



Academic Policy 14:

Fairness in Assessment

2026-2027

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Section 1

Introduction

1. The University is committed to providing a fair and equitable assessment process for all students. The University's academic regulations and the [Academic Standards and Quality Handbook](#) provide a framework within which the University's awards are based. They also provide assurance about the academic standards of our awards and ensure fairness and equity to our students.
2. This Policy presents the key principles which underpin the University's approach to fair and equitable assessment and provides an indicative set of mechanisms to illustrate how these are achieved. These are that:
 - The University will ensure that the design of assessment is fair and equitable
 - The University will ensure that assessment is accessible to all students
 - The University will provide clear and transparent information to students in advance of assessment periods setting out the purpose and requirements for completing assessment
 - The University will carefully plan summative assessment schedules across courses to avoid bunching, wherever possible
 - The University will provide timely and purposeful feedback that supports the learning process
 - The University will assess work and consider outcomes by student ID, or anonymously, wherever this is practicable
 - The University will implement a robust and documented internal moderation system
 - The University will implement a robust and well documented external examiner system
 - The University will design assessment and operate processes that promote academic integrity
3. Section 3 of this document details the procedure for undertaking marking and moderation at Kingston University. Section 4 of this document details the procedure for considering marks for scaling.

Section 2

Principles and indicative mechanisms

The University will ensure that the design of assessment is fair and equitable

4. The Academic Framework requires that assessment regimes scaffold students' learning throughout the course, with an early stakes assessment in level 4 and formative assessment opportunities throughout. Assessment should be designed to be inclusive, adhering to the principles of the [Inclusive Curriculum Framework](#).
5. Assessed group work will only lead to individuated marks.

The University will ensure that assessment is accessible to all students

6. The University builds accessibility and inclusivity into its curriculum and assessment using its [Inclusive Curriculum Framework](#). This means the principles of inclusivity are embedded within all aspects of the academic cycle from the development and revitalisation of curricula, through the practice of teaching and learning, to the process of assessment and finally to programme review, modification and revalidation.
7. The University makes a range of digital equipment and services available to students. There are open-access networked computers available across the University, plus laptops available for short-term loan. Additionally, some students can apply for long term laptop loans providing they meet certain eligibility criteria. Free Wi-Fi is available on each of the campuses and in our Halls of Residence.
8. Some professional courses have a requirement for students to have access to equipment that will allow for online proctoring (invigilation) during assessments.

The University will provide clear and transparent information to students in advance of assessment periods setting out the purpose and requirements for completing assessment

9. [Programme Specifications](#) and Module Descriptors are the officially validated documents which describe a course and its component modules. They give information on the form of the assessment for modules, on the way it relates to learning outcomes and on the relative weightings of the various elements of assessment in a module.
10. Module information is provided via the syllabus page in Canvas. This information is published to students at the start of the module and includes Assessment Briefs, the deadlines for submission and for receiving feedback on marked work, and the criteria against which the work will be marked.

Assessment Briefs are sent to External Examiners for comment before being published to students.

11. Marking criteria show students how their work will be judged and are published in advance for all assessments. They should be:
 - tailored to the individual assessment set
 - written in clear, accessible language
 - discussed with students as part of their formative preparation for the assessment.
 - pitched in line with Kingston University's [Level and Outcomes Classification Descriptors](#) (AG1).
 - inclusive of defined assessment parameters (e.g. word counts, video length, font size, poster size etc.), which must be specified in the assessment brief.

A 10% buffer should be used for word counts (and equivalents such as the length of a video recording), within which submissions are considered acceptable. Penalties for exceeding or failing to meet defined parameters are expressed in the marking criteria and fall under the application of academic judgement.

The University will carefully plan summative assessment schedules across courses to avoid bunching, wherever possible

12. A summative assessment calendar will be published to students at the start of the module. Assessment schedules will be carefully planned to avoid bunching and to provide students with the opportunity to act on feedback received for their next assessment.
13. Deadlines for summative assessment on standard delivery courses will not be set during student vacation periods, as set out in the University's academic calendar. Deadlines should be set at times when students will have access to support services, within the following 24 hours, should any issues arise. Where deadlines are set outside of normal working hours, students will be made aware of the support they have access to. This information will enable students to plan their submissions appropriately to ensure that they have access to the relevant support services that they may need.

The University will provide timely and purposeful feedback that supports the learning process

14. Coursework will normally be returned to students within 20 university days (university days count as Monday to Friday. Bank holidays are not included nor are the days when the University is closed during the winter vacation).
15. It will be accompanied by clear feedback which refers to how students have performed against the published marking criteria and indicates what they can do to improve their work. To ensure legibility and ease of access, all

summary feedback must be typed or voice-recorded. Additional hand-written annotations on scripts can be used where appropriate.

16. Feedback will be provided on examination performance by the module leader on request. Examination scripts are not returned.

