



Higher Nationals Assessment Regulations

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Contents

1. Introduction and Purpose.....	3
2. Scope	3
Regulations	3
3. Period of Registration	3
4. Credit Composition and Awards.....	4
5. Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL).....	4
6. Submission of Coursework and Attendance at Examinations.....	4
7. Grading.....	5
8. Moderation, Internal Verification and Second Marking	7
9. Reassessment and Repeating Units	8
10. Students with Mitigating Circumstances.....	9
11. Progression	10
12. Calculation of Final Award	10
13. Compensation	11
14. Poor Academic Conduct and Academic Misconduct	11
15. Appeals	11

1. Introduction and Purpose

1.1 This regulations document is made for the use of e m p l o y e e s and students of Trafford & Stockport College Group (TSCG).

1.2 The following assessment regulations apply to BTEC Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) offered at Trafford & Stockport College Group.

1.3 This regulation does not relate to students on a course leading to an award from the Sheffield Hallam University or the University of Huddersfield, you may access their assessment regulations here:

[Sheffield Hallam University](#)

[Taught students - University of Huddersfield](#)

1.4 Enrolling on a programme of Higher Education (HE) is an agreement to be bound by the HE Student Terms and Conditions which makes clear that in doing so, students agree to follow all relevant Policies and Procedures. This includes the assessment regulations prevailing at the time and any subsequent approved modifications during their registration period. Students will be notified of any changes to the assessment regulations during their studies.

1.5 All students should have access to these regulations and other assessment policies and procedures, including:

- HE Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure
- HE Extensions and Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedure
- HE Accreditation or Prior Learning Procedure
- HE Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure
- HE Fitness to Study Procedure
- Course and Module Handbooks (including assessment planners and schemes of work)
- Programme specifications and unit descriptors
- Criteria relating to grading and marking schemes

2. Scope

2.1 The regulations in this document govern Higher National programmes and are intended for TSCG employees and students. The Higher National assessment board is responsible for ensuring that these regulations are followed and adhered to. This regulation does not relate to students on a course leading to an award from the Sheffield Hallam University or the University of Huddersfield.

Regulations

3. Period of Registration

3.1 The maximum periods within which a student may take to complete their programme, from first registration, are normally as follows:

Qualification	Full time Maximum (years)	Part time maximum (years)
HNC	2	4
HND	4	6

3.2 Periods of registration may formally be adjusted by the Assessment Board on reasonable grounds. Maximum periods of registration may be set out for students who enter with credit.

4. Credit Composition and Awards

4.1 Higher National Certificates will normally be awarded to a student who has been credited with at least 120 credits at Level 4.

4.2 Higher National Diplomas will normally be awarded to a student who has been credited with 120 credits at Level 4 and 120 credits at Level 5.

4.3 Where specified, students will be expected to have successfully completed the required work experience hours.

5. Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)

5.1 Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) is a generic term used for the award of credits on the basis of demonstrated learning that has occurred in the past. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for Teacher Education Programmes in relation to the QCF is covered under this section of the assessment regulations.

5.2 Within APL and/or RPL there are two main categories: Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) and Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL). APCL is learning for which certification has been awarded by an Educational Institution, Awarding Body or education/Training Provider. APEL is learning acquired from previous experience in the workplace/industry.

5.3 Students should be directed to the Accreditation of Prior Learning Procedure for details on how to complete applications for APL/APCL/APEL or RPL.

6. Submission of Coursework and Attendance at Examinations

6.1 If a piece of coursework is not submitted by the required deadline the following will apply at the discretion of the Course Leader:

- This applies to coursework only and applies to the first submission only. This includes a submission following a successful deferral of assessment claim.
- Failure to submit or complete coursework by the published deadline or not meeting the terms of any extensions granted will result in a Fail grade being awarded.

6.2 Students may request extensions, without prejudice, where there are immediate, short term mitigating circumstances that prevent the timely submission of work. These claims will need to be verified with the appropriate evidence. Please refer to the HE Extensions and Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedure for more information.

6.3 Failure to attend a scheduled controlled assessment may result in a Fail grade being awarded.

6.4 Students may request deferrals of examination or coursework submission, without prejudice, where there is illness or genuine mitigating personal circumstances providing an application for deferral is made before the examination. Claims will need to be verified with the appropriate evidence. Please refer to the HE Extensions and Mitigating Circumstances Policy

and Procedure for more information and guidance.

6.5 Students may apply to the Mitigating Circumstances Board, without prejudice, where there has been illness or genuine mitigating personal circumstances. These claims can be made after the submission of coursework or examination date. Claims will need to be verified with the appropriate evidence. Please refer to the HE Extensions and Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedure for more information.

