ICA ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK
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1. Introduction

This document sets out the principles, practice and conduct of assessment and gives information on reaching decisions from assessment.

The policies and procedures contained herein apply to all registered ICA candidates irrespective of their mode, level or place of study.

1.1 ICA policies and procedures

This document should be read in conjunction with the following ICA policy documents available on the ICA website:

- ICA Assessment Boards
- ICA Appeals procedure
- ICA Complaints procedure
- ICA External Examiners
- ICA Policy on mitigating circumstances
- ICA Policy on academic malpractice

1.2 Assessment overview

The assessment method for a qualification is dependent upon the level, format and sometimes jurisdiction of the programme studied.

The different methods of assessment are designed to offer candidates the broadest possible opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the topics studied at whichever level they are studying.

The assessment methodology for each programme will be detailed in a programme-specific Assessment Handbook and made clear to candidates prior to enrolment.
2. Assessment principles

Assessment is the process of forming a judgement about a candidate’s attainment of knowledge, understanding or skills. The processes of assessment will conform to ICA’s expectations, as detailed in its regulations, policies, procedures and guidance.

Each programme of study will include a series of assessment tasks, which together make up the ‘assessment scheme’ for the programme.

The scheme is summarised in the Assessment Handbook and will satisfy the following three principles, described further below.

Educational: the processes of assessment will help candidates learn, or reinforce previous learning, or both.

Ethical: the processes of assessment will be fair and transparent, and must not discriminate according to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion or belief, age, social class or disability.

Regulatory: the processes of assessment will conform to ICA expectations detailed in its regulations, policies, procedures and guidance.

Online assessment will be carefully considered in relation to these principles.

2.1 Educational principles

Assessment tasks are an integral part of the syllabus and will be integral to the teaching and learning processes.

There will be an appropriate mix of formative and summative assessment throughout the programme, with summative assessment being used formatively, where possible.

Excessive and unnecessary assessment will be avoided (an intended learning outcome will not normally be assessed repeatedly).

The timing and amount of assessment will be organised to facilitate deep learning.

Feedback to candidates must follow stated ICA procedures, and will contain positive, encouraging comments where possible, as well as pointers for future improvement.

All staff contact with a candidate is a potential opportunity for feedback to and from the candidate.

Peer review and assessment (i.e. assessment of candidates’ work by other candidates) will be encouraged, to provide rapid feedback and promote understanding of programme content and consolidate learning.

Innovation in online assessment, marking and submission of assessed work is encouraged.
2.2 Ethical principles

Assessment tasks and marking criteria will focus on the intended learning outcomes for the programme, module or unit.

The assessment scheme will allow candidates to demonstrate their achievement of all the intended learning outcomes, where practical, by the end of the programme.

Candidates will be informed in advance about the assessment tasks and grading systems for their programme.

Candidates will be helped to understand the requirements of assessment, e.g. through guidance, discussion with course tutors or specimen assessment materials.

Candidates will be made aware of the procedure to follow if they wish to query or appeal against an assessment decision.

The assessment process will not be biased according to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion or belief, age, class or disability.

Candidates and staff will evaluate the effectiveness of the assessment scheme (e.g. during periodic programme reviews).

Where assessment takes place online, clear protocols and instructions will be given to the candidates before the assessment takes place.

2.3 Regulatory principles

The assessment scheme will provide enough evidence of a candidate’s achievement to enable robust decisions to be made about their progression through the programme and the award of the intended qualification.

Assessment tasks will allow candidates to demonstrate achievement appropriate to the level of the intended award in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ).

Assessment tasks will be managed across the programme, to achieve appropriate variety in assessment tasks, avoid unnecessary concentrations of assessment at particular times, and reflect intellectual progression through the programme.

Assessment will be conducted in accordance with ICA regulations, policies, procedures and guidance, as set out in this Assessment Framework and elsewhere.
3. The practice of assessment

3.1 Submission of assignments

This section sets out ICA’s policy on the process of submission and the penalties associated with late submission.

3.1.1 Purpose of the submission policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure consistent application of ICA procedures in order to ensure an equality of experience for candidates across all programmes.

In addition, the policy provides transparency in the way submission procedures are articulated to candidates.

