HE Assessment Framework

Policy Title	HE Assessment Framework
Policy Category	Compliant
Owner	Deputy Director HE Quality and Standards
Group Executive Lead	Deputy Principal Newcastle College, Executive Lead HE
Date Written	July 2023
Considered By	HE Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee
Approved By	HE Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee
Date Approved	September 2023
Equality Impact Assessment	The implementation of this policy is not considered to have a negative impact on protected characteristics.
Freedom of Information	This document will be publicly available through the Groups Publication Scheme.
Review Date	September 2026
Policy Summary	This framework outlines NCG's approach to ensure effective, appropriate, transparent and fair assessment.

Applicability of Policy	Consultation Undertaken	Applicable To
Newcastle	Yes	Yes
Newcastle 6th Form	No	No
Carlisle	Yes	Yes
Kidderminster	Yes	Yes
Lewisham	No	No
West Lancashire	No	Yes
Southwark	Yes	Yes
Group Services	No	No
HE Partnerships (*partner may have an equivalent policy)	No	Yes

Changes to Earlier Versions	
Previous Approval Date	Summarise Changes Made Here
January 2023	*Minor updates and corrections.*

Linked Documents	
Document Title	Relevance
Student Partnership and Engagement Strategy	*Linked to assessment design section and engaging students in assessment practices.*
HE Assessment Policy	*Policy for HE Assessment*

Equality Impact Assessment

	Judgement
EIA 1 - Does the proposed policy/procedure align with the intention of the NCG Mission and EDIB Intent Statement in 2.0?	Yes
EIA 2 - Does the proposed policy/procedure in any way impact unfairly on any protected characteristics below?	
Age	No
Disability / Difficulty	No
Gender Reassignment	No
Marriage and Civil Partnership	No
Race	No
Religion or Belief	No
Sex	No
Sexual Orientation	No
EIA3 - Does the proposed policy/processes contain any language/terms/references/ phrasing that could cause offence to any specific groups of people or individuals?	No
EIA4 - Does the policy/process discriminate or victimise any groups or individuals?	No
EIA 5 - Does this policy/process positively discriminate against any group of people, or individuals?	No
EIA 5 - Does this policy/process include any positive action to support underrepresented groups of people, or individuals?	No
EIA 6 - How do you know that the above is correct?	Consultation has been carried out with relevant colleagues within NCG and with a higher education (HE) committee within our HE deliberative structure, which includes HE student representation.

Higher Education Assessment Framework

Providing a framework which offers guidance and documentation to ensure effective, appropriate, transparent and fair assessment.

We adopt an inclusive approach to assessment which:

- Fairly evaluates students' ability to meet module and programme learning outcomes and academic standards.

- Is accessible for all students.

- Provides every student with an equal opportunity to demonstrate their achievement.

- Provides student engagement, learning, progression, retention and addresses the needs of our diverse student population.

- Is authentic and contextualised, meaningful tasks that replicate real-world challenges through effective programme design.

- Provides a reduction to the need for modified assessment provision.

Our Higher Education (HE) quality processes and systems are used in conjunction with the HE Assessment Policy to provide a structure which assures the quality and standards of HE assessment and feedback. The core principles of the assessment policy reflect the expectations (standards and quality) and the core practices within the UK Quality Code https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/advice-and-guidance.

Core principles

- Validity - ensures that assessment measures what it claims to measure.

- Reliability/Consistency - refers to the accuracy with which an assessment measures the skill or attainment it is designed to measure. A reliable assessment consistently gives the same results under similar conditions.

- Fairness - a fair and timely assessment, in addition to being valid and reliable, provides equity of opportunity for students in line with current equality legislation.

- Transparency - a transparent assessment policy and guidelines will ensure clarity and understanding by all relevant stakeholders.

- Quality – a key principle in ensuring the credibility and status of awards. Quality will be assured through adherence to the regulations and requirements of awarding and professional bodies and the institution policy and guidelines, national award standards, programme approval and validation and monitoring and evaluation.

- Engagement - refers to the process of engaging both staff and students in an understanding of the purpose of assessment and the institutional contexts in which assessment takes place.

- Setting of assessment – effective planning and design of assessment.

Assessment and Regulatory Literacy

Assessment and regulatory literacy refers to the process of engaging both staff and students, in a process by which they fully understand the purpose of assessment The development of such literacy is essential to everyone involved in assessment practice insofar as learning is most effective when students and staff share an understanding of academic and professional standards and the regulatory environment which frames those standards.