7. Grading

Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) Grading

7.1 Assessment decisions for BTEC Higher Nationals are based on the specific criteria given in each unit and set at each grade level. The criteria for each unit have been defined according to a framework to ensure that standards are consistent in the qualification and across the suite as a whole. The way in which individual units are written provides a balance of assessment of understanding, practical skills and vocational attributes appropriate to the purpose of the qualifications.

7.2 Teaching staff must show how they have reached their decisions using the criteria in the assessment records.

7.3 When a student has completed all of the assessment for a unit then the Course Team will give a grade for the unit. This is given simply according to the highest level for which the student is judged to have met all the criteria. A student must achieve all the required learning at a level or below to be awarded the grade:

- To achieve a Pass, a student must have satisfied all the Pass criteria for the learning outcomes, showing coverage of the unit content and therefore attainment at Level 4 or 5 of the national framework.
- To achieve a Merit, a student must have satisfied all the Merit criteria (and therefore the Pass criteria) through high performance in each learning outcome.
- To achieve a Distinction, a student must have satisfied all the Distinction criteria (and therefore the Pass and Merit criteria), and these define outstanding performance across the unit as a whole.

7.4 The award of a Pass is a defined level of performance and cannot be given solely on the basis of a student completing assignments or coursework. Students who do not satisfy the Pass criteria should be reported as Unclassified.

7.5 The following table summarises the grades available and the conditions attached to each grade:

In order to achieve a Pass in a unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria have been met
In order to achieve a Merit in a unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria have been met• All Merit grade descriptors have been met

In order to achieve a Distinction in a unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria have been met • All Merit and Distinction grade descriptors have been met
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7.6 Each of the generic Merit and Distinction grade descriptors can be amplified by use of indicative characteristics. These give a guide to the expected student performance and support the generic grade descriptors. The indicative characteristics should reflect the nature of a unit and the context of the sector programme. Performance and achievement against indicative characteristics will be discussed within the Assessment Board.

7.7 Each assessment activity does not need to incorporate all the Merit and/or Distinction grade descriptors.

7.8 The differences between assessment criteria, grade descriptors and indicative characteristics are outlined in the following table:

Assessment Criteria	Statements that identify the important features to be present in the assessment evidence and are indicative of a satisfactory (i.e. Pass) level of achievement.
Grade Descriptors	Statements that identify the features within the assessment evidence which enable an Assessor to measure achievement above the satisfactory level (i.e. Merit and Distinction).
Indicative Characteristics	Guides to the expected student performance within a particular assignment, supporting the generic grade descriptors. The indicative characteristics should reflect the nature of a unit and the context of the sector programme.

Group Assessment Guidelines

7.9 Group projects should be included in the assessment schedule for a unit only where one or more learning outcomes of the unit indicate that they might be appropriate.

7.10 Contributions will be measured and graded against the learning outcomes, the assessment and grading criteria.

7.11 Evidence of observation of presentations and discussions (with peers, with Assessors etc.) will be detailed and mapped to criteria in order to provide evidence of achievement of individual contributions.

7.12 In some cases, presentations may provide evidence only sufficient for Pass criteria, for example where a presentation contained no corroborated detail of individual tasks undertaken by members of the group. In such cases, evidence for higher grades may be achieved through formalised questioning of individual students mapped to the assessment criteria, or having the students produce a supplementary report of their activities.

7.13 Feedback can be directed to the group with reference to individual contributions and achievement.

7.14 For graded programmes, the achievement of the Merit and Distinction grade descriptors should be measured against individual contributions and the method of measurement should be clear within the assignment brief.

8. Moderation, Internal Verification and Second Marking

8.1 TSCG strives to ensure that a rigorous and consistent model of internal quality assurance of assessed work is in place.

8.2 The purpose of internal quality assurance is to promote quality and to ensure that all assessable work undertaken by students has been fairly and consistently assessed and meets the requirements of awarding bodies.

8.3 Policy and procedure relating to moderation, internal verification and second marking can be found in the Internal Quality of Assessment and Verification Handbook.

Assessment Boards

8.4 TSCG operates a two tiered Assessment Board structure. The first part of Assessment Board meetings focus on unit and course performance rather than student performance which is discussed in part two.

