proficiency in the English language, the University is not required to comply with 7.5 to the extent that it is able to demonstrate to the OfS, on the balance of probabilities, that its English language proficiency requirements, or failure to have English language proficiency requirements, for one or more students, are strictly necessary as a matter of law because compliance with the relevant skills requirements in respect of that student, or those students: i. would amount to a form of discrimination for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010; and ii. cannot be objectively justified for the purposes of relevant provisions of that Act; and iii. does not fall within an exception or exclusion provided for under or by virtue of that Act, including but not limited to provisions of the Act that relate to competence standards. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)