

# Assessment Arrangements

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**Harper Adams  
University**

# Assessment Arrangements

- Introduction ..... 1
- Assessment purposes and format ..... 2
- Assignment setting ..... 3
- Assignment submission arrangements ..... 4
- Assignment submission arrangements - reassessments ..... 6
- Processing of assignments..... 6
- Arrangements for dealing with suspected academic misconduct ..... 6
- Marking and moderation requirements ..... 7
- Feedback/forward to students ..... 8
- Arrangements for mitigating circumstances and appeals.....9

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## Introduction

1. This document aims to provide a reference point for staff and students on the assessment arrangements operated at Harper Adams University. It reflects both approved policy and, for students whose studies are based at Harper Adams, also details the operational aspects.
  
2. These operational details might vary, in detail, for students who are enrolled on programmes run with partners. This document does, however, refer to approved policy documented within the *Academic Quality Assurance Manual (AQAM)*, which applies to all awards of Harper Adams, wherever the location of students' study. This document is an annex of the *AQAM*. **Section 5** of the *AQAM* should be considered the authoritative document on the regulatory aspects of assessment. Please note that the key documents from the *AQAM* that relate to students are available through the University's Key Information Page (which can be accessed via the University's website Key Information Page) or through Course Managers where students are not based at Harper Adams.

## Assessment Purposes and Format

3. Assessment has many purposes at Harper Adams and individual assessments might have a diagnostic, formative or summative purpose. The majority of assessments at Harper Adams have a formative or summative purpose. Most coursework assessments represent a combination of formative and summative purposes, in that they provide an opportunity to learn through completion of a task and the provision of associated feedback / feed-forward, and include a mark that contributes to the overall marks of the associated module.

**Diagnostic assessment** aims to establish the level of existing learning, to help plan for appropriate learning activities.

**Formative assessment** aims to provide opportunities for learning, through the assessment task itself and through feedback on how well the task has been completed, with a view to enable the student to take such feedback into account in subsequent assignment work. The feedback does not necessarily include a contributory mark.

**Summative assessment** aims to establish what learning has taken place and will typically results in a mark and/or grade to determine the extent to which learning has reached a satisfactory level. In some instances, summative assessment may be based on a pass/fail outcome only. Where a mark and/or grade is awarded, this will count towards module marks and/or grades.

4. Approved intended learning outcomes are written into module descriptors. The learning and teaching strategies and assessment strategies of each module, together, should provide opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate the intended learning outcomes. Assessment should, therefore be **valid** (supporting the student to develop and/or demonstrate the intended learning outcomes), **reliable** (so that the marks/grades awarded consistently reflect the achievements of individuals) and **fair** (so that students have sufficient time, guidance and learning resources to complete the assessment in a way that does not advantage or disadvantage any student or student group).
5. The **format** of assessment should reflect the intended learning outcomes and be authentic in that they should reflect real world activities, as far as practicable. Most modules include a combination of formative and summative assessment. Summative assessment is often, but not always, in the format of a time constrained examination towards the end of a module. Examinations are often written, but may take the form of e-assessments (undertaken using a computer, rather than by writing on paper) and, occasionally, practical or oral assessments. Formative assessment formats are wide ranging and can include written, oral and practical activities. Irrespective of the format that is selected, formative assessment should provide an opportunity for students to learn as they complete the assessment task, with clear guidance on how the work will be judged (ie the assessment criteria), which during and/or following completion is reinforced through feedback, using the assessment criteria.
6. Approved module descriptors indicate the assessment formats to be used within assessment strategies. Module authors are, however, able to propose alternative approaches where they are considered to offer better validity, reliability and fairness, subject to following the approved procedure for modifying module descriptors (see **Section 3.8** of the *Academic Quality Assurance Manual*).

