Assessment Policy
Atlas Star IT Centre

Policy statement

This Assessment Policy is designed to ensure that assessment at Atlas Star IT Centre is Transparent, Equitable, Valid, Reliable, Just and Sustainable. It has been designed to bring a standardised approach to the range of courses offered at the institution and the disparate awarding organisations governing these courses. It should be noted that awarding organisations may have their own requirements, and these must be followed where identified.

Purpose

The purpose of the policy is to ensure an equivalence of experience for all students, consistency of standards, and that students are treated equitably and with fairness. The institution recognises the need to remain sensitive to subject specialist needs, subject benchmarks, validating/awarding organisations and statutory body requirements. Accordingly, this policy provides a broad benchmark within which there is scope for flexibility in implementation by courses, both to maintain fairness for students within the institution and to ensure parity with the conventions of individual subjects across the education sector.

Other Related Policies

- Academic Appeals Policy
- Blended- Distance Learning Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Malpractice & Plagiarism Policy

Assessment Policy

In Education, 'assessment' describes any processes that appraise an individual's knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills. There are many different forms of assessment, serving a variety of purposes. These include:

- Promoting student learning by providing the student with feedback, normally to help improve their performance.
- Evaluating student knowledge, understanding, abilities or skills.
- Awarding a mark or grade that enables a student's performance to be established. The mark or grade may also be used to make progress decisions.
- Enabling the public (including employers) and qualification providers, to know that an individual has attained an appropriate level of achievement that reflects the academic standards set by the awarding body. This may include demonstrating fitness to practice or meeting other professional requirements.
- The way in which students are assessed fundamentally affects their learning. Good assessment practice is designed to ensure that, in order to pass the module or course, students must demonstrate they have achieved the intended learning outcomes.

1. The Principles of Assessment

The purpose of student assessment is to:

- Promote, reinforce and reward student learning.
- Measure and report student progress and achievement of learning outcomes.
- Provide feedback on student learning to assist in the identification of learning needs.
- Enhance students' ability to assess and reflect upon their learning.
- Assist in the evaluation of the design of learning.
- Demonstrate the maintenance of academic standards, ensuring that these are in line with awarding organisation specifications.

2. The Assessment Policy and Practice of the institution will

- Ensure parity of treatment for all students.
- Identify strengths and acknowledge effort and originality of thought.
- Address misconceptions and gaps in understanding through feedback and reflection.
- Focus on the application and integration of learning in a variety of contexts.
- Provide the opportunity to achieve credit and progression regardless of the time, place and mode of learning.
- Create an achievable schedule of student tasks and a reasonable workload.
- Require the minimum number of assessment tasks necessary to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes of an award.
- Provide a diversity of tasks appropriate to the assessment of learning outcomes and the greatest possible opportunity for students to demonstrate their achievement.
- Ensure equitable assessment practices for all students, particularly taking into account underrepresented groups.
- Make explicit provision for procedural variation and/or alternative assessments for students with special needs.
- Effectively communicate the nature, timing and procedures of all assessments and their criteria of assessment.
- Validate through internal and, where required by regulation, and external scrutiny, all assessment tasks, criteria and judgements to ensure consistency of interpretation of evidence of student achievement and conformity to national and/or professional standards.

2.1 The purpose of summative assessment is to enable students to demonstrate that they have fulfilled the objectives of the course of study and that they have achieved the standard required by the award (s) they seek. All courses of study should be subject to awarding organisation regulations, which relate the assessment requirements of the course to its objectives, and it is within the context of those assessment regulations that the examiners make their judgements on the student's performance.

3. Award Assessment Policy

3.1 Atlas has developed an assessment strategy in line with the regulations of the awarding organisation to ensure that the defined outcomes of the award are explicitly and appropriately tested through a variety of methods in the context of the course of summative modular/unit of study assessments.

4. Assessment Practice

4.1 Academic staff are to produce and/or implement assignments, which comply with the awarding organisation requirements, in line with the assignment schedule.

4.2 Students will receive, as a minimum, an assessment schedule for their course at the appropriate level in week one of the academic session so that they are aware of the assessment demands being made of them and can plan accordingly.

4.3 Assignment briefs are to follow the requirements of the relevant awarding body. The latter form requires the student to make a declaration that the assignment submission is all their own work, that they fully understand the consequences of plagiarism and that they understand that making a false declaration is a form of malpractice.

