



UCD Assessment Code of Practice

For UCD Staff
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Assessment Code of Practice

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Introduction



1. Introduction

Assessment at UCD is an integrated and integral part of learning and teaching. The Assessment Code of Practice (ACOP) is a public document for UCD staff, which sets out a mandatory code of practice encompassing all forms of assessment along the lifecycle of assessment.

This code of practice is underpinned by the Purpose, Terms and General Principles of Assessment (see section 1) and supported through the UCD Academic Regulations, the Examination Regulations and all University policies relating to assessment. The UCD Academic Regulations provide high level, overarching rules to govern UCD programmes and specifically address matters relating to student progression, assessment and awards for undergraduate and graduate taught programmes of study.

The Assessment Code of Practice applies consistently to all students registered to taught modules on undergraduate or graduate programmes. The assessment of the research element of the work of students on graduate research programmes is governed by the UCD General Regulations and the UCD Policy on Theses in Graduate Research Programmes.

The University, through the Academic Council Committee on Examinations (ACCE), shall periodically monitor and review University assessment procedures and regulations, taking into account feedback from Schools, Governing Boards and Subject Extern Examiners.

Instances of non-compliance or breach of the Code of Practice by the responsible party, shall be referred to the ACCE for consideration and action and/or other University mechanisms where appropriate.

In this code of practice, where responsibility is assigned to the School, the responsibility rests with the Head of School. However, the Head of School may formally devolve this responsibility to a nominee such as a Head of Subject or Head of Teaching and Learning.

1.1. Purpose of assessment in UCD

Assessment is a systematic process for gathering and evaluating information on a student's academic progress, which can be used for one or more of the following purposes¹:

- To provide certification: providing means to identify, and discriminate between, different levels of achievement of the learning outcomes for the purposes of making an award of the University upon completion of a module or programme of study.
- To improve student learning: promoting learning by motivating students and
- informing them of their progress towards achievement of the learning outcomes.
- To contribute to quality enhancement: providing evidence of academic standards and student progress to staff and other stakeholders in order to inform teaching or curriculum enhancement.

1.2. Key assessment terms

Summative assessment is a term to describe assessment which is primarily for the purpose of providing certification. This includes all assessments that receive a grade contributing to the overall module grade, for example continuous or end of trimester assessments. Where one summative assessment is given a high weighting in a module, it is often referred to as high stakes assessment.

Formative assessment is a term to describe assessment designed to provide feedback on students' learning and overall progress towards achievement of the learning outcomes. It can assist in improving student learning by: providing students with information to self monitor their academic progress and providing staff with feedback to inform their teaching approaches. Formative assessment is often not graded.

Whilst summative and formative assessments generally are differentiated by whether they are graded or not, they are not mutually exclusive. For example, particularly in the early weeks of a module or programme, staff may design assessments to encourage participation or to provide feedback on students' performance (formative) that are given low weighting (summative). This is often described as a low stakes assessment. Although the primary focus of this document is on the practices and policies related to graded assessments, increasingly non-graded formative assessment activities serve an important function in terms of student engagement and self-monitoring in the learning process.

These activities are often undertaken by students (in-class or online) where they self or peer review their own work with a view to monitoring their progress.

¹ Bloxham & Boyd, (2008) *Developing Effective Assessment in Higher Education, A Practical Guide*. Berkshire: Open University Press.

Mutch, A. and Brown, G. (2001) *Assessment: A Guide for Heads of Department*. York: Learning and Teaching Support Network Generic Centre.

1.3. Desired Outcomes of Assessments in UCD

The following desired outcomes of assessment shall guide both programme and module assessment practices, although their application and emphasis will vary according to the context and purposes of the assessment (see Table 1). Not all assessment outcomes are equally applicable at the same time, and the balance of emphasis in practice requires professional judgement based on the overall intended learning outcomes, stage of student learning, educational rationale and pedagogic approach.

Table 1: Desired outcomes of assessment²

Validity	Assessments shall be appropriate and shall measure what they purport to measure and shall align with the programme and module's learning outcomes.
Reliability	Assessment tasks shall generate comparable grades across time, across graders and across methods to ensure academic standards.
Effectiveness	Assessments tasks shall be designed to encourage good quality 'deep' approaches to learning in students.
Comparability and consistency	There shall be consistent and comparable approaches to the summative assessment requirements of awards of the same level across programmes and institutions in terms of student workload and academic challenge.
Equity and diversity	All students shall have equal opportunity to effectively demonstrate their learning and shall have the opportunity to be assessed by different, appropriate and applicable methods across a programme/subject major.
Practicability and efficiency	Assessment tasks shall be practical for both staff and students in terms of a reasonable workload, the time needed for completion and grading, and their cost effectiveness.
Transparency	Information, guidance, assessment criteria and rules and regulations on assessment shall be clear, accurate, consistent and accessible to all students, staff and examiners.
Attribution	Assessment tasks shall generate clear and reliable evidence that the work has been produced by the student.

1.4. Academic regulations

The Academic Regulations provide high level, overarching rules to govern UCD programmes and specifically address matters relating to student progression, assessment and awards for Undergraduate and Graduate Taught programmes of study.

