



THE  
**TRAFFORD**  
**COLLEGE**  
GROUP

**Section:** Assessment Regulations  
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## APPROVAL

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# Higher National Assessment Regulations

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Scope and Purpose

1.1. This policy is made for the use of staff and students of the Trafford College Group, comprising of Trafford College, Stockport College, Cheadle College and Marple Sixth Form. For convenience, and unless otherwise indicated the group of colleges is referred to as 'we', 'our' or 'the College'. 'You' and 'your' refer to all students of the Trafford College Group.

1.2. The following assessment regulations apply to BTEC Higher National Certificates (HNCs) and Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) offered at the Trafford College Group.

1.3. This regulation relates to the provision of higher education programmes delivered at the College. Students undertaking a programme of study awarded by Sheffield Hallam University at the College may access the University regulation here:

[https://students.shu.ac.uk/regulations/assessment\\_awards/index.html](https://students.shu.ac.uk/regulations/assessment_awards/index.html)

1.4. All students should have access to these regulations and other assessment policies and procedures, including:

- Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure
- Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedure
- Accreditation or Prior Learning Policy and Procedure
- Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure
- Fitness to Study Policy and Procedure
- HE Student Complaints Policy
- Course handbooks (including assessment planners and schemes of work)
- Programme specifications and unit descriptors
- Criteria relating to grading and marking schemes

1.5. The regulations in this document govern Higher National programmes and are intended for College staff and students. The Higher National Assessment Board is responsible for ensuring that these regulations are followed and adhered to.

1.6. Enrolling on a programme of Higher Education (HE) is an agreement to be bound by the HE Student Terms and Conditions which makes clear that in doing so, students agree to follow all relevant policies and procedures. This includes the assessment regulations prevailing at the time and any subsequent approved modifications during their registration period. Students will be notified of any changes to the assessment regulations during their studies.

## REGULATIONS

### 2. Period of registration

2.1. The maximum periods within which a student may take to complete their programme, from first registration, are normally as follows:

Qualification	Full time maximum (years)	Part time maximum (years)
HNC	2	4
HND	4	6

2.2. Periods of registration may formally be adjusted by the Assessment Board on reasonable grounds. Maximum periods of registration may be set out for students who enter with credit.

### 3. Credit Composition and Awards

3.1. Higher National Certificates will normally be awarded to a student who has been credited with at least 120 credits at level 4.

3.2. Higher National Diplomas will normally be awarded to a student who has been credited with 120 credits at level 4 and 120 credits at level 5.

3.3. Where specified, students will be expected to have successfully completed the required work experience hours.

### 4. Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)

4.1. Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) is a generic term used for the award of credits on the basis of demonstrated learning that has occurred in the past. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for Teacher Education programmes in relation to the QCF is covered under this section of the assessment regulations.

4.2. Within APL and/or RPL there are two main categories: Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) and Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL). APCL is learning for which certification has been awarded by an Educational Institution, Awarding Body or education/Training Provider. APEL is learning acquired from previous experience in the work place/industry.

4.3. Students should be directed to the Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure for details on how to complete applications for APL/APCL/APEL or RPL.

### 5. Submission of coursework and attendance at examinations

5.1. If a piece of coursework is not submitted by the required deadline the following will apply:

- At the discretion of the Course Leader, students may be offered an extension to the published deadline of 24 hours. Students accepting this option will have their work capped at a PASS.
- This applies to coursework only and applies to the first submission only. This includes a submission following a successful deferral of assessment claim.
- Failure to submit or complete coursework by the published deadline or not meeting the terms of any extensions granted will result in a 0 grade being awarded.

5.2. Students may request extensions, without prejudice, where there are immediate, short term mitigating circumstances that prevent the timely submission of work. These claims will need to be verified with the appropriate evidence. Please refer to the College Mitigating Circumstances Policy for more information.

5.3. Students registered on Higher National Qualifications following the QCF specification are able to request a resubmission opportunity. Details of which are available at paragraph 9.2.

