

LASER LEARNING AWARDS ACCESS POLICY DOCUMENT: DRAFTS AND FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

This document is intended for the use of Access Practitioners and External Moderators. The document clarifies the QAA Regulations in terms of the use of drafts and provides a summary of best practice in relation to the use of both drafts and formative assessments.

Laser Learning Awards

The use of Formative Assessment and Drafts in preparation for Summative Assessments

Preamble: This policy has been formulated as a response to queries from both External Moderators and Access Practitioners. The policy aims to provide further clarification in terms of the QAA Regulatory Framework established within Section C (4b) of the *QAA Grade Scheme Handbook*.

The *QAA Grade Scheme Handbook* at Section 4b states:

- Opportunities to submit assignments (or parts of assignments) in draft for comment and feedback by tutors before the formal submission date are permitted only for the particular assignments where the tutor has decided that this is appropriate and has specified this in advance. **Such opportunities will not be the norm.**
- Where the opportunity for the submission of drafts exists, this is specified to all students in writing (for example on assignment briefs) before they begin work on the assignment.
- Tutors may provide written feedback on drafts and engage in dialogue of a general kind which allows students to see how they might develop their response to the assignment brief. In responding to draft submissions they **are not** permitted to:
 - a) Make detailed corrections to a draft submission
 - b) Provide detailed information about predicted grade indicators, or other information about predicted grade judgments.

The box above contains a verbatim copy of the QAA position. In exploring the consequences of this for the assessment process it is important to initially define terms.

Drafts:

A ***Draft*** represents a situation where the **formal** or **summative assessment** for a unit which will be used to assess all (or some) of the Learning Outcomes and provide evidence of relevant Assessment Criteria is submitted for consideration by the marker prior to final / summative assessment and grading of the assignment. This policy **does not** apply to **formative assessments** which are used to assess and development learning but which do not form any part of the final summative assessment.

Formative Assessment:

As stated above, this should not be confused with assessment in relation to draft policy. **Formative Assessment** can take a number of forms, from simple in class question and answers sessions, group work, in class tests which are not a part of the final graded assessment (such as practice tests for example) or written assignments completed at home by the student in readiness for the completion of a separate formal / summative assessment. *The key difference here is that a formative assessment may relate to the summative*

assessment but it is not the same as the summative assessment. The Summative Assessment will always be a separate and different piece of work.

Boundaries between Formative Work and Drafts:

It is quite possible to see that there would likely be overlap between strategies. Indeed good practice would require that any assessment be relevant to both the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria ultimately being assessed and also the nature of the actual assessment (to prepare the student for the actual skills as well as knowledge to be tested).

Therefore, an example of a formative assessment might be that the student produces an essay plan in preparation for their subsequent 'summative assessment' (the *actual* essay). Another example may be that of asking the student to respond to a series of short answer questions (e.g. a paragraph on each), which represent bite sized chunks which may later be re-arranged and edited into the final 'summative' assessment. In neither case is the work required representative of either the formal 'summative assessment' or any part thereof (although in the latter case it may seem that the work is part of the final assessment this is not the case as the student is merely completing responses to a set of questions which test the knowledge that will later be used in a more interconnected / global sense to respond to a single essay question).

However, if the student is asked to complete the essay and submit a 'draft version' in advance of the final 'summative' submission (which will be graded), then this would not constitute a formative assessment. In this instance the work would represent a draft submission and would be bound by the regulations noted above. This would also be the case where a student was asked to submit a part of the final 'summative' assessment (for example, the introduction or first page or a particular section of a report). The key difference is that the submitted work represents an identifiable part (or even the whole) of the actual final 'summative' assessment (which will then be graded).

It is of the utmost importance that the distinction noted above is clear as the QAA Regulations only apply to assessment models which employ actual opportunities for 'draft work' to be submitted. They do not and should not be applied in relation to other formative assessments. External Moderators and Access Practitioners should assure themselves that the model of assessment employed is either a formative assessment, to which the regulations are not applied, or an actual draft which must be compliant with the QAA Regulations.

Regulations where a Draft is employed:

- The opportunity to allow a draft can be granted by the assessor and there is no formal requirement for a student to have any opportunity to submit a draft. It is the assessor's decision as to whether to grant said opportunity (or not). However, it **must not be the norm**¹.

This could be interpreted to mean that all assessors in a centre may allow students the opportunity to submit for consideration a draft for their initial graded assessment in any particular subject module (regardless of whether the new module appears at the start or during the academic year).

It could also be used to allow students a draft attempt where a new means of assessment is employed (e.g. a case study in law where essays were previously employed).

