Academic Regulations and Guidance

for Pearson Higher National

Programmes

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1. Scope

These regulations apply to all BTEC Pearson Higher National programmes at Coleg Gwent i.e. a Pearson HND, HNC or units thereof. They do not apply to franchised HE programmes for which the academic regulations for the relevant franchising University should be followed. Both of these documents should be read in conjunction with these regulations.

2. Regulation Guidance

These regulations have been developed in accordance with the guidance in the BTEC Centre Guide to Enhanced Quality Assurance and Assessment which in turn takes account of the QAA Code of Practice.

Please note that the individual subject specification documents include guidance on qualification structure, assessment of the qualification and calculation of the students' final grade for QCF and RQF Higher Nationals. These should be referred to in addition to this guidance.

3. Admissions

In order to be admitted students must fulfil the entry criteria stipulated in the programme specification. Admissions for higher education (HE) are managed by the College's central admissions team. In the case of higher education student interviews, these are carried out by a member of the programme area team.

4. Enrolment and Registration

Students must be enrolled with the College, and tuition fees paid, at or before the commencement of the first module at the start of each academic year. Students should also be registered with BTEC on an annual basis. The examinations team will carry out the registration process.

5. CG Connect

All students will be registered on CG Connect for staff and students to use. Staff will need to encourage and support students to make use of it.

6. Student Attendance and Engagement

Students will be expected to engage satisfactorily with the programme in terms of attendance and study. Students are expected to attend all timetabled sessions and satisfactory engagement expectations will be advised by the programme team. Registers will be maintained for all timetabled sessions. The final decision regarding satisfactory engagement shall rest with the Assessment board.

7. Formative Assessment

The main function of formative assessment is to provide feedback to enable the student to make improvements to consolidate a pass or attain a higher grade.

Students should be provided with formative feedback during the process of assessment and be empowered to act to improve their performance. Feedback on formative assessment must be constructive and provide clear guidance and actions for improvement prior to summative assessment.

Formative assessment will not confirm achievement of grades and should be prompt so it has meaning and context for the student.

8. Summative assessment

All summative assessment decisions are subject to confirmation by the final Higher Education Assessment Board. Hence students must be informed that summative assessment decisions are provisional and can be overturned by the Assessment Board.

Students should be familiar with the assessment criteria so that they can understand the quality of what is required. They should be informed of the differences between grading criteria so that higher skills can be achieved.

9. Grading

Assessment decisions will be based on the specific criteria given in each unit and set at each level of attainment in that unit and at the qualification 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 behavioural attributes appropriate to the purpose of the qualifications.

Assessors must show how they have reached their decisions using the criteria in the assessment records. When a student has completed all of the assessment for a unit then the assessment 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 the Pass criteria) through high performance in each Learning Outcome.

- To achieve a Distinction, a student must have satisfied all the Distinction criteria (and the Pass and Merit criteria), and these define outstanding performance across the unit as a whole.

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

10. Classification

To achieve a Pearson 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.

To achieve a Pearson BTEC Higher National Diploma qualification a student must have:

- completed units equivalent to 120 credits at Level 5 and achieved at least a pass in 105 credits at Level 5.

- completed units equivalent to 120 credits at Level 4 and achieved at least a pass in 105 credits at Level 4.

The calculation of the overall qualification grade is based on the student's performance in all units.

Students are awarded a Pass, Merit or Distinction qualification grade using the points gained through all 120 credits, at Level 4 for the HNC or Level 5 for the HND, based on unit achievement.

The overall qualification grade is calculated in the same way for the HNC and for the HND.

All units, in valid combination, must have been attempted for each qualification. The conditions of award and the compensation provisions will apply as outlined below. All 120 credits count in calculating the grade (at each level, as applicable).

The overall qualification grade for the HND will be calculated based on student performance in Level 5 units only.

Units that have been attempted but not achieved, and subsequently granted compensation, will appear as 'Unclassified' (i.e. a 'U' grade, on the student's Notification of Performance, that is issued with the student certificate).

