

Marks and Standards Policy

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1 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to define a fair and consistent marks and standards policy for the assessment of learners in the Institute of Art, Design & Technology, IADT.

This document is required under section 10 (f) of The Regional Technical Colleges Act ((1992) as amended by the Institutes of Technology Act (2006)) and section 84 of the Qualifications and Quality Assurance Act (2012) with reference to section 23 (e) of the Qualifications (Education and Training) Act 1999 – repealed by the 2012 Act.

The policy is to be used in conjunction with the [QQI Assessment and Standards 2013](#) document which has been formally adopted Academic Council. The QQI document is comprised of four main parts:

- 1 Foundations – Section 2
- 2 Sectoral Conventions for Assessment – Section 3
- 3 Protocols – Section 4
- 4 Interpretations (of key terms) – Section 5

The QQI principles and guidelines are accepted as the foundation on which the Institute’s Marks and Standards stand.

1.1 Principles

The **principles** are organised under six themes:

- 1 Learners are responsible for demonstrating their learning achievement.
- 2 Assessment supports standards based on learning outcomes.
- 3 Assessment promotes and supports both effective learning and teaching.
- 4 Assessment procedures are credible.
- 5 Assessment methods are reviewed and renewed as necessary to adapt to evolving requirements.
- 6 Learners are well informed about how and why they are assessed.

1.2 Guidelines

The **guidelines** are elaborated in the QQI document under the following headings:

- 1 Introduction – this refers to [The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area](#), 2015.
- 2 The meaning of fairness.
- 3 The meaning of consistency.
- 4 Student assessment procedures are expected to be designed to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and other programme objectives.
- 5 Student assessment procedures are expected to be appropriate for their purpose, whether diagnostic, formative or summative.
- 6 Student assessment procedures are expected to have clear and published criteria for marking.
- 7 Student assessment procedures are expected to be undertaken by those who understand the role of assessment in the progression of students towards the achievement of the knowledge and skills associated with their intended qualification.
- 8 Student assessment procedures are expected to not, where possible, rely on the judgements of single examiners.
- 9 Student assessment procedures are expected to take account of all the possible consequences of examination regulations.
- 10 Student assessment procedures are expected to have clear regulations covering student absence, illness and other mitigating circumstances.
- 11 Student assessment procedures are expected to ensure that assessments are conducted securely in accordance with stated procedures. Assessment procedures should be secure, confidential and compliant with Data Protection and applicable Freedom of Information legislation.
- 12 Student assessment procedures are expected to be subject to administrative verification checks to ensure the accuracy of the procedures.
- 13 Records are maintained to facilitate monitoring and reviews.
- 14 There are procedures for the promulgation of assessment results. Assessment results (or, where necessary, provisional results) should be communicated to learners as soon as possible after assessment.

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- 15 There are procedures for appeals and complaints by learners.
 - 16 The provider appoints at least one independent expert external examiner for each award programme.
 - 17 Students should be clearly informed about the assessment strategy being used for their programme, what examinations or other assessment methods they will be subject to, what will be expected of them, and the criteria that will be applied to the assessment of their performance. The required information should be publicly accessible (eg on the web and in a handbook).

1.3 Sectoral Conventions for Assessment

The Sectoral Conventions for Assessment comprise a set of regulations and benchmarks which, in the interest of fairness and consistency, are agreed at sectoral level, these conventions are incorporated within this Marks and Standards policy document.

The assessment protocols as outlined in the QQI document help to establish the Institute's assessment procedures, in particular the sections on:

- Pass by compensation
- Exemption from studying a module (RPL)
- Progression with credit deficit

2 Scope

These marks and standards apply to all assessments conducted in IADT leading to awards up to NFQ Level 9, plus Minor, Special Purpose and Supplemental Awards as accredited by the Institute under Delegated Authority.

These regulations apply to both undergraduate and postgraduate learners and apply to assessments held in the academic year in which they were approved by Academic Council and subsequent academic years, unless amended by Academic Council, with the approval of the Governing Body.