Any derogation from the UCD Academic Regulations to meet professional accreditation or any other requirements shall be approved by the relevant University Programme Board and Academic Council.

1.5. Language of Assessment

All teaching and assessment of modules within programmes leading to an academic award of the University shall be in the English language, apart from the following exceptions:

- Irish modules, foreign language modules and any modules on a programme with a significant foreign language curriculum specialisation.
- Modules provided and assessed by another institution associated with a student exchange or collaborative programme and approved by the relevant University committee/board

1.6. Academic Integrity

Academic integrity requires every member of the academic community at UCD to act ethically, honestly and fairly. A lack of academic integrity in any sphere of university activity undermines the credibility and value of all that UCD does and of the awards that it makes to students. Every member of the UCD community shares responsibility for upholding the academic integrity values that underpin our scholarly practice in teaching, research, and student learning; activities that underpin the foundations of our intellectual community at University College Dublin.

UCD is committed to supporting faculty and students in embedding and nurturing a culture in which academic integrity flourishes and in which breaches of academic integrity are promptly, efficiently and appropriately addressed according to their severity.

Further information

[UCD Academic Integrity Policy](#)

[UCD Student Code of Conduct](#)

[UCD Student Discipline Procedure](#)

² IBID Bloxham S. and Boyd, P. (2008)

1.7. Assessment and extenuating circumstances

Extenuating circumstances are unforeseen events which prevent a student from attending a substantial number of classes, affect their ability to study or complete assessments, or impair their performance. In such cases, students may apply for their extenuating circumstances to be considered by the relevant Programme Examination Board. Such circumstances include serious illness, hospitalisation, accidents and family bereavement. Foreseen circumstances that prevent students from meeting deadlines cannot be considered under the Extenuating Circumstances Policy and procedure. The University's Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Late Submission of Coursework Policy provides further guidance and related procedures.

Schools shall ensure that clear guidance on the protocols in place for dealing with submission of late coursework including taught theses and application for deadline extensions is provided for students, including details of any penalties that may be imposed for late submission.

Further information can be found in the:

[UCD Extenuating Circumstances policy](#)

1.8. Assessment and students with disabilities

UCD is committed to ensuring, as far as possible and within the framework of current legislative requirements, that students with disabilities have equal access to, and participation in, all examinations and assessments. Reasonable accommodations are defined as those actions that enable students to accurately demonstrate their full knowledge and ability in examinations without changing the demands of the assessment. The intention behind the provision of such accommodations is to alleviate a substantial disadvantage without affecting the integrity of the assessment. The granting of reasonable accommodations is not intended to put the integrity or status of the assessment or examination at risk and is designed to ensure fairness to all students. Although students are required to contact Module Coordinators well in advance of an examination to request reasonable accommodations, it is advisable for Module Coordinators to contact students to enquire if they require reasonable accommodations for local examinations by checking their module class list in UCD Infohub for both in person and online examinations.

Schools shall provide reasonable accommodations for students registered with the University for disability support in local examinations organised by the School.

Assessment, UCD Registry shall provide reasonable accommodations for the end of Trimester examinations.

Further information can be found in the:

[Assessment and students with disabilities](#)

Pre Assessment



2. Pre Assessment

This section focuses on pre-assessment and covers the key considerations and actions which need to be completed as part of the design of assessment approaches in advance of the assessment taking place.

2.1. Assessment Design

Staff shall consider carefully the purpose of their assessment(s) and the desired outcomes of assessment (see section 1), taking into account any previous student and staff feedback and the UCD module enhancement process. Assessment design is strongly linked with the module's learning outcomes. Normally UCD curricula use a 'typical' learning outcomes approach; this implies that outcomes should be written to represent what students typically achieve, as distinct from outcomes indicating a minimum standard of achievement. However, the 'threshold performance' approach is appropriate for the assessment of competence and pass/ fail assessments where it is not possible or necessary to distinguish performance levels above the threshold. Examiners from different national or international institutions should be made aware of this distinction, where relevant.

- To ensure the validity of the assessment, all assessment tasks shall be clearly aligned with the module's learning outcomes.
- Module learning outcomes shall normally be assessed summatively (graded to certify learning). However, to achieve high level complex learning, some outcomes may be assessed formatively, primarily for student learning/feedback.
- The principle of equity and diversity requires that students shall have the opportunity to be assessed by different approaches across a programme/major. Within each programme, there shall be a balance and a blend of assessment tasks to test the range of learning outcomes at each level of the programme/major.
- Students shall normally have opportunities during the trimester to work with and self-monitor against the assessment criteria or assessment rubrics, in order to have clear expectations of their progress.
- When planning an assessment, both the method and the timing of the assessment shall be considered with reference to the overall assessment workload for the academic trimester. The Module Coordinator shall consider how the assessment workload and approaches for each module relates to broader School/programme practices and consider steps to avoid assessment overload, and the clustering of assessment and submission deadlines for individual students where possible.

