

Policy revised in 2018/19 following Equality Impact Assessment. See:

https://www.ulster.ac.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0005/396671/EMA_Policy.pdf

<http://addl.ulster.ac.uk/academicdevelopment/articles/category/policy/electronic-management-of-assessment>

EXTRACT FROM LEARNING AND TEACHING COMMITTEE MINUTES:

14 February 2017

17.17 Electronic Management of Assessment and Feedback Policy (Item 7a) (Min 16.98 refers)

The former Learning and Teaching Committee had agreed at its June 2016 meeting to a staged approach to the transition to online assessment with the online submission of written assessment being prioritised in Semester 2, 2016/17, the online return of marks in 2017/18 and feedback in 2018/19. It was noted that the timetable was phased to allow staff appropriate time to adjust to new methodologies but was not intended to disconnect the links between marking and providing feedback, as embedded in the Principles of Assessment and Feedback for Learning, nor to prevent earlier achievement of all aspects.

Professor Bartholomew considered that it might be more appropriate pedagogically, and practically, for online marking and feedback to be dealt with together in a single target date of 2018/19. This would allow staff more time to make the adjustment to online marking and feedback, and in particular it would assist those staff who did not yet have the appropriate hardware to fulfil these expectations. Heads of School would have more time to review resources.

Variability in practices and lack of consistency among individual staff were raised by the Ulster University Business School representatives. Professor Murphy advised that staff should be encouraged to attend the Assessment and Feedback sessions scheduled by the Office for Digital Learning to support best practice and to seek advice in terms of technical solutions relating to their particular equipment.

The Sub-Committee had noted that staff who did not have the appropriate equipment to support online assessment should raise the matter with their Head of School; a list of actions arising from consideration of such requests had been drawn up. Health and Safety concerns should be considered through the Display Screen Equipment Procedure and the implementation of health and safety interventions, if necessary. It was noted that a paper on this topic was to be presented to the next meeting of the Health and Safety Consultative Forum.

Professor McMahon-Beattie asked whether any normal or minimum equipment requirements were specified. Although there was a view that staff would benefit from double screens, Professor Murphy advised that this would not be set as a minimum standard since it was possible to mark and provide feedback with a single screen, and resources might constrain the availability of such an optimal solution.

AGREED that:

- i) the timetable for the return of marks online be revised to coincide with that for feedback in 2018/19;

- ii) the Office for Digital Learning draw up a flow chart to guide staff on contacts, equipment needs and other matters relating to online assessment and feedback. This should be circulated to members for discussion and agreement before the next Committee meeting.

19 October 2016

16.98 Digital Learning Policy (Item 6)

The Sub-Committee [Digital Learning] had noted the Learning and Teaching Committee's approval of the proposed Policy on Electronic Management of Assessment and the Guidelines on the Use of Turnitin in June (min 16.64 refers).

The Committee noted that the new policy and target dates may not have yet been widely disseminated in all Faculties. Professor Murphy undertook to prepare a communication to schools. Guidance and support would be provided by the Office for Digital Learning.

It was noted that the Policy allowed for certain circumstances where the online submission of assignments might not be possible. Professor McClenaghan highlighted that some students experienced difficulty in writing by hand in examinations and in order to support them some assignments in his School were now to be submitted in hand-written format rather than word-processed.

Professor Jędrzejewski reported that his Faculty had discussed the Policy and noted a health and safety concern in relation to online marking and feedback for lecturers with large numbers of student scripts. Professor Murphy advised that this matter had been identified in the consultation on the Policy.

20 June 2016

16.64 Electronic Management of Assessment Policy

The Committee considered the draft Electronic Management of Assessment Policy which addressed the online submission of coursework assignments, return of marks and feedback, in accordance with the vision of the Digital Futures Strategy for 100% online management of assessment and feedback where practicable. It was noted that standardisation of practice was attractive to the student body in view of the variability of current arrangements. The policy aimed to streamline processes in the assessment cycle and bring benefits for students and academic and administrative staff, in terms of efficiency, quality of feedback and engagement with students. It was recognised that online submission was not feasible for some types of coursework and consequently academic teams would be allowed to opt out of the policy if a valid case were made.

It was noted that many schools were already accepting all submissions online, and many were also marking and providing feedback online. It was recognised that online marking would be a challenging process for others. The Sub-Committee had also noted that not all academic staff at present had the appropriate hardware/ software. Consequently, the Sub-Committee had recommended a staged approach with online submission being achieved in semester 2, 2016/17, online return of marks in the following year and the online return of marks and feedback in 2018/19.

It was noted that the Committee would provide guidance and training to support the transition. Positive examples of practice would help adoption.

The Sub-Committee had also recommended that external examiners use the VLE to review coursework submissions, provisional marks and feedback as part of their moderation duties. An access protocol was in place and the functionality of the supporting technologies allowed samples to be identified. Professor McMahon-Beattie commented on the difficulties she had experienced in this regard as an external at another institution.

AGREED that:

- i) subject to minor amendments, the draft Policy and target dates be approved (finalised version at Appendix 3 [not attached]);
- ii) external examiners be informed, at the time of appointment, of the University's preference for online submission, marking and feedback; they should be asked to review submissions digitally through the VLE when these were available.