



## Assessment Policy and Procedure (Spurgeon's College)

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# **Assessment Policy and Procedure (Spurgeon's College)**

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## Introduction

1. This policy sets out the principles and practice relating to assessment and feedback at Spurgeon's College (the College) for students taking units at academic Level 4 to 7.<sup>1</sup> This policy is informed by the *UK Quality Code for Education: Advice and Guidance, Assessment*.<sup>2</sup>
2. This policy applies to all students on Level 4 – 7 taught courses validated by the College or Liverpool Hope University.
3. Any requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) or other academic award partners may take precedence over the content of this policy.

## Definitions

4. *Assessment* is intended to ascertain that stated learning outcomes have been achieved. A variety of assessment methods enables students to demonstrate a variety of kinds of learning outcome.
5. *Summative assessments* are those which contribute directly to a student's overall mark or grade and evaluate student learning at the end of an instructional unit by comparing it against a standard or benchmark.
6. A *formative assessment* provides students with opportunities to build the skills and understanding they will need in their summative assignments, and opportunities to receive feedback that will help them with that development.
7. *Feedback* may be oral, provided in seminar or tutorial discussion, or written, for example, in email or electronic responses to online forums. It will normally be provided by tutors but can include elements of peer feedback. Formal feedback can be provided for both formative and summative assessment and is designed to show students whether and how they have met the relevant learning outcomes, what areas there might be for improvement, and what they might do to pursue that improvement.

## Section 1 General Principles of Assessment

### The principles of assessment

8. Assessment is an important part of the College's educational process. The principles relating to assessment are outlined in the College's [Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework](#), and have been written with reference to the *UK Quality Code for Education*.<sup>3</sup>
9. The principles of assessment (as detailed in the framework) are as follows:
  - Assessment methods and criteria are aligned to learning outcomes and teaching activities.
  - Assessment is reliable, consistent, fair and valid.
  - Assessment is holistic.
  - Assessment methods and criteria are inclusive and equitable.
  - Assessment is explicit and transparent.

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<sup>1</sup> [The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies \(qaa.ac.uk\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [advice-and-guidance-assessment.pdf](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Quality Code \(qaa.ac.uk\)](#)

- Assessment and feedback is designed to be purposeful and support student learning and academic development.
- Assessment is timely.
- Assessment is efficient and manageable.
- Academic tutors assist students to prepare for assessment.
- The College's approach to assessment encourages academic integrity.

## Regulatory principles in assessment

10. The College will ensure that:
- The assessment scheme provides enough evidence of students' achievement to enable robust decisions to be made about their progression through the programme and the award of the intended academic qualification.
  - Assessment tasks allow students to demonstrate achievement appropriate to the level of the intended award in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.
  - Assessment tasks are managed across the programme, to achieve appropriate variety in assessment tasks, avoid unnecessary concentrations of assessment at particular times and reflect intellectual progression through the programme.
  - Assessment is conducted in accordance with College regulations, policies, procedures and guidance, as set out in this Assessment Policy and elsewhere.

## Assessment design

### *Intended learning outcomes*

11. Each unit should have an appropriate mix of formative and summative assessments which are clearly aligned with the unit's intended learning outcomes. Assessment design, therefore, should be considered when the learning outcomes for a unit are conceived or revised.
12. Assessment tasks for each unit will be matched against the learning outcomes for the unit and individual assessment instructions will always clarify what learning outcomes the student is expected to demonstrate in the piece of work they produce. All the stated learning outcomes for a unit should normally be summatively assessed.
13. The following characteristics of assessment will be promoted across academic Level 4 – 7:
- *Diversity* – types of assessment used should be varied to reflect the variety of student learning styles and preferences and respond to the varied nature of course content across units
  - *Innovation* – assessment tasks should motivate students through presenting innovative challenges that demand originality and creativity
  - *Challenge* – assessment should promote high expectations and inspire students to extend their learning and develop skills
  - *Stimulation* – assessment should aim to induce conversation, dialogue and interaction between students and tutors
  - *Realism* – assessment tasks should be achievable and realistic given the allotted learning hours/ word counts.
14. Effective design of assessment ensures that course-level learning outcomes are addressed through the assessment of the course's constituent units or modules.

### *Inclusivity*

15. Assessment tasks will provide every student with an equal opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of learning outcomes through inclusive design wherever feasible and through individual reasonable adjustments as required to demonstrate their achievement through the assessment process, with no group or individual disadvantaged. The College keeps the needs of students to the forefront of its thinking when designing assessments, including those studying at different locations, from different cultural/ educational backgrounds, with additional learning needs, or with protected characteristics. Assessment procedures and methods are flexible enough to allow adjustments to overcome any substantial disadvantage that individual students could experience.

### *Assessment in a Digital Age*

16. Good academic assessment can make a positive contribution to students' future employability because of its role in developing students' proficiency in both discipline-related skills<sup>4</sup> and the wider skill set known as 'digital capability'. Digital capability embraces media and information literacy, digital research, and presentation skills; it includes utilising information technology in creative communication and problem solving.