4.4 Details of assessed coursework will be published in good time with a clear statement as to what is required, in what format and by when. All arrangements for the submission of coursework shall be detailed in the Course Handbook and Tutors will take reasonable steps to ensure that all students are aware of the procedures and process with regard to claims for extenuating circumstances.

4.5 Tutors will ensure that information on the date, time and location of all examinations is published in good time. Students are responsible for making themselves aware of the date, time and venue for all examinations that they are required to take and for presenting themselves at the examination room in good time before the examination is due to begin.

4.6 Student work must be submitted in adherence to hand-in procedures.

4.7 A copy of the assignment schedule must be retained and made available to the Quality and IQA Team as required.

4.8 A log will be kept by the Tutor of all student work received. Where appropriate, the use of electronic submissions will be deployed in line with awarding organisation regulations. A submission log will also be required for electronic submissions.

4.9 For tracking and monitoring purposes all records of submissions must be retained for the duration of the course as per retention policy and made available to the Quality Team on request.

4.10 There will be no provision for draft submissions.

4.11 Written feedback will be given no later than 5 weeks (excluding days on which the institution is officially closed) after submission and at least 2 weeks prior to the deadline for any end-of-year/teaching block summative assessment. This will apply unless the regulations of validating/awarding organisations state a more limited time frame.

4.12 Alternatively, students may receive purposeful and systematic feedback on their learning and progress through participation in other activities. Such feedback will be made available no later than 4 weeks (excluding days on which the institution is officially closed) after the activity has taken place and at least 2 weeks prior to any end-of-year/teaching block summative assessments.

4.13 Included with the returned work should be a feedback sheet giving full details of how the marks/grades have been allocated and an indication of areas for improvement. All spelling and grammar errors should be identified and corrected in the piece of work.

4.14 A hard copy of the assessment policy will be given to the students with an electronic version also made available.

4.15 Assessment must comply with the institution's Assessment Malpractice Policy.

5. Extensions to assignment deadlines

5.1 Students will be encouraged to submit all work on time and institution staff should ensure that students are aware of assessment submission dates. Late submissions will be assessed 'without penalty' in the first instance, the late submission recorded, and the student made aware that the lateness of submission may impact their grade. Where appropriate students should utilise the extenuating circumstances process.

6. Extenuating circumstances

6.1 Requests for extensions to assignment deadlines are to be submitted at least a week before the submission deadline and may be granted for a maximum of ten working days unless this is in conflict with awarding organisation regulations. Requests must be submitted and authorised using the institution's Extenuating Circumstances document.

6.2 Requests for extensions are to be submitted to the Tutor. The Tutor will assess the application for an extension against the prescribed course criteria of acceptance or in line with the course's awarding organisation regulations and make a recommendation. Recommendations relating to requests for extensions of between 1 and 10 working days will be forwarded to the relevant Department manager for approval.

6.3 Applications for extenuating circumstances to be considered by the Award/Examination Board following the non-completion of an assignment/non-attendance at a timed assessment are to be submitted in line with the validating/awarding organisation regulations.

7. Criteria for the acceptance or rejection of claims for extensions based on extenuating circumstances

7.1 Reasons for accepting claims for extenuating circumstances;

- Ill health which occurred at the time of assessment or during the period when the student might be expected to prepare the assessment.
- Prolonged periods of illness which prevent the student from studying at the rate normally expected of a student.
- If self-isolating or if advised not to attend by local Health Protection Team.
- Difficulties with assessments, including examinations, due to childcare responsibilities and/or home-schooling during periods of lockdown due to COVID-19.
- Unforeseen changes in patterns of employment experienced by students studying on part-time, block release or distance learning modes.
- Tragic personal circumstances, including the death and serious illness of friends and family members, including participation in funerals and associated rites.
- Special needs declared to the institution and pursued by the student with additional support, but not provided for in the delivery or assessment of a module.
- Breakdown of a close personal relationship.
- Severe financial hardship, over and above that normally experienced by students or unforeseen at the start of the learning period.
- Criminal, intentional or negligent acts of a third party which impact on a student's ability to complete or prepare for assessment.
- Unforeseen adverse weather conditions
- Unforeseen transport problems.
- Unforeseen failure of computing and other equipment where the student can demonstrate that they had taken all reasonable steps to ensure that the assessment was prepared in good time.
- Any other reason accepted as valid.

