



ICA Assessment Framework

Contents

1.	Introduction	5
1.1	ICA policies and procedures	5
1.2	Assessment overview	5
2.	Assessment principles	6
2.1	Educational principles	6
2.2	Ethical principles	7
2.3	Regulatory principles	7
3.	The practice of assessment	8
3.1	Submission of assignments	8
3.1.1	Purpose of the submission policy	8
3.1.2	Scope of the submission policy	8
3.1.3	The policy on submission	8
3.1.4	Extending deadlines	8
3.1.5	Penalty for late submission	9
3.1.6	Submission of summative assessment	9
3.2	Examinations	9
3.2.1	Scope of examinations policy	9
3.2.2	Fairness	9
3.2.3	Admission to examinations	10
3.2.4	The use of dictionaries in examinations	10
3.3	Marking	10
3.3.1	Introduction	10
3.3.2	Scope of marking policy	10
3.3.3	Purpose of the marking policy	10
3.3.4	Definitions	10
3.3.5	The assessment policy	11
3.3.6	Importance of marking	11
3.3.7	Professionalism in marking	12

3.3.8 Anonymous marking	12
3.3.9 Checking marks	13
3.3.10 Scrutiny of marking	13
3.3.11 Marking different forms of assessment	14
3.4 Feedback to learners	14
3.4.1 Introduction	14
3.4.2 Scope of feedback policy	14
3.4.3 The policy on feedback	14
3.4.4 Feedback on assignments	15
3.4.5 Feedback on examinations	15
3.5 Accessibility of Assessment	15
3.5.1 Reasonable Adjustments	15
3.6 Religious observance	16
3.7 Assessment decisions (awarding regulations and guidelines)	17
3.8 The issuing of results	17

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1. Introduction

This document sets out the principles, practice and conduct of assessment and provides information regarding assessment decisions.

The policies and procedures contained herein apply to all registered ICA learners irrespective of their mode, level, or place of study with the exception of apprentices assessed through Apprenticeship Assessment where other policies and procedures apply.

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 Appeals policy
- ICA Complaints policy
- ICA Mitigating circumstances policy
- ICA Reasonable adjustments policy
- ICA Malpractice and maladministration policy

1.2 Assessment overview

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

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

The assessment methods for each programme are presented in programme-specific fact sheets and made clear to learners prior to enrolment.

2. Assessment principles

Assessment is the process of forming a judgement about a learner's attainment of knowledge, understanding and/or skills. The processes of assessment are required to conform with ICA's 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 for the relevant programmes and detailed in the programme factsheets. The assessment scheme satisfies the following three principles, described further below:

- **Educational:** the processes of assessment will help learners 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 teaching and learning processes.

There will be an appropriate mix of formative and summative assessment throughout the programme.

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

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

Feedback to learners must follow stated ICA procedures, and, where possible, will contain a balance of positive, encouraging comments as well as constructive feedback for future improvement.

All peer-to-peer learner interaction and all staff contact with learners are potential opportunities for feedback to and from learners.

Peer review and assessment (i.e., assessment of learners' work by other learners) will be encouraged, to provide rapid formative feedback, 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 learners to demonstrate their achievement of all the intended learning outcomes, where practical, by the end of the programme.

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

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

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

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

Learners and staff will evaluate the effectiveness of the assessment methodology and methods on a continuous basis.

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

2.3 Regulatory principles

The assessment scheme will provide enough evidence of a learner'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 learners 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 learners across all programmes.

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

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 learners 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 learners, via handbooks and ICA's learning platforms.

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

Learners 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 policies on mitigating circumstances and reasonable adjustments.

3.1.5 Penalty for late submission

Meeting the deadlines for assessments is a requirement and serves to develop skills of time management while also avoiding unfair advantage for late submissions. 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 learners, via the assessment handbook.

3.1.6 Submission of summative assessment

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

ICA will advise all learners that plagiarism detection software is used, and learners will be directed to information, advice, and guidance on academic writing, avoiding plagiarism, the improper use of AI tools 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 learners who submit assessments online.

ICA will develop contingency plans, in the event of technical difficulties for the submission of assessed work and ensure learners are informed.

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 learner's programme of study.

The policy sets out the practical arrangements for learners' 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 learners do not obtain unfair advantage for themselves or cause unfair disadvantage to other learners.

Examinations will be supervised by trained invigilators.

3.2.3 Admission to examinations

Learners must pay all appropriate fees in order to be complete an examination.

3.2.4 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 it must have no facility for wireless connectivity.

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

Language translation dictionaries may not be used in examinations.

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

Learners 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. Learner 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 section 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 learner and consistency of practice in relation to marking procedures across all ICA examinations.

3.3.4 Definitions

The principal examiner is appointed by ICA to oversee the assessment process and procedures. The principal examiner will moderate the marking in accordance with the marking guidance, ICA standards and the level of a qualification.

