



Ruskin College
Oxford

HE ASSESSMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES

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HE Assessment Policy and Procedures

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Ownership: Academic Registrar

Approval: Academic Board

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1. Introduction

Ruskin College provides access to educational opportunities for adults with few or no prior qualifications but often with considerable life experience and heightened social awareness. In their time at Ruskin, students are engaged in a range of programmes of study and attain a variety of qualifications, but a common feature of all programmes is the College's commitment to engaged scholarship and applied research. This leads to knowledge that can be applied and used in different ways, often in processes of social change as well as in personal growth and development.

2. Methods and Types of Assessment

2.1

At Ruskin, there is an emphasis on students using their own experiences, writing and activism and making these the subject of intellectual scrutiny as their analytical and critical skills deepen and mature. To foster engagement, students are often encouraged to draft their own titles for assessment in consultation with their tutor, whilst project and portfolio work is used throughout the programmes. An emphasis on group work helps embed the value of democratic scholarship, not only in class but also in some forms of assessment. Overall, our assessment methods aim to enhance independent and self-directed learning

2.2

The development and practice of assessment at Ruskin is informed by the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and is in line with the expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education that programmes should be "well designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed"

2.3

Ruskin Higher Education programmes are subject to external scrutiny and validation. All Higher Education programmes have External Examiners, who provide feedback on the overall standard being met and ensure these are comparable with other such courses elsewhere. The awarding HEI reviews the institution on a periodic basis, during which the assessment policies and procedures of the college are also scrutinised, while the QAA also has oversight of all Higher Education provision. Finally, the Programme Boards and HE Academic Board have clear mechanisms for including the student voice so allowing the student body to participate in reviewing and enhancing assessment policies and procedures.

2.4

The following is an indicative list of assessments employed at Ruskin. It is not intended to be either exhaustive or prescriptive. Ruskin encourages staff to devise innovative and inclusive assessment practices across all disciplines and details of specific assessment methods are available in the individual module specifications.

- essays
- case studies
- 'seen' tests
- 'unseen' tests (where formal qualifications are required for)
- seminar presentations
- statistical exercises
- book reviews
- reflective diaries
- projects

- dissertation
- portfolio of written work
- portfolio of practical work
- fieldwork
- practice placements
- professional practice

2.5

Assessment is also provided by a variety of individuals, both within and external to the college. On the professional courses, practice assessors and fieldwork supervisors from partner agencies are involved in ensuring that professional standards have been met that will safeguard the public and comply with national occupational standards. In some of the programmes, group work activities include peer assessments, in which students comment on one another's level of participation, while many modules include portfolios for self-assessment of professional practice or creative writing. In certain programmes, self-reflective diaries or assignments are compulsory submissions that help students to acquire the skills of evaluating their own work and recognising the learning processes of the course.

2.6

An Assessment Panel, made up of senior members of tutorial staff, will meet annually to moderate and evaluate all module assessment requirements to ensure that they meet the conditions of external validating agencies and the learning outcomes outlined in the respective QAA Subject Benchmark Statements.

3. Scheduling of assessments

3.1

Students at Ruskin are provided with clear information about assessment requirements. These are contained in programme and module handbooks issued at the start of the academic year and available on the relevant module page of the college Moodle site. Each module has its own published criteria in addition to those applying to the programme as a whole. Tutors provide regular explanations of these, both in the tutorial setting and in class. Any student who is in doubt has the opportunity to seek clarification in class or through individual enquiry (by Ruskin College e-mail) from their tutor, the Programme Lead or the HE Programme Manager.

Where coursework forms part of the summative assessment of a programme, this must be clearly stated in the information provided to students. Details of the work required, along with the date and time of submission, must be clearly communicated in the individual module handbooks.

3.2

Module tutors should, as far as is possible, schedule assessments to avoid placing students under undue pressure and to permit timely feedback.

4. Completion and Submission of Assessments

4.1

Students must follow all specific instructions for assessments. Failure to do so may result in a penalty or non-valid attempt. This includes the submission of work for assessment by the published deadline.

