



# HE Assessment Board Terms of Reference Policy [for Pearson HND Courses]

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## **1. Introduction and Purpose**

- 1.1** The Assessment Board is a formal academic governance body responsible for assuring the academic standards, integrity, credibility and fairness of assessment and awards in line with Pearson, OfS and QAA expectations.
- 1.2** This Policy applies to all Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) Higher National Certificate (HNC) / Higher National Diploma (HND) Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) awards offered at USP College, including those delivered in partnership with other institutions. The structure and operations of the Assessment Board will embrace awarding body requirements and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) UK Quality Code Guidance for Assessment.
- 1.3** The main purpose of a Higher National Assessment Board is to make informed academic recommendations on:
  - a. the grades achieved by students on individual modules or units
  - b. approved extenuating circumstances and their impact on assessment outcomes
  - c. cases of cheating, plagiarism, and other forms of academic misconduct, including the inappropriate use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)
  - d. the progression of students to the next stage of the programme
  - e. the awards to be made to students
  - f. referrals and deferrals
  - g. compensation decisions, in accordance with Pearson regulations
- 1.4** In carrying out these functions, the Assessment Board will also:
  - a. confirm that Pearson External Examiner sampling has taken place and that any required actions or conditions have been satisfactorily resolved prior to award recommendations; and
  - b. assure the integrity and credibility of assessment decisions, confirming that no unresolved academic misconduct (including AI related malpractice) impacts progression or award outcomes.
- 1.5** It is only when the unit results of students' achievement have been considered by an Assessment Board that certification can be awarded. Prior to this the External Examiner will have sampled work, and the report will be received by the Assessment Board.
- 1.6** The Assessment Board should follow a set agenda as found in Appendix 1.

## **2. Legal Background or Relevant Legislation and Guidance**

- a. Further and Higher Education Act 1992
- b. Data Protection Act 2018 / UK GDPR
- c. Office for Students Regulatory Framework – Conditions B2 and B4
- d. QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2024)

## **3. Linked/Related Policies**

- a. Internal Quality Assurance Policy
- b. HE Extenuating Circumstances Policy [for Pearson HND Courses]
- c. Academic Appeals Policy
- d. EDI Policy

- e. Student Confidentiality Policy
- f. Additional Learning Support (ALS) Policy
- g. Data Protection Policy
- h. HE Student Suspension of Studies Policy
- i. BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment 2025/26

#### **4. Basic Purpose and Process**

- 4.1** The primary purpose of the Assessment Board is to check the accuracy of the recording of grades, approve the results of assessments, decide on matters of student progression and the recommendation of awards (i.e. diplomas, certificates), together with classification at HND level.
- 4.2** In addition to checking the accuracy of results, the Assessment Board is responsible for assuring the credibility and consistency of assessment decisions across cohorts, programmes and delivery teams, in accordance with sector recognised standards.
- 4.3** The Assessment Board has powers of discretion to determine, subject to limitations defined in the Assessment Regulations, repeat assessment requirements (where a student cannot progress or is not eligible for an award) and exclusion on academic grounds.
- 4.4** The Assessment Board shall consider each student in turn and make decisions about progression and recommendations for awards. The Assessment Board will quality check student assessment evidence (physical or digital) against grade transcripts and internal verification records, to ensure that student's work is an accurate reflection of the recommended award.
- 4.5** The Assessment Board will determine requirements for retrieval of failure, confirm details of deferred assessment and the decisions possible following completion of that deferred assessment, or it will withdraw students from a programme of study. Details of these decisions are in section 4 below.

In exercising its powers to determine progression and recommend awards, the Assessment Board must refer to the following information:

- a. The student's coursework and front sheets
  - b. Student records in terms of units passed
  - c. The grade in each of these units, together with units the student was registered on for the current academic year, but which have not yet been achieved
  - d. A record of the decision of the Extenuating Circumstances Panel Student attendance record
  - e. Confirmation that Internal Verification has been completed
  - f. Confirmation that Pearson External Examiner sampling requirements have been met
  - g. Declaration of any conflicts of interest by Board members
  - h. Confirmation that assessment integrity concerns (including AI use) have been addressed
- 4.6** Additionally, the members of the Assessment Board, when meeting to determine progression and recommend awards, must receive the following information:
    - a. The minutes of its previous meeting held to determine progression and recommend awards, including sub-boards and special meetings that took place

- within the period since that meeting.
- b. Notification of any actions taken under delegated authority since the last meeting held to determine progression and recommend awards.
- c. The names of all students who have identified themselves to the college as having disabilities in accordance with the approved procedures, together with confirmation that it has made any allowances due to the student in recognition of these disabilities.
- d. The name of any student(s) alleged to have been guilty of an assessment offence in relation to assessment(s) and details of any action taken in relation to the alleged offence(s).
- e. The name of any student in breach of college regulations whose result the Assessment Board is required to withhold.

