

University Centre Colchester (UCC)

Teaching and Learning Policy for Higher Education

| Policy Details | | | |
|------------------------|--|------------------|-----------------|
| Policy Owner | Head of Quality and UCC Education Programmes | | |
| CE Sponsor | Principal and Chief Executive | | |
| Date created this year | 14 April 2025 | | |
| Version: | Approved by: | Date approved: | To be reviewed: |
| 1 | College Executive | 14 July 2025 | June 2028 |
| 1 | Curriculum and Quality Committee | 13 November 2025 | June 2028 |

Equality Impact Assessment Tool

| | | Yes/No | Comments |
|----------|---|--------|----------|
| 1 | Does the policy/guidance affect one group less or more favourably than another on the basis of: | | |
| | Race or ethnicity | No | |
| | Disability | No | |
| | Gender | No | |
| | Religion or belief | No | |
| | Sexual orientation | No | |
| | Age | No | |
| | Marriage and Civil Partnership | No | |
| | Maternity and Pregnancy | No | |
| | Gender Reassignment | No | |
| 2 | Is there any evidence that some groups are affected differently? | No | |
| 3 | If you have identified potential discrimination, are any exceptions valid, legal and/or justifiable? | N/A | |
| 4 | Is the impact of the policy/guidance likely to be negative? | No | |
| 5 | If so, can the impact be avoided? | N/A | |
| 6 | What alternatives are there to achieving the policy/guidance without the impact? | N/A | |
| 7 | Can we reduce the impact by taking different action? | N/A | |

Introduction

At University Centre Colchester, our approach to teaching and learning is designed to encourage a positive, inclusive, and supportive environment where students can flourish academically and professionally. This policy reflects our guiding core values of integrity, inclusion, collaboration, respect, and ambition. It ensures that we meet the diverse needs of our students while encouraging continuous professional development for our staff.

1. Teaching and Learning Principles

Aligned with Condition B1 of the Office for Students (OfS, 2022) regulatory framework, our teaching and learning principles aim to ensure that students receive a high-quality academic experience that is pedagogically sound, inclusive, and supports critical engagement, socialisation, and professional development through:

- Creating an inclusive learning environment that enables all students to thrive through Universal Design for Learning¹. Our approach to teaching and learning is underpinned by a balanced recognition of the core educational purposes: the acquisition of knowledge and skills (qualification), active engagement in academic and wider societal communities (socialisation), and the development of critical, independent, and responsible students (subjectification). This holistic model supports the academic, social, and personal flourishing of every student, promoting equitable access to meaningful and transformative learning experiences (Biesta, 2010²).
- A commitment to creating transformative learning experiences, informed by Mezirow's (2000³) theory of transformative learning, in which students are supported to critically reflect on their underlying assumptions, challenge taken-for-granted perspectives, and develop new, more inclusive, and informed ways of understanding the world.
- Nurturing a collaborative learning community in which staff and students are partners in the educational process. For example, on some programmes Teaching and Learning are designed to engage learners through a balanced and purposeful integration of Diana Laurillard's (2012⁴) six learning types: acquisition, investigation, practice, discussion, collaboration, and production. This approach supports diverse modes of engagement, promotes active learning, and recognises the shared responsibility of educators and students in co-constructing meaningful learning experiences.

¹ Cast (2024) The UDL guidelines. [online] Available: <https://udlguidelines.cast.org/>

² Biesta, G. (2010). *Good education in an age of measurement: Ethics, politics, democracy*. London: Routledge.

³ Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

⁴ Laurillard, D. (2012). *Teaching as a design science: Building pedagogical patterns for learning and technology*. London: Routledge.

- In line with Biggs' (1996⁵) model of constructive alignment and Carole Evans' EAT framework (2021⁶), our assessment practices are designed to be equitable, transparent, and promote learner agency. This approach reflects our commitment to delivering high-quality higher education, consistent with the Quality Assurance Agency's expectations for inclusive, rigorous, and future-facing provision (QAA, 2023⁷).

2. Quality Assurance and Course Validation

This section reflects the requirements of OfS (2022) Conditions B2 and B4, ensuring that course design, validation, and assessment processes maintain sector-recognised standards, encourage transparency, and are underpinned by systematic quality assurance.

- We endeavour to ensure the quality of our courses through a triangulated approach involving the course validator, external examiner/assessor, and sector specialist. Our sector specialists include accreditation partners, apprenticeship standard frameworks, and endpoint assessors (EPAs), ensuring all programmes are mapped to the relevant subject benchmarks statement (QAA, 2023), or EPA organisation frameworks.
- We uphold integrity in our quality processes by providing transparent assessments and evaluations, ensuring all stakeholders know how our courses meet high academic standards.
- Our quality assurance processes are regularly reviewed to align with the UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning in Higher Education (Advance HE, 2023⁸), OfS (2022) and Apprenticeship standards (IfATE, 2025⁹).

3. Industry Expertise and Professional Development

In line with Condition B1 and the OfS's (2022) commitment to academic excellence, we aim to ensure that staff possess both disciplinary expertise and pedagogical competence.