3.1.2 Scope of the submission policy

This policy refers to all written work (assignments) submitted for summative assessment. Summative assessment is defined, for the purposes of this policy, as that which contributes to the final unit mark.

The policy does not apply to purely formative assessment that does not contribute to a final unit mark, nor to assessments that candidates must attend to complete, such as oral interviews and written examinations.

3.1.3 The policy on submission

ICA will publish procedures on submission of work for summative assessment and is responsible for ensuring that these are appropriate across all programmes and in accordance with this policy.

The ICA procedures and guidance for the submission of summative assessment must be clearly publicised to candidates, via handbooks and ICA’s learning platforms.

ICA will publish deadlines for the submission of all assignments at the beginning of each semester.

Candidates are responsible for managing their time in order to meet published deadlines.

3.1.4 Extending deadlines

Deadlines may be extended in accordance with the Policy on Mitigating Circumstances.
3.1.5 Penalty for late submission

ICA will implement a sliding scale to penalise late submission. Work submitted after the deadline will be marked but the mark awarded will reduce progressively for each day, or part thereof, by which the work is late.

The penalties applied for late submissions will be clearly publicised to candidates, via Assessment Handbooks.

3.1.6 Submission of summative assessment

All typed summative assessment material, including dissertations, will be submitted online and will be subjected to plagiarism detection software, where appropriate.

ICA will advise all candidates that plagiarism detection software is used and candidates will be directed to information, advice and guidance on academic writing, avoiding plagiarism and the penalties arising from academic misconduct.

Online submission may affect the application of the anonymous marking policy. All efforts will be made by ICA to preserve the anonymity of candidates who submit assessments online.

ICA will develop contingency plans, in the event of technical difficulties for the submission of assessed work.

3.2 Examinations

This section sets out ICA’s policy on examinations.

3.2.1 Scope of examinations policy

This policy refers to all formal examinations that take place as part of a candidate’s programme of study.

The policy sets out the practical arrangements for candidates’ participation in examinations.

3.2.2 Fairness

In support of the principle that the processes of assessment will be fair, ICA has a policy on examinations designed to ensure that candidates do not obtain unfair advantage for themselves or cause unfair disadvantage to other candidates.

Examinations will be supervised by trained invigilators.

3.2.3 Admission to examinations

Candidates must pay all appropriate fees in order to be admitted to an examination.
3.2.4 Admission to the examination room

Candidates will not be admitted to an examination room more than 15 minutes after the scheduled start.

Candidates must sit in specified seats if so required by the invigilator.

Candidates must not impersonate another candidate or allow themselves to be impersonated.

3.2.5 Material not permitted in an examination

Candidates must not bring food or drink into an examination room, except for a small packet of sweets (or similar) and a small bottle of water or other soft drink.

Except as allowed under the policy on use of calculators or specifically authorised for use in the rubric of an examination, candidates must not take to their examination desk any equipment capable of receiving, inputting, storing, processing or transmitting information, including mobile phones.

Candidates must not take to their examination desk any learning material or aids not specifically authorised for use in that examination. A candidate found in possession of any unauthorised and/or undisclosed material once the exam has started will be subject to disciplinary action, regardless of whether there was intent to use the material.

In accordance with sections 3.2.8 and 3.2.9, candidates may take into the examination room an unmarked dictionary, any notes, course materials and texts if permitted in the rubric for that examination.

Any personal property such as coats or bags brought into an examination room must be left in a designated area.

3.2.6 Conduct in the examination room

Candidates must not copy from the work of another candidate or allow copying from their own work, and must not obtain assistance from another candidate or provide assistance to them.

Candidates must maintain silence and remain seated while in the examination room. Candidates must not cause any kind of disturbance or distraction or attempt to communicate with other candidates.

3.2.7 Leaving the examination room

A candidate who wishes to leave the examination room temporarily may do so only if accompanied by an invigilator.

Normally, candidates may not leave the examination room during the first 15 or last 30 minutes of the examination. If the exam is of one-hour duration or less, candidates cannot normally leave until the end of the exam. Outside these times, a
candidate may leave the examination room before the allotted finishing time under the direction of an invigilator. Candidates must leave the examination room silently.