**4.7** This policy is reviewed annually to ensure continued alignment with Pearson, OfS and QAA expectations for higher education assessment governance.

## **5. Frequency of Meetings**

**5.1** The Assessment Board will meet as follows:

- a. at the end of the academic year, to consider the performance of all students registered on the award(s) for which the Assessment Board is responsible
- b. following the referral period, to consider issues of progression and awards after the results for referral have been agreed
- c. to reconsider the case of a student who has made a successful appeal following the procedures as specified under Section II of this document.

**5.2** Only a properly constituted Assessment Board has the authority to alter the decisions of a previous Assessment Board. Assessment Board decisions constitute final academic judgement, subject only to the formal academic appeals process, in line with Office for Students (OfS) expectations for academic governance.

**5.3** The Chair is responsible for ensuring the Assessment Board follows the regulations of the college and Assessment Board terms of reference.

## **6. Academic Misconduct (including plagiarism and use of Artificial Intelligence)**

**6.1** The Assessment Board may not apply assessment penalties in cases of academic misconduct, including cheating, plagiarism and the inappropriate use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Artificial Intelligence-assisted malpractice is treated in the same way as other forms of academic misconduct, in line with Pearson requirements. A separate Plagiarism (Academic Misconduct) Panel is convened to consider such cases and to determine outcomes. Where allegations or suggestions of academic misconduct are raised at an Assessment Board, these must not be considered as part of academic decision-making.

**6.2** Where a case has been highlighted, or it is determined that an academic misconduct investigation will be initiated, the Assessment Board shall make a decision on the student's progression or recommendation for an award as if the case were not known. That decision must then be formally withheld pending the outcome of the disciplinary process. The Assessment Board must confirm whether any progression or award decision is being withheld as a result of an unresolved

academic misconduct investigation.

## **7. Extenuating Circumstances**

- 7.1** The Extenuating Circumstances Panel will inform the Assessment Board of cases of extenuating circumstances and decisions, prior to the Assessment Board date.
- 7.2** The Assessment Board normally will simply acknowledge the Extenuating Circumstances Panel's decision.
- 7.3** Final academic judgement rests with the Assessment Board, informed by Quality Nominee advice where required. No assessment may be changed unless it is submitted for Internal Verification.
- 7.4** The Assessment Board must confirm that approved adjustments have been applied equitably and recorded accurately, and that no student receives unfair advantage.

## **8. Decisions of the Assessment Board**

- 8.1** Assessment Board decisions represent formal academic judgement and must be evidence based, auditable, and defensible under Pearson and OfS scrutiny. In respect of each individual student considered, the Assessment Board must make one or an appropriate combination of the following decisions:
  - a. The grades achieved by students on the individual modules or units
  - b. Extenuating circumstances
  - c. Cases of cheating and plagiarism
  - d. Resubmission & Repeat Units
  - e. Progression of students on to the next stage of the programme
  - f. The awards to be made to students
  - g. Referrals and deferrals
  - h. Withdrawals
  - i. Compensation
  - j. Confirmation of External Examiner engagement
  - k. Confirmation of academic integrity clearance
  - l. When and how the results will be provided to students and staff
  - m. Whom the students can contact should they require clarification or advice
  - n. Timescale for students to lodge an academic appeal of complaint following the release of final results
- 8.2** All decisions on resubmission, repeat units, compensation, progression and withdrawal must be consistent with Pearson regulations and applied uniformly across all students. Patterns of repeated resubmissions, compensation or withdrawal must be reviewed as part of ongoing quality assurance processes.
- 8.3** If a Pearson External Examiner (EE) attends an Assessment Board, it is in the capacity of an adviser; they have no power of veto at the Board. If an EE feels that a wrong decision is being made, they can only register disagreement with the decision in their report.

