

Assessment Handbook 2024-25: Summary of changes

This document summarises changes of substance made to the Assessment Handbook for 2024-25.

The main changes relate to section 5, the 'Marking Policy', which replaces the previous section 5, 'Marks and Marking'. Much of the original content has been retained - sometimes in a new format - but there are also wholly new sections and some existing sections have been amended.

Other than the Marking Policy, changes of substance are very limited.

Section 3: Setting assessment

1. *"3.11 All specified provisions for the setting and approval of examination papers apply equally to online and in-person examinations. Additionally, online and computer-based examinations must be designed carefully and in accordance with current Queen Mary policies on online and computer-based examinations, including policies on format and duration."*

The first sentence (only) is new, emphasising the existing intentions of Queen Mary in this area and reflecting the confirmation that papers for online exams should be submitted to Registry by a deadline in the same way as papers for in-person exams.

Section 4: Conduct of invigilated examinations

2. *"4.26 Answer scripts, absence forms, attendance sheets, and a final set of marks for each module shall be stored in labelled boxes (or an electronic equivalent), arranged by module and then by Student Identity Number. Schools and institutes shall retain scripts for around four weeks after results have been released by Registry Services to allow for any administrative checks, and to provide feedback; this may be requested by students, or by DGLS as part of an academic appeal case. After this time, schools and institutes must make arrangements for boxes of scripts to be delivered to Academic Registry. These shall be archived and kept for a period extending until five-years after the end-date of the student's programme of study for a period of five years after the end date of a course or for a period of one calendar year from the date of the examination, depending on whether or not the assessment falls within the work retained by the University to comply with the Office for Students' requirement for providers to retain "appropriate records of students' assessed work for such regulatory purposes for a period of five years after the end date of a course"."*

This is an existing provision, but the wording from 'These shall be archived' onwards is new, reflecting our OfS obligations in terms of retention of assessment (but specific to exam papers).

Section 5: Marking Policy

The Policy is a new document but draws upon the pre-existing 'Marks and Marking' chapter of the Assessment Handbook (which it replaces). Major points of note are:

1. A new section on the responsibilities of the various parties involved (5.8-15).

2. The section on marking turnaround times remains under review, and discussions will continue in 2024-25 on the future shape of this clause. The 2023-24 wording (the pre-existing approved policy) has been restored while those discussions continue:

“Assessments will normally be marked within 15 working days of the assessment taking place (or of the official submission deadline), with provisional marks returned to students. If this is not possible, students should be informed of the reason for the delay and the expected return date. For certain assessments where provisional marks are not given longer turnaround times may apply.”

3. A previous requirement for all examinations (assessments coded EXM or EXN in SITS) to be subject to one of the five quality assurance methods, irrespective of their weightings within a module, has been removed. In practice, nearly all examinations count for $\geq 50\%$ of a module mark and will therefore be subject to those processes in any case, but the Sub-Board and the EQSB agreed that the provision – which originally dates from a time when most modules included examinations counting for $\geq 70\%$ of a module mark – had become less relevant as assessments had diversified and that examinations no longer had any inherent special status over other assessment types.
4. A new section on the appointment of markers has been added, including a formal requirement for markers to have appropriate knowledge and experience as judged by the Subject Examination Board (5.16-20).
5. The section on criterion-referenced marking and marking schemes has been expanded, and formally establishes generic Queen Mary marking schemes with which school/institute-level schemes must align (these match the existing grade boundaries) (5.21-30).
 - a. the E grade in the undergraduate scheme (40.0 – 44.9) has been removed with effect from 2024-25 in favour of an expanded D grade (changing from 45.0 – 49.9 to 40.0 – 49.9) to align with the classification scales. The E grade is a historical remnant from a time when it aligned with a now obsolete degree classification of ‘Pass’, and when the Third Class range ran from 45.0 – 49.9. The Policy includes explanatory notes on how this will be applied.
 - b. A new clause has been added that relates to use of the English language in assessment. This is a non-negotiable requirement of the Office for Students, relating to Condition of Registration B4. The new text reads “Marking schemes must ensure the effective assessment of technical proficiency in the English language in a manner that appropriately reflects the level and content of the module.”
6. Peer assessment under which students directly award final summative marks to each other will not be permitted. Benchmarking showed that this position was in line with common sector practices. The new policy reads: “Peer assessment provides valuable experience in assessment literacy and may be used either as formative assessment or as evidence to inform a summative mark awarded by a Queen Mary marker. Clear marking criteria and expectations for feedback must be made known to students. Direct peer assessment under which students directly award final summative marks to each other is not permitted.” (5.32).

7. Two changes relating to moderation.
 - a. One of the previous moderation outcomes was a rejection of the original marking and a requirement that all assessments be second marked. This has been clarified to state that the assessments must be re-marked rather than second marked, as if the original marking was unsound, second marking would not necessarily rectify the issue. Following the re-mark the assessments (and the new marking) would then be quality assured again through moderation or another approved means (5.40.c).
 - b. The requirements for the moderation sample have been amended, and simplified. Previously, the minimum sample size was 25% for long-answer assessments and 10% for short-answer assessments (with a minimum sample size of ten in both cases). Benchmarking and internal feedback indicated that the 25% was high; this has been amended to 10% for all assessment types (where moderation is permitted), retaining the minimum sample size of ten but adding additional requirements to ensure that where an assessment has multiple markers there are provisions in place to ensure that every marker is marking consistently with the others as well as with the marking scheme (5.43, 45). As was previously the case, the moderator should have also access to data on the distribution of the full set of marks (available in PowerBI).
8. The section dealing with requirements for marking trails has been expanded to make explicit reference to the Office for Students' requirement to retain assessment (including marking records) for a period extending to five years after the point at which a student completes their programme of study (5.46-50).
9. The language in the section on standard-setting and scaling has been updated without making substantive changes at this stage. The Assessment Sub-Board has an open action to develop a common scaling policy for the whole of Queen Mary. This will be part of the next round of developments, in 2024-25, and the Marking Policy will be amended for 2025-26 to include the outputs of that review (5.52-61).
10. The policy on late submission of assessment has been updated. The vast majority of changes are not substantive and are intended only to clarify the language and meaning. However, the policy has been amended to explicitly state that it does not apply in full to examinations, and that failure to submit an examination by the deadline will result in an immediate mark of zero rather than a graduated deduction of marks over several days (the existing provisions around extenuating circumstances still apply). The previous wording referred to 'coursework and other in-course assessment' – it did not state that the policy applied to examinations, and that was not its intention (5.68).
11. The provisions for the marking of illegible assessments have been included in the Policy for the first time. These were previously published in the Academic Regulations (and remain there) but have been included in the Marking Policy for completeness. The current provisions have not been changed (5.69).
12. A new section on contingency arrangements has been added, to provide an institutional framework through which to deal with situations that mean it is not possible to deliver the standard marking procedures: "Circumstances may occasionally arise that mean, for operational reasons, it is not possible or appropriate to deliver all aspects of the Marking Policy in the manner set out in this document. In such cases Queen Mary will, through an

appropriately constituted institutional group, develop, communicate and implement alternative contingency marking arrangements that pay due regard to internal and external expectations and obligations.” (5.73).

General

3. References to some redundant regulatory provisions have been removed (the removals were approved in past years as part of changes to the Academic Regulations, but we are now at a point where no students remain registered to whom those old regulations still apply). These include discounting of modules from classification (6.70), EC Pass degrees (6.70), and discretionary fields of study (6.113).
4. References to the new reassessment provisions (three attempts, including a retake) for the MBBS and BDS have been added, and a reference to the old – discretionary – provisions has been removed (7.9).