5.4. Failure to attend a scheduled controlled assessment may result in a 0 grade being awarded.

5.5. Students may request deferrals of examination or coursework submission, without prejudice, where there is illness or genuine mitigating personal circumstances providing an application for deferral is made before the examination. Claims will need to be verified with the appropriate evidence. Please refer to the College Mitigating Circumstances Policy for more information.

5.6. Students may apply to the Mitigating Circumstances Board without prejudice, where there has been illness or genuine mitigating personal circumstances. These claims can be made after the submission of coursework or examination date. Claims will need to be verified with the appropriate evidence. Please refer to the College Mitigating Circumstances Policy for more information.

## **6. Grading**

### **RQF Grading**

6.1. Assessment decisions for BTEC Higher Nationals are based on the specific criteria given in each unit and set at each grade level. The criteria for each unit have been defined according to a framework to ensure that standards are consistent in the qualification and across the suite as a whole. The way in which individual units are written provides a balance of assessment of understanding, practical skills, and technical attributes appropriate to the purpose of the qualifications.

6.2. Staff must show how they have reached their decisions using the criteria in the assessment records.

6.3. When a student has completed all of the assessment for a unit then the course team will give a grade for the unit. This is given simply according to the highest level for which the student is judged to have met all the criteria. Therefore:

- To achieve a Pass, a student must have satisfied all the Pass criteria for the learning outcomes, showing coverage of the unit content and therefore attainment at Level 4 or 5 of the National Framework.
- To achieve a Merit, a student must have satisfied all the Merit criteria (and therefore the Pass criteria) through high performance in each learning outcome.
- To achieve a Distinction, a student must have satisfied all the Distinction criteria (and therefore the Pass and Merit criteria), and these define outstanding performance across the unit.

6.4. The award of a Pass is a defined level of performance and cannot be given solely on the basis of a student completing assignments or coursework. Students who do not satisfy the Pass criteria should be recorded as Unclassified.

6.5. The following table summarises the grades available and the conditions attached to each

<b>In order to achieve a Pass in a unit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria have been met</li> </ul>
<b>In order to achieve a Merit in a unit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria have been met</li> <li>• All Merit grade descriptors have been met</li> </ul>
<b>In order to achieve a Distinction in a unit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria have been met</li> <li>• All Merit and Distinction grade descriptors have been met</li> </ul>

6.6. Each of the generic Merit and Distinction grade descriptors can be amplified by use of indicative characteristics. These give a guide to the expected student performance, and support the generic grade descriptors. The indicative characteristics should reflect the nature of a unit and the context of the sector programme. Performance and achievement against indicative characteristics will be discussed within the Assessment Board.

6.7. Each assessment activity does not need to incorporate all the Merit and/or Distinction grade descriptors.

6.8. The differences between assessment criteria, grade descriptors and indicative characteristics are outlined in the following table:

<b>Assessment Criteria</b>	Statements that identify the important features to be present in the assessment evidence and are indicative of a <b>satisfactory</b> (i.e. Pass) level of achievement.
<b>Grade Descriptors</b>	Statements that identify the features within the assessment evidence which enable an Assessor to measure achievement <b>above</b> the satisfactory level (i.e. Merit and Distinction).
<b>Indicative Characteristics</b>	Guides to the expected student performance <b>within a particular assignment</b> , supporting the generic grade descriptors. The indicative characteristics should reflect the nature of a unit and the context of the sector programme.

6.9. Grade descriptors can be found in Annexes A and B: Grade Descriptors

## **Group Assessment Guidelines**

- 6.10. Group projects should be included in the assessment schedule for a unit only where one or more learning outcomes of the unit indicate that they might be appropriate.
- 6.11. A common group grade will not be assigned to all members of the group; individual contributions will be measured and graded against the learning outcomes, the assessment and grading criteria
- 6.12. Evidence of observation of presentations and discussions (with peers, with Assessors etc.) will be detailed and mapped to criteria in order to provide evidence of achievement of individual contributions
- 6.13. In some cases, presentations may provide evidence only sufficient for Pass criteria, for example where a presentation contained no corroborated detail of individual tasks undertaken by members of the group. In such cases, evidence for higher grades may be achieved through formalised questioning of individual students mapped to the assessment criteria, or having the students produce a supplementary report of their activities
- 6.14. Feedback can be directed to the group with reference to individual contributions and achievement
- 6.15. For graded programmes, the achievement of the Merit and Distinction grade descriptors should be measured against individual contributions and the method of measurement should be clear within the assignment brief.