## 9. Conditions for the Awards

The Pearson BTEC Higher National Certificate (HNC) is a Level 4 qualification made up of 120 credits. This is made up of eight units, each with a value of 15 credits.

To achieve a Pearson BTEC Higher National Certificate (HNC) qualification a student must have:

- Completed units equivalent to 120 credits at Level 4
- Achieved at least a pass in 105 credits at Level 4

The Pearson BTEC Higher National Diploma (HND) is a Level 4 and Level 5 qualification made up of 240 credits of which 120 credits are at Level 5, and 120 credits are at Level 4 and usually attained via the HNC.

To achieve a Pearson BTEC Higher National Diploma (HND) 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

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 the award and the compensation provisions will apply as outlined above. 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, which is issued with the student certificate.

### 9.1 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.

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

#### 9.1.1 Procedure for resubmissions

If the programme leader or Assessment Board does authorise a resubmission, the following conditions apply:

- a. The resubmission must be recorded in the relevant assessment documentation
- b. The student must be given a clear and realistic deadline for resubmission that is consistent across all students granted a resubmission. It is recommended that students be required to resubmit work within 15 working days of the student being notified that a resubmission has been authorised.
- c. The resubmission must be undertaken by the student with no further guidance
- d. The original evidence submitted for the assessment can remain valid and be extended, or may need to be replaced partially or in full
- e. Arrangements should be made for resubmitting the assessment in such a way that does not adversely affect other assessments and does not give the student an unfair advantage over others.

The programme leader may opt to conduct a resubmission of the assignment under supervised conditions, even if this was not necessary for the original assessment. For example, this may be necessary to ensure that plagiarism cannot take place.

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

## **9.2 Repeat Units**

**9.2.1** 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:

- a. A unit can be repeated if the Assessment Board decides it is an appropriate course of action.
- b. The student is required to retake the unit with full attendance and, if necessary, pay the applicable unit fee
- c. The overall unit grade for a successfully completed repeat unit is capped at a Pass for that unit
- d. Units can only be repeated once

**9.2.2** When a student repeats a unit, they will not be treated any differently to those students completing the unit for the first time, in terms of the deadlines given and the assessments provided.

**9.2.3** If a student repeats a unit and still does not achieve a Pass in either their first submission or resubmission, they will be required to either complete a different unit in full or take the unit as compensation. In either instance, the Assessment Board must make sure that the relevant rules of combination and requirements have been met.

**9.2.4** The External Examiner is likely to want to include assessments that have been resubmitted as part of the sample they will review.

## **9.3 Progression**

- 9.3.1** Students that have passed all or enough units may progress onto the next stage/year of the course.
- 9.3.2** Students who fail more than two units in an academic year are typically not allowed to progress to the next level (e.g. from Level 4 to Level 5) until they have passed those units. Students are usually allowed one resubmission per unit (at the assessor's discretion and based on valid attempts). If, after resubmissions, they still have more than two failed units, progression is normally halted.
- 9.3.3** In such cases, students may be required to retake the failed units (with attendance and payment if applicable) or repeat the year entirely. Repeating the year is subject to the decision of the Assessment Board, which may consider extenuating circumstances or other relevant evidence.

#### **9.4 Withdrawal**

The Assessment Board may make this decision where a student has not passed enough units for progression or the recommendation of the final award and the student, in the academic judgement of the Assessment Board, is not making satisfactory academic progress. The decision to withdraw means withdrawal from the programme. Students have no automatic right to transfer courses or reapply for another course at the college.

#### **9.5 Compensation Provisions**

- 9.5.1** HNC Students can still be awarded an HNC if they have completed but have not achieved a Pass in one of the 15 credit units (including core units) but have completed and passed the remaining units.
- 9.5.2** HND Students can still be awarded an HND if they have completed but not achieved a Pass in one of the 15 credit units (including core units) at Level 4 and similarly if they have attempted but not achieved one of the 15 credit units at Level 5 (including core units). 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.
- 9.5.3** 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, which is issued with the student certificate.

#### **9.6 Retake Year**

The Assessment Board may allow a student to retake a year on one occasion only. This would be discussed during the Assessment Board and is subject to other external factors.

