

# Assessment Policy

## **Document Summary**

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## Assessment – Policy & Practice

### 1: Background

The City College is committed to the provision of a learning environment which encourages and supports a diverse student community. To this end, the College works, and will continue to work, towards ensuring that assessment tasks and procedures are designed to be inclusive and that they do not disadvantage any group or individual, for example, students from ethnic backgrounds.

The College's Assessment Policy requires that:

- All assessment processes are underpinned by the five principles of promotion of learning, transparency, equity, validity and reliability (including authenticity)
- All programmes recognise the importance of formative as well as summative, assessment
- Assessment will address all of a programme's learning outcomes and assessment criteria, as well as any essential unit requirements that are given to contextualise assessment
- Assessment tasks will, first of all, address the nature of the unit or outcome but will, also ensure that students have the opportunity to develop a range of important skills and capabilities, including, for example, report writing, critical analysis, reflection, and developing and facilitating presentations
- The amount of assessed work required by any programme or any course unit will be manageable within the normal standards of student workloads, aligned to Total Qualification Time (including Guided Learning Hours) and unit credits
- Feedback is an integral part of the assessment process and students will receive both formative and summative feedback at the appropriate time
- Assignment tasks will take a variety of forms designed to support a range of approaches to learning (i.e. case scenarios, simulation, real-work experience, problem and essay questions, role-play, and presentations etc.)
- All programmes must adhere to the City College policies and principles of assessment to ensure a common framework for the student experience of assessment
- In all cases, the assessment policies and procedures of awarding organisations have precedence over those of The City College.

### 2: The purpose of assessment

The City College approach to assessment has been developed to align with the requirements of the revised *UK Quality Code* (QAA, 2018) and the *Pearson BTEC Centre Guide to Quality*

*Assurance and Assessment.* The College recognises that, as is stated in the Advice and Guidance for Assessment in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (page 2):

*Assessment is a fundamental aspect of the student learning experience. Engagement in assessment activities and interaction with staff and peers enables learning, both as part of the task and through review of their performance. It is a vehicle for obtaining feedback. Ultimately, it determines whether each student has achieved their course's learning outcomes and allows the awarding body to ensure that appropriate standards are being applied rigorously. Deliberate, systematic quality assurance ensures that assessment processes, standards and any other criteria are applied consistently and equitably, with reliability, validity and fairness.*

Overall, different forms of assessment serve a variety of purposes including:

- Promoting students' learning by providing them with feedback which is designed to improve their performance
- Evaluating students' knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills
- Providing a grade that enables a recognised\* level of performance to be established and may therefore be used to establish the level of progress being made in a way that may determine whether a student is ready to move to the next level
- Enabling employers and other higher education providers to know that an individual has reached a level of achievement that reflects the standards set by the awarding organisation
- Preparing students for progression to higher levels of education and/or progression straight into suitable employment.

\*By Pearson, nationally and internationally, as part of their Higher National Qualifications structure.

### **3: The assessment process - BTEC formative assessment and feedback**

Assessors may offer formative assessment at any point during the term in order to address areas where additional support/ clarification may be needed. The following will apply:

- During teaching and learning, assessors must use their best professional judgement about the nature, quantity or level of feedback. It could include, for example:
  - Identifying areas for student progression, including stretch and challenge
  - Explaining clearly how BTEC assessment works and what students need to do to achieve a Pass, Merit or Distinction

- Setting “dry run” or “mock” tasks and scenarios to help students understand what level they have reached and prepare for assessment, practice assignment questions to be done at home, in-class tests, presentations, mock exams etc
- Providing feedback on how to improve knowledge, skills, understanding, behaviour, approach, grammar etc
- While students are working on an assessment, assessors can continue to give general feedback and support, particularly around the development of knowledge, understanding and skills. This could include, for example:
  - Guidance on how to approach the knowledge and skills requirements
  - Guidance on appropriate behaviour and approach, confirmation of deadlines etc
  - Confirmation of which criteria the assessor is targeting and clarification of what the assignment brief requires
- Following assessment, clear feedback should be given on the criteria achieved (explaining the decisions) and the criteria not achieved (and why) although this should not be a list of instructions on how to get a higher grade. This could include, for example:
  - Which assessment criteria the student has achieved and what the student has done well
  - Which assessment criteria the student has not achieved and what was missing
  - Information or guidance available to the student they could have drawn on (e.g. class notes; handouts; resources in assignment brief)
  - General behaviour and conduct, approach, grammar etc.