Marks and Standards for Joint Awards may vary and will be defined in the legal agreements for each of such awards.

3 Definitions

- Learner assessment (specifically the assessment of learning) involves drawing inferences (by for example, judgement, estimation or evaluation) of a learner's knowledge, skill and/or competence by comparison with agreed award standards, based on appropriate evidence.

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- Learning outcomes required are specified by the award standards as agreed and published by QQI.
 - Standards are classified exclusively on the basis of criterion-referenced assessment of learning outcomes.
 - The term assessment should be construed to include reference, as appropriate, to written, aural and oral assessment, assessment of coursework, practical skills assessment and project work. It should include assessment of theses, dissertations and similar work, and such other forms of assessment of performance as may have been approved or prescribed by the Academic Council of the Institute.

4 General Requirements for Assessments and Awards

Only candidates who are in good standing with the Institute's policies, as approved by the Academic Council and who, in general, have met all programme requirements, will be considered at Examination Board meetings.

The granting of an award by IADT will be on the basis of performance of a candidate in appropriate assessments. Such assessments must have been set or prescribed by the Institute, and must have been approved and monitored by External Examiners in accordance with procedures approved by the Academic Council.

6 Programme Schedules

The approved programme schedule provides an overview of the programme. The details provided include:

- Name of programme
- Name of award
- NFQ level of programme
- The total number of credits to be awarded
- The credits available for each modules, per stage, and the contribution to the grade of each of the modules components
- Requirements which must be fulfilled for learners to progress from one stage to another and to complete the programme successfully

The award conferred is determined by reference to the approved programme on which the learner was registered. The approved programme schedule is a summary of some of the information that is included in the programme assessment strategy.

6.1 Programme Modules

The programme schedule sets out the modules for each programme that must be satisfactorily completed to be eligible for an award (except where equivalence has been established through RPL or for credit gained abroad by Erasmus students).

Modules are categorised as **mandatory**, **elective** or **optional**. The following provisions apply to the various categories of modules.

- **Mandatory modules** – each candidate must present and gain credits in mandatory modules.
- **Elective modules** – the award structure consists of one or more mandatory and several elective modules, each candidate must present and gain credits in all mandatory modules and in a prescribed number of elective modules. The number of elective modules required is prescribed in the approved course schedule.
- **Optional modules** – learners may gain additional credit for optional modules which do not form part of their programme of study, these modules are supernumerary and are not used in GPA calculation.

6.2 Assessment of Joint Projects

Where two or more candidates present a joint project, the individual contribution and performance of each candidate should be assessed, and individual grades awarded accordingly. This does not preclude assessment of the outcome of a team’s achievement nor does it preclude formative assessment of a team and formative feedback to the team.

7 Responsibility for Assessments

The Registrar has overall responsibility for the conduct of assessments and ensures effective implementation of procedures approved by the Academic Council regarding conduct of assessments.

8 Alpha Grading System

IADT uses the alpha grading system for assessment, which incorporates a calculation of an overall grade point average (GPA). This system uses a specified number of credits at specific levels per award as its basis. It applies to all learners on accredited programmes in IADT.

The following list indicates the number and level of credits required to obtain an award. In the case of add-on awards, credits obtained in previous qualifications may be used to meet entry requirements.

Award	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9 PGD	Level 9 Masters
Higher Certificate	120				
Ordinary Degree		180			
Honours Bachelor Degree - Add-on			60		
Honours Bachelor Degree - Ab initio			240		
Postgraduate Diploma or Masters				60	90
				60	30

A grade, representative of the quality of a learner’s performance in a particular module, is awarded at the end of each module for which a learner is registered, using the following categories:

Grade	Grade Point Value	Credits awarded	Description
A	4.00	Yes	
B+	3.50	Yes	
B	3.00	Yes	
B-	2.75	Yes	
C+	2.50	Yes	
C	2.00	Yes	
DP	1.50	Yes	Compensated D
D	0.00	No	Not compensated D (Fail)
F	0.00	No	Fail
PS		Yes	Pass in 'Pass/Fail' Module (not used in GPA calculation)
FL		No	Fail in 'Pass/Fail' Module (not used in GPA calculation)
X		Yes	Exempted from module requirements because of previous equivalent learning (RPL) (not used in GPA calculation)
I		No	Deferral of result
W		No	Withdrew
NP		No	Not Present
WH		No	Withhold Result
N		No	Module no longer offered

This information should be present on broadsheets considered by the Examination Board.

