

OCA Summative Assessment Policy

From August 2025

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1. Policy Summary

- 1.1. This policy sets out OCAs approach to summative assessment of student work, how this occurs, when, and the controls that are in place to ensure quality

2. Scope

2.1. What does this policy cover?

- This policy covers assessment practice for all students undertaking undergraduate or postgraduate level qualifications. This includes students studying on separate, specified Certificate of Higher Education courses.
- Some sections of this policy may only be applicable for specific courses or qualification levels. Where this is the case, those sections will be clearly identified.

2.2. What does this policy not cover?

- This policy does not apply to foundation or short course units

3. General Principles

- 3.1. Assessment at OCA is seen as an integrated and meaningful part of students' overall learning experience.
- 3.2. OCA uses an 'assessment for learning' approach, which emphasises assessment for learning rather than assessment of learning. Assessment for learning helps to define appropriate assessment tasks that encourage critical reflection, support students by explaining the assessment process, and encourages students and assessors to position assessment as part of an overall learning experience.
- 3.3. The purpose of summative assessment is to enable students to demonstrate that they have achieved the stated learning outcomes of a unit/module, and that they have achieved the standard required for the unit/module credit to be awarded. Where applicable, assessment will also quantify the level of performance by the use of percentage marks for feed-forward, processing assessment outcomes and calculation of awards.
- 3.4. Assessment processes at OCA are quality checked to ensure equitability, inclusivity, transparency, reliability, and validity. All OCA assessment processes are in line with UK Quality Code Guidance.

Assessment is designed in a way that promotes effective learning, to minimise the potential for plagiarism or other forms of unfair practice and to encourage academic integrity.

- 3.5.** Through summative assessment, students will be provided with feedback, which will relate to the assessment criteria, and be well-grounded, constructive, and challenging.
- 3.6.** OCA has considered the alignment between intended learning outcomes, teaching strategies, methods of assessment, and assessment criteria, to enable all students to achieve the desired learning outcomes, measured through assessment activities using clearly aligned criteria.
- 3.7.** For students enrolled on degree programmes, student work is assessed against the current assessment criteria within the [assessment section](#) on OCA Learn and described across stages through a set of assessment marking criteria. These are set in accordance with national standards in the discipline, with reference to the appropriate outcomes in the FHEQ and QAA subject benchmarks (HE) or course specifications (FE). These ensure that students are tested for both subject-specific knowledge and general transferable skills.
- 3.8.** Students enrolled on a CertHE are assessed using an Assessment Matrix tool which will provide students with a Statement of Attainment detailing the extent to which they will have generally met the Learning Outcomes for that component, as evidenced in the work they have submitted.
- 3.9.** Preparing for assessment guidance, including current assessment marking criteria, is available to students to help explain and support the assessment process, and to reinforce assessment for learning values. The current guidelines are available within the [assessment section](#) on OCA Learn for degree students and within the department space for CertHE students.. The guidance is reviewed frequently to ensure clarity following student and assessor feedback. If any of the guidance is updated, students will be able to access the 'live' latest version. Assessment criteria are specified by stage across all OCA's curriculum.
- 3.10.** Assessment is conducted primarily as a digital only process. This includes digital assessment submissions using OCA Learn and summative assessment processes. Assessment guidance will provide any necessary clarification on digital file types and other requirements needed for digital assessment.

3.11. For CertHE programmes, assessment processes are distinct from existing OCA assessment arrangements in several ways:

- The summative assessment for each module will contain 3 weighted components.
- Processes are structured to support condensed delivery of learning materials as part of a 'cohorted' model.
- The volume of assessment aligns with established sector standards for 30-credit modules at Higher Education Level 4 .

