

ACADEMIC REGULATIONS

FOR

HIGHER EDUCATION

PROGRAMMES

To be applicable from: September 2023
Approved by Academic Board: v0523

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1. Introduction

1.1 University Centre at Blackburn College (UCBC)

These regulations apply only to Blackburn College's Higher Education provision, specifically to programmes of prescribed Higher Education, and the components and contained awards thereof. They should be read as applying to all such Higher Education provision offered by the College irrespective of the locus of management and/or delivery, and to strictly no other part of the College's activities.

University Centre at Blackburn College is the Higher Education arm of Blackburn College. It manages and delivers all prescribed Higher Education within the College.

To avoid repetition, this distinction between the College as the legal entity and the University Centre as the delivery arm is not made in the text of these regulations.

All references to Blackburn College herein should be understood to refer to its prescribed Higher Education provision only.

Where the context requires, references to staff posts should be taken to be the appropriate posts within the University Centre staff.

1.2 Objects

Objects

The objects of Blackburn College are to enhance the quality of life and serve its communities by:

- Providing a wide range of vocationally and professionally relevant educational opportunities based on a commitment to innovation, participation and lifelong learning;
- Facilitating learning by the provision of high-quality teaching, informed and supported by the research and scholarship of staff;
- Advancing the community of learning by engaging in research in the sciences, scholarship in the humanities, and in artistic creation;
- Educating students to search for truth, to think critically, to communicate effectively, and to apply their knowledge for the common good
- Maintaining a commitment to the truth, integrity and coherence of its provision;
- The example and influence of its corporate life.

1.3 Awarding Powers

Blackburn College currently holds no degree awarding powers. All of its Higher Education provision is validated by or franchised from institutions that hold the powers to make the awards offered and is regulated by formal agreements with those institutions.

1.4 Scope & Application

These regulations outline the structures, policies and procedures that contribute to academic quality assurance and enhancement at Blackburn College.

Unless explicitly stated otherwise, these regulations apply to all taught Higher Education programmes at Blackburn College. Where Blackburn College programmes lead to awards of other institutions, these regulations shall apply to the maximum extent possible within the requirements of the relevant awarding body, but in the case of conflict of regulations those of the awarding body shall take precedence. Where practicable, Blackburn College will seek formal recognition of these regulations by its partner institutions.

These regulations shall continue in force until and unless amended or revoked by the Academic Board.

These regulations supersede all previous regulations and shall apply to all Blackburn College staff and students from the date of implementation.

1.5 Competent Authority

The final authority regarding interpretation and implementation of Blackburn College Policies and Regulations shall be with the Academic Board.

The Academic Board may, by minuted resolution, constitute sub-committees to administer the operation of the whole of these regulations, or any part thereof. Unless the resolution creating such a sub-committee explicitly limits its powers, each/any sub-committee shall have the authority to decide matters on behalf of the Academic Board and shall report its decisions in writing to be included in the minutes of the next scheduled Academic Board meeting.

Where the Academic Board is satisfied that these regulations result in a significant disadvantage to any student who was already enrolled on their programme prior to the date of implementation or change, it shall have discretion to authorise variations from these regulations to ensure that the student is treated fairly. All such variations must be explicitly authorised in writing by the Academic Board.

2 Structure

2.1 Revising Authority

This document (Academic Regulations for Higher Education programmes) may only be changed by minuted resolution of the full Academic Board. Such changes have effect from the date of the Academic Board meeting at which they are approved unless a later date is explicitly included in the relevant resolution.

Authority to approve all Academic Processes and Procedures relating to the implementation and administration of these regulations (including all rules, protocols, procedures, guidance, administrative arrangements and forms pertaining to them) can be delegated to other sub-committees, but this delegation may be revoked or amended by minuted resolution of the Academic Board.

A definitive version of this document, including all revisions approved by the Academic Board, will be maintained by the Quality Unit.

2.2 Application

As stated in section 1.4, these regulations apply to awards it delivers on behalf of its validating partners only to the extent permitted by the regulations of the relevant awarding body.

3 Award Design, Validation and Review

3.1 Appropriate Content

Blackburn College awards and constituent modules may focus on any area of academic discourse or of vocational and / or social interest, including areas that may involve controversial views or beliefs, subject to the following constraints:

- Study of the subject area selected must reasonably be considered to contribute to the objects of Blackburn College.
- Study must not expose students or staff to significant risks of physical, mental, moral or spiritual harm.
- Curriculum design must allow for the testing, discussion and evaluation of any assertions made and of any implicit underlying assumptions, beliefs and values in the light of all available evidence.
- The right of staff and students to hold, express and promote personal views and/or beliefs must be protected, provided that any such expression is lawful and does not intrude unreasonably on others' rights to hold different views and/or beliefs.

3.2 Award Design

3.2.1 Principles

- All Blackburn College awards are consistent with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (QAA, 2018) and the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) (2014).
- Awards are defined by a series of benchmarks relating to the general level of knowledge and skills required to register for the award, and the qualification, credit volume and study levels required to achieve the awards as defined in the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ).
- To the greatest extent possible within the requirements of the Quality Code, the requirements of any relevant professional and/or statutory body and the reasonable 'fitness to practice' expectations of any employment area connected with the award(s) delivered, and Blackburn College's Appropriateness to Study Policy and procedure, Blackburn College programmes are designed to have non-discriminatory programme outcomes and core competences.
- Blackburn College awards may be structured so that programmes incorporate intermediate awards with appropriate learning outcomes.

- Qualifications can only be conferred or recommended where a student has registered for and successfully completed a programme of study leading to an approved award.
- English is the primary language of learning and assessment for all awards except where the study area involves foreign languages.
- Where an award is recognised by and subject to the regulations of a Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) and there is a conflict between these regulations and those of the PSRB, then the regulations of the PSRB shall normally have precedence.

3.2.2 Fitness to Practice / Fitness for employment

Blackburn College programmes are designed to enhance students' employability and will often be targeted at particular professions and/or employment sectors where employers have reasonable non-academic expectations of a student's fitness to practice or to be employed in that sector. Where necessary:

- to protect the public;
 - to protect Blackburn College against a legal action brought by someone claiming to have suffered loss or harm as a result of a student proving after qualification to be unfit for employment or to practise;
 - to ensure students do not waste time and money seeking a qualification for which they are not suited or seeking employment for which they are not suited;
- or
- to comply with the requirements of professional and/or statutory bodies.

HE Quality may approve Statements of Professional Standards in consultation with internal and external partners.

These statements may constrain admission to programmes, may constrain the application of other parts of these regulations and may be used to determine a student's fitness to continue on their programme of study.

Any such Statement of Professional Standards cannot be imposed retrospectively and must be given in writing to prospective students before enrolment, preferably as part of the admissions process.

Statements of Professional Standards must be expressed in terms that will be clear to both students and prospective students in terms of their impact on admissions, on their programme and on students studying on the programme.

3.2.3 Modules, Credits and Levels

The College defines its taught Higher Education provision in terms of modules, credits and levels.

Modules

Each module is self-contained with defined learning outcomes and a specified volume of credit at one level/intellectual standard only. Modules can also stand alone as coherent credit bearing learning experiences in their own right.

Modules may have specified pre-requisites. Where these are stated, they may determine the order in which particular modules or combinations of modules are undertaken, or restrict the choice of optional modules throughout a programme of study.

Essential elements of learning within a named programme award may be indicated through the specification of core/mandatory modules at validation. Such modules must be passed for the named award to be conferred.

Module descriptors may contain very specific subject-related material or may be expressed in general terms that are to be contextualised at the point of delivery.

Modules contributing to programmes leading to a professional qualification may integrate academic and professional components.

Blackburn College takes care to consider the views of students in relation to changes to their programmes of studies but reserves the right to change the modules offered and/or the content of individual modules without notice to the students affected. Blackburn College will ensure that students who have legitimately registered for a named award will be able to follow an appropriate series of modules to qualify for the named award within the normal registration period.

Credits

In determining the number of credits required to achieve an award, Blackburn College recognises one credit as equivalent to ten hours of notional academic learning time.

A standard academic year of full-time study equates to 120 credits (1200 notional hours).

Qualification Levels

Each module is placed at one of eight academic levels. These are:

Levels 0 to 3 – Further Education Levels

Certain programmes may contain modules at level 3 or below. These modules contribute to HE awards only by providing underpinning knowledge and/or preparatory skills. They do not form part of the summative classification structure of any HE award.

These modules are allocated a level by reference to the challenge and content of comparable FE awards and have assessment strategies based on those of FE awards.

Level 4 – Certificate Level

Level 4 modules provide the opportunity to demonstrate:

- knowledge of the underlying concepts and principles associated with the area of study, and an ability to evaluate and interpret these within the context of that area of study
- an ability to present, evaluate and interpret qualitative and quantitative data, in order to develop lines of argument and make sound judgements in accordance with basic theories and concepts of their subject(s) of study.

A Level 4 module should contribute substantially to the learners' capacity to:

- evaluate the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems related to their area(s) of study and/or work
- communicate the results of their study/work accurately and reliably, and with structured and coherent arguments
- undertake further training and develop new skills within a structured and managed environment.
- demonstrate the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of some personal responsibility.

Level 5 – Intermediate Level

Level 5 modules provide the opportunity to demonstrate:

- knowledge and critical understanding of the well-established principles of the area of study, and of the way in which those principles have developed
- ability to apply underlying concepts and principles outside the context in which they were first studied, including, where appropriate, the application of those principles in an employment context
- knowledge of the main methods of enquiry in the subject(s) relevant to the named award, and ability to evaluate critically the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems in the field of study

- an understanding of the limits of their knowledge, and how this influences analyses and interpretations based on that knowledge.

A Level 5 module should contribute substantially to the learners' capacity to:

- use a range of established techniques to initiate and undertake critical analysis of information, and to propose solutions to problems arising from that analysis
- effectively communicate information, arguments and analysis in a variety of forms to specialist and non-specialist audiences, and deploy key techniques of the discipline effectively
- undertake further training, develop existing skills and acquire new competences that will enable them to assume significant responsibility within organisations.
- demonstrate the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and decision making.

Level 6 – Honours Level

Level 6 modules provide the opportunity to demonstrate:

- a systematic understanding of key aspects of their field of study, including acquisition of coherent and detailed knowledge, at least some of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of defined aspects of a discipline
- an ability to deploy accurately established techniques of analysis and enquiry within a discipline
- conceptual understanding that enables the student:
 - to devise and sustain arguments, and/or to solve problems, using ideas and techniques, some of which are at the forefront of a discipline
 - to describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research, or equivalent advanced scholarship, in the discipline
- an appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge
- the ability to manage their own learning, and to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources (for example, refereed research articles and/or original materials appropriate to the discipline).

A Level 6 module should contribute substantially to the learners' ability to:

- apply the methods and techniques that they have learned to review, consolidate, extend and apply their knowledge and understanding, and to initiate and carry out projects
- critically evaluate arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and data (that may be incomplete), to make judgements, and to frame appropriate questions to achieve a solution - or identify a range of solutions - to a problem
- communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.
- demonstrate the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
 - the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility

- decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts
- the learning ability needed to undertake appropriate further training of a professional or equivalent nature.

Level 7 – Masters Level

Level 7 modules provide the opportunity to demonstrate:

- a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice
- a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship
- originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline
- conceptual understanding that enables the student:
 - to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline
 - to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.

A Level 7 module should contribute substantially to the learners' capacity to:

- deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level
- continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level.
- demonstrate the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
 - the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
 - decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations
 - the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.

3.2.4 Qualification Structures

The range of qualifications offered by the College, and their structures in terms of their minimum content at various academic levels (based on a typical full-time academic year of 120 credits) will be determined by those of the awarding body.

Foundation Years

Any of the qualification structures adopted at Blackburn College may be extended by the addition of a foundation year (also known as a 'Year 0') comprising 120 credits at level 3. All

such foundation years will be integral to the design of the final award and will provide a combination of knowledge and skills appropriately underpinning the final award. Foundation years will be qualificatory and will not contribute to the summative classification of the final award. The results achieved in the foundation year will, however, be included in students' final transcripts.

Placement, 'Sandwich', or Industry Years

Any of the qualification structures adopted at Blackburn College may be extended by the inclusion of a Placement, 'Sandwich', or Industry Year of up to one academic year (or part-time equivalent). The placement must contain learning activities appropriate to a student's final award, and must be approved, monitored and assessed by College staff. Placements may be included in programmes either by specific inclusion within programme validations or by the validation of separate placement programmes and their approval for incorporation within specified programmes. Students' placement achievements will be acknowledged by the inclusion of a module of appropriate title, level and credit value on students' transcripts. The grades students achieve in the assessment of their placement learning will be included in their transcripts. These grades will not contribute to the classification of final awards unless specific provision is made in the relevant validation documentation for them to do so. The validation of placement programmes may make provision for appropriate variation in the title of students' final awards.

3.2.5 Curriculum Design

Each programme is intended to address the QAA Benchmark Statements in the relevant subject area at a level consistent with the award. Honours degrees are designed to accord with the Benchmark unless a reasoned case can be made for departing from the standard. Programme outcomes should not normally be replicated in full from the Benchmark Statement, but contextualised to the curriculum design. Lower awards are constructed so that they contribute in an appropriate manner to the academic progression towards an Honours degree.

Foundation Degrees are designed to meet in full the expectations of the QAA Foundation Degree qualification benchmark.

All programmes are designed to provide the opportunity to develop transferable skills. In some cases, these are embedded within academic modules, in others they are taught separately.

3.2.6 Combined Awards

Only three forms of combined award, 'joint', 'major-minor' and 'combined', are permitted.

'Joint' awards are made up of equal sized packages, each carrying half the credits of the parent award, and have a title made up of the titles of these packages linked by the word 'and', e.g. History and Philosophy.

‘Major-minor’ awards are made up of unequal sized packages, one carrying two-thirds of the credits of a parent award and the other one-third of a different parent award, and have a title made up of the titles of these packages linked by the word ‘with’, e.g. English with Philosophy.

‘Combined’ awards are made up of equal sized packages each carrying one-third of the credits of a parent award. Combined awards have a title made up of the titles of these packages linked by a comma and the word ‘and’, e.g. English, History and Philosophy.

3.2.7 Naming of Awards

Subject Title

Each award should bear a subject title reflecting its principal subject area, subject to the following criteria.

- Subject titles should reflect the subject area(s) of the majority of the material studied. The inclusion of material from another subject area, or from a narrower specialism within the principal subject area, amounting to 25% or less of the credits of an award should not be reflected in the subject title of the award.
- Awards comprising substantial study in two or three distinct subject areas should follow the naming conventions for Combined Awards whether or not they were validated as Combined Awards as described in-3.2.6 above.
- Awards comprising substantial study in more than three distinct subject areas should be titled ‘Combined Studies’.
- Certificates of Higher Education and Diplomas of Higher Education awarded as contained awards of programmes leading to higher awards should normally be given a subject title appropriate to the study that an individual student has completed successfully. Where there is insufficient coherence to a student’s successful study for a named award to be made, these awards may be made without a subject title.

Award Title

Certificate of Higher Education Named Award

A Certificate of Higher Education programme will lead to the award of Certificate of Higher Education Named Award:

- The award of Cert HE is reserved for the programmes that have been validated to have a named Cert HE target award.
- This is not an exit award but an award in its own right.
- This award is Level four and is normally a one-year full time programme.

Foundation Degrees

Foundation Degree programmes will lead to the award of either FdA, FdSc or FdEng:

- The award of FdA is generally used in art and design, the arts and humanities and areas of social science and business studies.
- The award of FdSc is generally used in areas of science, mathematics, their applications and in certain other disciplines of an analytical nature.
- The award of FdEng is reserved for programmes which provide a technologically broad-based education with an emphasis on engineering applications.

Bachelor's Degrees

First degree programmes will lead to the following awards:

- The award of Bachelor of Arts (BA) is generally used in art and design, the arts and humanities and areas of social science and business studies.
- The award of Bachelor of Science (BSc) is generally used in areas of engineering, technology, science, mathematics, their applications, and in certain other disciplines of an analytical nature.
- The title of Bachelor of Engineering (BEng) is reserved for programmes which provide a technologically broad-based education with an emphasis on engineering applications.
- The title Bachelor of Laws (LLB) is reserved for programmes of specialised study of law which are recognised by the relevant professional body.

Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PgCE) and Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)

- The Postgraduate Certificate in Education is a teaching qualification with the majority of its modules at level 7 and is awarded to graduate students who have successfully completed a specialist teaching programme.
- The Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) is a similar award to the PgCE except that the majority of its academic components are at level 6.

Taught Master's Degree

Programmes at level 7 may lead to the following awards:

- The title Master of Arts (MA) is generally used in art and design, the arts and humanities and areas of social science and business studies.
- The title Master of Science (MSc) is generally used in areas of engineering, technology, science and mathematics, their applications, and in certain other disciplines of an analytical nature.
- The title Master of Engineering (MEng) is reserved for integrated master's programmes amounting to four years' full-time equivalent study which provide a

technologically broad-based education with an emphasis on engineering applications and which contain at least 120 credits at level 7.

- The title Master of Business Administration (MBA) is reserved for programmes which focus on the general principles and functions of management and the development of managerial skills.
- The title Master of Laws (LLM) is reserved for programmes of specialised study of law.

Other Awards

All other awards may be made across the whole range of the Blackburn College academic portfolio and may be awarded in a particular specialism. In these cases, the area of specialism may be reflected in the title of the award.

Designation of Combined Awards

If a differentiated designation (e.g. BA or BSc) is permitted for the award then the designation of the award as Arts, Sciences, Engineering, etc. will normally be determined as follows:

- Where the major package of a major-minor award is based in the Arts (e.g. art and design, humanities, social/media studies, health studies, business or management) an Arts designation is used.
- Where the major element is based in the Sciences (e.g. mathematics, science, social/health science, technology or their applications) a Science designation is used.
- Where the major element is based in Engineering, an Engineering designation is used.
- Where both elements of a joint award are based in the Arts, an Arts designation is used.
- Where both elements of a joint award are based in the Sciences, a Science designation is used.
- Where both elements of a joint award are based in Engineering, an Engineering designation is used.
- Where the parts of a joint award come from different cognate areas then any Engineering package appears first in the title, followed by any Science-based package and then by any Arts based package. The award has the designation of the first named package. e.g. a joint honours award made up of Physics and Engineering would be designated BEng (Hons) Engineering and Physics.
- Where the packages of a combined award come from more than one area the designation of the award is based on the area from which the majority of the credits are derived and the title of the award is made up with the packages from the majority area appearing first. (e.g. BA English, Education and Computing). Where packages are taken from all three areas, Arts, Engineering and Sciences, then a Science designation is used. (e.g. BSc Electronics, Computing and Music)

In exceptional circumstances an alternative designation for a particular award may be agreed at validation. Any deviation from the pattern above must be explicit in the validation documentation and be supported by a satisfactory rationale.

3.2.8 Design Guidelines

General

The *Higher Education Credit Framework for England: Guidance on academic credit arrangements in Higher Education in England* provides guidance on the use of credit in the design of programmes leading to the main Higher Education qualifications awarded.

UCBC has established 20-credit modules as the norm, equal to a total of 200 hours of student effort. Therefore, UCBC has approved the implementation of a credit framework which will be based on a **20-credit model**. This will also allow modules to be offered in multiples of 20-credits for Foundation Degrees with top-up years, as these programmes enable condonation of up to 20-credits. However, for three and four-year honours programmes, weightings of up to 30-credits will also be considered, as this falls within a condonable range.

NB: Weightings above 20-credits for Foundation Degrees with top-up years and 30-credits for honours programmes will not normally be permitted, unless the programme team present a strong rationale that is supported and approved at the Development, Review and Approval Panel (DRAP). This is because an inability to condone credit weightings greater than the weightings specified could potentially impact negatively on students' achievement.

3.2.9 Aegrotat Awards

In instances where 'exceptional circumstances' have resulted in students not fully completing the final year of their Award, which includes Level 6 of a three-year honours programme or an honours top-up year, an Aegrotat Award (unclassified honours) may be offered. This will be subject to the discretion of the Award Board and formal approval by relevant Awarding Partner's relevant body.

In the case of Lancaster University, formal approvals will be granted by the University Committee of Senate via the Classification and Assessment Review Board. For further details on the specific requirements of this process, please refer to Section 21 of the *Regional Teaching Partnership Regulations*.

3.3 External Subject Specialist Membership of Validation Panels

3.3.1 External academic subject specialists

External academic subject specialists will be members of Approval Panels as detailed below.

External Academic Subject Specialists will either be

- sourced independently from the programme team, by the Higher Education Quality Unit

or

- nominated by the relevant UCBC Assistant Principal or Head of School and subject to approval by the Higher Education Quality Unit.

All appointments will be approved by the Academic Registrar (or nominee).

The External Academic Subject Specialist should normally:

- Reside in the United Kingdom.
- Hold an academic post at an appropriate level of seniority, in a relevant subject area to the programme(s) under consideration, in an institution judged to be delivering awards of comparable standards. Normally they will hold programme leadership or Senior Lecturer status within a Higher Education Institution with awarding powers.
- Have substantial experience and competence in the subject area to command the respect of academic peers. Normally they will hold a minimum of a qualification at level 7 (in the Framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, 2008) in a relevant subject area and/or demonstrate a significant research profile.
- Have no potential conflict of interest or other impediment to the impartial judgement of validation proposals. For example, the panel member should not have been involved in or consulted on the proposal prior to the panel event, acted as an External Examiner or Programme Consultant within the School in the last five years, or have any pecuniary interest in any aspect of the programme or personal or professional relationships with members of staff involved with the programme.

External panel members who do not hold academic posts may be appointed on a case by case basis at the absolute discretion of the in the first instance by the Academic Registrar (or nominee). Such panel members may be appointed in order to ensure an appropriate balance of academic, professional and industrial expertise within a Panel, and for the relevance of their background in relation to targeted recruitment groups, and knowledge of graduate employment in the subject area.

3.3.2 Student Membership of Validation Panels

Student representatives will be members of Approval Panels as detailed below.

The student representatives will be sourced independently by HE Quality and/or the Student Engagement and Events Officer. The appointment of Student Panel Members will be approved by the Academic Registrar (or nominee).

The student representative should normally: -

- Be registered on a Higher Education programme taught at Blackburn College, and studying at least at level four.

- Have no potential conflict of interest or other impediment to the impartial judgement of validation proposals. For instance, they should not have studied the programme(s) under consideration, or a programme which is taught substantially by academic staff also teaching on the programme under consideration.

3.4 Development, Review and Approval

The Development, Review and Approval Panel reports to Academic Board.

All proposals for programme development, review, amendment, suspension and closure should be considered and approved by the Development, Review and Approval Panel, subject to final agreement of Academic Board.

The Development, Review and Approval Panel is the central vehicle for considering the development of new programmes, refreshing of existing provision, and closure/suspension of outdated provision across HE.

The Panel is chaired by the Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality

Its other members comprise:

Assistant Principal for Higher Education

Heads of School

Head of Finance

Director of Quality Innovation

Director of Business Development and External Engagement

Director of Marketing and Communication

Representation from the Students' Union.

The Panel meets periodically during each year to handle the business of programme development, review and closure.

The Panel will ensure its processes align with the College's Business Planning cycle.

The Panel will submit proposals periodically to Academic Board and not less than once a year for its final approval.

The Panel will coordinate its outcomes with validating partners to ensure proper development of business schedules.

