

Assessment Handbook 2026-27

Summary of changes

Section 3: Setting assessment

Standard-setting (3.5-3.9)

A new section of text, addressing the need for SEBs to ensure that assessments are designed and calibrated at the correct level of difficulty for the disciplinary area and FHEQ level.

This text was approved by the Education Quality and Standards Board in April 2026.

Section 5: Marking Policy

Artificial intelligence and marking (5.4-6)

New clauses, intended to clarify the permitted scope and limitations of the use of AI to support marking. These are deliberately relatively high level, and link to other files and policies that are regularly updated. It is anticipated that, as this field develops, these clauses will be subject to additional updates for future editions:

“5.4 Staff may – within the limits of this Policy - use artificial intelligence to assist with marking and providing feedback to students, but marks and feedback must not be awarded directly or solely by AI. AI is a tool to support markers in making their decisions, which must be based on academic judgement. The marker remains fully accountable for all marking and feedback decisions.

“5.5 AI-supported marking may only be used where the Subject Examination Board Chair has been informed in advance and is in agreement that its use is appropriate. The SEB and its Chair are responsible for monitoring and recording where and how AI is used to support marking.

“5.6 AI-supported marking may only be used where the [AI tool is approved for use at Queen Mary](#), and where its use fully complies with the University’s [policies on AI and IT, including but not limited to data protection, privacy, and information security](#). Its use must also align with the requirements set by the relevant Faculty and School or Institute, and with the [University’s expectations for the use of AI in education](#).”

A long-standing clause addressing assessments that are marked automatically by computer (typically where there are clear right and wrong answers) has also been updated to explicitly reference AI and the continued need for humans in the loop:

“5.42 Electronic marking refers to cases where marking is completed automatically, generally by a computer or AI system. The human marker remains accountable for the final award of marks, and results of electronically marked assessments should be checked by the SEB for item difficulty and discrimination. Missing data points shall be checked against the original forms. Any items that do not perform correctly should be reviewed, with the possibility of scaling or exclusion of the question.”

Mark scaling (5.54-98)

A substantive new set of procedures on mark scaling have been added, to address situations where there is a need to adjust marks across a cohort where an issue with the design or difficulty of an assessment is identified.

Queen Mary has not previously had a single scaling policy, and SEBs have operated local arrangements. The new procedures ensure a level of institutional consistency and robust consideration.

These procedures were developed by the EQSB Assessment Sub-Board and approved by the EQSB in April 2026 for inclusion in the Assessment Handbook 2026-27.

Section 8: External examining

Approval of assessment tasks by external examiners (increase to threshold) (8.9.ii)

Assessments totalling a minimum 60% of each module must be approved by external examiners before students attempt them (including all examinations)

This is an increase from the previous minimum figure of 50%, and was approved by the EQSB in April 2026. It reflects changes in assessment design in recent years, with fewer modules that have one very heavily weighted assessment and one or more 'minor' elements in favour of two or more significant but fairly equally weighted elements. The change ensures thorough consideration of all significant elements, to provide a better experience for students and a robust test of the quality and standards of the assessments and , further supporting alignment and compliance with OfS Condition B4.

External examiner appointment criteria (8.14 and appendix 5)

Revised appointment criteria (Appendix 5) were approved by the EQSB in April 2026. These include two notable changes:

1. New external examiners must demonstrate recognition of their teaching, either as a formal qualification or through membership of the HEA.
2. The provisions around the appointment, or succession, of externals from the same institution have been revised to allow a small degree of flexibility for exceptional cases while maintaining a meaningful variety of viewpoints.

Termination of an external examiner's contract where they do not submit reports (8.23)

Queen Mary already has provisions to terminate an external examiner's contract where there is a breakdown in the working relationship and where the external fails to perform their duties. An additional clause has been added with an explicit expectation that an external who fails to submit an annual report on more than once occasion should have their contract terminated. This was approved by the EQSB in April 2026.

Approval of marking by external examiners (clarification) (8.33 and 5.7)

Samples of marked assessments for each module must be approved by external examiners as part of the marking process. The main detail of the provision is covered at 8.33, but it is also referenced in the Marking Policy at 5.7.

Specifically, this is a reminder that an illustrative sample of submissions for *all* marked elements of assessment should be considered by an external rather than a selection (for example, a sample limited to the examination or two a single element).

The policy aligns with ongoing changes to assessment design, with fewer modules that have one very heavily weighted assessment and one or more ‘minor’ elements in favour of two or more significant but fairly equally weighted elements. The change ensures thorough consideration of the marking of all significant elements, to provide a robust test of the quality and standards of the assessments, further supporting alignment and compliance with OfS Condition B4.

New appendices

Three appendices on external examining have been added to the Assessment Handbook: the revise appointment criteria outlined above, the pre-existing external examiner fee calculation guidance, and a new appendix setting out detailed operational guidance for SEBs on external examining.

Other changes

Minor amendments to drafting have been made throughout the Assessment Handbook. These are not substantive, and either serve to consolidate and clarify the text, or to update terminology, titles, and style to reflect current usage.