4. Policy / Procedure

4.1. *Types of Assessment*

- OCA offers formative feedback and summative assessment. Details of formative feedback are covered in the [Tuition Policy](#).
 - All forms of tuition offer formative feedback through constructive and well-grounded comments and/or dialogue that aims to stretch and challenge learners at staged points within the unit, prior to any summative assessment.
 - Summative assessment takes place at the end of the unit/module. The purpose of summative assessment is to enable the student to demonstrate they have achieved the stated learning outcomes of their unit/module, and that they have achieved the standard required for the unit credit to be awarded.
- For CertHE programmes, within each module there will be formative feedback points (called 'Progress Checks' in student-facing contexts).

4.2. *Assurance of Academic Quality for Summative Assessment*

- OCA uses the UK Quality Code Guiding Principles for assessment as a framework to design our assessment policies and processes. This includes:
 - developing effective assessment policies, regulations and processes
 - ensuring those involved with setting and marking assessment are competent;
 - supported students to develop assessment literacy through formative feedback;

- designing effective assessment outcomes to align with validated documents ie unit descriptors / programme specifications.;
 - offering accessible and equitable experiences, that can demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes;
 - providing timely, constructive, and developmental summative feedback;
 - ensuring assessment is carried out securely
 - providing clear processes for assessment, moderation, and internal verification, including the use of External Examiners;
 - defining the terms of reference for Boards of Examiners to ensure authority and accountability; and
 - reviewing and evaluating assessment processes and policies regularly, to ensure enhancement
- All undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses offered by the OCA are subject to a rigorous process of formal review. Degree courses are reviewed quinquennially and are subject to review before the end of the five yearly cycle
 - The Open University assures the quality of provision delivered by subsidiary institutions using its formal (Re)Validation process. Review panels consider the standard of the course against all relevant criteria, including the expectations of the [QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) and ensures that the proposed curriculum and assessment methods will meet the stated learning objectives of the course.
 - For undergraduate programmes the [Academic Regulations for Subsidiary Institutions of The Open University](#) specifies how assessment outcomes are aggregated to determine progression, award and classification; the conditions under which compensation may be applied; the type and nature of reassessment opportunities (including penalties to be applied); and penalties for late or non-submission
 - Assessed work is subject to internal moderation to ensure that the standard of marking is consistent and that the level of marks is appropriate. Internal moderation may take several forms but is most often carried out on a sample of assessed work. (See Appendix 1 for details of OCA's Internal verification/ moderation

process). OCA may also undertake cross discipline parity checks to ensure levels of marks are appropriate and consistent across disciplines.

- For undergraduate and postgraduate provision, External Examiners are appointed for each award to audit the assessment process, and to report to the Board of Examiners. Examiners must confirm that:
 - the standard of student performance is appropriate for the award offered in the discipline given at their demonstrated level;
 - the standard of student performance is comparable with similar programmes, or subjects, in other UK institutions;
 - the process for assessment, examination and the determination of awards is sound and fairly conducted;
 - the standard of marking is satisfactory;
 - there is an appropriate spread of marks, which reflects the student work sampled; and
 - there is evidence of appropriate internal verification of marks
 - External Examiners are appropriately qualified and experienced academic staff, who are approved by the Open University

4.3. *Boards of Examiners following Summative Assessment*

- For each programme leading to an award delivered by OCA there is a Board of Examiners, whose constitution (including a note of those members constituting a quorum) and terms of reference have been approved by The Open University as part of the Institutional Quality Review process.
- The Board of Examiners is a sub-committee of OCA's Academic Board. It considers the outcomes of unit assessment and confirms progression and award decisions. The Board of Examiners provides a means of institutional confirmation of achieved award standards comparable with standards at other Higher Education Institutions. The Board of Examiners is authorised to determine the progression of students in accordance with the [Academic Regulations for Subsidiary Institutions of The Open University](#) and to determine progression

or the conferment of subsidiary awards of The Open University. All recommendations related to a student's progression, final results, and awards, will be approved by a properly constituted Board of Examiners.