## Assignment Setting

7. Module leaders design all assessments, including formative coursework assignments, with reference to the approved module descriptor. They are expected to use the approved assignment briefing form so that students are advised of the key information they need<sup>1</sup>. Tutors should set launch and submission dates in line with those outlined in the approved module descriptor as these have been set with a view to provide a balanced work schedule for students. Variation from this is permitted only with the prior agreement of the relevant Course Manager(s), who will balance the needs of individual module requirements (such as seasonality constraints) with the need for student workloads to be balanced throughout the academic sessions. Once assignments have been launched, any revision to assessment schedules at the module level, including by student group request, must be approved by the relevant Course Manager(s).
8. **Assessment criteria** which indicate to the students how the work will be judged (eg in relation to the work's organisation and presentation, its content coverage, use of reference sources or the extent to which the assignment task's demands are satisfied [such as the analysis of data and associated recommendations]) must always be included, with an indication of the relative importance of the various criteria. The number of criteria will vary but will typically range from 3-6 different criteria against which the work will be judged.
9. It is also expected that **marking criteria** will also be indicated, either with reference to the generic coursework marking scale<sup>2</sup> or, ideally, by inclusion of marking criteria that are specific to the assignment and which give an indication of the relative importance of each of the assessment criteria and how a poor, acceptable and excellent piece of work would be described in relation to each of the criteria. There is no prescribed basis for the format of marking criteria, although there are approved criteria for individual major projects<sup>3</sup>. Some exemplar approaches to establishing marking criteria are archived in the Learning and Teaching Development pages on The Learning Hub.
10. Tutors are expected to estimate the **length of time** that a student would be expected to invest in each assignment and include this in the briefing form. The allocated time should not normally exceed the hours in the table below, must be realistic for the task set and comparable with assessment tasks of a similar type.

Level	3&4	5	6	7
Typical time guide to prepare and create the assessment product	20-50 hours	20-50 hours	20-50 hours	30-60 hours

Tutors are required to either set a word / page limit so that students are clear on the expectations upon them. **Word / page limits** require that work should be concisely written and free from superfluous material. Where a word limit is set, students should be reminded of the need to include an accurate word count in their completed work. Where a student exceeds a word / page limit, any words / pages written after the limit has been reached should not be marked (unless the penalty is specified otherwise, as with individual major project marking criteria). The table below provides an overview of the

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<sup>1</sup> **Annex 5.03b / Annex 5.03d / Annex 5.03e / Annex 5.03f** of the *Academic Quality Assurance Manual*: module title, module number, module leader, module tutor (where different), module outcomes assessed, launch date, submission deadline, intended return date of marked work, time guide for students to complete the work satisfactorily, submission instructions, assignment title, outline of the tasks to be undertaken, either a word limit or page limit., assessment criteria, details of who has moderated (approved) the assignment brief and the assignment submission form, which is eventually returned to a student with their submitted work.

<sup>2</sup> **Annex 5.11** of the *Academic Quality Assurance Manual*.

<sup>3</sup> *Academic Quality Assurance Manual*, Annexes 5.12, 5.13, 5.19, 5.20, 5.22.

typical word/slide/time limits for 15 and 20 credit modules at the different levels of academic study.

Level	3&4	5	6	7
Written report or essay (typical - expected maximum)	1500-2000 words	1750-2500 words	2000-3000 words	2000-3500 words
Presentation (slide decks)	10 slides / 10 minutes	12 slides / 12 minutes	15 slides / 15 minutes	15 slides / 15 minutes
Video or audio commentary	10 minutes	15 minutes	15 minutes	20 minutes

11. The *Harper Adams' Guide to Report Writing* (available on the Library Services webpages) indicates that **words / pages counted** include all words / pages from the start of the summary to the end of the conclusion and including all words / pages within sentences, lists, tables and figures. Only words included within the contents list, appendices and reference lists / bibliography are not included in the word count.
12. There is a requirement for each assessment to be reviewed by a different tutor (**moderator**) to the one who designed it, normally assigned by the Head of Department, to ensure that the assessment is fit-for-purpose and provides students with all the guidance that they need to complete a satisfactory piece of work. The assigned moderator should signify their approval of the assessment design on the assignment briefing form. For some assessments, particularly summative assessments, which contribute to the overall grading of an award, an external examiner is also involved in moderating their design<sup>4</sup>.