It will receive from the Assistant Principal: Higher Education or Heads of School:

- New programme proposals
- Major and minor amendments to current provision
- Programme closures and suspensions

New programme proposals will be considered in the light of:

- strategic fit
- a strong rationale
- market intelligence showing student demand
- competitor analysis
- employer demand/skills gap analysis

Programme closure/suspension of recruitment proposals will be considered in the light of:

- Strategic fit
- Poor recruitment, retention or student satisfaction
- Lower than expected quality (Courses in Action process)

Any closure decision will be taken in the light of applicant, student and staff impacts and must include specific arrangements to protect the rights of applicants and students and ensure that, where necessary transfer arrangements are in place for affected students.

Please also refer to the 'Programme Development, Amendment and Closure Process'.

3.5 Validation

3.5.1 General

All new programmes must be validated using the method prescribed by the validating institution or awarding body as Blackburn College does not possess its own degree awarding powers. For any programme to be accepted for validation or revalidation it must have been approved by the Development, Review and Approval Panel (see section 3.4).

3.6 Minor Amendments, Major Amendments & Single Module Approvals

3.6.1 Minor Amendments

The power to approve Minor Amendments is delegated to the Development, Review and Approval Panel.

A Minor Amendment is defined as a minor change to the subject matter, method of delivery, teaching learning or assessment strategy of an existing validated module or programme of study; that does not affect the programme Learning Outcomes and has no significant resource implications.

This may include:

- Changes in emphasis in Teaching and Learning Strategy for a module(s), of up to a quarter of the award; e.g. Move from 80% lecture: 20% practical assessment to 50% lecture: 50% tutorial
- Minor changes in assessment strategies and weightings for modules; e.g. 100% exam to 50% exam: 50% coursework
- Minor changes of topics taught within a module including updating a module with relevant new material
- The introduction of a new optional module (i.e. not part of the core modules) of up to 20 credits in size
- The introduction of a new delivery mode for a single module of up to 20 credits in size; e.g. move from face-to-face to distance learning. The introduction of a new delivery mode greater than 20 credits is classed as a Major Amendment.
- A change to the title of an individual module

The change to the title of any award is classed as a Major Amendment.

The amendment concerned must be a genuinely minor one which does not itself, or in combination with other previous Minor Amendments, constitute what is in effect a Major Amendment or Revalidation of the programme.

The validation of a minor amendment is a single-stage process. Minor amendments are normally considered by the Development, Review and Approval Panel or may be considered and approved as a Chair's Action where needed. Minor amendments are not referred to the Academic Board for final validation. In the case of Minor amendments for the University of South Wales (USW) provision then these are approved by USW.

The relevant External Examiner(s) and, where relevant, the Programme Consultant for the programme must be consulted on the proposed amendment and must provide comments to inform the validation decision.

The minor amendment process may result in validation of the desired change or refusal of the change. Validation may be granted subject to conditions and/or recommendations.

3.6.2 Major Amendments

The power to approve Major Amendments is reserved to the Academic Board, and would normally require the approval of the validating or awarding body, who would also prescribe the procedure, and should be proposed via the Development, Review and Approval Panel (section 3.4).

All changes to programmes that exceed the limits imposed above on Minor Amendments and that the relevant panel feels fall short of full revalidations are classed as Major Amendments.

The amendment concerned must not itself, or in combination with other previous amendments, constitute what is in effect a revalidation of the programme.

Major amendments may be considered by the next scheduled Development, Review and Approval Panel meeting.

The relevant External Examiner(s) and, where relevant, the Programme Consultant, for the programme must be consulted on the proposed amendment and must provide comments to inform the validation decision.

Where a Major Amendment relates to an active or recently active programme, the views of current and recently qualified students of the programme should be sought and reported to the relevant validation panel.

The major amendment process may result in validation of the desired change or refusal of the change. Validation may be granted subject to conditions and/or recommendations.

3.6.3 Single Module Approvals

The Minor Amendments procedure may be used to validate individual modules prior to their inclusion in an academic award. Single module approvals require the support of a suitably qualified External Examiner or external subject specialist.

3.6.4 Updating of Combined Awards & Packages

Where the packages of a combined award are sub-sets of the modules of particular 'parent' awards, these packages must remain in accord with the contents of the relevant parent award. In particular, the effect of any change in the structure of a parent award (e.g. changes of mandatory and/or optional modules) on related packages must be considered at the time of the amendment of the parent programme. Should such changes imply a change to any package then the package must be amended promptly.

Any amendments made to the content, assessment, etc. of any module within a parent award will be immediately applicable to any related package(s) without further validation documentation. Changes may not be made to parent awards by means of amendments to the packages of a combined award.

Where packages are not so constructed they must be reviewed and re-validated as if they were freestanding programmes. Any amendments made to the content, assessment, etc. of any module within a package will be immediately applicable to any related package(s) without further validation documentation.

Changes made to packages by either of these methods will apply immediately to all combined awards containing the revised packages.

3.6.5 Review of Combined Awards

Where a package is taken from a particular parent award, the performance of students, etc. on the package is to be reported within the annual report for the parent award, taking due care to differentiate between student groups where necessary.

In addition, an annual programme review (APR) must be completed for each combined award. These may be aggregated into single documents containing a number of related awards. These overarching APRs should discuss all matters relevant to the students on the relevant award(s) but need not repeat subject specific information that is covered by the APRs of parent awards.

Where a package is not reviewed as part of a parent award it must be reviewed in detail in at least one of the related APRs.

3.7 Withdrawal of Validation / Programme Closure

The Assistant Principal: Higher Education or a Head of School may recommend the withdrawal of programme approval if it has evidence that the programme is no longer meeting minimum acceptable academic standards or where recruitment levels are no longer viable.

The final decision on the withdrawal of programme approval rests with Academic Board on the advice of the Development, Review and Approval Panel.

Where a programme is closed to further recruitment for any reason, Blackburn College will ensure that adequate standards and the learning experience are maintained for any students remaining on the programme, or that students are enabled to transfer to a suitable alternative programme at Blackburn College or elsewhere. Academic Board may place conditions on the withdrawal of programme approval in order to ensure the quality of learning opportunities for remaining students.

3.8 Annual Programme Reviews (APR) and Self-Evaluation Document (SED)

Review should be a self-critical exercise focusing on the operation of an individual or range of programmes/awards within the context of the needs of internal and external stakeholders, developments in the discipline/subject area and new approaches to teaching and learning relevant to that area. Reviews build on the outcome of the annual and periodic monitoring exercise and provide programme teams with the opportunity to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of its provision and identify the future direction of the curriculum, its delivery and assessment.

3.8.1 APR and SED Process

Stage 1

All APR reports are submitted to a designated Peer Reviewer (in a standard template) by the Programme Team for initial approval. The Peer Review Team normally comprise a Senior member of the Quality team, the Assistant Principal: HE and Heads of School.

Stage 2

The Peer Review Team undertake internal quality auditing of the APRs and report their findings to the APR author(s), who will make any amendments, or changes to the document.

Stage 3

The APR author then submits the revised APR to the relevant Peer Reviewer for second approval and feedback at the APR Review Day.

Stage 4

APRs are presented at an APR Review Day by the Programme Leader, which will contain an internal panel of senior managers, and would also normally include a representative from the relevant Awarding Partner.

Stage 5

The Panel review the APR reports and approve, or return the APRs to the Programme Teams for final amendments.

Stage 6

HE Quality then receive the final drafts of APRs for approval and submit the final versions to the appropriate to the appropriate Awarding Partner.

The actions arising from programme level actions in the Quality Improvement Plan of each APR also help to form the basis of the Higher Education-level Quality Improvement Plan, all of which feeds into the annual Self Evaluation Document for Higher Education which is considered by Academic Board and the College's Governors at the Learning and Quality Committee.

3.9 Approval and Audit of Academic Staffing

Blackburn College requires that all staff engaged in teaching activities are appropriately academically qualified, supported and developed for the roles in which they are deployed. Blackburn College uses the processes of validation and revalidation of its collaborative partners to assure itself that its academic staff are suitably qualified. Where staff changes are made in between validation and revalidation of a programme of study the collaborative partner's processes are followed to gain approval for the new member of staff.

4 Academic Awards and Assessments

Notifications

References in this chapter to students being notified ‘in writing’ refer to written notifications sent by post to a student’s last known home address, emails sent to the student’s College email account and/or posts to the student’s College Moodle homepage. Notifications sent by post are deemed to have been received on the second working day after the date of posting. Notifications by email or postings to Moodle homepages are deemed to have been received on the day following the date sent or posted.

4.1 Assessment Guidelines

4.1.1 Context

Blackburn College aims to ensure that its assessment processes are robust and reliable. Great significance is placed on ensuring that assessment practices are appropriate and address the programme aims and learning outcomes.

Assessment processes aim to facilitate the making of judgements about a student’s achievement of academic standards set in terms of knowledge, skills and understanding. All Higher Education programmes within Blackburn College incorporate specific assessment strategies which include a variety of tasks and projects. The underpinning themes that inform the assessment processes reflect the need to educate within an inclusive, equitable, ethical and objective framework.

These principles require assessment processes to be embedded within the learning and teaching strategies, and include diagnostic, formative, summative and synoptic assessment and feedback. These ensure there is equivalence in terms of the assessment demands on students from programmes of a similar level and ensures that there is ongoing review to avoid over-assessment. Assessment tasks ensure that students have opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and skills in different ways. The process requires the drawing up of assessment schedules which are staged to ensure that the assessment facilitates deep learning and targeted development of employability skills. Appropriate feedback on assessment is seen as the cornerstone of any effective assessment process. The processes within Blackburn College prioritise this through a system of feedback which provides timely, formative, constructive comments with recommendations for further improvement.

Equitable and ethical principles applied ensure that assessment tasks, schedules and marking criteria relate to, and conform to, programme and modules learning outcomes. Student support systems ensure that students are aware and understand the assessments tasks, criteria and procedures at appropriate times. The process will ensure that it avoids bias in terms of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion or belief, age, class or disability. Where assessment takes place on-line the systems will ensure that effective protocols are adhered to. The process will also explicitly incorporate requirements for effective evaluation by students, staff and quality committees.

Objectivity and regulatory requirements are reflected in the systems in place to facilitate robust impartial decisions on progression and achievement in line with levels of the programme, award and academic infrastructure.

4.1.2 Aims of Assessment

Each programme will have a variety of assessment methods to facilitate effective learning and include a range of approaches to learning. There will be an implementation plan which details the procedures that will ensure that this policy is applied and reviewed. This plan aims to ensure that standards are maintained and enhanced with reference to external reference points including the academic infrastructure and professional, statutory and/or regulatory bodies.

The main aims of assessment are:

- To set and facilitate student achievement of academic standards in line with the academic infrastructure.
- To assist in measuring, rewarding and celebrating student learning.
- To measure objectively, record, and report on student progress and achievement of programme and module learning outcomes.
- To address gaps in learning and understanding through effective feedback.
- To facilitate the application of learning in diverse contexts.
- To offer opportunities for credit accumulation and progression.
- To make use of a variety of methods and tasks to provide the optimum opportunities to demonstrate learning.

The aims of the associated processes are:

- Explicitly to ensure equal opportunities for students.
- To allow for adapted and/or alternative assessments for students with particular needs.
- To ensure that information on timing, nature, procedures and criteria for assessment are published accurately to students.
- To provide a consistent process incorporating appropriate internal and external scrutiny of assessment tasks, criteria and judgements to confirm validity, reliability and integrity.
- To ensure that regulations are applied consistently in the measurement and interpretation of student achievement in line with the academic infrastructure and programme outcomes.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of learning, teaching and assessment strategies.
- To ensure compliance with precepts within the code of practice on assessment, work-based and placement learning.

4.1.3 Responsibility for Assessment

The operational responsibility for assessment lies jointly between the programme teams and the relevant Head of School. Each Programme Leader has the first line responsibility to ensure that individual programme team members are aware of these requirements, and their application, and for ensuring validation of all assessment instruments before their issue to students.

All staff are required to take all reasonable steps to preserve the confidentiality of assessment instruments until the point when they are issued to students. Staff are also required to take all reasonable steps to ensure the integrity of the assessment process by refraining from all forms of improper briefing about what might or might not be included in unseen assessment instruments. The HE Quality Team may approve guidance on acceptable and unacceptable practice in this area. Any guidance so approved will be mandatory for staff from the date of issue.

Compliance with assessment requirements is monitored via the Annual Programme Review (APR) process, by the HE Quality Team and Academic Board.

In addition, the system of External Examining provides additional assurance to both Blackburn College and its Academic Partners as to compliance with assessment requirements.

4.1.4 Design of Assessments

General

The assessments for a particular module should be so designed that satisfactory completion of the module assessments demonstrates achievement of the learning outcomes for that module. Marking schemes should be designed in such a way that it is not possible to pass an assessment without achieving the outcomes associated with it.

Validation documents normally impose substantive regulations on the assessments to be used on individual programmes. Such requirements are imposed after detailed considerations which will have reflected on the principles set out below. As a consequence, unless the regulations below specifically state otherwise, any requirements of programmes' validation documents are to be respected in full.

Definitions:

Coursework refers to all student work that is assessed, counts towards an award, and is not a formal examination, a dissertation or project. All Academic Groups are required to set coursework deadlines and to publish these to students, together with information about the consequences of not meeting them.

A **dissertation** is defined as a substantial piece of written (or equivalent) work, or a portfolio of separate but linked pieces of work, presented for assessment and which may form part of the assessment of a project.

A **project** requires the submission of specified work on operations of a practical nature, such as a report for a client, computer software supported by an analytical report, or fieldwork supported by maps, diagrams or other data. The elements of each project must be clearly defined in advance.

Examination refers to formal assessment by time-limited written exercises conducted in traditional examination conditions. Blackburn College approves six types of formal examination.

Closed-Book: These are traditional examinations in which the student faces unseen questions and must not bring learning materials into the examination. Reference material, such as data books, formula sheets, etc. can be supplied in closed-book examinations separately from the examination paper itself. The nature of any such materials to be supplied must be clearly stated on the examination paper.

Open-Book: These are examinations in which the student faces unseen questions but may bring specified learning materials into the examination. The nature of permitted materials must be clearly stated on the examination paper and must be communicated to students in advance. If there are any requirement that materials brought into an open-book examination should be checked by the invigilator(s) of the examination this fact must be stated on the paper and the details communicated clearly in writing to the invigilator and the students affected. The questions and marking schemes for open-book examinations must be devised in such a way that students do not gain marks for answers extracted directly from such permitted materials.

Prepared Scenario: These are open-book examinations for which the student has been given a limited amount of information in advance about the scenario(s) covered in the examination. The questions and marking schemes for prepared scenario examinations must be devised in such a way that students' application of the knowledge gained is rigorously tested and that marks are not given for material covered in the prior information.

Seen Paper: These are open- or closed-book examinations in which the actual questions to be answered have been seen in advance. The questions, their release date and the marking schemes for such examinations must be devised in such a way that students' knowledge and skills are rigorously tested despite prior knowledge of the questions. The rubric for such examinations must clearly state the release date of the questions and any materials the students are to be permitted to bring into the examination room.

Time-Constrained Exercise: In these examinations, students are required to undertake specified practical tasks under conditions as near as practicable to normal examination conditions. Assessment may be by:

- marking of written answers to questions
- assessment of students' performance in the tasks by a suitably qualified member of academic staff

or

- where and only where assessment is limited to determination of successful completion of tasks and where no academic judgement is required, by a suitably qualified non-academic invigilator.

Use of a time-constrained exercise does not remove the requirement for second marking. Wherever such an exercise is not marked on written answers satisfactory provision for second marking must be made. Typically, this would be by joint assessment by two suitably qualified markers both of whom were present at the exercise or by means of video recording (or other electronic records) of the tasks to enable second marking to take place after the event.

Online Examinations - Timed, Single Sitting. These are examinations that take place within a defined period, with all students starting simultaneously. The exam paper will open at a set time and a portal will be set up for submission. This cannot close however as this would deny those students with access arrangements. The submission will give the time stamp for all exams and this will be used to ensure students take the allowed amount of time. Students must be told that it is their responsibility to ensure that the correct file is uploaded and on time, as the time stamp on Moodle will be used. Where it is a timed online exam, the student has a 30-minute window outside the exam time to ensure that they log on, access the exam and upload the correct file. Guidance to students will make clear that only the first submission will be considered. Moodle settings allow for only the first upload to be submitted, and this setting should be chosen by default.

- **Designing online exam questions** When setting exam questions, teams should carefully consider the fact that students can access electronic sources alongside their notes and books, which increases the *potential* for academic misconduct. Questions that seek knowledge are likely to be less effective than those that seek the application of knowledge, as the information being asked can frequently be found online. Instead of asking a descriptive question, it would be more appropriate to ask an analytical question. Instead of recalling a fact or equation, it would be better to ask students to apply that fact or equation. Questions that ask students to reflect on issues or apply knowledge to a case study or scenario are particularly well suited to this type of exam.

- **Academic Misconduct within online exams** It is the responsibility of the module leader to ensure that they check for potential academic misconduct. Turnitin is used where the assessment method is compatible with that software. Where it is not compatible, teaching teams should have other ways of identifying plagiarism. Students should be reminded that they cannot cut and paste chunks of text without quotation marks and attributing the source. Refer to section 8.

The selection of the appropriate examination type is a matter for programme teams and module leaders, and is subject to the approval of the relevant external examiner. Students must be informed in good time of the type of examination(s) they will sit.

In certain circumstances these assessment types may be adapted to meet the needs of particular students.

Viva voce examination is not a primary assessment method and is used only in specific circumstances. The role of viva voce examinations is covered in section 4.1.11

4.1.5 Pass / Fail Assessments

The content and/or method(s) of an individual assessment may demonstrate achievement of specified learning outcomes but not lend itself to the grading of levels of such achievement. Where this is the case the assessment should be graded on a pass / fail basis and excluded from the calculation of the overall grade for the module to which it contributes.

Occasionally, the validation document for an award may designate content of a whole module as falling into this category. In these cases, all the assessment for the module may be on a pass / fail basis.

In all other cases, the decision to use pass / fail assessments is left to the professional academic judgement of teaching staff, subject to the caveats that:

- the use of pass / fail assessments must not significantly distort or dilute the assessment burden of the module;
- the volume and nature of graded assessment within any individual module must be sufficient to justify the award of an overall mark;
- the graded assessments within a module must give the student an opportunity to demonstrate levels of achievement across the subject material and learning outcomes of the module

In some awards, passing a pass / fail module is a condition of passing the overall award. Any such condition is unaffected by this regulation.

4.1.6 Extent, Number, Timing, Type and Methods of Assessments

Extent

The burden of assessment in each module should be set broadly in proportion to the credit value of the module and in such a way that the overall student workload is reasonable. The definition of a reasonable workload may legitimately vary between disciplines, levels and qualification types, but in general modules should not normally have more than two assessment points.

Blackburn College will publish an indicative tariff for the sizes of assessments of various types and at various levels. Where there is a rationale for deviating from these guidelines for a particular assessment, module or award the specific tariffs to be used should be stated and justified in the relevant validation or amendment documentation.

Where a validation document specifies the assessment burden that should apply to students on a particular programme, this takes precedence over the guidelines.

The indicative tariff will be reviewed periodically.

Number

The number and timing of assessments required by a particular module should facilitate learning by enabling formative feedback to be given to students during the delivery of the module. For this reason, it is normally good practice to divide the overall assessment burden across several assessments spread throughout the module delivery. Modules should not normally have more than two assessment points.

Timing

The timing of assessments across all modules of a programme should be planned and published in advance to ensure that the academic purposes of assessment are achieved without excessive demands being made of students as a result of assessment bunching.

The timings of assessments should not be changed without careful consideration of the implications of any change. The timings of formal examinations should not normally be changed within 4 term weeks of the original scheduled.

Types and Methods

Formative assessment should be embedded within all programmes to ensure that students have an opportunity for feedback on progress to facilitate improvement on a continuous basis. Summative assessment provides a measure of success in achieving the intended programme and module learning outcomes. Synoptic assessment allows students to integrate and apply their skills and knowledge from differing parts of the programme.

Assessment methods may take a wide variety of forms. Innovation is explicitly encouraged in all assessments. No restrictions are placed on the forms that assessments may take other than that the programme team must be certain that any innovative assessment method proposed does not compromise the need for valid, reliable and authentic assessment.

Innovation in examinations is subject to an additional condition that it must ensure that the fundamental character of a summative examination is retained in the proposed innovative method. Significant innovations in assessment must be discussed with the relevant external examiner and approved prior to use.

Any given module may have a combination of the above assessment types methods, and in the context of work-based programmes assessment should provide for employer involvement.

A mixed diet of assessment types and methods is necessary to ensure that students with diverse learning styles get the opportunity to achieve their potential. The types of assessment chosen for an individual module should contribute to a varied assessment diet across each programme. Where practicable, individual modules should contain more than one assessment type and/or method.

Communication

Students must be informed of the number, timing and types of assessments that they will be required to undertake. This information must reach students in good time. In the case of on-campus students this should be at or before the commencement of modules, preferably at the beginning of the academic year. Where students are taking one or more modules by intensive study, this information should be given at the earliest practical date and not on arrival.

Changes in assessment arrangements should not be made without good reason. Where they do occur, it is the responsibility of the Programme Leader to ensure that that changes do not materially disadvantage the students affected and that they receive information in a timely manner.

Feedback on assessed work

Tutors should be mindful of the importance of timely feedback when designing their assessment tasks. Blackburn College undertakes to provide feedback on assessed work, along with the provisional grade, within fifteen working days. Feedback on assessed work should always be given to students in advance of the submission deadline for a subsequent assessment within a module.

4.1.7 Assessment Content and Scope

Presentation

Assessment briefs should be in the approved Blackburn College format for the relevant assessment type.

Content

The range of assessment tasks used must reflect the programme and module outcomes, and/or any professional competences related to the award. Tasks used within a module should provide students the opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the particular learning outcomes for that module. Tasks should be set in the context of the Blackburn

College grade descriptors, the requirements of the award and in keeping with the expectations of performance at the module's academic level. Tasks should be clearly articulated and should be clearly referenced back to the relevant module content and learning outcomes.

The content of assessment should be free from discrimination of all types whether conscious or unconscious. It is important to consider implicit assumptions in terms of cultural or religious context, the effects of study or assessment mode and the potential requirements of disabled students when devising assessments.

Assessment Criteria

The criteria that will be used to judge student performance should be stated in all assessment briefs. In the case of formal examinations and summative tests this may be implicit in the questions posed and marks awarded, but in all other forms of assessment grading criteria must be explicit.

Grading must be based on the Blackburn College Mark Descriptor Guidelines outlined in section 4.2. It must be clear to students how grading criteria will be applied in the context of a particular assessment. In many cases it will be appropriate and/or necessary to produce explicitly contextualised criteria for a particular assessment. The use of generic Blackburn College or general programme grading criteria is permitted only when their interpretation in the context of the assessment in question would be clear to the average student.

Employer Input

The inclusion of employers' views, case-studies, scenarios, practical tasks, etc. is highly desirable in all programmes. Programme teams are strongly encouraged to engage with employers and employer representative groups, and to encourage employer involvement in assessment.

For Foundation Degrees, it is a requirement that the vast majority of assessment in the programme is based on employment-related scenarios and that employers are as widely involved as possible in the setting of assessment tasks.

Employers may also be involved in the grading of assessments. Where an assessment, or an element of an assessment, requires the demonstration of threshold knowledge, skill or competence in a tightly defined task then an employer's assessment that a student has completed the task may be accepted by Blackburn College staff. In other cases, particularly where an academic judgement on levels of skill, knowledge and/or competence is required, employers may form part of the team assessing a task, but academic judgement on grading is reserved to Blackburn College staff.