8.5 The membership of the Assessment Boards shall be as follows:

- Assistant Principal (Chair)
- Head of Higher Education (Quality & Standards)
- Relevant Higher Education Head of School
- Relevant External Examiner or confirmation of visit.
- Administrator/Secretary (minutes)
- Programme Leaders
- Module Leaders (where appropriate)

8.6 The terms of reference for part one of the Assessment Board are as follows:

- Moderate and agree unit results
- Ensure that fair assessment has taken place
- Confirm the scale of marking within each unit
- Approve and confirm reassessment methodology for each unit

8.7 The terms of reference for part two of the Assessment Board are as follows:

- The Assessment Board make recommendations regarding the progression of students on to the next level of the programme
- Receive comments and reports from External Verifiers/Examiners (EVs/EEs)
- Receive and confirm decisions relating to deferrals and mitigating circumstances
- Receive and confirm decisions from the Academic Misconduct Panel
- Make decisions regarding reassessment of students
- Make decisions regarding compensation for failed units.
- The final awards to be made to students

8.8 It is expected that members of the Assessment Board will make every reasonable attempt to attend the meeting. Where appropriate, a nominee will be proposed to the Chair of the Assessment Board

8.9 The meeting will be quorate when 50% of the required attendees are present.

8.10 Where not quorate, the Assessment Board will proceed informally with the minutes being shared with the membership as soon as possible. Absent members of the Board should review the minutes and respond confirming the Board's decisions are appropriate and reflect the terms of reference of the Assessment Board.

8.11 These boards will normally be held annually, although if programmes are operated on a semester system, there may be intermediate boards at the end of semester one.

8.12 Whilst the majority of Assessment Board activity will be enacted at the Board itself, there may be rare occasions where this is not possible.

8.13 The Chair of the Assessment Board has delegated powers to act between scheduled meetings on:

- Items of routine business that would not normally merit discussion at the meeting
- Matters relating to the implementation of decisions which have already been approved at previous meetings
- Issues which arise that, in the view of the Chair, are too urgent and important for consideration to be deferred until the next scheduled meeting.

8.14 In such cases, the Chair will have delegated authority to take action, which may take the form of:

- Calling a superordinate meeting for the committee
- Consulting with members of the committee by correspondence

8.15 In all cases the Chair will exercise care before taking action on behalf of the board member and if appropriate, may consult with senior colleagues.

8.16 The Chair may take action on matters of importance where the delaying of a decision would disadvantage TSCG or the student.

8.17 Where the Chair has exercised delegated authority, a written report of the action taken will be presented to the next scheduled meeting which shall give its formal endorsement or otherwise to the actions.

9. Reassessment and Repeating Units

9.1 Students will normally be required to make good a failure before progressing to the next level of the programme.

9.2 Students registered on the RQF specifications who, for the first assessment opportunity, have failed to achieve a Pass for that unit specification shall be expected to undertake a reassessment. In these circumstances the Assessment Board will act in accordance with the following principles as set out by Pearson Edexcel's UK Guide to Quality and Assessment in Higher Education:

- There is only one opportunity for reassessment of the unit permitted
- Reassessment for coursework, project or portfolio-based assessment shall normally involve the reworking of the original task or submission

- Reassessment of examinations will involve the completion of a new task, i.e. a resit examination paper or new assignment brief
- Where a reassessment takes place, the grade will be capped at a Pass.
- A student will not be entitled to be reassessed in any component of assessment for which a Pass grade or higher has already been awarded.

9.3 Reassessments may take place within the same semester or it may be deemed appropriate that the reassessment take place in the next semester. The Course Leader will confirm the due date with students noting the student record on ProMonitor.

9.4 Any late resubmissions from students on RQF specifications will be regarded as a Fail.

9.5 The following applies to students registered on RQF specifications who, for the first assessment opportunity and resubmission opportunity, still failed to achieve a Pass for that unit specification:

- They cannot progress to the next level of study
- At the discretion of the Assessment Board, decisions can be permitted to repeat a unit
- The student must study the unit again with full attendance and full payment of the unit fee
- The overall unit grade for a successfully completed unit is capped at a Pass for that unit
- Units can only be repeated once

9.6 If unit(s) are no longer available, a suitable alternative will be identified.

10. Students with Mitigating Circumstances

10.1 Students who are unable to submit work due to mitigating circumstances should be directed to the HE Extensions and Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedure.

10.2 Where mitigation is confirmed, a student may be reassessed as a first attempt in the elements the student has requested deferral in.

10.3 If an assessment affected by illness was itself a second attempt, the student will be permitted to be reassessed as if for the second time. Where a student has passed a unit at a first attempt but his/her performance has been affected by mitigation, the Assessment Board may allow the student an opportunity to be assessed as for the first time. In such cases the second mark will stand.

