



University of Wales
Prifysgol Cymru

Procedure for Approval of Assessments

March 2014

Procedures for Approval of Assessments

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Procedures for Approval of Assessments

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of this document

The document provides guidance on the procedures for the approval of assessment material by collaborative centres. It is designed to be used in association with the University of Wales' Taught Degrees Handbook, which contains the full set of Academic Regulations, protocols, procedures and guidance which provide the regulatory framework within which all programmes are delivered and within which external examiners are expected to operate. Taken together these documents comprise the University's Common Academic Framework for Taught Awards (CAFTA).

Queries or concerns relating to anything contained in this Document should be addressed to:

Assessments
University of Wales Registry
King Edward VII Avenue
Cathays Park
Cardiff, CF10 3NS
Tel.: +00 44 (0)29 2037 6999
Email: Assessments@wales.ac.uk

1.2 Definition of assessment

In the context of this document, the term 'assessment' is used to mean any form of evaluation which results in a mark, or grade, being given in respect of study for a University of Wales award.

Accordingly, it covers:

- i. all examinations, whether time constrained or otherwise, open book or otherwise;
- ii. in-course assignment work, i.e. briefs and marking criteria; and
- iii. project work, i.e. briefs and marking criteria.

1.3 Contents of the document

The document describes the key principles which link assessment and the securing of the standards of University of Wales' awards. It describes the procedure which the University of Wales has in place to cover the approval of assessments by external examiners. It provides guidance on dealing with assessment material in languages other than Welsh or English. It also provides information on the University's requirements for ensuring the security of assessment material during the approval process.

2. ASSESSMENT AND STANDARDS

2.1 Judging the standards of University of Wales awards

In order to ensure the maintenance of standards and quality of University awards based upon successful completion of approved programmes of study delivered at collaborative centres, assessment and examination must be conducted in accordance with the detailed and documented criteria agreed at validation, and with the requirements of the Common Academic Framework for Taught Awards approved by the University.

Assessment questions (and assignment / project briefs, where appropriate) must examine the programme syllabus, and be able to be completed in the time available. The learning outcomes and the award classification system will be the major determinants of the type of assessment and of the nature of the questions or tasks posed. It will be important that questions (or tasks) must be of a level (in terms of the academic demands which they place on students) appropriate to that of the award concerned.

At the same time, collaborative centres (and the University) will need to ensure that awards are equivalent to those of other UK degree-awarding institutions.

It is primarily through maintaining an oversight of the coverage in terms of learning outcomes and levels of assessments that the University acts to secure the standard of its awards.

2.2 Role of external examiners

External examiners, as acknowledged subject experts, play a central role in the approval process, and it is upon their judgements that the University 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 programme concerned.

External examiners therefore play an important role as guardians of the academic standards of the University's awards. In particular, the University expects external examiners to take the lead in ensuring that:

- the standards set for an award remain appropriate for the particular qualification;
- the overall standards of student performance are comparable to that within similar programmes or disciplines in other UK higher education institutions with which they are familiar;
- the processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards are sound and fairly conducted.

It is in this context that external examiners play a key role in the University's processes for the approval of assessments.

2.3 Securing standards

Section 3 of this document describes the processes which the University has in place for the approval of assessments. It is important to emphasise that having obtained the prior approval of assessments by external examiners is a mandatory pre-condition of allowing the assessment of students to take place. Proposals for cognate re-sit or re-take assessments must be submitted at the same time as those for the main assessment in question.

Collaborative centres should note that the University will not allow an assessment which contributes to a final award to proceed where the assessment in question has not received approval from the external examiner(s). It follows that failure to comply with the processes described in this document will result in the University withholding permission to conduct assessment and refusing to permit the holding of an examining board. The University may, at its discretion, take action in the event of a centre failing to comply with this requirement.

Centres should also note that the use of assessments which have not received prior approval from the external examiner/s for a programme will place their students in a situation in which they may be asked to undertake additional (i.e. approved) assessments, and any marks obtained through the unapproved assessment process will be nullified.

3. ASSESSMENT APPROVAL PROCESSES

3.1 Overview of the approval process

The main elements of the University's process for the approval of assessments are as follows:

- i. a draft assessment is prepared by the programme team of a collaborative centre;
- ii. the draft assessment, along with the associated re-sit assessment (see section 3.2 below) is submitted by the required deadline to the designated officer at the University of Wales;
- iii. the University sends the draft assessments to the appointed external examiner(s) for consideration;
- iv. external examiners review the draft assessments and provide comments and requirements for amendments (where appropriate) to the University;
- v. the University's designated officer returns the comments of external examiners and requirements for amendments to the collaborative centre together with a deadline for making any required amendments;
- vi. where amendments have been required, the collaborative centre returns the updated version of the assessment to the University for communication to the external examiner who will consider whether or not to approve the amended version of the assessment. Centres should note that in cases in which an external examiner is still not able to approve an amended assignment, steps iv, v and vi above will be repeated;
- vii. where amendments have been required, the University's designated officer secures final approval and communicates this to the centre;
- viii. the collaborative centre should confirm receipt of the approved assessments and ensure that they are kept safe and secure;
- ix. at the correct time, the collaborative centre proceeds with the approved assessment.