4.1.8 Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies' Requirements (PSRBs)

Accreditation, approval, endorsement or other recognition of awards and/or programmes by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies may impose additional requirements and/or restrictions on assessment.

These requirements may become part of the requirements for an award either at validation or by later amendment, or may not affect the award itself but regulate the recognition that students can expect after graduation.

Programme teams must ensure that all students affected are fully informed of the implications of any such requirements.

4.1.9 Disability and Equality Issues in Assessment

The validation process takes great care to ensure that the assessment structure of each programme meets the requirements of the award and of any relevant professional or statutory body, and that the range of assessment types employed across each programme is appropriate to its intended learners.

Assessment of all students must take place in accordance with the requirements of the Definitive Programme Document unless other arrangements are specifically authorised by the Academic Registrar (or nominee) with support of the External Examiner and Awarding Partner.

Inclusion

To the maximum extent that is both reasonably practicable and permitted by individual programmes' validation documents and by the requirements of any relevant professional and/or statutory body, the assessment methods and detailed tasks used for the assessment of all students should be so selected as to make the assessment process equitable for all. This aligns with the Equality Act (2010), which requires Awarding Bodies to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that all students are not disadvantaged because of any disability. The Equality Act defines a disability as a 'physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term effect on someone's abilities to carry out normal day-to-day activities'.

Under anticipatory duty, staff should seek to design assessments such that, as far as is permitted and reasonably practicable, the whole group, including students with protected characteristics, can undertake the same assessments in the same manner.

Access Arrangements, Adapted and Alternative Assessments

Access arrangements and/or adapted and/or alternative assessment arrangements will be provided, where necessary, for students with physical and sensory disabilities, with specific learning difficulties (including dyslexia), with mental health issues or with chronic medical conditions.

Access Arrangements

Access arrangements are changes that enable a student to undertake a standard assessment in substantially the normal manner. They should reflect the least possible change to normal practice necessary to ensure that individual students' needs are accommodated. Such arrangements may involve extra time, rest breaks, alternative times or dates for assessment, deferral of assessment to an appropriate later date, special room arrangements, the use of a scribe, reader, prompter and/or word processing equipment, question papers in an alternative format, or other appropriate support.

Adapted Assessments

Adapted Assessments involve changes to assessment practice that preserve the original assessment method but make a substantial change to the manner of assessment (e.g. the division of a two-hour examination into two one-hour papers covering the same material in the case of a student who is medically unable to manage a two-hour sitting even with rest breaks). Adapted Assessments should be permitted only when the student's needs cannot be accommodated by Access Arrangements and should reflect the least possible change to normal practice necessary to ensure that individual students' needs are accommodated.

Alternative Assessments

If the nature of a student's needs cannot be accommodated by the provision of Access Arrangements or Adapted Assessments, then an Alternative Assessment that does meet the student's needs may be substituted. The alternative assessment will involve a change of assessment method and should be designed to have, as nearly as possible, the same scope, depth, difficulty, rigour, learning outcomes and grading criteria as the assessment for which it has been substituted.

Access Arrangements, Adapted Assessments and/or Alternative Assessments may be used even when not explicitly provided for in the validation documentation for the relevant programme, subject to approval from the External Examiner and Programme Consultant (the latter of which relevant is for Lancaster programmes only). They may also be approved where students suffer acute short-term issues. The guidelines for the Student Facing Panel (see section 4.10) should be used when determining whether a short-term issue warrants consideration.

Exceptions

Access Arrangements, Adapted Assessments and/or Alternative Assessments will not be granted where the Assessment Arrangements Panel (see 4.1.10) considers that:

- A change in assessment practice would undermine the core competences of a student's award;
- A change in assessment practice is contrary to a Statement of Professional Standards that applies to the programme or the reasonable 'fitness to practice' expectations of any profession, professional and/or statutory body associated with a student's award;
- The mix of assessments in the student's award is such that any disadvantage a student may encounter in one assessment is fully compensated for in other assessments and to change the assessment requirements for the student would amount to a granting that student undue advantage over their peers.

4.1.10 Authorisation of Arrangements

The Examinations Team, HE Quality and the Disability Services Team liaise to convene an Assessment Arrangements Panel and will determine its membership, quorum and terms of reference. This Panel will have delegated authority to approve Access Arrangements and Adapted Assessments, subject to any constraints set out in its terms of reference. Existing

Blackburn College practice and experience will be taken into account, as will the individual's requirements and precedents in previous assessments. In some cases, approval by an external awarding or professional body may also be required.

The Panel will also have the authority to decide that a student should be assessed by an Alternative Assessment using a method other than that set out in the relevant validation document or Definitive Programme Document. However, the nature of and arrangements for the Alternative Assessment(s) to be used are a matter for the relevant programme team and are subject to the prior approval of the relevant External Examiner.

Students are required to make requests for Access Arrangements and/or Adapted Assessments and/or Alternative Assessments as early as possible. Blackburn College cannot guarantee to process requests at short notice. Where requests are made at short notice, assessment may exceptionally be deferred to allow for due consideration of a case without prejudice to the final decision.

The authorisation of Access Arrangements and/or Adapted Assessments and/or Alternative Assessment arrangements is an evidence-based process and students must provide appropriate and independent evidence. The following is a list that provides some examples of permissible evidence, but it is not exhaustive, and each case will be considered on its individual merit and the strength of the evidence provided:

- Documentation for Disabled Students' Allowance, which provides an assessment of needs.
- Letters from doctors or other relevant medical professional that provide evidence and/or support for the application.
- A psychologist's report that provides evidence and/or support for the application.
- Results from baseline tests such as reading and writing tests.
- A speech therapy report with a diagnosis of severe language impairment.

Satisfactory competence in the English language is a condition of entry to Blackburn College programmes and difficulties that arise for students whose first language is not English do not amount to a disability. As a result, access arrangements, adaptations and/or alternative assessments will not be approved solely on the grounds of students' competence in English or lack of it.

4.1.11 Viva Voce Examination

Students are expected to make themselves available for a viva voce examination at any reasonable time prior to their final Award Board. Students must be informed of the likely dates of any viva voce examinations and must be given reasonable notice of any requirement to attend for examination.

For the purpose of clarification, this regulation distinguishes between a simple oral test, which may be held with or without external examiners present, and a viva voce examination, usually held at the end of a student's programme in the presence of an External Examiner.

An oral test may be held at any time to check the authenticity of evidence derived from coursework, or to aid in the assessment of work.

Viva voce examinations will normally be held at the request of External Examiners, but in exceptional circumstances may be held at the request of Blackburn College staff with the support of the relevant Head of School. This power should be used rarely. In all cases students should be told why they are being called for such an examination, and the extent of the material to be covered. Viva voce examinations may be employed in cases of suspected academic misconduct.

Where the outcome of viva voce examination is used to moderate module marks prior to their consideration by boards, should the relevant external examiner not attend, then (s)he must receive a summary of the examination and must explicitly approve any mark moderation(s) made as a result.

4.1.12 Administration of University Examinations at Blackburn College

UCBC examinations are held at times agreed by the Examinations Department and Programme Leaders, liaising via the HE Quality team.

The Examination Department will be responsible for producing the weekly examination timetable; however, tutors must inform students in advance of their examination dates and times.

Programme Teams shall be responsible for providing the Examination Department, on request and by specified dates, details of modules for which there is to be an examination. The number of written and practical papers to be taken by categories of students shall be specified, as shall the title and duration of each paper, the sequence in which papers are to be taken (if relevant), and any special requirements (e.g. the provision of graph paper, calculators, statistical tables). The Examination Department is responsible for drawing up examination timetables which take account of student module enrolments and examination registrations and schools' requirements.

The Examination Department shall be responsible for consulting with the Academic Groups over any discrepancies or examination clashes and for resolving them. Once finalised, the exam timetable will be publicised promptly via tutors and will be made available via Moodle. Copies of the timetable will be posted in the UCBC Atrium, St Paul's and Sports Centre on Friday afternoons for the following week.

Academic Groups wishing to hold University examinations at any time other than the normal examination periods will be expected to inform HE Quality and the Examinations Department at least one month in advance.

There shall be at least one invigilator present for each group of thirty candidates or fewer sitting written examinations. When one invigilator is present, they must be able to get help easily, without leaving the examination room and without disturbing the candidates.

NB: For most examinations with over 10 students 2 invigilators at least will be present.

For standard examinations invigilators shall arrive at the examination room not less than thirty minutes before the start of the examination. These persons shall be responsible for the preparation in and outside of the examination room. They shall also ensure that notices covering conduct in the examination venue shall be displayed outside each examination room. Prior to the examination the invigilators shall ensure candidates deposit their belongings in a designated place.

The Examination Department shall be responsible for arranging venues, recruiting and training invigilators, making the necessary physical arrangements for University examinations, and providing examination stationery and for administering all examinations, following the College's examination guidelines and those of the relevant awarding body. In such a case that a central examination room cannot be sourced within 2 weeks of the examination date then UCBC shall provide their own venue.

The Examination Department may request that an appropriate member of the relevant Academic School acts as an invigilator and/or to attend for the first 10 minutes of an examination. Where this is not done, the Examinations Department and the relevant Academic School must ensure that an appropriate member of the academic staff is contactable by telephone throughout the examination.

4.1.13 Security and confidentiality of examination papers and scripts

It is the responsibility of the Examinations Officer:

- To publicise the submissions deadlines for draft papers;
- To request examination papers from academic schools at due times;
- To give guidance as to layout;
- To check papers for undue similarity to recent papers in the same subject;
- To ensure that the relevant external examiner and programme consultant have received copies of draft papers, that their comments have been considered appropriately and that draft papers have the approval of the relevant external examiner.

The Examinations Officer will produce all examination papers and deposit securely in the Secure Examination Store by agreed dates.

The content of questions in examination papers is both restricted and reserved material (i.e. not to be disclosed to or discussed with students or to be discussed until after the examinations have been held). Where a paper contains materials that are to be released to students prior to the examination it is the responsibility of the relevant academic School to ensure that each student receives the correct pre-released information in a timely manner.

The normal non-disclosure requirements apply to all materials not explicitly designated for pre-release.

Examination papers, but not model answers and/or marking schemes, will be published on the relevant Moodle page once the examination to which they relate is over.

Since revision classes and other preparatory work for examinations will inevitably provide some guidance as to the areas of a subject which may be examined, schools are required to prescribe the extent of such guidance and so inform external examiners. Schools must then ensure that no disclosures beyond the prescribed boundaries are made. Where guidance is provided to candidates, schools must ensure that it is provided consistently for all those to be examined on the course concerned.

All examination scripts, and other assessed work not returned by Academic Groups to the originating student, should be retained by the Academic Group(s) in which the student is registered for a period of three years (36 months) after the mark has been confirmed.

Scripts and other assessed material should be held securely and clearly labelled, and disposal should be in accordance with the College's procedures for the disposal of confidential waste.

In the case of a review, appeal or complaint by the candidate, any examination scripts or other assessed work relevant to the case should be sent to the Academic Registrar (or nominee) to be held on an indefinite basis or until such appeal or complaint has been resolved.

4.1.14 Alternative examination arrangements for students with disabilities

Adapted examination arrangements shall be provided where necessary for students with physical and sensory disabilities, with specific learning difficulties (including dyslexia), with psychological problems or with chronic medical conditions (such as asthma or M.E.).

In cases where there is no clear physical or sensory disability, the candidate shall provide a doctor's letter or psychologist's report to support their request for adapted arrangements.

Students are required to make requests for access arrangements for examinations in the first semester by a date specified in November each year. There is no requirement for a second application to be made for examinations in the second semester, however a date will be published by which new or revised applications must be made if they are to be considered for second semester examinations. The College cannot guarantee to process requests unless they are made by the relevant deadline. See the Access Arrangement Policy for further details.

Details of the arrangements for any individual shall be agreed by the Access Arrangement Panel in accordance with guidelines approved by the College.

The responsibility for proof-reading student work prior to its submission for assessment rests with the individual student as author. This long-standing principle cannot be compromised by the spread of professional proof-reading services advertised to students, or any ambiguity amongst students and staff as to what constitutes acceptable practice. University Centre at Blackburn College (UCBC) therefore wishes to develop a shared understanding of what proof-reading student work can reasonably entail and who can legitimately be involved in offering various forms of comment on, and correction to, work that is yet to be submitted for assessment.

This overview is intended for the guidance of students and academic staff, and relates to the proof-reading of any text to be submitted as part of assessed work for our HE programmes.

Proof-Reading and Support with Formative Drafts

It is entirely appropriate and beneficial for students to submit formative drafts of their work and engage in student-to-student in peer reviews. Regarding formative drafts, students can expect support from their tutors or supervisors regarding both feedback on their progress and feed-forward on areas for further development. Alongside written and verbal feedback/feed-forward from their tutor or supervisor, staff may also refer students to Academic Coaches for advice on proof-reading techniques.

Regarding student-to-student peer reviews, it is appropriate that students may critique one another's work through in-class activities where they will typically provide one another with verbal feedback and feed-forward on their work. This practice engenders active learning and a move towards autonomy, which is recommended. However, in line with UCBC Regulations on academic misconduct, staff and students should ensure that this positive activity does not transcend into 'collusion', which is made clear in yearly staff and student presentation relating to UCBC's *Academic Regulations for Higher Education Programmes* (see p100-101).

UCBC leaders and managers expect that, during the formative assessment stage, the process of assessing work will result chiefly in the provision of comments and advice regarding the content, logic and clarity of the arguments advanced in the work under review. It should not include directly writing, re-writing, editing or amending the work, including any figures, notation and sequences of code, as well as text. Although the assessing formative drafts *should* include attention to standards of written English and presentation, the role of the tutor or supervisor does not normally extend to the systematic correction of grammatical and spelling mistakes, or typographical errors. In all cases, ultimate responsibility for deciding how best to respond to formative feedback rests with the student as author. However, it is also important for tutors, supervisors, Academic Coaches or other relevant staff to consider the individual learning needs of students when offering support.

At the summative stage of assessment, in-line with guidance from the Office for Students (2021)¹ it is worth noting that tutors ‘should assess spelling, punctuation and grammar where they are relevant to the course, subject to compliance with their obligations under the Equality Act and other legislation’. Compliance with this legislation should not justify ‘removing assessment of written proficiency in English for all students’ and ‘quality and standards must not be compromised’, otherwise UCBC may compromise the development of graduate skills in communication, which could limit opportunities for meaningful progression. To ensure parity, ‘relevance to the course’ will be interpreted as any assessment that has written content.

Students are reminded that when they submit work for assessment, they must sign a declaration which asserts that they are the sole author of the work, unless otherwise stated. Students should be aware that collusion in the preparation of work for assessment is regarded as academic malpractice, thus they must ensure that the contribution arising from assessment of formative work does not compromise their role as the sole author of the work.

Definitions

“Proof-reading” is defined as the systematic checking and identification of errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar and sentence construction, formatting and layout in the text.

“Third-parties” are persons other than the academic supervisor, tutor, marker or examiner, who might offer to proof-read a student’s text in the sense given above. Such third parties may be Academic Coaches, fellow-students, friends and family, or professional proof-readers.

“Editing” is defined as any material amendment to the presentation of text which exceeds proof-reading, as defined above. In particular it includes any alteration which substantially changes, corrects, expands or condenses the academic content of the work.

The Role of Students in Proof-Reading their Own Work

The starting point is the fundamental principle that responsibility for all aspects of the work submitted for assessment remains with the student. The integrity of UCBC’s awards (aligned to the relevant Awarding Partner) rests upon the principle that work submitted for assessment represents the student’s own effort and reflects their own abilities and understanding. As part of the student’s induction into appropriate academic practice, it is therefore important for students to develop the skill of proof-reading their own work to identify specific flaws and errors. In this way, proof-reading may be seen as a concluding stage in the process of producing academic writing.

In addition to the initial planning, researching, drafting and writing, students are expected to review and edit their own work. In this context, editing will seek to enhance the academic

¹ https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/1482/assessment_practices_english_higher_education_providers.pdf

content of the work by rewriting passages of text, for example to improve the readability and clarity of the argument, or by making adjustments to formulae or code. Accordingly, successive drafts of work are likely and these should always be retained by the student. This process should culminate in a stage of proof-reading, which identifies any remaining errors of punctuation, grammar, spelling, layout and pagination for final correction.

As aids to proof-reading, students may use dictionaries, thesauri and spelling- and grammar-checking software to help identify and correct typographical and spelling mistakes or errors. However, students should be aware of the limitations of such software. Suggested alternative forms of phrasing or sentence construction are sometimes clumsy or inappropriate, whilst guidance on spelling takes little or no account of the context in which words are being used. Over-reliance on automatic proof-reading systems can thus result in the meaning of sentences being lost or distorted, and in a failure to use technical terms appropriately. It follows that such systems are no substitute for careful proof-reading by the student of their own work.

Students are also encouraged to seek assistance in developing their skills in academic writing and proof-reading from a number of sources of support provided by UCBC. This is detailed in the Student Handbook. In no case, however, will such support extend to the provision of a proof-reading service for students. Our Academic Coaches can provide advice and support on proof-reading techniques, but we do not offer a proof-reading service.

The Role of Supervisors and Tutors in Proof-Reading Assignments other than Dissertations and Extended Projects

Although academic staff most frequently provide feedback on finished work submitted for assessment, they are expected to offer formative advice on work in draft form. For example, a tutor may offer general comments on the ideas and information presented in the draft work, raise further questions and suggest additional reading or elaboration. Staff may indicate to students where further work is required to clarify the meaning of a particular passage of text, or to ensure compliance with the specified word limit for an assignment. Advice may also be offered in relation to the overall style, tone and presentation of the work. Students are, however, expected to be active participants in this process and retain responsibility as the author to determine whether and how to make specific changes to the work in response to the general advice offered. However, where students have identified learning difficulties or disabilities, appropriate support will be put in place to ensure that these students are neither advantaged or disadvantaged in comparison to their peers, and in line with the Equality Act (2010).

In providing formative advice, academic staff are expected to highlight specific spelling mistakes, typographical errors, instances where words and phrases are misused, and lapses in sentence construction, grammar or punctuation. Staff should also explain why such features are likely to prove problematic and provide exemplification of the ways in which particular failings might be addressed.

Staff are expected to indicate where a student has made inconsistent use of referencing conventions, and where inconsistencies exist between items in the reference list or bibliography and items in the text. This may extend to the identification of incomplete items in the reference list or bibliography.

However, staff advice should not amount to the systematic and comprehensive correction of errors in spelling, punctuation or grammar throughout an entire piece of work.

Furthermore, staff must not directly rewrite, edit or amend the student's work. This prohibition extends to figures, notation and sequences of code, as well as to text.

Where draft work is submitted to a member of academic staff in electronic form, proof-reading should involve the use of the relevant 'comment function' to annotate the work, rather than the Track Changes function. Staff must not make direct (i.e. invisible) edits to a text. The student remains responsible for considering each suggested comment critically and carefully, and for the identification and inclusion of an appropriate correction to the text.

Proof-reading of Dissertations and Extended Projects.

Supervisors of students working on extended projects or dissertations have specific responsibilities to comment on the written work submitted, advise generally on the research and preparation of the text, and read and comment on drafts through verbal and written feedback. Such advice extends to the clarity and style of the written argument, as well as to academic content. This may extend to interventions which go beyond the provision of advice as outlined above. It is not the intention of this guidance to inhibit good supervisory practice, which is often an iterative process involving comment on successive drafts of particular sections of a dissertation or extended project. It is also expected that advice arising from 1:1 tutorials should be recorded on ProMonitor.

It follows that there may be instances where it is legitimate for supervisors to propose specific changes to the draft text to correct numerical or textual errors, and/or to improve the structure and clarity of the argument. Such actions should, however, be set within the context of a wider supervisory discussion of the development of a student's work. The need for revision and the logic of the alternative text, figures or formulae being proposed should be discussed with the student. As in all other circumstances, the student retains ultimate authorial responsibility for the content and quality of work submitted for assessment.

Supervisors and other academic staff commenting on student work should, therefore, remain mindful that any editorial intervention must not be so extensive as potentially to compromise the student's role as the author of the work. Where possible, supervisors and tutors should follow the advice given above regarding the use of the 'comment function' when proof-reading an electronic text, in preference to the 'track change function'. Staff must not make "invisible" edits to a text, so as to allow proper discussion of the development of the draft with the student.

Proof-Reading and Breaches of Academic Integrity

It is vital that neither students nor staff breach the terms of these regulations in ways which mean that a student cannot truthfully sign the statement of academic integrity that sets out their claim to be the author of a particular assignment. Inadequacies in proof-reading by the author or by parties other than the author will not be accepted in mitigation of any deficiencies in the work.

Students are warned of the particular risks they run in proof-reading each other's work, unless expressly permitted to do so by the instructions accompanying a particular assignment. Unless such specific exemptions apply, both parties – the author and the proof-reader – may risk a charge of academic misconduct.

Students must also be alert to the dangers that may follow from uploading the content of their work to on-line essay checking websites. In some instances, this may lead to their work being shared publicly (without acknowledgment) and in turn, expose them to allegations of academic misconduct.

Any case which is suspected of breaching the terms of these regulations will be investigated in accordance with the UCBC's existing procedures on academic misconduct (please refer to Section 8 of UCBC's *Academic Regulations for Higher Education Programmes* p100-101). The student may be required to produce draft material and evidence of the annotations and changes suggested or made by the proof-reader. Failure to retain copies of drafts or to produce them when requested to do so, will weigh against a student.

4.2 Blackburn College Mark Descriptor Guidelines

4.2.1 Standardised Feedback Grades

In order to standardise the treatment of students across Blackburn College, all work will be assessed on a scale from A+ to F4. The available feedback grades and their relationship to honours classifications and the grading of other awards are shown in the table below.

Honours Class	Other Grade	Feedback Grade		Percentage Mark		Score
				Min	Max	
1st	Distinction	A+	Excellent	90	100	24
		A		80	89	21
		A-		70	79	18
2:1	Commendation	B+	Good	67	69	17
		B		64	66	16
		B-		60	63	15
		C+		57	59	14

2:2	Merit	C	Satisfactory	54	56	13
		C-		50	53	12
3rd	Pass	D+	Weak	47	49	11
		D		44	46	10
		D-		40	43	9
Fail	Fail	F1	Marginal Fail	32	39	7
		F2	Fail	18	31	4
		F3	Poor Fail	8	17	2
		F4	Very Poor Fail	0	7	0

Where work is qualitatively assessed it will first be tested against the criteria for grading appropriate to the level of the module and will be allocated to a category A-F. Once this has been done the quality of the work will be assessed to determine its relative quality within the band and it will be awarded a final grade on the scale A+ to F4 accordingly.

By default, all work will be graded as above, but there can be cases where work is more appropriately marked numerically. Permission for numerical marking is at the discretion of HE Quality.

Where work is marked numerically the numeric mark will be expressed as a percentage and rounded to the nearest whole percent. This mark will be recorded as a number and used, pro rata for the assessment weighting, in the calculation of the overall module grade. The overall module grade will be expressed as a grade not a percentage.

4.2.2 Blackburn College Mark Descriptors

Blackburn College has developed tables of mark descriptors to assist in standardising the nature of achievement expected at each academic level and the grading of student performance. These general descriptors are designed to inform teaching staff in the design of assessments, not normally to form assessment grading criteria per se. Lecturing staff should use these guidelines to inform their assessment design and should produce appropriately contextualised grading criteria.