### **Review of assessments**

17. Review of a Level 4-7 unit's formative and summative assessment should be conducted prior to the academic year in which it is taught.
18. Proposed changes to detailed assessment briefings (examination papers/questions and proposed assignments) must be approved by the External Examiner.<sup>5</sup>
19. The process for proposing and approving changes to assessment rubrics within a unit, including weighting, is:
  - a. Unit tutors should review assessments in the units allocated to them by the Academic Director;
  - b. If a change to a unit's assessment rubrics is required, the unit tutor must complete the [Curriculum Modification Form](#) along with supporting evidence and new or tracked change unit and programme specifications appended to the submitted form;
  - c. Recommendations for changes to assessment rubrics (which count as 'minor modifications' under the [Curriculum Modification Policy](#)) must be sent to the Senior Management Team (SMT) for approval prior to any other action being taken, so that resource and management implications can be assessed. SMT approval should be recorded on Section five of the Curriculum Modification Form.
  - d. The Programme Director is responsible for ensuring an appropriate student consultation process is undertaken and recorded, and for consultation with any relevant professional staff or PSRBs prior to the proposed change being formally considered by the Programme Approval, Revalidation and Review Committee (PARRC).
  - e. The Programme Director will collate the proposed minor changes (changes to summative assessments) and forward to the PARRC for approval.
  - f. The Chair of the PARRC should then complete Section 5 of the Curriculum Modification Form.

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<sup>4</sup> QAA *Subject Benchmark Statement: Theology and Religious Studies*, [sbs-theology-and-religious-studies-22.pdf](#)

<sup>5</sup> [External-Examiners-Policy.pdf \(spurgeons.ac.uk\)](#) paragraph 36:g.

## Assessment length and weighting

20. Different types of written coursework involve differing levels of research and critical engagement with the subject matter, consequently, the relationship between word length and credit allocation is variable. It is important, however, that the principles informing assessment workloads are consistent. The College's agreed normal assessment lengths for written coursework assessments (such as essays, theses, reports etc.) for each level of its degree programme(s) is consistent with best practice in UK higher education.

### *Undergraduate unit word length*

<b>MAXIMUM TOTAL WORD COUNT FOR SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT</b>		
<b>Level</b>	<b>Credit amount</b>	<b>Maximum word count</b>
4	15 credit units	3000
5	15 credit units	3500
6	15 credit units	4000
Dissertation	30 credit units	10,000
Short Dissertation	15 credit units	6000

### *Postgraduate unit word length*

<b>MAXIMUM TOTAL WORD COUNT FOR SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT</b>	
<b>Credit amount</b>	<b>Maximum word count</b>
15 credit units	4000
30 credit units	8000
Dissertation	15000

21. Handbooks and course unit documentation should be used to provide students with clear guidance on assessment lengths. Where necessary, students should be provided with a rationale for assessment word-lengths. This may include, for example, the level of difficulty of the assessment and expected research time.
22. Other forms of assessment (such as presentations, team projects, performance assessments, websites, wikis, take away examinations, community projects etc.) require different guidelines. The amount and level of work required for such tasks should be equivalent to that required for written assessments. Rationales for such assessments should be given in the programme documentation or in unit descriptors.
23. Units that have a combination of written and non-written assessments may have different assessment weighting depending upon the learning outcomes. Where assessments for a unit utilize such a combination, the unit descriptor will include the type, length and weight of the assessments.

## Policy on word limits

24. The purpose of a word limit is to give all students, across the College, a clear indication of the maximum length of a piece of assessed written work, the amount of work expected and therefore how much detail they should go into and how they should allocate time to one piece of assessed work in relation to others. Writing to set word limits is a skill required within some professions, as well as an academic skill. Word limits are set appropriate to the assessment outcomes.
25. The purposes of enforcing word limits are to:
  - ensure parity and fairness by creating a level playing field
  - help students produce well-focused and cogent written work
  - instil the discipline essential for real-life writing tasks
  - ensure that students acquire the ability to edit their writing effectively and cut away inessential material.
26. Unit Descriptors should clearly state a maximum word count for the assignment.
27. Students should adhere to the words count stipulated for each the assignment. Where a single number is given (i.e., a 2000 word assignment) this is the maximum number of words. Where two numbers are given (i.e., a 1500-2000 word essay) students may submit written work over 1500 words in length and up to a maximum of 2000 words in length. The actual number of words should be within the margin indicated.
28. The upper limit is the designated maximum; it should not be regarded as a target that must be achieved and should not be exceeded. The expectation is that students should be able to produce an effective answer without exceeding the set word limits. Learning to write to a specific word limit is a valuable skill to acquire.
29. There is no formal penalty for exceeding (or falling markedly below) the maximum length. Markers, however, will use their academic judgement when evaluating assessments that do so. Decisions on appropriate mark deductions will depend on the overall quality of an individual assignment and the extent to which work exceeds or falls short of the word count and therefore does not adequately use the opportunity given in the assignment task to demonstrate their learning. Markers should highlight in their feedback to students who contravene the set word limits the need to adhere them in future assignments.
30. The word count normally refers to everything in the main body of the text. This includes direct textual quotations and footnotes/endnotes in the essay. Everything before (i.e., abstract, acknowledgements, contents, executive summaries etc) and after the main text (i.e., references, bibliographies, appendices etc) is **NOT** included in the word count limit. Students should be given clear guidance on the use of appendices etc. Appendices are for supporting, illustrative material only; they should not be used to elaborate or extend the argument.
31. A signed declaration of length must be received with every piece of work submitted for marking.

