

Regulatory Framework for Validated and Non-Validated Awards

August 2026

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Introduction

Context

“An educational foundation where creative talents can be discovered and developed, and where one can spread culture through the teaching of crafts and the preservation of knowledge that might otherwise be destroyed or forgotten.” Edward James

The Edward James Foundation was formed in 1964. It is an educational trust, registered as a charity (number 306372) and administered by a board of Trustees. In creating the Trust, Edward James, patron of the arts, gave to the Foundation his house, West Dean Park and some 6500 acres of farmland and woods. He also bequeathed, to the Foundation, the contents of West Dean House; which included furniture, ceramics, tapestries and paintings. It was the Edward James' vision that the house and estate should be used as an educational centre for the arts.

Today the College is a self-supporting, privately funded organisation which offers full-time study programmes in visual and applied arts and in conservation, making and restoration, interior and garden design. All areas of College's academic provision have, since 1995, received support and guidance through an affiliation with the University of Sussex. The College has had, since May 2012, full partnership status with the University.

Scope

This Regulatory Framework defines the College's approach to the management of academic standards for taught programmes and sets out the principles that underpin our approach to ensuring and enhancing the quality of learning, teaching, and assessment.

The College's Student Education and Experience Committee is responsible for the approval of additions, modifications or variation of the Regulatory Framework.

The Regulatory Framework applies to all of the College's academic provision of taught programmes of study.

Where, under exceptional circumstances, there is an identified need for variation or relaxation of specific parts of the Regulatory Framework, such derogations will be presented to the College Student E for review and final approval shall be sought through the College Academic Board. This shall include any derogation that may be deemed necessary to meet the requirements of a specific professional body. A list of agreed derogations shall be maintained and reviewed annually by the Student Education and Experience Committee.

Any changes required to academic policies relating to validated courses will also be taken through the University of Sussex Education Committee for approval before being implemented.

This Regulatory Framework is reviewed, annually, by the Academic Registrar and updated to reflect any changes that may be approved by the Student Education and Experience Committee during the previous year. The updated Regulatory Framework is published annually; usually during the first week of the academic year. The updated Regulatory Framework will be published on the Student Support area of the VLE/Moodle and on the College Website. Updates to the Regulatory Framework, from the previous year, shall be listed at the front of the document.

This document should be read in conjunction with the Student Assessment Policy.

Purpose

As a UK higher education provider, West Dean College requires a thorough, consistent and rational regulatory framework of academic regulations, procedures and practices to provide the assurance that academic standards are applied in a consistent and equitable manner for all students enrolled on programmes of study. This Regulatory Framework, therefore, sets out to:

- be fit for purpose, up to date and approved by the College's Student Education and Experience Committee;
- provide a consistent point of reference to ensure that taught programmes are in compliance with academic regulations of the University of Sussex;
- be applied fairly across all areas of the College's taught provision;
- provide a clear reference for decisions that enhance the quality and delivery of programmes of study and the student experience;
- provide a framework for the development of learning, teaching and assessment.

The Regulatory Framework

Structure of the Academic Framework

All validated awards, and their associated programme of study, will be assigned at the point of validation, to a Level of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (QAA, 2nd Edition 2024) in accordance with the national system of levels and awards.

All non-validated, College Awards, and their associated programmes of study, will be assigned at the point of *internal* validation to a Level of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (QAA, 2nd Edition 2024). Such assignment of Level is for indicative purposes only.

Validated Awards

Validated awards are those that have been externally validated by a university partner.

To receive a named award students must successfully accumulate the specified number of Credits, at the requisite Levels, as defined in the Table 1, below.

The accumulation of Credits is achieved through the satisfactory completion of Units, within the programme of study related to the award.

Each programme of study is described, in detail, in a Programme Specification; which is approved at the point of validation. The Programme Specification sets out the structure of the programme, the units, and the approach to teaching, learning and assessment, and the award title(s) to which the programme of study may lead. In some programmes of study, there may be pathways available, and these will be described within the Programme Specification.

Table 1 - Summary of distribution of Credits for different validated awards

Qualification	Credits	FHEQ Level (s)
Foundation Degree	240	4 & 5
Diploma of Higher Education	240	5
Bachelor of Arts	360	4, 5 & 6
Bachelor of Arts (Top Up)	120	6
Graduate Diploma	120	6
Postgraduate Diploma	120	7
Master of Arts	180	7
Master of Fine Arts	240	7

College Awards

College awards are not validated by a university partner.

These awards and their programmes of study are designed to provide students with specific knowledge and skill within a defined subject area. Typically, these programmes of study enable a graduate to progress to further study in a validated programme or entry into a professional context.

College awards do not result in the accumulation of credit. Therefore, they do not provide for direct progression to higher levels of study. However, depending on the subject area, level of study they may provide evidence for recognition of prior learning (RPL) internally or externally to the College.

Table 2 - College awards and indicative FHEQ Level(s)

Qualification	Credits	FHEQ Level (s)
West Dean Certificate	N/A	4
West Dean Diploma	N/A	5
West Dean Foundation Diploma Art & Design	N/A	3/4

The FHEQ level indicated, for College Awards, is representative of the level of challenge that the programme of study seeks to provide.

Awards Delivered through Partnership

Awards delivered through partnerships with other organisations will be non-validated.

Such awards shall be defined in collaboration with the partner organisation, in keeping with the regulations; set out in this Framework, for programme structure, assessment and delivery models.

Any derogation from this Framework shall be approved by the College Academic Committee.

Programme Structures

Programme of Study

A Programme of Study (or Course) is the combined teaching, learning and assessment that a student engages with; in order to develop their knowledge, skill and behaviours associated with a specific subject area.

- The Programme Aims define the ways in which the Programme of Study will support students in their learning.
- The Programme Learning Outcomes, set out what a student should be able to do at the end of the programme.

The Programme of Study is comprised of a number of Units (see below), that provide information about the detailed areas of study, that combine to provide the content of the programme. Each Unit is defined within a Unit Descriptor.

To achieve an award, a student must successfully complete all of the units within a Programme of study.