#### **4: Feedback v “coaching”**

Students must show that they can generate evidence independently using their knowledge, skills and understanding gained through the learning and teaching process. BTECs are vocational qualifications, designed to help students become independent workers in their chosen field. So while it is important to continue giving general feedback and support during assessment, it is not appropriate for assessors to:

- “coach” students to produce the evidence itself
- give them a specific list of actions they need to take in order to meet the assessment criteria or achieve a particular grade.

Before starting an assessment, the assessor must ensure each student understands the:

- assessment requirements

- nature of the evidence they need to produce
- importance of time management and meeting deadlines.

Once the student begins work for the assessment, assessors must not:

- provide specific assessment feedback on the evidence produced by the student before it is submitted for assessment
- confirm achievement of specific assessment criteria until the assessment stage.

### **5: Assessing unit content**

Professional judgement will always be required but the following principles apply to all BTEC programmes:

- It is not a requirement that all of the content is assessed unless specifically directed by the assessment criteria and associated assessment guidance in the unit specification
- The College is expected to deliver (ie. 'teach') the unit content fully. Assessors must cover all the elements of content, apart from anything preceded by 'e.g.' which is merely an example of what may be chosen to cover
- A student is not required to provide evidence for all the unit content, but is required to provide sufficient evidence to address the assessment & grading criteria in order to successfully achieve the unit.

### **6: The assessment process - BTEC summative assignments (end of semester assignments)**

The process is as follows:

- A schedule is published at the start of each term to which assessors and internal verifiers (IVs) must adhere, identifying all the key dates eg. assignment brief from the assessor to the IV deadline, publication to students' deadline, 1<sup>st</sup> marking deadline etc
- Assignments are set by the assessor who teaches the unit and is responsible for ensuring that the assignment brief covers all learning outcomes and assessment criteria for the unit / that the assignment scenario and tasks are appropriate for work at Levels 4 and 5 / that the tasks may be assessed through a variety of appropriate assessment methods / that the assignment brief follows exactly The City College house style / that assignment tasks incorporate any unit essential requirements used to contextualise the assessment environment
- Before being given to students, all assignment briefs must be verified by the designated IV. The IV is responsible for ensuring that every assignment brief which goes to students covers all learning outcomes and assessment criteria / is of a style and level appropriate for HND / contains a variety of appropriate assessment methods have been included / follows The City College house style

- Under no circumstances may an assignment brief (or any part thereof) be made available to students before it has been signed-off by the appropriate internal verifier. Assessors are required to amend assignment briefs until the internal verifier is satisfied that they meet the required standard
- Once the assignment brief is published to students, assessors are expected to give students a detailed briefing on the requirements of the assignment
- It is expected that, during the course of the term, all content required for successful completion of the assignment will be covered in the requisite detail and clearly linked to the appropriate task / learning outcome
- Assessors have some discretion as to the exact form of the assignment brief but must conform to BTEC requirements and also to those of The City College
- Assessors may review drafts of assignment work if so requested by any student and may indicate whether or not the work addresses the questions asked and/or clarify the exact expectations of the task. This must not amount to effectively marking the task(s)
- Assessors must not suggest what grade the work might attract (not even tentatively suggesting whether it will pass or not). No grade can be confirmed until the College's quality assurance procedures have been completed
- All students must submit their work electronically on The City College MOODLE which incorporates Turnitin. Turnitin is a software programme that produces a similarity index comparing the assignment to other published sources in order to identify plagiarism etc
- All submissions are logged on the electronic assignment tracking system
- The progress of marking in Moodle is shown through 6 work flow states (WFS), identified in the assessor stage of marking, the IV stage, and the grade release stage
- The assessor stage:
  - 1. Not marked (this is shown as the WFS after the assignment is uploaded by the student)
  - 2. In marking (the assessor changes the WFS (from Not marked) to show the assignment is being marked)
  - 3. Marking completed (after marking, the assessor must change the WFS (from In marking) to identify assignments graded as a Distinction, Merit, Pass, or Refer)
  - 4. In Review (also after marking, the assessor must change the WFS (from In marking) to identify assignments graded as a Fail)
  - All assignments must have a grade issued and a grading feedback form uploaded
  - The grade given must be the same as the grade given on the grading feedback form
  - Reasons must be given for awarding a Refer or Fail grade