The process is outlined in the following process flow chart overleaf.

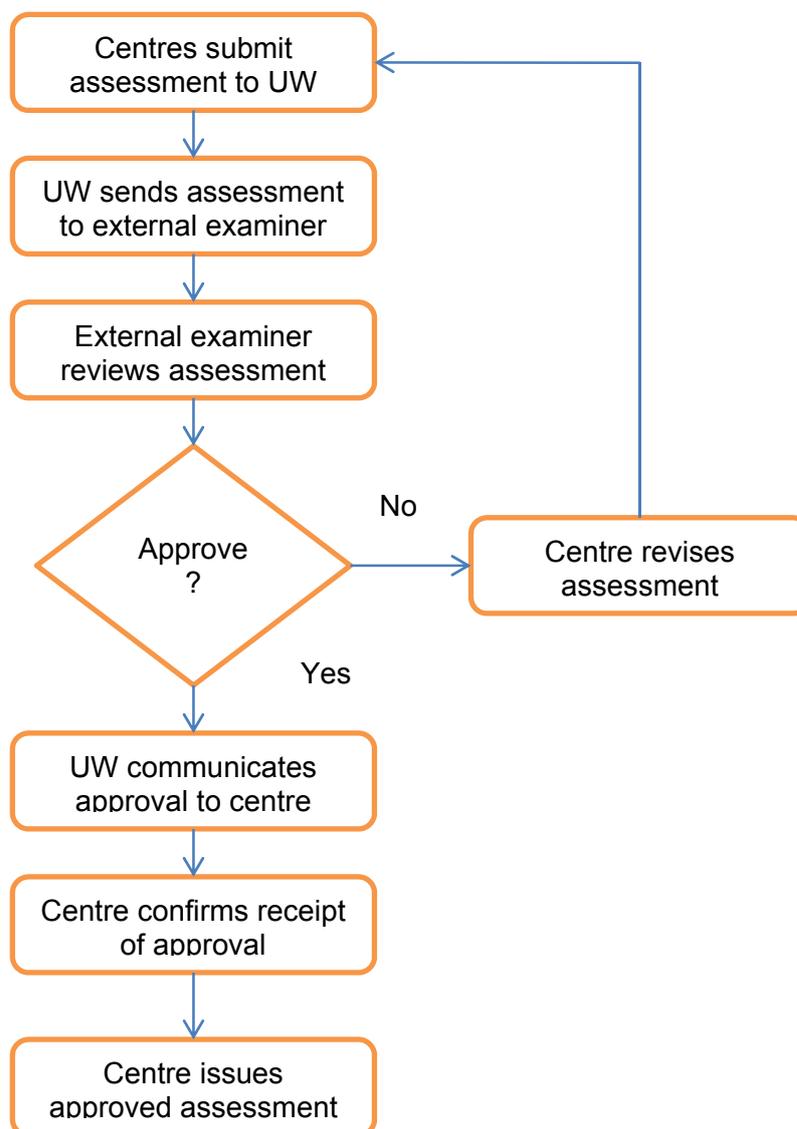


Figure 1: Process flow chart for assessment approval

3.2 Putting the process into practice

Deadlines for submitting assessments for approval

Centres are required to submit an annual assessment calendar at the commencement of each academic session. An example of the calendar can be found in Appendix A. This calendar must define the dates of all examinations, as well as dates at which other forms of assessment, such as coursework or assignments, are to be issued.

In order to allow adequate time for the University and its external examiners to complete the approval process (including re-submission and re-approval where and examiner requires it)

the University requires collaborative centres to submit assessments for approval at least **sixteen weeks** before the date at which an assessment is due.

The following table outlines the timetable the University will operate for the approval process

| <i>Stage</i> | <i>Action</i> | <i>Responsibility</i> | <i>Deadline</i> |
|--------------|--|---|--|
| 1 | Collaborative centre submits draft assessment(s) and resit paper for approval | Collaborative centre | At least 16 weeks before assessment is due |
| 2 | UW returns examiner comments and requirements to centre and specifies the date at which any amendments must be re-submitted for final approval | UW designated officer + external examiner | Within 6 weeks of receipt of assessment(s) from centre |
| 3 | (Where appropriate) centre submits amended assessment(s) for final approval | Collaborative centre | 3 weeks from receipt of examiner comments from UW |
| 4 | (Where appropriate) UW secures final approval from external examiner(s) and communicates this to centre | UW designated officer + external examiner | Within 2 weeks of receipt of amended assessment |
| 5 | Centre confirms receipt of approved assessment(s) | Collaborative centre | Within 1 week of receipt |
| 6 | Assessment is undertaken | Collaborative centre | Date specified in assessment calendar |

Table 1: Timeline for assessment approval

Collaborative centres must note that the sixteen-week deadline for submission for first draft assessments is mandatory. If assessments are not received by this deadline at the latest the University will not permit assessment (and any related meeting of an examining board) to proceed.

