



**Higher Education Services
Assessment & Feedback
Procedures**

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Higher Education Services Assessment and Feedback Procedures

1.0 Introduction

1.1 At FutureLearn, the assessment procedures are designed to uphold high academic standards while promoting a positive, inclusive, and supportive learning environment. Central to this process is the scheduling, preparation, marking and moderation practices, which ensure that students receive constructive, respectful, and actionable feedback that supports their development. Feedback is most effective when it is clear, timely, and focused on behaviours and outcomes rather than personal traits, encouraging students to reflect and improve.

1.2 Moderation plays a vital role in maintaining fairness, consistency, and integrity across all assessments. It ensures that both the marking and communication processes align with FutureLearn's educational values and quality standards. Through careful sampling, monitoring, and evaluation, moderation helps identify and address any discrepancies or concerns, supporting a culture of accountability and continuous improvement. Together, these practices help create an equitable learning experience where all learners are treated fairly and provided with the opportunity to succeed.

2.0 Assessment Planning and Feedback

2.1 Assessment planning and scheduling are managed by FutureLearn and its university partners.

2.2 Assessments are made available to students on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) at the start of the module. The Exams and Assessments team ensures that the correct version of each assessment is released, while the Module Leader verifies the accuracy of the uploaded content.

2.3 Assessments are submitted on the VLE. Instructions for submission are available on the VLE, and submission times and dates on the assessment briefs. Student work is then distributed to individual lecturers for marking, ensuring adherence to specified deadlines and timely release of provisional grades.

2.4 For sub-contractual arrangement students, for example Brunel and Roehampton, FutureLearn delivers teaching and assessments in alignment with each partner's established timelines, which are coordinated with the Exams and Assessments team.

3.0 Summative Feedback

3.1 Students receive summative feedback for their module assignments via the VLE. Feedback is generally structured as follows:

- Acknowledges the student's effort and engagement.
- Highlights strengths in their work.
- Provides constructive suggestions for improvement where appropriate.

3.1.1 Lecturers can comment on:

- Understanding and knowledge: being able to accurately explain concepts, research and theory.
- Synthesis: ability to draw together a range of ideas from reading and research.
- Application: reading beyond learning materials and applying and developing the concepts presented to answering the question.
- Critical analysis: drawing conclusions, answering the question, comparing and contrasting research or arguments, selecting appropriate and relevant material, developing an argument.
- Originality of thought: creative thinking, thought provoking conclusions, critical reflection.
- Structure: conciseness, logical structure, adherence to word limits.
- Style: Citing and referencing, academic writing style.

3.1.2 Key points to consider when marking include:

- Feedback generally should not overly focus on citing and referencing or writing issues.
- Provide links to additional resources if helpful.
- Give clear and actionable suggestions to students (i.e. feed forward).

4.0 Standardisation

4.1 All Module Leaders (MLs) participate in standardisation activities to ensure consistent quality in both teaching and marking across all iterations of a module. When a module is delivered by multiple teaching staff, standardisation becomes essential and is formally conducted.

4.2 Prior to a module commencement the ML briefs all teaching teams on the following:

- The structure of the module
- Content and approach to delivery
- Forum post topics and how to respond to them
- How to follow up on dis-engaged students
- When to report 'risk' students to the Module Leader and Student Services
- Structure of the Assessment

4.3 Standardisation activity is common practice within Higher Education when multiple markers are involved in assessing the same piece of work. This ensures quality and consistency of marking is maintained. According to AdvanceHE [standardisation](#) is a process to maintain and assure standards. Key components include:

- Dialogue, negotiation and joint decision making.
- Peer review by members of an academic community.
- An opportunity to "discuss, review and compare student work to reach a shared understanding of the academic standard which such work needs to meet".

4.3.1 Module Leaders (ML) can opt to take one of two approaches to standardisation.

4.3.2 Option 1: Typical Standardisation Activity

- ML can download early submissions from the VLE.
- ML selects 3-4 scripts for standardisation – a variety of topics and standards are useful here.
- ML distributes scripts to the team.
- Each team member reviews the scripts against the assessment criteria, assigns a grade and notes major reasons for that choice (e.g. 3 strengths, 3 weaknesses).
- Meet at the end of submission week to compare and agree on grades for each prior to beginning individual marking.