- Assessors must complete a Suspected Case of Academic Malpractice (SCOAM) form where appropriate and send it to the IV. The IV then initiates the Academic Conduct and Practice procedure
- The IV stage:
  - 4. In review (the IV must change the WFS (from Marking completed) to identify assignments requiring further consideration)
  - 5. Ready for release (the IV must change the WFS (from Marking completed) once the IV process is complete and the grade confirmed)
  - Assignments that are graded 'Fail' must remain 'In review' until the IV process is complete - the IV must then change the WFS to 'Ready for release'
- The grade release stage:
  - 6. Released – The Lead Assessment Administrator must change the WFS (from Ready for release for grades that have been IV'd or Marking completed for grades that have not been IV'd) once the grade is released to a student
  - Only the Lead Assessment Administrator can release grades to students
  - Students are notified by email and must login to see their grade and grading feedback form.
- Grades are submitted to the relevant Assessment Board, along with other key information (eg. SCOAM details). The Assessment Board then reports to the Academic Board.

### **7: Marking spelling, punctuation and grammar**

It is good practice for assessors to "mark" spelling and grammar ie. correct mistakes on student work and expect the student to correct them. Mistakes in spelling and grammar should not influence assessment decisions unless:

- the mistakes are so problematic that they undermine the evidence of student understanding, or
- specific assessment criteria requires good communication, spelling and grammar and/ or correct use of technical language.

If student work has consistently poor spelling, grammar or language below the standard expected at the level of the qualification, marking should be delayed until the student has resubmitted work considered to be up to standard. This should be within in a timeframe not considered to provide an unfair advantage to the student.

### **8: Grades awarded**

The following grades may be awarded:

#### **Pass grades**

- Distinction
- Merit

- Pass

#### **Fail grades**

- Fail – plagiarism
- Fail – collusion
- Fail – commissioning
- Fail – other malpractice (assessor or IV must give reason as identified in Academic Practice and Conduct)
- Fail – incomplete (there little or no evidence to confirm it as a genuine attempt)

#### **Refer grades**

- Refer – assessment criteria or unit requirements not met
- Refer – incomplete (there is evidence to confirm it as a genuine attempt)
- Refer – other (assessor or IV must give reason)

#### **No grade**

- Non-submission - nothing submitted at all.

### **9: Resubmission of assignments**

Because every assignment contributes towards the final qualification grade, students may be eligible for one resubmission of evidence for each assignment submitted. A resubmission can be authorised providing this is fairly and consistently implemented for all students.

A resubmission may be authorised by the Lead IV if all of the following criteria are met:

- the student has met initial deadlines set in the assignment, or has met an agreed deadline extension
- the Assessor judges that the student will be able to provide improved evidence without further guidance
- the Assessor has authenticated the evidence submitted for assessment and the evidence is accompanied by a signed-and-dated student declaration of authenticity.

### **10: Procedure for resubmissions**

If a resubmission is authorised:

- it must be recorded on the assessment record giving a deadline for resubmission within 15 working days of the student receiving the results of the assessment
- the 15 working days must be must be within term time, in the same academic year as the original submission and must not fall over a holiday period.
- undertaken by the student with no further guidance
- a signed and dated record of the authorisation must be kept
- the resubmitted evidence must be accompanied by a signed declaration of authenticity from the student

- the resubmission assessment record must detail the additional student evidence submitted and show any related changes to the assessment decisions
- the assessor must confirm that the resubmitted evidence is authentic and is the student's own work.