

Electronic Management of Assessment Policy

Introduction

Digital Futures (2015-2018) describes a vision for online management of assessment and feedback for written assignments, where practicable and appropriate. The Electronic Management of Assessment (EMA) policy supports this ambition, whilst also accommodating reasonable adjustments and practical constraints. It is supported by existing protocols for making reasonable adjustments for disabled staff and for inclusive and accessible assessment design for students.

Available data within Blackboard shows that online assessment and feedback is well used at Ulster with approximately 150,000 electronic submissions per academic year, however there is a lack of consistency in assessment workflows across Programmes, Schools and Faculties. The electronic management of assessment streamlines the assessment cycle for students, academic staff and administrators in terms of efficiency and allows for rich feedback and direct engagement with the students.

Providing timely, clear, legible and meaningful feedback to students in a consistent manner is key to supporting and helping students feed forward as they progress through their studies.

Scope

This policy covers the three core elements of Electronic Management of Assessment.

1. Online submission of written assignments: the process whereby a student submits work online for storage and retrieval for marking, feedback and review. This can include originality checking.
2. Online return of marks: the process whereby academic and teaching staff provide online marks to students.
3. Online return of marks and feedback: the process whereby students access and view their marks and feedback online.

This policy should be read in conjunction with The Ulster Assessment Handbook (<http://www.ulster.ac.uk/academicoffice/download/Handbooks/Assessment%20Handbook.pdf>) and principles for Assessment and Feedback for Learning

Aims

- Whilst accommodating reasonable adjustments; to improve consistency in assessment and feedback processes and practices at Ulster,
- To provide students with the means to submit their written assessments online.
- To provide students with online marks and feedback
- To provide staff with the means to mark online, digitally annotate assessments and provide digital feedback.
- To provide structured processes for managing assignment workflows such as External Examiner access.
- To provide a foundation for improving other business workflows such as the uploading of assessment marks to Banner.

Online Submission

1. To ensure a consistent experience for students, online submission of written assignments should be used, where practical and appropriate.
2. Academic staff should set up assignment submission points within their modules in Blackboard Learn. These should be contained within a clearly defined content area within the Blackboard Module area that is consistently named. Ulster's Blackboard template uses the term 'Assessment' and it is recommended that the naming convention is used.
3. Clear instructions should be made available alongside the submission box, providing information about the assignment expectations and how to contact the academic team with any queries.
4. There are three supported technologies that can be used for online assignment submission, all integrated within Blackboard Learn. Alternative submission methods can still be used for inclusive assessment design and to support reasonable adjustments for both staff and students.
 - Turnitin
 - Blackboard Assignment
 - Panopto Video assignment (video submissions).
5. Each tool has unique characteristics and supports different assessment types, for example; group work, anonymous marking,

peer assessment. If your assessment design requires specific functionality, the Office for Digital Learning can provide guidance to help select the most appropriate technology.

6. The Office for Digital learning can also provide support and guidance for making reasonable adjustments and for inclusive assessment design.
7. For extenuating circumstances, the Office for Digital Learning recommends using a separate submission drop box.

Online Return of Marks and Feedback

8. Marks and feedback should be made available online, where appropriate and practical.
9. Marks should be returned to all students on the same date, and the relevant Grade Centre column should be hidden until all marks are populated.
10. There are three supported technologies which can be used for providing feedback digitally. Alternative feedback methods can still be used to support reasonable adjustments for both staff and students.
 - Turnitin Grade Mark / Turnitin App
 - Blackboard Assignment inline viewer / Grader App
 - Blackboard Grade Centre (by uploading Word/PDF documents).

Exemptions

It is recognised that there will be occasions when assessment cannot be practically delivered online and exceptions are expected and should be agreed by discussion at the local level with the Head of School. Exemptions will be notified to the Digital Learning Sub Committee.

Examples of exemption on grounds of suitability for online submission

1. Some forms of written assessment may not be suitable for online submission. Decisions on inclusion/exemption of forms of written assessment will be based on local discussion with the Head of School.
2. Some Dissertations may not be suitable for online submission and feedback.
3. Where an exemption applies, alternative arrangements will be put in place for the written submission. In these instances, academic

teams should still use the Grade Centre within Blackboard to return student marks and feedback.

Examples of exemption on grounds of inclusion.

1. Lack of appropriate hardware to provide feedback online, in such cases options are:
 - a. agreement on an alternative mode of assessment;
 - b. printing of online submissions followed by annotated feedback with marks issued online (note resources for printing and distribution of feedback);
 - c. review of personal and desktop technology available to academic staff (note resources).
2. Reasonable adjustment or other accessibility matter.