- All award recommendations are made to The Open University's Module Results Approval and Qualifications Classification Panel (MRAQCP) for them to ratify. The Panel is responsible for approving recommendations for awards and Classification of qualifications. More information about the MRAQCP is in Appendix 2.
- No other body has authority to recommend conferment of an award or progression, nor to amend the decision of an approved and properly constituted Board of Examiners acting within its terms of reference and in accordance with the regulations for the programme of study. A Board of Examiners may, however, be required to review a decision, or may have that decision annulled under the Appeals procedure.
- For all registerable CertHE programmes, a single Examination Board will convene annually. This board is responsible for the ratification of final module marks for the academic year, following external verification and adherence to institutional quality assurance procedures. Students will be eligible for the award of a Certificate of Higher Education upon successful completion of 120 credits. Please note that the CertHE is an unclassified award; no classification is specified for CertHEs

4.4. Conduct of Summative Assessment

- Where any course leads to, or forms part of, the qualification of a professional or statutory body, a clear statement of this fact will be contained within the Programme Specification. The value and status of this qualification across the national sector will also be stated.
- The Assessment Guidance provided on OCA Learn, and within unit materials, details the assessment requirements for the assessment task. The unit/module descriptors provide specific weightings of each assessment task. Formal review panels consider the spread, number and methods of assessment to ensure that the burden of assessment is not excessive. Further review is provided through the annual monitoring exercise.

- Work assessed is identifiable because of the practical nature of courses offered by OCA, and the very individual nature of many projects. The assessment criteria, mark descriptors and verification procedures ensure that assessment is conducted fairly.
- The integrity of academic conduct is of paramount importance and all forms of academic misconduct including the misuse of Gen AI (Generative AI) are taken seriously. For further information see the [Academic Misconduct Policy](#) which also details the use of the AMBeR Tariff for determining penalties for academic misconduct.
- Student requests for extensions to assessment deadlines will not be approved unless made in accordance with [OCA's Extenuating Circumstances Policy](#).
- Students enrolled on a CertHE programme you can apply for a postponement to assessment in accordance with [OCA's Extenuating Circumstances Policy](#).
- Where coursework is submitted late and there are no accepted extenuating circumstances or extension permitted by OCA, it will be penalised in line with the following tariff:
 - Submission within 6 working days: a 10% reduction deducted from the overall marked score for each working day late, down to 40% pass (for UG) and 50% pass (PG awards) and no further.
 - Submission that is late by 7 or more working days, and/or does not include all summative assessment components, and/or has not been checked for plagiarism, the submission will be refused and receive a score of 0.
 - Students who fail to submit work for assessments or attend examinations shall be deemed to have failed the assessment components concerned and will be marked as 0
- A working day is defined by the OCA and submission after the deadline will be assumed to be the next working day.

4.5. **Summative Assessment Marking**

- The regulations for assessment are contained in the [Academic Regulations for Subsidiary Institutions of The Open University](#)
- For the purposes of calculating unit/module and award outcomes, a mark between 0 and 100 is given for each assessment component
- . The minimum pass mark is 40 at undergraduate level and 50 at postgraduate level.
- Full details of how and which unit/module marks contribute to the final degree classification are detailed in the [Academic Regulations for Subsidiary Institutions of The Open University](#) - Section 19.
- Assessment components are weighted in terms of their contribution to the overall unit/module mark, as stated in the validated unit/module descriptor
- Where an assessment component comprises two or more assessment tasks, the mark shall be awarded to the assessment component rather than to the individual assessment tasks.
- If assessors/moderators are more than ten marks apart or in different grade boundaries, and unable to reach an agreement, Programme Leaders / Senior Academic Managers should aim to resolve in the first instance. Internal verification undertaken by Programme Leaders / Senior Academic Managers across all units/modules will identify any concerns where a unit/module has not been selected for moderation. Resolution may be as a result of additional group parity checks, or bringing in a third member of the assessment team to review the work. In any cases where concerns are raised over assessor marks by moderator / internal verifier this will result in additional support and training by the Programme Leader / Senior Academic Manager ahead of further assessments.

4.6. **Summative Assessment Feedback**

- Students will be provided with holistic feedback that covers all summatively assessed components. Feedback will make

reference to all the relevant assessment criteria and learning outcomes relevant to the unit / module.