## Alternative assessment

32. Spurgeon's College is committed to its existing statements regarding equality of opportunity which can be found in the student handbook. As part of this commitment we recognise that students with disabilities are an integral part of the academic community. The College adheres to the QAA Code of Practice on Students with Disabilities and in



particular it agrees with the precept that "assessment and exam policies, practices and procedures should provide disabled students with the same opportunity as their peers to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes". At the same time, the rigour and comparability of the assessment should be protected so that one academic standard is applied to all students.

33. The College's approach to alternative assessments and arrangements for students with special educational needs may be found in its [Academic Assessment Guidelines for Students with Disabilities and Specific Learning Needs](#).

## Section 2 The Practice of Assessment

### Assessment deadlines

34. The College's procedures and guidance for the submission of summative assessment must be clearly publicised to students, via Handbooks, local web pages or Moodle.
35. The deadlines for the submission of the coursework for individual units are published at the beginning of each semester. These are agreed by the Programme Director and Academic Director in consultation as appropriate with unit tutors. In choosing assessment deadlines, consideration should be given to evening out student workload as far as possible while allowing sufficient time for relevant learning to be absorbed and research carried out.
36. Students are expected to plan their work so that they can meet assessment deadlines at the same time as other obligations which they may have both inside and outside of the College. The College recognises that students may experience exceptional short-term issues outside their control during their studies which adversely impact their ability to complete or perform in assessments by the specified deadline. The College's [Mitigating-Circumstances-Policy](#) enables students with a legitimate mitigating circumstance to apply for an extension, deferral or consideration of their circumstances by the Special Cases Committee.
37. Students are responsible for managing their time in order to meet published assessment deadlines.

### Submission of summative assessment

38. Assessment of all written (including dissertations) and electronically produced assignment material (i.e., video and audio recording etc.) takes place principally electronically; this includes electronic submission, marking and feedback. Written assignments must be submitted through the College's virtual learning environment, Moodle and is subject to plagiarism detection software checking, where appropriate.
39. The College must ensure students are aware that plagiarism detection software is used and must be directed to information, advice and guidance on academic writing, avoiding plagiarism and the penalties arising from academic misconduct. Students can find technical advice on how to submit an assignment in the document '[How to Submit an Assignment](#)' on Moodle. The presentation of assignments should follow the advice given in the College's [Style Guide](#) also accessible via Moodle.
40. Work submitted online is anonymised for marking. The College will make every effort to preserve the anonymity of students throughout the assessment of written material. Oral presentations or recordings by students cannot be anonymised.

41. In cases where malpractice is suspected in a written submission by a student, the College will follow its [Academic Malpractice Policy](#).

### Guidance on late submission

42. Any work that has been submitted after a deadline has passed is classed as late except in cases where an extension has already been agreed. **There are no discretionary periods.** This guidance relates to first attempts only.
43. The College implements a sliding scale to penalise late submission. Work submitted after the deadline will be marked, but the mark awarded will reduce progressively for each calendar day, or part thereof, by which the work is late. This includes weekends.
44. In cases where a late piece of work does not represent an entire assessment for a unit, the penalty applies to the *individual piece of work*, not all the assessment elements for the unit.

### *Application of penalties for late submission*

45. No calculations should be made for part-days. Any work submitted at any time within the first 24 hours following the published submission deadline will receive a penalty of 10% of the maximum amount of marks available. Any work submitted at any time between 24 hours and up to 48 hours late will receive a deduction of 20% of the marks available, and so on, at the rate of an additional 10% of available marks deducted per 24 hours, until the assignment is submitted, or no marks remain.
46. If a piece of work is not marked out of 100, the deduction per day is proportional to that for work marked out of 100. For example, for a piece of work marked out of 60, the deduction would be 6 marks per day/24 hours. The reduction is therefore 10% of the total assessment value, rather than 10% of the mark awarded for the piece of work.
47. This guidance on late submission relates to 24 hours/calendar days, so includes weekends and weekdays, as well as bank holidays and College closure days. If an assessment deadline is at noon on a Friday and the student submits it just before noon on the following Monday, their penalty would be a 30% mark deduction, based on being late by three days/72 hours.
48. The College must make clear to students that submission dates and times are in UK local time and it is the responsibility of students to ensure that they check the relevant time zone. (This may be of particular relevance to distance learning students or students at a collaborative partner).
49. This guidance on late submission also applies to long essays and dissertations/theses. Late work will be logged by the Senior Registrar, and students can expect to receive feedback on it in the normal way. Students will be informed clearly of the mark they would have received without late penalty deductions.
50. Markers should indicate the **unpenalised** mark on the feedback sheet and marking grid. All deductions for late submission are to be made by the Senior Registrar, and clearly recorded on the marking grids for the course unit.
51. Students who submit referral/re-sit assignments after the deadline will be automatically subject to a mark of zero. There is no sliding scale in operation for re-sits/referrals.