The aggregate performance of an individual learner is represented by the GPA in the assessment for each stage of the programme followed. In order to determine the GPA, the following calculation is carried out:

- A grade point value is assigned to the alpha grade a learner has gained for each module, as listed above
- The grade point value is multiplied by the credits allocated to that module to arrive at a grade credit score for each module
- The appropriate grade credit scores are then added together and divided by the credits for the stage to arrive at the GPA

In the case of a module being awarded a grade of X (learning outcomes have been achieved previously) and PS (Pass/Fail module), credits gained are not included in the calculation of GPA.

8.1 Indicative GPA

An indicative GPA is a GPA determined at any point in time within a stage based on the grade credit score at that time divided by credits attempted to date (excluding any module not used in GPA calculation).

8.2 GPA for Award classification

The GPA for award classification is defined as the cumulative GPA for the award stage, unless defined in an alternative way in the approved programme schedule for a particular programme.

In Stage Weighted programmes, the award GPA is calculated using a proportional GPA from the ultimate and penultimate stages of the programme.

9 Progression Arrangements

Subject to the regulations on [Pass by Compensation](#) below, progression to a subsequent stage of a programme is dependent on the attainment of:

- 60 credits (as defined in the approved programme schedule)

AND

- A minimum GPA of 2.00

9.1 Proceed with Credit Deficit

In exceptional circumstances, and at the discretion of the Examination Board, a full-time candidate may be allowed to proceed to the subsequent stage (except for an award stage) of a programme without having attained 60 credits. ¹

Such candidates must have attained at least 50 credits and have a minimum GPA of 2.00 (therefore, only a maximum of 10 credits can be carried from one stage into the next). Modules carried forward to a subsequent stage must not be prerequisites for that stage.

Progression under these circumstances is conditional and candidates must complete any outstanding assessments before an Examination Board can consider the results of the subsequent stage.

¹ For 'Stage Weighted' programmes this refers to the ultimate stage of the programme and not to any other stage which contributes to the award classification.

10 Award Classifications

10.1 First Attempt

In order to be eligible for an award classification higher than Pass, all modules in the award stage of a programme must be passed at the first attempt.

10.2 Second and any other Attempt

The award of a candidate who repeats the assessment in any module will be capped at a Pass classification.

10.3 Eligibility for an Award

To be eligible for an award at Pass classification, a candidate must:

- Satisfy all the assessment requirements, credits and other requirements for the programme as specified in the programme schedule
- Pass the final assessment by attaining a minimum GPA of 2.00, in accordance with these marks and standards

To be eligible for consideration for an award other than a Pass, a candidate must:

- Satisfy all assessment requirements, credits and other requirements for the programme specified in the course schedule, and
- Pass the assessment in each module in accordance with these marks and standards **at the first attempt**
- Have attained an appropriate award GPA in accordance with the requirements in the tables below

10.3.1 Higher Certificate (Level 6) and Ordinary Bachelor Degree (Level 7)

Classification:	GPA boundary value	Description
Distinction	3.25	Indicative Descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in most respects is significantly and consistently beyond this
Merit Grade 1	3.00	Indicative Descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in many respects is significantly beyond this
Merit Grade 2	2.50	Indicative Descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in some respects is significantly beyond this
Pass	2.00	Definitive Descriptor: Attains all the minimum intended programme learning outcomes