Effective assessment literacy should generate a discussion with students prior to the point of summative assessment to establish an agreed understanding of the purpose and expectation of assessment. This means that active engagement with assessment practice and its relationship to the learning process should be integral to module and programme design, approval and delivery. The process recognises that students are better able to achieve complex and sophisticated outcomes from their learning experiences when they have the opportunity to understand, shape, and internalise expected standards of assessment. Therefore, engagement with assessment and regulatory literacy, interactions in which staff and students are contributing partners, not only helps foster autonomous and reflective student learning but also enables staff to review and enhance their own practice as professional educators.

There are three main areas incorporated within the framework:

- Assessment design.

- Assessment standards.

- Assessment feedback.

Assessment Design

All assessment should be designed and planned to ensure:

- Assessment is designed to engage students in learning that is meaningful, tasks replicate the world of work, is relevant and accessible to all.

- Information and guidance on assessment is clear, accurate and accessible to all staff, students, placement or practice providers, assessors and external examiners.

- The module guide is aligned to the principles of assessment and is used appropriately in linking the learning outcomes, assessment criteria and academic level for the programme/award.

- The range and type of assessment encourage and promote learning to ensure possible bias towards an individual assessment method is avoided.

- Strategies for assessment encourages good academic practice and academic integrity (plagiarism software is used as part of the submission process for all written assignments).

- Students are provided at the start of their programme with an assessment plan which states the number and frequency of assessments and re-assessment opportunities. The plan should clearly state the dates for both assessment and re-assessment.

- Assessment design is regularly reviewed to ensure that the amount and timing of assessment enables effective and appropriate measurement of students' achievement of intended learning outcomes.

- Formative assessment provides students with tasks and opportunity to try out a particular assessment. It is used to provide students with developmental feedback to improve future summative assessments. Formative assessment is n not graded and does not count towards the student's achievement on their programme.

- Summative assessment measures achievement of the learning outcomes linked to the required level and standard of the programme. The work is graded and recorded.

- Assessment design will consider the concepts of the Student Partnership and Engagement Strategy to enable effective engagement with their students to provide an opportunity to share and develop their own knowledge in an academic environment.

Assessment Standards

- Assessment processes are transparent and clearly communicated to relevant stakeholders.

- Clear and appropriate contextualised assessment criteria is provided for all summative assessment tasks.

- Assessment literacy supports student understanding of assessment, effective assessment practice and standards.

- Moderation of module guides/assessment briefs takes place prior to publication to students.

- Module guides and examinations for level 4 (Certificate of HE), 5, 6 and 7 are externally moderated by the external examiner for the programme prior to being published to students.

- The procedure and documentation for setting examination papers and the conduct of examinations conforms to the requirements within the academic regulations.

- Appropriate training is available for the organisation of group assessments.

- Academic assessment practices are inclusive, ensuring all students have equality of opportunity to demonstrate the achievement of the learning outcomes and competence standards.

- Marking and moderation practices promote consistency, reliability and objectivity, and follow the protocols and processes set out in the marking and moderation guidelines.

- Assessment of student's work is undertaken by appropriately qualified staff competent to carry out this role.

Assessment Feedback

- Appropriate and timely feedback is provided to students (**normally within 20 working days).**

- The format of feedback, formative and summative complies to the standards set out in the HE Assessment Policy.

- Formative feedback will be provided to students to indicate strengths and weaknesses and provide clear information about what the student needs to do to improve their performance.

- Feedback is provided electronically to students on summative assessments.

- Students are provided with the opportunity to discuss their feedback with a module tutor as appropriate.

- Students will be informed about the position regarding the reading of draft work for a module prior to submission.

Assessment and Feedback Documentation

In addition to the NCG HE Academic Regulations the following documentation and processes provide a framework which promotes and supports the quality and academic standards of HE provision within the institution:

- NCG Teaching Learning and Assessment Policy.

- 12 Guiding Principles.

- Standardisation event guidance.

- A Guide to Good Practice in Assessment.

- Assessment Tariff guidance.

- Alternative Assessment for students who disclose a disability.

- Mitigation – introduction to the Mitigation.

- HE Academic Appeals flowchart.

- Academic Misconduct flowchart.

- External Examiner Handbook.

- Inclusive assessment.

- Moderation Process.

- Moderation plan (HE09).

- Module guide template.

- Moderation of module guide (HE06).

- External moderation of module guide (HE10).

- Moderation of assessment decisions (HE07).

- Concealed Double marking sheet (HE12).