Further information can be found in the:

[UCD Teaching and Learning Assessment Resources](#)

2.2. Assessment strategies and approvals

The Module Coordinator is responsible for designing all the instruments of assessment for a module. To support the Module Coordinator, this process is subject to review and monitoring by the School Head of Teaching and Learning, the Head of Subject, the Head of School, the Stage Coordinator (when relevant) and the Subject Extern Examiner.

- Internal review of examination question papers shall take place before the papers are sent to Extern Examiners for comment. This shall include the clarity and accuracy of the language, specification of task and difficulty relative to the level and learning outcome.
- Assessment information shall be clear and unambiguous to students, staff and examiners. The Assessment Strategy including assessment criteria, shall be communicated to students along with the learning outcomes and curriculum for each module in the Module Descriptor. Section 3.16 of the Academic Regulations identifies the assessment information which shall be recorded in the Module Descriptor.
- Once students are registered to a module, only in the most exceptional circumstances, which do not prejudice the students concerned, can a Module Coordinator request a change to the assessment strategy through the formal University process as set out in section 4.8 of the Academic Regulations.
- The mode and scheduling of remediation shall be set out in the Module Descriptor. Remediation strategies may not be changed during the course of the module unless the Vice Principal for Teaching and Learning in the relevant College grants an exemption based on exceptional circumstances.
- Where appropriate, students shall also be provided with details of specific assessment outcomes or other criteria in order to fulfil the requirements of professional accreditation bodies.
- Where work-based learning forms part of a programme and students are assessed on placements, Module Coordinators shall inform students regarding who will assess their work during the placement, how it shall be assessed, and if the results will contribute to the calculation of the award for their programme.
- It is the responsibility of the School to establish a collaborative relationship with the extern examiner and to provide them with relevant programme materials and system access.

Further information can be found in the:

[Module Assessment strategy](#)

2.3. Communication of assessment arrangements to students

- Schools shall ensure that students are provided at the start of the module a comprehensive description of all the assessment tasks within the Module Descriptor.
- Each module descriptor must specify how the module will be assessed and, where there is more than one assessment, the specific weighting of each assessment.
- The Module Descriptor shall:
 - Outline the different assessment types and provide description
 - Refer to details such as timing, open book, % of final grade
 - Assessment, UCD Registry will routinely provide standard Assessment information to students throughout the Academic Year.

Assessment



3. Assessment

This section focuses on the process of assessment and outlines the requirements to ensure that the conduct of assessment in the University is appropriate and upholds the integrity of the assessment.

3.1. Conduct of Assessment

Assessment shall be conducted in the appropriate conditions in accordance with the designated university regulations, policies, procedures, timelines and systems to:

- Ensure that the work has been produced by the student.
- Guarantee that all students who participate in the assessment do so in comparable conditions, which are reasonable and appropriate to enable them to satisfactorily attempt the assessment in an equitable manner.
- Ensure students are aware of all necessary technological requirements, in the event of online assessment.
- In line with GDPR and the UCD Retention Policy, online assessments may be recorded.
- Protect the integrity and security of the assessment process and ensure the confidentiality of all assessment related materials.
- Ensure that the Module Coordinator or Internal Examiner concerned has no conflict of interest in relation to any student whose academic work they would assess and/or act as an examiner.
- Ensure that a contingency plan is in place both at School and University level in the case of any event where an assessment needs to be cancelled, so that a clear, coherent process is followed to enable the assessment to be rescheduled with the minimum of inconvenience caused and with the aim of not disadvantaging any students by the revised assessment schedule.
- The Head of School shall ensure that students are given appropriate guidance on academic integrity and avoiding plagiarism. Suspected incidents of plagiarism should be addressed using the procedures of the Student Plagiarism Policy. Other forms of suspected academic misconduct may be reported using the Student Discipline Procedure. Exam Hall incidents are usually reported directly to UCD Assessment by University Invigilators.

3.2. Conduct of clinical assessment

A clinical assessment is a practical, competency-based assessment which tests a student's ability to perform a key task or tasks related to their programme of study and developing clinical competence. It may be conducted as a simulation (eg. Objective Structured Clinical Examination) or in the workplace (eg Direct Observation of Procedural Skills).

- Clinical assessments should be designed and conducted to maximise the reliability and validity of the assessment at evaluating the student's attainment of the skill being assessed.
- Examination materials shall be appropriate and meet the criteria of standard and quality for the assessment being undertaken.
- When conducting an Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) or an Image-Based Clinical Assessment (IBAs), assessment should be standardised to ensure all students are uniformly assessed and competency is assessed at the appropriate level.

3.3. Conduct of continuous assessment

Continuous assessment in UCD involves the evaluation of a student's progress and attainment throughout the course of delivery of a module during the teaching trimester. In UCD, assessment is based on a learning outcomes approach which is more aligned with a greater emphasis on continuous assessment rather than the traditional approach of assessment being mainly based upon terminal examinations. A wide and diverse variety of continuous assessment methods are used in UCD which include - but are not limited to - projects, essays, laboratory tests, laboratory reports, practical assignments, fieldwork assignments, clinical assessments, group assessments, practical or experimental reports, projects, problem based learning exercises, class tests, pop quizzes and reflective/learning journals.