Candidates may not take question papers away from the examination unless specifically told verbally or in writing to do so. Candidates must not remove from the examination room any materials provided for the examination, including answer books (used or unused).

Examinations must follow procedures described in the Invigilator Instructions and Examination Handbook.

### 3.2.8 The use of calculators in examinations

Examinations may require candidates to perform simple calculations for which normal practice would be to use a calculator. It is necessary to ensure that candidates do not bring into the examination room any device that would enable them to obtain an unfair advantage. The following rules are designed to regulate the type of calculator that may be used and to do so in a way that is enforceable in practice by invigilators. Assessments that require complicated calculations may well be better conducted by means other than formal examinations.

Candidates may bring into the examination room any calculator, provided that it does not have any means of inputting or storing text, alphabetical or other symbolic information, including mathematical expressions (except that hexadecimal keys a to f are allowed); any means of transmitting or receiving information, including (but not restricted to) infra-red, microwave and wireless ports and cable connections such as USB ports.

These rules preclude the use, as calculators, of electronic devices, which includes mobile phones, tablets such as iPads (other than in Singapore exams), notebook or laptop computers, where they cannot be prevented from any means of transmitting or receiving information.

Calculators must be silent in operation and must have their own self-contained power supply. No recharging facilities will be available, and candidates must bring their own spare batteries.

Invigilators may examine any device a candidate brings into the examination room. If the device does not comply with these rules, it will be confiscated and returned only at the end of the examination; no replacement will be provided. The invigilator is required to record the incident as suspected cheating.

For candidates with disabilities these rules may be overridden in specific, individual cases as mitigation.

### 3.2.9 The use of dictionaries in examinations

Use of dictionaries may be appropriate in closed-book examinations but:

- dictionaries must be unmarked
where the dictionary is electronic (e.g. for disabled candidates) it must have no facility for wireless connectivity.

Any candidate found using a marked dictionary will have the dictionary confiscated for the duration of the examination and may be reported for suspected cheating. If a marked dictionary is confiscated, the invigilator will be under no obligation to issue the candidate with a replacement dictionary for the remainder of the examination.

Language translation dictionaries may not be used in examinations.

Candidates are not allowed to use specialist dictionaries unless a specific instruction to the contrary is given in the rubric of the examination.

Candidates with disabilities are allowed to use electronic dictionaries or similar aids if they have received formal approval either from ICA, or the Approved Provider of ICA qualifications. Candidates must take a copy of the approval to all examinations to certify that they may use the aid concerned.

3.3 Marking

3.3.1 Introduction

This document sets out ICA’s policy on marking.

3.3.2 Scope of marking policy

The policy applies to the marking of all work.

3.3.3 Purpose of the marking policy

The purpose of the policy is to ensure equality and fairness in the treatment of candidates and consistency of practice in relation to marking procedures across all ICA examinations.

3.3.4 Definitions

The **Chief Examiner** is appointed by ICA to ensure the production of assessment material for a programme and marker guidance. The Chief Examiner will moderate the marking in accordance with the marking guidance and ICA standards.

The **Marker** is the first marker. Their role is to mark in accordance with the model/expected answers, the marking scheme and expected ICA outcomes.

An **External Examiner** reviews a sample of assessed work in accordance with ICA regulations, standards and the marking guidance (see ICA’s Guidance on External Examiners).

The Marker and Chief Examiner can be the same person.
3.3.5 The assessment policy

All assessment must be marked by a marker and reviewed by a Chief Examiner and an External Examiner.

All assessment tasks will be designed relative to the intended learning outcomes, and examinations will be accompanied by guidance for the purposes of internal examining and review by an External Examiner.

All written assessments must be marked anonymously, although it is recognised that this may not be possible for all assessments.

ICA will adopt procedures for checking that all sections of each piece of assessed work have been marked, that partial marks have been totalled correctly, and that total marks have been transferred correctly to Assessment Board reports.

ICA will have procedures in place for applying a penalty if the word count exceeds the specified limit. Penalties will be articulated clearly to candidates in assessment briefs and candidate handbooks.

Giving feedback on assessment

ICA will have procedures for providing clear and useful feedback to indicate how marks have been assigned.