Units & Credits

A Unit is the basic building block of a Programme of Study. Each Unit, within a Programme of Study, defines the following:

- The number of Credits that are achieved through successful completion of the Unit.
- The Level of the Unit (with reference to the FHEQ)
- The Duration of the Unit (in weeks)
- The Total Learning Hours required to complete the Unit.
- The Unit Aims, which set out what the programme seeks to provide to the student
- The [Unit] Learning Outcomes, which sets out what a student should be able to do at the end of the programme
- The Content describes the unit in terms of subject matter and types of activities with which students engage.
- Teaching and Learning Methods describe the types teaching and learning activities that will be used in delivering the Content and sets out the number of hours of taught delivery and independent learning (which, together, are the Total Learning Hours).
- Assessment Requirements define the types of assessment evidence that will be required, the number of summative assessments (and, if there are multiple summative assessments, sets out the weighting of these). The use of formative assessment is also described.
- The Assessment Criteria that will be used in the assessment of this unit are listed and mapped to the learning outcomes that relate to the criteria.
- Indicative Reading provides a list of readings (books, journals, etc.) that will support students' work on the Unit.

Each Unit is assigned a Credit Volume and Credit Level. Together these constitute the Credit Value of the Unit.

The Credit Level sets out the depth of learning, intellectual demand and practical skill that will be developed and assessed through the Unit. The Credit Level is defined in relation to the Credit Level Descriptors prescribed by the Higher Education Credit Framework for England:

Guidance on Academic Credit Arrangements in Higher Education in England (QAA, 2nd Edition 2024).

The Credit Volume is the number of Credits that are achieved through successful achievement of the Learning Outcomes associated with the Unit.

The Credit Volume will reflect the amount of learning expected for the typical student to achieve the learning outcomes of that Unit. The Credit Volume is based on an estimate of notional hours of learning, which includes directed study and independent learning. One credit represents 10 notional hours of learning. Credit Volume therefore defines the Unit size.

The standard Credit Volume of units shall be defined in increments of 10 Credits with no unit being smaller than 10 Credits. The permitted Credit Volume of Units, at Levels, are as stated in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Permitted Credit Volume of Units

Unit Level	Permitted Credit Volume
5,6 and 7	10, 20, 30, 40, and 60
4	10, 20 and 30

The total of the Credits for all the Units, within a validated programme of study, will equal the number associated with the Award (see Table 1) that will be achieved upon successfully completing all of the units.

Levels, Years and Stages

Each programme of study will be comprised of one or more Stages. Where a programme of study has two or more Stages, these will correspond to the progression point and students must satisfy the progression requirements in order to progress to the next Stage.

Table 4: Progression

Programme	No. of Years (FT study)	No. of Years (PT Study)	No. of Stages	Stage	Credit Value of units to be taken
Master of Fine Arts	2	3	1	1	240 credits at Level 7
Master of Arts	1	2	1	1	180 credits at Level 7
Post graduate Diploma	1	2	1	1	120 credits at Level 7
Bachelor of Arts	3	5-6	3	1	120 credits at Level 4
				2	120 credits at Level 5
				3	120 credits at Level 6
Bachelor of Arts (Top Up)	1	2	1	1	120 Credits at Level 6
Graduate Diploma	1	2	1	1	120 credits at Level 6
Diploma HE	1	2	1	1	120 credits at Level 5 120 RPL credits at Level 4
FdA	2	4	2	1	120 credits at Level 4
				2	120 credits at Level 5

The Structure of the Academic Year

Induction Week	Term 1				Term 2				Term 3				MA Block								
	Block 1		Reading Week	Block 2		Admin Week	Block 3		Reading Week	Block 4		Admin Week	Block 5		Reading Week	Block 6		Admin Week (Assessment/ Unit Board)	Block 7		Admin Week (Assessment)
12 Weeks				12 Weeks				12 Weeks				10 Weeks									

Figure 1 - The Academic Year

The Academic Year is divided into 3 12-week *terms*.

The Academic Year and Awarding of Credit

At the end of each Level, of a multi-level programme, there is an *Internal Assessment Board*. The Internal Assessment Board confirms the grade achieved for that Level of the programme. Credits are not formally awarded at the Internal Board.

At the end of each programme there is a *Formal Assessment Board*, chaired by a representative from the Validating Partner, that awards credits to those students who have successfully completed units that have been completed within the term. Prior to the Assessment Board, the students' submissions will have been assessed, moderated and reviewed by External Examiner(s); appointed by the university partner. The External Examiner(s) verifies the standards of the work, parity of grading, and ensures that the grades are commensurate with national standards.

For students on the full time MA programmes, submitting work in September, the award of the credit and verification of results happens at the end of Term 1 in the following January. For students on block delivery MA programmes, an Assessment Board only occurs once a year at the end of Term 3.

The delivery of a unit may begin or end, only, at the start or end of a Teaching Block; as indicated in the image above. Units may not span across Stages or Academic Years. All units must be completed within the Stage in which they are started.

Full-time and Part-time Study

The Programme Specification will state whether a Programme of Study is offered in Full-time and/or Part-time mode, and whether it is available as *online* or *onsite* delivery. It is not possible for a student to undertake a Programme of Study in a different mode to the one in which it has been validated.

Structures

The structure of a programme of study should be developed with a view to ensuring a coherent delivery of curriculum and assessment that supports student learning. This must also consider the relationship between formative and summative assessment, in support of clear support of students and a coherent and logical approach to assessment.

Sequential Delivery

Sequential delivery defines the delivery and assessment of learning into a series of units that take place one after another.



Figure 2 - Example of Sequential Delivery

When developing a programme for sequential delivery there is a need to ensure that the credit weighting, and the total learning hours must be achievable within the time allocated for the unit. In the example above, assuming this is a full-time programme, Unit 1 and 2 must each be delivered within 5-weeks. This means the units cannot be more than 20 credits each. A 20-credit unit equates to 200 hours of learning (including both taught and independent learning). Thus, the student would be required to dedicate 40-hours per week to their studies.

Sequential delivery is most effective when the curriculum lends itself to the delivery of discrete bodies of knowledge and skill; with the student required to evidence some 'mastery' of the subject before progressing to the next unit.

Parallel Delivery

Parallel delivery defines the delivery and assessment of learning into a series of units that run over, typically, longer periods of time; with the student learning across different units at the same time.

Similarly, for those courses which may be a single year, culminating in a single holistic assignment (e.g., 'final major project' or dissertation), there may be value in allowing students to focus solely upon developing a single body of work at the end of the programme (as in the example below).