### *Late penalties and pass marks*

52. Students whose assignment mark falls below a pass as a result of a late penalty should not be routinely asked to resubmit the assignment; instead, the original assignment will be used in lieu of a referral, and normal re-sit/referral procedures will apply, with unit marks receiving a suffix of 'C' or 'R', as described below. If a student's original unit mark before the application of the penalty was a pass, the mark recorded for the unit will not fall below the minimum compensatable pass mark for the programme.
53. However, if the student has exhausted all their compensation allowance or the unit is a core/compulsory unit which does not permit compensation, the student would need to take a referral for progression purposes and would receive an 'R' suffix see paragraph 55 below.<sup>6</sup>

### *Example scenarios*

54. In cases where a student's overall unit mark is in the compensation zone (following application of a late submission penalty) and the student has compensation credit remaining, normal compensation procedures will apply. For example, undergraduate (UG) marks after the penalty of between 31 and 39 are recorded as 31-39C. Postgraduate Taught (PGT) marks after the penalty of between 41 and 49 are recorded as 41-49C.
55. In cases where a student's overall unit mark is in the compensation zone (following application of a late submission penalty) but the student has exhausted all their compensation allowance or the unit is a core/compulsory unit which does not permit compensation, the student would need to take a referral of the unit for progression purposes, and would receive an 'R' suffix.
56. In cases where a student's overall unit mark falls below the compensation zone, following application of a late submission penalty, the original assignment submission is treated as a referral and the mark is capped, with the final unit mark recorded with a suffix of 'R' to denote its treatment as a referral. For example, UG course unit marks that were pass marks before the penalty but that after the penalty fell to 30 or below are recorded as 30R (i.e., the minimum compensatable pass mark). PGT course unit marks that were pass marks before the penalty but that after the penalty fell to 40 or below are recorded as 40R.
57. Students whose assignment mark was in the compensation zone should not be routinely asked to resubmit the assignment; instead the student's original mark will be used in lieu of a referral with the students' unit marks being capped at the lowest compensatable mark (normally 30 for UG and 40 for PGT programmes) and the mark receiving a suffix of 'R' to signify that it is being used in lieu of a referral. For example, a UG student whose assignment makes up 100% of the unit and whose original assignment mark was 35, and receives a mark of 5 for the unit as a result of late submission penalties, would have their unit mark recorded as 30R.
58. However, if the student has exhausted all their compensation allowance or the unit is a core/compulsory unit which does not permit compensation, the student would need to take a referral for progression purposes, and would receive an 'R' suffix – see paragraph 55 above.

### **Wrongly submitted assignments**

59. A student may make a mistake submitting an assignment via Moodle. Examples include:

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<sup>6</sup> For the general regulations on compensation and referral, see the Undergraduate Degree Regulations and the [Postgraduate-Taught-Degree-Regulations-LHU-or-SC.pdf \(spurgeons.ac.uk\)](https://www.spurgeons.ac.uk/postgraduate-taught-degree-regulations-lhu-or-sc.pdf).

- a formative assignment submitted rather than a summative one;
  - an assignment submitted for the wrong unit;
  - an earlier, draft version of an assignment submitted rather than the final one.
60. Details of the procedure that should be followed if a mistake is believed to have occurred is contained in the [Protocol for Wrongly Submitted Assignments](#).
61. In all disputed cases, the Special Cases Committee (SCC) is the point of appeal for students. The SCC will decide cases with reference to the above protocols.

### **Mitigating circumstances**

62. Where a candidate is aware in advance that the deadline will not be met, the [Mitigating Circumstances Policy](#) should be followed. The student should submit an application for mitigating circumstances (online form) explaining the reasons the submission date cannot be met, together with appropriate third-party supporting documentary evidence (e.g., medical or other). The SCC will consider the evidence and may recommend an appropriate revised submission deadline for the work, taking into account the circumstances presented.
63. Mitigating circumstances can on rare occasions be submitted after a deadline – for example if someone becomes incapacitated and goes into hospital and therefore cannot apply for extensions. Further details are available in the Mitigating Circumstances Policy; it should be noted that requests will not normally be considered retrospectively unless there are clear reasons why the delay could not have been avoided or reduced.

