Open College of the Arts (OCA)
Assessment Policy and Procedures

1. The purpose of this policy

1.1 This policy sets out OCAs approach to assessing student work, how this occurs, when, and the controls that are in place to ensure quality.

2. The purpose of this policy

2.1 This policy applies to assessment undertaken as part of OCA undergraduate or postgraduate programmes of study only. It applies to all OCA students, staff, and tutors.

3. Linked and other relevant policies and legislation

3.1 This policy is part of the OCA Student Regulations.

3.2 This policy references:

- The University for The Creative Arts (UCA) Quality Assurance Handbook (QAH)
- OCA Academic Regulatory Framework (ARF) - undergraduate programmes only
- OCA Common Credit Framework (CCF) - postgraduate programmes only
- OCA Academic Appeal Regulations
- OCA Extensions and Deferrals Policy
- OCA Reasonable Adjustments Policy
- OCA Academic Misconduct Regulations
- Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)
- Quality Assurance Agency UK (QAA) Subject Benchmarks
- QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education
- GDPRte
- UCA Harvard Referencing Guide

4. General Assessment Principles

4.1 Assessment at OCA is seen as an integrated and meaningful part of students' overall learning experience. It therefore uses an 'assessment for learning' approach, which emphasises assessment *for* learning rather than assessment *of* learning. Assessment for learning helps to define appropriate assessment tasks that encourage critical reflection, support students by explaining the assessment process, and encourages students and assessors to position assessment as part of an overall learning experience.

4.2 The purpose of assessment is to enable students to demonstrate that they have achieved the stated learning outcomes of a unit, and that they have achieved the standard required for the unit credit to be awarded. Where applicable, assessment will also quantify the level of performance by the use of percentage marks for feed-forward, processing assessment outcomes and calculation of awards.

4.2 Assessment processes at OCA are quality checked to ensure equitability, inclusivity, transparency, reliability, and validity. All OCA assessment processes are in line with QAA requirements.

4.3 OCA believes that timely, well-grounded, constructive, and challenging formative feedback and feed forward is essential for successful learning. Formative feedback motivates and supports reflection, especially when valid criticism is accompanied by appropriate positive commentary. Feedforward provides narrative on how you might approach future studies or practice. Students will receive regular formative feedback on assignments and project work to help them reflect on their learning, and prepare for summative assessment. Through assessment, students will be provided with brief summative feedback, which will relate to the assessment criteria, and follow the same well-grounded, constructive, and challenging principles as formative feedback.

4.4 OCA has considered the alignment between intended learning outcomes, teaching strategies, methods of assessment, and assessment criteria, to enable all students to achieve the desired learning outcomes, measured through assessment activities using clearly aligned criteria.

4.5 Student work is assessed against the current assessment criteria published in each Unit Descriptor, and described across stages through a set of range statements. These are set in accordance with national standards in the discipline, with reference to the appropriate outcomes in the FHEQ and QAA subject benchmarks (HE) or course specifications (FE). These ensure that students are tested for both subject-specific knowledge and general transferable skills.

4.6 Preparing for assessment guidance, including current range statements, is available to students to help explain and support the assessment process, and to reinforce assessment for learning values. The current guidelines are available on OCA Learn. If any of the guidelines are updated, students will be notified by OCA.

5. Assessment Procedures and Process

5.1 Assurance of academic quality

5.1.1 All undergraduate and postgraduate courses offered by the OCA are subject to a rigorous process of validation overseen by University for the Creative Arts (UCA). Courses are validated for a period of a maximum of five years, after which time the course is subject to undergo formal Periodic Review.

5.1.2 Responsibility for validation and review (including the determination of procedures and regulations for the process, and confirmation of the outcome of events) is delegated by the UCA Academic Board to the UCA Academic Quality Committee. The approved procedures for validation and review are contained within UCA's Quality Assurance Handbook (Sections C and H).

5.1.3 Validation and review panels consider the standard of the course against all relevant criteria, including the expectations of the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education and ensure that the proposed curriculum and assessment methods will meet the stated learning objectives of the course.

5.1.4 Non-material changes to validated courses are approved by OCA's Curriculum & Quality Committee, enabling a timely response to issues identified through course monitoring. Material changes are considered at institutional level. The criteria for changes to courses and the processes for approval of those changes are described in Section E of UCA's Quality Assurance Handbook.

5.1.5 In addition, all courses are subject to rigorous annual academic monitoring, which ensures that the academic standards of OCA's awards are secure. Annual academic monitoring is a self-critical process in which the views of staff, students, external examiners, and others who contribute to the delivery of courses are considered, as well as substantial statistical data on assessment performance and trends. Procedures for annual academic monitoring are approved by UCA's Academic Quality Committee, and are published in UCA's Quality Assurance Handbook.

5.1.6 Assessed work is subject to internal moderation to ensure that the standard of marking is consistent and that the level of marks is appropriate. Internal moderation may take several forms, but is most often carried out on a sample of assessed work.

5.1.7 For undergraduate and postgraduate provision, appropriately qualified and experienced external examiners are appointed for each award to audit the assessment process. Examiners must confirm the standard of student performance is appropriate for the award offered in the discipline given at their demonstrated level; that the standard of student performance is comparable with similar programmes, or subjects, in other UK institutions; that the process for assessment, examination and the determination of awards is sound and fairly conducted; the standard of marking is satisfactory; there is an appropriate spread of marks, which reflects the students work sampled; and there is evidence of appropriate internal verification of marks.

5.1.8 For undergraduate programmes the ARF, and for postgraduate programmes the CFF, specifies how assessment outcomes are aggregated to determine progression, award and classification; the conditions under which compensation may be applied; the type and nature of reassessment opportunities (including penalties to be applied); penalties for late or non-submission; and arrangements for deferred submission or examination.

