



Royal College of Art

Assessment and Feedback Policy

1. Purpose

Assessment and feedback are used to determine whether students have met learning outcomes and academic standards, while also supporting their learning, progression, and engagement. This policy sets out the principles and procedures that govern assessment and feedback at the Royal College of Art (RCA). It ensures that assessment is fair, transparent, and supports learning, while maintaining academic standards and integrity.

This policy provides a framework for assessment and feedback across all postgraduate taught and Graduate Diploma programmes at RCA. It is intended to:

- Ensure that assessment is designed, delivered, and reviewed in a way that is academically rigorous, fair, inclusive, and supportive of student learning;
- Promote consistency and transparency in assessment practices across the College;
- Establish clear expectations for staff and students, supporting a shared understanding of responsibilities and standards;
- Align with quality assurance frameworks for academic quality and integrity;
- Encourage innovative and reflective practices in assessment design that are responsive to disciplinary needs and evolving pedagogies;
- Contribute to the College's commitment to equity, student success, and continuous enhancement of the academic experience.

This policy supports a culture in which assessment is not experienced as a burden or barrier, but as a coherent and purposeful element of the educational journey.

2. Scope and Definitions

This policy applies to all postgraduate taught and Graduate Diploma programmes delivered by RCA, including those delivered in collaboration with partner institutions.

The College/RCA: Refers to the Royal College of Art.

Assessment: The process used to evaluate a student's performance in relation to the intended learning outcomes of a unit.

Learning Outcomes: Defined statements, published in the programme specifications and unit descriptors, that describe what a student is expected to know, understand, and be able to do upon successful completion of a learning experience.

Unit: The smallest credit-bearing component of a programme, comprising teaching, learning, and assessment activities.

Programme: A structured course of study consisting of multiple units that collectively lead to an academic award.

Further assessment and feedback definitions are supplied in the [Assessment Typology](#).

3. Principles of Assessment

Assessment at RCA is governed by the following principles:

3.1. Validity

Assessment methods must objectively measure achievement against the unit learning outcomes they are intended to assess.

3.2. Reliability, Consistency and Parity

Assessment processes must ensure parity across different assessors, contexts, and timeframes. A transparent process for marking, moderation and quality assurance (such as external examiners) will support this.

3.3. Inclusivity and Accessibility

Assessment tasks will be designed to provide all students with an equitable opportunity to demonstrate their learning, accommodating a diverse range of learners.

3.4. Transparency

Learning Outcomes, deliverables and deadlines must be clearly communicated to students at the start of each unit.

3.5. Academic Integrity

All assessments must adhere to principles of academic honesty. Plagiarism, collusion, and other forms of misconduct are subject to disciplinary procedures.

3.6. Timeliness and Constructive Feedback

Students will receive timely, constructive feedback that supports learning, highlights strengths, and identifies areas for improvement.

3.7. Assessment Landscape

Programme assessment landscapes should be designed to balance workload across the academic year, with bunching of assessment deadlines minimised. The annual schedule of assessment will be carefully planned at the beginning of each academic cycle to identify key dates, including submission dates, marking and moderation periods as well as dates of awarding board.

3.8. Developmental

Assessment will be used not only to evaluate learning but also to support students' academic and personal development.

4. Summative Assessment Design

- 4.1.** Assessments will be designed to assess achievement against the Learning Outcomes as listed in the unit specifications. All unit Learning Outcomes must be summatively assessed at least once within the unit.
- 4.2.** Programme teams must ensure a balanced and coherent assessment load across units and levels, that reflects the unit credit value and achievable within the associated learning hours.
- 4.3.** Assessment types must be appropriate to the discipline and Learning Outcomes (please see [Assessment Typology](#) for varieties and definitions of assessment types).
- 4.4.** Assessment methods should be inclusive, promote deep learning and avoid excessive reliance on a single form of assessment across the programme.
- 4.5.** Dialogic assessment (please see [Assessment Typology](#)) should be embedded to promote student engagement, reflection, and shared understanding of expectations.
- 4.6.** Assessment landscapes must take account of workload implications for students and staff. Where there are units running concurrently, assessment clashes should be avoided.
- 4.7.** Reasonable adjustments to an assessment must be made for individual students where there is an Inclusion Plan in place.