The University will assess work and consider outcomes by student ID, or anonymously, wherever this is practicable

17. Wherever possible, all student work that results in a mark (i.e. summative assessment that is recorded in SITS) will be marked using only the Student ID. There will be types of assessment, such as presentations and performances, where this will not be possible. Exams and coursework (wherever possible) are submitted using students' KU ID number.
18. Final module marks, progression, reassessment and award decisions will be agreed by an Assessment Board. Assessment Boards are typically chaired by a head of department, school or deputy dean and will include representative from the relevant course teams. External examiners are also members of Assessment Boards and provide independent assurance that the decisions reached are fair and consistent and in line with benchmark standards and the University's regulations. However, their attendance is not required for the Assessment Board to be quorate. An independent monitor from within the University, but not connected with the teaching and learning of the modules or courses under consideration is also present to provide impartial advice and ensure fair and consistent decisions are reached. Programme Assessment Boards operate using students' KU ID number.

The University will implement a robust and documented internal moderation system

19. We also ensure fairness in assessment through our system of internal moderation (which is described in section 3).

The University will implement a robust and well documented external examiner system

20. External examining provides one of the key means of maintaining UK threshold standards and, therefore, the role of the external examiner is an essential part of the University's quality assurance processes. Kingston University appoints external examiners from other universities, industry and/or the professions. Those appointed are suitably qualified and experienced in the subject, or specialism within the subject, to which the appointment relates. They are external to, and therefore independent of, the University.
21. Based on their qualifications and experience, external examiners provide advice to the University that the awards that it makes are comparable with similar provision elsewhere in the HE sector, and that the University's academic regulations and assessment processes and procedures are applied fairly.

22. External examiners undertake this role by being provided with an opportunity to comment on draft assessments, by auditing a sample of student work and providing an annual report to the University based on what they have observed of the institution's assessment processes.
23. You will find full details of the process in Section I of the Academic Quality and Standards Handbook ([AQSH](#))

The University will design assessment and operate processes that promote academic integrity

24. For coursework assessment, students will be permitted to use Turnitin for checking and development purposes, with no limit to the number of times they can submit coursework through the system. Each coursework assignment on Canvas should be set up to permit this. It should be noted that Turnitin reports can take a few minutes through to a few hours to generate, particularly at peak times, and a fourth submission of a draft will take a minimum of 24 hours to generate.
25. Students should not make use of Turnitin for the duration of online examinations.

Section 3

Marking and Moderation Procedure

26. The following procedures have been agreed by the University to ensure fairness and consistency in our approach to marking and moderating student work.
27. All marks must be internally moderated, i.e. a sample of marked work will be reassessed by another member of the module team in order to ensure that the first marker has applied the marking criteria appropriately and fairly.
28. In the same way that external examiners are not required to audit work submitted for reassessment, there is not a requirement for work submitted for reassessment to be internally moderated as standards will have already been confirmed via the initial assessment process.
29. The sample to be moderated must, as a minimum, match the guidelines for the sample to be provided for External Examiners as stipulated in the Academic Quality and Standards Handbook, i.e. normally:
 - the sample will include examples from each classification (including borderlines and marginal fails (representing all sites of delivery and modes)
 - the sample will be a minimum of 10% of the cohort
 - the sample will be a minimum of 6 and maximum of 20 (this amount may need to be exceeded where provision is franchised to multiple partners. In which case, a minimum sample as described above should be taken from each partner).
 - work at Level 4 will be internally moderated. However, level 4 marks do not need to be audited by the External Examiner unless it contributes towards classification (i.e. level 4 of a Foundation Degree) or it is required by a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB).
30. Where marks are moderated based on a sample of work, rather the work of an entire cohort, no individual student mark can be changed by the moderator, unless errors in calculation or omissions are identified. However, in the case of there being errors in calculation or omissions, the entire cohort should still be checked.
31. Where there is evidence from the internal moderation process of inappropriate marking then the guidance in Section 4 should be referred to.
32. The internal moderation process should be documented by the Module Leader, showing the first marker's marks and the marks agreed by the internal moderator, and this information should be provided to the External Examiner.

33. Markers and moderators should make a brief record of their discussion for External Examiners. If their discussion has given any cause to return to the whole cohort and the first marking, an explanation of this should be supplied to the External Examiner.
34. Student feedback should include a single mark.

Ephemeral Work

Whilst the section below sets out the Policy for the moderation and audit of ephemeral work, module teams should be mindful of the University's Retention of Assessed Work Policy which requires digital copies of all ephemeral work to be retained. Whilst students can be encouraged to submit digital copies of ephemeral work as part of their assignment brief i.e. presentation scripts or recordings, it is the responsibility of the module team to ensure that digital recordings of all students' ephemeral work are made and retained in line with this Policy.

35. Marks for all 'ephemeral' work (e.g. presentations, performances etc.) must also be moderated regardless of its assessment weighting within a module.

This can be done by:

- Using two members of academic staff to observe all, or a sample, of the work
 - Recording a sample of the work (using audio, video or photographic records as appropriate) for the moderator to evaluate. Staff who are planning to record work, should refer to the [Recording of Teaching Policy](#) for further important information, in particular, around data compliance.
36. For the purposes of external examiner audit of ephemeral work, a sample of work matching the requirements for written work should EITHER be witnessed by the external examiner, OR should be recorded and sent to the external examination for audit. Refer to the [Recording of Teaching Policy](#) for further important information, in particular, around data compliance.
 37. In exceptional cases, where external examiners cannot attend and where, for ethical reasons, it is not appropriate to record (e.g. for confidentiality reasons in healthcare), then a summary of the moderation process used and of the discussions between marker and moderator should be supplied to the external examiner.