- Submission and Assessment feedback (HE11).

- Retention of student work – checklist (HE31).

Implementation of Assessment Framework

Assessment Framework	Implementation
Assessment Design	
Assessment is designed to engage students in learning that is meaningful, relevant and accessible to all.	Assessment is inclusive and designed to fairly evaluate the students; ability to meet the learning outcomes and standards of the programme. When designing a new programme teams should consider providing the opportunity for assessment choice in at least one module per level.
Information and guidance on assessment is clear, accurate and accessible to all staff, students, placement or practice providers, assessors and external examiners.	The validation documents map the learning outcomes of the programme to the module learning outcomes. Assessment design provides clear evidence and evaluates the extent to which the student meets the learning outcomes. The range of assessments for a programme must be summarised in the Programme Specification and this is reviewed as part of the Programme Approval/Review Event. Detailed assessment strategies must be included in the module specifications and module guides to provide clear and transparent information to all stakeholders. Components of assessment constitute part of the overall assessment strategy. Where a module has several components, each should assess different learning outcomes. Each component is awarded an individual mark that is recorded separately on the Marks Recording System. For each module, the module guide will provide timely information that clearly states the methods of module assessment, assessment criteria, assessment deadlines and how and when students will receive feedback.
The module guide is aligned to the principles of assessment and is used appropriately in linking the learning	A 'Guide to good practice in Assessment' - based on the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications [FHEQ] is provided to inform programme and module assessment. The module guide must include:

outcomes, assessment criteria and academic level for the programme/award.	▪ Details of learning outcomes and assessment strategies. ▪ Information about which learning outcomes each assessment component is linked to. ▪ Contextualised grading for each assessment component which provides clear information to students about what they need to do to achieve. All module learning outcomes are assessed through **summative** assessment. The use of Appendix D: Outcome classification descriptors for FHEQ Level 6 and FQHEIS level 10 degrees is used as a reference point to provide assurance of the level and standards of our degree programmes: The following links to documents and articles within QAA and Advance HE= which provide further guidance and support relating to understanding assessment for HE: https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/qualifications-and-credit-frameworks
The range and type of assessment encourage and promote learning to ensure possible bias towards an individual assessment method is avoided.	A validation event will scrutinise the range of assessment tools implemented across a programme to ensure they are authentic, appropriate to the vocational area and provide a variety of opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning. Curriculum design should adopt an inclusive approach to assessment providing alternative approaches to achieving the same module outcomes by creating a choice of assessment tool in at least one module per level.
Strategies for assessment encourages academic integrity.	Plagiarism software is used as part of the submission process for all written assignments. The induction programme and the virtual learning environment (VLE) for HE students provides access to training session and online resources to support students understanding of academic integrity. Guidance to support students understanding of academic misconduct is provided on the VLE site for HE students.
Students are made aware at the start of their programme of the number and frequency of assessments, with planned dates.	An assessment schedule for each programme is published at the beginning of the academic year which identifies the assessment submission and examination dates for each module. The schedule also includes reassessment and re-sit examinations dates.

	Assessment deadlines should be planned to give students adequate time to reflect on learning and develop the required skills before engaging in summative assessment. It is expected, where possible, that assessment deadlines will be spaced across the academic year to avoiding 'bunching of assessment' at the end of each semester.
Assessment design is regularly reviewed to ensure that the amount and timing of assessment enables effective and appropriate measurement of students' achievement of intended learning outcomes.	Module assessments are reviewed as part of the Annual planning and the module evaluation process. Assessment tariff guidelines provide information relating to the appropriate amount of summative assessment for a module of a particular weighting at each level. Module statistics will be reviewed at the Module Examination Committees and as part of the Programme Annual Review Report and where issues related to student performance are identified an action plan will be implemented. A detailed analysis of student performance data, at module level should be undertaken as part of programme annual review and assessment strategies adjusted where necessary. Where a module is delivered across a number of programmes data should be analysed to ensure parity and consistency of standards.
Assessment design will consider the Student Partnership and Engagement Strategy.	Programme teams should promote effective engagement with their students to provide an opportunity to share, shape and develop their own knowledge in an academic environment. Co-development of assessment design focused on industry/real work environment practice.
Assessment Standards	
Assessment processes are transparent and clearly communicated to relevant stakeholders.	Details of the NCG HE Academic Regulations are provided to students via the NCG HE Regulatory documentation website and the programme VLE site. Student-friendly guides are available to support key process (mitigation, alternative assessment processes, and academic misconduct) on programme and college HE VLE. Programme teams are expected to provide an assessment schedule at the beginning of the academic year which clearly identifies the assessment deadlines and opportunities for