- Module Coordinators must ensure that records of assessment are kept in a safe, accurate and comprehensive manner and in accordance with the University's retention policy and procedures, and enter the component grades into University systems not later than 20 working days (unless the Vice Principal for Teaching & Learning in the relevant College grants an exemption based on exceptional circumstances) after the assessment submission for all work submitted within the time specified in the assessment strategy, or the date specified by Academic Council for the final submission of grades for the trimester, whichever comes first. Module Coordinators shall also be cognisant of the approved guidelines around feedback provision, which are delineated explicitly in section 4.1 of this document.
- In the conduct of continuous assessment, Module Coordinators shall pay particular attention to what additional continuous assessment related accommodations may be required by students with disabilities who are taking the module by checking their module class list in UCD Connect. Module Coordinators can direct any queries about a student's reasonable accommodations to UCD Access & Lifelong Learning by emailing disability@ucd.ie.
- Module Coordinators shall monitor the performance and feedback of students on components of continuous assessment during the module to inform the teaching inputs and module content in the later weeks of its delivery and to address any significant, unforeseen issues that may arise during the course of the trimester.

Further information can be found at:

[Reasonable Accommodations in Assessments](#)

3.4. Conduct of group assessment

A group assessment involves students participating collaboratively to produce a component of assessment where the process of the group work, the output of the group or a combination of both contributes to the outcome of the assessment.

- Group assessments shall be conducted in a planned, developmental and coherent manner, to facilitate equity of contribution and participation for all students who attempt the assessment. Module Coordinators shall prepare students for group work, make them aware of the consequences of non-engagement with group work activity, and address the risk of the 'free-rider' syndrome in this assessment setting.
- It shall be made clear how the module will be assessed and whether the assessment strategy is based on the product of the group work, the process of the group work or a combination of both the product and process.
- It shall be clearly outlined how grades in group assessments will be distributed, shared group grade, individual grade or a combination of both.
- It shall be made clear who applies the assessment criteria and determines the grades.
- Schools that use group work for assessments shall ensure that a fair and transparent process is put in place to assign roles and responsibilities within student assessment groups. The roles may be assigned by the Module Coordinator, or by agreement within the group by its members.
- Basic ground rules for the conduct of an assessed group work activity shall be established at the onset of the activity, including the means of any conflict resolution (what students do if there is conflict within the group) and what is expected of the group members in terms of treating each other with dignity and respect. Minimum levels of collaboration shall be identified as part of the group work assessment guidelines.
- Module Coordinators shall encourage group members to resolve any disagreements amongst themselves. Schools shall ensure that there is a formal escalation and resolution process in place where relationships break down and disputes cannot be satisfactorily resolved by group members.

3.5. Conduct of online assessment

Similar to all assessment approaches, staff using online assessments shall be clear on the key purposes of each online assessment component

- With regard to the conduct of online formative assessment, which includes a low stakes, online Multiple Choice Questionnaire (MCQ) examination, participation in online discussion forums, contribution to wikis, student creation of resources and low stakes summative assessment, Module Coordinators shall ensure that students have opportunities to:
 - Self-monitor and/or learn from other students.
 - Receive feedback.
 - Practise, and see examples of, any unfamiliar task/software/VLE functionality prior to submission.
- With regard to online summative, high stakes assessment (e.g. online examination, highly weighted projects/assignments), Module Coordinators shall ensure - in addition to the considerations on formative assessment - that students are given clear comprehensive instructions on all aspects of the operation and completion of the assessment including such information as the required file formats and the number of attempts allowed for that assessment component for which they have the responsibility for submitting online.
- The principles of universal design shall underpin online assessment in UCD to ensure it is accessible to the greatest extent possible by all students regardless of age, ethnicity, family status, gender, nationality, sexuality, religion, size, ability or disability. As with all assessment practices, Module Coordinators should account for reasonable accommodations required by individual students within their cohort. In designing online assessment practices, please also refer to section 1.9 on "Assessment and students with disabilities" for guidance in this regard.
- Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) in an assessment context refers to the practice of students taking an online assessment on their personal electronic device such as a PC, laptop, tablet or smartphone. UCD supports the principle of providing greater diversity in assessment through BYOD online assessments where it is pedagogically appropriate.

In order to conduct a BYOD online assessment, the Module Coordinator shall:

- Inform the students of the minimum hardware and software technical specifications required to complete the assessment on their device in advance of the examination.
- Agree a contingency plan for the process to be followed, if a student is unable to complete a BYOD online assessment on their own device due to a) a University systems error, and b) an error with their own personal device.
- Provide any student who does not have access to a personal device, with the appropriate information regarding UCD supplied devices to take the examination, in order to uphold equality of access in an online assessment.

- Students must be provided with clear instructions on how to access, complete and submit online assessments. This includes how to use any examination platform/software required and communication channel established for assessment errors or technical issues.
- As in person invigilation is not possible for online examinations, online invigilation, or 'eProctoring', software solutions may be utilised. If this option is being considered, the module coordinator must contact Assessment, UCD Registry. Where such a solution is being utilised, the module coordinator must provide the students with information and guidance.

3.6. Conduct of MCQ Examinations

A MCQ examination is where the student is provided with a range of questions or statements

- the stem - with a number of possible answers, where one or more of the answers
- the key are correct responses and the other answers are distractors.