### **10. Departure from the College's Regulations**

- 10.1** If the Assessment Board departs from the college's regulations it must follow the correct procedure. The justification from the Assessment Board must find that the strict application of the regulations would be unjust to a student(s).
- 10.2** Detailed, audit ready minutes of the Assessment Board must record:

- a. The name of the student
- b. The regulation from which the Assessment Board wishes to depart
- c. The full circumstances in which the Assessment Board considered it necessary to depart from this regulation
- d. The reason why the Assessment Board considered it necessary to exercise this discretionary power includes the consequences to the student of exercising discretion and not exercising discretion.
- e. The reason why this discretionary power should not be exercised for the other students is under consideration by the Assessment Board.
- f. This regulation is for use in exceptional and unanticipated cases. The Chair should not permit its application as a means of bypassing regulations with which members do not agree, or which they find irksome.

**10.3** Any departure from regulations must be demonstrably exceptional and capable of external scrutiny by Pearson or the OfS.

## **11. Recording of Results**

**11.1** The Academic Board is responsible for ensuring that robust and reliable college systems are in place for the computation, checking and recording of assessment decisions, and for providing relevant information in time to the Examination Office for the Final Meeting of the Assessment Board.

Results are recorded using the following conventions:

- a Pass is recorded as "P"
- a Merit is recorded as "M"
- a Distinction is recorded as "D"
- a Referral is recorded as "R"
- any plagiarised work is also recorded as referral
- a non-submission is recorded as "NS"

**11.2** Assessment Board minutes must evidence decision-making processes, not solely outcomes.

**11.3** Records must be retained in line with OfS requirements for retention of assessed work and decision-making evidence.

## **12. Data Protection**

**12.1** All assessment results are covered by the Data Protection Act. No grades, modules or unit results should be divulged to candidates until after the Assessment Board has verified the results.

**12.2** Access to Assessment Board papers is restricted to authorised members only, and records must be stored securely to support potential external audit. 11.3.3 Where colleges wish to publish results/grades, they should be displayed using ID numbers without names.

**12.3** Results should only be given to students either in person or by telephone if steps have been taken to confirm the student's identity: they should NOT be disclosed to third parties (including parents) without a student's explicit consent. It is recommended that the college does not release any grade or results to candidates but instead refers students to the Student Portal.

- 12.4** If a grade is amended after it has been submitted for reasons other than an appeal, it is the responsibility of the Assessment Officer to update and inform the student of the changes and to email/write to the student concerned giving the revised grades.
- 12.5** Where the Assessment Board, including all the member(s), agree that a candidate's grades for a module or unit result should be amended as a consequence of an academic appeal being upheld, the Exams Office will update the changes and inform the student of the decision in email/ writing on receipt of confirmation of the amended grade or result from the Assessment Board.

### Appendix 1 - USP College BTEC HNC/D Assessment Board Agenda

<b>Course:</b>		
<b>Time/date/location:</b>		
<b>Chair:</b>		
<b>Clerk:</b>		
<b>Attendees:</b>		
1	Introduction to the meeting, including explanation of the Assessment Board process	Chair (5 mins)
2	Declarations of interest and conflicts of interest	All (5 mins)
3	Academic integrity declaration, including confirmation that there are no unresolved cases of academic misconduct (including cheating, plagiarism or inappropriate use of Artificial Intelligence) affecting assessment outcomes	Programme lead (5 mins)
4	External Examiner report, including confirmation that required sampling has taken place and that any conditions or actions have been resolved	Chair/programme lead (10 mins)
5	Confirmation of completion of Internal Verification	Programme lead (5 mins)
6	Outline of the programme as a whole in [20??-??], including any special features	Programme lead (10 mins)

7	Quality check of student assessment evidence, cross-referenced to student transcripts	Chair (25 mins )
8	Extenuating Circumstances	Programme lead (as req'd) (10 mins)
9	Referrals and Deferrals	Programme leadr (as req'd) (10 mins)
10	Cases of Academic Misconduct (Note: outcomes determined separately through the Academic Misconduct/Plagiarism Panel; the Assessment Board to confirm whether any progression or award decisions are being withheld)	Programme lead (as req'd) (10 mins)
11	Grades achieved by students on individual modules/units (programme leader to present the list of student achievements)	Programme lead (20 mins)
<del>12</del>	Progression of students <del>on</del> to the next stage of the programme	Chair (10 mins)
13	Awards to be made to students (programme leader to present the list of student achievements)	Programme lead (15 mins)
14	AOB	All (5 mins)
15	Conclusion and any recommendations	Chair (5 mins)