Overall grades are calculated as per tables below:

	Points per Credit
Pass	4
Merit	6
Distinction	8

Grade	**Point Boundaries**
Pass	420-599
Merit	600-839
Distinction	840+

11. Compensation

Students can still be awarded an HNC if they have attempted but not achieved a Pass in one of the 15 credit units completed, but have completed and passed the remaining units.

Students can still be awarded an HND if they have attempted but not achieved a Pass in one of the 15 credit units completed at Level 4 and similarly if they have attempted but not achieved one of the 15 credit units at Level 5. However, they must complete and pass the remaining units for an HNC or HND as per the unit rules of combination of the required qualification.

Units that have been attempted but not achieved, and subsequently granted compensation, will appear as 'Unclassified' (i.e. a 'U' grade, on the student's Notification of Performance, that is issued with the student certificate).

12. Progression

A student may be permitted to proceed from year one to year two carrying a maximum of two referred/deferred units (subject to the requirement of successfully completing them alongside those to be studied in the next academic year). Students can either re-sit the unit (subject to it being delivered and a fee) or they can re submit the assessments at the next assessment point.

13. Resubmissions

A student who, for the first assessment opportunity, has failed to achieve a Pass for that unit specification shall be expected to undertake a reassessment.

- Only one opportunity for reassessment of the unit will be permitted.
- Reassessment for course work, project or portfolio-based assessments shall normally involve the reworking of the original task.
- For examinations, reassessment shall involve completion of a new task.
- A student who undertakes a reassessment will have their grade capped at a Pass for that unit.
- 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.

NB. the External Examiner (EE) is likely to want to include assessments that have been resubmitted as part of the sample they will review.

14. Repeat Units

The following applies to a student who, for the first assessment opportunity and resubmission opportunity, still failed to achieve a Pass for that unit specification:

- At the provider's discretion and Assessment Board, decisions can be permitted to repeat a unit.
- The student must study the unit again with full attendance and (if required) payment of the unit fee.
- The overall unit grade for a successfully completed repeat unit is capped at a Pass for that unit.
- Units can only be repeated once.
- The External Examiner is likely to want to include assessments that have been resubmitted as part of the sample they will review.

15. Marking Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar

Mistakes in spelling and grammar should not influence assessment decisions unless:

- the mistakes are so problematic that they undermine the evidence of student understanding, or
- specific assessment criteria require good communication, spelling and grammar and/or correct use of technical language

It is good practice for Assessors to "mark" spelling and grammar, i.e. correct mistakes on student work and expect the student to either correct them (at the formative feedback stage) or note them (at the summative feedback stage).

If student work has consistently poor spelling, grammar or language it should not be accepted for marking, but should be returned to the student to be corrected. The student must be given a deadline by which to correct the work.

16. Authenticity and Authentication

The College can only accept evidence for assessment that is authentic, i.e. that is the student's own and that can be judged fully to see whether it meets the assessment criteria.

Students must authenticate the evidence that they provide for assessment. They do this by signing a declaration stating that it is their own work when they submit it. Turnitin should be used for assignments that permit this type of submission (word processed reports, essays, overviews etc). For practical or performance tasks observed by the Assessor this is not necessary.

Assessors should only assess student evidence that is authentic. If they find through the assessment process that some or all of the evidence is not authentic, they need to take appropriate action, including invoking academic misconduct policies as required.

17. Extensions and Submission of Late Work

Principles

- Extensions will only be considered for authorisation where there are legitimate reasons and extenuating circumstances, such as illness at the time of submission.

- Students must make a formal application for an extension providing evidence of the reasons for not meeting a deadline.

- Extension requests should be made at least 5 working days prior to the assessment deadline.

- The duration of extensions will normally not exceed 2 weeks and should not be after the summative feedback has been issued to the other students on the programme.

- All extensions granted by the Programme Leader will be recorded and made available at the Assessment Board and to the External Examiner (EE). Recording details of extensions enables the Assessment Board and the EE to confirm that the programme is operating consistently in accordance with Cambria's and Pearson's policies and guidance.