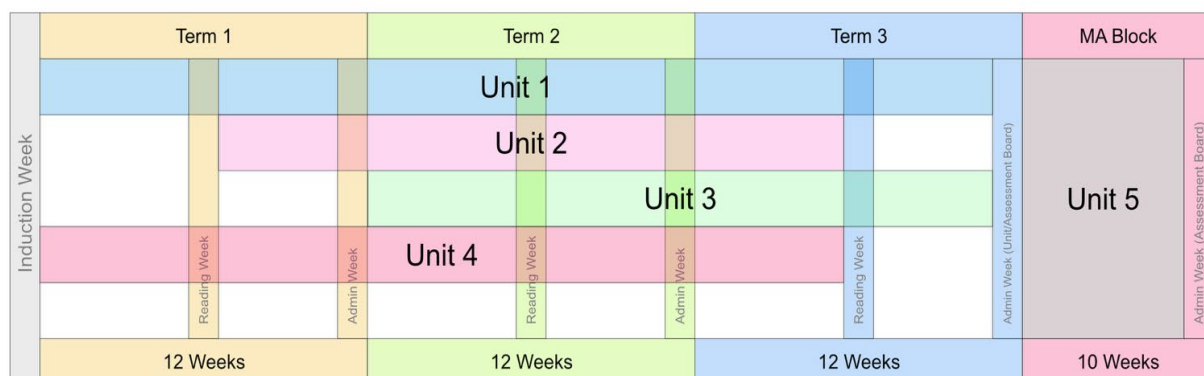


Figure 5 - Example of 'End-loaded' Hybrid Delivery

Sequential vs Parallel vs Hybrid Delivery

There is no 'right' form of delivery in all cases. The choice of programme structure must be considered in relation to:

- The nature of the subject and practice
- The potential benefits and challenges for the students' learning
- The provision of formative assessment
- The scheduling of summative assessment for students
- The management of formative and summative assessment by staff

Admission of Students

General Principles of Admissions

The College's admissions policy and practices support the institution in meeting the strategic aims of the College and enhancing its standing as a leading practice-based higher education institution.

The College is committed to operating admissions procedures that are fair, transparent and consistent, while being compliant with all relevant legislation and regulations.

The College seeks to admit only suitably qualified applicants who have the relevant knowledge and skill to successfully complete their Programme of Study. Further information is available in the College's [Admissions Policy and Procedures](#).

The College is committed to widening participation and access to higher education. For more information, please see the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity Policy](#).

Approved Programme Specifications provide information about minimum entry requirements, and this information is also published on the College website.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

In the recognition of prior learning (RPL), the following principles shall apply:

- Students may be awarded credit(s) for prior certified learning (PC) or prior experiential learning (RPEL) at FHEQ Levels 4, 5, 6, or 7.
- RPL credit(s) can only be awarded for whole units, not for partial achievement of a unit.
- The credit(s) awarded, through PC/RPL/RPEL, must contribute to the achievement of learning outcomes within the Programme of Study. The mapping of prior learning against the learning outcome of the Programme Study is a matter of academic judgement.
- Where credit(s) may be awarded for RPEL, the student will be asked to provide evidence that will allow the confirmation of learning and mapping to the learning outcomes of the Programme of Study. This evidence may include:
 - examples of work undertaken in relevant employment
 - examples of work, not from employment, that shows relevant skill
 - responses to questions set during a RPL interview
 - written statements, by the applicant, in which they provide evidence of knowledge
- results of an assessment, set by the College, to evaluate the applicant's knowledge and/or skill
- Marks achieved on imported credit will not be recorded on the student record or the transcript and will not contribute to progression/award.
- Credit from an existing honours degree or Master's degree cannot be used towards another qualification at the same level. Transfer of credits to count towards a second qualification at a higher level may be allowed, as long as this does not exceed the maximum number of credits allowed by RPL.
- Programme-specific requirements, such as the entry criteria and applicable timeframe for the achievement of prior learning (normally within five years), will apply to any RPEL consideration.

The College seeks to balance the recognition of prior learning with the need to ensure that awards conferred are based on sufficient evidence of study being undertaken within the College, and in compliance with the University of Sussex RPL policy. The following credit volume requirements apply to programmes validated by the University of Sussex:

Undergraduate

- A maximum of 120 Level 4 credits (or equivalent) may be imported for admission to a programme at the start of Level 5.
- Certified prior learning equivalent to 240 credits at Levels 4 and 5 may be awarded through RPL for admission to the final year of a degree programme. No further credit may be awarded through RPL in this case.

Postgraduate

- A maximum of 50% of the credits required for the new programme may be imported from another HE provider (for example 90 level 7 credits not used for a previous award may be imported to a masters)
- a maximum of 50% of the credit previously used for an award may be imported, provided that this constitutes no more than 50% of the credits required for the new award (for example 60 level 7 credits used for a PG Dip may be imported to a Masters)
- credit achieved on a dissertation/project may not be imported.

Enrolment

Students are required to enrol on a name Programme of Study and must re-enrol annually in accordance with procedures set out by the Registrar. An eligible student who fails to complete their enrolment/re-enrolment within one month of their expected enrolment date will be deemed to have withdrawn from the Programme of Study.

Maximum Enrolment Period: Validated Programmes

The maximum enrolment period for a validated programme of study, including any periods of interruption/intermission, shall be:

Table 6: Maximum Periods of Enrolment: Validated Programmes

Programme	Number of Years Study	Maximum Number of Years
Master of Fine Arts	2	3
Master of Fine Arts (PT)	3	5
Master of Arts	1	2
Master of Arts (Part-time)	2	4
Postgraduate Diploma	1	2
Graduate Diploma	1	4
Bachelor of Arts (Full-time)	3	6

Bachelor of Arts (Part-time)	6	9
Bachelor of Arts (Top Up) Full-Time	1	2
Bachelor of Arts (Top Up) Part - Time	2	4
Diploma HE (Full-time)	1	4
Diploma HE (Part-time)	2	5
Foundation Degree	2	5

Maximum Enrolment Period: Non-validated Programmes

The maximum enrolment period for a non-validated programme of study, leading to a College Award, including any periods of interruption/intermission, shall be:

Table 7: Maximum Periods of Enrolment: Non-validated Programmes

Programme	Period of Study	Maximum Period of Enrolment
West Dean Certificate (Full-time)	3—months	1-year
West Dean Certificate (Part-time)	1-year	2-years
Online Certificate	1-year	3-years
West Dean Diploma (Part-time)	1-year	2-years
West Dean Foundation Diploma (Part-time)	2-years	4-years
Online Foundation Certificate (Part-time)	1-year	2-years
Online Foundation Diploma (Part-time)	1-year	2-years
Certificate in X Writing	1-year	2-years

An extension to the maximum period of enrolment shall be granted, by an Assessment Board, only in exceptional circumstances.

Students who exhaust the maximum period of enrolment for their Programme of Study, without achieving the final award, will have their enrolment terminated. In such circumstances, the student may be eligible for an Exit Award which will be determined at an Assessment Board.

Intermission and Returning to Studies

This section should be read in conjunction with the [College's Fitness to Study Policy](#).

