

Assessment Policy

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This policy outlines the principles and processes for the design and delivery of assessment, to ensure an approach across the courses within Francis James' degree programmes that is valid, reliable and fair to learners.

It also sets out the guidelines for learners that underpin assessment processes.

1. Principles of Assessment

Assessment is an important part of each course design process to ensure learning experiences are effective and sector-recognised standards are maintained.

Francis James will ensure that:

- Course assessments are informed by a planned and integrated approach to programme design to enable academic progression.
- Assessments align clearly with course learning outcomes, and are informed by sector-recognised standards, to ensure clarity and credibility.
- Programme design includes opportunities for formative assessment as well as end of course summative assessment.
- Assessments are checked for validity and are verified to confirm academic standards and fairness.
- Learners' assessments are marked using only the published assessment and grading criteria.
- Processes for marking enable impartial, valid and dependable decision-making.
- The potential for academic misconduct (for example plagiarism, unauthorised collaboration or use of unauthorised materials) by learners is minimised as far as possible.
- Accurate and detailed records of assessment decisions are kept, to support learners and to inform a robust and rigorous moderation and external examining procedure.
- The Academic Appeals Policy is explained and accessible to learners.
- Good assessment practice is shared between learners and staff.
- Feedback on assessment is reviewed regularly and remedial action taken promptly when required.

2. Types of Assessment

Assessment is used to evaluate progress, knowledge, skills and ability, and enables learners to demonstrate that they can meet the learning outcomes of their programme of study.

Summative assessment is used to review the extent of a learner's success in achieving the intended learning outcomes of a course. Summative assessment criteria are developed to reflect the learning outcomes and assessments submitted by learners are reviewed and marked, with the marks awarded reflecting how well the criteria are met. Marks awarded in summative assessment typically count towards the progression and programme classifications (see the Awarding: Awards and Classifications Thresholds Policy).

Formative assessment can also be used in Francis James' programmes. This is assessment that has a developmental purpose. It is designed to help learners to learn more effectively by providing feedback on performance and progress, identifying areas for improvement. It also helps learners understand the standards they need to meet to be successful. Formative assessment does not count towards any marks awarded.

2.1 Summative assessment methods

A range of assessment methods are used by Francis James.

- **Comprehensive report** - a structured document created in response to a particular task or wider assignment brief. Contains between 2,500 and 4,000 words reflecting research, analysis and evaluation on the given task. Can include aspects including literature reviews, case studies, conclusions and recommendations.
- **Group report** - a structured document prepared by a number of learners together, with research, analysis and drafting shared between the group members.
- **Presentation** - a prepared talk (usually accompanied by slides or other visual tools) delivered to tutors and peers, sharing findings, demonstrating knowledge and explaining research undertaken to reach particular conclusions. Usually combined with post-presentation questions from tutors and/or peers, in order to demonstrate the knowledge that underpins what has been presented.
- **Group presentation** - a talk prepared by a number of learners together, with research, drafting and presenting work shared between the group members.
- **Portfolio** - evidence of related activities that have usually been completed separately to build up a picture of a learners' knowledge and ability across the course content. Can include worksheets, short essays, reflective logs and presentations.
- **Learning journal/log** - reflective output based on workplace practice or personal experience
- **Interview** - a discussion about a learner's work, with questions used to enable the learner to demonstrate the knowledge they have gained through their study. Often used effectively alongside written reports as a check for authenticity of work.

2.2 Group-based assessment

Where learners work in groups to create assessments jointly, assessment briefs should reflect the combined efforts that are required, this may include increasing word counts, and/or range of tasks. Learners should take responsibility within their groups for allocating and agreeing work - this is not the role of the tutor.

Peer assessment may also be incorporated into assessment; this is where fellow learners provide appraisal of another learner's work and their performance while working as part of a group. This will be moderated by staff to ensure fairness.

Where there is group-based assessment, learners must be reassured that so long as they operate within the guidelines of the assignment brief, their output cannot be deemed as collusion and at risk of being academic misconduct. However, learners must contribute to the group work and cannot assume they can take credit for all of the work of the group if they have not participated.

The assignment brief must set out expected outputs of the group and outline procedures for learners to follow if any difficulties arise within the group and if there are any personal extenuating circumstances to be managed. As with individual assignments, the brief must clearly align to the intended learning outcomes, and a clear assessment scheme must be provided that enables learners to understand how marks will be allocated. Learners should also understand the consequences of non-participation in group-based assessment. Those who contribute to the group work should not be penalised because of non-participation by others; equally, those who do not contribute, should not expect to be assessed in line with those who do contribute.

3. Feedback Norms

Feedback on assessed work can take many forms. It can range from informal feedback, such as a discussion of a draft for an assessed activity, through to formal written comments on a template grading sheet.

It is important for learners to have the opportunity to receive and reflect on feedback. Tutors and programme support officers will provide learners with feedback and with opportunities to follow this up if the learner requires this.