3.3.6 Importance of marking

The awarding of marks is an important process as this provides a judgement of how well candidates have completed an assessment task. The resulting marks are then used for feedback and decisions on awards.

It is important that ICA’s candidates are given the right mark: one that is an accurate reflection of their response to tasks and rewards them appropriately.

There are two factors that determine whether marks are ‘right’. One is whether marks are awarded fairly and consistently across a cohort of candidates, and the other is whether the absolute marks are appropriate. This aspect of marking is handled by the Chief Examiners and ICA.

The final arbiter of the awarding process is the Assessment Board. The board has input from External Examiners for each discipline, allowing continuous review of marking standards and moderation.

3.3.7 Professionalism in marking

It is assumed that assessments have been properly designed in accordance with ICA principles and the intended learning outcomes for a programme. With this in mind, the primary reassurance that the mark is ‘right’ is provided by the professional expertise and competence of the marker and Chief Examiner.

The design of questions for assignments and for examinations requires a Chief Examiner to ensure that assessments meet ICA’s requirements that assessments
for validity and reliability comparable with other assessments set at the same programme level, manageable with the resources and time available, and minimise the potential for bias in accordance with ICA’s ethical principles (see Section 2.2 above)

Markers’ Guidance will offer appropriate advice on the range of expected responses and what would constitute different levels of performance; the extent to which this is practical will depend on the discipline, the level and the type of assessment question employed.

3.3.8 Anonymous marking

All work will be marked anonymously wherever possible, in order to provide reassurance that marking is fair. Similarly, decisions on progression and awards must be made anonymously.

Once marks have been awarded, it is of paramount importance that the right mark be assigned to each candidate. This is facilitated by associating the marks with candidate names as well as registration numbers for subsequent processing.

Where ICA develops new forms of assessment, anonymous marking may not be possible, but it is required for all formal written assignments and examinations. In other cases, reasonable efforts will be made to achieve anonymity.

Choice of assessment task will be governed by its suitability for assessing the intended learning outcomes rather than its suitability for maintaining anonymity.

If relevant additional information about a candidate comes to light at any stage, it will be made available to examiners, even if that may compromise anonymity.

The Policy and Procedures on Mitigating Circumstances distinguish between a stage for determining whether a candidate has established sufficient grounds for mitigation and a subsequent stage for determining what mitigation will be applied to the outcomes of the candidate’s assessments.

Assessment Boards must make their decisions from an anonymous mark list.

3.3.9 Checking marks

ICA has procedures for checking that all sections of each piece of assessed work have been marked, that marks have been totalled correctly and that total marks have been transferred correctly to a mark list.

When following correct procedure, it should also be possible to identify cases where an individual candidate’s mark on one assessment deviates significantly from those for other assessments or for other candidates within a cohort.

In cases where a candidate has not followed set instructions on an examination paper and has answered an incorrect number of questions the following guidance is given:
a. where a candidate has attempted too many questions, examiners will mark all responses to all questions and credit candidates with the marks awarded for their best responses
b. where a candidate has failed to attempt sufficient questions, they will be awarded zero for the unanswered questions
c. where a candidate has answered too many questions within a section, the best responses will be credited.

In cases where a candidate has not followed set instructions for an assignment question and has exceed the stated word count, penalties will be applied.

3.3.10 Scrutiny of marking

It is sometimes desirable to provide additional scrutiny beyond the level of a second marking review to provide reassurance that marking has been carried out appropriately. The nature and intensity of the scrutiny will focus on the perceived risk. This will depend on a number of dimensions, which may be present separately or together.

a. During the review of first marking, the Chief Examiner will take a view on the validity and reliability of the marks awarded, the experience of the Marker, variations in first marking where there are a number of Markers involved, discrepancies between marks and comments, where the process has changed or been interrupted (e.g. owing to high numbers of reasonable adjustments being allowed) etc.
b. The Assessment Board may wish to consider whether there are any issues relating to the nature of the assigned task(s); for example, where there is significant variation between assessment outcomes for the same cohort, or there are any questions raised relating to the fitness for purpose of the assessment.