10.3.2 Bachelor Honours Degree (Level 8)

Classification	GPA boundary value	Description
First class Honours	3.25	Indicative Descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in most respects is significantly and consistently beyond this
Second class Honours, Grade 1	3.00	Indicative Descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in many respects is significantly beyond this
Second class Honours, Grade 2	2.50	Indicative Descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in some respects is significantly beyond this
Pass	2.00	Definitive Descriptor: Attains all the minimum intended programme learning outcomes

10.3.3 Postgraduate Diploma (Level 9)

Classification	GPA boundary value	Description
Distinction	3.25	Indicative Descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in most respects is significantly and consistently beyond this
Merit	3.00	Indicative Descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in many respects is significantly beyond this
Pass	2.00	Definitive Descriptor: Attains all the minimum intended programme learning outcomes

Normally, awards other than Pass may be recommended on the results of the final year assessment only. However, any weighted contributions from previous years' assessments will be indicated in the approved programme schedule.

At levels other than award level, classification will be at pass level only.

10.3.4 Master's Degree - Taught (Level 9)

Classification	GPA boundary value	Indicative description
First Class Honours	3.25	Indicative Descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in most respects is significantly and consistently beyond this
Second Class Honours	3.00	Indicative Descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in many respects is significantly beyond this
Pass	2.00	Definitive Descriptor: Attains all the minimum intended programme learning outcomes

10.3.5 Master's Degree – Research (Level 9)

The Degree of Master (Research) is of Honours standard and is awarded without classification. In the case of successful candidates, the broadsheet of results should be annotated Recommended and signed by the assessor(s) concerned.

Classification	GPA boundary value	Description
Unclassified <i>(recognised as equivalent to an honour classification for progression and employment purposes)</i>	N/A	Definitive Descriptor: Attains all the minimum intended learning outcomes for the relevant research degree programme

Special-purpose awards which have a volume of at less than 60 credits will be unclassified.

10.4 Other Broadsheet Result Categories

Other overall broadsheets result categories include:

Result Code	Result
ABS	Absent from assessment
EXE	Exempt from further assessment in a module*
FAIL	Fail
DEF	Deferral of result(s)
WDRW	Withdrew from programme
WHLD	Learner's result(s) withheld

Modules passed (Grade C or higher) will accrue for the purposes of progression or award and will not be retaken.

11 Results Collation Meeting prior to Examination Board meeting

Where appropriate, the Programme Team will meet to consider module results for each learner prior to the meeting of the Examination Board.

The completed module marks sheet will include the following for each candidate:

- The allocation of marks for written, continuous assessment, and if relevant, oral, practical, and projects, in accordance with the terms of the programme schedule
- The overall grade awarded to each candidate and agreed upon by the internal and external examiners for that module

12 Examination Board Meeting

At meetings of the Examination Board, Internal and External Examiners will determine the overall result of candidates and to agree award classification. They meet together under the chairmanship of the Registrar, or by a member of the Institute's staff nominated for that purpose by the Registrar (ordinarily, a Head of Faculty for a Faculty other than the one being discussed). Examination Boards will consider results of learners at the end of each complete stage.

An Examination Board normally comprises all assessors who have a role in the assessment of relevant module and programme stages, along with the relevant External Examiners, Programme Chairs and the relevant academic managers. Academic managers may be the heads of relevant academic units and other specified persons, including those who may have relevant contributions to make in respect of decisions about learner eligibility to progress.

There may be circumstances in which an External Examiner is unable to attend the meeting of the Examination Board, but has, nevertheless, visited the provider's premises, examined the assessment findings, agrees with the recommendations recorded on the draft broadsheet of results, and has provided a written report.

An Examination Board may act notwithstanding the absence of one or more members, provided that the Chairperson of the Board is satisfied that the meeting has been duly convened and that the members present constitute an appropriate attendance for the proper discharge of the Board's responsibilities.