- 4.8.** Assessment must take place within the term for which the unit has been validated, except where the student has an extension, extenuating circumstance, PStCs or a Referral.

5. Assessment Submission and Extensions

- 5.1.** Clear submission requirements, procedures and deadlines will be communicated in writing, on Moodle. These should be published on the Assessment section of the unit Moodle page within 1 week of the start of the unit.
- 5.2.** Students' digital submissions should be received via student upload to the Moodle Assignment page. Students should be required to upload to Moodle a [submission checklist](#) that lists all items that have been submitted, including where any or all items are submitted in-person.
- 5.3.** A maximum extension of 2 working days can be granted at the discretion of Heads of Programme, Academic Leads, or Unit Leads, for unavoidable circumstances (such as unexpected technical/digital difficulties) that prevent the student from completing their assessment before the published deadline.
- 5.4.** Longer extensions may only be granted where they are advised in a student's Inclusion Plan. Where students have in place an Inclusion Plan that states they may be permitted additional time to complete assessment, it is the responsibility of the student to request this additional time at least 2 working days before the deadline, in writing to the Head of Programme or Academic Lead, or Unit Lead for elective or shared units, CCing the programme administrator.
- 5.5.** Requests for extensions should be made in writing to the Head of Programme or Academic Lead, or for elective or shared unit, the Unit Leader, CCing the programme administrator, at least 2 working days in advance of the deadline where possible, to ensure that there is sufficient time to review the request before the deadline. The request should outline the reasons that the student is unable to submit by the deadline; should provide any available evidence of the circumstances described in the request; and should clearly identify which unit assessment the request relates to. Any extension requests submitted less than 2 working days

before the deadline cannot be guaranteed to be responded to before the deadline.

- 5.6. Where students require longer than 2 additional working days to complete their assignment, they may apply for longer extensions or deferrals due to extenuating circumstances, in line with the College's Extenuating Circumstances Policy.

6. Marking

- 6.1. All summative assessments will be explicitly marked according to achievement against the unit Learning Outcomes, as evidenced in the work submitted or presented for assessment.
- 6.2. The academic regulations identify the minimum number of assessors that must be involved in assessment. These vary for different kinds of units.
- 6.3. Marking by more than one assessor and/or an assessor plus an internal moderator from within the programme team, as described in the assessment regulations, will be used to ensure fairness and consistency.
- 6.4. Assessors should be made aware, by the programme administrator, of any individual students' Inclusion Plans that may require adjustments to their approach to assessment.
- 6.5. Referrals will be marked against the Learning Outcomes that a student did not achieve on their first attempt. The referral assessor should refer to the feedback submitted in response to the student's first attempt to ensure that feedback is consistent with advice given previously.
- 6.6. Parity meetings should take place prior to Non Awarding Boards in order to ensure parity across all assessment activities on a unit. These meetings may be used as an opportunity to discuss and agree any results where the first and second assessor, or assessor and moderator, have not been able to agree on a grade, and to confirm that a consistent approach to assessment and feedback has been taken across all assessment teams within the unit.
- 6.7. External examiners will verify the appropriateness of assessment design and the consistency of marking, by reviewing a sample of work and feedback, as described in the [External Examiner's handbook](#).

7. Feedback

- 7.1. One nominated assessor for each assessed student will be responsible for writing and uploading student feedback to Moodle for all of the students that they are directly assessing, and making any amendments that arise as a result of parity meetings.
- 7.2. Written or recorded feedback will be provided on Moodle within 20 working days of the submission deadline unless otherwise agreed.
- 7.3. Feedback should explicitly state whether the student has passed the assessment.
- 7.4. Feedback should be specific, actionable, and explicitly linked to the Learning Outcomes.
- 7.5. Approaches to writing feedback should be consistent across the assessment team.
- 7.6. Where the student has not passed, feedback should explicitly indicate which Learning Outcome(s) has/have not been achieved.
- 7.7. Where a student is referred, the feedback must supply an itemized list of actions to be undertaken to address the shortcomings in their submission, aligned to the Learning Outcomes that they have not yet achieved.
- 7.8. Referred students should be given an opportunity for a referral tutorial, which should take place during term time.