3.3.11 Marking new forms of assessment

For online assessment, the policy on marking applies in full. Nonetheless, the choice of assessment tasks will be governed by their suitability for assessing the intended learning outcomes rather than their suitability for maintaining anonymity.

For e-portfolios, the policy on marking applies in full. Nonetheless, the suitability of documents submitted for assessment must be considered prior to marking, in order to assess whether they meet the requirements for evidence of achieving the intended learning outcomes. Tasks will be designed to ensure that the only evidence submitted is relevant for the learning outcomes identified through the relevant assessment objectives.

Procedures must also be adopted to ensure that work is marked appropriately and checked in accordance with a marking scheme. Feedback must also be given for the assessment in an appropriate form conforming to Section 3.4 below.
3.4 Feedback to candidates

3.4.1 Introduction
ICA is committed to providing timely and appropriate feedback to candidates on their academic progress and achievement, thereby enabling candidates to reflect on their progress and plan their academic and skills development effectively. Feedback, and acting on feedback, is therefore part of the active learning process throughout a programme of study.

Methods of feedback will vary according to assessment type.

3.4.2 Scope of feedback policy
This policy applies to ICA programmes. It sets out the principles under which feedback will be planned and delivered.

3.4.3 The policy on feedback
Feedback must be provided in a timely manner that helps candidates understand:

- the marks or grades they have received for the work submitted, and
- how their performance might be improved in future.

Feedback must be as personal to the individual candidate as possible to enable reflection on individual skills and performance.

Candidates are responsible for considering feedback given on their work, seeking to understand it, and acting on it.

Feedback must be timely, and candidates must be made aware of the timetable for submission deadlines and the dates on which results and feedback will be returned.

Feedback will always be constructive and include advice to the candidate on how the work concerned might have been improved.

Opportunities for feedback will be comparable in scope and scale between candidates and will be similar in style and structure.

3.4.4 Feedback on assignments
Feedback will be provided for all assignment scripts and must be clear and legible. Candidates will have the opportunity, within reason, to seek clarification and further feedback; nonetheless, candidates will be reminded that there can be no appeals concerning matters of academic judgement.

Feedback on candidate performance will also be provided by ICA to academic staff within its approved training providers in order to support monitoring and review of learning and progression.
3.4.5 Feedback on examinations

For ICA exams, there is no feedback to candidates other than where the candidate has failed and a ‘fail report’ is forwarded to the candidate.

3.5 Retaining candidates’ work

In order to safeguard the security and objectivity of assessments, candidates’ work must be available to examiners not only when it is first marked but also when marks are being reviewed. For this reason, ICA retains candidates’ work after it is has been submitted.

Submitted work is retained so that Assessment Boards can reach secure and defensible judgements about awards and progression of candidates.

Beyond the requirements stated above, ICA will only retain assessed work according to its own identified needs, e.g. to meet regulatory requirements, or in support of the development of assessments.

All assessed work which is retained will be kept in a secure location and organised so as to enable effective management. At the end of the retention period, all retained work will be disposed of as confidential waste.

3.6 Candidates with an impairment

Candidates who have some form of impairment, which introduces an unjustifiable barrier to assessment, will be treated according to the policy laid out in Section 3.7.

All assessments must assess the same intended learning outcomes and be of the same standard for any given cohort.

Where an assessment is conducted in a different location or under modified conditions, it will be conducted at the same time as the assessment of other candidates. If it is not practical to do this (for example, because of a difference in time zones), then to avoid the risk of compromising the security of the assessment, it will be conducted as soon as possible before or after the one undertaken by the other candidates being assessed at this time.

3.7 Assessment of candidates with disabilities

ICA has responsibilities under Equalities legislation and the Disability Discrimination Act to make reasonable adjustments to its provision, including methods of assessment, to ensure that candidates with disabilities are not disadvantaged for reasons relating to their disability.

Adjustments to assessment for a candidate with a disability may take one of two general forms:
a. modifying the circumstances under which the standard assessment is taken, or
b. providing an alternative form of assessment that is equivalent to the assessment undertaken by the other candidates within a programme of study

Most adjustments will consist of modifying the circumstances under which the existing assessment is taken.