### Assignment Submission Arrangements

13. All text-based written work should be submitted in the **specified digital format** by the submission deadline. The deadlines for assignment submission are based upon standard days for submission (determined by module level) so that assessments can be securely and scrupulously administered. These details are included on the assignment briefing form. The specific time and date will be clearly stated on the assignment submission form, reflecting the following arrangements:

Level of module	Submission deadline
3 & 4	3pm Monday
6	3pm Tuesday
5	3pm Wednesday
7	3pm Thursday

14. Assessment submissions must be accompanied by the **assignment submission form** which includes the **student's declaration** that the work is their own and that it has not previously been submitted for credit, other than where indicated. Any accompanying assessment feedback sheet should also be submitted where the tutor has requested it. Work should not be submitted directly to tutors as all submissions are recorded and the assignment forms which must accompany work are prepared so that tutors can mark the work without knowing which student has completed it. Students are keen that **anonymous marking** should take place so that they can be confident that tutors are not influenced in their assessment of individual pieces of work by knowing whose work it is.

<sup>4</sup> The requirements for moderation are specified in **Section 5.3** and a moderation checklist is provided within **Annex 5.03c** of the *Academic Quality Assurance Manual*

Anonymous marking is common practice in UK universities, although is not applied for assessments where the candidate's identity is clearly known (eg with an oral presentation, a placement assessment or a final year major project).

15. For online submission of work, digital files must also be uploaded by the student into the **assignment upload box** that has been created in The Learning Hub, and which is available approximately two weeks in advance of the submission deadline. The need for the digital submission is explained in paragraph 25. It is the **student's responsibility** to ensure that they upload the correct file, before the deadline. For group-based project, it is the collective responsibility of the group to ensure that the correct file is uploaded before the deadline. If a student uploads the incorrect file, the file may be replaced (without penalty) by the student providing this is completed **before** the submission deadline. However, assessment submission may **NOT** be replaced **after** the submission deadline. Instructions on how to replace an incorrect file are provided on The Learning Hub. It is important that the receipt that a student is sent, by email within ten minutes of successfully completing the upload, is retained by them as evidence of successful submission. For work submitted after the published deadline, students will not be permitted to resubmit or replace work that has already been uploaded.
16. As in the world of work, the ability to plan work to meet deadlines is considered a central aspect of learning and associated assessment arrangements. Paragraph 18 of the assessment regulations<sup>5</sup> details the **consequences of late submission** of coursework, as detailed here:

Arrangements for the submission of all student work will be published for each module and the industrial training period(s). Assessment submissions **MUST** be submitted by the stated date/time and must use the format stated within the assignment brief. Student work (paper or digital) submitted **UP TO 5** working days later than the published date/time will be subject to the final mark being capped at 40%. Student work submitted **AFTER 3.00pm** on the fifth working day will be awarded a grade of zero.

For modules which include assessment based upon a Timed Open Book Assessment (TOBA), the consequence of submitting work after the stated deadline is that the work will be awarded a mark of **ZERO**, unless mitigating circumstances have previously been approved by the University.

Where a student has genuine and significant difficulties in meeting a deadline, they should consult the approved arrangements for requesting an extension or, in exceptional circumstances, where they miss a deadline, a deferral. The arrangements by which **mitigating circumstance** claims are considered are available from the University's website Key Information Page, and as set out in paragraph 36<sup>6</sup>.

17. Where a student has completed the approved extension request form, provided supporting evidence and gained the prior approval of their Course Manager to submit a piece of coursework after the submission deadline, they are required to meet the extended deadline time and date for submission of the work. Penalties for late submission, beyond the approved extended deadline, apply as for all students (as paragraph 16). As the assignment submission box in The Learning Hub will have been closed five working days after the deadline, digital submissions should be presented on a pen drive to the Assessment Office noted in the assignment briefing form, when the paper copy is submitted.

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<sup>5</sup> **Annex 5.01** of the *Academic Quality Assurance Manual*.

<sup>6</sup> The approved arrangements are specified in **Annex 5.28** of the *Academic Quality Assurance Manual*.

## Assignment Submission Arrangements - Reassessments

18. Coursework-based reassessments will normally be submitted in digital format only. The digital file should be uploaded by the student to the **reassessment upload box** provided on The Learning Hub. For coursework-based reassessments, the consequence of late submission is that the work will be awarded a mark of **ZERO**. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they upload the correct file before the deadline. It is important that the receipt that a student is sent, by email within ten minutes of successfully completing the upload, is retained by them as evidence of successful submission of the reassessment.

## Processing of Assignments

19. Once the deadline submission time has passed, staff in the Assignment Office reconcile the digital submissions against the list of expected submissions, taking into account the students for whom there are approved extensions.