7.2 In the majority of the above circumstances the assessors of claims must be satisfied that circumstances have impacted adversely on a student's ability to undertake assessment (and the student could not have foreseen and planned for the circumstance) for which claims are submitted. Evidence such as a COVID-19 test result or notification of the need to self-isolate will be considered acceptable without the need for further evidence from a GP. Similarly, copies of emails from the school advising of institute closure.

To be considered valid, claims must relate to the appropriate assessment period and be supported by both independent and supporting evidence:

7.3 Independent evidence - Written evidence from a member of the medical profession, member of the institution, counselling service or other professional service, or other independent organisation (e.g., Police, Social Worker, Citizen's Advice Bureau, religious leader).

7.4 Supporting evidence – A detailed written statement from the student explaining the nature and timing of the extenuating circumstances and how these have impacted their ability to take part or perform well in assessment. Where a statement from the student is not possible, they ask their parent, partner/parent or other significant person in their life to write a letter of support explaining the nature of the circumstances. This statement is in addition to the independent evidence that is required. Photocopied evidence is not normally acceptable unless it has been certified by Student Services staff as a true copy of the original. A claim is unlikely to be upheld without appropriate and both independent and supporting evidence.

7.5 Reasons for not accepting claims for extension and extenuating circumstances evidence

- Submission of a request for an extension to a submission deadline after the deadline and a request for extenuating circumstances to be considered by an Examination/Assessment Board after the published submission date.
- Evidence which does not cover the dates relevant to assessment tasks in respect of which a claim has been made.
- Having to meet the normal demands of part or full-time work.
- Having to meet normal family commitments.
- Special needs already taken into account in the delivery or assessment of the module.
- Insufficient evidence to support the claim.
- Claims that levels of state support for undergraduate and postgraduate students, by way of grants and loans, in themselves constitute a student suffering financial hardship.

7.6 Below are some examples of circumstances which will not normally be accepted:

- Taking a holiday.
- Lateness due to traffic.
- Missing the bus
- Last-minute personal computer and printer problems.
- Medical evidence that does not cover the period of assessment.
- Lack of appropriate evidence.
- Foreseeable or preventable circumstances.
- Minor illnesses and ailments (e.g., colds)
- Poor planning or time management.
- Not backing up computer files.
- Oversleeping.

- Long-standing, ongoing conditions (e.g., medical conditions known at the point of admission to the institution).
- Lack of awareness of institutional procedures.

7.7 Where a student's claim for extenuating circumstances is accepted as valid, the student will normally be offered the opportunity to submit work for assessment, as if for the first time and without penalty, at the next available opportunity. If an extension is granted the new deadline should be recorded and adhered to. Decisions regarding extenuating circumstances will be ratified at the course's Award/Qualification Body.

The duration of extensions should be consistent across students and should not be after summative feedback has been issued to other students on the course.

All extensions authorised by the Tutor/Department Manager must be recorded and made available at the Award/Examination Board and to the External Examiner on request.

8 Feedback

8.1 The institution recognises it is good practice to provide students with sufficient, constructive and timely feedback on their work in respect of all types of assessment.

8.2 Feedback will be provided at an appropriate time in the learning process (See above paragraphs), and as soon as possible after the student has completed the assessment task.

8.3 The nature and extent of feedback that students can expect will be specified. It is important to consider the particular needs of students studying part-time and/or remotely.

8.4 It is important to adopt the effective use of comments on returned work, including relating feedback to intended learning outcomes and assessment criteria, in order to help students identify areas for improvement as well as commending them for achievement.

8.5 The role of oral feedback, either on a group or individual basis, as a means of supplementing or replacing written feedback will be explained to students.

9. Assignment feedback sheets

9.1 Assignment feedback sheets are to contain:

- Comments detailing strengths of the assignment and any improvements that would have brought about a higher grade
- Action points
- Grading

Standard institution assessment feedback sheets are to be used unless validating/awarding organisations stipulate the use of their own documentation or unless the submission has been made electronically.

10. Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) (Also known as Internal Verification)

10.1 IQAs must sample assessed work for each assignment to check the accuracy of assessment decisions. Internal quality assurance of assessment decisions should be carried out by a staff member who is familiar with assessment at the appropriate level and has subject knowledge of the qualification area.

Where new/inexperienced assessors and/or new qualifications/pathways are introduced, IQA sampling should be increased accordingly.