The proceedings and deliberations of an Examination Board are strictly confidential. Under no circumstances should any person attending a meeting disclose to any other person deliberations of the Board or any document, information or opinion considered, conveyed or expressed at the meeting **unless requested to do so by the Board**. The Registrar may, however, agree that provisional results are issued prior to the presentation of results to Academic Council for approval.

Only recorded decisions of the Board meeting should be revealed, in accordance with Institute policy. Such results, once recommended, may not be adjusted at subsequent Examination Board meetings.

The Institute reserves the right, for any reason, (personal, health, discipline, or otherwise) to withhold presentation of a learner's results to the Academic Council. It is further a matter for the Institute whether it will present results from such a learner again to Academic Council, and if it does so, under what circumstances.

13 Broadsheets of Results

At the Examination Board meeting, a broadsheet of results will be endorsed which will record the grades awarded to each candidate in each module. It will also indicate GPA, academic standing and, in an award stage, award classification.

Examination Board meetings should allow for full and frank discussion of all borderline cases before a final decision is made. The final decision should be based on the cumulative evidence presented rather than on the view of one internal or external examiner/assessor.

The broadsheet(s) of results will be signed by the Chairperson and Secretary of the meeting, and by all of the assessors (external and internal) present at the meeting.

Once the broadsheet of results is signed by the assessors, any necessary amendments must be recorded on the appropriate form, and countersigned by the relevant Head of Department and the Registrar. Results (grades or award classification) may be amended as a result of Appeals Board decisions. Such amendments will be noted and identified on the broadsheet and an extract of the signed minutes will be attached.

14 Pass by Compensation

A D grade is awarded when a learner has nearly (but not quite) demonstrated attainment of the relevant minimum intended learning outcomes for a particular module. An inherent feature of the GPA system is that such performance may be compensated for by superior performance in the other modules. Therefore, while a D grade is the minimally acceptable performance in any individual module, an average performance at C grade (GPA of 2.0) over the entire programme is required to pass an assessment as a whole. In practice, a D grade (or D grades) will need to be compensated for by sufficient grades at C+ or higher in the remaining modules.

Where a candidate is just below pass in each of a string of independent modules in the same stage, the results are reinforced. Consequently, it is justifiable to limit the number of independent modules that may be passed by compensation in a stage. Because modules can have different sizes, it is reasonable to express such a limit as a proportion of the total available credit rather than the number of modules. This latter point assumes that the confidence in the grade is increased in larger volume modules owing to compensation processes operating within the module.

In a programme based on stages, subject to conditions 1 - 4 specified below, a module can be passed by compensation (using passes in other modules from the same stage) unless this is specifically precluded in the programme assessment strategy and approved programme schedule.

Compensation can be applied automatically. Accordingly, the programme and module assessment strategies should take this into account. Specifically, they should further ensure that compensation is consistent with the requirement that minimum intended programme learning outcomes are achieved before an award is recommended.

Performance at the first attempt in modules in a given stage may be used to compensate in the same stage, provided no module in the stage has been failed outright. A pass earned in this way is referred to as a pass by compensation and is credit bearing.

Compensation can only be applied in the following circumstances:

- 1 The learner has been assessed for all stage modules and no module in the stage has been failed outright (F or FL).
- 2 The results of all modules in the stage are from first attempts.
- 3 In the case of full-time learners, the results are from the same sitting.
- 4 The overall Grade Point Average is at least 2.00 and the potentially compensatable results account for no more than one-third of the credit for the stage, i.e. 20 credits in a 60-credit stage or 10 credits in a 30-credit stage, etc.

Compensation may be applied only to enable a learner to pass a stage (at the award stage, a learner who passes by compensation remains eligible for honours etc.). Compensation does not change the result of the modules passed in that way. When reporting module passes by compensation (on the Europass Diploma Supplement), the actual result is returned, e.g. D, along with an indication that the module pass has been granted by compensation.

In the Approved Programme Schedule, certain modules may be designated as not passable by compensation.