## **Section 3 The Process of Assessment**

### **Examination procedures**

64. All exam papers, for units requiring the process of assessment to be a formal written exam, must be signed off by the Programme Director before submission to the external examiner.

#### *Examination paper rubrics*

65. Any special instructions needed for the examination should be clearly marked on the front sheet of the examination paper:
- Rubric
  - Any textbooks the candidates are allowed to use
  - Any special paper candidates need to be provided with
  - Whether the question paper must be handed in at the end of the exam
  - Statement regarding the use of dictionaries (if appropriate)

#### *Breaches of the rubric*

66. In cases where a student has not followed set instructions on an examination paper and has answered an incorrect number of questions or failed to answer a compulsory question, the following guidance is given:
- Where a student has attempted too many questions, academic judgement should be used to decide which answers to mark and which should be disregarded.
  - Where a student has failed to attempt a compulsory question, they will be awarded zero for that question. Academic judgement should then be used to decide what to mark and what to disregard from the remaining answers.

- Where a language exam is taken in the College, the unit tutor may give permission for a dictionary to be used in the exam. When permission has been granted to use a language dictionary, clear instructions will be given in the rubric at the head of the examination paper. The College will provide students taking the exam with an approved, clean copy of the approved dictionary.

### *Online examinations*

67. Online examinations must be set in such a way as to minimise the opportunity for students to use unfair means.
68. Students who are permitted to take an examination online must adhere to the following:
- the conduct of the exams should be as if the examination was being sat on campus
  - a student must not communicate or attempt to communicate with anyone about the content of the examination during the period of the examination. This applies before the exam has started, and after the student has finished, their examination. This means that:
    - Students must not share information about the content of the examination questions, with other students or other third parties, whether this be in person or electronically (including by social media, gaming or other similar platforms)
    - Students must not share their answers with other students or third parties, whether this be in person or electronically (including by social media, gaming or other similar platforms)
    - Students must not discuss the contents of the examination/assessment with others or collaborate with other students or third parties in the writing or drafting of answers
  - students must not save, replay, post, or take screenshots of examination questions or suggested answers on social media, gaming platforms or similar
  - a student must not copy or attempt to copy from another student's work
  - a student must not be involved in any arrangement whereby another party undertakes the assessment on their behalf
  - a student must not obtain or access, or attempt to obtain or access, an unseen assessment, except where this has been expressly agreed with the unit tutor
  - any work submitted must be the student's own work
  - students must not access non-permitted materials when undertaking the assessment.
69. If students are suspected of failing to adhere to the rules for online examination (para 66 above), this will be investigated in accordance with the College's [Academic Malpractice Policy](#).

### **Marking policy and procedures for coursework and examinations**

70. *First Marking* provides a measure of student performance which enables internal assessors to confirm whether the individual student has achieved the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) and reflects how well they have performed against the assessment criteria. Marking is carried out by one or more internal markers for all summatively assessed students' work. First marking, therefore, involves judging a submitted assignment against the relevant marking criteria and providing comments for students which both justify the mark and offer constructive feedback. The first marker of a unit will usually be the person who taught the unit and set the assessment or examination. First markers of dissertations are allocated by the Academic Director.
71. All marking activities must be carried out by suitably qualified staff.
72. All marking activities, including moderation (see below) and second marking for Level 7 units, must be completed within the marking window of 15 working days and before the

mark release date. In exceptional cases, the Academic Director may grant an extension to the mark release date for individual units.

73. The College has clear and transparent marking schemes for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes respectively, and these are published in programme/student handbooks.
74. All assessment, including presentations, must be marked by the first marker and an agreed sample reviewed by an internal moderator and, in the case of work submitted at Level 5 and above, an external examiner. External examiners have the right to sample work order to ensure that each student has been fairly assessed, is fairly placed and accurately graded in relation to the rest of the cohort.
75. All assessment tasks should be designed relative to the Intended Learning Outcomes, and examinations should be accompanied by guidance for the purposes of internal examining and review by an Internal and/or External Examiner.
76. The Registry checks that all sections of each piece of assessed work have been marked, that partial marks have been totalled correctly, and that total marks have been transferred correctly to Progression and Awards Board reports.

#### Marking summative coursework assessments & examinations

77. *Anonymous Marking* helps to reassure students and others that marking is fair, and hence work submitted in fulfilment or partial fulfilment of a unit assignment, should be marked anonymously wherever possible. This does not include verbal student presentations to tutors and audio/visual assignments; but anonymous marking is required for all formal written assignments and examinations. The choice of assessment task should be governed by its suitability for assessing the intended learning outcomes rather than its suitability for maintaining anonymity.
78. All pieces of written coursework which contribute to the summative assessment of the course unit and all examination scripts are to be marked anonymously by the first markers, by internal moderators and by external examiners. Students should submit their work by registration number only.
79. For written, summative assessments (including assignments, wikis and blogs as well as those in other media such as posters or brochures) students are required to submit one copy of their summative coursework via Turnitin. The first marker then marks the work, provides feedback to the student and enters the provisional marks via the Turnitin interface on Moodle.
80. Examination scripts will be delivered to markers by Registry as soon as possible after the examination has taken place. Online examinations will be marked within Moodle. Registry will transfer marks to the student database.
81. Markers should be aware that comments on exam scripts are personal data that students have a legal right to see.