8. Moderation

- 8.1. Where an assessment requires an internal moderator, as determined by the academic regulations, a moderator should be appointed with subject expertise, normally from within the programme team. A member of staff cannot act as both assessor and moderator for the same assessment.
- 8.2. The moderator will review a sample of at least 10% including all PSTCs, referrals and fails, including the student work and assessor feedback, to ensure that the work has been assessed fairly and appropriately.
- 8.3. Where there are multiple assessors, the moderation sample should include samples from every assessor, and the moderator should ensure that there is consistency of approach to grading and feedback across the assessors.
- 8.4. The internal moderator should be The outcome of moderation must be one of the following:
 - 8.4.1. Marks and feedback are approved

- 8.4.2. Marks are approved but changes to feedback are advised for one or more assessor
 - 8.4.3. The minimum pass standards are found to be too generous and need to be revised downwards for one or more assessor
 - 8.4.4. The minimum pass standards are found to be too harsh and need to be revised upwards for one or more assessor
 - 8.4.5. There is discrepancy between markers in marks or feedback, and the marks or feedback for that marker only need to be revised up or down, or feedback revised.
- 8.5.** Where there is disagreement between the assessor and moderator that cannot be resolved, they may seek a third opinion from an additional moderator, normally a Head of Programme, Academic Lead or Associate Dean.

9. Cross-college Peer Review (formerly known as Internal Moderation)

- 9.1.** A Cross-college Peer Reviewer is appointed by the Senate on the recommendation of the Academic Standards Committee. The Cross-college Reviewer must be a member of the academic staff of a School other than that within which the programme is located, and must be contracted to the College for a minimum of 15 days per year. Cross-college Reviewer must not have taught on the programme of study for which they are appointed as Cross-college Reviewer.
- 9.2.** The Cross-college Reviewer is not required to make a judgement on the quality of the students' work. Rather, they ensure that there are appropriate mechanisms in place for the objective and impartial assessment of students' work and to ensure comparability of examination practices between programmes within the College. Cross-college Reviewers will be required to observe a sample of assessments. The sample size is usually 10% of summative assessments on each unit (or work from 10 students - whichever is greater). Where there has been internal moderation within the programme, this is normally the same sample.
- 9.3.** Cross-college Reviewers are required to submit a report to the Quality and Enhancement team, commenting on:
- 9.3.1. whether the assessment process was fair, consistent and appropriate;

9.3.2. whether the assessment criteria were applied as described in the Programme Handbook;

9.3.3. examples of good practice.

9.4. Staff may not normally act as a Cross-college Reviewer on more than one programme in any one year - this is to enable a broad spread of staff to gain experience in the role.

10. Formative feedback

10.1. Opportunities for formative feedback should be built into each unit to support student progression.

10.2. Formative feedback may be verbal or written, or recorded by some other means.

10.3. Formative assessment does not always require the submission of documents. It may take place in-person during normal teaching sessions, such as crits.

10.4. Formative feedback may include tutor and/or peer assessment.

11. Academic Misconduct

11.1. The College is committed to upholding academic integrity.

11.2. Alleged cases of plagiarism, collusion, impersonation, or cheating will be investigated under the [Academic Misconduct Policy](#).

12. Appeals and Complaints

12.1. Students have the right to appeal assessment decisions and submit complaints in line with the College's [Academic Appeals and Student Complaints Policies](#).

13. Monitoring and Review

13.1. Assessment practices will be reviewed through continuous programme monitoring and Periodic Review processes.

13.2. Student feedback and performance data will inform continuous improvement of assessment strategies.

14. Further guidance and support

For further details on the assessment and feedback process, please refer to the [Assessment and Feedback Guide](#).