Intermission

An intermission is an extended period of authorised absence from a Programme of Study. It may be:

- required by the College on grounds relating to the student's health and/or well-being, in accordance with the procedure described in the College's Fitness to Study Policy; or
- granted by, and at the discretion of, the relevant Head/Deputy Head of School at the request of a student on grounds of the student's personal circumstances. Such personal circumstances may include illness on the part of the student, illness or death on the part of a close relative of the student, financial difficulties, or other unforeseen circumstances, beyond the control of the student, and with the potential to have significant and adverse impact, for a substantial duration, on the student's ability to study.

Students required to intermit their studies on health or well-being grounds may be required to provide evidence that they are fit to resume their studies before they re-join the course.

An intermission is not to be confused with, or used as a substitute for, deferral of an assessment due to mitigating circumstances (See Mitigating Circumstances Policy).

Intermission will initially be approved for a period of no longer than one year. The minimum period of an approved intermission will depend on the structure of the Programme of Study but will normally be approved for a period of not less than a term.

During a period of intermission, a student is not normally entitled access to any of the College's services or systems; including IT, library, workshop or social facilities, beyond such access that is permitted to members of the public.

Information about the procedure for applying for an intermission is available in the [Student Assessment Policy](#).

Returning to Studies

After Intermission

Where a student commences a period of intermission in the middle of a unit and before completing the assessment requirements for that unit, no credit will be awarded and the student, upon their resumption of studies, will be required to re-join at the start of the uncompleted unit(s).

Where, upon the end of an approved period of intermission, a student wishes to apply for further intermission, the decision will be at the discretion of the College as this may put the student at risk of exhausting the maximum period of enrolment.

After Withdrawal

Where a student has, previously, chosen to withdraw from their Programme of Study, they may apply to re-join the programme within a period of two-years. Return and re-enrolment will be at the discretion of the College. The following will apply:

- The student's previous grades/marks for completed whole stages will be carried forward.
- The student will be required to re-join their programme at the stage after their last fully completed stage.
- Any Exit Award will be returned before any higher award is made.
- A former student may not return to a Programme of Study if they were discontinued due to academic failure or academic misconduct.

Attendance

This section should be read in conjunction with the College's [Attendance Policy](#).

The College has a duty to monitor attendance, and to act on non-attendance so that students can be supported to complete their Programme of Study. The practice-based nature of programmes means that it is unlikely that a student will be able to meet the learning outcomes without regular and sustained attendance at the College. As such, students are expected to attend all timetabled lectures, seminars, workshops, tutorials or any other teaching activity associated with their Programme of Study

The College is required to:

- Maintain an attendance record in order to meet their obligations in the event of an emergency.
- Monitor students' attendance and report as appropriate to the UK Visas and Immigration department, Student Loan Company or financial supporters.

Assessment

This section should be read in conjunction with the College's Student Assessment Policy.

General Principles of Assessment

Assessment is the process by which students' learning is evaluated. The aim of assessment is to determine the success of a student in relation to the learning outcomes associated with a specific unit within a Programme of Study.

The College seeks to ensure that all assessments are valid. This means that the assessment is designed to measure, at the appropriate level, the learning defined within the unit.

The purpose of assessment is to enable students to demonstrate that they have fulfilled the objectives of their programme of study, through achievement of learning outcomes, and that this achievement meets the standard required for the award.

Where a student may not be assessed under normal conditions; due to a disability, learning difficulty or mitigating circumstances beyond their control, alternative assessment arrangements may be made. This will provide a suitable form of assessment, for the student, while ensuring that parity and validity are maintained. Where an assessment, in a specific module or Programme of Study, is governed by an external professional body, any alternative form of assessment will require approval of that body.

Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcomes describe the knowledge, skill or behaviour that a student should be able to evidence at the end of a period of learning.

Programme Learning Outcomes

Programme Learning Outcomes are set out in the Programme Specification and describe the knowledge, skills and behaviours that a student should be able to evidence at the end of a Programme of Study.

Programme Learning Outcomes are not directly assessed. Rather, they are aligned to the aims of the programme and assessed through the Units

Unit Learning Outcomes

Unit Learning Outcomes are set out in the Unit Descriptors within the Programme Specification. These learning outcomes define what a student should be able to do at the end of the Unit. In assessing a student's learning, it is the learning outcome that determines both what is assessed and will inform the nature of the evidence that a student will submit for assessment.

Typically, a unit will have 3 or 4 learning outcomes and no more than 6 learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are written as statements of what the student should be able to evidence at the end of the unit. The content of the learning outcome will indicate the level of challenge that aligns with the level of the unit and Stage of the programme.

Learning outcomes should be written as clear statements of a single action or achievement. This is to ensure that the assessment is clear. For example:

At the end of this unit, the student should be able to:

- ✓ Analyse the outcomes of contextual research related to an identified topic.
- ✗ Analyse the outcomes of contextual research and present this to diverse audiences.

The first learning outcome is clear and indicates that the achievement will be based on 'analysis'. Whereas the second is overly complex. We cannot be clear as to whether the assessment will be based on 'analysis' or the 'presentation'. Effectively, the second is two different activities and therefore should be two learning outcomes.

To be deemed to have successfully completed a Unit, the student must achieve all of the learning outcomes defined for that unit. A student who does not achieve a learning outcome will be deemed to have failed the unit and may be given an opportunity for referral assessment. (See Referral and Deferral)

Achieving a learning outcome, in itself, does not indicate a level of achievement beyond the minimum. To determine the level to which a student has achieved a learning outcome and to define the mark or grade achieved, learning outcomes are mapped to Assessment Criteria.

When defining assessments, it is important to understand that a Unit learning outcome may only be summatively assessed once. There can be no 'partial' summative assessment of a learning outcome – a learning outcome is either achieved or not achieved. And, if it has been achieved, there is no valid reason to assess it again.

Assessment Criteria

Assessment Criteria are the specific description of the standards that a student is expected to achieve in a particular assessment. They are defined in order to set clear guidelines for what is deemed to be evidenced at different levels of achievement.

The College uses the following, as the basis for the Assessment Criteria:

West Dean College - Generic Assessment Criteria¹

Assessment Domain	Criteria
Practical	
Ideas and Intentions	Choice of materials and techniques is appropriate
Applied Skills	Materials and techniques are used effectively and fluently in practice
Innovation and Creativity	The development and application of techniques demonstrate originality and the extension of subject boundaries
Theoretical	
Contextual Knowledge	Practice is related to cultural/historical frameworks
Conceptual Understanding	New hypotheses are proposed that test and inform the boundaries of the discipline
Research and Enquiry	Relevant information is used to evaluate assumptions and make judgements
Professional	
Communication	Verbal, written and visual communications are fluent and effective
Professional Standards	A professional and ethical attitude is applied to work required.
Independence & Self-Management	Planning and implementing projects is effective demonstrates autonomy, independence and understanding of risk

For each level of achievement (or grade) there is a definition of what is expected to be evidenced by the student's assessment submission. The detailed Assessment Criteria for different grading schemes can be found in Appendix A.