3.1 Principles for feedback

- a. Feedback from Francis James will be focused and clear, related to assessment criteria and correspond to grades awarded. In order to support learner understanding, assessment criteria will be set out alongside assessments when they are issued.
- b. Learners will have the opportunity to review drafts of assessments ahead of submission with their tutors. This will give an indication of performance, but should not be seen as a guarantee of any particular outcome.
- c. Francis James aims to provide indicative marks and feedback within 30 days of an assessment deadline. Learners will access these through the virtual learning environment, Moodle. Marks remain indicative until they have been reviewed at an internal Assessment and Exam Board. They then remain as provisional marks until ratified at a RAUL external Exam Board.
- d. Learners are able to have follow up discussions once they have received feedback. Any follow up discussion is not an opportunity for the learner to challenge a tutor's opinion, or the grade awarded, but to better understand the comments they have received.

4. Assessment Submission Guidelines

4.1 Deadlines (late submissions)

All assessments are given a deadline, which is the date and time by which a learner must submit their work.

Unexcused late submission of an assessment will be penalised. A late submission will still be marked if submitted within 7 days of the deadline, but the mark it can score will be capped at 40%. Anything submitted after 7 days will not be marked, and so will score zero. For any assessment where an extension has been granted, these penalties will only apply from the extended deadline.

Penalties for late submission only apply to first attempts, not to resubmissions. Late submission of a resubmission will result in a zero mark.

4.2 Extenuating Circumstances

There may be occasions where extenuating circumstances (also called mitigating circumstances) might impact completion of assessment. Extenuating circumstances are unexpected and unpreventable events or conditions that significantly impact a learner's ability to meet assessment deadlines or perform to their usual standard.

Francis James acknowledges that learners may experience such circumstances and has in place approaches to support learners. Learners should refer to the 'Extenuating Circumstances and Reasonable Adjustments Policy'.

One response to extenuating circumstances arising is the provision of an extended deadline. Extensions are the decision of Francis James and should be applied for as soon after the circumstances arise. The duration of any extension granted will normally be no more than 14 days.

4.3 Issues with Submitting

Any learner who experiences technical difficulties submitting their work must contact their Programme Support Officer immediately in order to find a solution. Failure to follow required processes does not constitute a technical difficulty and will result in penalties for late submission if the deadline is not met.

If a learner realises they have submitted the wrong file, they must contact their Programme Support Officer immediately, and must be able to produce the correct file as soon as it is requested. If the correct file is not available immediately, penalties for late submission can be applied if this means deadlines are not met.

4.4 Formatting

Francis James requires that all assessments are produced electronically and submitted online through the Francis James Moodle site.

Learners are expected to follow the advice on formatting available in the assignment guidelines available on Moodle.

Where an assignment is submitted and is found to not be accessible - e.g. because of poor formatting or font choice, or because of issues with how the file has been saved before uploading - learners may be asked to resubmit within a short deadline. Where this is the case, the resubmitted assignment will be marked, but the mark it can score will be capped at 40%. Where issues have arisen during the upload process, Francis James will take steps to understand the issue before taking relevant action.

4.5 Word Counts

A word count is given for each assignment; this explains how many words a learner is expected to produce. Submitted work should not be more than 10% above or below the required word count.

The word count of the assignment should include everything in the main body of the text (ie, introduction, research/discussion, evaluation, conclusion, recommendations, plans, section/chapter titles). The word count does not include anything before the main body of text (eg title, contents list) or after the main body of text (eg reference list). Further advice is available in the assignment guidelines available on Moodle.

Where assignments exceed the word limit, penalties will be applied. The mark will be capped at 40% for any work that is either in excess of more than 10% of the word count or under the word count by more than 10%.

5. The Use of Artificial Intelligence

Francis James requires learners to have read their 'Guidance for Learners on the Use of Artificial Intelligence'.

While it is recognised that generative artificial intelligence (AI) has the potential to significantly assist the ways in which learners can study, access and receive education, care must be taken to use this ethically and responsibly.

Learners must not use AI to generate content for assessments submitted at the end of each course. There are ways in which AI can be used by learners to help them while they are producing work for assessments. This includes to help summarise research notes, and to aid with checking spelling, punctuation, grammar and referencing.

Learners are required to submit their assignments to AI detection software, which will provide a percentage score that represents the extent to which AI may have been used to generate the written content in the assignment. Where the score of the submitted assignment is above 20%, this will trigger a review. While it is not an automatic finding of misconduct, a process is invoked under the misconduct policy as a potential case. Francis James will review the AI report in detail, using academic judgement to decide the course of action. As part of this, learners will be spoken with so that Francis James can take account of and understand the approach they have taken and hear any mitigations. If it is agreed that AI has not been used to the extent claimed in the report, then the assignment will be sent for marking. No assignment with an AI score of above 20% will be marked before investigation. The misconduct process will end at this point.