During delivery of the qualification/pathway, internal quality assurance sampling should cover the following:

- All Assessors
- All units
- Work from every assignment
- Every assessment site (where delivery of a qualification takes place on different sites)
- Pass, Merit and Distinction achievement (Students who have not yet achieved or referred students are also valid selections).

10.2 Feedback from the IQA

Feedback from the IQA to the Assessor should comment on the quality of their feedback to the student and the effective completion of the documentation. The IQA should also give developmental feedback to the Assessor telling them what could be improved e.g., annotation of assessment evidence to show where grades are achieved. IQA of assessed work should be clearly recorded. If the IQA requires action, the Assessor should complete this and return it to the IQA for their review and sign-off.

IQA of assessment decisions must not be end-loaded. It is important that it is undertaken as soon as possible after assessment as this will improve the quality of assessment practice and not disadvantage students. IQA must be undertaken before work is returned to students.

11. External Examination

11.1 The HE Awarding Organisation will allocate a subject expert ('External Examiner' or 'EE') to sample assessment activities and assessed student work to make judgements regarding whether the delivery is in line with UK thresholds and to provide feedback. The EE can support in

identifying areas of good practice and for improvement, particularly in terms of how assessment can be improved.

11.2 External Examination usually takes place as part of a 'visit' (Although this can be remote). The EE will identify themselves to the Tutor and will supply a remote visit plan. All items requested on the visit plan should be provided – if there are queries regarding the items requested, Tutors should contact the Quality Nominee for HE as soon as possible in order that they can lend their assistance.

11.3 Students must authenticate the work that they submit for assessment. If, during external examination, the External Examiner raises concerns about authenticity or student declarations are not available, an action for evidence to be submitted to the EE will be set. If concerns are not resolved or declarations not produced, the External Examiner will not release certification for the relevant course.

12.   Misuse of AI

12.1 Students who misuse AI such that the work they submit for assessment is not their own will have committed malpractice, per Malpractice and Plagiarism policy.

12.2 Students must make sure that the work submitted for assessment is demonstrably their own. If any sections of their work are reproduced directly from AI-generated responses, those elements must be identified by the student.

12.3 Examples of AI misuse include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Copying or paraphrasing sections of AI-generated content so that the work is no longer the student's own
- Copying or paraphrasing whole responses of AI-generated content
- Using AI to complete parts of the assessment so that the work does not reflect the student's own work, analysis, evaluation, or calculations
- Failing to acknowledge use of AI tools when they have been used as a source of information
- Incomplete or poor acknowledgement of AI tools

• Submitting work with intentionally incomplete or misleading references or bibliographies.

Where AI tools have been used as a source of information, a student's acknowledgement must show the name of the AI source used and should show the date the content was generated. The student must, retain a copy of the question(s) and computer-generated content for reference and authentication purposes, in a non-editable format (such as a screenshot) and provide a brief explanation of how it has been used.

13. Certification

13.1 Responsibilities

• Assessors and Tutors are responsible for ensuring every unit completed is claimed against the correct criteria with the Awarding Organisation.

• Assessors will be responsible for ensuring every student receives notification of successful completion of every unit as soon as possible after achievement of that unit following successful IQA.

• Assessors and Tutors are responsible for liaising with the exams team to ensure all unit credits are claimed accurately against the relevant Awarding Organisation. If claims are to be made by the delivery team, these must be made by the Department Manager and at least one other member of the delivery team to minimise the possibility of errors. Claims must only be made for grades which have been ratified by the Assessment Board.

• Assessors and Tutors should ensure units should be claimed as soon as reasonably practicable after completion by the student to ensure they receive full credit for every unit completed.

• Assessors and Tutors should ensure any student who has achieved the credit value for a given unit will receive recognition of this achievement through claiming of individual units.

• Assessors are responsible for ensuring early leavers are fully aware of units completed and units still to be achieved to ensure full RPL for that student if they choose to carry on their qualification with another provider.

13.2 Any staff who become aware that an incorrect claim has been made, either at unit or award level, must contact the Examinations Manager and the Quality Nominee for HE at the earliest opportunity and no later than 24 hours of any working day. For example, if found on a Friday, this must be reported by 17:00 on the following Monday at the latest.

14. Policy Review

This Assessment Policy will be reviewed annually by the Academic Committee to ensure it remains effective, relevant, and aligned with the goals of Atlas Star IT Centre and the needs of its students.

This policy ensures that assessments at Atlas Star IT Centre are robust, equitable, and supportive of student learning and professional development.