- We actively recruit industry experts and support their transition into teaching roles through an ongoing staff development (CPD) cycle, ensuring our staff are equipped with industry knowledge and pedagogical skills.

⁵ Biggs, J (1998) Biggs, J. Enhancing teaching through constructive alignment. *Higher Education*, **32**, pp. 347–364

⁶ Evans, C (2021) *Enhancing assessment feedback practice in higher education: The EAT framework*. [online] Available: <https://www.eatframework.com/>

⁷ QAA (2023) *UK Quality Code for Higher Education*. Gloucester: Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

⁸ Advance HE (2023). *Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education 2023*. York: Advance HE. [online] Available: <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/teaching-learning/professional-standards-framework>

⁹ IfATE (2025) *Apprenticeship standards*. [online] Available: <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/>

- All teaching staff must hold or acquire a teaching qualification or HEA fellowship status within three years of joining the organisation. This reflects our commitment to maintaining the quality of our teachers to promote effective learning experiences in alignment with the principles of professional recognition set out by Advance HE (2023).
- We monitor and improve academic delivery through an observation process¹⁰ aligned to the UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning (Advance HE, 2023), encouraging an environment that enables staff to engage in constructive and collegiate dialogue about pedagogical practice.
- When evaluating teaching sessions, we consider:
 - The relevance of academic content about subject area, students' prior knowledge, and level of study
 - Student engagement through their contributions to learning
 - The diversity of teaching strategies employed.
 - How the session contributes to students' broader development throughout their module/unit of study.

4. Research and Scholarly Activity

Our commitment to scholarship and professional inquiry supports the academic experience outlined in Condition B1 and the sector-recognised standards described in Condition B5 (OfS, 2022), ensuring that teaching is informed by up-to-date disciplinary knowledge and reflective practice.

- We allocate all contracted academic staff-specific Research and Scholarly activity hours as part of their annual workload allocation (144 hours per FTE, pro-rata for fractional staff) in recognition of the time-intensive nature of maintaining specialist knowledge and sector relevance.
- Research and scholarly activity may include enhancing pedagogical skills, developing curriculum, updating their industry knowledge and skills, engaging the higher education sector, and publishing, all of which enhance student learning experience (Boyer, 1990¹¹).
- We offer a Research and Scholarly Activity Fund to support continuous professional development and curriculum enrichment. This fund supports staff in engaging with

¹⁰ [University Centre Colchester | Teaching Observation and Teaching Review Policy - Colchester Institute](#)

¹¹ Boyer, E.L. (1990). *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the professoriate*. Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

research and scholarship that directly benefits our programmes' learning experience and academic quality.

5. Employer Collaboration for Curriculum Relevance

Responding to the OfS's (2022) emphasis on student outcomes (Condition B3) and sector diversity, this section outlines how employer engagement ensures that curricula remain relevant, applied, and aligned to current and future workforce needs.

- We work closely with employers to ensure our curriculum meets the evolving needs of the workforce, both locally and nationally. Each programme area aims to establish a collaborative employer group/panel to help shape proposed changes to the curriculum, ensuring our programmes stay relevant and responsive to industry needs.
- This employer engagement supports authentic assessment practices that connect academic learning with real-world contexts, as contemporary assessment theorists advocate (Boud & Soler, 2016¹²).

6. Feedback and Feedforward on Assessments

As part of our responsibility under Condition B4 (OfS, 2022), we aim to ensure that all assessment feedback promotes learning, supports academic progress, and develops evaluative judgment, contributing to long-term student success.

- We provide feedback and feedforward on all formative assessments to guide students' learning. Feedback focuses on areas of success and improvement, while feedforward offers specific guidance on how students can enhance future performance.
- Following Boud's principles of sustainable assessment, our feedback practices aim to develop students' evaluative judgment and capacity for lifelong learning (Boud & Soler, 2016).
- We maintain a consistent and accessible feedback format across all programmes and assessments (see UCC assessment procedures policy¹³), focusing on a manageable number of developmental points to maximise student engagement and development (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004¹⁴).
- Overall, our aim is that the feedback and feedforward processes:

¹² Boud, D. and Soler, R. (2016). 'Sustainable assessment revisited', *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 41(3), pp. 400–413.

¹³ University Centre Colchester (2024) *Assessment procedures 2024/2025*. [online] Available: <https://www.colchester.ac.uk/legal/ucc-assessment-procedures/>

¹⁴ Gibbs, G. & Simpson, C. (2004). 'Conditions under which assessment supports students' learning', *Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*, 1, pp. 3–31.

- Enhance Learning: Supporting students in recognising both strengths and areas for improvement, enabling continuous academic progress.
- Signposting to teaching and learning resources available on Academic Skills Centre¹⁵.
- Promote Confidence and Engagement: Develop students' confidence and active engagement with their studies, empowering them to strive for excellence.
- Support Skill Development: Provide detailed annotations that highlight quality work and areas for improvement, giving students the tools to refine their skills.