Procedure for Application for an Extension

1. Applications for extensions should be submitted at least 5 working days prior to the submission date.
2. The form at appendix 1 Request for an Extension is to be completed and returned to the Programme Leader.

3. If approved, a further submission date will be set and the assessment will be graded as a first submission.
4. A record of the extension will be recorded and referred to at the Higher Education Assessment Board.

18. Unapproved Late Submission

If students do not have approval for an extension, work received after the submission date will be marked but capped at a pass.

However, the submitted work will be assessed 'without penalty' in the first instance, the late submission recorded and the student made aware that the lateness of submission has had an impact on their grade. In addition, the student should be informed that they may wish to submit 'mitigating circumstances' (see below); if there are circumstances that have related to the late submission. A decision can then be made as to whether any mitigating circumstances are accepted.

Work received over two weeks after the submission date will not be marked and a zero grade will be referred to the Assessment Board.

In addition, if you submit work late without approval for an extension, you forfeit the right to a resubmission even if you have been referred on the assignment.

The published Student Policy on Mitigating Circumstances can be found on CG Connect and on the (HE Student Intranet). Students should be alerted to this and provided with the link.

19. Mitigating Circumstances

Mitigating circumstances (also referred to as extenuating or special circumstances) are any serious circumstances beyond a student's control which may have adversely affected their performance; this can include the non or unauthorised late submission of assessments.

Where a student thinks that they have a case for mitigation they should be supported to follow the procedures below.

Students studying Higher Education programmes at Coleg Gwent should make every effort to ensure they are fit to study and undertake assessment as directed by the programme team. Students are also expected to make every effort to comply with assessment deadlines and complete their programme within the timeframe expected. However, there are times when a student will face adverse difficulties that will affect their academic progress.

The appropriate management of mitigating circumstances affecting a student's study and assessment is important in ensuring that academic standards are maintained and that students perceive that they are being treated fairly.

Students are responsible for reporting, in a timely manner, any special/mitigating circumstances that may affect their results, using the procedures that accompany this policy.
Claims for mitigating circumstances must be supported by appropriate evidence and the circumstances must be relevant to the claimed impact. Wherever possible, reasonable adjustments should be made to allow students to attend teaching activities and to complete coursework.

Claims for mitigating circumstances should be treated fairly and equally, and students who demonstrate mitigating circumstances should not be unduly disadvantaged or advantaged over other students.

Definition

Mitigating circumstances are circumstances that:

- affect the student's ability to attend or complete an assessment or a number of assessments
- affect the student's ability to complete a level, or the number of units they are enrolled on in an academic year (i.e. when a student requests to transfer to a different mode of study e.g., from full-time to part- time)
- are exceptional
- are outside their control
- can be corroborated by independent evidence
- occurred during or shortly before the assessment in question

Procedure

Where necessary a student should use the extensions procedure to request an extension 5 working days before an assessment deadline. If this is not possible then the mitigating circumstances procedure will need to be used.

If a student feels that they have valid mitigating circumstances that have affected their performance or ability to meet an assessment deadline (where they did not have an agreed extension) they should raise this, in the first instance, with their Personal Tutor or Programme Leader, who will then be able to provide support to the student to ensure they are aware of the process, the possible outcomes and, where feasible, identify support that would help the student towards completing the course work. The student may be referred to the Student Support Services offered by the College where they can be informed of available support services.

The student must apply by filling in the Mitigating Circumstances Form. The Mitigating Circumstances Form and supporting evidence should be sent to the Programme Leader.

The application will be considered by the Programme Leader, who may consult other members of the programme team, student services and the Higher Education Manager in order to reach a fair and equitable outcome, that neither disadvantages or advantages the student.