## **7. Moderation, internal verification and second marking**

- 7.1. The College ensures that there is rigor and consistent model of internal quality assurance of assessed work is in place.
- 7.2. The purpose of internal quality assurance is to promote quality and to ensure that all assessable work undertaken by students has been fairly and consistently assessed and meets the requirements of awarding bodies.

## **8. Assessment Boards**

8.1. The College operates a two tiered Assessment Board structure. The first part of Assessment Board meetings focus on unit and course performance rather than student performance which is discussed in part two.

8.2. The membership of the Assessment Boards shall be as follows:

- Assistant Principal Adult Education and Higher Skills or Director of Quality
- Head of Higher Education Registry, Standards and Compliance.
- Head of Studies
- Relevant External Examiner or confirmation of visit.
- Administrator/Secretary (minutes)
- Programme Leader

- Curriculum Team

8.3. The terms of reference for part one of the AB are as follows:

- Moderate and agree unit results
- Ensure that fair assessment has taken place
- Confirm the scale of marking within each unit
- Approve and confirm reassessment methodology for each unit

8.4. The terms of reference for part two of the AB are as follows:

- The AB make recommendations regarding the progression of students on to the next level of the programme
- Receive comments and reports from External Verifiers/Examiners (EVs/EEs)
- Receive and confirm decisions relating to deferrals and mitigating circumstances
- Receive and confirm decisions from the Academic Misconduct Panel
- Make decisions regarding reassessment of students
- Make decisions regarding compensation for failed units.
- The final awards to be made to students

8.5. It is expected that members of the AB will make every reasonable attempt to attend the meeting. In the Chair's absence, The Head of HE Registry, Standards and Compliance will preside.

8.6. The meeting will be quorate when 50% of the required attendees are present.

8.7. Where not quorate, the AB will proceed informally with the minutes being shared with the membership as soon as possible. Absent members of the Board should review the minutes and respond confirming the Board's decisions are appropriate and reflect the terms of reference of the AB.

8.8. These boards will normally be held annually, although if programmes are operated on a semester system, there may be intermediate boards at the end of semester one.

8.9. Whilst the majority of Assessment Board activity will be enacted at the Board itself, there may be rare occasions where this is not possible.

8.10. The Chair of the Assessment Board has delegated powers to act between scheduled meetings on:

- Items of routine business that would not normally merit discussion at the meeting;
- Matters relating to the implementation of decisions which have already been approved at previous meetings;
- Issues which arise that, in the view of the Chair, are too urgent and important for consideration to be deferred until the next scheduled meeting.

8.11. In such cases, the Chair will have delegated authority to take action, which may take the form of:

- Calling a special meeting for the committee;



- Consulting with members of the committee by correspondence;

8.12. In all cases the Chair will exercise care before taking action on behalf of the board member and if appropriate, may consult with senior colleagues.

8.13. The Chair may take action on matters of importance where the delaying of a decision would disadvantage the College or the student.

8.14. Where the Chair has exercised delegated authority, a written report of the action taken will be presented to the next scheduled meeting which shall give its formal endorsement or otherwise to the actions.

## **9. Reassessment and repeating units**

9.1. Students will normally be required to make good a failure before progressing to the next level of the programme.

### **RQF**

9.2. Students registered on the RQF specifications who, for the first assessment opportunity, have failed to achieve a Pass for that unit specification shall be expected to undertake a reassessment. In these circumstances the Assessment Board will act in accordance with the following principles as set out by Pearson Edexcel's UK Guide to Quality and Assessment in Higher Education:

- There is only one opportunity for reassessment of the unit permitted.
- Reassessment for coursework, project or portfolio-based assessment shall normally involve the reworking of the original task or submission.
- Reassessment of examinations will involve the completion a new task, i.e. a resit examination paper or new assignment brief.
- Where a reassessment takes place the grade will be capped at a Pass.
- A student will not be entitled to be reassessed in any component of assessment for which a Pass grade or higher has already been awarded.