A MCQ examination scores highly on the principles of the reliability and practicality of assessment and is appropriate for testing learning outcomes related to knowledge recall and comprehension, but is less suitable for assessing analysis, synthesis or evaluation. For these, other forms of objective assessments, including Spot Tests and Extended Matching Questions may be more appropriate.

- MCQs may be organised by Schools online through the nominated institutional Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) platform or in a classroom as an in-trimester examination. It is also possible to schedule a MCQ examination as part of the University's end of trimester examination session.
- Students shall be provided with all the necessary tools and examination materials to enable them to successfully attempt a MCQ examination in an online or paper format. It shall be clearly stated on the examination question paper and in all examination instructions to students whether or not negative marking applies to a MCQ examination.
- It shall be clearly stated on the examination question paper and in all examination instructions to students whether or not it is permissible to remove the MCQ examination question paper from the examination.
- Module Coordinators shall ensure the MCQ Set-Up Form has no errors and shall conduct an audit check of the results to ensure their accuracy and to ensure the integrity of the MCQ examination.

3.7. Conduct of oral examinations

An oral examination is an assessment which tests a student's achievement of a particular set of learning outcomes through the medium of spoken communication.

- Two examiners shall be present at every oral examination.
- Where a grade is allocated to the oral examination, every student shall be given an equal opportunity to perform well, the questions put to every student shall be of a comparable standard and the grading criteria shall be clear to students.
- The Module Coordinator shall keep an official record of the examination and shall archive - in line with University policy, see Section 4.6 - all the supporting documentation for an oral examination, including the examination structure, interview questions/topic guide, grading criteria and the official examination score sheet for each candidate.

3.8. Conduct of written, timed examinations

A written, timed examination is an assessment undertaken within a constrained period of time in a set location, following a rubric of instruction that is subject to invigilation. Examination invigilators are responsible for ensuring that the examinations are conducted in accordance with UCD procedures, ensuring that students comply with the Examination Regulations and for supporting students during examinations. The University's approved procedures provide a secure environment for examinations and for the fair treatment of all students undertaking them.

- Examination question papers shall be set by the Module Coordinator and reviewed by the Head of Subject and Subject Extern Examiner (where applicable) for final approval by the Head of School. Examination question papers shall be submitted by the School using the official online system by the deadline set by the University.
- A final schedule of formal, timed, end of trimester examinations, with the date, time and location of each examination, shall be published by the University at least four weeks prior to the start of the end of trimester examinations.
- The Module Coordinator (or an academic nominee) shall be in attendance at the examination centre to answer student queries at the start of the examination. If the Module Coordinator has students taking the examination in an alternative examination centre, they shall also, where possible, attend this examination centre. The Module Coordinator shall remain contactable throughout the duration of the examination.
- Changes to an examination question paper on the day of the examination shall only take place in exceptional circumstances where an error that materially affects the assessment has occurred and shall be reported to the Invigilator in Charge by the Module Coordinator in advance of the commencement of the examination.

- Normally dictionaries shall not be used during an examination in UCD, except for students on an international exchange programme, whose native language is not English. These students may bring a hard copy, English-native language dictionary into an examination. If a Module Coordinator wishes to allow all students to use a dictionary in an examination, the permission to use a dictionary and the restrictions of use shall be clearly stated on the front cover of the examination question paper and communicated to all students at the beginning of the module delivery.
- A calculator (programmable or non-programmable) is only permitted during an examination if its use is clearly permitted and specified on the examination question paper by the Module Coordinator.
- Normally, all written examinations in UCD are conducted as closed book examinations where students are not permitted to bring any written, printed or electronically stored materials into the examination. However, where a Module Coordinator wishes to organise an open book examination, this shall be indicated on the front cover of the examination question paper and communicated to Assessment UCD Registry in advance of the examination session along with clear instructions on what materials students may bring into the examination and what restrictions apply in this regard.
- The School is responsible for the planning, organisation and conduct of examinations that are not organised centrally by the University. When organising a local examination, the School shall meet the following requirements:
 - Appropriate supervision and invigilation are in place.
 - An identity check occurs of all students before the examination.
 - The UCD Examination Regulations are upheld throughout the examination.
 - The venue is accessible and appropriate so that students can satisfactorily attempt the examination without environmental disturbances.
 - Records and examination materials (attendance records, examination question papers and examination scripts etc.) are of the appropriate standard.

Further information can be found at:

[UCD Examination Regulations](#)

3.9. Appointment and role of examiners

All academic staff who hold permanent appointments or contract appointments of one year or longer are approved examiners.

- Other contract or part-time staff whose contract is less than one year's duration, who act as examiners shall be appointed annually by the Academic Council Committee on Examinations (ACCE), on the recommendation of the Head of School, to be an approved examiner.
- Professionalism in teaching and assessment demands that, as far as practicable, the member of staff who teaches a module shall also be responsible for assessing the module. Where the number of students taking an assessment is very large, several examiners may be required, but the Module Coordinator, as the principal examiner, retains responsibility for ensuring consistency of standards across the assessment.