10.4 In exceptional cases, where the student's ability to complete their studies is affected by serious circumstances (such as terminal illness of the student) and it is established that the student is likely to be unable to complete/return to complete his/her studies within a reasonable time period, the Assessment Board may act in one of the following ways:

- Where the Assessment Board is satisfied that there is sufficient evidence of the student's achievement to determine the classification of an award, or where this evidence is subsequently obtained, the student may be recommended on the basis of the available evidence for the award for which they are a candidate or for an intermediate award specified in the Programme Specification. The decision of the Assessment Board must be ratified by the Assistant Principal & Dean of Higher Education (or nominee).
- An aegrotat award may be recommended when the Assessment Board does not have

enough evidence of the student's performance to recommend the award for which the student is a candidate, or an intermediate award specified in the Programme Specification. *In exceptional circumstances, you may be offered an aegrotat award where there is sufficient evidence of your achievement to satisfy the Assessment Board that you would have met the requirement for the award, but where there is evidence that you cannot complete the course due to exceptionally severe illness or other exceptionally compelling reasons.* Before such a recommendation is made, the student must have demonstrated achievement at the level for which an aegrotat award is considered. The Assessment Board must be satisfied that on the balance of probabilities but for illness or other valid cause the student would have reached the standard required. The decision of the Assessment Board must be communicated to the awarding body (Pearson) for final ratification. Where appropriate, the student must have signified that he or she is willing to accept the award.

10.5 The above awards may only be considered when the student has not achieved the required number of credits. Although the award title is conferred, the student will only be accredited with the credits achieved.

11. Progression

11.1 To proceed to Level 5, students must normally complete and achieve at least 120 Level 4 credits as specified for Level 4 of the programme concerned and where specified, students will be expected to have successfully completed the required work experience hours.

12. Calculation of Final Award

12.1 To achieve an RQF BTEC Higher National Certificate qualification a student must have:

- Completed units equivalent to 120 credits at Level 4, and
- Achieved at least a Pass in 105 credits at Level 4.

12.2 To achieve an RQF BTEC Higher National Diploma qualification a student must have:

- Completed units equivalent to 120 credits at Level 5
- Achieved at least a Pass in 105 credits at Level 5
- Completed units equivalent to 120 credits at Level 4
- Achieved at least a Pass in 105 credits at Level 4

12.3 A student's overall qualification grade is based on their performance in all units. They are awarded a Pass, Merit or Distinction using the points gained through all 120 credits, at Level 4 for the HNC or Level 5 for the HND. The overall qualification grade is calculated in the same way for the HNC and the HND. For HND, the overall qualification grade is based on student performance in Level 5 units only. Students must have attempted all units in a valid combination for each qualification.

The final qualification grade is calculated and awarded by Pearson and details can be found in section 7 of each Pearson Programme Specification.

Calculation of Overall qualification grade		
Grade	Points per credit	Point boundaries
Pass	4	420 - 599
Merit	6	600 - 839
Distinction	8	840 +

13. Compensation

13.1 A student who has attempted but has not achieved a Pass in one of their Level 4, 15-credit units can still be awarded an HNC if they have completed and passed the remaining units.

13.2 A student who has attempted but not achieved a Pass in one of their Level 4, 15-credit units and one of their Level 5, 15-credit units can still be awarded an HND if they have completed and passed the remaining units at both levels as per rules of combination of the required qualification. This is at the discretion of the Assessment Board.

13.3 The conditions of award and compensation arrangements will apply as explained in sections 13.1 and 13.2. If a student has been granted compensation for a unit attempted but not achieved, that unit will appear as unclassified (a 'U' grade) on the notification of performance provided with their certificate. This is at the discretion of the Assessment Board.

14. Poor Academic Conduct and Academic Misconduct

14.1 Poor academic practice is identified as an unacceptable proportion of assessed work being based directly on the work of others, albeit with correct citation and attribution.

14.2 All cases of academic misconduct are reported and investigated under the HE Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure.

14.3 The HE Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure refers to the various types of HE Academic Misconduct that fall within the purview of the document.

15. Appeals

15.1 Students have the right to appeal decisions made by assessment boards and the academic misconduct panel.

15.2 Students **may not** appeal against the academic judgement of examiners or assessors.

15.3 The OIA define academic judgement as “a judgement that is made about a matter where only the opinion of an academic expert will suffice”³.

15.4 Students should be directed to the HE Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure for more information.