- In order to ensure parity in practice, OCA has developed an Assessment Marksheet (for undergraduate and postgraduate students) that includes the final assessment mark as well as the feedback. Students receive a separate Assessment Marksheet for each unit/module assessed. The Assessment Marksheet including overall mark is provisional until confirmed by the Board of Examiners and MRAQCP. Confirmed Assessment Marksheets which provide the student results are provided to students by the timeframe confirmed at the Board of Examiners. Where exam boards are not taking place immediately following an assessment period, OCA may, at its discretion, provide provisional results. This is usually within 10 working days from the exam board date for UG full degree and Postgraduate courses, and up to 6 months for cohorted CertHE programmes.
- Students who are permitted to submit physical work for assessment, due to agreed reasonable adjustments or other factors, will have their work returned to them by courier after the Exam Board. OCA accepts no liability for customs charges for work returned overseas. Students who have indicated they are collecting their physical assessment submission will be contacted by OCA to arrange a collection date. OCA reserves the right to dispose of work that is not collected or returned as undeliverable
- The following principles are intended to inform the academic practice of providing summative feedback:
 - Feedback should motivate, be positive and include constructive comment on things that have been done well;
 - Feedback should provide guidance on what could have been done better and how, so that a student knows how to improve next time;
 - Feedback should provide enough detail to evaluate the ideas and techniques that students have used in their work to enable them to digest their learning and to improve their understanding of how they can improve;

- Feedback should promote dialogue between students, tutors and the work;
 - Feedback comments should describe achievement with respect to a clearly referenced assessment criterion;
 - The Assessment Descriptors must be used to frame description of achievement in a degree course and its units/modules using language relevant to the subject or discipline so that feedback reflects the level of achievement; and
 - Where appropriate, feedback should reference spelling, grammar and use of English
- Feedback commentary should be delivered in plain English, consistent with the language used for the appropriate learning outcomes and assessment criteria, and contextualised within the aims and outcomes of the unit/module and/or degree pathway
 - Students who wish to be assessed through the Medium of Welsh should refer to [OCA's Assessment through the Medium of Welsh](#) policy. This outlines the terms of The Open College of the Arts (OCA) Welsh Language Standards Compliance Notice in relation to submitting work for assessment via the medium of Welsh. The objectives of this policy are to:
 - enable students resident in Wales to submit assessments via the medium of Welsh;
 - ensure that Welsh-medium assessments submitted will be treated no less favourably than those submitted in English;
 - detail the procedure for submitting assessments through the medium of Welsh;
 - outlines how OCA will process assessments submitted via the medium of Welsh.
 - Summative assessment contributes to a unit/module outcome; whilst formative assessment is purely for the purposes of development learning and does not attract a mark. Formative assessment should be accompanied by informal feedback in

order to develop students' learning in preparation for summative assessment

4.7. Support for students who are unsuccessful at summative assessment

- Students are only eligible for summative assessment if they have completed the unit/module. Completion is defined as all formative assignments have been completed and received tutor feedback.
- Where students have not submitted and have been awarded a mark of 0%, they will be able to resubmit for a capped mark - unless there is evidenced mitigation to explain failure to submit. In this instance students will be able to submit for an uncapped mark. Students will be permitted one resubmission opportunity per unit / module as detailed in the [Academic Regulations for Subsidiary Institutions of The Open University](#).
- Students who do not achieve the required minimum unit/module pass marks in their resubmission opportunity will have the option of retaking the unit/module within the parameters detailed in [Academic Regulations for Subsidiary Institutions of The Open University](#). Students will be charged the full unit/module fee ahead of being eligible for retake.
- In resubmission cases the student will be offered an optional portfolio review with a member of the assessor team.
- The portfolio review will:
 - provide further feedback to the student on where improvements are needed ahead of resubmission
 - Provide additional resubmission tasks for the student to undertake
- All resubmissions will be provided as part of the samples for the External Examiners.
- For CertHE programmes, - there will be one resubmission period each year. Any resubmission results will be ratified at the following undergraduate exam board.