20. The following information is passed to module tutors, along with the anonymised student work, normally within 24-48 working hours of the assignment submission deadline:

- a module list indicating which students met the deadline, which submitted after the deadline and require a mark penalty, and which have prior approved extensions;
- a note detailing how any penalty for late work should be applied;
- an overview report of student submissions detailing the percentage of text match that the Turnitin software has detected, for the tutor to investigate whether such text matches are legitimate (eg because they have been correctly cited and referenced) as outlined in paragraph 24;
- a note from the Principal Academic Misconduct Officer requesting detail on the action taken on student work that was flagged up by the Turnitin software and considered, by the tutor, in consultation with others, to demonstrate academic misconduct.

## Arrangements for Dealing with Suspected Academic Misconduct

21. In order to ensure both reliability and fairness of assessments, the University has developed approved arrangements<sup>7</sup> for dealing with suspected **academic misconduct**, where a student, or group of students: attempts to cheat in gaining an unfair advantage; or knowingly pass work off as their own when it is partially or wholly the work of others and which is not acknowledged as such; or presents work which a student has previously submitted for academic credit and not declared it. The expectations of good academic practice and, conversely, what constitutes academic misconduct are covered in course handbooks, in the Professional Scholarship (undergraduate) and Research and Information Skills (postgraduate) modules and in Course Tutor briefing sessions, as well as in leaflets that are distributed across the University. There are various categories of academic misconduct, depending on the seriousness of the infringement, with a range of penalties, ranging from marks reduction to failure of the course and permanent withdrawal.

22. In common with most other UK universities, Harper Adams uses detection software to assist in the identification of academic misconduct. For this reason, unless the assignment briefing form explicitly states otherwise, assignment submissions must be presented in a digital format (for submission to the Turnitin software). The software assists in matching the blocks of text from student work with other work (from billions of internet sources and the database of student submissions at both Harper Adams and all

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<sup>7</sup> Annex 5.02 of the *Academic Quality Assurance Manual*.

other participating UK (most of them) and some overseas universities), as well as from some 'cheat site' essay banks. Tutors are provided with a report outlining the extent of text matches for each assignment from which they are required to exercise their professional judgment in determining whether the text matches represent an attempt to pass others' work pass off as their own, without correct attribution. Tutors access an 'originality report' for each potentially suspicious submission, so that they can see the source of matching text. Examples of anonymised originality reports and how they are interpreted are hosted with The Learning Hub pages of the level 4 Professional Scholarship modules. Any work that appears to contravene the expectations of good academic practice is dealt with through the arrangements detailed in **Annex 5.02** of the *Academic Quality Assurance Manual - Academic Misconduct Policy, Procedures and Guidance* (available via the University's website Key Information Page).

## Marking and Moderation Requirements

23. Tutors are required to mark in accordance with the approved, published assessment and associated marking criteria. There are university-wide generic marking criteria that specify broad expectations that are to be used as a reference point in designing assessment-specific marking criteria<sup>8</sup>. **Marks** are converted to percentage points before being approved and released to students. The marks align with grades which, in turn, align with overall award grades or classifications, as specified in the assessment regulations<sup>9</sup>. The marks from each assessment will contribute to the overall module as specified in the approved module descriptor, annual scheme of work and assessment briefing form. The assessment regulations (at paragraph 10 therein) also detail how overall awards are graded or classified based on module marks.
24. Once marking has been completed, a sample of all work is reviewed by another tutor to verify or **moderate** the marking expectations of the first tutors. Most discrepancies (any variation of greater than 5%, as specified in **Section 5.5.4** of the *Academic Quality Assurance Manual*) are resolved through discussion and by reference to the approved assessment and associated marking criteria. Exceptionally, where this is not the case, a third marker might be assigned. For all modules from which the marks contribute to the overall award grading, an external examiner will also be invited to audit the marking and moderation that has taken place, to provide a further reference point that marking is reliable and consistent with standards setting in other UK universities. **Section 5.5** of the *Academic Quality Assurance Manual* details the full arrangements by which the University seeks to ensure that all students are awarded reliable marks that reflect their level of performance.
25. It is considered that all students will benefit from **group assessments** as team-working reflects the way in which most professionals operate in their working lives. In order to ensure that students are awarded marks that reflect both individual and collective contributions, all group work that contributes to an overall award grade or classification must derive a significant proportion of the marks from each individual's contribution to the team effort. Individual tutors may determine how individual contributions may be judged but must ensure that students are aware of how this will be organised. Alternatives include asking individuals to demonstrate their personal contribution (for example through a separate assessment, by completing a diary or by interview), by tutor observation or by peer assessment.