4.3.3 Option 2: In-Process Standardisation and Review

If a) no scripts are available early or b) the team are unable to meet before grading begins (the Friday immediately after the submission deadline):

- The Module team will share 2-3 scripts, grades and feedback in the first two days of marking.
- The Module team will review grades given to agree on appropriate standard.

4.3.4 Guiding Philosophy

All lecturers pay particular attention is required to:

- All work below 50
- Borderline grades (50, 60, 70)
- Work above 70
- Extreme outliers

Guiding questions:

- Are grades awarded consistent with the quality of the work, grading guidelines and assessment criteria?
- Are grades between students consistent considering relative quality of their work?
- Are the grades awarded consistent with the comments made?
- Are grades consistent between faculty for similar quality of work?

5.0 Moderation

5.1 All assessments undergo both internal and external moderation. The Exams and Assessments team is responsible for coordinating the submission of assessment samples to External Examiners.

5.2 The size of samples depends on the number of students but must represent a broad range of performance levels.

5.2.1 Sample size guidelines:

- A minimum of 10% of submissions across the full grade spectrum should be reviewed, with at least 10 scripts, whichever is greater.
- If fewer than 10 students are enrolled, all student work must be moderated.

5.2.2 Where a module includes more than one component (e.g. exams and coursework), the moderation sample must include elements from each, representing a spread of marks. The same sample may be used for both internal and external moderation.

5.3 Students should not be informed whether their work is part of the moderation sample.

5.4 The outcome of moderation must be documented on the appropriate form (e.g., Internal Moderation Form) to provide evidence for External Examiners. If moderation reveals issues (e.g. overly generous or harsh marking), the sample size should be expanded. If concerns continue, the moderator must consult with the marker and escalate to a Programme Leader if no agreement is reached. Any required changes should apply consistently and only at the component level, not individual student submissions.

5.5 Final moderation outcomes must be clear and comprehensive.

5.5.1 A completed moderation form, a finalised list of marks, and a retained sample for external use are all required. If fairness across marks cannot be assured, further moderation or re-marking of specific bands or the entire cohort must take place. Moderation does not involve re-marking individual submissions unless systemic issues are identified.

5.5.2 Timeliness matters. Provisional marks are then released as part of the approved study calendar, and external examiners are given adequate time to review.

5.6 This procedure of moderation varies across OPM sub-contractual arrangements, for example, Brunel University and Roehampton University.

6.0 External Examiners

6.1 External Examiners are provided with a sample of work that may or may not include internal moderation comments. External Examiners can request larger samples where they feel a consistent application of marks is missing or they have concerns about the sample. Any issues must be raised to the Exams and Assessment team in the first instance. External Examiners are also permitted to review resit work, which must undergo internal moderation and be made available upon request.

7.0 Formative Feedback

7.1 Students receive formative feedback from discussion activities and application exercises:

- Publicly in comments on discussion posts.
- Privately via SpeedGrader (*where activities are set*).

7.2 Responding to discussion forum posts:

- Focus on topic content.
- Encourage students to critically engage, explore deeper, provide further resources or ideas to stretch students.
- Ask questions to encourage follow up.
- Correct errors tactfully when they are misconceptions that might influence other students.
- Encourage students to engage in further discussion.

7.3 Other ideas for discussion forum posts:

You might provide a post at the end of each week/unit to:

- Encourage more attempts at the activity.
- Point out part of the activity students might do.
- Give more explanation about what is required.
- Summarise what has been said/done so far.
- Pick out general areas of good performance or areas for improvement.
- Highlight key ideas that have been missed.

7.4 For private feedback

- Provide brief feedforward towards the final assignment.
- Acknowledge strengths, provide a comment each on content and academic skills that you will most benefit the student in their overall development.
- Lecturers can be slightly more critical/personal here than they might be on the forum.
- Supplement the comments provided on the forum.

Note: Students can respond to comments. They receive a notification of this via the email updates from VLE.