Level 3

Excellent	A+, A, A-	<p>Student has met the LOs of the assessment with secure knowledge & understanding demonstrating study beyond the central requirements of the subject.</p> <p>The work shows clearly an appreciation of the importance of theoretical underpinning and provides evidence of simple analysis</p> <p>Work shows confidence in using given tools/methods in defined practical contexts and/or problems and an ability to reach reasoned conclusions.</p> <p>For a grade of A+ student's work should meet all the requirements above and demonstrate exceptional appreciation of the breadth of the field of study and sophisticated ability to express the complexity of issues. Work should transcend expectations for the level of student and the nature of the task(s) set.</p>
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Good	B+, B, B-	<p>Student has met the LOs of the assessment with evidence of relevant acquisition of knowledge & understanding.</p> <p>The work shows the ability to express defined ideas clearly and with evidence of understanding and simple judgement.</p> <p>Work shows evidence that the student has applied given tools/methods with broad accuracy to well defined practical contexts and/or problems though conclusions drawn are limited.</p>
Satisfactory	C+, C, C-	<p>Student has met the LOs of the assessment with evidence of acquisition of the main aspects of the knowledge of the subject.</p> <p>The work describes given knowledge clearly and displays limited evidence of an ability to use judgement.</p> <p>Work shows that the student has applied given tools/methods to well defined practical contexts and/or problems</p>
Weak	D+, D, D-	<p>Student has substantially met each of the LOs with evidence of simple acquisition of knowledge of the subject.</p> <p>The work describes given knowledge with few errors.</p> <p>Work shows that the student has applied given tools/methods with minor errors to well defined practical contexts and/or problems.</p>
Marginal Fail	F1	<p>Student has not met all the LOs but may show some incomplete knowledge of the topic.</p> <p>The work displays inaccuracy and uncertainty in handling given knowledge. The work may lack coherence and demonstrate an inability to describe given knowledge.</p> <p>Unable to always apply given tools/methods to well defined practical contexts and/ or problems</p>
Fail	F2	<p>Attainment of learning outcomes appreciably deficient in critical respects, lacking a secure basis in relevant factual and analytical dimensions</p>
Poor Fail	F3	<p>Attainment of learning outcomes appreciably deficient in respect of nearly all learning outcomes, with irrelevant use of materials and incomplete and flawed explanation.</p>
Very Poor Fail	F4	<p>No convincing evidence of attainment of any learning outcomes, such treatment of the subject as is in evidence directionless and fragmentary.</p>

Level 4

Excellent	A+, A, A-	<p>Student has met the LOs of the assessment with thorough knowledge & understanding demonstrating study beyond the core requirements of the subject.</p> <p>The work shows a resourceful and imaginative ability to analyse based on defined classifications, principles, theories or models</p> <p>Work shows clear evidence that the student has applied given tools/methods accurately to well defined practical contexts and/or problems.</p> <p>For a grade of A+ student's work should meet all the requirements above and demonstrate exceptional comprehension of knowledge & understanding. Sophisticated ability to analyse beyond defined classifications/principles. Work transcends expectations for the level of student and the nature of the task(s) set.</p>
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Good	B+, B, B-	<p>Student has met the LOs of the assessment with evidence of relevant and sound acquisition of knowledge & understanding.</p> <p>The work shows evidence of ability to analyse based on defined classifications, principles, theories or models.</p> <p>Work shows evidence that the student has applied given tools/methods accurately to well-defined practical contexts and/or problems. Although the work recognises inherent complexities in the area of study, some conclusions are reached on the basis of insufficient evidence.</p>
Satisfactory	C+, C, C-	<p>Student has met the LOs of the assessment with evidence of acquisition of knowledge of the subject.</p> <p>The work is largely descriptive in nature with evidence of limited reasoning based on defined classifications, principles, theories or models.</p> <p>Work shows some evidence that the student has applied given tools/methods accurately to well defined practical contexts and/or problems, including limited recognition of the inherent complexities in the area of study.</p>
Weak	D+, D, D-	<p>Student has substantially met each of the LOs with evidence of basic acquisition of knowledge of the subject.</p> <p>The work is limited to description and prone to unsubstantiated assertion, opinion or logic.</p> <p>Work shows evidence that the student has applied given tools/methods to well defined practical contexts and/or problems.</p>
Marginal Fail	F1	<p>Student has not met all the LOs but may show an emerging knowledge of the topic.</p> <p>The work is descriptive and uncritical with some inaccuracy and lack of coherence. Work may include discussion which is irrelevant or lack internal consistency. Unable always to apply given tools/methods to well defined practical contexts and/ or problems</p>
Fail	F2	Attainment of learning outcomes appreciably deficient in critical respects, lacking a secure basis in relevant factual and analytical dimensions
Poor Fail	F3	Attainment of learning outcomes appreciably deficient in respect of nearly all learning outcomes, with irrelevant use of materials and incomplete and flawed explanation.
Very Poor Fail	F4	No convincing evidence of attainment of any learning outcomes, such treatment of the subject as is in evidence directionless and fragmentary

Level 5

Excellent	A+, A, A-	<p>Student has met the LOs of the assessment with evidence of detailed knowledge & understanding of key concepts and theories, demonstrating a creative approach to a variety of ideas, contexts and frameworks. The work adopts a critical approach, using evidence, reasoning and reflection based on given classifications, principles, theories or models.</p> <p>Work shows sustained evidence that the student can identify & define straightforward problems and/or practical contexts and can successfully apply knowledge and skills aimed at their resolution.</p> <p>For a grade of A+ student's work should meet all the requirements above with impressive knowledge & understanding applying a well sustained critical approach drawing on a comprehensive breadth of evidence, reasoning and reflection. Work transcends expectations for the level of student and the nature of the task(s) set.</p>
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Good	B+, B, B-	<p>Student has met the LOs of the assessment with evidence of detailed knowledge & understanding of key concepts and theories, demonstrating a variety of ideas, contexts and frameworks. The work adopts a critical approach using given classifications/principles.</p> <p>Work shows evidence that the student can identify straightforward and successfully solve problems and/or practical contexts and choose appropriate methods for their resolution in a considered manner.</p>
Satisfactory	C+, C, C-	<p>Student has met the LOs of the assessment with evidence of knowledge & understanding of key concepts and theories which is generally sound. The work shows evidence of a general critical approach using given classifications/principles, although there may be some lack of focus on key points.</p> <p>Work shows evidence that the student can apply accurately learning in a considered manner to straightforward problems and/or practical contexts.</p>
Weak	D+, D, D-	<p>Student has substantially met each of the LOs of the assessment with evidence of basic knowledge & understanding of key concepts and theories. The work is heavily limited to description; analysis may be unsophisticated.</p> <p>Work shows evidence that the student can apply essential learning to straightforward problems and/or practical contexts.</p>
Marginal Fail	F1	<p>Student has not met all the LOs of the assessment with basic knowledge of some relevant topic issues and evidence of partial understanding.</p> <p>Work is largely descriptive and uncritical with some unsubstantiated assertion. Analysis is minimal or contradictory. Unable to always apply essential learning to straightforward problems and/or practical contexts. For professional programmes any work which contains evidence of, or reference to, unsafe or dangerous practice should be deemed a fail.</p> <p>Insufficient understanding of given tools/methods to apply them to straightforward practical contexts and/or problems.</p>
Fail	F2	Attainment of learning outcomes appreciably deficient in critical respects, lacking a secure basis in relevant factual and analytical dimensions
Poor Fail	F3	Attainment of learning outcomes appreciably deficient in respect of nearly all learning outcomes, with irrelevant use of materials and incomplete and flawed explanation.
Very Poor Fail	F4	No convincing evidence of attainment of any learning outcomes, such treatment of the subject as is in evidence directionless and fragmentary

Level 6

Excellent	A+, A, A-	<p>Student has met the LOs of the assessment with evidence of comprehensive and up-to-date knowledge & understanding of concepts and theories and their interrelationship. The work shows a detailed appreciation of how aspects of the subject are uncertain, contradictory or limited. The work adopts a well-sustained critical approach using a breadth of evidence, reasoning and reflection.</p> <p>Works shows evidence of a mature and independent approach to problem solving. The student can create appropriate hypotheses and select, justify and use imaginative and innovative approaches in their investigations.</p> <p>For a grade of A+ student's work should meet all the requirements above with evidence of exceptional scholarship including critical evaluation and synthesis of issues and information that generates originality and challenges existing approaches. Accurate and detailed use of a range of evidence. Comprehensive knowledge and understanding of theories, principles and concepts.</p> <p>Work transcends expectations for the level of student and the nature of the task(s) set.</p>
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Good	B+, B, B-	<p>Student has met the LOs of the assessment with evidence of comprehensive and up-to-date knowledge & understanding of concepts and theories and their interrelationship with an awareness of how aspects of the subject are uncertain, contradictory or limited. The work adopts a critical approach using a breadth of evidence, reasoning and reflection.</p> <p>Works shows evidence that the student can act confidently and autonomously in the identification and definition of complex problems and select, justify and use approaches aimed at their resolution.</p>
Satisfactory	C+, C, C-	<p>Student has met the LOs of the assessment with evidence of detailed knowledge & understanding of key concepts and theories including an awareness of the <i>provisional nature</i> of knowledge. The work shows evidence of a general critical approach using individual judgement and reflection although there is some limitation in the ability to conceptualise and/or apply theory.</p> <p>Works shows evidence that the student can act without guidance in the identification of complex problems and can apply knowledge and skills to their resolution.</p>
Weak	D+, D, D-	<p>Student has substantially met each of the LOs of the assessment with evidence of knowledge & understanding of key concepts and theories including basic recognition of the complexity of the subject. The work is in the most part descriptive rather than based on argument and logical reasoning.</p> <p>Works shows evidence that the student can apply appropriate learning accurately to complex problems and/or practical contexts.</p>
Marginal Fail	F1	<p>Student has not met all the LOs of the assessment with only basic knowledge of key concepts and theories and weaknesses in understanding. There is little or no recognition of the complexity of the subject. Work is largely descriptive and uncritical with some unsubstantiated assertion. Analysis is minimal or contradictory.</p> <p>Unable to always apply learning accurately to complex problems and /or practical contexts. For professional programmes any work which contains evidence of, or reference to, unsafe or dangerous practice should be deemed a fail.</p>
Fail	F2	Attainment of learning outcomes appreciably deficient in critical respects, lacking a secure basis in relevant factual and analytical dimensions
Poor Fail	F3	Attainment of learning outcomes appreciably deficient in respect of nearly all learning outcomes, with irrelevant use of materials and incomplete and flawed explanation.
Very Poor Fail	F4	No convincing evidence of attainment of any learning outcomes, such treatment of the subject as is in evidence directionless and fragmentary

Level 7

Excellent	A+	<p>Student has met the LOs of the assessment with:</p> <p>Knowledge and Clarity of Reasoning Exceptionally comprehensive knowledge base. Ability to discriminate and justify key issues and relate them to the wider context. Lines of thought are innovative and transparent and the arguments are confidently expressed to develop and synthesise compelling and novel conclusions. Conclusions drawn make a new contribution to the knowledge base of the discipline and there is clear evidence of originality in the work Innovative thinker.</p> <p>Interface between Theory and Practice in the Professional Context Exceptional critical analysis of the interface between theory and practice, which evaluates and challenges theoretical adequacy and synthesises the development of professional practice. Exceptional evidence of self-understanding which leads to creative and novel use of multiple frameworks for evaluation and synthesis and challenges current practice in the professional context.</p> <p>Use of literature Exceptional, discerning and balanced range of key and peripheral primary and secondary sources demonstrating a very high level of critical evaluation and synthesis and the ability to challenge received wisdom in the subject. Outstanding evidence of wide reading on the subject and this is incorporated into novel conclusions.</p> <p>Organisation of Material Exceptional clarity of presentation that demonstrates ability to attend to all detailed aspects of organisation and structure of discussion and all supporting evidence. The work has the qualities consistent with publishable material.</p>
Excellent	A, A-	<p>Student has met the LOs of the assessment with:</p> <p>Knowledge and Clarity of Reasoning Excellent, comprehensive knowledge base. Ability to discriminate and justify key issues and relate them to the wider context. Lines of thought are transparent and the arguments are confidently expressed to develop and synthesise compelling conclusions.</p> <p>Interface between Theory and Practice in the Professional Context Rigorous critical analysis of the interface between theory and practice, clearly elaborated to evaluate theoretical adequacy and synthesise the development of professional practice. Excellent, creative use of multiple frameworks for evaluation and synthesis of own stance.</p> <p>Use of literature Excellent, wide range of key and peripheral primary and secondary sources, demonstrating critical evaluation and synthesis within the professional context.</p> <p>Organisation of Material Excellent, coherent organisation and structure which enhances comprehension. Excellent presentation of all material. Referencing is accurate to a high degree.</p>

Good	B+, B, B-	<p>Student has met the LOs of the assessment with:</p> <p>Knowledge and Clarity of Reasoning Substantial knowledge base. Ability to discriminate key issues and establish some links to the wider context. Arguments are confidently expressed through clear, logical lines of thought. Conclusions are firmly articulated, comprehensive, relevant and arise directly from the premised arguments.</p> <p>Interface between Theory and Practice in the Professional Context Excellent critical analysis/evaluation of the relationship between theory and practice. Substantial use of multiple theoretical frameworks to evaluate professional practice with wide ranging synthesis to show how each is informing the other. Clear, critical evaluation of their usefulness.</p> <p>Use of literature Substantial selection of key primary and secondary literature sources demonstrating analysis and critical evaluation of a wide range of relevant issues for the professional context.</p> <p>Organisation of Material Organisation is comprehensive and structure coherent. Well presented, with considerable attention to detail which facilitates effortless comprehension. Supporting material is well presented and ordered with accurate referencing and minimal errors of detail.</p>
Satisfactory	C+, C, C-	<p>Student has substantially met each of the LOs of the assessment with:</p> <p>Knowledge and Clarity of Reasoning Sound knowledge base. Ability to discriminate key issues. Arguments are confidently expressed through clear, logical lines of thought. Conclusions are firmly articulated, relevant and arise directly from the premised arguments.</p> <p>Interface between Theory and Practice in the Professional Context Good, critical analysis/evaluation of the relationship between theory and practice. Some use of multiple theoretical frameworks to evaluate professional practice. Demonstrable synthesis to show how each is informing the other. Some evaluation of their usefulness.</p> <p>Use of literature Good selection of key primary literature sources with critical evaluation of significant issues for the professional context. Some limited analysis of related, secondary material.</p> <p>Organisation of Material Organisation and structure is coherent. Well presented, facilitating comprehension. Supporting material is well presented and ordered. Accurate referencing.</p>

Weak	D+, D, D-	<p>Student has not met all the LOs of the assessment with:</p> <p>Knowledge and Clarity of Reasoning Some defended knowledge of current, relevant issues. Limited development of arguments where lines of thought are discernible. Limited conclusions arising from premises.</p> <p>Interface between Theory and Practice in the Professional Context Some articulation of the relationship between and critical analysis/evaluation of the significance of relevant theory to specific professional practice with some awareness of how each may be informed by the other.</p> <p>Use of literature Range and choice of evidence/literature marginally inadequate. Some recognition and critical analysis of issues of significance for the professional context.</p> <p>Organisation of Material Organisation and structure does not adequately support the work. Presentation includes supporting material but is somewhat disorganised in places. Most referencing is sound and appropriate but limited in scope.</p>
Marginal Fail	F1	<p>Student has not met the LOs of the assessment with:</p> <p>Knowledge and Clarity of Reasoning Some evidence of relevant knowledge base but little argument and lines of thought are poorly expressed and often demonstrate confused thinking. Conclusions drawn but often not related to discussion.</p> <p>Interface between Theory and Practice in the Professional Context Some use of relevant theory but lack of awareness of relationship to practice. Little integration of the articulation between theory and practice</p> <p>Use of literature Narrow but mainly relevant selection of evidence/literature demonstrating some recognition of significance for the professional context</p> <p>Organisation of Material Poorly organised, incoherent structure. Poor presentation and referencing. Little appropriate supporting material given.</p>
Fail	F2	Attainment of learning outcomes appreciably deficient in critical respects, lacking a secure basis in relevant factual and analytical dimensions
Poor Fail	F3	Attainment of learning outcomes appreciably deficient in respect of nearly all learning outcomes, with irrelevant use of materials and incomplete and flawed explanation.
Very Poor Fail	F4	No convincing evidence of attainment of any learning outcomes, such treatment of the subject as is in evidence directionless and fragmentary

Please note that in recognition of the higher standard expected of post-graduate students, the pass mark for post-graduate courses is set at C-. For the sake of consistency across Blackburn College, the grade letters D+ to F4 continue to be used at level 7. All student literature at this level must make it clear that D+ to F4 are fail grades.

4.3 Submission, Due Dates, Late Work & Re-assessment

4.3.1 Submission

Submissions of written coursework, dissertations and projects will be made in accordance with arrangements approved by HE Quality and, where needed, Academic Board. For written

submissions this will normally either by electronic means or delivery to a central point/person. All non-electronic submissions will with be recorded and receipted.

As part of their submissions, candidates are required to make a declaration that the submitted work is their own and has not been submitted for any other award in substantially the same form by the candidate or any other person, and affirming that acknowledgement has been made to assistance given and that all major sources have been appropriately referenced. No coursework, dissertation or project submission will be accepted without the inclusion of such a statement.

In the case of group work where a submission in common is made by its members, all the students within the group must sign the same statement.

Where work is submitted by secure electronic means, this/these declaration(s) will be deemed to have been made whether or not the work contains a student signature.

4.3.2 Due dates

Formal examinations will be held on a specified date and at a specified time determined by the relevant programme team. This date and time must be communicated in writing to all affected students at least one month in advance.

Other assessments will have a due date for completion. The due time on that date will be taken to be 5pm, unless specifically notified. This date will be determined by the module tutor in consultation with the programme team and will be clearly stated on all assessment instruments.

4.3.3 Extensions of Due Dates

In cases where students request additional time to complete non-examination assessment work and that request is received before the original due date then the relevant programme leader will have the discretion to allow an extension of the original date not exceeding one term week. Programme leaders should take note of the dates of relevant assessment boards when considering extension requests and should seek to ensure that students' results will be available to the earliest board that is consistent with fair consideration of the students' circumstances. Mandatory guidance will be published to aid the programme leader in the exercise of their discretion.

In cases where an extension of more than one week is requested or where the programme leader feels it would be justified to grant a request that falls outside the guidance then the matter must be referred to the Head of School (or their nominee) who will determine the length of extension allowed, if any.

The Head of School (or their nominee) may also vary examination arrangements for a student by, for example, allowing a change of the examination date or allowing a re-sit paper to be taken as a first attempt.

Due care must be taken in setting a new due date for an assessment to ensure that the student in question can reasonably be expected to be prepared for the assessment by the revised due date and have had adequate opportunity to complete the necessary preparatory work and/or study.

Where it is deemed necessary to ensure the integrity of the assessment process, an alternative assessment instrument may be used when an extension or alternative examination date is granted.

Extensions and/or deferrals will be confirmed to the student in writing a new due date and/or examination date. Dates may not be extended more than once without the permission of the Assistant Principal: Higher Education or their nominee.

Where an extension or alternative examination date has been granted, the new date will become the due date for that student. A record of the new due date and the reasons for the extension must be kept and must be available to assessment and award boards.

Students requesting greater concessions than allowed above must apply for Mitigating Circumstances through the Mitigating Circumstances Panel within the specified deadlines.

4.3.4 Late Work

Lancaster University Programmes Only:

Where coursework is submitted between one and three days after the published deadline without an agreed extension the mark awarded for the assessment will be reduced in accordance with the table below.

Quality of work	Grade Awarded
A+	B+
A	B
A-	B-
B+	C+
B	C
B-	C-
C+	D+
C	D
C-	D-
D+	F1
D	
D-	
F1	F2
F2	F3
F3	F4
F4	

For the purposes of calculating the three-day limit, any work due for submission on Saturday or Sunday will be deemed to be on time if it is submitted by 10:00 on the following Monday.

Where coursework is more than three days late without an agreed extension a mark of zero will be awarded. Where coursework is submitted late after an agreed extension, these penalties will be applied based on the extended due date.

Late Submissions for Higher National Certificates and Diplomas Only (including consideration of Professional and Statutory Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs):

Work which is submitted after the designated deadline (including any formally approved extensions) for an assessment is deemed late.

There may be module and /or programme specific requirements or Professional and Statutory Regulations where late submission is not appropriate or applicable. These exceptions should be outlined in the programme specification, programme handbook or 'assessment brief' as appropriate.

A student that is likely to miss a deadline should discuss the situation as early as possible with the personal academic tutor and the module leader.

Where a student has a valid reason for late submission, which does not amount to an exceptional circumstance, the relevant Programme Leader can authorise a late submission request granting an extension of up to a maximum of 7 days with no grade penalty. In cases where an extension of more than one week is requested or where the Programme Leader feels it would be justified to grant a request that falls outside the guidance then the matter must be referred to the Head of School (or their nominee) who will determine the length of extension allowed, if any.

The time stamp of the work will be indicated by the submission date recorded in the electronic submission or in the event of a manual submission of technical drawings clearly evidenced by the receipt issued.

If serious circumstances beyond a student's control affect their ability to complete an assessment they may submit a Mitigating Circumstances application within 48 hours of the relevant deadline or examination. This must be accompanied by evidence and the work done to date, by the original assessment submission deadline. (See section 4.10 for more information on Mitigating Circumstances).

Where coursework is submitted between one and three days after the published deadline without an agreed extension the mark awarded for the assessment will be reduced in accordance with the table below.

Quality of Work	Grade Awarded
Distinction	Merit
Merit	Pass
Pass	Fail

For the purposes of calculating the three-day limit, any work due for submission on Saturday or Sunday will be deemed to be on time if it is submitted by 10:00 on the following Monday.

Where coursework is more than three days late without an agreed extension a Fail mark will be awarded. Where coursework is submitted late after an agreed extension, these penalties will be applied based on the extended due date.

4.3.5 Unsatisfactory Work

The right to grant a student reassessment of a failed module is reserved to the appropriate Assessment Board. Re-assessment may not be granted in the absence of a minuted decision of an assessment board.

Students will have the right to one re-assessment of any failed module, unless such a right is explicitly denied (e.g. in a validation document or by a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body). Re-assessment will not be offered where one or more assessments within a module have been failed but the module has been passed overall.

Reassessment of failed work may either be by re-sit examination, resubmission of an original assessment after re-work or by means of an alternative assessment.

Where reassessment is not by submission of re-work, the new assessment may be an alternative assessment covering the outcomes of the original assessment or may take the form of a summative assessment designed to demonstrate the threshold level of knowledge and skill for the whole module.

Re-assessment tasks and dates are non-negotiable and will be communicated to the student in writing.

All reassessed modules are capped at the pass grade for the relevant programme. Should reassessment result in a new module grade that is lower than that awarded before reassessment then the original grade will stand, otherwise the grade recorded will be that awarded after reassessment, subject to the cap above.

4.4 Examination Boards

Lancaster University Boards

The process leading to the formal approval of module marks, the achievement of awards and their classification is managed through a hierarchy of formal boards.

4.4.1 Module Boards

Module Boards will be held in advance of Assessment Boards, normally within the Academic School in which the relevant programme is run. Preparation for the Module Board will include discussions with the External Examiner to discuss scaling and low/high aggregation scores.

The purpose of Module Boards is to collate and moderate student module results, to consider the progression and awarding decisions and to make clear, reasoned and concise recommendations to Assessment Boards.