Grading Schemes

The College operates different grading schemes, depending on the level the award and whether a programme is validated or non-validated. These schemes are described within the *West Dean Student Assessment Policy*.

¹ For the 2025-2026 academic year, these criteria apply to all courses except BA (Hons) Interior Design Level 4, DipHE Applied Interior Design (Full-time and Part-time Year 1). These courses are piloting the use of new assessment criteria, which are included in Appendix.

Unit Assessment

There are two possible approaches to unit assessment. Each has potential benefits and challenges. The choice of approach will relate to an overall assessment strategy as well as the subject of study and the nature of the unit to be assessed.

Elemental Assessment

Elemental assessment allows for the assessment of individual unit learning outcomes at different points in time. Learning outcomes may have different weightings. For a unit with four learning outcomes, delivered over a single term, we may structure elemental assessment as:

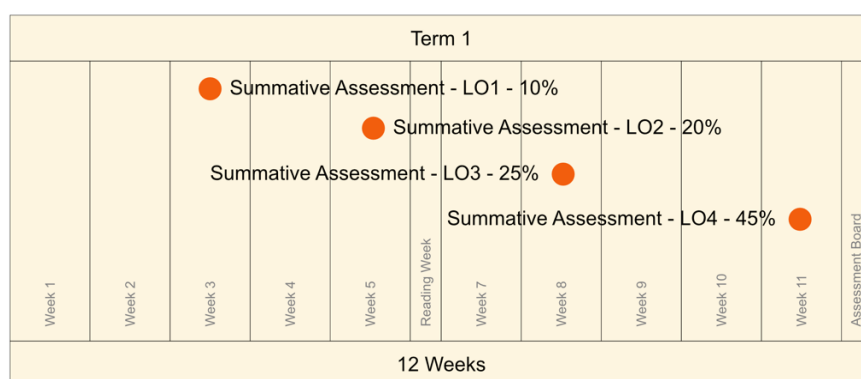


Figure 6 - Example of Weighted Elemental Assessment

When planning for elemental assessment, there are several key points that must be considered; to ensure that the assessment is valid and effective.

- ***Care must be taken to ensure that there is sufficient time in teaching & learning to enable the students to succeed in the assessment.*** In the example, above, there are 2-weeks of available teaching before the assessment of the first learning outcome. Therefore, we must ensure that the taught provision in the first two weeks is clearly going to enable the students to succeed in the assessment.
- ***Elemental assessment over shorter periods may not allow much time for formative assessment.*** Therefore, we must ensure that students; prior to the summative assessment, have some opportunity to gain an insight into their progress toward the assessment.
- ***It is possible to assess more than one learning outcome in a summative assessment.*** This may provide some greater time to integrate formative assessment,

to support students to have greater awareness of their progress toward summative assessment.

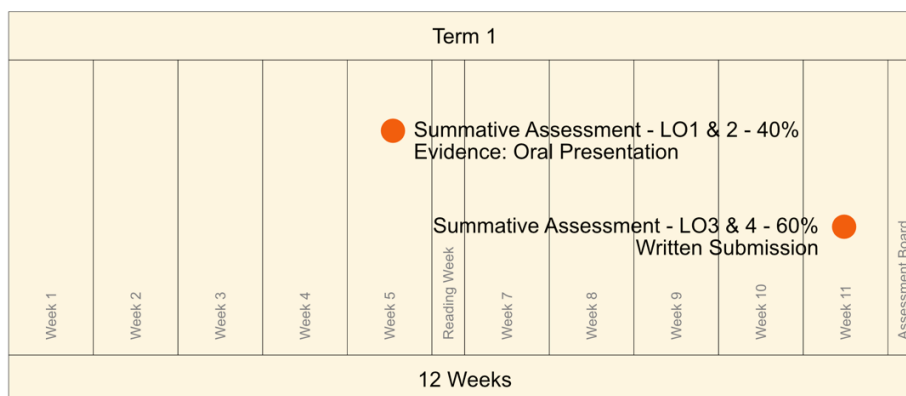


Figure 7 - Example of Elemental Assessment of combined Learning Outcomes

- ***Learning outcomes cannot be summatively assessed more than once.*** If a student fails an early 'element' of the assessment, they will; typically, have failed the unit and be required to retrieve the failed learning outcome.
- ***Tutors must ensure that the evidence of achievement of an 'element' is clearly aligned with what has been taught and the related learning outcomes.*** We cannot assess what we have not taught. Therefore, it is key to ensure that the required submission evidence, for the element of assessment, can be clearly understood in relation to the learning outcome and is underpinned by what has been taught. This is referred to as 'constructive alignment' and if it is not clear, the assessment may not be valid.

Holistic Assessment

Holistic assessment combines all learning outcomes into a single summative assessment at the end of the period of learning (end of the unit). For a unit with four learning outcomes, delivered over a single term, we would see an assessment structure like:

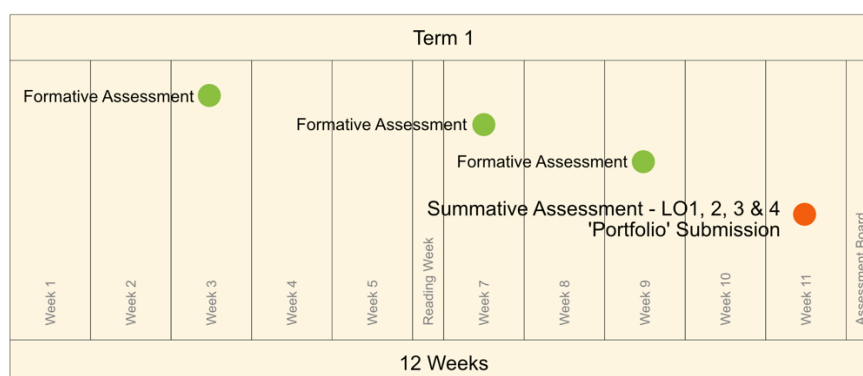


Figure 8 - Example of Holistic Assessment

It should be noted that holistic assessment relies upon a consistent use of formative assessment, during the period of learning, to support students to understand their development and progress toward achievement of the learning outcomes. These formative assessments may be related to individual learning outcomes or based on a progressing integration of learning associated with multiple learning outcomes.