5.2 Boards of Examiners

5.2.1 For all OCA's taught awards, the Boards of Examiners are charged with confirming the outcomes of assessment, and ensuring that the standard of student achievement is commensurate with the agreed learning outcomes for the units and courses for which they are responsible. The Boards of Examiners are responsible for making decisions about progression, award and classification.

5.3 Conduct of assessment

5.3.1 Where any course leads to, or forms part of, the qualification of a professional or statutory body, a clear statement of this fact will be contained within the Programme Specification. The value and status of this qualification across the national sector will also be stated.

5.3.2 The Unit Descriptors detail the assessment requirements, and give specific weightings of each component. Validation and review panels consider the spread, number and methods of assessment to ensure that the burden of assessment is not excessive. Further review is provided through the annual academic monitoring exercise.

5.3.3 Work assessed is identifiable because of the practical nature of courses offered by OCA, and the very individual nature of many projects. The assessment criteria, mark descriptors and verification procedures ensure that assessment is conducted fairly.

5.3.4 The integrity of academic conduct is of paramount importance and all forms of academic misconduct are taken seriously. Where students are suspected of academic misconduct an investigation will be undertaken. For further information see the Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism Policy.

5.4 Marking

5.4.1 The regulations for assessment are contained in the Academic Regulatory Framework (undergraduate) and Common Credit Framework (postgraduate).

5.4.2 For the purposes of calculating unit and award outcomes, a mark between 0 and 100 is given for each assessment component.

5.4.3 All assessment components must be passed for a pass to be achieved in the unit. The minimum pass mark is 40.

5.4.4 Assessment components are weighted in terms of their contribution to the overall unit mark, as stated in the validated unit descriptor.

5.4.5 Where an assessment component comprises two or more assessment tasks, the mark shall be awarded to the assessment component rather than to the individual assessment tasks.

5.4.6 Mark Descriptors have been developed to assist in the assurance of standards and equity across courses (these are appended to the Academic Regulatory Framework and Common Credit Framework).

5.5 Assessment / Summative feedback

5.5.1 Students will be provided with feedback on all summatively assessed components and feedback will address all the relevant assessment criteria.

5.5.2 Assessment feedback may be provided in a variety of formats, including group, written, or oral feedback relating to common themes emerging from assessment, individual oral

feedback, individual written feedback, peer commentary, etc. In creative arts subjects, there is typically a substantial element of oral formative feedback on practical work contributing to students' learning

5.5.3 In order to ensure parity in practice, OCA has developed an Assessment Marksheet (for undergraduate and postgraduate students) this includes the final assessment mark as well as the feedback. Students receive a separate Assessment Marksheet for each unit assessed. For units with more than one assessment component, the Assessment Marksheet will specify individual feedback for each component. The Assessment Marksheet including overall mark is provisional until confirmed by the Board of Examiners. Completed Assessment Marksheets are provided to students by the timeframe confirmed at the Board of Examiners. At OCA's discretion a provisional mark may be provided in advance of the Board of Examiners. This is usually within 10 working days from the exam board date. Students who have submitted physical work for submission will have their work returned to them by courier after the Exam Board. OCA accepts no liability for customs charges for work returned overseas. Students who have indicated they are collecting their physical assessment submission will be contacted by OCA to arrange a collection date. OCA reserves the right to dispose of work that is not collected or returned as undeliverable.

5.5.4 The following principles are intended to inform the academic practice of providing summative feedback:

- Feedback should motivate, be positive and include constructive comment on things that have been done well;
- Feedback should provide guidance on what could have been done better and how, so that a student knows how to improve next time;
- Feedback should provide enough detail to evaluate the ideas and techniques that students have used in their work to enable them to digest their learning and to improve their understanding of how they can improve;
- Feedback should promote dialogue between students, tutors and the work;
- Feedback comments should describe achievement with respect to a clearly referenced assessment criterion;
- The Assessment Descriptors must be used to frame description of achievement in a course and its units using language relevant to the subject or discipline so that feedback reflects the level of achievement; and
- Where appropriate, feedback should reference spelling, grammar and use of English.

5.5.5 Feedback commentary should be delivered in plain English, consistent with the language used for the appropriate learning outcomes and assessment criteria, and contextualised within the aims and outcomes of the unit and/or degree pathway.

5.5.6 Summative assessment contributes to a unit outcome; whilst formative assessment is purely for the purposes of development learning and does not attract a mark. Formative assessment should be accompanied by informal feedback in order to develop students' learning in preparation for summative assessment.

5.6 Collaborative provision

5.6.1 Under certain circumstances, limited changes may be made to assessment practice for OCA partners and/or collaborative provision. These changes do not affect any of the provisions outlined in paragraphs 5.1-5.5 inclusive.

6. Support for the policy

6.1 Should you need any help with this policy you should contact our Assessment team at assessment@oca.ac.uk, where they will be able to answer any queries you have.

6.2 Supplementary to this policy are a range of documents to support assessment available through the OCA student website. These include Preparing for Assessment, a detailed guide on how to prepare and submit work for assessment, and range statements for assessment marks.

7. Control of the policy

7.1 This policy was authored by Christian Lloyd, Director of Teaching and Learning, and Moira Lovell, Director of Curriculum and Quality in consultation with OCA Staff and the Student Association and given approval through Oversight Management Group in April 2021.

8. Reviewing the policy

8.1 OCA will work closely with the Student Association to gather student feedback on the outline of the policy, its intentions, the administration of the policy, and a review of all these points in practice. These will then be fed into the next review point for the policy.

8.2 The next review date is June 2021. If you would like to raise any issues around this policy then you should contact assesment@oca.ac.uk, or if you are a student, you might also wish to raise these with the appropriate Student Association representative.