15 Borderline Cases

An Examination Board may consider as a borderline case, any candidate presenting for an award, whose performance is considered borderline. When considering borderline cases, it is important to consider the learner's performance as a whole against the minimum intended learning outcomes. In general, a GPA may be considered borderline when it is within **±0.05** points of an award classification boundary. Such consideration may be given provided the candidate has achieved full credits in all the prescribed modules. Such a candidate may have their classification adjusted at the discretion of the Examination Board.

16 Publication of Results

The Registrar will ensure that results and award classifications, where appropriate, as agreed by Board will be issued by the Institute within the timeframe as published in the Institute Calendar. Results may be issued through electronic means. The Institute will not issue a result in the case of any candidate whose result is withheld nor should any information in relation to results be communicated to any such candidate pending an Academic Council decision thereon.

17 Deferral of Assessment Results

An Examination Board may, in the case of illness or bereavement or other serious situation, recommend that the final decision on a candidate's result be deferred to enable the candidate to complete specific outstanding requirements of the programme or assessment. As this recommendation can be significant in respect of the final award classification, such a recommendation may only be made when documentary evidence to support the request is available at the time of the meeting of the Examination Board. Only in exceptional cases will a recommendation of a deferral be made after this meeting, and in such cases, the approval of the Registrar is required.

18 Assessment Appeals

IADT has an [Assessment Appeals Policy and Procedure](#) in place in place for making application for an appeal of decisions of the Examination Board. An appeal will only be considered after results have been published.

19 Repeat Assessments

Where a module assessment is attempted by a learner more than once, the best performance will be reported.

The repeat assessment will be capped at a C grade, ie grades higher than C, will be degraded to a C grade and recorded as such on the broadsheet of results. The number of attempts at a particular module will be recorded on the learner transcript.

Learners who fail a module will normally be offered three repeat attempts. In the case of particular practical modules in the Faculty of Film, Art and Creative Technologies, candidates may be limited to a single repeat attempt depending on the availability of resources.

A candidate must repeat any F grades attained. If compensation criteria ([Section 14 above](#)) are not met, (ie there are no F grades and no more than 20 credits out of 60 at grade D), then all D grades must be repeated. As compensation cannot apply to a second or subsequent sittings, all repeat grades must be at grade C or higher in order for a Pass to be attained.

It is Institute policy that all assessments of an individual module are of similar academic intensity and standard. It follows that, where practicable, all learners participating in repeat assessments of a particular module do so under similar assessment criteria as pertained to the first attempt.

Thus, where continuous assessment is an integral part of the assessment process, continuous assessment should only be repeated in the subsequent academic year. Offering repeat attempts at continuous assessment will be subject to timetable restrictions. Thus, it may not be possible to repeat all modules in an Autumn sitting.

However, alternative continuous assessment may be determined by the Examination Board. Arrangements for such alternative continuous assessment or practical, project or laboratory assessment will be determined. Such determination will be in line with the existing programme assessment strategy and will be subject to maintaining academic standards as indicated in the previous paragraph.

20 Application for Conferring of Award

When the Academic Council endorses the recommendations of an Examination Board, the results approved will be final (except where the above regulations permit amendments) and the list of candidates deemed eligible for awards will be generated.

Appendix 1 References

[Institutes of Technology Acts, \(1992 – 2006, as amended\)](#)

[Qualifications and Quality Assurance \(Education and Training\) Act 2012](#)

[Grant of Delegated Authority to confer awards to NFQ Level 9 by QQI, Feb 2017](#)

[Assessment and Standards, 2013, QQI](#)

[National Framework of Qualifications](#)

[Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area 2015](#)

IADT Policy and Procedure documents:

[External Examiners Procedures](#)

[Programme Board Policy and Procedures](#)

[Assessment Appeals Policy and Procedures](#)

[Plagiarism Policy and Procedures](#)

[Aegrotat and Posthumous Awards Procedures](#)

[Examination & Assessment Procedures including Examination script inspection](#)

[RPL Policy and Procedures](#)

List of approved programme schedules and accompanying programme assessment strategies

[Grade point average calculations](#)