	reassessment (particularly with reference to the opportunity to re-sit examinations/practical assessments). Where there is a requirement to make a change to the assessment schedule students must be notified immediately of the change. Information regarding the revised assessment deadline must be clearly communicated to **all** students through programme sites and other appropriate communication channels. Any changes to the assessment schedule must be notified to students typically at least 7 days in advance of the original assessment deadline. Where feasible, the reassessment should involve the completion of a new piece of work. The process for the submission of assessments (hand-in process) must be clearly communicated to students as part of the induction programme and reinforced within the module guide.
Clear and appropriate contextualised assessment criteria is provided for all assessment tasks.	Contextualised grading criteria provided at assessment component level gives clear guidance and support to students of the standard and requirements of the assessment. 'Guide to good practice in Assessment' provides exemplars of contextualised criteria for individual assessment activities (essay, practical, presentation). Guide to good practice in assessment The use of Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and Appendix D: Outcome classification descriptors for FHEQ Level 6 and FQHEIS level 10 degrees are used as a reference point to provide assurance of the level and standards of our degree programmes: https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/qualifications-and-credit-frameworks
Assessment literacy supports effective assessment practice and standards.	Training and support for staff and students to ensure there is a shared understanding of the purpose and process of assessment. Students should be actively engaged and included in the assessment

	process to enable them to achieve their full potential. For example: designing and providing assessment choice, understanding the criteria and standards for assessment.
Moderation of module guides/assessment briefs takes place prior to publication to students.

Module guides and examinations for level 4 (Certificate of HE), 5, 6 and 7 are externally moderated by the external examiner for the programme prior to being published to students. | Each programme produces a moderation plan which identifies module moderators and concealed double markers (dissertation) . All module guides and examinations are internally (L4, 5, 6, 7) and externally (L4 (for one year stand-alone programmes, L5, 6 and 7) approved at the beginning of the academic year prior to being given to students.

Programmes with start dates outside the normal academic year (e.g., January starts) will adopt the same process and must moderate module guide prior to the commencement of the programme.

The moderation and concealed double marking process is recorded on the agreed moderation documentation (held within the HE Quality Reference Manual and Moderation Process).

The NCG Moderation Process provides detailed information in relation to moderation and contains guidance and templates to support internal sampling and concealed double marking. |
| The procedure and documentation for setting examination papers and the conduct of examinations conforms to the requirements within the academic regulations. | Module Leaders must adhere to the regulations relating to written examinations within the academic regulations for the relevant awarding body. Curriculum areas/module tutors must adhere to the guidelines provided by the College Examination Department in relations to the organisation of examinations. Curriculum/module tutors must give the Exams' Department a minimum of two weeks' notice of an exam so that they can arrange invigilation. It is the responsibility of the Curriculum area/tutor to ensure that there is sufficient capacity in each room to accommodate the number of candidates sitting the exam in the prerequisite exam conditions. If a room has not been used before for exams and/or if the Curriculum area/tutor does not have confirmed details of the room's capacity, Curriculum areas/tutors must inform the Exams Department who will arrange a survey of the room to ensure it is compliant.

Further information relating invigilation and the processes can be obtained by contacting the local college Exams Department and within the academic regulations. |
| Appropriate guidance is available for the organisation of group assessments. | Where group assessment is used to assess student achievement the programme team must have in place measures to ensure fair and equitable consideration is given to the contribution of all students as part of the assessment process. This should include: |

	- A mechanism which is fair and equitable in the allocation of differential marks to individual students within a group. - A detailed description of the mark scheme which breaks down how marks will be allocated to the sub-tasks within the group task/project for each student. - A statement clearly indicating if peer assessment is taken into consideration as part of the assessment process and the system that will be used to obtain the peer mark. The following link provides an example of guidance and support in relation to the management and assessment of group work. https://www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/transforming-assessment-and-feedback/group-work https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/assessing-group-work http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/designteach/design/instructionalstrategies/groupprojects/assess.html
Academic assessment practices are inclusive, ensuring all students have equality of opportunity to demonstrate the achievement of the learning outcomes and competence standards.	Staff are encouraged to consider alternative ways of assessing that provide students with the best opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding which focuses on the accessibility of assessment for all students. The NCG HE alternative assessment agreement and related process ensures consistent practice in the support of assessment arrangements for HE students who disclosed a disability or specific learning difficulty and/or mental health disability or specific learning need. The following links provide further information and examples relating to developing an embedded approach to inclusive learning. https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/inclusive-learning-and-teaching-higher-education https://www.jisc.ac.uk/guides/a-strategic-approach-to-inclusive-practice-in-higher-education#
Marking and moderation practices promote consistency, reliability and objectivity, follows the protocols and processes set out in the marking and moderation guidelines.	The institutions Moderation process provides clear instructions and support to staff in the process of: - Planning. - Creating a module guide. - Internal moderation of module guide Concealed double marking.