Possible Outcomes

1. **No Action** - where the mitigating circumstances are not considered to be directly impacting the student's studies or the evidence is not valid.
2. **Extension to submission deadline** - where the mitigating circumstances are agreed to be valid and require the learner to submit work by new deadlines NB If marked work has been returned to learners and the learner requesting mitigation would benefit from that assessment feedback the learner will be asked to complete a different assessment.
3. **Make an assessment attempt 'null and void' and allow an opportunity to repeat the assessment -** where allowances for mitigating circumstances have not already been made and it is accepted that the mitigating circumstances have impacted performance in that assessment.
4. **Poor performance taken into consideration** - where the student wants the mitigating circumstances to be considered by the assessment board. For example, where an illness affected a student's ability to undertake work to the same standard as previously submitted work, although the learner did submit work by the deadline.

   In this case the board of examiners may decide to increase the award class on academic achievement where the following apply:

   - the student has a borderline mark
   - there is evidence that the mitigating circumstances had an impact beyond specific modules in which allowances have already been made
   - it is not possible to make allowances retrospectively at module level e.g. because of the nature of the assessment method

The Higher Education Assessment Board may also decide to defer the decision until further details are obtained.

If a student attends a module but is unable to sit examinations or complete coursework because of Mitigating circumstances, the student may:

- Sit a supplementary examination or complete coursework before the meeting of the Assessment Board

or

- Sit a supplementary examination or complete coursework as a first attempt before or during the re-sit examination period

Evidence Based

In the interests of equity and transparency applications for mitigating circumstances must be supported by relevant and independent evidence to corroborate the claim made. This can include:

- Death certificates
- Medical certificates or GP letters
- Legal Notices.

Medical certificates are acceptable if they:

- are signed by a medical practitioner who has seen the student during or immediately after a period of illness
- indicate the date(s) when the student sought assistance
- provide sufficient detail without breaching confidentiality of the nature and seriousness of circumstances
- indicate the degree and duration of any incapacity

NB. Medical certificates signed by family members are not acceptable

Non-medical circumstances (e.g. bereavement) may be reported in writing, with a description of the circumstances, when they occurred and, wherever possible, their duration.

Higher Education Assessment Board

In order to pass a module students are required to meet specific learning outcomes. The Programme Leader will make recommendations to the Assessment Board who must be satisfied that specific learning outcomes have been achieved prior to allowing a student to progress to the next stage or making an award.

The Assessment Board has the right to ask for additional information about mitigating circumstances if original documentation is not adequate or if the circumstances reported are not considered serious enough to warrant special consideration.

Appeal

If the student wishes to appeal against an application that has been rejected, the Head of Higher Education will firstly assess if the independent evidence fully supported the dates noted on the Mitigating Circumstances Form. If any aspect of the Form is incomplete, or further evidence is required, contact will be made directly with the student and the Programme Leader to request this information or amend the form. If the evidence still does not

fully meet the criteria for approval, the student and programme leader will be formally notified in a letter and the minutes noted to reflect the final rejection of the application and the relevant reasons.

Retrospective claims of mitigating circumstances will not normally be considered unless there were exceptional reasons for not doing so at the time. This would normally only be because the student was unable to disclose the circumstances in advance because a medical condition has only just been diagnosed. Please note that unless there are exceptional circumstances as detailed above, mitigating circumstance claims which are submitted retrospectively will be deemed to be invalid.

Examples of circumstances which might be considered valid are:

- Hospitalisation, including operations
- Health problems
- Personal or psychological problems for which the student is undergoing counselling or has been referred to a counsellor or other qualified practitioner
- Bereavement
- Major accident or injury, acute ailments or conditions which coincide with an assessment deadline or an examination or test, or are sufficiently long-lasting to impact on a significant part of a term
- Mental health problem
- Recent burglary/theft/serious car accident
- Jury service which cannot be deferred
- Late diagnosis of, for example, dyslexia, resulting in no support or examination provision

Examples of circumstances which would not normally be considered valid:

- Computer problems such as inability to upload assignments to Turnitin
- Time management problems (e.g. competing deadlines)
- Appointments (legal, medical etc) which could be rearranged
- Child care problems which could have been anticipated
- Accidents or illness affecting relatives or friends (unless serious, or the student is a sole carer)
- Unspecified anxiety, mild depression or examination stress
- Cough, cold, upper respiratory tract Infection, sore throat, minor viral infection, unless the illness was at its peak at the time of an examination, end of module test or in class test and the corroborating evidence refers to the impact on the student's performance
- Financial problems (other than cases of exceptional hardship)
- Holidays, house moves, family celebrations

20. Academic Misconduct including Plagiarism

Academic misconduct covers any attempt by a student to gain unfair advantage (e.g. extra marks) for her/himself, or for another student, by unauthorised means.