In a very small number of cases the effects of the candidate’s disability are such that an alternative form of assessment is required. Devising an alternative assessment is an academic matter: it must assess the same intended learning outcomes as the standard assessment and meet the same academic standards, while giving candidates the opportunity to demonstrate their academic achievement despite their disability.

Once appropriate adjustments have been made, the work will normally be marked in the same way as any other piece of work.

When appropriate adjustments have been made, the marks will be treated in the same way as those of other candidates; no further compensation will be made unless there is additional documented mitigating evidence.

### 3.8 Religious observance

ICA will make every effort to avoid timetabling assessments or other compulsory activities on religious days or festivals for those candidates whose commitment to the observance of their faith would otherwise cause them to miss the assessment or other activity.

Nonetheless, ICA is able to accommodate the needs of candidates only if their requirement for particular religious observance is strict. ICA will not take any notice of casual preferences or of social or domestic reasons.

ICA’s policy covers only aspects of religious observance that occur at times known in advance. Other aspects that are unforeseeable or unpreventable (such as the death of a close relative when specified forms of mourning are required) will be handled under the arrangements for considering mitigating circumstances.

Deadlines for handing in assessed work will not normally be extended to allow for religious observance, and you must therefore schedule your work accordingly.

If religious observance affects a candidate’s attendance at normal teaching and learning activities in ways that will cause problems, they should discuss the issue with ICA.

Similar principles apply if religious observance affects their attendance at an examination.

Deadlines for submission of assessed work will not normally be extended to allow for religious observation.
ICA will make every effort to accommodate legitimate religious requirements.

3.9 Reaching decisions from assessment (awarding regulations and guidelines)

All final results (award of a grade) must be reviewed and approved by an Assessment Board prior to release to the candidate(s).

The policies and procedures related to Assessment Boards are available on the ICA website.

The minimum pass mark for each piece of assessment is 40%. If a candidate fails to achieve this mark in any assignment, they will need to retake that element, answering a different assignment or examination.

Candidate must achieve an overall pass mark of 50% in order to pass the programme.

Where a candidate has failed one or more assessment components, they can only receive at most the minimum pass-level mark on re-assessment.

The maximum number of attempts for any assessment is two. This does not include any re-assessment granted by the Assessment Board owing to mitigating circumstances.

Decisions as to which piece of assessed work needs to be retaken, where a choice exists, will be determined exclusively by the Assessment Board.

Candidates granted the right to re-take an assessment must attend the re-take at the next available sitting. The right to defer is not automatic.

Where a candidate fails to pass the course after exhausting all re-take opportunities, they will be offered a Certificate of Attendance.

Where mitigating circumstances have been accepted by the Assessment Board for a candidate who has failed an assessment component or the overall assessment, amendments to the awarding classification can be made by the Assessment Board but the mark awarded will remain the same. The candidate will be recorded as having passed with mitigating grounds.

Where a candidate has achieved a pass mark in an assessment, they may not repeat that assessment with the objective of trying to increase the mark for that piece of work.

The Assessment Board shall have the power to determine whether a candidate is required to repeat one or more pieces of assessed work.

Where a candidate’s final mark is borderline to a higher grade, i.e. 49, 59, or 69, the Assessment Board will review the candidate’s assessment with a view to increasing the overall grade. In the case of diploma candidates, two out of the three marks must fall in the upper bracket and the candidate must have demonstrated through
their assessments that they have performed in the higher-grade banding. For Advanced Certificate candidates at least one mark must be in a higher bracket with good evidence to demonstrate they have performed in the higher-grade banding.

In the event of failure by a candidate, the Assessment Board shall have the power to recommend that the candidate be awarded a lower level of award than the one for which they were being assessed. To be eligible for this, the candidate must have achieved a mark of 40 or above in each of the elements of assessment.

If the candidate is not eligible to be awarded a lower level of award, the Assessment Board may award a certificate of attendance.

3.10 The issuing of results

Results are made available to candidates online.

Where the online notification of results is not used, results will only be given to individuals in person, by letter (to an address specified by the candidate) or email (to an address specified by the candidate and from whom consent has been obtained to send results in this way).

Results will not be divulged over the telephone.
www.int-comp.org
f/intcompassoc
ã/IntComplCA
in/company/international-compliance-association
t/intcompassoc

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