As part of the moderation process, the Module Board should satisfy itself for each individual assessment that:

The assessment was correctly set and internally or externally validated as required.
The first and second marking processes were carried out correctly.

Having done so, the board should consider and decide any cases where the first and second markers were unable to agree a final mark.

In any case where the board is not satisfied that due process has been carried out or where disputes between markers indicate the possibility of wider problems with the assessment or its marking, the board may make whatever arrangements it considers necessary to ensure the efficacy of the assessment process. Such arrangements may include partial or complete re-marking of the assessment(s) in question and/or engagement with the external examiner to resolve problems.

If, after application of all other methods of moderation, the overall mean aggregation score for any module lies outside the range 13.5 to 17.0 (or 55% to 66.7% for quantitative results) then examiners must consider whether or not there is a case for the marks to be scaled. Scaling may be of the overall mark for the module or of any assessment therein. The method of scaling to be used should be discussed and should reflect both the nature of the assessment and the size of the cohort. Both the reason for scaling and the method used must be justified within the minutes of the Board of Examiners. If scaling is discussed and not used, the reason for not scaling will be recorded in the minutes. In all cases both the original and the scaled marks will be permanently recorded.

Where the board considers, on the basis of this reflection, that the marks awarded in a particular assessment or module are likely to have been affected by assessment being too easy, too difficult or failing to distinguish adequately between different levels of performance the board may propose adjustment of the marks for that module or assessment.

The adjustment proposed should be the least necessary to correct the problem and should normally take the form of a simple raising or lowering of all students' marks by a fixed amount or a linear scaling of the students' score of the form

$$\text{NewScore} = (\text{OriginalScore} \pm \text{Offset}) * \text{Factor}.$$

In cases where the effect of proposed moderation would be to reduce students' marks and the effect of such moderation on any classification of the award would be small then the board should not normally change marks but should comment on its findings so that these can form part of the review process for the affected module.

Module Board meetings will be formal and should be minuted. Any changes made to individual students' module marks must be recorded and the reasons detailed on the relevant assessment documentation. Changes will be subject to the consent of the relevant external examiner if they were not present at the board.

4.4.2 Assessment/Award Boards²

The purpose of the Assessment/Award Boards is to receive the recommendations of the Academic School Module Boards and to make recommendations for:

- the conferment of awards
- the classification of awards
- progression decisions at Foundation Year and level 4 and above
- recommendations for students to exit with a contained award
- accepting the reports of the external examiner(s) and programme consultant(s).

In addition, Assessment/Award Boards will:

- agree student module marks
- accept the decisions of the Mitigating Circumstances Panel and determine the remedies to be applied. Only in exceptional circumstances should a board overturn or disregard a recommendation of the MCP. All such decisions must be minuted and must be reported to the Academic Board where the student's target is a Blackburn College award or to the relevant authority of the external awarding body where it is not.
- determine arrangements for re-sits, re-assessment and re-takes of individual assessments
- determine whether or not a student should be permitted to retake individual failed modules or a failed year. This capacity is restricted to a first retake of any module or year. Any further concessions requested must be referred to the appropriate Assessment/Award Board for decision.

Assessment/Award boards will be supplied with the following information relating to all students being considered:

² Blackburn College Assessment and Award boards act with delegated authority for Lancaster University awards. For these awards these procedures apply but the awarding regulations of the University take precedence over these regulations. Boards must ensure that their recommendations are in line with the University's awarding regulations and practice.

- Module results data relating to students being considered for a final award or for progression at Foundation Year and level 4 or above
- Mitigating Circumstances Panel decisions and recommendations
- requests to leave the programme with a contained award
- minutes of relevant previous assessment and award board meetings.

Assessment/Award Boards will not make time for general discussion of students' individual circumstances.

Assessment/Award Boards must make recommendations in line with the awarding regulations in force at the time, exercising no more discretion than those regulations explicitly permit. Should a board feel that the strict decision would be inappropriate then it may request that the Award Board considers an alternative outcome. Any such request must be minuted and the Assessment/Award Board's preferred outcome stated.

The recommendations of the Assessment/Award Board are final.

Minutes of Award Boards will be approved by the Chair and/or Academic Registrar (or nominee), before being circulated to all attendees and then presented to Academic Board for information and approval. The Academic Board may refer matters of concern back to HE Quality for action.

Where an Assessment/Award Board at Blackburn College is acting as, or in lieu of, the award board of an external awarding body then the report of the will also act as a recommendation to the relevant committee of that awarding body.

4.4.3 Mid-year Progression Boards

The College may hold progression boards at the end of Semester A to receive grades from Semester A modules and agree resit requirements for students who have failed assessments at this point in the course. Resits will normally be held at the end of Semester B.

4.4.4 Possible Recommendations of Assessment Boards

The recommendations of assessment boards are restricted to one of the following decisions per student:

Pass Award	<p>Successful completion of the whole of an award. The student has completed a valid combination of modules, has acquired the required credits at every level and is entitled to the award.</p> <p>The award may be made with a summative classification or grade if appropriate.</p> <p>This description is to be used where the award made completes the student's studies, even where / if this award was not the student's original target award.</p>
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Proceed	The student has reached a point at which the validation document, or other regulations, requires a formal progression decision to be taken and the student has met the criteria for progression.
Award Proceed	The student is to be made a contained award and is to remain on the programme to study for a higher target award.
Condone Proceed	The student has reached a point at which the validation document, or other regulations, requires a formal progression decision to be taken. The student has met the criteria for progression but has failed a modules or modules. The extent of these modules is within the condonation discretion of the Award and the Award Board is being recommended to condone the failed modules and allow the student to proceed. No repair / re-take of the failed modules will be required.
Refer Proceed	<p>The student has met the requirements to progress to the next level or to achieve the target award but has one or more failed or incomplete modules and has not exhausted the opportunities available to remedy the situation.</p> <p>In these cases, the board must state the nature of the shortfall(s) and the details of how these are to be remedied. Typically, this is likely to be by resubmitting work, re-sitting examinations and / or carrying out reassessment exercises.</p> <p>Referred assessments are limited to a bare pass mark, but the modules to which they contribute are not.</p>
Refer	<p>The student has failed to achieve the requirements to progress to the next level or to achieve the target award and has not exhausted the opportunities available to remedy the situation.</p> <p>In these cases, the board must state the nature of the shortfall(s) and the details of how these are to be remedied. Typically, this is likely to be by resubmitting work, re-sitting examinations and / or carrying out reassessment exercises.</p> <p>Referred assessments are limited to a bare pass mark, but the modules to which they contribute are not.</p>
Continuing	The student has not reached a point at which a formal progression decision is required. The student's results are being presented for approval before being entered on their record.
Fail Repair	<p>The student, having had every permitted opportunity to remedy their situation, has failed to meet the requirements of the award or has failed to meet the criteria for progression at a point where a formal progression decision is required.</p> <p>The board recommends that the student's successful module results are to be recorded and the student permitted to retake failed modules. The</p>

maximum mark awarded for the retaken module(s) is capped at the pass mark for the relevant programme.

Notes:

- The regulations of the student's target award may not permit this option, may reserve this decision to another authority and / or may require explanatory detail. Boards must consult the appropriate regulations before recording this recommendation.

Fail Repeat

The student, having had every permitted opportunity to remedy their situation, has failed to meet the requirements of the award or has failed to meet the criteria for progression at a point where a formal progression decision is required.

The Board recommends that any successful module results are not to be recorded and the student is required to retake all modules making up the relevant level. The maximum mark awarded for the retaken is not capped.

Notes:

- The regulations of the student's target award may not permit this option, may reserve this decision to another authority and / or may require explanatory detail. Boards must consult the appropriate regulations before recording this recommendation.

Fail

The student has failed the requirements of the award and is not permitted to continue on the relevant programme.

Award Exit

The student has failed the target award and is required to leave the programme but is to be made a contained award to which the student is entitled.

Deferred

The decision is being deferred until a later date for further information, e.g. marks not available, work outstanding, pending decisions of a Mitigating Circumstances Panel or the like. Decisions cannot be deferred in cases where the student's results are unavailable because of a failure (such as late submission) on the student's part. Decisions would normally be deferred in cases of late filing of results by staff, delays resulting from legitimate extensions of deadlines, decisions (or pending decisions) of the Mitigating Circumstances Panel, or other similar situations.

Defer Proceed

The decision on some elements of the level is deferred but the student is permitted to proceed to the next level carrying deferred modules.

Chair's Action	Some item of information required to make a decision is unavailable at the board but will be available very soon. The board asks the chair to enter a recommendation on its behalf as soon as sufficient information is available.
Conditional Award	The board recommends an award be made, but this award is subject to a decision or the confirmation of a decision by another board or body.
Award Aegrotat	Offer an Aegrotat Award (unclassified honours) where exceptional circumstances prevent a student from completing of their award. Please refer to Section 3.2.10 and the relevant Awarding Body's Regulations.

Note that when a student falls into both a 'deferred' and 'referred' category the decision recorded should be 'deferred' so that the entirety of the student's situation can be considered at a later board. However, the opportunities available to remedy the failed or referred modules are unchanged by this decision and the board must state the nature of any such shortfall(s) and the details of how these are to be remedied.

In addition to these summative recommendations the board may, subject to any specific regulations for the award, require that particular modules be:

Referred	The module has not been completed successfully but the student has an outstanding opportunity to redeem it. The board must specify what action is required to remedy the situation. The marks for all repaired, repeated, resubmitted or reassessment work are capped at a bare pass, but the summative mark for the module is not.
Deferred	The module has not yet been completed successfully but this is not as a result of a failure by the student. The board must specify what action is required to remedy the situation. The marks for repaired, repeated, resubmitted or reassessment work are not capped.
Repeated	The module is to be retaken from scratch. Any existing mark is void.

4.4.5 Recommendation Guidance

This section provides boards with guidance in order to help them to make fair and consistent decisions. Boards may depart from the guidance where they feel this is justified but should minute their reasons for doing so and refer the final decision to the relevant award board.

The validation document or other regulations applying to a given award may restrict the application of this guidance. Where such regulations are explicit they take precedence.

Deferrals

Deferrals should not be made in cases where the reason that the student's marks are incomplete is a result of any failure on the part of the student. Boards should check that the

student is not at fault before making a deferral recommendation. Suitable evidence is likely to be written evidence of a deadline extension given by a member of staff, a decision (or pending decision) of the Mitigating Circumstances Panel or evidence of late marking as a result of, for example, staff illness.

Unspent re-assessment entitlements

Students should be permitted any unspent reassessment opportunities.

Reassessment

In the absence of explicit rules to the contrary, where a student has failed modules and has no remaining reassessment entitlements the following guidelines apply.

- Where it is possible to make the target award despite the failed modules, the award should be made.
- Where the student has qualified for a contained award then:

If the student has indicated a willingness to accept that award, the contained award should be made.

If the student has not indicated a willingness to accept the contained award, the approval of that award should be recorded in the board minutes and permission given for a decision to be taken by chair's action. The student should be advised of their entitlement to the contained award and given the option to accept it. If the student accepts the award, then the award should be made. This offer can be made even if other alternative actions are offered.

Acceptance of a contained award following failure is an alternative to any other offer made and terminates the student's registration for the original target award.

Repeats

Allowing a student to repeat a module, year or level can give an unfair advantage over others and care should be taken not to grant them inappropriately.

At level 4 and below, the grant of a repeat year is left at the discretion of the Board, or may be granted through the Student Facing Panel. The Board or Panel may grant a repeat where they feel that this is justified in the circumstances and they believe that any advantage gained is minimal. The repeat year does not apply to students registered on a One-Year named Certificate of Higher Education Target award.

At level 5 and above, students are expected to have matured academically and retakes should normally only be granted if the Board is aware of significant extenuating circumstances, evidenced by a decision of the Student Facing Panel or other reliable source, that a student's opportunity or capacity to study was significantly compromised during their studies.

Students should not normally be permitted to repeat modules, a year or level where the consensus of the programme team for the programme in question is that it would be inappropriate because, for example, of a student's incapacity to achieve at the required level or an unacceptably poor engagement with their studies. In such cases the student should be recorded as 'Fail Withdraw'.

Students should not normally be allowed to retake any module, year or level more than once.

Module Repeats

In cases where the board feels that reassessment would be inappropriate it can permit one or more modules to be retaken. Retakes are normally limited to failed modules and to the minimum number to allow the target award to be made or progression requirements to be met.

The student must re-enrol for this/these modules, attend the relevant lectures, seminars, etc. and take all assessments of the retaken module. If any of the modules to be retaken is an optional module for the target award, the student may choose to enrol for an alternative option module, if available.

Where individual modules are retaken then the marks in other modules stand but the module mark(s) for the retaken modules are struck from the record and the results of the retakes will stand.

Repeat Year or Level

If the board considers that offering retakes of individual modules is unrealistic, for example because the extent of failure is too great (typically totalling more than 60 credits) or because there is no practical way by which the modules could be retaken, then the board may allow the retaking of a whole year or level. In this case the student must re-enrol for and complete all modules of the year or level (or a valid alternative combination of modules), all the marks for the affected modules are struck from the record and the marks from the retaken modules will stand.

NB: Repeat years will normally only be considered if the student has attempted all assessments and re-assessments or has significant mitigating circumstances.

Aegrotat Awards

In recommending awards, assessment boards may consider cases of very serious physical/mental illness (certified by an appropriately qualified medical practitioner) or other compassionate circumstances. If, in the board's view, such circumstances have very seriously affected a candidate's attendance or performance in assessments, the board shall have the discretion to recommend an award other than that indicated by the results available to it.

If the threshold requirements for the award have been met, the board may recommend that the award made is of a higher classification than would normally be granted for the performance shown.

In cases where the threshold requirements have not been met, the board may recommend that an unclassified aegrotat award be made.

Boards should take care to balance the demands of justice for the disadvantaged student against the demand for fairness to other students and should not exercise this power unless it is satisfied that all normal provision for reassessment and/or the consideration of mitigating circumstances has been exhausted, or that the particular circumstances of the case render these processes wholly inappropriate.

Where an aegrotat award is recommended, the board may offer the student the option to be reassessed in specified modules in order to qualify for a normal award. Failure to take up a reassessment opportunity or academic failure in reassessment shall not deprive the student of the right to the aegrotat award.

Posthumous Awards

Assessment Boards may recommend that awards be made to students who have died before the date of the board. In such cases the board shall have discretion to recommend an award be made even when the minimum requirements of the award have not been met. All transcripts and certificates in respect of an award made posthumously shall bear a date earlier than that of the candidate's death.

4.4.6 Membership of Boards

No student may be a member of any module, assessment/award board or attend any meeting of these boards other than as a student for assessment. However, where a person who would normally be a member of a board is also registered as a student on an award they may act in their normal capacity subject to the provisions below.

Module Boards

Programme Leader(s) Programme Team(s)

The relevant Head of School and Academic Group Lead will be invited

External Examiners and/or Programme Consultants may attend

A member of the Quality Team or Senior Support Administrator will attend to record decisions and a Senior member of the College Leadership team will chair.

Assessment/Award Boards

Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality (Chair) (a suitable senior member of the College Leadership team may Chair in the absence of the VP)

Assistant Principal: HE

Head of School

Academic Registrar (or nominee) (secretary)

At least one HE Quality Team member (or nominee) to record decisions and take minutes

MIS-HE to record the marks

Programme Leaders for all programmes involved (or appointee if unavailable)

Representatives of all External Awarding Bodies involved

Relevant External Examiners and Programme Consultants will be invited.

4.4.7 Conflicts of Interest

Any member of any module, assessment or award board who is aware of any conflict of interest (for example being a student on, or being related to or a close friend of any student on a programme to be considered by that board) must declare that interest as soon as the possibility arises.

Such conflicts of interest must be reported to the Chair of the relevant board and the details must be recorded in the minutes of the board. No-one with such a conflict of interest may take part in any board discussion relating to the student(s).

Any board member or other person in attendance at a board who is also a student whose case is to be considered at that board must leave the meeting for the duration of the discussion of their case.

Any other person who has declared a conflict of interest may, with the permission of the Chair, be permitted to remain in attendance for the duration of the discussion.

4.4.8 Pearson Assessment Boards³

The main purpose of an Assessment Board is to make recommendations on:

- The grades achieved by students on the individual modules or units
- Extenuating circumstances
- Cases of cheating and plagiarism
- Progression of students onto the next stage of the programme
- The awards to be made to students
- Referrals and deferrals.
- Assessment Boards may also monitor academic standards.

The Pearson Assessment Board delegates responsibility to make recommendations on Extenuating/ Mitigating circumstances, Cases of cheating and plagiarism to the Student Facing Panel (SFP) who will make their decisions available to the Assessment Board.

4.4.9 Membership of Pearson Assessment Boards

No student may be a member of any module, assessment/award board or attend any meeting of these boards other than as a student for assessment. However, where a person

³ Blackburn College Pearson Assessment Board act with delegated authority for Pearson BTEC Higher National programmes. For these awards these procedures apply but the awarding regulations of Pearson set out in the BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment will take precedence over these regulations. Assessment Boards must ensure that their recommendations are in line with Pearsons BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment.

who would normally be a member of a board is also registered as a student on an award they may act in their normal capacity subject to the provisions below.

Assessment Boards for Pearson qualifications

Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement (or appropriate senior nominee) (Chair)

Assistant Principal: Higher Education

Head of School

Academic Registrar (or nominee)

At least one HE Quality Team member (or nominee) to record decisions and take minutes

MIS-HE to record the marks

Programme Leaders for all programmes involved (or appointee if unavailable)

All members of the programme team, for which modules are being presented

Relevant External Examiners (EE) will be invited. (To note that if a Pearson EE attends the Assessment Board, it is in the capacity of an adviser; they will have no power to veto at the Board).

Quorum

The Quorum of the Pearson Assessment Boards shall be six members, including the Chair. Should the meeting be inquorate then it will be necessary to postpone and reconvene the Assessment Board until the first available opportunity for the Assessment Board to be quorate.

4.4.10 Conflicts of Interest for Pearson Assessment Boards

Any member of any Assessment Board, who is aware of any conflict of interest (for example being a student on, or being related to or a close friend of any student on a programme to be considered by that board) must declare that interest as soon as the possibility arises.

Such conflicts of interest must be reported to the Chair of the relevant board and the details must be recorded in the minutes of the board. No-one with such a conflict of interest may take part in any board discussion relating to the student(s).

Any board member or other person in attendance at a board who is also a student whose case is to be considered at that board must leave the meeting for the duration of the discussion of their case.

Any other person who has declared a conflict of interest may, with the permission of the Chair, be permitted to remain in attendance for the duration of the discussion.

4.4.11 Provision for Chairs Action at Pearson Assessment Boards

Chairs Actions will normally take place only in extenuating circumstances and where a decision has not been able to be made during the Assessment Board. The Chairs Action

decision should be recorded in the minutes as such and the minutes updated, as a post meeting update, once a decision on the Chairs Action has been reached. A Chairs Action report form should also be used to record the reason for the Chairs Action and the outcome after the Chairs Action has been made.

4.5 Management of Assessment

Assessment of the modules delivered within the University Centre is normally either by coursework or by a combination of coursework and examinations, as indicated in the relevant module descriptors and programme specifications.

4.5.1 Validation of Assessment instruments

All assessment instruments used within the University Centre will be validated before use.

Level 0-4 Modules

Assessments for use up to Level 4 modules will be internally validated by Blackburn College staff prior to use and copies made available to any relevant external examiner(s) / verifiers on request. This does not apply where level 4 modules count towards the final classification of an award, in which case they will be approved by the external examiner.

Level 5-7 Modules

In the case of formal examinations pre-issue validation will be by the external examiner(s) for the programme / module in question. Coursework elements will be internally validated by Blackburn College staff prior to use and copies made available to the external examiner(s) / verifier(s) on request.

Validators must ensure that assessments meet these regulations in full.

4.5.2 Marking and Feedback

Marking should be carried out to a detailed marking scheme for the assessment. The method of marking is a matter for the academic school in which a particular programme is offered and may include traditional marking of written assessments, machine-marking of multiple-choice tests or electronic submissions, group and/or peer assessment of presentations and/or exhibitions, etc. Care should be taken to ensure that any changes to marking arrangements made under section 4.1.5 are observed.

It is the responsibility of the relevant Programme Leader to ensure that marking procedures are objective, robust and appropriate to the assessment types, and that the relevant external examiner is content with the arrangements.

In some cases, particularly for exhibitions and major projects, marking may be deferred until the relevant external examiner is present so that a final mark can be agreed between all assessors at once.

Level 0-4 Modules

All assessments will be marked within the University Centre and then be subject to internal verification by the second marking of a sample of scripts. A sample of student scripts will be retained for scrutiny by any relevant external examiner(s) / verifier(s). Where level 4 modules count towards award assessments, they are subject to external verification.

Level 5-7 Modules

All assessments will be marked within the University Centre and then be subject to internal verification by the second marking of a sample of scripts. First and second marking of all formal examinations will be completely anonymous.

Feedback

Relevant, constructive and formative feedback must be given for all non-examination assessments. Staff may give feedback on examinations but should comment on the performance of the group assessed and not the performance of individual students.

Feedback should relate directly to each of the assessment tasks and learning outcomes addressed and to the grading criteria for the assessment. Feedback should explain the marker's conclusions for each of the outcomes and the reasons for the grade awarded. Feedback should also give advice on the changes, if any, that would have resulted in a higher mark.

In the case of written submissions, the feedback detailed above should be recorded on the feedback forms for the assessment in question.

4.5.3 Definition of Second Marking

The purposes of second marking are to ensure that grading decisions are based on the judgement of more than one assessor / examiner and to reduce the risk of human error in the marking process.

Second marking is not required for machine-marked electronic assessments.

Blackburn College accepts that the most appropriate form of second marking varies by subject and may vary by module. Academic Schools should assign to one of the second marking methods listed below to each programme and/or module as it feels appropriate.

- unseen double marking, where student work is independently assessed by a second marker without the knowledge of marks assigned by the first marker
- second marking where student work is assessed by more than one marker, but the second marker knows the mark allocated by the first marker
- joint marking in which the student work is assessed by two or more markers and an agreed result recorded.

The methods to be applied to each programme / module and the rationale for their selection should be communicated in writing to the relevant programme leader and a record kept with the relevant programme documentation.

Second Marking Sample Size

The sample of submissions selected for second marking should be representative of the body of submissions and should include items showing the range of student attainment for the assessment in question. The sample size should normally be at least the square root of the original number of assessments (i.e. 5 for a group of 25, 10 for a group of 100) subject to a minimum of three items per assessment that represent a spread of grades including at least one fail (if there are any). Staff should endeavour to include work from a wide range of students in the samples retained for the modules within a programme.

4.5.4 Retention of Marked Work

General

Samples of assessed, moderated and externally examined student work must be retained for future scrutiny within Blackburn College and by external quality agencies. Normally, all samples for a particular module and particular year should be kept together in a coherent and accessible format.

Samples of work must be accompanied by:

- Copies of original assessment briefs / examination papers
- Evidence of appropriate validation of the briefs / papers
- Evidence of internal / external verification / moderation of marking, where this is not evident from the marked work itself.
- Data showing the spread of marks awarded for the module in question.

Formal Examinations:

All student examination scripts must be retained for scrutiny by the relevant external examiners and until the maximum time period for student appeals has passed. After that, a representative sample must be kept for quality purposes but other scripts may be destroyed. The sample must be retained for a total of three academic years from the original examination date and then should be destroyed. Formal examination scripts are never to be returned to students.

