Assessments Approval Procedure

Introduction

Under the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, higher education providers have an obligation to ensure that the awards they make meet nationally agreed standards. Summative assessment instruments are central to ensuring the quality and validity of the School's awards. This Procedure sets out the means by which individual assessment instruments are approved for a Programme or Module that has been validated under the Programme or Module Approval Procedures (set out in the document, Programme Design, Development, Monitoring and Evaluation Procedures). It is in place to ensure that summative assessments are authored and approved in such a way that they conform to sector standards.

This Procedure has been developed in line with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and the QAA's UK Quality Code for Higher Education Advice and Guidance – Assessments. It should be read in conjunction with the School's Security of Examinations and Assessments Procedures.

Scope

This procedure covers all summative assessments for validated programmes leading to an award, including alternative assessments and retake assessments. Summative examinations and assessments at the School will take a variety of forms, including written assignments, presentations, groupwork, and skills performance, and may include examinations. Some of these may be under proctored, time-constrained conditions such as an unseen examination, an in-class test or written piece of work, an in-class presentation or a piece of personal reflection.

Policy

Obtaining the prior approval of assessments by an External Examiner is a mandatory pre-condition of allowing the assessment of students to take place.

Proposals for cognate re-take or alternative assessments may either be submitted at the same time as those for the main assessment in question, or submitted for approval as required (e.g., in the event of an irrevocable problem with the original assessment instrument).

Role of External Examiners

External Examiners, as acknowledged subject are experts, play a central role in the approval process, and it is upon their judgements that the School will rely for assurance that the assessment of student performance is robust, reliable and of a standard that matches equivalent programmes offered by UK higher education institutions.
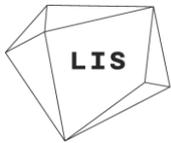
In fulfilling this role, external examiners look for evidence that:
- Individual module assessments provide appropriate coverage of the learning outcomes of a module and, collectively, of the programme as a whole;
- Assessments are of an appropriate level for the Level being assessed;
- The threshold standards in the assessment are appropriately set in alignment with the relevant national qualifications frameworks;
- The assessment instruments and rubrics enable students to achieve standards beyond the threshold that are reasonably comparable with those achieved at other UK providers;
- The processes for assessment are sound and fairly conducted.

Procedure

Summative assessments must be drafted in alignment with the relevant Programme Specification, Module Form and the School's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy, all of which are validated via the Programme Approval Procedure (set out in the document, Programme Design, Development, Monitoring and Evaluation Procedures).

The development of the assessment instrument shall be led by the Module Leader, drawing on other Faculty members as required.

Once finalised, the assessment instrument should be reviewed via the secure server by the Module Leader against the Assessment Criteria Checklist:

1. It provides students with an appropriate and fair opportunity to demonstrate that they have met those intended learning outcomes, set out in the Module Form and Programme Specification, that the assessment instrument is designed to test;
2. It provides students with the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level;
3. The marking criteria are appropriate and clear;
4. The assessment instrument is as inclusive as possible, in line with the School's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy;
5. It is expressed accurately and unambiguously.

The Director of Teaching and Learning must approve the assessment instrument, after which point it must be sent to the External Examiner by the Module Leader, along with an Assessment Approval Form (see Annex 1) normally eight weeks prior to the assessment taking place. An alternative assessment instrument (e.g., required as a result of irrevocable problems with the original assessment instrument) should wherever possible be sent to the External Examiner by the Module Leader alongside the original assessment instrument, and at the latest within four weeks of the assessment taking place.

The External Examiner will review the assessment instrument against the Assessment Criteria Checklist.
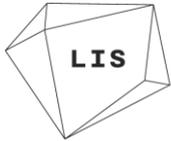
The External Examiner may approve, make minor corrections or amendments or refer back the assessment instrument.

Where the assessment instrument is referred back, the External Examiner must give explicit reasons. The Module Leader must report the matter to the Director of Teaching and Learning and must agree with the Director of Teaching and Learning proposals for meeting the External Examiner's concerns.

Once the assessment instrument has been adapted in line with External Examiner feedback, it must be sent back to the External Examiner for approval. Where the External Examiner is satisfied, they will approve the assessment instrument (with minor corrections or amendments where required).

Once approved by the External Examiner, the assessment instrument becomes final.

Security of Assessments

All summative assessments and associated documentation must be kept and transmitted under strictly confidential conditions, including during the assessments approval process. The protocol for this is set out in the [Security of Examinations and Assessments Procedures](#) (B. Protocol for the Authoring, Storage, Printing and Transport of Assessment Instruments).

Monitoring and Review

This Policy and Procedure will be reviewed annually by the Director of Teaching and Learning, with changes authorised by the Academic Council.
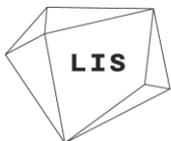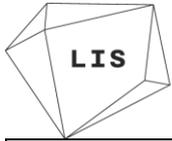
Annex 1: Assessment Approval Form
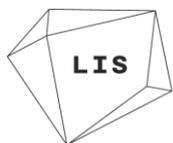
Section 1: For completion by the Module Leader

Programme of Study	
Module Title	
Module Level	
Module Leader Name	
Type of Assessment	
Date of Assessment Submission/ Examination	
Version	

Section 2: For completion by the External Examiner

Summary finding	
Option A This assessment is of an appropriate standard and is approved (minor amendments being incorporated where necessary) ☐	**Option B** A revised draft of this assessment should be submitted, taking into account the comments below ☐

Detailed findings		
The assessment instrument provides students with an appropriate and fair opportunity to demonstrate that they have met those intended learning outcomes that it is designed to test	Yes ☐	No ☐
	Comments	
The assessment instrument and associated rubric provides students with the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level	Yes ☐	No ☐
	Comments	
The marking criteria are appropriate and fair	Yes ☐	No ☐
	Comments	
The assessment is as inclusive as possible	Yes ☐	No ☐

	Comments
The assessment instrument is expressed accurately and unambiguously	**Yes** ☐ **No** ☐ *Comments*

Recommendations	
External Examiner Name	
Date	
Signature	

Name of policy/procedure:	Assessments Approval Procedure
Document owner:	Hannah Kohler (Director of Admissions and Student Support)
Date Originally Created:	02/2020
Last reviewed:	08/2021
Reviewed by:	Dr Andrew Redford (Head of Quality)
Audited by:	Academic Council
Date of Audit:	03/2020 - approved
Date of next review: (annually unless otherwise agreed)	
Related documents: (eg associated forms, underpinning processes, related policies or overarching policies)	Programme Design, Development, Monitoring and Evaluation Procedures Security of Examinations and Assessments Procedures Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy External Examiners Policy and Procedure

Version Control			
Version	Author	Date	Brief summary of changes
1	Hannah Kohler (Director of Admissions and Student Support)	29/02/2020	Separated out into separate policy.
2	Hannah Kohler (Director of Admissions and Student Support)	02/03/2020	Included greater detail on Examiner External approval form
3	Academic Council	16/03/2020	Approved with some minor wording amendments