#### Marking oral examinations and presentations

82. Individual oral presentations and group presentations will be recorded for marking, moderation and external examiner purposes. The first marker will assess the presentation against the relevant marking criteria, provide comments for students which both justify the

mark and offer constructive feedback. Comments and marks will be entered on Turnitin as above.

83. Unit tutors will provide written and oral instructions for students on how group presentations will be assessed. Written instructions on how group oral presentations will be assessed will be reviewed and approved by the Programme Director prior to the semester concerned. Presentations will be recorded for marking, moderation and external examiner purposes. Comments and marks will be entered on Turnitin as above.

### *Marking Dissertations*

84. All work for the master's courses and dissertations at all levels will be first and second marked. The supervisor will not normally be one of the internal markers of a dissertation.

### **Internal moderation and second marking**

85. Internal moderation is important in assuring that examiners apply assessment criteria consistently, and that there is a shared understanding of the academic standards students are expected to achieve and to ensure that academic standards are appropriate and consistent across course units, subjects and programmes. Evidence of moderation is an important feature of internal procedures.

86. 'Moderation' and 'second marking' are different processes:

- The aim of moderation is to provide a quality check on the parity of marking across units. Moderators are not expected to change marks or provide comments on individual pieces of work, but they will enter a note on Moodle to indicate that moderation has taken place.
- Second marking involves reading individual pieces of work, reading the first marker's comments on them, writing comments of their own, and making a judgement as to whether they agree with the first marker's mark, or wish to propose a higher or lower one. In cases of disagreement, the markers are expected to discuss the mark and come to an agreement (see further below). If they are unable to do so, the case is referred to the Academic Director who will appoint a third marker to assess the work.

87. The College will use the following moderation samples:

- **Level 4** 20% of all work (which includes a. and b. below)
  - a. A selection of failed work
  - b. Problem cases for which further advice is required
  - c. 25% of the work marked by associate tutors and inexperienced markers
- **Level 5** 20% of all work, with a representative sample from each ten per cent band, which should include:
  - a. The highest scoring candidate, and the lowest if there are no fails
  - b. Problem cases for which further advice is required

Where there are fewer than ten candidates, all work will be moderated.

- **Level 6** 20% of all work, with a representative sample from each ten per cent band, which should include:
  - a. The highest scoring candidate, and the lowest if there are no fails
  - b. Problem cases for which further advice is required

Where there are fewer than ten candidates, all work will be moderated.

88. Moderators should consider the following during moderation:

- Do the individual marks correspond with the comments made by the first marker?
- Has the full range of marks been used?
- Have the grade descriptors (marking criteria) been used?



- Is the feedback appropriate, and is there feed forward?
  - Is the spread of marks appropriate?
  - Are the boundaries between classes in the right place?
  - Where multiple first markers are used, is the marking consistent across the markers?
89. Although moderators should not change marks or provide comments on individual pieces of work, they may recommend revised marks if their advice has been sought to help resolve problem cases. If the process of moderation raises concerns, the whole batch of work (or a proportion of it if the issue is more specific e.g., issues with borderline, fails or a classification bracket) may be second marked, or the unit marks scaled (in relation to agreed benchmarks and guidelines) after due consultation with the first marker. Where moderation suggests that alteration of unit/ marks is required, this will be discussed between markers and the opinion of a third marker sought if required. The opinion of the third marker is decisive in the subsequent discussion. Only in exceptional circumstances will unresolved differences between marks be presented to the External Examiner for resolution.
90. Individual pieces of work that come in after a unit has been moderated (late work and work from students with an extension) is not normally moderated, but the moderator should check the marking of all failed work.
91. The marker and moderator complete a moderation report form recording any queries or discussions. This is returned to Registry so that it can be sent to the External Examiner for scrutiny.

### *Second Marking*

92. Second markers are given access to the unit on Moodle where all submissions, with the first marker's marks and comments, as well as key information including the Unit Descriptor and assignment briefings can be found.
93. Once first marking has taken place, the second marker:
- Reads the assignment(s) and the first marker's comments, and enters their own comments on Moodle with a note of whether they agree with the first marker's mark or wish to propose a different one
  - Discusses the mark with the first marker where there is disagreement and come to an agreed mark which is entered on Moodle with a note of their discussion. If they are unable to agree a mark, the case is referred to the Academic Director who will appoint a third marker to assess the work. The opinion of the third marker is decisive in the subsequent discussion. Only in exceptional circumstances will unresolved differences between marks be presented to the External Examiner for resolution.
94. Where a whole unit has been second marked, the first and second marker complete a second marking report form recording any queries or discussions. This is returned to Registry so that it can be sent to the External Examiner for scrutiny. No form is required in the case of dissertations which will be marked by a range of different first and second markers according to subject expertise.
95. The Academic Director or the Registry Team may request second marking of an individual student's work where there appears to be noticeable discrepancy in marks achieved across different units.
96. New members of teaching staff who are inexperienced in marking will be given guidance as part of their induction programme. During their first year, and as part of their training,



large samples of their marking will be read in the moderation process. The moderator will use the opportunity to discuss the appropriate interpretation and application of marking criteria.