Review of Marginal Fail Module Marks

38. Where a student's final module mark falls within the marginal fail band (i.e. 35–39% for undergraduate modules or 45–49% for postgraduate modules), and the final mark results from the aggregation of two or more assessment elements, the Module Leader may initiate an additional, holistic moderation process. This step is supplementary to the standard moderation of individual elements, which may have been completed at different times in the academic year and by different assessors and moderators. The Module

Leader will coordinate a review of the student's assessed work across all relevant elements, involving the appropriate assessors and moderators, to determine whether the module learning outcomes have been met overall.

39. It is expected that adjustments to marginal fail marks following this review will be infrequent. The purpose of the process is to ensure that, where the assessment evidence demonstrates that all module learning outcomes have been met, any mark adjustment is based on sound academic grounds and in accordance with the published marking criteria. All decisions must be clearly documented and made available to the External Examiner.

Section 4

Scaling of Marks

40. Scaling is the process of applying a systematic adjustment to the marks obtained during assessment, so that the marks which result after scaling has been applied, more accurately reflect student learning and achievement against the assessment element or module learning outcomes.
41. Scaling is used as part of the internal moderation process. Scaling is usually undertaken over the marks of all students on a module and to the marks of a single element of assessment. However, scaling can be applied to specific occurrences of modules if there is evidence that any irregularities in the assessment process have been specific to these occurrences.
42. When scaling is undertaken, the reasons and mechanism for each instance of scaling must be documented in the minutes of the Assessment Board that confirms it, along with proposed actions to address the issues arising in the process of assessment that led to scaling being undertaken. The Assessment Board has the final authority for approving marks.
43. Where scaling has taken place, the module leader will post a note on the relevant Canvas module confirming that this has taken place and the reason why.
44. The following is an indicative list of reasons why scaling might be considered. The presence of a trigger on this list does not require that scaling must be undertaken. In all cases, it is important for local knowledge to be used to inform the final recommendation on scaling:
 - Evidence from the internal moderation sample, of inappropriate, or irregular, marking;
 - An anomalous distribution of marks (for example, unusual patterns or numbers of high or low marks) at either module level or the level of an assessment element;
 - Reasoned evidence of an irregularity with an assessment element
45. Where there is evidence during internal moderation, of inappropriate marking then either:
 - The work of the entire cohort should be remarked if there is evidence of erratic or inconsistent markingOr
 - The set of marks should be recalibrated ('scaled'). Proposals for scaling must be discussed and agreed with the appropriate deputy dean before they can be presented to an Assessment Board.

46. In the case of Force Majeure and/or exceptional circumstances impacting entire cohorts, a review of past and cognate module outcomes can be undertaken. If course teams identify anomalous module or module occurrence outcomes, the course team should also then consider information such as:
- Changes to assessment types (i.e. coursework, examination, practical and the way these have been set i.e. online/on-campus), assessment weightings and the order of assessments that may have contributed to differences in data
 - The number of non-submissions, mitigating circumstances, or the total number of students taking the module

The module leader is then required to form an evidence-based judgement as to whether the cohort mark profile is within the normal range of year-to-year variation, or whether it is anomalous and should be scaled.

47. If a module being considered for scaling is taken by a large number of students from another faculty or faculties, the course team must consult with the other faculty or faculties as appropriate.
48. For PSRB-accredited modules that exceptionally require External Examiner audit prior to the assessment board, and where time permits, course teams should include relevant Subject External Examiners in any deliberations regarding scaling.
49. Once it has been established that scaling might be appropriate, the following guidelines should be considered for scaling at the element of assessment level:
- Look at the current average for the element of assessment and identify how this needs to be adjusted in order to normalise the element mean;
 - Identify an appropriate multiplication factor utilising the expected average at element level as the nominator and the actual average at element level as the denominator;
 - Note that it is only possible to apply a scale calculation that does not take any marks above 100%;
 - Discussions must include a consideration of the impact of scaling, positive or negative, on cohort progression points;
50. All proposals for scaling must be agreed by the appropriate deputy dean or equivalent. Once agreed, the module leader will provide the scaled marks to the Course and Student Administration team so that these can be updated in the Student Record System. The module leader must also provide the reason and mechanism for each instance of scaling to the Course and Student Administration team so that this can be presented to the Assessment Board. The module leader is also responsible for ensuring that the relevant Canvas module is updated with information for students confirming that scaling has taken place and the reason why.

APPENDIX 1**Policy/Regulation Detail Information**

Policy/Regulation owner	Academic Registrar (RASC)
Policy/Regulation Department owner	Academic Registry
Committee(s) responsible for review and approval	Education Committee to Academic Council
Version number	2026-2027.1
Periodic review frequency	Every six years
Last review date	2021-2022
Next review date	2027-2028