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<sup>8</sup> **Annexes 5.10** and **5.11** of the *Academic Quality Assurance Manual*.

<sup>9</sup> **Annex 5.01** of the *Academic Quality Assurance Manual*.

## Feedback/Forward to Students

26. Students can expect to receive **feedback** on the extent to which they have satisfied an assessment's criteria through a percentage mark, accompanied by individualised feedback on the strengths and the limitations of the work, with suggestions for improvement (and which, therefore, constitutes **feed-forward**). Usually this feedback/forward will be written but it might be also given orally. Tutors might also give feedback/forward to a group which reflects on the generalised strengths and limitations across all submissions. There is no prescribed format for written feedback/forward but it should be given:

- in relation to each of the assessment criteria, which in turn link to assessment intended learning outcomes;
- be constructive in suggesting improvements;
- identify any aspects of strength;
- provide a basis for the student to prepare an improved piece of work were they to complete a similar assessment in the future;
- be timely to enable students to use the feedback to feed-forward into subsequent assessments;
- be legible if written feedback is handwritten.

Tutors might also annotate the student submission to highlight specific points of concern, the main aspects of which will be summarised. Some tutors use marking grids with common strengths and limitations identified against which they will highlight those of relevance for an individual submission. The Learning and Development pages in The Learning Hub hosts a collection of exemplars.

27. The University has a policy which stipulates that all work should normally be marked, moderated and returned to students, with marks and feedback/forward, within **21 working days**, although earlier return is encouraged where this is possible. This is to ensure that students are able to consider their marks and associated feedback/forward in their subsequent assessment preparations, whether they are within the same module or not, and of the same format or not. The arrangement for each assessment should reflect this requirement.

28. Where, for exceptional reasons, it is known in advance that it will not be possible for work to be marked and returned within the 21 working days, this should be agreed, in advance with the Head of Department, and noted clearly on the assessment briefing form. In such exceptional cases, work should be marked and returned to students within no more than **31 working days**. Where, exceptionally, unexpected events mean that a scheduled assessment return date will not be met, the module leader must discuss the situation with their Head of Department, agree a realistic alternative return date and ensure that all students are advised of the delay. The 21 working days return period does not include the week in which the University is closed over the Christmas vacation. This means that, where the Christmas period spans a four week window for the submission and return of assignments, work submitted in weeks 8, 9 and 10 should be returned to students in week 12 and work submitted in week 11 should be returned in week 13. Work submitted in the four weeks immediately prior to the four week Easter vacation, should be returned to students in the first week of the Summer term e.g. If the Easter vacation occurs between week 22 and week 23, all work submitted in weeks 19, 20, 21 and 22 should be returned by week 24.

29. The 21 working day period should not be extended for all students because individuals have been granted extensions. The 21 working day normal return period should also normally apply where the written work constitutes a component of a larger assignment, using the criteria associated with the written work as a basis for feedback/forward.