3.10. Grading and moderation

Grading in UCD is the process of applying standardised measurements of varying levels of achievement in a module with reference to the UCD standard component or module grading scale and the Module Grade Descriptors which have been approved by the Academic Council. A key aspect of grading is setting an appropriate standard and maintaining consistency of standards, particularly where the same examiner is grading a large number of assessments.

Moderation is a quality enhancement tool to help ensure that grading practices and assessment outcomes are valid, consistent and reliable. Moderation may be used in a School for the assessment of large modules where a number of Internal Examiners are grading components of assessment that contribute to the overall module grade for review by the Module Coordinator.

- All examiners involved in grading shall ensure that they are aware of UCD regulations and policies in relation to the assessment of students and the official [UCD Module Grade Descriptors](#).
- A student's performance shall be graded according to the module assessment criteria published in the Module Descriptor and set out in the Module Outline document - which shall be set at the required academic level of the module - by measuring the extent to which the learning outcomes have been achieved by the student.
- To avoid the possibility of bias entering the grading process, wherever possible, the identity of students shall not be apparent to graders and assessments shall only be identified by a student number in both continuous and terminal assessments.

- The Head of School shall have effective systems and processes in place for the internal moderation of the process of grading all assessments in the School to help ensure that there is a consistency in grading standards and practice.

3.11. Grading examination scripts

- When grading examination scripts, examiners shall ensure all parts of an answer, which a student has attempted, have been checked and an appropriate grade or mark has been entered onto the front cover of the examination script.
- Answers, or parts of answers, which have been crossed out by the student shall be read and shall be graded if the student has not attempted to answer the question by writing additional content.
- Where there is a degree of subjectivity in the response to a question, examiners shall be scrupulously fair in awarding grades for opinions expressed by students which might not accord with their own views, but which are nevertheless valid, well-argued and supported by relevant data.
- Where a student attempts more than the required number of questions, all answers shall be graded. The lowest grade(s) or mark(s) shall be excluded when calculating the total grade or mark and shall be parenthesised on the front cover of the examination script.
- In order to support student feedback, examiners shall annotate graded examination scripts, particularly to indicate material that is factually incorrect or irrelevant to the question. Examiner's comments shall be distinguishable from the student's and shall not contain personal or derogatory material. Where a second examiner is examining the script, the first examiner shall avoid any notations that may influence the second examiner.
- Examination scripts containing a 'Refer to Grading Guidelines Sticker' shall be graded in accordance with the [Examiners' Grading Guidelines](#) from UCD Access.
- Module Coordinators shall enter grades for examinations into University systems by the deadline set out in the [schedule for the Grade Approvals Process](#) (GAP) for the given trimester.

Post Assessment



4. Post Assessment

This section refers to the post-assessment phase and identifies the key activities and actions that must be completed once assessments have taken place in order to guarantee the accuracy, reliability and responsiveness of the assessment process.

4.1. Assessment feedback

- Module Coordinators shall provide timely feedback to students in order to promote learning and facilitate improvement. It is provided following formative and summative assessment. Feedback may be individual, to identify specific issues relating to one student's work, or generic, referring to general points about the assessment as a whole, arising from an overview of the work produced by the student or group as a whole. All feedback shall:
 - Relate to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria.
 - Be relevant, meaningful, motivating, clear and constructive.
 - Be critical but with the intention of enabling student development by consolidating learning and advising on means of improvement.
- The nature and the extent of feedback that a student may expect shall be indicated for each assessment task at the time it is set. Students shall be made aware of whether their assessed work will be returned at the time feedback is provided.
- The timing of feedback is important in improving students' learning. Feedback shall be provided as soon as possible after the student has completed the assessment task. Feedback on formative assessment shall be given in time for students to make use of it prior to summative assessment.
- Feedback on assessment must be provided according to the specification in the module descriptor and no later than 20 working days after the deadline for submission of each piece of assessed work, excepting work submitted late or submitted as part of the final assessment component of the module.
- Section 4.35 (a) of the Academic Regulations outlines the process for applying for an exemption, where in exceptional circumstances, a Module Coordinator cannot provide feedback within 20 days.
- As part of the feedback process, provisional component grades may be released to students during the teaching trimester. Where this is the case, Module Coordinators shall clearly communicate that provisional grades are indicative only and are subject to adjustment until they have been formally approved by the relevant Programme Examination Board.
- Where possible, students shall be able to meet with the Module Coordinator. Where this is not possible, another academic/examiner shall be available to provide feedback and the Module Coordinator shall brief the academic/examiner giving feedback on the grading schema for the particular module and on how the student can improve their approaches to learning and to other assessments.
- When giving feedback to students, a Module Coordinator shall outline the reasons why the student's attempt at an assessment task was given a particular grade, referring to the appropriate Grade Descriptors. Module Coordinators shall try to help students to understand what is further required in order to achieve the module's learning outcomes and how to improve their approach in other assessments.
- Module Coordinators shall inform students that they are entitled to inspect their examination script following the release of finalised module results in order to:
 - Gain feedback on their performance in the module and/or
 - Facilitate a results recheck if a student believes there was an administrative error in the calculation of the grade.
 - If requested, students are entitled to a copy of their examination script or submitted assessment and are not required to provide a reason for their request. The following should also be noted:
 - A copy of the examination script can be provided following release of final examination results.
 - A copy should be provided to the student without undue delay and within one month of receipt of the request (or within one month following release of final examination results if the request was made earlier). If a delay is anticipated (e.g. due to large volume of requests) an approximate timeframe should be provided to the student which cannot exceed one month.
 - A School or Module Coordinator can ask a student to put the request in writing in accordance with their procedure and to ensure a record of the request and response is available. However, given the examination script constitutes a student's personal data, a written request is not a requirement.
 - There is no issue whether this is provided as a digital copy (e.g. scanned copy or photo) or hard copy, but the copy should typically be made by a member of UCD staff or in the presence of a member of staff. All necessary steps must be taken to ensure that the copy is issued securely to the identified student so as to avoid any data breaches.
 - The copy should include all annotations including comments and marks awarded.