Similarly, the summative assessment may be a 'body of work' or 'portfolio submission' that includes multiple types of evidence related to different or combined learning outcomes. The important fact is that this 'body of work' is submitted and assessed together; such that the assessment team may look at the student's achievement of learning outcomes *across* the body of work.

The necessity for formative assessment makes holistic assessment particularly appropriate for Parallel Delivery; where units are more likely to be delivered over longer periods, including multiple terms.

Using Elemental Assessment or Holistic Assessment

As with any decision about assessment, the primary concern should be to ensure that the delivery model and assessment model align to provide students with a supportive learning experience. Either Elemental or Holistic assessment can be valuable experiences for students, but each has challenges.

Research tells us that frequent high-stakes assessments contribute to stress, burnout, and reduced academic engagement.² Further, in the case of creative subjects, "focusing solely on results can lead to superficial learning, as students are less likely to engage deeply with the reflective and experimental practices that are central to their development as artists and designers."³ Thus, the use of Elemental Assessment, where we have multiple summative assessment points for each unit, may create additional stress in students and mitigate against students developing their creative practice.

In addition, Elemental Assessment when used with Sequential Delivery (where units may be delivered over shorter time periods) may limit the opportunities for formative assessment; such that students may not have sufficient insight into their development and progress toward summative assessment.

While Elemental Assessment may create increased stress in students due to the multiple assessments, Holistic Assessment creates very high-stakes assessment; as all learning outcomes will be assessed at once. This may reduce the number of assessments, and the

² Knight, *Summative Assessment in Higher Education* 2002

³ Eisner, *The Arts and the Creation of Mind* 2002

repeated stress that may occur in association with assessment points, but it does create (potentially) high levels of stress toward the end of the period of learning when students will be concerned about evidencing achievement in a large summative assessment. It is, for this reason, that Holistic Assessment must have a clear approach to the use of formative assessment to support student in continuously developing and improving toward the summative assessment.

Assessment Feedback

Feedback is a key element of student learning; supporting them to recognise what they have achieved and what requires improvement.

All summative assessments will, in addition to a grade, provide students with written feedback. This written feedback will provide, in a standard format, information about the achievement of learning outcomes and the level to which the learning outcome has been achieved (in relation to the assessment criteria).

Formative assessment, which does not provide a grade, will include either written or verbal feedback and may involve peer feedback. In designing formative assessments, staff should be mindful of the relationship between the formative assessment and the related summative assessment. Where the formative assessment may be the last opportunity for the student to gain insight into their progress, written feedback will be important to help the student understand how to continue to improve as they approach the summative assessment.

In all forms of written feedback, the language should be clear and concise. Feedback should avoid being overly long, which may make it difficult for the student to make effective use of the feedback. Staff should ensure that the written feedback, for summative assessment, aligns with the level of achievement (e.g., feedback should not use superlatives like “excellent” if the grade is not in the “A” band).

Calculation of Unit Grades

For many Units, the assessment requirement comprises a single component or portfolio of work which is assessed holistically in accordance with the grading scheme above. Where a unit of study consists of a number of assessed components, each component is assessed and awarded a mark on a percentage scale related to the grading scheme, which enables the calculation of the final unit grade to accurately reflect the relative weighting of each component.

The weighting given to different components of assessment is outlined in the Unit Descriptors of the Programme Specification.

Where a unit of study contains components that are weighted differently, the overall unit grade is derived using the awarded percentage multiplied by the weighting. An example is provided below:

Table 9: Example calculation of unit grades with weighted assessments

Assessment Evidence	Weighting	Example Tutor grade	Multiplier	Example conflated grade
Written coursework	70%	60/100	0.7	42
Oral presentation	30%	40/100	0.3	12
	100%			54%

In this example, a conflated grade of 54% would; therefore, equate to a grade C for the example unit when applying the West Dean Letter Grading scheme. (See Appendix C)

The final classification of the award will be based on the grade scores for all contributory units of the student's Programme of Study following confirmation by the Assessment Board.

Unit and Assessment Boards

Unit Boards

At the end of each Term or Level/Stage a Unit Board is convened to consider the attainment in each Unit of study that has been delivered within the term/stage. The Unit Board is responsible for considering each student's grades, any claims for mitigation or deferral resulting from intermission and making recommendations to the Assessment Board. The Unit Board is also responsible for the evaluation of Units through consideration of overall achievement data and recommendations for progression to the next stage.

The Unit Board is chaired by the Vice Principal or Head/Deputy Head of School and membership includes the Registrar and all unit leaders.

Assessment Boards

At the end of each Programme there is an Assessment Board. The unit level grades for students are received and decisions made as to the awarding of credit and awards.

All unit grades remain provisional until confirmed by an Assessment Board.

An Assessment Board is chaired by a representative of the University partner and membership includes senior staff from the College including the Vice Principal, the Registrar and all External Examiners.

Internal Assessment Boards

For qualifications that result in the achievement of an internal award (those not validated by a University partner), the College will convene regular Internal Assessment Boards.

The Internal Assessment Boards will be chaired by the Vice Principal or Head/Deputy Head of School and membership will include the Registrar, Head/ Deputy Head of School and Senior members of the Academic Team.

The Internal Assessment Board will receive unit level grades for students and decisions made as to the awarding of credit, progression and internal awards.

Referral and Deferral

Referral

Where a student's submitted work for a Unit, has been assessed and does not achieve a pass grade a *Referral* may be awarded.

If a Referral has been awarded for either a single unit or number of low credit weighted units, a retrieval opportunity is usually granted.

Referred work must be completed satisfactorily within a timescale agreed at the Assessment Board, which is, typically, six (6) weeks for full-time programmes and up to twelve (12) weeks for part time programmes.

The recorded grade for referred work will be 'capped' at the minimum passing grade for the Unit.

All students will be given another opportunity to submit failed work, but any additional opportunities is at the discretion of the Assessment Board. If, through assessment, the referred work does not achieve a satisfactory standard the unit will be recorded as Fail. In such circumstances, at the discretion of the Assessment Board, the students may be offered an opportunity to *retake* the unit. Further opportunities may be possible in a case where a student has had mitigating circumstances which have been accepted.