4.8. ***Dissatisfaction with the summative assessment result***

- You cannot appeal against an academic decision simply because you disagree with the academic judgement of OCA. You may only appeal an academic decision where there are specific grounds relating to the fairness or adequacy of the procedures followed, including:
 - the consideration of all relevant evidence,
 - the correct application of rules,
 - how a decision was communicated,
 - bias, and
 - whether the decision was one which, in all the circumstances, it was reasonable for OCA to have made.
- Further details including how to make an academic appeal are detailed in [OCA's Academic Appeals Policy and Procedures](#) document

4.9. ***Force Majeure***

- Force Majeure may require changes to be made to the assessment practice to enable continuation of study.

4.10. ***Implementing the Policy***

- OCA will work closely with the Student Association to gather student feedback on the outline of the policy, its intentions, the administration of the policy, and a review of all these points in practice. These will then be fed into the next review point for the policy.
- This policy is reviewed annually. If you would like to raise any issues around this policy then you should contact assessment@oca.ac.uk, or if you are a student, you might also wish to raise these with the appropriate Student Association representative

5. **Glossary of terms**

Academic Misconduct: Any form of cheating, plagiarism, or other dishonest behaviors in academic work.

Assessment for Learning: An approach that emphasizes using assessments to promote and support student learning, rather than just measuring it.

Assessment Literacy: The understanding of assessment principles and practices, enabling students and assessors to effectively engage with and use assessment processes.

Assessment Marksheet: A document that includes the final assessment mark and feedback for a unit/module.

Board of Examiners: A sub-committee of OCA's Academic Board that considers unit assessment outcomes and confirms progression and award decisions.

Compensation: The process of allowing students to progress despite failing a component of the assessment, under certain conditions specified by regulations.

External Examiner: An independent academic appointed to audit the assessment process and ensure its fairness and rigor.

Formative Assessment: Assessment that provides feedback for the purpose of improving student learning, without contributing to the final mark.

Internal Moderation: The process of ensuring consistency and appropriateness of marking within a discipline, often by reviewing a sample of assessed work.

Mark Descriptor: A detailed explanation of the marks awarded for assessed work, reflecting the level of achievement in relation to assessment criteria.

Module/Unit: A component of a course with specific learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

Programme Leader / Senior Academic Manager: A member of academic staff responsible for overseeing the delivery and assessment of a specific academic program.

Progression: The process of moving from one stage of a program to the next, based on meeting assessment criteria.

Revalidation: The formal review process to ensure that a course remains current, meets required standards, and is fit for purpose.

Summative Assessment: Assessment that takes place at the end of a unit/module, contributing to the final mark and demonstrating that learning outcomes have been achieved.

Validation: The process of approving a course or program as meeting the required academic standards and learning objectives.

Weighting: The proportion of the total mark that each component of the assessment contributes.

6. If you need support

6.1. Should you need any help with this policy you should contact our Assessment team at assessment@oca.ac.uk, where they will be able to answer any queries you have.

6.2. Supplementary to this policy are a range of documents to support assessment available through the [OCA student website](#). These include Preparing for Assessment, a detailed guide on how to prepare and submit work for assessment, and range statements for assessment marks.

7. Linked and other policies and legislation

This policy references:

- [Academic Regulations for Subsidiary Institutions of The Open University](#)
- [Assessment through the Medium of Welsh Policy](#)
- [OCA Running Assessment Guide](#)
- [Academic Misconduct Policy](#)
- [Academic Appeals Policy & Procedures](#)
- [Extenuating Circumstances Policy](#)
- [Tuition Policy](#)

8. Changes since previous policy

8.1. Additional details specific to the OCA CertHE have been added.

8.2. Changes have been made to describe digital assessment as OCA's primary mode of assessment.

9. Policies superseded by this document

9.1. This policy supersedes Version 2 of the Summative Assessment Policy