14	AOB	
15	Conclusion and any recommendations	Chair

## Equality and Diversity Statement & Impact Assessment

USP College is committed to equality of opportunity. The aim is to create an environment in which people treat each other with mutual respect, regardless of: age, disability, family responsibility, marital status, race, colour, ethnicity, nationality, religion or belief, gender, gender identity, transgender, sexual orientation, trade union activity or unrelated criminal convictions.

This form should be used by managers and policy owners within their area of responsibility to carry out Equality and Diversity Impact Assessments (EDIAs) in relation to protected characteristics including, but not limited to: Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Marriage and civil partnership, Pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion and belief, Sex, Sexual orientation. The word 'policy' is taken to include strategies, policies, procedures and guidance notes; both formal and informal, internal and external.

### 1. Name of Policy

USP College Higher Nationals Assessment Board Terms of Reference Policy (for Pearson HND courses)

### 2. Which of the following groups could be affected by this policy?

*(Tick all that apply)*

<b>Students</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Staff</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Wider Community</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 3. Complaints

Have complaints been received from anyone with one or more protected characteristic about the service provided? If yes, then please give details.

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### 4. The Impact

Four possible impacts should be considered as part of the assessment:

- a. **Positive Impact** - Where the policy might have a positive impact on a particular protected characteristic.
- b. **None or Little Impact** – Where you think a policy does not disadvantage any of the protected characteristics.
- c. **Some Impact** – Where a policy might disadvantage any of the protected characteristics groups to some extent. This disadvantage may be also differential in the sense that where the negative impact on one particular group of individuals with protected characteristics is likely to be greater than on another.
- d. **Substantial Impact** – Where you think that the policy could have a negative impact on any or all of the protected characteristics. This disadvantage may be also differential in the sense that the negative impact on one particular protected characteristic is likely to be greater than on another.

Thought-provoking questions, which might help come to a decision about the impact of a policy on individuals with protected characteristics:

- e. Does policy outcomes and service take up differ between people with different protected characteristics?
- f. What key information do we have? Does data or engagement with people with protected characteristics give insights into areas of disadvantage which relate to the policy area?
- g. If the policy is likely to have a negative impact on individuals, sharing particular characteristics what steps can be taken to mitigate these effects?

- h. Will the policy deliver practical benefits for certain groups?
- i. Does the policy miss opportunities to advance equality of opportunity and foster good understanding/relationships between groups?
- j. Do other policies need to change to make this policy more effective?
- k. Are there any elements of the policy that could be unlawful under the Equality Act 2010?

Use the guidance provided above and complete the following table: **(Please Tick ✓)**

<b>Gender/Age</b>	Positive Impact	No or Little Impact	Some Adverse Impact	Substantial Adverse Impact
Gender		✓		
Age		✓		
<b>Disability</b>	Positive Impact	No or Little Impact	Some Adverse Impact	Substantial Adverse Impact
Visually Impaired		✓		
Hearing impaired		✓		
Physical Disability		✓		
Specific Learning Difficulties		✓		
Global Learning Difficulties		✓		
Autistic Spectrum Disorder		✓		
Any other disability – Various		✓		
<b>Other Factors</b>	Positive Impact	No or Little Impact	Some Adverse Impact	Substantial Adverse Impact
Race		✓		
Culture		✓		
Religious Belief		✓		
Sexual Orientation		✓		
Gender Reassignment		✓		
Marriage/Civil Partnership		✓		
Pregnancy /Maternity /Paternity		✓		

Please comment on any areas where some or substantial impact is indicated. Any resulting actions must be added to the action plan below.

**5. Is there anything that cannot be changed?**

What cannot be changed?	Can this be justified?	If so, how?
Not applicable		
E.g., Disabled people can be treated more favorably under the Disability Discrimination Act 2005. If a policy appears to treat disabled people more favorably than other equality groups, the disadvantage may be justifiable		

Please list the main actions that you plan to take as a result of this assessment in your area of responsibility. (Continue on separate sheets as necessary)

**Action Plan:**