9.3. Reassessments may take place within the same semester or it may be deemed appropriate that the reassessment take place in the next semester. The Course Leader will confirm the due date with students noting the student record on ProMonitor.

9.4. Any late resubmissions from students on RQF specifications will be regarded as a 0.

9.5. The following applies to students registered on RQF specifications who, for the first assessment opportunity and resubmission opportunity, still failed to achieve a Pass for that unit specification:

- They cannot progress to the next level of study.
- At the discretion of the Assessment Board, decisions can be permitted to repeat a unit.
- The student must study the unit again with full attendance and full payment of the unit fee.

- The overall unit grade for a successfully completed unit is capped at a Pass for that unit.
- Units can only be repeated once.

9.6. If unit(s) are no longer available, a suitable alternative will be identified.

## 10. Students with mitigating circumstances

10.1. Students who are unable to submit work due to mitigating circumstances should be directed to the College Mitigating Circumstances Policy and Procedure.

10.2. Where mitigation (i.e. deferral of assessment either through the completion of form DF1 or through an application to the Mitigating Circumstances Board completing form MC1) is confirmed, a student may be reassessed as a first attempt in the elements the student has requested deferral in.

10.3. If an assessment affected by illness was itself a second attempt, the student will be permitted to be reassessed as if for the second time. Where a student has passed a unit at a first attempt but his/her performance has been affected by mitigation, the Assessment Board may allow the student an opportunity to be assessed as for the first time. In such cases the second mark will stand.

10.4. In exceptional cases, where the student's ability to complete his/her studies is affected by serious circumstances (such as terminal illness of the student) and it is established that the student is likely to be unable to complete/return to complete his/her studies within a reasonable time period, the Assessment Board may act in one of the following ways:

- Where the Assessment Board is satisfied that there is sufficient evidence of the student's achievement to determine the classification of an award, or where this evidence is subsequently obtained, the student may be recommended on the basis of the available evidence for the award for which he or she is a candidate or for an intermediate award specified in the Programme Specification. The decision of the Assessment Board must be ratified by the Chair of the Assessment Board
- An aegrotat award may be recommended when the Assessment Board does not have enough evidence of the student's performance to recommend the award for which the student is a candidate, or an intermediate award specified in the Programme Specification. *In exceptional circumstances, you may be offered an aegrotat award where there is sufficient evidence of your achievement to satisfy the Assessment Board that you would have met the requirement for the award, but where there is evidence that you cannot complete the course due to exceptionally severe illness or other exceptionally compelling reasons.* Before such a recommendation is made, the student must have demonstrated achievement at the level for which an aegrotat award is considered. The Assessment Board must be satisfied that on the balance of probabilities but for illness or other valid cause the student would have reached the standard required. The decision of the Assessment Board must be communicated to the awarding body (Pearson) for final ratification. Where appropriate, the student must have signified that he or she is willing to accept the award.

10.5. The above awards in 10.4 may only be considered when the student has not achieved the required number of credits. Although the award title is conferred, the student will only be accredited with the credits achieved.

## **11. Progression**

11.1. To proceed to Level 5, students must normally complete and achieve at least 120 Level credits as specified for Level 4 of the programme concerned and where specified, students will be expected to have successfully completed the required work experience hours.

## **12. Calculation of final award**

12.1. To achieve an RQF BTEC Higher National Certificate qualification a student must have:

- Completed units equivalent to 120 credits at level 4, and;
- Achieved at least a Pass in 105 credits at level 4.

12.2. To achieve an RQF BTEC Higher National Diploma qualification a student must have:

- Completed units equivalent to 120 credits at level 5,
- Achieved at least a Pass in 105 credits at level 5,
- Completed units equivalent to 120 credits at level 4,
- Achieved at least a Pass in 105 credits at level 4.

