# Glossary of Assessment Terms

**Assignment**

A project, task or piece of work, which needs to be submitted for assessment.

**Brief**

Details of the work required for assessment (it may also be referred to as an assessment brief or assignment brief). Any summative assessment must have a written brief, which is published on the Blackboard course site, and includes:

* Contextual information about the purpose of the assignment and how it relates to other tasks and units on the course.
* Details of the assessment task including the weighting of the task in the calculation of your unit grade (where this occurs).
* The submission requirement including any specific parameters (e.g. word count, minimum/maximum pieces of work).
* The submission date.
* Reading lists and other appropriate resources.
* The marking criteria relevant to the assessment task.

**Element**

Each course unit may be made up of a number of different assessment tasks. These individual tasks are referred to as elements. Your course handbook will indicate whether all of the elements are considered individually or holistically (see Holistic Assessment below). In element assessment, all of the pieces of assessment evidence are marked individually and given a grade. Each piece of work is given a ‘weighting’ i.e. some pieces of work may represent a higher proportion of your final unit grade than others. Your weighted marks are added together to give your overall grade for the unit. You will need to achieve at least an E grade in each individual element and an overall grade of D- to pass the unit.

**Feedback**

The marks you receive in the final stage constitute your degree results. However, before that, and arguably even more importantly, feedback on your work supports your learning by helping you understand what is expected of your work at this level, analysing what you have achieved so far, and indicating how you can improve your work in future. Feedback can be informal i.e. conversations with your tutors, or can be given to you on the UAL Assessment Feedback Form which has been developed to help tutors give you clear and helpful feedback on your work.

**Formative Assessment**

An assessment which is designed to be developmental and supportive and which usually concentrates on helping you to improve rather than on what mark a piece of work deserves. You may receive an indicative grade for a formative assessment, but it will not count towards your unit grade.

**Grade**

You will be given a letter grade for each summative element of assessment or piece of work. The grades have an equivalent point value (e.g. an A- is worth 13 points). The points are used to add the grades for each unit together, to calculate your grade for the whole year, and on the final stage of your course, to calculate your degree classification. You may also be given an ‘indicative’ grade for formative assessments and projects. The indicative grade is not used in the calculation of your results, but helps you to understand your current level of achievement, and where you can improve in future.

**Holistic Assessment**

Each course unit may be made up of a number of different assessment tasks. Your course handbook will indicate whether all of the tasks are considered holistically or as individual elements (see Element Assessment above). Holistic assessment emphasises the importance of your performance in the unit as a whole and recognises the interdependence of all the assessment elements. All of the pieces of work in the unit are considered in one, over-arching judgement of your performance against the marking criteria of the University and the learning outcomes of your course. You will receive one summative assessment grade for the unit, but you may also be given a number of formative assessment tasks to support your learning throughout the unit, which do not carry individual grades. You will need to achieve an overall grade of at least D- to pass the unit.

**Internal Moderation**

Also known as Internal Verification. Your work may be marked by an individual tutor, by two separate tutors (double marking) or by a group of staff (this is common where there is an exhibition or show to evaluate). Where work is marked by a single tutor, a sample of the work will be reviewed by a second tutor to confirm that the standard of marking is fair and equal across the unit. Where there is more than one marker, the course team will meet to discuss and agree the final grades for the unit. This is used to reconcile any differences in marking between tutors, and ensures that the standard of marking is fair and equal across the unit and course.

**Learning outcomes**

* Learning Outcomes articulate academic standards and what tutors want you to be able to do or know; they help tutors plan courses, course units, and learning and teaching activities including assessment.
* Learning Outcomes help to define the purpose of your course/course unit/ learning activity, by explaining what the course or activity is intended to help you do or know.
* Learning Outcomes should be written in clear straightforward language so that course teams and students can discuss them with confidence.
* Learning Outcomes vary in how demanding they are, according to the level of study. The higher the level of study, the more demanding the learning outcomes.

It is important that the learning outcomes are appropriate for the level and purpose of study, achievable for students and aligned with the teaching and assessment methods. It can be helpful to plan for not too many and not too few learning outcomes, but there is not a fixed desirable number.

**Level**

The term used to distinguish the phases of study on all the courses in the University. The assessments in each unit are aligned with the levels described in both the University’s Credit Framework and the national Framework for Higher Education Qualifications. In practice a level usually maps onto a full time year of study. The use of the term helps to distinguish between a full time student completing a level in a single academic year and a part time student taking two or more academic years to complete a level. It also distinguishes between undergraduate study, taught postgraduate study and postgraduate research. The learning outcomes of a course or qualification increase in sophistication with the level.

**Marking Criteria**

The basis on which tutors award marks and give you feedback on how to improve your work. Not all the criteria will be relevant to every course unit or assignment. Any criteria which do not apply will be marked as such. The individual Marking Criteria are not ‘weighted’ (i.e. a specific proportion of your mark is not attributed to each criterion); markers will consider your performance as a whole. However, some criteria may be given more emphasis at some times than others, to support your learning or because of the nature of the assignment. Any particular emphasis in terms of the criteria will be made clear in the assignment brief.

**Stage**

The term used to indicate how far you have progressed on the course. The final stage is the period of the course when your unit marks count towards your degree.

**Submission**

The work or activity which you provide or ‘hand-in’ for assessment.

**Summative Assessment**

An assessment which is designed to evaluate the standard of your work and give you a grade that reflects your level of achievement. Summative assessments are always given a grade which is included in the calculation of your end of year result and, in the final stage of the course, in the calculation of your classification. You are expected to pass all summative assessments unless you qualify for compensation (see Course Regulations website).

**Unit**

Each course is divided into units of study. A unit may comprise one or several assignments (also known as elements). You will receive a letter grade for each unit you complete, and the grades from your final stage units are combined to give your degree result.