Deferral

Where a student has had Mitigating Circumstances accepted, they may be offered a *Deferral* at a Unit or Assessment Board. A deferral may be offered when the Mitigating Circumstances are accepted and, in the view of Mitigating Circumstances Panel have:

- led to a non-submission of work for a required assessment, or,
- led to work be submitted on time, but achieving a non-passing grade; or,
- led to work be submitted on time, but achieving a grade noticeably below that expected (based on prior achievement);

The award of a deferral may result in the student being given additional time to complete the work for resubmission. Deferred work must be completed satisfactorily within a timescale

agreed by the Assessment Board, which is typically six (6) weeks for full-time programmes and up to twelve (12) weeks for part-time programmes.

Where a Unit/Assessment Board has awarded a deferral, the student's grade; through assessment, will *not* be capped and this will be considered as their first attempt at the Unit.

A deferral will only be awarded where mitigating circumstances have been reviewed and accepted by the Mitigating Circumstances Panel.

If a student with accepted mitigating circumstances is offered a deferral, on the basis that the assessed grade was below the expected level of achievement and undertakes further work for reassessment, the original mark shall be expunged from the student record. Where a lower mark is obtained at this new submission, this mark shall be recorded. This principle applies in order to ensure equality of opportunity for all students.

Failure and Retake

Where a student has failed to achieve a passing grade through a referral, an Assessment Board may offer the opportunity to *retake* the failed unit(s).

The retake will take place at the next available starting date of the failed units. Typically, this will be at the start of the next academic year.

A retake will require full attendance and payment of (pro-rata) fees. The student will be required to undertake *new* work for submissions during the retake. The student may not submit work from a previous failed attempt.

During a retake, the student will have the same opportunity for referral or deferral.

A student will have only one (1) opportunity for the retake of a unit. If a retake, and any related referral, does not result in a passing grade the student will have *no further opportunity* to achieve the unit and will be withdrawn from the programme.

Compensation

An Assessment Board may, at its discretion, award credits by *compensation* where a student has not met the minimum standard required for a unit but is within a defined range of the required level.

Typically, the defined range for the awarding of compensation will be when a student is within the range indicated in the table below.

Table 9: Minimum achievement at which Compensation may be considered

Level of Award	Minimum Pass	Achievement at which compensation may be considered	Minimum Stage Mean
Undergraduate	40%	35-39%	40%
Postgraduate	50%	45-49%	50%
All others	40%	35-39%	40%

Failed units may be compensated up to a maximum of 20 credits per level or stage of a programme of study.

Compensation may only be awarded if the student has *fully attempted* the unit. This requires that all required work has been submitted for assessment.

Discretion

In exceptional circumstances an Assessment Board may award a second Referral attempt to a student who has failed to achieve a passing grade.

Progression

This section should be read in conjunction with the College's Student Assessment Policy.

Progression refers to the transition of a student from one Level/Stage of a programme to the next. Progression will be agreed at an Assessment Board at the end of the Level/Stage.

Programmes with only one Level/Stage do not have interim progression points. While unit grades may be confirmed by a mid-year Assessment Board, this is not a progression point; except in the case of the one-year full-time Masters programmes.

Students must achieve passing grades for all of the units within a Level/Stage in order to progress. Where a student has not achieved passing grades for all units, they may be given the opportunity for referral. In such cases, the student must complete the referral and achieve a passing grade in order to progress.

Where a student has not achieved passing grades for all units within the Level/Stage, a referral will usually only be offered if the total credits of the failed units is less than 50% of the overall credits for the Level/Stage. If the total credits of the failed units is in excess of 50% of the credits for the Level/Stage the student may be offered the opportunity to *retake* the Level/Stage.

In exceptional circumstances, where a student has failed more than 50% of the credits for Level/Stage they may have their studies terminated in accordance with the Student Assessment Policy.

Awards and Classification

Classification of an Award

The final classification of the award will be determined on the basis of the grade scores for all the applicable units of the student's programme of study following confirmation at the relevant Assessment Board.

Undergraduate Awards

Foundation Degree Arts (FdA)

Foundation Degree awards are classified as Pass, Merit or Distinction

- Pass will be awarded to students for the Foundation Degree award who have satisfied the requirements of the award and have achieved a mark for each module across the award of at least 40.00
- Merit will be awarded to students for the Foundation Degree award who have satisfied the requirements for a pass and have achieved a credit-weighted mean mark from all modules at level 5 of at least 60.00
- Distinction will be awarded to students for the Foundation Degree award who have satisfied the requirements for a pass and have achieved a credit-weighted mean mark from all modules at level 5 of at least 70.00

The *mean mark* will include all marks at Level 5, weighted according to their credit weighting.

Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE)

Diplomas of Higher Education awards are classified as Pass, Merit or Distinction

- Pass will be awarded to students who have satisfied the requirements of the award and have achieved a mark for each module of at least 40.00
- Merit will be awarded to students who have satisfied the requirements for a pass and have achieved a credit-weighted mean mark from all modules at level 5 of at least 60.00
- Distinction will be awarded to students who have satisfied the requirements for a pass and have achieved a credit-weighted mean mark from all modules at level 5 of at least 70.00

Bachelor of the Arts Programmes (BA)

Bachelor of the Arts, with Honours, awards are classified as First Class (1st), Upper Second Class (2.1), Lower Second Class (2nd) and Third Class (3rd).

- A First Class degree will be awarded to students of a BA who have satisfied the requirements of the award and achieved a credit-weighted mean mark of at least 70.00
- An Upper Second Class degree will be awarded to student of a BA who have satisfied the requirements and achieved a credit-weighted mean mark of at least 60.00
- A Lower Second Class degree will be awarded to student of a BA who have satisfied the requirements and achieved a credit-weighted mean mark of at least 50.00
- A Third Class degree will be awarded to student of a BA who have satisfied the requirements and achieved a credit-weighted mean mark of at least 40.00

The *mean mark* will include all marks at both Levels 5 and Level 6, weighted according to their credit weighting, with a ration of Level 5 to Level 6 of 40:60.

For students progressing to Level 6 of a Bachelors programme from either the Sussex-validated Diploma HE Applied Interior Design or FdA Clocks (etc), the *grand mean mark* will include all marks at both levels 5 and 6, weighted according to their credit weighting, with the ratio of level 5 to level 6 being 40:60. This assumes the previous award is rescinded.

For Students entering at Level 6 from any other institution, the mean mark will be 100% weighted on marks achieved for applicable Units at Level 6.

Graduate Diploma and Postgraduate Programmes

Graduate Diploma (GD)

Graduate Diploma awards are classified as Pass, Merit or Distinction.

