

Assessment practices and expectations

Responsibility for the assurance of quality of assessment procedures rests with individual institutions. The General Board, through its Education Committee, sets a framework of expectations within which institutions should reflect on their assessment procedures and, if necessary, make changes to ensure that they are fit for purpose and effectively carried out.

Key expectations

The four key expectations of the General Board are:

1. that the key criterion for using a particular form of assessment should be its effectiveness in properly assessing the intended learning outcomes of the course;
2. that assessment procedures and policies should be communicated clearly to students, their advisors, and examiners, through published marking and classing criteria for each Part of the Tripos and all taught postgraduate programmes (preferably on a website with open access);
3. that forms of assessment and the procedures for implementing them should be subject to regular review, and any changes to exam arrangements must be approved through the correct channels (EQPO (Education Quality & Policy Office), ASEC (Academic Standards and Enhancement Committee)) in good time.
4. that forms of assessment, either in form or in practice, should not treat any candidate less fairly than another on the grounds of sex (including gender reassignment), marital or parental status, race, ethnic or national origin, age, colour, disability, sexual orientation, or religion.

In determining assessment practices, institutions (or Boards of Examiners) should consider **learning outcomes**; the **form of assessment**; and the available **resources**.

Examiners should also ensure that:

- particular care is taken to ensure that **common and consistent standards are applied** across all elements of the examination to ensure that standards are set and maintained at an appropriate level and that the learning outcomes are carefully considered;
 - **principles, procedures, and processes** of assessment are explicit, valid, and reliable;
 - there are **robust mechanisms** for marking, moderating marks, and classing;
 - assessment is conducted with rigour and fairness and with due regard for security.
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Processes and practices

Various processes and practices may be adopted to promote **comparability** between markers and/or between candidates; not all of them are appropriate for all forms of assessment and the impact of any one method will depend in part on the number of candidates being assessed. The **first three practices** in the list given below are considered by the General Board to be the most important and effective methods for ensuring comparability of treatment:

1. Issuing detailed, unambiguous, and widely circulated **qualitative criteria or marking standards** to examiners and assessors as a benchmark against which to mark work.

2. **Double marking** is the most common method of ensuring robustness of assessment. Where the number of candidates is large, this will require significant resources and the marking of a sample number of candidates may be as productive. Examiners and assessors must have clear guidelines over what further action is necessary if **marking discrepancies** arise. Please note there is the expectation that external examiners are not to be used to settle disputes. Any discrepancies in marks must be resolved (either between the first and second markers, in extreme cases, appointment of a third who must not be the external examiner) prior to receipt for moderation by the external examiner.
3. **Model (or outline) answers** are likely to be more appropriate for questions requiring the precise recall of factual knowledge, the solution of set problems and examples, or essays where a particular focus is expected. The provision of such a defined marking scheme may allow for a more objective analysis of answers.
4. A variety of **grading schemes** may be adopted, ranging from 5-point to percentage-point scales. Care should be taken to adopt a marking scheme which adequately assesses performance while allowing for appropriate discrimination between candidates.
5. **Opportunities for examiners and assessors to meet** during the marking process for discussion and comparison of assessment. There are also statistical methods to review marking patterns of individual examiners and assessors; any such review should be presented to the examiners as part of the final classing meeting.
6. **Oral assessment** of candidates (either the cohort or a sample) can help to confirm assessments made by individual examiners.
7. **Anonymous marking** is still widely regarded as best practice. However, in exceptional circumstances and where the Degree Committee is satisfied that no alternative arrangements are possible, a supervisor may act as one of the markers of their supervisee's dissertation (or research project).

Further information

- [Guidelines on marking standards and classing conventions](#)
- [Advance HE: Transforming Assessment](#)
- [QAA \(Quality Assurance Agency\) Quality Code, Guidance and Practice: Assessment](#)
- Faculties and Departments can also consult with the [Cambridge Centre for Teaching and Learning](#) for further guidance and advice.

Frameworks for Assessment

The current annual iterations of the [Framework for Assessment](#) will be replaced by the Chapter III Assessment Format Ordinance on 1 October 2025.