### *Pairing*

97. The Academic Director will draw up a list of markers and moderators for each academic year. This list will take into account:

- the importance of avoiding 'cosy pairs' and 'perpetual reciprocal pairs' between first markers and moderators.
- that a careful allocation of pairings of markers across years will enable consistency across units and across time.

### **External examination**

98. External Examiners play a vital role in the maintenance of academic standards and quality assurance in ensuring rigorous but fair assessment of students. One or more External Examiners will be appointed to any provision that leads to a Spurgeon's College award.

99. The College's [External Examiners Policy](#) has been informed by QAA's Quality Code for Higher Education – Chapter External Expertise.

### *Functions of the External Examiner*

100. The principal responsibilities of External Examiners are to ensure that:

- Assessment and examination procedures have been fairly and properly implemented and decisions have been made after due deliberation.
- Standards of awards and student performance are at least comparable with those in equivalent higher education institutions.

101. A **Programme External Examiner** is appointed to each degree programme (or group of cognate programmes) and has specific responsibilities for the whole programme.

102. A **Subject External Examiner** has responsibility for a set of units, which may contribute to more than one programme. All assessed work that leads to the degree class is to be considered by the External Examiner prior to it being completed by the students. This includes all draft core assessment, including examination papers, and any other significant assessment at the discretion of the College or at the request of the External Examiner.

103. A Programme External Examiner may also be a Subject External Examiner. When there is only one Examiner per programme, these roles are combined, and this has an impact on the duties they carry out.

104. Both Subject and Programme External Examiners also have a role in highlighting and encouraging good practice; commenting on the programme's relationship to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, any relevant Subject Benchmarks and professional body requirements; and advising the Progression and Awards Board on dealing with difficult cases.

105. External Examiners are given access by the Registrar to all unit information and all marked assessments in their subject area, together with the marks and comments of internal markers, and notes about how marks were agreed in cases where a second marker has differed in their initial assessment from a first marker. They also receive the Moderation and Second Marking Report forms for each unit, which record discussions about the marking of a batch. The Programme External Examiner samples dissertations.

106. External Examiners will discuss with the Academic Director and Senior Registrar the arrangements for choosing the samples and moderating the internal marking to satisfy themselves that standards are appropriate and that students are being treated fairly. This discussion should take place at the earliest opportunity and both internal staff and External Examiners should work together to monitor the effectiveness of the arrangements.
107. As part of a full and robust system of moderation, External Examiners are general assessors of the overall level of marking for each individual course unit, a representative selection of students and the degree programme as a whole. They are required to authenticate all marks for course units and dissertations for which they are responsible; to satisfy themselves as to the general standard of the marking and the procedures for examining. They also adjudicate any unresolved differences between internal examiners of 5% or more, or entailing a difference in classification band. (Smaller differences must be resolved internally.)
108. External examiners are not permitted to change individual marks but may provide informal feedback on the marking and moderation process for individual units, in addition to their summary comments at the Progression and Awards Board and their annual report.
109. Where moderation of scripts, or an analysis of the distribution of the marks, indicates a need to review the marks for a whole unit, or component of a unit, an external examiner may request a regrading. In this case, the examiner has discretion on whether to request:
- a re-mark of all the assignments in the batch.
  - a scaling of the marks in relation to agreed benchmarks and guidelines. Any scaling must be reported to, and endorsed by, the Progression and Awards Board.
110. The marks agreed by the Subject External Examiner after any moderation will not be altered by a Programme External Examiner or the Examination Board.
111. The full duties of External Examiners are detailed in the College's [External Examiners Policy](#)

## **Feedback for coursework and examinations**

112. The College recognises that feedback is a vitally important part of the learning process.<sup>7</sup> It can take many forms, but it is central to the relationship between tutor and student.

### *General principles*

113. Feedback should be timely, clear and as encouraging as possible. It should enable the individual student to reflect on their skills and performance. Feedback given to students should identify strengths in their work together with practical suggestions about how to improve and develop. Generic feedback to a class can be used to supplement the individual written feedback given to students on their work. It can be provided either in an open, face-to-face forum or posted on a course unit's Moodle site and can be helpful in addressing common mistakes or misunderstandings. Generic feedback can also be useful for some forms of examination.