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).

3.3.5 The assessment policy

All assessments must be marked by a marker and a sample reviewed by a principal 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 examination and review by an external examiner.

Where possible, all written assessments must be marked anonymously.

ICA will adopt procedures for checking that all sections of each piece of assessed work have been marked, that partial marks have been added-up correctly, and that total marks have been transferred correctly to assessment board reports.

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

ICA 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 learners have completed an assessment task. The resulting marks are then used for feedback and decisions on awards.

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

There are three factors that determine whether marks are 'right'. One is whether marks are awarded at the appropriate level, the second is if the marks are awarded fairly and consistently across a cohort of learners, and the third is whether the absolute marks are appropriate. This aspect of marking is handled by the principal examiners and confirmed by external examiners and assessment boards.

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 principal examiner with the advice of the external examiner.

The design of questions for assignments and for examinations, must meet ICA's requirements for validity and reliability comparable with other assessments set at the same programme level. They must be manageable with the resources and time available, and should minimise the potential for bias in accordance with ICA's ethical principles.

Markers' guidance and grade descriptors will offer appropriate general 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 learner. This is facilitated by associating the marks with learner 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 an 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 learner comes to light at any stage, it will be made available to examiners, even if that may compromise anonymity.

The policies and procedures on mitigating circumstances and reasonable adjustments distinguish between a stage for determining whether a learner has established sufficient grounds for mitigation or reasonable adjustment and a subsequent stage for determining what mitigation or adjustment will be applied.

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 learner mark on one assessment deviates significantly from those for other assessments or for other learners within a cohort.

In cases where a learner 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 learner has attempted too many questions, examiners will mark all responses to all questions and credit learners with the marks awarded for their best responses
- b. where a learner has failed to attempt sufficient questions, they will be awarded zero for the unanswered questions
- c. where a learner has answered too many questions within a section, the best responses will be credited.

In cases where a learner has not followed set instructions for an assignment question and has exceeded 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 moderation 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 principal 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 different forms of assessment

For online assessment, the policy on marking applies in full.

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.

3.4 Feedback to learners

3.4.1 Introduction

ICA is committed to providing timely and appropriate feedback to learners on their academic progress and achievement, thereby enabling learners 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 learners 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 learners as possible to enable reflection on individual skills and performance.

Learners are responsible for considering feedback given on their work and acting on it.

Feedback must be timely, and learners 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 learners on how the work concerned might have been improved.

Opportunities for feedback will be comparable in scope and scale between learners 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. Learners will have the opportunity, within reason, to seek clarification and further feedback; nonetheless, learners will be reminded that there can be no appeals concerning matters of academic judgement.

Feedback on learner 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 normally no feedback to learners other than, in some cases where the learner has failed an assignment exam where a 'fail report' is forwarded to the learner.

3.5 Accessibility of assessment

The ICA is committed to ensuring that its assessments are accessible to all learners and recognises that some assessments may be more challenging for some learners due to permanent or temporary impairment or disability.

3.5.1 Reasonable adjustments

ICA is committed to ensuring that all training does not discriminate against learners with a disability, and assessments are a fair test of an individual's knowledge and proficiency. If someone has a disability or learning difficulty, the usual format of training delivery or assessments may not be suitable and in certain circumstances adjustments may need to be made for them. This approach is intended to allow an individual to show their ability and knowledge without being disadvantaged by the training delivery method or the assessment format itself.

Adjustments to assessment for a learner with a disability may take one of two general forms:

Modifying the circumstances under which the standard assessment is taken, or providing an alternative form of assessment that is equivalent to the assessment undertaken by the other learners 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 learner'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 learners 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 learners; no further compensation will be made unless there is additional documented mitigating evidence.

For more information, please see our reasonable adjustments policy on our website.

3.6 Religious observance

ICA will make every effort to avoid timetabling assessments or other compulsory activities on religious days or festivals for those learners 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 learners 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 learners must, therefore, schedule their work accordingly.

If religious observance affects a learner'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 attendance at an examination.

ICA will make every effort to accommodate legitimate religious requirements.

3.7 Assessment decisions (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 learner(s).

The policies and procedures related to assessment boards are available on the ICA website.

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

Learners 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 learner fails to pass the course after exhausting all re-take opportunities, they may be offered a certificate of attendance.

Where mitigating circumstances have been accepted by the assessment board for a learner 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.

Where a learner 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 learner is required to repeat one or more pieces of assessed work.

The assessment board shall have the power to consider borderline cases (overall results of 59 and 69) and exercise its discretion to increase the mark where the board considers there is sufficient justification to do so.

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

If the learner is not eligible to be awarded a lower level of award, the assessment board may award a certificate of attendance.

3.8 The issuing of results

Results are made available to learners online.

Where the online notification of results is not used, results will only be provided to individuals by email.

Results will not be disclosed over the telephone.



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