If Francis James determines that AI has been used inappropriately to generate content, the penalty is a score of zero for the assignment, and record made of committing academic misconduct. Appropriate action will be determined by Francis James, and this may involve the completion of an alternative assignment or an additional assessment alongside the existing work submitted (for example a viva voce).

6. Plagiarism

Learners must take care to ensure their work is referenced correctly and accurately, and that they do not attempt to take others' work and ideas and claim them as their own. Francis James requires that learners use plagiarism detection software as part of the assessment submission process on Moodle.

Where the potential for plagiarism is flagged by the software, Francis James will review the assignment and the plagiarism detection report, using academic judgement to decide the course of action. As part of this, learners will be spoken with so that Francis James can take account of and understand the approach taken. If potential plagiarism is detected by the software, this does not lead automatically to a penalty. However, if Francis James subsequently determines that an assignment is purposely plagiarised, the penalty is a score of zero for the assignment. This will also be recorded as committing academic misconduct, and appropriate disciplinary action will be taken. Learners should refer to Francis James' 'Academic Misconduct Policy' for further detail.

7. Resubmissions

A learner who does not achieve a pass mark (40% or above) for their course assessment, will be given the opportunity to resubmit. Learners who have passed their assessment may not undertake a resubmission to improve their mark.

Only one opportunity for resubmission is permitted per course. Resubmission may involve reworking and improving the original task, or can require the completion of a new task. In either case, it is

important that the learner has the opportunity to be validly assessed against the same learning outcomes as the original assessment.

Resubmitted assessments can only receive a maximum mark of 40%. The only exception to this may be where a learner has approved mitigating circumstances; in these cases, this should be made clear to the learner in advance of completing the assessment.

8. Appeals

Learners who have concerns about the outcome of an assessment should, in the first instance, discuss the matter with their programme support officer.

Learners are able to formally appeal the outcome of an assessment under certain circumstances. Details and process are set out in Francis James' 'Academic Appeals Policy'.

Valid grounds for an appeal typically include:

- Procedural irregularity: A significant error or omission in the assessment or decision-making process.
- Extenuating circumstances: New or previously undisclosed circumstances that could not have been reported earlier for valid reasons.
- Evidence of bias or prejudice: Where the learner can demonstrate the academic decision was influenced by bias.

An appeal cannot be based solely on disagreement with the academic judgement of markers and examiners or the marking standards applied.

9. Academic Misconduct in Assessment

Francis James takes all incidences of alleged misconduct very seriously. Academic honesty is fundamental to the integrity of the academic community. Francis James is committed to ensuring that assessment procedures are fair for all, and will take steps to make sure they are not compromised by the actions of learners who engage in academic misconduct.

All incidences of academic misconduct are dealt with under the 'Academic Misconduct Policy'. These incidences include plagiarism and misuse of AI as set out above, and can also include, for example, cheating, fabrication of research and evidence and impersonation or misrepresentation.

Penalties for misconduct may include learners needing to take remedial training to understand what is required of them, and failure of courses.

10. Assessment marking and grading processes

All assessments are marked by independent markers, who use assessment criteria to determine individual outcomes. These criteria are shared with learners in each course assessment brief.

All assessment outcomes within a course are subject to moderation and external verification through the Assessment and Exam Board. The moderation and verification processes are in place to ensure that marking is consistent, fair and reliable both within and between cohorts of learners. Marking and moderation will typically take place within 30 days of assignment submission. After initial independent

marking, moderation will involve either sampling marked assignments, or a review of all marking. This internal moderation will be followed by a standardisation meeting with the markers to agree on marks. Standardisation meetings will also include lecturers and an internal moderator.

External verification will take place through the tri-annual Assessment and Exam Boards, where marks will be agreed. These marks will be provided to Richmond American University London (RAUL), which is the validating university for Francis James' degree programme. The Exam Board at RAUL will ratify the final outcomes decisions with regards progression on the programme and awards. This means that marks and classifications provided to learners should be considered provisional until the full awarding process has been completed at the end of each academic year.

11. Monitoring

As part of the moderation and external verification processes, Francis James will gather feedback on the performance of assessment tasks. This will include looking at grading outcomes, levels of resubmissions, and comparing between cohorts of learners. This is part of the quality assurance process that reviews assessment design to ensure learners are provided with suitable opportunities to demonstrate they are achieving the identified learning outcomes. Assessment tasks are also reviewed to ensure that they remain valid and reliable over time. Learner feedback will also be collected and taken into account in order to identify where any changes or improvements may be required.

12. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed annually by Francis James to ensure:

- Fairness and academic integrity in assessment
- Consistency with broader institutional assessment regulations

Written By	Revision Date	Revision Number	Approved By	Review Date
Karen Tucker	31/12/2024	1	 S Graham	31/12/2025
Helen Barratt	28/07/2025	2	 S Graham	28/07/2026
Helen Barratt	01/07/2026	3	Academic Quality & Standards Committee (Chair: S Graham)	01/07/2027