	• Moderation of practical examinations, practice demonstrations, performances, artefacts or oral presentations. • Moderation type and sample size. • Internal and external moderation of assessment decisions. • Working with the External Examiner. • Standardisation and support for new staff. Holding a Standardisation Event, particularly when there is a module that is delivered across a number of programmes, supports and promotes the assurance and consistency of standards. Further guidance on the conduct and purpose of a standardisation event can be accessed within the Moderation Process map. http://intranet.ncgrp.co.uk/newcastlecollege/HE/SitePages/Moderation%20Project.aspx A sample of assessed work will be retained by a curriculum for the current academic year, plus two further academic years. Further guidance for the retention of student work is provided in the 'Retaining Student Work' document (HE31 Quality Reference Manual).
Assessment of students work is undertaken by appropriately qualified staff competent to carry out this role.	All staff, including part-time staff who assess students' work, have access to a range of support and development including: ▪ Assessment & Feedback Workshops. ▪ Individual and team support on assessment and feedback. ▪ Guide to good practice in Assessment. ▪ Quality Reference Manual – standard document templates, processes and guidance materials. ▪ Access to teaching qualification. ▪ Moderation process map. All HE academic staff are required to hold a nationally recognised HE qualification appropriate to the role or to be working towards one with the reasonable expectation of completing it within two years from the date of your employment.

	Inexperienced members of staff involved in assessment must be supported by experienced academic staff at all stages of the assessment process for at least one academic year in line with the Moderation process.
Assessment Feedback	
Appropriate and timely feedback is provided to students on assessed work in a way that promotes learning and facilitates improvement (**normally within 20 working days**). The format of feedback, formative and summative complies to the standards set out in the Assessment Policy.	Normally feedback is provided via electronic return and where this is not the case, alternative arrangements must be clearly identified to the students. It is expected that students will, following assessment, receive feedback within 20 working days. Feedback should include areas of strength and identify aspects for further enhancement providing appropriate guidance to enable improvement. Feedback must be linked explicitly to the module learning outcomes and/or assessment criteria, as appropriate. Curriculum areas should use a standard Submission and Assessment feedback and agree the electronic mechanism by which feedback is distributed (e.g. via the VLE, email, etc.). An example of a typical submission and assessment form is held within the HE Quality and Standards Reference Manual HE11. Programme teams are encouraged explore alternative mechanisms for providing feedback, e.g. audio feedback. Where audio feedback is used, this can replace written feedback as long as copies of the feedback can be retained and made available to the external examiner. Where useful, annotation of assessments can be used to supplement written feedback to identify areas of strength and for improvement, demonstrating how the student may enhance their work. If annotation is used, mechanisms for returning student work must be in place (e.g., electronic annotation and return). There is no College requirement that students will be given individual feedback where the form of assessment is an examination. Feedback to students following an examination needs to be specific enough to enable the student to improve his/her performance. Examination answer booklets are retained by the College and not returned to students.

	To promote more meaningful use of examination feedback for learning, all students should be provided with an opportunity to view their examination answer booklet alongside feedback and/or model answers if available. For students who have failed, this opportunity must be provided prior to the reassessment examination and timed to allow the student sufficient time to prepare for the reassessment. It is good practice to have a module tutor available to discuss the feedback at this point. For students who have passed, this opportunity must be provided on request around the start of their next module.
Formal feedback for summative assessment is provided electronically, where possible, to students on summative assessments.	Written feedback for summative assessment is provided electronically on summative assessed work.
Students are provided with opportunity to discuss their feedback with a module tutor as appropriate.	In addition to written feedback following summative assessment, module tutors will offer the opportunity to students via a group or individual feedback session to discuss the assessment and areas for future improvement.
Students will be informed about the position regarding the reading of draft work for a module or programme prior to submission.	Curriculum areas and programmes will provide information to students within the module guide which indicates the practice with regard to the reading of draft work. It is expected that no mark/grade will be given for draft work.