- Pass will be awarded to students for the Graduate Diploma award who have satisfied the requirements of the award and have achieved a mark for each module across the award of at least 50.00
- Merit will be awarded to students for the Graduate Diploma award who have satisfied the requirements of a pass and have achieved a credit-weighted mean mark from all modules of at least 60.00
- Distinction will be awarded to students for the Graduate Diploma award who have satisfied the requirements of a pass and have achieved a credit-weighted mean mark from all modules of at least 70.00

Master of Arts (MA)

Master of Arts awards are classified as Pass, Merit or Distinction

- Pass will be awarded to students for the Masters award who have satisfied the requirements of the award and have achieved a mark for each module across the award of at least 50.00
- Merit will be awarded to students for the Masters award who have satisfied the requirements for a pass and have achieved a credit-weighted mean mark from all modules of at least 60.00 with at least 50% of credits achieved at 60.00 or above including the final major unit.
- Distinction will be awarded to students for the Masters award who have satisfied the requirements for a pass and have achieved a credit-weighted mean mark from all modules of at least 70.00 with at least 50% of credits achieved at 70.00 or above including the final major unit.

Master of Fine Arts (MFA)

Master of Fine Arts awards are classified as Pass, Merit or Distinction

- Pass will be awarded to students for the MFA award who have satisfied the requirements of the award and have achieved a mark for each module across the award of at least 50.00
- Merit will be awarded to students for the MFA award who have satisfied the requirements for a pass and have achieved a credit-weighted mean mark from all modules of at least 60.00 with at least 50% of credits achieved at 60.00 or above including the final major unit.
- Distinction will be awarded to students for the MFA award who have satisfied the requirements for a pass and have achieved a credit-weighted mean mark from all modules of at least 70.00 with at least 50% of credits achieved at 70.00 or above including the final major unit.

Grades and recommended awards may only be confirmed by a fully constituted Assessment Board, chaired by the validating University. Students are informed that all grades remain subject to confirmation by the Assessment Board.

Non-validated Awards

West Dean Certificate (WD Cert)

West Dean Certificate awards are classified as Pass, Merit or Distinction

West Dean Diploma (West Dean Dip)

West Dean Diploma awards are classified as Pass, Merit or Distinction

West Dean Foundation Art & Design (FAD)

West Dean Foundation Art & Design awards are classified as Pass/Fail.

Exit Awards

A fully constituted Assessment Board, chaired by the Validating University, may confer an *exit award* for students who do not achieve the requirements for the full award but have achieved sufficient credits at an interim Level.

Bachelor of the Arts (BA)

Table 10: BA Exit Awards

Award type	Award	Level	Eligibility for award		Classification of award
			Total credits	Ratio of marks	Class of award
Intermediate	Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE)	4	120	Level 4 marks	Certificate Higher Education
Intermediate	Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE)	5	240	Level 5 marks	Diploma Higher Education
Intermediate	BA Ordinary Degree	6	300	A minimum of 60 Credits at Level 6	Degree
Final	BA (Hons)	6	360	60% level 6: 40% level 5	Honours Degree

Master of the Arts (MA)

Table 11: MA Exit Awards

Award type	Award	Level	Eligibility for award		Classification of award
			Total credits	Ratio of marks	Class of award
Intermediate	Postgraduate Diploma	7	120	Level 7 marks	Postgraduate Diploma
Final	Master of the Arts (MA)	7	180	Level 7 marks	Masters

Master of Fine Arts (MFA)

Table 12: MFA Exit Awards

Award type	Award	Level	Eligibility for award		Classification of award
			Total credits	Ratio of marks	Class of award
Intermediate	Postgraduate Diploma	7	120	Level 7 marks	Postgraduate Diploma
Intermediate	Masters of the Arts	7	180	Level 7 marks	Masters
Final	Master of Fine Arts	7	240	Level 7 marks	Master of Fine Arts

Aegrotat Awards

Where a student suffers severe or long-term illness, an *aegrotat* may be recommended when an Assessment Board lacks sufficient evidence of the student's performance to be able to recommend the award for which the student was a candidate.

The Assessment Board must be satisfied that, but for illness or other valid cause, the student would have demonstrated the standard required. In such circumstances, the student or their representatives must have signified that the student is willing to accept the award.

Posthumous Awards

In the event of a student death, the deceased student may be recommended for the award on which they were registered. Where all the required assessments for the award were completed at the time of death the award and classification will be considered under the standard process of the classification of the award. Where the required assessments were not completed at the time of death, an unclassified award will be conferred.

A posthumous award will, typically, be the named award to which the student was registered except in cases where professional body requirements may indicate otherwise.

External Examiners

For every validated programme of study, or across multiple courses within a related subject area, leading to a qualification awarded by the Validating University there will be at least one examiner who is external to the College and validating University whose primary role is:

- to verify that academic standards are appropriate for the qualification that they have been appointed to examine;
- to ensure that the academic standards are nationally comparable to the standards of other institutions, nationally, for the subject of the qualification that they have been appointed to examine;
- to ensure that the assessment process is in keeping with the College and University's policies and regulations and has been undertaken fairly, with rigour.

The Validating University will provide external examiners with a copy of their External Examiners Handbook setting out the principles and requirements governing:

- the functions of an External Examiner
- the nomination, appointment and induction of External Examiners
- the preparation and submission of External Examiner reports
- the College and University's consideration of and responses to External Examiner reports.

Glossary

Directed Study - refers to learning activities that are either:

- undertaken with the in-person guidance of a member of academic or support staff. This may include taught sessions, studio work, tutorials, lectures, seminars, engagement with library staff or workshop technicians, etc.
- undertaken online, based on prior preparation of teaching materials by a member of academic or support staff. This may include engaging with online lectures, training videos or other online material.

Independent Study - refers to activities that may be required to continue the development of learning but are undertaken outside of the studio/classroom and are not under the supervision of a member of academic or support staff.

Appendix A - New Assessment Criteria

The criteria, below, are the new Generic Criteria for West Dean College. These have been approved within the College and were piloted by the BA(Hons) Level 4 Course within KLC School of Design for the academic year 2025-2026.

Following a successful 1-year 'pilot', the criteria will be brought into effect for all new courses within the College for September 2026. Existing students who commenced their courses before September 2026 will remain on the older version of the Assessment Criteria as outlined in their handbooks and Programme Specifications.

Criterion	Definition
Research / Analysis	Engagement in a process of enquiry and investigation of ideas, theories and practice
Ideation /Creativity/Proposition	Generating ideas and theories through experimentation in practice.
Development/ Exploration	The process of developing ideas through creative, design or scientific practice.
Technical / Material Knowledge	The application of knowledge of materials, properties and processes in the development of bodies of work.
Communication / Resolution	The production of a body of work and the use of diverse methods of communication, appropriate to the practice and the intention of the work.
Professional Practice	Understanding of professionalism within the subject area, individual and collaborative working practices