- Material/records to be withheld i.e. not be provided to a student include, MCQ examination questions, UCD Copyrighted or unpublished examination related materials. Please note however, personal data of individuals contained in a copyrighted record or MCQ question sheet can be extracted into a separate document in order to fulfil a student's request.
- If you have any questions with regard to redaction or extraction of any data you can contact the Data Protection Office at data.protection@ucd.ie.
- Where the School or Module Coordinator are of the view that an exception to the above is required, this can be queried with the UCD Data Protection Office at data.protection@ucd.ie.
- Module Coordinators shall be clear that the inspection process is not an opportunity for a student to try to alter or renegotiate a finalised grade, which is not permitted by the University. If a student believes they have grounds to appeal a module grade, they shall follow the formal appeals process in the University.
- Any errors in the award or collation of grades in a module, which might come to light during a feedback session, shall be brought to the attention of the Head of School for amending according to the standard University procedure. Where errors are noted by another academic/examiner giving feedback on behalf of the Module Coordinator, this matter shall be immediately referred to the Module Coordinator and the Head of School.

4.2. Grade Approval Process

The responsibilities of staff with respect to grading and grade approvals, and functions of examination boards and committees, are defined in the Academic Regulations. All grading activities are expected to be delivered in accordance with the following principles as set out below.

- Fairness and equity in the assessment process will be ensured by the following:
 - Full adherence to Academic Regulations.
 - The Grade Approvals Process will be applied to all students equally.
 - Auditing of the process will be completed routinely.
 - Any issues or errors will be dealt with appropriately and promptly in line with University policies and the Academic Regulations.
- Results will be delivered in a timely manner by ensuring the following:
 - Component results will be issued within 20 working days in accordance with Academic Regulations.
 - Final module results will be released as close as possible to the start of the next trimester.
 - Schools will ensure contingency plans are in place if an issue arises that risks timely corrections and/or grade entry (e.g. Module Coordinator falls ill).
 - Schools and Programmes will ensure adequate preparation, time and planning to ensure university grade approvals dates and deadlines can be met.
- Academic standards will be maintained by ensuring the following:
 - Robust review and validation will take place at School and Programme Examination Board and committee meetings, utilising the University reporting.
 - The Subject Extern Examiner plays a critical role. The Subject Extern policy sets out the requirements of this role. Subject Extern Examiners are expected to visit once each academic year, but the visit is not required to take place during the grade approvals period or prior to release of results.
- Decisions will be made by the most competent body, and decision-making will be authorised and located where it is best placed and most informed. The following will apply:
 - The Module Coordinators and the School will confirm validity and accuracy of grades of the School in accordance with Academic Regulations.
 - The Programme Examination Board will formally approve programme awards, progression and extenuating circumstances in accordance with Academic Regulations.
 - Security protocols will be in place to ensure only staff who have a legitimate need to access student results information for grade approvals purposes will be able to do so, promptly and directly. Formal approval sign-off functions will be provided and used to confirm regulatory functions have been met.
- The university process will be as efficient and as agile as possible by ensuring the following:
 - The process will be completed in accordance with the GAP schedule approved by ACCE and with one release of final module results.
 - All steps in the process will avoid duplication, repetition and eliminate avoidable iteration, where appropriate.
 - Responsibilities of the Programme Examination Board will ensure not to repeat those activities of the Schools or central units.
 - Non time-critical activities should be deferred to meetings held outside the peak processing periods. This may include review of results data to inform curriculum planning, feedforward reflection at year end or within the trimester.