### *Feedback on formative work*

114. Formative work, which is not graded and therefore does not contribute to a student's overall profile of attainment, may take a variety of forms, and tutors will give feedback in an appropriate way. For example, if a formative task is to contribute to a class discussion or give a class presentation, the tutor may give feedback face-to-face, either in the class or

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<sup>7</sup> See [Learning-Teaching-and-Assessment-Framework](#).

soon afterwards. If the task is a written draft or outline, the tutor may give feedback via email, video call or telephone, which may lead to further discussion if the student wishes.

#### *Feedback on summative work*

115. Feedback on summative work is provided via the Turnitin interface on Moodle. Tutors provide summary comments for all assignments, and annotations within the text of written assignments. The summary feedback should clearly indicate why the work has been graded as it has. It is good practice to make reference to relevant elements of the grade descriptors. The feedback should affirm positive qualities and outline how the student's work might be improved in future.
116. Students have a responsibility to consider feedback given on their work, to seek to understand it, and to act on it. Students can find further information on [Making the Most of Feedback on Your Assignment](#) on Moodle. Students are encouraged to discuss marked work with the unit tutor and seek further clarification if they wish.
117. All students must have the opportunity to receive feedback on their examinations where these form a part of their assessment. In the case of online examinations, feedback is given on Moodle. Students who wish to receive feedback on examinations taken in person should, in the first instance, contact their unit tutor.
118. Coursework submitted late should receive feedback within 15 working days of the actual submission. Where unforeseen circumstances (such as illness on the part of the marker) mean that these norms cannot be observed, the Senior Registrar will make alternative arrangements and will inform students.

## **Section 4 Progression and Awards Boards**

119. Decisions about progression and awards are made by Progression and Awards Boards in accordance with the relevant degree regulations.<sup>8</sup> In these meetings, and in the Pre-Progression and Awards Boards which prepare for them, every effort is made to preserve student anonymity. The annual cycle of assessment normally involves a number of examiners' meetings.

#### *Pre-Progression and Awards Board – end of first semester*

120. At the end of the first semester the Pre-Progression and Awards Board, consisting of a group of internal tutors and the Senior Registrar,<sup>9</sup> considers the mark profiles of all students and identifies any causes for concern regarding their progression. These students are deanonymized to the Programme Director after the meeting and for follow-up as required. Any problems regarding the marking of individual units are also identified and action taken as required. Any issues likely to cause complications in the application of the regulations at one of the summer Progression and Awards Boards are identified for further investigation by the Senior Registrar and discussion with the Academic Director where required.

#### *Pre-Progression and Awards Board – end of second semester*

121. At the end of the second semester the Pre-Progression and Awards Board meets shortly before the Progression and Awards Board and considers the mark profiles of students who have reached a point where a decision about progression or award is required. Any problems regarding the marking of individual units are identified and action taken as required. Issues likely to cause complications in the application of the regulations at one of

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<sup>8</sup> Undergraduate Degree Regulations; [Taught-Postgraduate-Degree-Regulations](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Pre-Progression and Awards Board Terms of Reference.](#)

the forthcoming Progression and Awards Board meetings are identified for further investigation by the Senior Registrar and discussion with the Academic Director where required. This includes proposals for Classification Review where students are on a borderline between classifications.

122. As at the end of the first semester, the Pre-Progression and Awards Board identifies any causes for concern regarding the progression of continuing students. These students are deanonymized to the Programme Director after the meeting for follow-up as required **after the main Progression and Awards Board meeting.**

*Progression and Awards Board – end of second semester*

123. Progression and Awards Boards consist of all teaching staff in the relevant programme(s) as well as the duly appointed External Examiner(s) for the programme or group of programmes under consideration.<sup>10</sup> At the end of the second semester the Board meets to review the profiles of all students who have reached a point where a decision about progression or award is required. Separate Board meetings may be required for separate programmes. The Board confirms marks and makes decisions in accordance with the relevant regulations, including decisions about classification of awards, compensation of marks and referrals (re-sits). Approved mitigating circumstances are taken into account.

*Pre-Progression and Awards Board – end of summer*

124. A Pre-Progression and Awards Board meeting is normally held in late August or early September to prepare for the late summer Progression and Awards Board(s).

*Progression and Awards Board – end of summer*

125. Progression and Awards Board meetings are also held at the end of the summer to confirm marks and make the same range of decisions as above in the cases of students whose mark profile was not complete at the end of the second semester, whether because of late submissions, approved mitigating circumstances, assignments with summer deadlines or other reasons. This is in order to approve decisions about progression which may be required prior to the new academic year and to make awards in a timely fashion.

*Chair's Action*

126. Occasionally it may be in the student's interest that a decision about their progression, or the grant of a referral (re-sit) is taken between Board meetings. In these cases, Chair's Actions may be taken, which always requires the approval of the Programme External Examiner or, in their absence, another External Examiner.

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<sup>10</sup> [Progression and Awards Board Terms of Reference.](#)