Coursework (inc. informal tests, exhibition material, projects, etc.)

Normally, coursework assessments will be returned to the relevant students shortly after marking. Students must be advised that they must retain their coursework at least until the final assessment board for that year has passed, so that the relevant External Examiner may view them on request. A representative sample of work from each module must be retained for the External Examiner. Where a student's work is retained as part of a sample then the student should receive a copy of the feedback forms and may request the return of a photocopy of the coursework. Samples must be retained for a total of three academic years from the original assessment date and then should be destroyed. At the discretion of the relevant programme team, students may be given an opportunity to collect coursework items due for destruction.

Project reports and dissertations are deemed the property of Blackburn College and may be retained in the library for future reference.

Where a module has been delivered more than once in an academic year then work from each separate delivery of that module must be included in the samples retained. It is not necessary to keep separate samples from each delivery.

The sample kept for external scrutiny should be representative of the assessments as a whole and should include items showing the range of student attainment for the assessment in question. The sample size should normally be at least the square root of the original number of assessments (i.e. 5 for a group of 25, 10 for a group of 100) subject to a minimum of three items per assessment. Staff should endeavour to include work from a wide range of students in the samples retained for the modules within a programme.

Any of the above samples may be kept electronically provided that each electronic copy is a faithful representation of the original and is retained on non-volatile media (such as CD or DVD).

This policy defines the minimum level of student work retention. Where there are genuinely exceptional reasons for retaining work in excess of that indicated above this is permitted.

4.5.5 Modules approved for percentage marking

Currently there are no Blackburn College modules for which the College has requested percentage marking.

4.6 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Introduction

The College recognises that students may have gained significant knowledge and skills prior to joining the College that are relevant to the award(s) for which they are admitted, and that there should be fair and transparent mechanisms by which students can gain formal recognition for these achievements. The provisions of this section provide a transparent, fair, consistent and coherent approach to the treatment of recognition of prior learning.

The College follows the principles and guidance for conduct as expressed in the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Advice and Guidance section on Assessment, page 12.

4.6.1 Definitions

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the generic term used for the recognition of certificated, non-certificated, work-based and experiential learning that occurs prior to the commencement of study at the College.

The College differentiates between experiential and certificated learning, as follows:

- Credit Transfer (CT) is defined as the recognition of prior learning certified by a recognised UK higher education awarding body for which the level and volume of achievements are specified. Credit Transfer is distinct from RPCL in that the original provider's statement of the volume and level of learning is accepted without further investigation. CT is not part of the definition of RPL.

RPL is defined as follows:

- Recognition of prior certificated learning (RPCL) is the official recognition of units, courses and/or credits previously recognised by an education provider where such learning has been formally assessed in order to contribute to an award.
- Recognition of prior experiential learning (RPEL) is the official recognition of learning, which has occurred through life and work experience or training / study and that has not been formally attested as above. This learning will be demonstrated for the award of credit by documenting and/or reflecting on those experiences gathered outside formal education.
- Advanced Standing is where an applicant enters a programme with RPCL at a point later than the normal point of entry of the programme. Students can enter the programme with a previous qualification or other certified learning, where this learning is mapped against the relevant programme and it has been established that the learning outcomes, content, currency, academic credit and level of award are appropriate and relevant. Advanced Standing can be awarded for a full course stage or part of a course stage and this determines the point of entry to the course, subject to the limitations specified below.

Credits awarded may be general, specific credits or partial credits:

- General Credits are the credit values attributed without regard to a particular programme of study. They are awarded on the basis of the quantity of learning and credit level demonstrated and are used only to grant advanced standing.
- Specific Credits are directly relevant to an identified programme of study, are awarded in place of specific modules and are used in the awarding process in lieu of taught modules.
- Partial Credits are awarded where RPL has evidenced the fact that a student has achieved some but not all of the learning outcomes within a module. The remaining outcomes must then be demonstrated by assessment. Modules completed in this way are used in the awarding process as taught modules.

4.6.2 Admissions and Recognition of Prior Learning

The consideration of prior learning for admission to a programme at a normal entry point is an admissions matter and rests on an academic judgement of a student's suitability for a programme, not the award of credit, and therefore is not within the scope of this section. RPL for admission falls within the scope of this section only if, and to the extent that, it involves

the recording of credits that will contribute to those considered for an award and/or to any classification of an award.

4.6.3 General RPL Regulations

- The availability of and procedures for obtaining RPL must be clearly publicised to prospective and current students, but the onus for making an application for RPL rests on the student.
- RPL is dependent on the provision by the applicant of documentary evidence of the achievement of learning at the appropriate level. Care must be taken to ensure that the evidence provided is authentic and current.
- RPEL credit is awarded for authenticated documentary evidence of achievement of learning or the outcomes of that learning, not solely for specific experiences, engagement in activities or attendance
- The evidence supporting an RPL claim must meet the following criteria:
 - Authenticity and sufficiency – the learning must have been undertaken by the applicant and have been fully achieved;
 - Relevance/Equivalence - the evidence produced must relate sufficiently well to the module or programme outcomes against which a claim being made;
 - Quality - the structure, process and outcomes of the learning experience must be of comparable quality to taught learning experiences having due regard to the academic level claimed;
 - Currency – the evidence must relate to the student’s current level of knowledge and skill and must embody the current state of knowledge in the relevant cognate area. Evidence of further development or updating will normally be required if the learning relating to an RPL claim is more than five years old.
- The evidence offered can be assessed by any appropriate method including, but not limited to written evidence, the presentation of portfolios, oral testing or presentation, observation of performance, etc. A record must be kept of all evidence provided such that the relevant external examiner can adequately review the integrity of any credit granted.
- General credit can be awarded without regard for a particular unit or course on the basis of the quantity of learning and credit level demonstrated but the learning outcomes evidenced should be consistent in volume, scope and level with those of the programme and stage(s) for which RPL is to be applied.
- Where RPL is for Specific or Partial Credit, the knowledge, skills and academic level of attainment evidenced should be substantially the same as the programme elements for which credit is to be granted. Specific or Partial Credit is awarded against identified programme elements in place of credits earned normally.
- Where the threshold achievements of specific certified learning have been mapped against particular Specific or Partial Credit elements and have been found to meet the RPCL requirements for the grant of such credits, a document detailing the mapping exercise may be produced. Once such a document has been produced and approved, future RPCL claimants offering evidence of identical certified learning may be awarded identical Specific or Partial Credits without any requirement that the mapping exercise be repeated or reapproved.

- RPL credits may be awarded at any level.
- Credits awarded by RPL must be identified as such in information presented to assessment and/or award boards.
- External examiners have the right, and must have the opportunity, to review the evidence used to support a claim for RPL.
- RPL credits will be identified as such on students' transcripts.
- The RPL process does not award grades or marks. Elements credited by RPL will have a recorded grade of the pass mark for the award.
- Where RPL credits have been used for an award, these credits cannot be used again for a subsequent award at the same level.
- Applications cannot be made retrospectively in the event that a module has been taken and failed.
- The classifications of awards will be calculated in accordance with the normal regulations for the award in question. However, where an assessment board feels that a student has been disadvantaged by the non-grading of RPL credit the board should make a recommendation of the classification that it deems just as set out in Section 2F Classification of Awards within the RTP regulations.
- Should a student feel that a Credit Transfer (CT), Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) or Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) decision is unjust (s)he will have the right to appeal under the Academic Appeals process.

4.6.4 Limits of Credit Awarded

Applications can be made under this regulation for consideration of CT, RPCL and/or RPEL towards any award.

RPL for General Credit is limited to programmes comprising more than one stage, to the first stage of awards comprising two or three stages and to the first two stages of awards of four stages or more. General Credit will be recorded as such on student transcripts.

CT may be accepted without limit where the credit to be transferred was subject to the same quality system as the award to which it is to be credited (e.g. between Blackburn College awards or between partner institutions of the same external awarding body delivering the same module(s)).

RPL (but not CT) is limited to elements of an award (modules, learning outcomes, competences, assessments, tasks, etc.) that total 50% of the credit value of the student's target award.

Where an award has a summative classification, RPL for Specific and/or Partial Credit is further limited to elements totalling 25% or less of the weighted credits used in the calculation of that summative classification.

4.6.5 Process

Students may seek advice and help from programme teams to aid them in deciding whether or not to make an application for RPL and in producing the application itself.

Students' applications for RPL will be considered by a Recognition of Prior Learning Panel (RPLP). The membership and terms of reference of this panel will be determined by HE Quality, who will also determine the processes and documentation to be used and may also approve mandatory guidelines for the RPLP.

The decisions of the RPLP are recommendations to Lancaster University and are provisional until confirmed by Lancaster University. They are subject to approval of the Programme Consultant.

Students may be notified of the recommendations made by the RPLP but must be informed clearly of the provisional nature of those recommendations.

4.7 Notification of Results

The marks awarded for coursework assignments, examinations and other assessments should be communicated to students promptly after assessment, normally within three weeks of the submission / examination date. In some rare circumstances, for example where reporting results to one student or group would give an unfair advantage to another student / group as yet unassessed, it may be necessary to withhold results longer than 3 weeks.

It must be clearly stated that all such marks are subject to moderation by internal verification and/or external examiners and are, as such, a guide to students' performance and not final grading decisions. The results of individual assessments may be posted, communicated in class or tutorial time or sent by electronic means.

Module marks, summative grades / classifications, awarding decisions and / or reassessment decisions agreed at assessment and/or award boards are normally final and should be reported to students promptly by electronic means such as email, Moodle, etc., normally within two weeks of the board meeting. Where the decision of a board is subject to confirmation by an external awarding body this should be made clear in all communications with the students concerned.

In some exceptional circumstances (such as, for example, some borderline cases) external awarding bodies may require that the decisions of boards are withheld until after confirmation. In such cases, the students concerned should be informed promptly of their situation. The final decision should be reported to the student as soon as possible.

Student results are not confidential personal information and may be published.

4.8 Academic Appeals

This section applies to appeals on academic matters only. Appeals relating to decisions on other matters, such as for example student discipline or malpractice are provided for under other policies.

For the purposes of this section the word 'appeal' refers to appeals against examination board decisions, requests to review academic decisions and student challenges on academic matters.

Students have no right of appeal in matters of academic judgement such as marking, grading, awarding or classification. Appeals on this basis will be ruled invalid.

4.8.1 Valid grounds for appeal

A request for an appeal against a Board decision may only be based on one or more of the following grounds:

- material administrative error or irregularity in conduct of assessment which has affected the student's results;
- the production of significant new evidence concerning extenuating or mitigating circumstances, which for good reason had not been available to boards of examiners;
- other grounds where unfair treatment or discrimination is alleged which is outside the exercise of academic judgement and which for good reason had not been brought to the attention of the boards of examiners.

Process

The process for of Academic Appeals is evidence-based, therefore appropriate supporting documentation must be provided in order for the appeal to be heard. Appeals that are submitted without evidence will be rejected without being heard by the panel.

First Stage Appeal

The student must appeal in writing to the HE Quality Team at Blackburn College stating the precise ground(s) for the appeal within 14 days of the original notification. Appeals received outside this timescale will be ruled invalid. Any relevant documentary evidence should be provided.

First stage appeals will be heard by an Academic Appeals Panel convened by a member of the HE Quality Team for this purpose, which must contain at least two academics unconnected with the student or the student's programme of study, and a member of professional services staff. A student representative will be appointed where possible.

Students' applications for consideration by the panel will be checked on receipt to ensure that they fall within the remit of the panel, are complete and are supported by prima facie evidence where relevant. If an application is judged at this stage not to be within the panel remit, to be incomplete or not supported by prima facie evidence, where relevant, the application will be rejected without being considered by the panel. Such rejection will be deemed to be the decision of the panel meeting that would otherwise have considered the application and will be recorded in the minutes of that meeting.

A member of the HE Quality Team will convene panels to hear appeals and is responsible for arranging times for hearings with students. Students have a right to be accompanied by a representative or friend at any hearings in the Appeals process.

The Academic Registrar (or a delegated member of HEQ) is responsible for ensuring the student is informed both verbally (at the meeting) and in writing of the outcome of the appeal which may be:

- The appeal is upheld and referred back to the relevant Board for reconsideration
- The appeal is upheld and the Academic Registrar (or nominee) takes immediate action on behalf of the Assessment Board
- The appeal is turned down

Where a first stage appeal is turned down, the student has a right to a second stage appeal if they are dissatisfied with the outcome.

Second Stage Appeal

A second stage appeal will not be called if a first stage appeal has not been held. Requests for second stage appeals must be made in writing to the HE Quality Team within 14 days of the first stage appeal hearing. Any relevant documentary evidence must be provided.

Extenuating circumstances that were not declared either at the time of the relevant assessment board meeting or at the first stage appeal will be ruled invalid unless it can be shown that the evidence was for good reason not available earlier.

Stage two appeals will be heard by a panel convened by the Assistant Principal for Higher Education in the same manner as for Stage 1 appeals. The powers of an Appeal Panel are:

- To determine the validity of the grounds for the appeal. The appeal will not proceed if the panel does not deem the grounds to be valid;
- To uphold the appeal based on the evidence presented and to refer the matter back to the relevant Board;
- To uphold the appeal and the Academic Registrar (or nominee) takes immediate action on behalf of the Assessment Board
- To turn down the appeal and to uphold the original decision of the relevant Board.

The Academic Registrar (or nominee) is responsible for ensuring that the appellant and the Chair of the relevant Board are informed in writing of the decision of the Appeal Panel and the reasons for the decision, normally within 5 working days of the appeal being held.

Third Stage Appeal

Where an appeal is turned down at the second stage the student may have a final right to resort to the appeals processes of an external body. In such cases it is a strict requirement of these regulations that any such appeal must pass through the Blackburn College appeals process before proceeding to any external body. The timescale for submitting a final third stage appeal will be communicated to the student within the information provided at the second stage appeal, this will normally be within 14 days.

A student whose case is under consideration via an appeal shall have the right to continue with their current programme (provided they are in good standing with Blackburn College) until such time as a final decision is reached. Such a student will not be permitted to enrol for any programme, stage or module for which their entitlement to enrol rests on the outcome of the appeal, but may be permitted to attend classes while the appeal is being considered. This right is designed solely to ensure that a student whose appeal is upheld is not academically disadvantaged and it shall not be interpreted as acceptance of a failed student on a subsequent stage of the programme.

Students should be aware that there may be financial implications and that they could be liable for fees should their appeal be unsuccessful.

In the case of second stage appeals students will be supplied with a Completion of Proceedings letter and would have the right to take the matter to the relevant awarding body and/or to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. Details of methods, timescales and institutional contacts are supplied to students in the emails by which all appellants receive formal notification of Panel decisions.

4.9 Exceptional Circumstances

In exceptional circumstances arising from unforeseen events such as, for example, epidemics, staff illness, strike action, force majeure, etc. it may not be feasible to carry out assessments in line with normal procedures.

In such circumstances alternative arrangements may be made subject to the following constraints.

- 1) The Exceptional Academic Matters procedure must be used to establish that the circumstances in question are sufficiently extraordinary to warrant use of this process and to approve the alternative arrangements proposed. Where the circumstances require urgent action, the timescales of this process will be shortened appropriately.

- 2) No proposal may reduce the extent of second marking below a requirement for the second marking of a representative sample of assessments affected, nor may any reduction in the work available for the scrutiny of external examiners be proposed.
- 3) Programme Leaders must inform all students affected, and all relevant external examiners, of the changes to be made and their consequences at the earliest possible date and by the fastest practical method.

4.10 Mitigating or Exceptional Circumstances

4.10.1 Student Facing Panel Membership and Terms of Reference

The membership and terms of reference of the Student Facing Panel (SFP) will be determined by HE Quality. The SFP relates to student matters regarding mitigating/exceptional* circumstances, but also to repeat year and extended study plan requests, academic malpractice and suspensions/interruptions* of study, all of which are discussed in other areas of these regulations.

*The optional language reflects the terminology that our different Awarding Partners use.

The SFP may co-opt other voting and non-voting members at its own absolute discretion. It may also invite students and/or members of staff to appear to give evidence in person.

The Chair of the Student Facing Panel formally records the outcome decision for each case, and informs the students and Programme Leaders individually of the outcome. The Chair also informs Chairs of Assessment/Award Boards, as well as other relevant parties, such as MIS-HE, Student Support Teams and The Finance Team, as appropriate.

SFP recommendations for the granting of concessions must be specific about the action(s) recommended, their scope (modules and assessments affected) and limitations (especially in terms of time). For example, the SFP may recommend that a student should be allowed to sit a missed examination at the next opportunity as a first attempt and it may recommend that a student should be reassessed in a particular module when a particular medical problem has passed.

In the cases of students with problems of protracted nature the expiry date should be set shortly after a later SFP meeting. That meeting should consider the case again and, if appropriate, set a new expiry date. In such cases, the SFP should consider whether a further extension of concessions is academically sound and whether or not the student concerned is fit (or likely to become fit) to study before agreeing a new expiry date. The panel is under no obligation to extend concessions where a student is unfit to study and not likely to become fit within a reasonable period of time, or where to do so would be academically unsound.

The decisions of the SFP relating to validity of claims are taken by Assessment and Award boards without discussion and the information remains confidential. Recommendations relating to concessions are subject to Assessment board approval.

In order to avoid unhelpful delays, staff and students will act on recommendations of the SFP so long as it is made clear to all parties that these recommendations are subject to assessment board approval and that the relevant assessment board may overturn recommendations and impose requirements of its own.

The MC process does not determine the precise timings or arrangements for affected assessments, merely extent of concessions to be granted. It is a matter for the relevant programme team to make the necessary arrangements which should be treated as extensions to due dates but without the need for further formal approval.

Mitigating circumstances applications should normally be submitted within 48 hours of the relevant deadline or examination; where this is not possible the application should provide satisfactory evidence to explain the delay in submission.

4.10.2 Mitigating Circumstances Criteria

The following details the grounds which will or may be considered by the Student Facing Panel regarding mitigating circumstances:

Examples of circumstances beyond the reasonable control of the student:

- bereavement (near relative only)
- serious accident, illness or serious infectious disease
- burglary and theft
- jury service
- maternity/paternity or adoptive leave
- major financial problems leading to acute stress

Examples of situations which may be considered beyond the reasonable control of the student:

- medical operation (if approved prior to the point of assessment or an emergency)
- hospital tests (if approved prior to the point of assessment or an emergency)
- being taken ill during an examination
- significant accident, injury, acute ailment or condition
- unanticipated and unavoidable professional obligations
- private or public transport failure leading to significant delays
- accommodation difficulties

In every case it will be necessary for the student to show that the impact of these circumstances was significant, unavoidable and not known to them in advance, not reasonably foreseeable, and that any action(s) the student could have reasonably have been expected to have taken to limit their impact had been taken.

The following circumstances will not normally be considered by the Board:

- accidents to friends or relatives (unless within 3 days prior to deadline or examination or where student is sole carer)
- family illness (except in an emergency (up to 3 days before a deadline or examination) or where the student is the sole carer)
- examination anxiety/nerves
- minor accidents or injuries
- pregnancy
- cold, cough, throat infection, unspecified viral infection (minor illness)
- childcare problems that could have been anticipated
- domestic problems (unless supported by independent evidence)
- mistaking the deadline, or time management problems (including alarm not going off)
- general financial problems
- legal problems (unless required to attend Court on the day of the assessment)
- holidays or booked travel arrangements
- house moves
- notes burned or stolen (unless supported by a fire or police report)
- intermittent or last-minute computing equipment problems (discs, machines, printers, viruses)
- inclement weather (unless exceptional/severe conditions)
- ignorance of the Regulations or examination/assessment arrangement
- inadequate planning and time management
- having more than one examination on the same day
- any event that could reasonably have been expected or anticipated.

4.10.3 Mitigating Circumstances Affecting Groups of Students

Particular conditions (e.g. disruption in an examination due to noise or computer problems, staff illness during the study period, procedural errors) may affect groups of students and their performance. Such problems should be identified by the Invigilator or other member of staff and reported to the relevant Assessment Board.

The nature of the event, the length of time it extended over, the students/module affected and action taken/recommended (for example adjustments to the marks following discussion in the moderation process) should be indicated. The board will then act to take action where justified. The Programme Leader should inform students that Blackburn College will initiate the relevant action so avoiding the need for multiple individual submissions by students.

4.10.4 Evidence required to support claims for mitigating circumstances

Students must keep their Programme Leader informed of any adverse personal circumstances. All claims for consideration of Mitigating Circumstances must be supported by documentary evidence.

If an examination is missed due to medical problems the student must attempt to seek medical attention as quickly as possible, and attach a medical certificate to the claim. Medical certificates dated days later may not be regarded as sufficient evidence. The certificate must relate specifically to the time of the illness and must contain a clear medical opinion that the student was unfit to take the examination.

Normally, the evidence supporting an application to HE Quality should be provided from sources independent of the student and Blackburn College staff. Only in the most exceptional circumstances may the Board accept evidence that is not independently certified.

4.10.5 Decisions of the Mitigating Circumstances Panel

The Student Facing Panel's decisions on the validity of students' MC claims, but not the detail of the claims, are reported to the relevant Assessment Board. SFP recommendations are subject to Assessment Board approval and an Assessment Board may overturn recommendations and impose requirements of its own.

4.10.6 Notification of Outcome to Students and Appeals

The SFP will report its decisions and any recommendations to the Student and Programme Leader, normally within 3 working days of the Panel meeting, and decisions will be available at the next relevant Assessment and Award Board. Where a student disagrees with the outcome of the SFP and is able to present additional relevant evidence, they may appeal to the next scheduled SFP.

4.10.7 Continuation of Study

A student whose case is under consideration by the Mitigating Circumstances Panel or who is appealing against a SFP decision shall have the right to continue with their current programme whether or not formal progression requirements have been met until such time as a final decision is reached, provided they is in good standing with Blackburn College. Students should be aware that there may be financial implications and that they could be liable for fees should their MC claim be unsuccessful.

Similarly, a student whose agreed SFP concession(s) have not yet expired shall have the right to continue with their current programme whether or not formal progression requirements have been met until the expiry of that/those concession(s), provided they is in good standing with Blackburn College.

This right is designed solely to ensure that a student whose MC appeal is upheld is not academically disadvantaged and it shall not be interpreted as acceptance of a failed student

on a subsequent stage of the programme. Any continuation of study under these circumstances is at the student's own risk and failure to meet progression requirements after all MCP concessions have expired and any appeal has been decided may result in exclusion from the relevant programme.

4.10.8 Confidentiality

In applying to the SFP, students give their consent for their personal circumstances to be discussed by the panel. The MCP will keep this information confidential to its members and will not permit its use or disclosure outside the Board.

If a student's application involves a very sensitive personal matter or concerns a member of Blackburn College staff who may be a member of the MCP considering their case then the student should place their application in a sealed envelope marked 'for the personal attention of the Chair of the Student Facing Panel'. The Chair of the SFP will exercise their professional judgement on the extent of disclosure necessary for a fair decision to be made.

5 External Examiners & Programme Consultants

Regulations for External Examiner and Programme Consultants are governed by our main validating partner, Lancaster University, who are responsible to appointing and managing these roles on awards made in their name.

6 Admissions

6.1 Section 1 – College admissions policy

6.1.1 Purpose

The College is committed to offering a fair and transparent admissions policy and process. It serves to underpin the entitlement of all potential learners to impartial information, advice and guidance and to support individuals in identifying the programmes of study which most meet their skills and aspirations.

6.1.2 Scope

The policy works within the framework of the College's mission statement and Equal Opportunities Policy.