¹ See QAA regulations on page 1

The use of drafts must not be the 'norm' though and therefore the opportunity should not apply to all assessments within a course or all assessments within any given module within that course. The opportunity for drafts might also be indicated within the IMA 4: Diploma Assessment Plan document (or equivalent), to ensure External Moderators can see that the use of drafts in particular areas and across the scope of an entire 'Diploma Scheme of Assessment' does not breach the QAA Regulations (in terms of frequency and being seen as the norm). DA might be entered against any assessment where a draft is used to indicate 'Draft Allowed'.

- Where a draft is employed, the QAA require that the opportunity for submission of said draft work is made available to all students within a given cohort. This is a requirement for equity to ensure that all students are able to benefit from the opportunity to submit drafts in relation to a particular assignment(s). It is clearly stated that the opportunity **must be expressed in writing**. The best way to do this is to include the 'draft opportunity' within written assessment guidance provided to students, noting the option on the *actual* assignment brief would be best practice (although this could refer to more detailed guidance provided separately if necessary). The nature of the envisaged draft opportunity should be noted (for example whether the marker is allowing submission of the entire assessed task or a part thereof (e.g. a section of a report or the introduction of an essay). The assessor should also indicate (and enforce) a deadline for the submission of drafts to ensure equity and also to manage workloads (as the marker should allow time between the submission of the draft for the completion of initial marking such that the student can benefit from feedback before the final summative submission's deadline).
- Feedback **must not provide any indication of grading decisions / judgments**. If this were to occur it would be treated as evidence of '**grade polishing**' which is expressly forbidden within the QAA Regulations.

This provides a challenge for assessors in terms of how to engage in a meaningful dialogue which helps the student to understand how to improve their work.

In terms of structure a marker might offer comment on whether the work is coherently structured and how this might be improved (although the marker should not explicitly instruct the student in terms of re-organising the work structurally).

In terms of theoretical development, the marker might legitimately suggest the student makes link to relevant theories but they should not tell the student *how to do this*. Finally, in terms spelling and grammar the marker might identify errors within a paragraph of the work to allow the student to recognize that there are areas of deficiency in this respect. However, the marker should not 'proof read work' or make corrections as the work would then fail to be the student's own.

The marker may reflect in their comments that the work is of high quality, which may be expressed through praise for significant areas which are logical and coherent and based on high levels of knowledge. The marker may also draw the conclusion that there remain some areas for development within an overall positive start. Alternatively, the marker may suggest that there are significant areas for improvement. However, if the marker were to state the work is sound, very good or excellent as an overall judgment this could be seen to constitute a grade prediction (and may be seen as non-compliant). A marker must certainly not say that the work is Pass standard but with the improvements suggested might be Merit or even Distinction. At all times the marker will need to employ their judgment in terms of how to balance supporting the student and helping them to improve with ensuring feedback does not breach the regulatory guidelines. This is particularly the case in terms of how terminology is

employed and also how much instruction in terms of improvement is given. The following chart gives some examples of 'do's' and don'ts'.

Suggested Feedback Parameters:

| Area | Do's | Don'ts |
|--------------------|--|--|
| Structure | <p><i>This work might be improved by a more coherent overall structure which allows each point to be fully developed and analysed in one place, rather than shifting around and not fully developing points in an orderly succession.</i></p> <p><i>Try to ensure that you define a theory before you move to critique it as a failure to do this prevents the logical and sequential development of analysis.</i></p> | <p><i>You need to move all the material in relation Freud into a section on the first page (see the marked sections (*) for the order to put them in. Then you can look at Behaviourism in one section in the order indicated on the script after this prior to your conclusions</i></p> <p><i>Put your definition of Freud highlighted (with amendments) prior to the analysis (which is marked +) to make the work make sense.</i></p> |
| Theory | <p><i>When you discuss the critique of Conservatism you might consider the critique put forward by Feminists.</i></p> | <p><i>When you discuss the critique of the Conservatism, if you refer to the work of Kate Millett, the Feminist, who would argue that the inherent gender roles established in the traditional model of the family help to perpetuate patriarchal hegemony.</i></p> |
| Spelling / Grammar | <p><i>You need to consider the limitations on your work which are created by problems in terms of spelling / punctuation / grammar. I have noted some corrections in paragraph one. These issues are preventing you from expressing ideas clearly and succinctly and this is undermining the quality of your work.</i></p> | <p><i>Please see all corrections made throughout and ensure the final submissions is corrected in terms of the spelling / grammar / punctuation and is reworded as per my recommendation.</i></p> |
| Area | Do's | Don'ts |
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|---------|---|---|
| Content | <p><i>Beware of using unsubstantiated opinions and/or value judgements</i></p> <p><i>Your assignment would be improved by more evidence from statistics and/or studies.</i></p> | <p><i>Remove your views on what is wrong with men and/or women and how they should behave.</i></p> <p><i>Make sure that you include the work of Oakley and Gittins to add an historical dimension to your understanding of the development of gender roles.</i></p> |
|---------|---|---|