Collusion includes the conscious collaboration, without official approval, between two or more students, or between a student(s) and another person, in the preparation and production of work which is then submitted as individual work. In cases where one (or more) student has copied from another, both (all) students involved may be penalised. The boundary between legitimate co-operation and unacceptable collusion varies according to the type of work involved. Staff setting the assessment will issue clear guidance on how much cooperation is acceptable.

Falsification includes the presentation of fictitious or deliberately distorted data in, for example, laboratory work, surveys or projects. This also includes citing references that do not exist.

Deceit includes misrepresentation or non-disclosure of relevant information, including the failure to disclose any cases of work being submitted for assessment which has been or will be used for other academic purposes.

Plagiarism is the act of using other people's words, images etc. as if they are your own. In order to make clear to readers the distinction between your words, images etc. and the work of others, it is essential that you reference your work accurately, thereby avoiding a charge of plagiarism. It is always obvious when a student has copied words from a text without referencing, as there is a change of writing style each time. If you do not reference your work correctly, it will come across as if you have 'stolen' words or ideas from other sources. Module tutors use computer software to check students work for potential plagiarism or improper citation.

Self-Plagiarism is the reuse of significant, identical or nearly identical portions of your own work without acknowledging that you are doing so or without citing the original work.

Re-presentation is the submission of work presented previously or simultaneously for summative assessment at this College.

Cheating is defined as any attempt to gain an unfair advantage in an assessment (including examinations), or assisting another student to do so. It includes: copying from other candidates, collusion, impersonation, plagiarism and unauthorised access to unseen assessment papers. In the event of an allegation of cheating you are advised to contact the student union advice centre immediately after the incident.

Your cooperation is expected in actively protecting the integrity of the assessment process. It is the duty of all students to observe high personal standards of academic honesty in their studies and to report any instances of malpractice of which they become aware.

Penalties

The maximum penalty for a proven case of academic misconduct is usually a mark of zero in that module, with the maximum being exclusion from the course. Should academic misconduct be proven after completion of the course the student will have their award rescinded.

The College follows the published policy and procedures by the Joint Council for Qualifications JCQ Suspected Malpractice Policies and Procedure 2023 on academic misconduct which should be read in conjunction with the above.

21. Examinations

All examinations are managed by the Examinations team at Coleg Gwent. For Higher Education, Examination Administrators will coordinate the data by collecting the information on examinations and liaising with invigilators. The Examinations office will book rooms and invigilators.

22. External Examiners

An external examiner will be appointed by Pearson for each programme to ensure that appropriate standards are being met. Their role is essentially that of a moderator, they do not mark work but moderate the decisions made by Internal Verifiers. They have the right to attend Assessment Boards and are also able to act in an advisory capacity. External Examination performs the same quality checks as other forms of standards verification. It also ensures that the processes and procedures are consistent and appropriate for qualifications at higher and professional levels.

23. Appeals against Academic Decisions

The Coleg Gwent process for Higher Education Appeals against Academic Decisions should be adhered to for Pearson HE programmes. This can be found on the HE Intranet page or via this link Pearson Higher Education Programme - Academic Appeals Procedure

24. Withdrawal and Suspension of Studies

Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals currently carry a maximum registration period of five years. However, it is important, and expected, that students complete their studies in a timely manner, in line with both the advertised programme duration and the expected completion date set at the time of registration. BTEC Pearson HE students will be subject to the Coleg Gwent regulations for withdrawal and suspension of studies.