6.1.3 General Objectives

Blackburn College affirms the right of all potential learners to receive:

- Full and detailed information about programme provision and additional services and facilities;
- Appropriate guidance, where necessary or requested;
- Access to transparent entry criteria;
- An induction to the College services and facilities and to their chosen learning programme, once they have enrolled.

All decisions relating to admissions will be based on:

- Transparency (in respect of process and criteria);
- Equality of opportunity;
- Respect for the rights of the individual;
- Consistency of practice and procedures;
- Confidentiality and disclosure protocols.

All applicants will be offered the opportunity to declare a disability. All such requests will be treated as confidential, and permission will be requested to pass relevant information to other members of staff.

The College will make every effort to provide reasonable adjustments to both services and curriculum delivery in order to meet the needs of disabled students. Our ability to make reasonable adjustments may be limited if permission is not granted to disclose details of the additional need.

In order to ensure compliance with the objectives stated above, the following will be in place:

Pre-entry information

Blackburn College affirms the right of all potential learners to full and detailed information about programme provision. Such information will be given impartially and without prejudice

Programme information will include details about:

- Entry requirements;
- Programme contents and structure;
- Teaching and learning strategies employed on the programme and assessment procedures;
- The qualifications or accreditation to be gained;
- Work placement opportunities;
- Exemptions or credits which might be claimed against previous experience;
- Progression opportunities;
- Other requirements e.g. residential.

College information will include details about:

- College facilities;
- Financial help available;
- Additional Learning Support which may be available to learners;
- Other forms of additional support available, including college wide services such as counselling and advice about the impact of learning on benefits;
- Information to local school leavers will be made available through School Liaison activities and in partnership with local schools;
- Information to others who are interested in learning will be made available to employers and to the community at large through Student Services, College publications, the College website and outreach or marketing activities;
- The potential learner will be fully informed of the costs of the programme and methods of payment;
- All information will be consistent with the College's equal opportunities policy and code of practice.

6.1.4 Admission and Interview

Guidelines for interview procedures are published for Curriculum Centre staff and admissions tutors receive training in order to meet standards and ensure consistency.

Admissions tutors are expected to be aware of any disability issue or gender and/or cultural differences which may affect the admissions and interviews.

Any learner with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who regards themselves as having a physical disability will be encouraged to disclose this at application so that appropriate adjustments or arrangements can be discussed and arranged wherever possible.

The interviewer will recognise and take into consideration any available Record of Achievement or prior accreditation.

Learners who require further advice or guidance following the interview or who are unlikely to meet the set entry criteria, will be offered a referral to other services either internally or externally.

The College works in partnership with external agencies such as UCAS and the National Careers Service in order to ensure the quality and integrity of its Admissions procedures.

6.1.5 General Information, Advice and Guidance

The Information and Guidance team offers a drop-in enquiry point for potential and existing students which is open at published times throughout the year.

Appointments for more individualised and detailed advice and guidance are available.

Outreach guidance and advice activities take place throughout the year at a range of venues.

Learners are entitled to pre-entry and exit guidance in order to ensure that personal choices match career aspirations.

All information collated during the Admissions procedures is regarded as confidential and will not be disclosed to other parties without the prior agreement of the learner.

Records will be stored securely.

The College accepts that it is not possible to legislate for every circumstance which might arise in the Admission process but strives to ensure that it provides a fair and equitable service to all learners.

6.1.6 Monitoring Criteria

The policy will be monitored through the Higher Education Management Committee. More specific quality control of the central process rests with the Head of MIS/IT and the Admissions Manager, and quality control of the Curriculum Centre process rests with the Heads of School.

The effectiveness of the admissions processes will be reviewed through:

- Regular analysis of applications by school and subject area;
- Annual analysis of conversion rates from application to enrolment.
- Annual analysis of student, retention, achievement and graduate outcomes.

6.1.7 Management Responsibility

This policy forms part of the suite of student support policies overseen by the Executive.

The Head of MIS/IT and the Admissions Manager are responsible for ensuring the admissions policies and procedures are effectively implemented.

The College will provide a well-resourced Admissions Team inclusive of responsible and suitably trained administrative staff. This team are responsible for updating the applicant's record and for maintaining communications with each applicant prior to enrolment.

The Disability Support Team will contact people who disclose a disability to ensure support needs are discussed during the admissions process.

Appropriate advice, guidance and training or briefing will be provided by Student Services staff to support Curriculum Centre Admissions Teams.

The policy will be regularly reviewed. The review process will be led by the Head of MIS/IT who will consult with relevant Curriculum and Quality staff.

6.2 Section 2 – code of practice for the admission of students to Blackburn College

6.2.1 Aims

Blackburn College aims to:

- Maintain the high academic standards;
- Create a student body that is balanced and diverse in terms of background and experience, with all the educational and cultural benefits that this brings;
- Recruit students who will engage with and contribute to the intellectual and cultural vitality of the community.

Blackburn College will achieve these aims by:

- Encouraging applications from all those with the motivation and academic ability to thrive at Blackburn College, whatever their background;
- Assessing each application carefully and fairly;
- Offering places to applicants who have the potential to do well at Blackburn College.

The principles and procedures through which Blackburn College assesses applications and offers places are designed to be:

- Easily understood by candidates;
- Transparent;
- Fair;

- Equitable for applicants who disclose a disability;
- Based on principles that are applied consistently across Blackburn College and the College as a whole.

Blackburn College will review its policy regularly in the light of experience, research and best practice.

6.2.2 Role and Responsibilities of Admissions Team:

The Admissions Team consists of members of staff appointed to the task by the Head of MIS/IT and the Admissions Manager, who will liaise closely with staff involved in the teaching and management of the programmes for which they are recruiting and where appropriate in consultation with Disability Services.

The main responsibilities of the HE Admissions Team are:

- To select able and willing students who are capable of success on the selected programmes, using equitable admissions criteria, as set out in the current Definitive Programme Document;
- To refer non-standard cases to Programme Admissions Tutors;
- To liaise closely with Disability Services to ensure applicants who disclose a disability are treated equitably throughout the admissions process;
- To respond as quickly as practicable to all applicants;
- To correspond directly with applicants on admissions matters, where appropriate, in consultation with programme leaders;
- To identify possible equivalent or lower qualification (ELQ) applications and notify relevant applicants of fee implications;
- To be responsible for, in liaison with UCAS and other agencies, checking applications for signs of fraud/plagiarism and for investigating and resolving suspected cases of fraud/plagiarism;
- To provide timely and relevant information at various stages in the application process,
- To be involved in the organising of interviews and other selection methods;
- To be aware of continuing developments in education which have a bearing on HE selection and recruitment, and to participate in training and development appropriate to their role;
- To monitor application data and update information held on the UCAS system and other relevant sites to ensure that applicants have clear statements of all relevant entry criteria and requirements.

Recruitment information to be provided to applicants by the Admissions Team will include programme leaflets and the prospectus, both of which contain details of entry criteria. More detailed information will be available on the College website and in the entry profiles on the UCAS website, which must be prepared as part of the validation process.

6.2.3 Transparency

Blackburn College's website and printed publications will make available clear information on admissions principles and procedures and criteria for each programme. Blackburn College will provide advice on request to applicants on what it is looking for in personal statements and to referees on the elements that are helpful in a reference.

6.2.4 Consistency

Blackburn College acknowledges that whilst procedures will vary to some extent across subject areas, all Departments must act in a way consistent with the Admissions Policy and must follow the procedures and principles set out in that document.

6.2.5 General Admissions Practice

Admission to a programme of study shall be subject to the principle that Blackburn College has a reasonable expectation that the applicant will be able to fulfil the objectives of the programme and achieve the standard required for the award.

Every person admitted to a Blackburn College programme, whether full or part-time, must submit an application form and receive a formal offer of a place before entry. Applications to Blackburn College should be made on the appropriate form, as follows:

- Applications to any full-time or part-time Blackburn College Post Graduate, Degree, Foundation Degree or Higher National programme must be made through either UCAS or direct to Blackburn College via the online application form at www.blackburn.ac.uk
- Applications specific to Teaching Qualification must be made using the relevant partner institutions application form included within the apply section of the Blackburn College web-site;
- Applications must adhere to deadlines as published by UCAS and/or Blackburn College

The Assistant Principal for Higher Education and Heads of School should ensure that Admissions staff and related programme admissions staff are clearly informed of programme recruitment targets and agree with them how the number of offers relative to the number of places available shall be determined.

Blackburn College receives many excellent applications each year. Many of our programmes receive several applications for each available place, so regrettably we cannot offer places to all applicants who have the minimum entry qualifications that we require. All applicants for a programme are assessed against the same criteria. Where places are limited, we offer places to those eligible applicants who best meet our selection criteria, and whom admissions staff judge to have most potential to benefit from their chosen programme and to contribute to the academic department and Blackburn College.

Suitably qualified applicants should normally be aged at least 18 years or over at the start of the academic year.

Programme admission regulations must define standard minimum entry requirements based on nationally recognised formal minimum levels of attainment, and by identifying the knowledge and skills required at admission and relating these to the length, content and objectives of the programme.

NOTE: these should be seen as benchmarks only. Blackburn College recognises that a wide variety of other qualifications and learning may provide appropriate evidence of an applicant's suitability for admission. Admissions and academic staff are expected to use professional judgement in assessing the academic potential of individual candidates, taking a number of factors into account, including educational and social context, and the motivation and commitment of the applicant.

General *minimum* entry requirements for each programme of study are articulated within all programme admissions documentation including but not limited to the UCAS Web-Site, Blackburn College website, Prospectuses, and Programme Leaflets. Applicants should check individual entry requirements for their chosen programme of study before application.

The Blackburn College Initial Advice and Guidance Service can help applicants ascertain those requirements.

In addition to minimum entry requirements the personal statement and references provide important supplementary indications of ability, experience, motivation and potential, as well as information about personal circumstances and social and cultural context. They are read carefully and taken into account in reaching a decision. Criteria for assessing the Personal Statement may include, for example:

- Demonstrated interest in and commitment to the subject
- Evidence of clear thinking and understanding
- Appropriateness of the Blackburn College programme in relation to the candidate's declared interests and aspirations
- Non-academic achievement and/or experience, or extra-curricular interests, that indicate the likely contribution a candidate will make to the life of the College
- Exceptional individual circumstances or personal barriers to learning e.g. extended illness or being in local authority care
- Other relevant skills – e.g. foreign languages

Applicants who disclose a disability will be made an offer based purely on their academic ability or portfolio as relevant. Whilst it may not always be possible for consideration to be of an equal nature the implementation of the admissions process should always be transparent and equitable.

Applications from mature and other students who are not applying directly from, or within 3 years of leaving, school or college, who have non-standard qualifications or who wish work

or life experience to be taken into account as part of their application, will be considered on an individual basis, in line with the general aims and principles of the Admissions policy. These students will be subject to an interview process as described in 6.2.6.

Since 2008/09, many students with existing equivalent or lower qualifications (ELQ) to those they would like to study, are no longer eligible for student loans from the UK government.

The Academic Registrar (or nominee) will act as a source of advice to staff on the ELQ ruling and will report any changes which will impact on Blackburn College admissions policy and procedures.

All Blackburn College applications are checked for possible ELQ funding issues. Where a possible ELQ issue has been identified, Admissions staff will contact the applicant and offer advice on programme fees to enable the applicant to make an informed decision. If the application indicates a non-standard award the Academic Registrar will make a decision regarding the ELQ ruling.

Blackburn College reserves the right to make offers to applicants conditional on receipt of references and/or DBS (or Enhanced DBS as appropriate) which it deems satisfactory and to withdraw an offer if factors subsequently come to light about an accepted applicant which, in Blackburn College's judgement, render the applicant unsuitable for admission.

Programmes requiring Disclosure and Barring Service check (DBS or Enhanced DBS) will have this clearly stated in the entry requirements.

6.2.6 Interviews

Blackburn College does not require all candidates to be interviewed. However, departments may choose to interview candidates. When they do they will explain clearly why and how the interview will be used to assess candidates, and will follow Blackburn College-approved procedures. These are:

- All candidates must be treated on an equal and fair basis. This does not preclude some candidates being interviewed and others not. It may, for example, be appropriate to interview candidates who proceed to a second stage of selection or shortlist, to distinguish between candidates with similar academic profiles, or to interview a candidate whose UCAS form does not provide sufficient information on which to base a decision (e.g. a candidate presenting non-standard qualifications).
- The interview and subsequent decision-making will be consistent with the College's policy on equal opportunities. Questions related to the race, ethnicity, disability, nationality, gender, sexuality, religion or age of the applicant must not be considered in forming a decision as to whether to offer a place. However, once a decision has been made the interviewer should encourage applicants to disclose a disability and to discuss how the nature of their selected programme may have an impact on their ability to undertake their studies. Information relating to the disclosure of a disability

should only be used to make the necessary adjustments whether this is in relation to the programme of study, assessment, trips, social aspect, evacuation or placements.

- The interview should follow a standard format and brief notes of the interview must be taken.
- Decisions made following an interview will be down to the academic judgement of the interviewing member of staff and may include conditions of offers. Where an interviewer is not able to determine a decision, the interviewer must refer the decision to the relevant Head of School.

6.2.7 Additional Selection Instruments

Blackburn College does not normally require candidates to provide supplementary written work. However specific programmes may ask candidates for an example of their work such as a portfolio of artwork.

It may on occasion be appropriate to set work for candidates as part of the selection process to help distinguish between candidates with similar academic profiles, or to give further consideration to a candidate whose UCAS form does not provide sufficient information on which to base a decision (e.g. a candidate presenting non-standard qualifications).

In cases where additional selection or assessment instruments are used, candidates declaring a disability must be offered reasonable and appropriate adjustments.

Arrangements for any additional selection or assessment instruments must be made via the Admissions Team.

6.2.8 English Language Proficiency

Candidates for admission shall have sufficient command of the language(s) in which the programme is taught to meet all the entry requirements for the programme. In some cases, applicants may be required to take an English Language test as part of the condition of an offer. New undergraduate students who have not had their secondary education through the medium of English should normally have attained the equivalent of IELTS 5.5, Cambridge Advanced, or TOEFL 500. Alternatively, an overall pass in the UETESOL (University Entrance Test in English for Speakers of Other Languages) exam would be acceptable. This requires a minimum of two grade Cs and three grade Bs in the five categories, for example: Writing B; Editing B; Reading B; Listening C; Speaking C. Postgraduate applicants who have not had their secondary or tertiary education through the medium of English should normally have attained the equivalent of an IELTS score of at least 6.5.

Careful consideration will be given to applicants whose English Language proficiency assessment is affected by a disability in order to determine whether, through reasonable

adjustment, they will nevertheless be able to undertake and benefit from the programme with a reasonable prospect of successfully achieving the eventual award.

6.2.9 Fraud

Blackburn College reserves the right to:

- request additional information to verify an application;
- put the application process on hold whilst investigating any alleged fraud and/or plagiarism;
- withdraw the application/registration/place if it is proven, or if the University has reasonable belief, that the information provided is false, or if the applicant refuses to provide requested information;
- terminate a student's registration if he/she is found at a later stage to have submitted a fraudulent application to Blackburn College.

Definitions

- Definition of fraud (based on the definition adopted by UCAS)

When a person or persons conspire to deceive another person or group of persons into believing that a claim made by that person or group is genuine when in fact it is false. For example, this could comprise false information given on an application regarding qualifications or experience, or the provision of a fake certificate or reference to support an application, or the deliberate omission of relevant information, e.g. the non-inclusion of information regarding previous qualifications, or some other act of deception.

- Definition of plagiarism

False information copied into an application from a third-party source (e.g. the internet, or from another applicant). This constitutes plagiarism whether it is intentional or unintentional.

UCAS check all personal statements using a similarity detection system, Copyscatch. Each personal statement is compared against a library of personal statements already in the UCAS system and a library of sample statements collected from a variety of websites and other sources, including paper publications (but filters out any instances of 'self-plagiarism', i.e. if an applicant uses the same statement in two admissions cycles). Any statements showing significant levels of similarity are reviewed by members of the UCAS Similarity Detection Service. Blackburn College is notified on a daily basis of any cases where there are reasonable grounds to suspect deception. The applicant is notified that the personal statement has been identified as potentially plagiarised. Blackburn College will review the information supplied by UCAS Similarity Detection Service and the Admissions office will make a decision about what action, if any, to take.

Blackburn College also receives notification from UCAS verification unit regarding any applications that are suspected of being fraudulent. The UCAS Hunter fraud detection database holds records of all applicants previously referred for investigation, and compares these with all new applications. The database flags up if any new application matches, and further investigation is then undertaken, as necessary. UCAS copies Blackburn College into any correspondence with our applicants. If UCAS subsequently decides to suspend or cancel the application, then Blackburn College will also be informed. At any point in the application cycle, if a member of staff suspects that an applicant has provided false information, then that application is referred to UCAS for investigation.

When Blackburn College are notified of a UCAS alert:

- The Admissions Team put a note on the Admissions database and on file that an allegation of plagiarism has been made.
- The application is considered using normal criteria and make reject or provisional offer decision.
- The Admissions Team will review the information provided about the plagiarism and, in the light of this information, reach a decision in consultation with the curriculum team (and/or Head of School) on whether there is a case to be answered. For example, the alleged plagiarism could merely consist of a number of unfortunate stock phrases, rather than falsifying facts.
- If there is no case to be answered, then this will be communicated to the applicant and they will receive confirmation of the offer.
- If it is decided that there is a case to be answered, then more extensive investigation into the plagiarism allegation will need to be undertaken. The applicant will be asked to re-submit their personal statement. A set period of time, usually 14 days, will be given for the applicant to provide the additional information requested. If the applicant does not provide the information within that period, then the application will be automatically unsuccessful.
- Once the additional information has been received, the case should be referred to a panel to decide whether the nature of the allegation means that the applicant should not be offered a place. This group will need to see evidence of the efforts that have been made to elicit extra information from the applicant, and should also see the application materials.

The group will consist of the following:

- A Head of School
- Head of MIS/IT
- Assistant Student Services Manager

6.2.10 Deception

The discovery, however belated, by Blackburn College of any form of fraudulent, untrue or misleading statement (including omission of pertinent facts) by an applicant on an application

or enrolment form, or made at interview, will lead to an immediate withdrawal of any offer of a place.

6.2.11 Duty of Care to Employees and Students

Blackburn College / the College has a duty of care to its staff and student community and is therefore obliged to ensure that the admission of a particular individual will not endanger or intimidate that community or any individual or group within it. Where an application is considered to cause concern and the applicant is considered to be capable of benefiting academically from the programme the application will be referred to the Assistant Principal - Student Support and Engagement.

The Assistant Principal - Student Support and Engagement will obtain as much information as possible about the individual. The applicant will be asked to provide references from suitably qualified professionals, if necessary. Following discussion with the Admissions Team, the Assistant Principal - Student Support and Engagement will determine whether or not (s)he is satisfied that their admission is consistent with Blackburn College's duty of care and whether an offer should be made or not. Blackburn College reserves the right not to make an offer, to make offers conditional on receipt of references and/or DBS reports that are satisfactory to Blackburn College, and to withdraw an acceptance if factors subsequently come to light about an accepted applicant or a student who has been enrolled which, in Blackburn College's judgement, render the applicant unsuitable for admission.

Each case will be assessed individually, but Blackburn College has the right to withdraw offers and to terminate registration on the grounds that admission would conflict with its duty of care to staff or students.

6.2.12 Criminal Records

All applicants will be asked to declare a criminal conviction.

Consideration of an application from a person

- with a criminal conviction that is not spent under the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act
- or
- who is, or is reasonably suspected of being, the subject of police investigation or on bail for an alleged offence

cannot be made solely on academic judgement as to their ability to benefit from the programme applied for.

If an applicant is considered academically to be capable of benefiting from the programme, Assistant Principal - Student Support and Engagement will obtain as much information as possible about the applicant's offence(s). The applicant will be asked to provide references

from their Probation Officer, and/or prison authorities, if necessary. Following discussion with the Admissions Team, the Assistant Principal - Student Support and Engagement will determine whether or not they are satisfied that the applicants admission is consistent with Blackburn College's duty of care and whether an offer should be made or not. Blackburn College reserves the right not to make an offer, to make offers conditional on receipt of references and/or DBS reports that are satisfactory to Blackburn College, and to withdraw an acceptance if factors subsequently come to light about an accepted applicant or a student who has been enrolled which, in Blackburn College's judgement, render the applicant unsuitable for admission.

If information concerning criminal convictions or police investigations only comes to light after an offer has been made, or a student has been enrolled, the above procedures should be followed to determine whether or not the student is unsuitable for admission. Each case will be assessed individually, but Blackburn College has the right to withdraw offers and to terminate registration on the grounds of admission obtained by deception.

6.2.13 Correspondence with Applicants

Blackburn College will inform applicants of their obligations proceeding that offer at the time the offer of a place is made.

Where an applicant has disclosed a disability, any future correspondence should be in the applicants preferred means of communication.

Applicants to whom an offer of a place should be provided with any such additional programme specific information as may assist them in making an informed and timely decision on the offer made to them. Any deadlines within which applicants need to respond to offers should be clearly stated.

Blackburn College will inform prospective students, at the earliest opportunity, of any significant changes to a programme made between the time the offer of a place is made and registration is completed, and that they are advised of the options available in the circumstances. Programme Leaders are responsible for ensuring that prospective students are informed of any such changes.

Blackburn College Admissions Team will explain to applicants who have been offered a place, general arrangements for the enrolment, registration, induction and orientation of new students and ensure that these arrangements promote efficient and effective integration of entrants fully as students.

Applicants who accept an offer of a place on a programme should be provided with programme joining instructions, information about enrolment dates and times, details of induction programmes and information on the Blackburn College's educational services and facilities, which will be sent from the programme team.

Applicants should be requested to disclose any disability (as defined by the Disability Discrimination Acts 1995 & 2005) they may have so that they may be referred to appropriate support services both within and external to Blackburn College.

Blackburn College will consider the most effective and efficient arrangements for providing feedback to applicants who have not been offered a place.

Programme Admissions Tutors should make a clear record of reasons for rejection which can be provided to applicants requesting feedback

6.2.14 Offers

Wherever possible, all candidates are contacted by Blackburn College within 4 weeks of their application being received, to establish contact and inform the candidate of the process to be followed. This may result in an automatic offer.

Different levels of offer may be made to meet individual circumstances. They are not made on the basis of the educational sector from which the candidate is applying. There are no quotas or targets for different types of school or college.

Some departments may wish to make early offers to attract exceptional candidates, but will need to ensure that mechanisms are in place to ensure that all applications received at UCAS and to the College by the January deadline are treated on an equal basis.

6.2.15 Confirmation

Confirmation is the name given to the period in August each year when the University receives A-level and other UK and international qualification results for any applicants who have accepted conditional offers via the UCAS process. On the basis of these results, applicants who achieve the grades required by their conditional offer have their place confirmed. Applications from those students who have marginally not met the required grades are reviewed and their places may be confirmed if there are places still available on their programme.

In order to carry out the Confirmation process described above, Blackburn College relies on its computer systems receiving and processing electronic results data from UCAS, for results of A-level and some other UK qualifications. In turn UCAS relies on receiving and processing electronic results data from the A level and other UK qualification examination boards. All bodies also rely on the appropriate staff being available to process the examination results. These activities normally have to be accomplished within a tight timescale of three to four working days.