For its part, the University will commit to ensuring that its officers and its external examiners comply with this timetable.

Centre should note that a UW Assessment Approval Form must be submitted with each assessment. A copy of this form is included as Appendix B. Section 1 of this form must be completed by the Centre on submission of an assessment. External examiners should complete Section 2, and Section 3 is for the final sign-off from a centre confirming their receipt of the final approved version of an assessment.

What must be submitted to the University for approval?

All proposed assessments which contribute to the final award of a programme must be submitted to the University for approval. This includes examinations, in-course assignments and project work. The sixteen-week submission applies without exception to all these forms of assessment.

Dealing with re-sit assessments

In cases where students fail an assessment they are normally required to undertake a re-sit assessment. Accordingly, when collaborative centres submit an assessment for approval, they are also required to submit a draft re-sit assessment for approval at the same time. This will remove the time lag associated with gaining approval for such re-sit assessments.

What form must assessments be submitted in?

It is important to note the University's requirement (as set out in the appended regulations) that assessments submitted for approval must be in the form in which students will receive them, i.e. in addition to the questions or set tasks, assessments submitted to the University must include appropriate rubric, instructions to candidates, and details on the proposed allocation of marks.

The proposed assessments must also be accompanied by a marking guide which defines how, and on what basis, the internal examining team propose to allocate marks, along with the Draft Assessment Approval Form.

Assessments in languages other than Welsh or English

Where the language of assessment is other than Welsh or English, collaborative centres must submit a full English translation of their proposed assessment (including the marking guide), alongside the original home language version of the assessment. The University will not be held responsible for delays or subsequent cancellation of assessments or related examining boards in the event that this requirement is not followed.

4. SECURITY OF ASSESSMENT

Collaborative centres are required to ensure that all assessments, and associated documentation, are kept and transmitted under strictly confidential conditions. Any possible breaches of security must be reported to the University.

It is of vital importance throughout this process that the greatest possible care is exercised in securing the confidentiality of assessments prior to them being undertaken. All staff must be made aware of their responsibilities in this area and should ensure that their working drafts as well as completed papers cannot enter the public domain whether as hard copy or through a computer network.

When undertaking the assessment approval process, draft examination papers may be transmitted to the Registry by email, provided that they are password protected and that the password is transmitted separately.

5. FAILURES OF COMPLIANCE

Examination papers and other assessments are central to ensuring the quality and validity of the University's awards. The use of assessments which have not been properly approved by an external examiner, or any breach of security are very serious matters and will potentially invalidate the University's awards process.

The University will take robust action when any such failure of compliance is uncovered. This may result in the immediate termination of the partnership between the University and the collaborative centre, and/or candidates having to undergo a replacement examination or assessment.

University of Wales
March 2014

Appendix B: Assessment Approval Form



Assessment Approval Form

Section 1

| | |
|--|--|
| Collaborative Centre Name: | |
| Programme of Study: | |
| Module Title: | |
| Level: | |
| Type (e.g. Examination, Assignment, Coursework): | |
| Exam Date\Hand Out Date: | |
| Version: | |

Section 2

Please select one of the following options:

| | |
|---|---|
| <u>Option A</u> The assessment is of an appropriate standard and can be printed (minor amendments being incorporated where necessary). <input type="checkbox"/> | <u>Option B</u> A revised draft of the assessment should be submitted, taking the below comments into account. <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <u>Comments/Recommendations:</u> | |
| External Examiner Name: | |
| Date: | |
| Signature: | |

Section 3

| |
|---|
| I hereby certify that the draft assessment version noted above has been approved by the External Examiner, and will be the final version of the assessment. |
| Name: |
| Date: |
| Signature: |

Please forward your completed form and any queries to: assessments@wales.ac.uk



Assessment Submission Checklist

In the context of the procedure for approval of assessments, the term 'assessment' is used to mean any form of evaluation which results in a mark, or grade, being given in respect of study for a University of Wales award.

Accordingly, it covers:

- i. all examinations, whether time constrained or otherwise, open book or otherwise;
- ii. in-course assignment work, i.e. briefs and marking criteria; and
- iii. project work, i.e. briefs and marking criteria.

Please ensure the following are included in your assessment submission

- both first and re-sit papers in the form in which students will receive them;
- English translation alongside original home language version (if applicable);
- full rubric, instructions to candidates and details of proposed allocation marks;
- marking scheme;
- files are password protected (passwords to be sent in a separate e-mail)
- Assessment Approval Form (section 1 only to be completed by the Collaborative Centre)

Assessments must be submitted to the University of Wales **no later than sixteen weeks** prior to date that assessment is to be taken as either an e-mail attachment sent to assessments@wales.ac.uk or via the University of Wales upload facility (details upon request).

The University of Wales will acknowledge receipt of your assessments within 10 working days.