30. Tutors are encouraged to discuss overall group strengths and limitations in class, to augment any written feedback/forward they will receive. Tutors should ensure that students are advised when feedback/forward is available for students to review online.
31. Provisional student results are entered into the **student record system** by the module leader. Tutors are expected to enter marks for individual assessments as soon as marks have been approved by the internal moderator (another tutor), so that students can view their own results and Course Tutors can view the results of the students under their care. These results remain provisional until they have been approved by the relevant Subject Assessment Board at the end of the academic year (and in September for reassessment results). Once approved marks have been ratified by each Subject Assessment Board and the Course Assessment Boards have considered individual student profiles, the results for the year, and decisions on progression, reassessment or failure and on awards, are made available to students online, at a time and date that is published in advance.
32. Provision is made through assessments at the end of the Autumn term, for first year students to be given detailed feedback/forward on their **assessment performance**, with a view to identify limitations and develop their assessment strategy and technique. For the selected modules with assessments at this time, tutors will share assessment submissions with individual students so that they can identify difficulties and, where necessary, seek help from members of the Learner Support Team in order to develop better assessment skills in preparation for subsequent assessments. This will normally be achieved through returning students' submissions to each, individually, during an in-class review and discussion. Normally, other than for objective or short answer elements, students will be allowed to keep these scripts for future reference in assisting them to develop their examination skills. University policy is that, other than for selected response tests (such as multiple choice questions), previous assessment tasks are made available to students within The Learning Hub, to support student preparations.
33. University policy is that, for written examinations other than those designated in the final week of the Autumn term of the first year of study, individual students may request access to their own **examination script**, with the guidance of a tutor. Students who wish to review any of their scripts are required to submit a request, by e-mail, to their Module Tutor, within two weeks of their results being released. The Module Tutor will organise access to scripts within four weeks of receiving the request, by inviting the student to come and review it, normally with their Module Tutor, subject to their availability. These scripts remain the property of Harper Adams University. In the event of unavoidable absences of staff in the early Summer, students who are unable to contact their Module Tutor should contact the relevant departmental administrator for further advice. For all examinations completed prior to Easter, tutors should provide group feedback/forward to students on the cohort's performance, identifying typical strengths and limitations. Individuals with residual queries should immediately approach their module leader with a request to review their own script and to be given oral guidance to explain the strengths and limitations of their script.

### **Arrangements for Mitigating Circumstances and Appeals**

34. The University has approved arrangements by which students can formally advise tutors of **mitigating circumstances** that either prevent them from completing assessments according to the published schedule or affects the quality of their work. University staff will always treat claims sensitively and in confidence. Mitigating circumstance claims should represent significant, rather than trivial, occurrences and must be evidenced in writing. In summary, Course Managers are authorised to consider **extension requests** prior to the submission deadline on the basis of accepted, significant and independently evidenced mitigating circumstances, that do not arise from poor time management or last minute preparations. Course Managers may **NOT** authorise retrospective extensions after the submission deadline has been passed. A panel of independent staff considers mitigating

circumstance claims and supporting evidence in relation to work submitted within 48 hours of the deadline, requests to **defer assessment** (eg because documented ill health prevented attendance at an assessment) and requests for results to be **condoned**. Notwithstanding the provision for condonement requests, students who submit themselves for assessment do so on the understanding that they declare themselves to be fit to do so. If they do not consider themselves fit to submit for assessment, they are required to submit a deferral request, along with a mitigating circumstance claim and supporting evidence. The full arrangements by which claims must be made are detailed in **Annex 5.28** of the *Academic Quality Assurance Manual*, which can be accessed via the University's website Key Information Page.

35. The University also has approved arrangements<sup>10</sup> for dealing with **academic appeals** where a student believes that either their results were not properly considered because of an error which affected assessment arrangements or because of mitigating circumstances unknown to an assessment board. Students may not appeal against the academic judgment of examiners, for example claiming that the marks awarded were too low. Neither can a student appeal on the grounds that he or she did not understand, or was not aware of, the University's regulations, timetable or procedures. The full appeal arrangements are published on the University's website Key Information Page.
36. A student who wishes to seek a review of a provisional mark awarded by a module tutor prior to both confirmation of that mark by a Subject Assessment Board and a decision on the progression or completion of that student by a Course Assessment Board should, in the first instance, discuss the issue with the module tutor. If the student is not satisfied with the response provided by the module tutor, the student should be invited to discuss the matter further with the Head of Academic Department at the University who chairs the Subject Assessment Board at which the mark would be considered (or with the HE Manager at partner colleges or with the Assessment Manager at workforce development partners). Students who are unsure to whom their review request should be directed should seek guidance from their Course Manager, Course Tutor or the University's Student Advisor or Student Wellbeing Officer. The student can only invoke the appeals procedure after the mark has been made definitive and the Course Assessment Board has determined the student's progression or overall award or, in the case of workforce development credit-only candidates, after the mark has been made definitive by the relevant Subject Assessment Board. There is no provision for appealing against the academic judgement of assessors. The grounds upon which appeals can be lodged are set out in the Academic Appeals Policy accessible from the University's website Key Information Page.

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<sup>10</sup> **Annex 5.09** of the *Academic Quality Assurance Manual*.