- Support systems and reports will be efficient and fit for purpose.
 - The University will ensure adequate reports are available to Schools, Programmes and central units to provide data and analytics to satisfy responsibilities as set out in the Academic Regulations.
 - Real-time action will be enabled on decisions by the School, eliminating need for follow-up correspondence. Grading systems will only close following School review meetings and final sign-off in accordance with the schedule.
 - Progression and GPAs will be calculated automatically. Changes will only be made where there is an error in line with Academic Regulations.
 - Module Coordinators will, via the sign-off and observation functions in the Module Coordinator reports, confirm the validity and accuracy of grades, outline actions taken and provide sufficient narrative to ensure that the Module Coordinator's input will be considered throughout the Grade Approval Process. The Module Coordinator sign-off must be recorded prior to School Modular Exam Committee meeting(s) each trimester.
 - Schools will, via the School sign-off and observation functions in the School Grading Summary reports, confirm that the module grades submitted across the Subjects/School have been reviewed and validated, outline actions taken and provide sufficient narrative to ensure that the contextual input of the School will be considered throughout the Grade Approval Process. The School sign-off must be recorded prior to the Programme Exam Board meeting each trimester.
 - Programmes will, via the Programme sign-off and observation functions in the Programme Exam Board reports, confirm that the grades, degree GPAs, and award classifications (where applicable) for each programme have been reviewed and validated, outlining actions taken and any further comments to note. The Programme Sign-off must be recorded at the conclusion of the Programme Exam Board meeting each trimester.
 - Full and direct access to reports and live data will be provided only to relevant staff to avoid GDPR and security issues.

- Identified responsibilities of key stakeholders within Schools, Programmes and Assessment are as summarised below in accordance with Academic Regulations and to be delivered in accordance with the approved GAP trimester schedules.

- The School shall:
 - establish as many committees and meetings as required to deliver and support the grading activities for the School. These include:
 - review and assure the grades for the modules coordinated by that School.
 - ensure checks are in place to identify missing final or component grades, errors in final or component grades or registration issues utilising reports provided.
 - ensure formal completion and sign-off requirements are met and any agreed changes are made prior to finalisation of grades.

- The Governing Board shall:
 - establish Standing Committees to deal with grading activities outside of the Programme Examination Board such as programme compliance, extenuating circumstances applications, registration issues, student continuation matters, and that should involve minimal necessary staff only.
 - establish a Programme Examination Board in accordance with the schedule to deliver the following requirements:
 - consideration and approval of grades submitted by Schools.
 - approval of the progression of students on taught programmes.
 - recommendation of final award (and class, if appropriate) on the delegated authority of Academic Council.
 - reflection on student performance, grade distributions and other assessment matters.

- The Registrar and Registry shall:
 - ensure accurate grade and GPA processing, auditing, checking completed in advance and during the GAP.
 - ensure optimal reports and systems are provided, maintained and further enhanced or corrected if required to support grading activities for all stakeholders.
 - escalate any serious issues relating to grading to the Registrar and ACCE for decision if required.

- Accuracy of the student record is maintained by ensuring the following:
 - The process will enable maximum time available to grade, review and reflect to reduce the risk of error.
 - Reports provided to Schools, Programmes and central units will facilitate anomaly checking.
 - Any issues identified will be corrected as soon as possible and using the University systems in place and in accordance with relevant University policies and regulations. Serious or large-scale grading issues will be reported to the Registrar and ACCE for consideration and decision where required.
 - The process will be GDPR compliant.

Further information can be found at:

[UCD Grade Approval Process](#)

[UCD Subject Extern Examiner policy](#)

4.3. Release of provisional component results and final module results

Module Coordinators shall communicate to students that any provisional component grades are indicative only and subject to adjustment. Final module results will be issued by the University in accordance with the approved GAP trimester schedules.

Student grades should only be released to students on an individual basis and through the appropriate university system (e.g. Brightspace or Student Information System (SIS)). Student module results should not otherwise be made publicly available

4.4. Assessment appeals

A summary of the criteria for making an assessment appeal and the procedures that are required for a student to submit an appeal are available on the website of the UCD Assessment Appeals Office.

Further information can be found at:

[UCD Assessment Appeals policy](#)

4.5. Aegrotat and Posthumous Award

Where the death or a very serious illness of a student prevents completion of a degree, diploma or other academic award, the Academic Council Committee on Examinations may, on the recommendation of the relevant Programme Examination Board and the Registrar, award a posthumous or aegrotat degree or diploma.

Further information can be found at:

[Aegrotat and Posthumous Award Policy](#)

4.6. Archiving of Assessments and Records Management

- Module Coordinators shall - as the Data Controllers of their modules - guarantee the integrity of student assessment data for which they are responsible and ensure that it is stored in a safe and secure manner in line with University procedures on Records Management. Any breach or suspected breach of the security of student data shall be reported immediately to the UCD Records Management and FOI Unit.
- All assessed work and outcomes - including examination scripts - shall be retained by Schools in safe storage for a minimum of thirteen months after the release of final results for the assessed module.
- All records (paper and electronic) relating to assessment shall be disposed of securely in line with UCD guidance on records management.
- The University shall maintain a public repository of past examination question papers. All university in person examination question papers will be made available on the public repository for 5 years, unless the Module Coordinator explicitly requests that they are to be made available for longer. Module coordinators who wish to upload online examination papers to the past paper archive can contact Assessment, UCD Registry
- A School/Module Coordinator can, at the time of submission, request that the examination question paper is not made publicly available. A Module Coordinator can also, with the approval of the Head of School, request the withdrawal/removal of an exam paper from the public repository at any point in time they wish.
- The University will retain an archive of all examination question papers for permanent storage that can be provided to staff on request.

Further information can be found at:

[UCD GDPR](#)

[UCD Records Management](#)