If the assessment cannot be submitted in time for the submission deadline due to extenuating circumstances, the student may have recourse to the Mitigating Circumstances policy. Please see: <https://www.ruskin.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Mitigating-Circumstances-Policy->

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4.2

All failed assessments will be capped at the relevant pass mark for subsequent attempts, with the exception of those cases in which a student's request for mitigating circumstances has been accepted. For Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Form please see:

<https://www.ruskin.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Mitigating-Circumstances-Policy-v.2-1.pdf>

4.3

Provided it is submitted on time, assessed work is returned with written feedback according to a published timetable. The normal maximum period between submission and receipt of feedback is three weeks but may be longer where public holidays intervene. Where appropriate, feedback includes annotations on the submitted work itself, so that the student can see the detailed ways in which his or her written style can be improved, as well as the precise areas of strength and weakness in the argument presented.

5. Feedback and Moderation of assessment

5.1

The anonymity of assessment begins with the submission of summative assignments. All work must be submitted with the student number and without any details of the student's name. The subsequent quality assurance process, whereby a second marker moderates the initial assessment and an External Examiner agrees the marks, ensures the process of anonymity of assessments.

5.2

The final grade for an individual assessment component will be determined after completion of a quality assurance process. Assessments for Levels 4, 5 and 6 of modules will be marked initially by the module tutor and then moderated by another tutor from the programme, with the exception of the Level 6 Dissertation, all of which must be second marked by another tutor from the same programme. Assessments for modules at Level 7 and above will be second marked by another tutor from the same programme.

5.3

In moderating assessments, second markers will ensure that:

- Feedback refers to the marking criteria and assignment tasks
- Feedback is constructive and respectful
- There is a clear link between comments, feedback and grade awarded

5.4

Grades decided by first and second markers must agree. If there is a differential between the grades of first and second markers, then the grades should be amended accordingly. Boundary grades of 39, 49, 59 and 69 should be avoided. In the case of boundary marks, it is advisable for first and second markers to agree the promotion or demotion of the boundary mark at the time.

In the event of disagreement between first and second markers, the assessment will be scrutinised at a meeting of the Assessment Panel, which will be convened outside of normal schedules to consider the case. The decision of the Assessment Panel will then be held as the final assessment result and the assessment will be included in submissions sent to the External Examiner for the module. In such cases, the extended process of deciding the final assessment will be made clear to the External Examiner at the time.

5.5

A random selection of assessments will be sent to the External Examiner for further scrutiny.

This will normally include all firsts, fails and borderline passes. Submissions for External Examiners must include at least 25% of all module assessments. In cases of small cohorts, all submissions may be included.

6. Examination Boards

6.1

Each Higher Education programme of study culminates in a meeting of the Board of Examiners. The Board is chaired by the Assistant Principal, who has not participated in assessing the students whose work is under consideration. All tutors who have marked assessed work are normally required to attend the Board, together with the External Examiners appointed by the relevant awarding institution. The Board considers and makes decisions about each student's achievements including, where relevant, degree classifications and the right to progress to the next level of the course.

6.2

Every Board of Examiners works within the Terms of Reference for Examination Boards for Ruskin College. These Terms of Reference are validated by the external awarding HEI, which ratifies the final awards.

7. Staff development and training in assessment

7.1

Ruskin College seeks to develop the potential of all academic staff. All full-time and part-time staff who are employed to teach are allowed time for staff development activities. This helps to ensure that tutors are, and remain, competent to undertake their assessment roles and responsibilities.

7.2

The College organises a programme of in-house events for tutors each year and there are also additional seminars and workshops within teams. Tutors are also encouraged to attend external conferences and seminars on pedagogic matters as well as in their specialist subject area.

7.3

External examiners are offered training by the HEI awarding body, which appoints them. This ensures not only that they develop the skills required but also that they understand the nature of their role, the extent of their powers and their line of accountability. They are also provided with the detailed regulatory framework, programme and module information that apply to the course they are examining.

8. Action in response to external feedback

8.1

All reports - from external examiners, inspectors, reviewers and academic auditors of all kinds - are considered by the appropriate level of management (e.g. Programme Team) and by the Academic Board. Action points are followed up by the relevant team and are monitored by the Programme Manager or the Academic Registrar and HE and Quality Administrator, according to the area of competence of the recommendation. Following any College-wide scrutiny, such as institutional review or inspection, an action plan is developed which is itself subject to monitoring and regular review.