## **13. Compensation**

### **RQF**

13.1. A student can still be awarded an RQF HNC if they have not achieved a minimum of a Pass in one of the 15 credit units but they have otherwise fulfilled all of the conditions in section 12.1 or 12.2, whichever is appropriate.

13.2. A student can still be awarded an RQF HND if that have not achieve a minimum of a Pass in one of the 15 credit units at level 4 and one of the 15 credit units at level 5 but they have otherwise fulfilled the criteria described in section 12.

## **14. Poor Academic Conduct and Academic Misconduct**

14.1. Poor Academic Practice is identified as an unacceptable proportion of assessed work being based directly on the work of others, albeit with correct citation and attribution.

14.2. All cases of academic misconduct are reported and investigated under the College Academic Misconduct Policy.

14.3. Paragraph 2.2 of the College Academic Misconduct Policy makes reference to the various types of Academic Misconduct that fall within the purview of the policy.

## **15. Appeals**

- 15.1. Students have the right to appeal decisions made by assessment boards and the academic misconduct panel.
- 15.2. Students may not appeal against the academic judgement of examiners or assessors.
- 15.3. The OIA define academic judgement as “a judgement that is made about a matter where only the opinion of an academic expert will suffice”.
- 15.4. Students should be directed to the College Academic Appeals Policy and Procedure for more information.

## ANNEX A: RQF GRADE DESCRIPTORS

### Pass grade

A Pass grade is achieved by meeting all the requirements defined in the assessment criteria for pass for each unit.

### Merit grade

<b>Merit grade descriptors</b>	<b>Exemplar indicative characteristics</b>
In order to achieve a <b>Merit</b> the student must	The student's evidence shows, for example:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and apply strategies to find appropriate solutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective judgements have been made</li> <li>• Complex problems with more than one variable have been explored</li> <li>• An effective approach to study and research has been applied</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Select/design and apply appropriate methods/techniques</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant theories and techniques have been applied</li> <li>• A range of methods and techniques have been applied</li> <li>• A range of sources of information have been used</li> <li>• The selection of methods and techniques/sources has been justified</li> <li>• The design of methods/techniques has been justified</li> <li>• Complex information/data has been synthesised and processed</li> <li>• Appropriate learning methods/techniques have been applied</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present and communicate appropriate findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The appropriate structure and approach has been used</li> <li>• Coherent, logical development of principles/concepts for the intended audience</li> <li>• A range of methods of presentation have been used and technical language has been accurately used</li> <li>• Communication has taken place in familiar and unfamiliar contexts</li> <li>• The communication is appropriate for familiar and unfamiliar audiences and appropriate media has been used.</li> </ul>

## Distinction grade

Distinction grade descriptors	Exemplar indicative characteristics
In order to achieve a <b>Distinction</b> the student must	Centres can identify and use other relevant characteristics. This is NOT a tick list.  The student's evidence shows, for example:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use critical reflection to evaluate own work and justify valid conclusions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conclusions have been arrived at through synthesis of ideas and have been justified</li> <li>• The validity of results has been evaluated using defined criteria</li> <li>• Self-criticism of approach has taken place</li> <li>• Realistic improvements have been proposed against defined characteristics for success</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take responsibility for managing and organising activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autonomy/independence has been demonstrated</li> <li>• Substantial activities, projects or investigations have been planned, managed and organised</li> <li>• Activities have been managed</li> <li>• The unforeseen has been accommodated</li> <li>• The importance of interdependence has been recognised and achieved</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate convergent/lateral/creative thinking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideas have been generated and decisions taken</li> <li>• Self-evaluation has taken place</li> <li>• Convergent and lateral thinking have been applied</li> <li>• Problems have been solved</li> <li>• Innovation and creative thought have been applied</li> <li>• Receptiveness to new ideas is evident</li> <li>• Effective thinking has taken place in unfamiliar contexts.</li> </ul>