Ensuring compliance in terms of drafts is important in terms of the QAA Regulations. Where drafts are employed the External Moderator should be able to see feedback provided to the student in relation to the draft and indeed, the draft and any feedback must be included in the final submission of work in relation to the unit in the student's folder (together with the assignment brief, the summative feedback and the actual final graded submission). Thus the External Moderator should be able to see from the assignment documentation that a draft was allowed, that it was completed and how that work was 'fed back on' prior to the final 'graded' submission of work.

Formative Assessment and Grading:

As noted this mode of assessment falls outside of the provisions of the QAA Regulations. Carefully targeted formative assessment can provide an effective means of preparing students for the submission of final graded 'summative' assessments. A key differential is by their very nature a formative assessment will not have any Grade Descriptors or indeed Grade Descriptor Components identified or attached to it. It will simply be a 'standalone' task for the assessment of the extent of learning taking place (although good practice would suggest this will likely be undertaken through a similar model of assessment to the final 'summative' graded assessment). This enables the marker to be more flexible in terms of the extent of feedback provided and whilst the marker cannot and should not state the work is of Pass / Merit or Distinction level (as there are no Grade Descriptors or their Components associated to the assessment itself), the marker can make more general assertions in terms of extent and quality of the work in meeting Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria.

An example of this might be:

Your discussion of the use of the Royal Prerogative in terms of government attempts to undermine the decision in terms of the wrongful expulsion of the Chagos Islanders certainly provided excellent evidence in relation to the Learning Outcome 4. You have shown both comprehensive understanding and application of law in terms of this aspect of the constitution and you also write in a technically accurate format adopting appropriate academic tone and convention. You might also consider though whether the critique provided by the High Court may have shaped Gordon Brown's attempts to set aside the Royal Prerogative in the wake of his becoming Prime Minister to fully expose the tension between the prerogative and democratic accountability. Analysis of this sort, if consistently applied in the context of the final assessment is characteristic of Distinction level work although this must be presented accurately and developed in the context of the final 'summative' assessment. In completing the final assessment do take care to note the Grade Descriptor Components

This example has highlighted the fact that the formative assessed work contained excellent work relevant to a single Learning Outcome and this quality of analysis may be seen as indicative of Distinction level although it must be applied consistently in the context of the actual 'summative' assessment which will not be the same as the actual formative assessment. Moreover, whilst there are no Grade Descriptors or their Components applied to the assessment the assessor has identified commentary in relation to the broad areas or aspects of assessment which pertain to the Grading Descriptors for the relevant unit. However, at all times the caveat remains that this quality of work is indicative of the quality expected in terms of the Grade Descriptors but **not** that the student has received the relevant grade (which will only be achieved (or not) in relation to the final 'summative' assessment where the Grading Descriptors are actually applied)!

Conclusions:

A draft or not a draft – that is the question!

The key differential relates to whether the assessment either prepares students for or directly contributes to a piece of work which constitutes the final graded or ungraded assignment. If it is either an initial submission of the final 'summative' assessment or an identified part thereof then the assessment will constitute a '**Draft**'. A draft will in effect '**be**' the final assignment albeit in a trial form.

Using drafts

The use of **drafts must remain compliant with the provisions of the QAA Regulations** and in particular the provisions of the *Grade Scheme Handbook Section C (4b)*. The evidence of compliance in terms of the assessment / assignment documentation and marked feedback remain subject to External Moderation (and obviously internal moderation for that matter).

Using formative assessment

The use of formative assessment is not governed by the same regulatory provisions and will **not be subject to External Moderation**. It provides greater scope for developmental feedback (although this must be couched carefully to ensure that students do not confuse *de facto* ungraded formative work with developmental comments with formerly graded 'summative' assessment). As noted formative assessment may very likely assess knowledge and skills which pertain to the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria for the identified unit but they will do this through an assignment that is tangibly different to that employed by the final 'summative' assessment. Formative assessments are **not graded** and **do not count** towards the calculation of grade profiles for a unit (although they may help to improve student performance in relation to the final work submitted).

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