Blackburn College has contingency plans in place to enable it to cope with failure of these processes (for example, localised computer systems failure, loss of power). However, in the event of some very exceptional circumstances beyond its control (e.g., extensive computer systems failures, mass staff unavailability affecting either students' ability to sit school leaving

examinations or Blackburn College's ability to process results within the necessary time constraints), Blackburn College reserves the right to use alternative methods including, but not limited to, use of Programme Tutors' prior assessment and/or scoring of UCAS application forms, or any other method(s) deemed most appropriate, to decide which CF (Conditional Firm) applicants to admit to the University's undergraduate degree programmes for the forthcoming academic year.

Should such exceptional circumstances occur, Blackburn College will make every possible effort, once normal service is resumed, retrospectively to offer places to CF candidates who had achieved the terms of their offers but who had not been allocated a place under the emergency procedures. Depending on the timescale and availability of places, it might be necessary to offer a place for the following (i.e., deferred entry) academic year.

6.2.16 Offers to Applicants Who Require Reasonable Adjustment

Students who, because of disability, are unable or believed likely to be unable to meet one or more of a programme's core competences will be carefully considered to determine whether there is a reasonable adjustment that can be made to address the issue. Where no such reasonable adjustment can be found, Blackburn College may have to withdraw the offer made.

Where an offer is withdrawn in this way the applicant can appeal. Such an appeal is to be made initially to the Assistant Principal - Student Support and Engagement. If the appeal remains unresolved the applicant can submit their appeal to the Principal and Chief Executive. The decision made by the Principal and Chief Executive will be final and binding. The applicant and UCAS will be notified formally in writing of Blackburn College's inability to proceed with the initial offer.

6.2.17 Applicants to Whom an Offer is not Made

Applicants will be rejected in cases where they do not meet the minimum entry requirements for a specified programme, irrespective of whether a disability has been disclosed.

Rejected applicants who do request feedback should be given a reasonable opportunity to discuss factual grounds for their rejection based on quantitative (e.g. lack of GCSE Maths or other subject) and/or documented information (e.g. failure at Performing Arts audition), with regard to any future or alternative applications, at Blackburn College or elsewhere. If an applicant is not satisfied with the feedback, they may invoke Blackburn College's complaints procedure.

Where applicants are deemed not to possess the minimum requirement for a specified programme, Blackburn College may offer them a suitable alternative programme, within the constraints of any relevant clearing regulations.

6.2.18 Deferred Entry

Applicants seeking to defer their entry or to be considered for acceptance onto an alternative programme to that originally accepted for should be provided with clear information about how to request this. Programme Tutors should contact the Admissions Team for advice.

6.2.19 Transfer from Other Institutions

Subject to meeting any programme-specific requirements, and in consultation with validating institutions, students may be allowed to transfer from a point on one programme of study within or outside Blackburn College to a point deemed to be equivalent on another within Blackburn College, providing Blackburn College is satisfied that the two programmes are broadly equivalent in terms of their curriculum and credits and entirely at Blackburn College's discretion.

Where the applicant has disclosed a disability, the ability to make reasonable adjustment specific to the individual nature of Blackburn College or the programme the applicant is transferring to, must be considered.

6.2.20 Complaints and Appeals

Complaints arising from a procedure or administrative process related to the admissions processes may be made by individual applicants or by groups of applicants; they may not be made by a representative, a parent, a school or any other third party.

Appeals are a request for a review of a decision concerning selection or admission and can be lodged only after such a decision has been made.

Both Complaints and appeals can be made by invoking the Blackburn College Complaints Procedure that is available for all on the Blackburn College web-site.

Blackburn College will seek to ensure that all such complaints and appeals are treated seriously and constructively. It will also seek to ensure that complaints and appeals are dealt with promptly, with fairness and consistency. If a complaint or an appeal is upheld, Blackburn College will take such action or provide such remedy as may be appropriate and will do so promptly. If a complaint or an appeal is not upheld, the reasons for the decision will be communicated to the applicant. There will be no discrimination against any applicant who makes a complaint.

The Admissions Team will monitor, on an annual basis, formal complaints and appeals which have been referred, and will be responsible for implementing, or recommending to the appropriate authority, changes to systems or procedures suggested by the nature and pattern of the complaints received. Such records will contain: name (anonymised), age, gender and ethnicity (if known) of complainant, programme of study applied for, summary of complaint/appeal and summary of outcome. The outcome of such monitoring may also

inform other processes or activities such as arrangements for interview or standard correspondence with applicants.

In the first instance, applicants who feel they have valid grounds for complaining about the manner in which their application has been handled should raise the issue informally with the Admissions Team and/or Head of School.

If an applicant is dissatisfied with their response they should then take should take the opportunity to invoke the official complaints procedure.

7 Management of Study Plans

7.1 Registration

All students on all programmes, including those studying with partner institutions, are required to enrol annually with Blackburn College. Students' annual enrolments indicate the award to which they are working, the stage they have reached in that award, the agreed timescales for completion and the modules to be completed in a particular academic year.

These enrolments form a study plan and the basis of a learner agreement between the student and Blackburn College. All changes to study are subject to approval and must be documented.

Full-time students are expected to complete their planned diet of modules within the normal academic year for their programme and may not normally defer modules for assessment at a later date.

7.2 Changes to Study Plans, Suspensions of Study & Deferrals

7.2.1 Minor Changes at the Programme Leader's discretion

The following changes, as outlined in section 7.2.2, are permitted at the discretion of the relevant Programme Leader. The Programme Leader's consent must be given in writing and the agreed changes documented and passed to the Academic Registrar (or nominee) for action. It is the responsibility of the Programme Leader to ensure that the documentation is completed accurately and in a timely manner.

7.2.2 Changes in streams or option modules

The Programme Leader may permit students to change the modules they study in a particular year if the changes made are acceptable within the validation of their programme and do not dilute the total volume of academic credit to be undertaken.

The Programme Leader may also permit a student to transfer between streams within the same programme so long as:

- the target awards are at the same level and of the same type
- the volume and level of credit undertaken in the academic year is unchanged
- completion of the new award can be achieved within the agreed timescales

The Programme Leader may also permit part-time and blended learning students to change the amount of credit taken within a given period (e.g. to accommodate changes in employment demands) so long as the changes made allow for completion within the agreed timescales for the qualification. Students may not opt to 'drop' a module for which they have received the majority of the tuition or have submitted significant assessment work.

7.2.3 Major Changes needing formal Blackburn College permission

The following changes, outlined in 7.2.4, 7.2.5 and 7.2.6, are permitted, subject to the agreement of the relevant Programme Leader and Head of School, and confirmation by the Academic Registrar (or nominee) that changes comply with all relevant regulations. It is the responsibility of the Academic Registrar (or nominee) to ensure that such changes are correctly and promptly documented.

7.2.4 Changes between study modes

Students may be permitted to change their status from full- to part-time, or vice versa, during their studies. The regulations of the programme to which the student transfers will apply to the student after the transfer.

7.2.5 Transfer between programmes

Students may be permitted to transfer between programmes leading to different awards. Where programmes contain identical academic modules, any such modules completed on the original programme will be transferred to the student's new programme as 'Credit Transfer'. Other modules may be considered under RPL and AP(E)L procedures.

7.2.6 Suspension/Interruption of Study*

*The optional language reflects the terminology that our different Awarding Partners use.

Students wishing to suspend/interrupt their studies temporarily may request a suspension of their studies. Such requests should normally be for periods of not less than one semester. Students should not normally be granted suspensions/interruptions of study totalling more than two years for the same programme of study.

Suspension/Interruptions of study is not a right and students must give a satisfactory reason and/or evidence supporting their request(s). The types of requests likely to gain agreement are informed by, but not limited to, the criteria for consideration of Mitigating Circumstances (see 4.10).

When approving a suspension/interruption of study students must be fully aware of the impact of such a decision on their progress and any financial support they receive.

Capacity to study

Where Blackburn College considers that a student's capacity to study is impaired it will invoke the Blackburn College Appropriateness to Study Policy.

7.3 Academic Standing, Probation and Recovery

A student remains in 'good academic standing' so long as, with any proper adjustments required under these regulations in respect of their personal circumstances, they are making satisfactory progress towards their intended award.

A student may cease to be in good academic standing by:

- a) having unsatisfactory attendance or engagement;
- b) being late in submitting assessments or failing to submit assessments;
- c) failing assessments at the first attempt;
- or
- d) being subject to disciplinary proceedings or penalties

A student who ceases to be in good academic standing is thereby on Academic Probation.

A student on Academic Probation is required to:

- a) meet with their personal tutor to discuss their situation;
- b) provide a detailed self-assessment of the reasons behind their situation and the actions required to prevent any recurrence;
- and
- c) enter into and adhere to an Academic Recovery Plan designed to return them to good academic standing over the minimum realistic period of time.

An Academic Recovery Plan should provide the student with the minimum departure from the normal requirements of their programme of study necessary to provide them with a realistic opportunity to return to good academic standing and should not offer the student an unfair advantage over other students who have remained in good academic standing.

Each Academic Recovery Plan will specify:

- a) minimum acceptable levels of attendance and engagement;
- b) any specific actions required of the student;
- c) details of any amended or extended deadlines assessments agreed as part of the plan (these deadlines will be treated as replacement due dates for these assessments);
- d) details of any failed assessments that the student is to be permitted to resubmit (these assessments will be capped at the bare minimum pass grade for the relevant programme);
- e) details of compulsory tutorials to review the student's progress.
- and
- f) any required engagement with other College processes or bodies.

A student will return to good academic standing once the requirements of their Academic Recovery Plan have been complied with in full provided that their academic results on completion of the plan do not exclude the possibility of the achievement of an award.

A student who does not comply with the requirements of their Academic Recovery Plan will be referred to The Student Completion, Progression and Achievement Committee.

Where a student fails to meet the conditions of their recovery plan they should be withdrawn in accordance with Blackburn College processes and policy.

7.3.1 Limited Scope

Changing study plans can have significant impact on the practicalities of how a student can complete their studies, and indeed whether completion is possible at all. Nothing in the above imposes a duty on Blackburn College to agree to any particular request for a change in study plan.

Blackburn College staff will endeavour to give good advice to students who wish to change their plans but any obligation on Blackburn College to ensure that progression routes remain open is strictly limited to completion of the target award of the modified plan and direct progression through that plan as agreed.

Blackburn College specifically does not undertake to keep routes open indefinitely and intercalating students must be warned that the structure and content of awards changes over time. While all reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that an intercalating student is not unnecessarily disadvantaged, the grant of permission to intercalate does not constitute a guarantee that the student will be able to return to the same programme at the same point as the student left.

7.3.2 Academic Integrity

Nothing in the above places any duty on Blackburn College to agree to any particular request from a student.

It is an overriding principle that the proposed programme completed in the proposed manner should form an academically valid body of learning and should be fully in keeping with the expectations for achievers of the relevant award at the time it is made.

For this reason, Blackburn College reserves the right to refuse requests for changes in study plans, or requests to return to study after a break, if it considers that the academic integrity of the relevant award would be compromised.

The following examples illustrate this point but are by no means exhaustive.

- Changes to a study plan that make the relevance of previous learning questionable. Such as completion of the same (e.g. research methods) module in so different a context that credit transfer is inappropriate.
- Re-planning study such that the timescales are not consistent with maintaining currency of knowledge. For example, extending study in such a way that a major technological or legislative change happens during the programme and is not reflected in the modules the individual student has completed.
- Returning after a break during which the original programme has been retired or substantially amended.
- Returning after a break of such duration or following such illness that the knowledge, understanding and/or skill covered in modules already completed may not remain secure.

8 Academic Misconduct

Blackburn College unequivocally condemns academic misconduct including acts of cheating and plagiarism.

Academic misconduct is any behaviour that gives an unfair advantage to a student or groups of students. It can usefully be divided into three sub-categories: cheating, fabrication of results and plagiarism.

It is an academic offence for a candidate to commit any act designed to obtain for themselves an unfair advantage with a view to achieving a higher grade or mark than they would otherwise secure. Any attempt to convey deceitfully the impression of acquired knowledge, skills, understanding, or credentials, is a serious offence and may constitute grounds for sanctions up to exclusion.

8.1 Cheating

Cheating is any unfair practice that presents a misleading picture of a student's true level of achievement in assessment. It can take many forms including, but not restricted to, those listed below.

8.1.1 Coursework

- Collusion, where a piece of work prepared by a group is represented as if it were the student's own
- Commission or use of work by the student which is not their own and representing it as if it were
- Purchase of a paper from a commercial service, including internet sites (sometimes called 'essay mills'), whether pre-written or specially prepared for the student concerned
- Submission of work produced by another person, either by a fellow student or a person who is not a member of the College
- Duplication of the same or almost identical work for more than one module
- The act of copying or paraphrasing a paper from a source text, whether in manuscript, printed or electronic form, without appropriate acknowledgement
- Submission of another student's work, whether with or without that student's knowledge or consent.

8.1.2 Examination

In addition to any of the above that apply:

- Any breach of the rules for Blackburn College examinations procedures (or those of a validating partner or professional body), including copying from or conferring with other candidates or using unauthorised material or equipment in an examination room.

- Impersonating or allowing another to impersonate a candidate.
- Introducing examination scripts into the examination process otherwise than in the course of an examination.
- Failure to abide by the instructions of a duly authorised examination invigilator.

8.2 Fabrication of Results

Fabrication of results occurs when a student claims to have carried out tests, experiments or observations that have not taken place or presents results not supported by the evidence with the object of obtaining an unfair advantage.

8.3 Plagiarism

Plagiarism is to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own or use (another's production) without crediting the source.

8.3.1 Deliberate plagiarism

Some students who plagiarise do so deliberately, with intent to deceive. This conscious, pre-mediated form of cheating is regarded as a particularly serious breach of the core values of academic integrity and one of the worst forms of cheating, for which Blackburn College has zero tolerance.

8.3.2 Accidental plagiarism

Many students who plagiarise probably do so inadvertently, without realising it – because of inexperienced study skills, including note taking, referencing and citations. Many students (particularly those from different cultures and educational systems) find UK academic referencing/acknowledgement systems and conventions awkward, and proof-reading is not always easy for dyslexic students and some visually-impaired students.

8.4 Misconduct proceedings

8.4.1 Roles and responsibilities

Coursework marker: will have the primary responsibility for detecting plagiarism in student work, using their specialist knowledge and academic judgement to decide what is and what is not acceptable within that subject. They should refer any suspected cases, annotated clearly, to the Academic Misconduct Panel (AMP) and programme leader, who should record each case, along with any evidence in support of the claim.

For the avoidance of doubt, work referred to the AMP should be marked / graded on its academic merit taken at face value and normal feedback given so that should the AMP rule

that the original mark should stand the student is not academically disadvantaged. Students who are given feedback in the period between referral to the AMP and a final decision being reached must be informed that the assessment has been referred AMP and that feedback is being given on the work at face value.

Students must be informed, where possible by the coursework marker and where this is not possible by the programme leader, of the fact that an assessment has been referred to the AMP but there should be no discussion of the details of the referral.

The Academic Registrar (or nominee) will ensure that the student is informed of the details of the referral and the evidence offered in support of it.

8.4.2 Process

Academic Misconduct proceedings will be considered by an Academic Misconduct Panel appointed for the purpose by HE Quality.

Referrals of academic misconduct will be checked on receipt to ensure that they fall within the remit of the panel, are complete and are supported by prima facie evidence. If a referral is judged at this stage not to be within the AMP remit, to be incomplete or not supported by sufficient prima facie evidence the referral will be rejected without being considered by the panel. Such rejection will be deemed to be the decision of the panel meeting that would otherwise have considered the referral and will be recorded formally by the Chair of the meeting.

These panels will meet as required as part of the Student Facing Panel, with subsequent meetings as required. Panels will conduct investigations into alleged offences and give students an opportunity to discuss allegations made against them. Students will have the right to appear before the panel considering their cases and may be accompanied by a support person such as a friend or representative from the Students' Union. The role of the support person is to provide support during the meeting. Their role is not to represent you, advocate on your behalf or to speak for you. You cannot send any other person to the meeting on your behalf. The Chair reserves the right to refuse the attendance of a support person if it is determined that there is a conflict of interest relating to the nominated person, in which case, you will be given the opportunity to nominate a different support person. Panels may ask academic marker(s), programme leaders and/or members of the examinations teams to present evidence. If a student elects to attend a panel meeting, the student and their representative will be asked to withdraw to allow the panel to discuss the response to the allegations made, and to decide on appropriate penalties.

If the panel concludes that misconduct has occurred, it shall apply the appropriate penalty without the use of discretion and shall inform the student in writing.

8.5 Penalties

8.5.1 Plagiarism

A clear distinction must be drawn between inexperienced academic study and writing skills (especially among first year undergraduates and international students) and wilful cheating and deception. The former requires remedial teaching and only the latter deserves severe penalties. But intentionality is difficult to establish, so the framework allows a first offence based on “benefit of doubt”, with a relatively light penalty and a requirement that the student seeks appropriate study skills advice. Subsequent plagiarism offences are more likely to be deliberate, so the penalty system becomes progressively more serious.

However, ignorance of proper procedures or of good practice in academic writing is no excuse, particularly if a student has previously been accused of plagiarism, advised to seek study skills help, and fails to learn the lessons.

First offence: Plagiarism warning

The Academic Misconduct Panel shall determine whether action requiring a plagiarism warning has taken place. Action requiring a plagiarism warning shall be defined as poor referencing, unattributed quotations, inappropriate paraphrasing, incorrect or incomplete citations, or up to several sentences of direct copying without acknowledgement of the source. The student shall receive the appropriate warning letter (see section 8.6).

First offence: Major first offence

Major plagiarism offences shall be defined as copying multiple paragraphs in full without acknowledgement of the source, taking essays from the Internet without revealing the source, copying all or much of the work of a fellow student with or without their knowledge or consent, and submitting the same piece of work for assessment under multiple modules.

- Major first offence penalty for year 1 students will be required to submit equivalent work in line with the approved assessment stated in the module descriptor, and will be eligible to receive only the minimum pass mark appropriate to the piece of work. If the student refuses or fails to submit the work, a mark of zero shall be recorded. The student shall in any case receive the appropriate warning letter (see section 8.6).
- Major first offence penalty for year 2/3 students (except those admitted directly into year 2) will be required to submit equivalent work in line with the approved assessment stated in the module descriptor, and will be eligible to receive only the minimum pass mark appropriate to the piece of work. If the student refuses or fails to submit the work, a mark of zero shall be recorded. In particularly extreme cases, the Academic Misconduct Panel will be able to apply a penalty up to the awarding of a zero for the piece of work, with no automatic right of reassessment. The student shall in any case receive the appropriate warning letter (see section 8.6).

Second offence: Year 1

If a second alleged offence has been detected, and the first offence was discovered in year 1, the Academic Misconduct Panel will be able to apply a penalty up to the awarding of a zero for the piece of work, with no automatic right of reassessment. The Academic Misconduct

Panel shall in addition send the student the appropriate warning letter, (see section 8.6), confirming the decision and advising the student of the consequences of any further offence.

Second, and any subsequent, offence: Year 2/3

If a second alleged offence has been detected, and the first offence was discovered in year 2/3, the Academic Misconduct Panel will agree one of the alternatives listed below, as appropriate:

- i. to permit the student to repeat the work, subject to receiving only the minimum pass mark appropriate to the piece of work;
- ii. to award zero for the work in question;
- iii. to award zero for the whole coursework or dissertation;
- iv. to award zero for the unit or module;
- v. to award zero as under (iv) and, where the inclusion makes no difference to the class of award, to recommend that one class lower than the one determined by the arithmetic be awarded;

If a student does not accept the decision of the AMP they may appeal to a panel constituted by HE Quality (see section 8.14).

8.6 The warning letter

For each offence the Academic Misconduct Panel will send the student a formal letter which

- spells out what the student has done wrong, and why it is wrong
- points them towards appropriate sources of study skills help
- reminds them of the need to discuss their work with academic staff if the student is uncertain about how to avoid subsequent allegations
- warns of the serious consequences of subsequent offences, and spells out the sanctions that will be applied
- outlines the student's rights of appeal

8.7 Evidence requirement

In all cases of alleged misconduct, satisfactory evidence must be provided to confirm that an offence has occurred. No penalties shall be imposed in the absence of clear evidence. Where a tutor suspects plagiarism but there is no clear evidence via plagiarism detection software the College may invoke use of a viva voce examination (oral test) to determine the level of expertise a student possesses in any given assessment task. In these circumstances the relevant external examiner must approve the process, it must involve at least two tutors including the relevant module leader, and it must be overseen by the Academic Registrar (or nominee), students should be given fair notice of at least one week, and they should receive a clear briefing as to the form and purpose of the viva examination and the potential consequences.

8.8 Right to resit

In cases in which a student fails a module overall, because work has been awarded a zero mark as a result of misconduct, the student forfeits the normal right of re-assessment in that module. The right to re-sit can be restored by the relevant Assessment Board at its absolute discretion.

8.9 Multiple pieces of work

For the first offence only, if a student has submitted more than one piece of work for assessment at the same time, and misconduct is detected in more than one of those pieces of work, this shall be defined as one “offence”. After the first offence, each piece of work in which plagiarism is detected will count as a separate offence. Multiple second offences do not exist and are treated as second, third and fourth etc. Likewise, multiple third offences do not exist.

8.10 Group Projects

Where misconduct has been discovered in a group project, wherever possible the individual(s) responsible for affected sections will be identified and treated in the normal manner; if it is not possible to identify individuals responsible, the group will be allowed to resubmit for a pass mark. This will apply equally to all members of the group even if individuals in the group are on a second or subsequent offence warnings.

Despite being allowed to resubmit, for those individuals their offence will be recorded accordingly as a second or subsequent offence.

8.11 Counting offences

In cases where the counting of offences is relevant, “Second offence” means the next case of misconduct to be confirmed after the student has received feedback on the consequences of the “first offence”. “Third offence” and “Fourth offence” are defined relative to feedback from earlier cases of misconduct.

8.12 Retrospective detection

Retrospective work is defined as any work that has been subject to final moderation and/or approval by an Examination Board. Blackburn College reserves the right to review work retrospectively, and apply appropriate sanctions, if there are reasonable grounds for doing so. Where there are reasonable grounds, the Academic Misconduct Panel can instigate a retrospective review, requiring the student to re-submit assessed work and referring the matter to the Academic Registrar (or nominee) with a recommended sanction where appropriate. The Assistant Principal – HE (or another delegated member of the College Leadership Team) can also request the retrospective review of any work in relation to cases referred to it.

8.13 Award Boards

The decisions and recommendations of the Final Award Board will normally be regarded as the cut-off point beyond which allegations of misconduct will not be considered, and past which no sanctions will normally be applied.

8.14 Right of appeal

If a student does not accept the decision of the Academic Misconduct Panel they can appeal to a senior office holder not already involved in the misconduct process, such as the Assistant Principal: Higher Education or Vice-Principal Curriculum and Quality.

8.15 Reporting of plagiarism histories

Each school will have discretion to decide whether misconduct should be mentioned if a request is received (particularly from another University or a professional body) for an academic reference for a Blackburn College student, or whether to report plagiarism to professional bodies.

8.16 Professional Misconduct

Student studying on a qualification that is subject to the regulations of a professional or statutory body may be governed by additional professional principles and practices. Students will be advised of the nature of relevant professional conduct at induction and at other appropriate times throughout their studies.

Cases of alleged professional misconduct will, as far as is permitted under the rules of the relevant professional or statutory body, be subject to the same processes and penalties as apply to academic misconduct. Where there is a conflict of rules, those of the professional or statutory body will take precedence.

The Academic Misconduct Panel will determine the rules that should apply to cases of professional misconduct referred to it.