7. Commitment to Timely Marking

In accordance with Condition B1 and B2 (OfS, 2022), we prioritise timely and developmental feedback on assessments to uphold academic standards and support students' engagement with future learning opportunities.

- We are committed to a four-week marking turnarounds for all summative work. This ensures that students receive timely and actionable feedback that supports their ongoing development and helps them apply actionable feedback to future assignments (QAA, 2023¹⁶).

8. Preparedness and Availability of Teaching Resources

In alignment with Condition B2 (OfS, 2022), we ensure that all teaching resources are relevant, accessible, and support structured academic engagement, reinforcing pedagogical coherence and enhancing the student experience.

- For all lecture-room-based sessions, we expect staff to prepare session resources and, where appropriate, make them available to students 24 hours before delivery. This supports an organised, transparent, and student-centred learning environment. In some cases, this also supports the learning of students with specific learning difficulties or disabilities.
- Session resources are developed by module tutors in alignment with the planned learning activities and outcomes outlined in the approved module guides. Module guides are aligned to validation specifications and are reviewed annually by the course leader to ensure academic coherence, currency, and quality. These guides are submitted annually to the external examiner as part of the institution's commitment to robust quality assurance and academic standards.

¹⁵ <https://colchinst.sharepoint.com/sites/UCCAcademicServices-Intranet/SitePages/Academic-Skills-Centre.aspx>

¹⁶ QAA (2023) *UK Quality Code for Higher Education*. Gloucester: Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

- Area Heads, Assistant Area Heads and course leaders are expected to sample session resources of modules in their respective areas to ensure academic appropriateness and consistency of the student experience.
- For workshop-based sessions, we recognise that while teaching resources might include links to examples of good practice, the applied nature of these sessions means that student attendance is essential for skills development.

9. Collaborative Professional Partnership Between Academic Staff and Students

Reflecting the OfS's (2022) student-centred regulatory focus and Conditions B1 and B2, we view teaching as a collaborative endeavour where staff and students co-create meaningful academic experiences.

- At University Centre Colchester, teaching is viewed as a collaborative professional partnership between staff and students. We recognise the wealth of knowledge and professional experience students bring to their studies and actively encourage staff to connect their professional backgrounds with their academic work.
- We adapt our teaching to meet the diverse needs of our students, ensuring that our pedagogical intent positively impacts individual students during lessons and throughout their broader academic development.
- Our teaching approach is increasingly informed by recent research on the educational potential of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI), particularly the work of Sharples (2024¹⁷, 2023¹⁸), who proposes a range of pedagogical roles for AI that support personalised, scalable, and inclusive learning. These include AI as a "Socratic opponent", "personal tutor", "collaboration coach", and "possibility engine", which enable teaching practices that adapt responsively to student needs while supporting deeper inquiry, dialogue, and knowledge construction (Sharples, 2023). Such roles allow academic staff to work in partnership with students to co-create learning experiences that are dynamic and context-sensitive, extending traditional notions of classroom engagement. This aligns with the broader institutional commitment to pedagogical innovation, student-centredness, and ethical integration of emerging technologies.

¹⁷Open Innovation team and Department for Education (2024) Generative AI in Education. Educator and expert views. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65b8cd41b5cb6e000d8bb74e/DfE_GenAI_in_education_-_Educator_and_expert_views_report.pdf

¹⁸ Sharples, M. (2023) Towards social generative AI for education: theory, practices and ethics. *Learning, Research and Practice*, 9:2, pp. 159-167.

10. Student Experience and Support

Informed by Conditions B2 and B3 (OfS, 2022), our holistic support strategy ensures students are guided academically and pastorally, enabling success through inclusive teaching, targeted support, and structured academic advising.

- We collaborate with students to ensure they have a high-quality learning experience, focusing on curriculum development and personal academic support (OfS, 2022). Class sizes are kept small for a more personalised and tailored learning experience.
- All students are entitled to two 20-minute academic tutorials per module and one 30-minute pastoral tutorial per semester, ensuring they receive academic guidance and personal support throughout their studies, aligning with the QAA expectations for student support (QAA, 2023). Our commitment to personalised academic and pastoral support is underpinned by Condition B3 (OfS, 2022), ensuring that all students are supported to achieve successful academic outcomes and graduate destinations.
- We aim to ensure that all students are supported and experience equitable access to teaching and learning. Students with diagnosed additional needs are signposted to access additional support through reasonable adjustments and, where appropriate, Disabled Students Allowance (DSA).

11. Digital and Technological Enhancement of Learning

Supporting the OfS's emphasis on innovation under Condition B1 (OfS, 2022), we integrate purposeful digital technologies that enhance access, interaction, and the overall quality of the academic experience.

- We recognise the importance of appropriate digital technologies in enhancing the learning experience, as emphasised in the UK Professional Standards Framework (K4) (Advance HE, 2023).
- We are committed to developing staff and student digital fluency to support effective teaching, learning, and assessment while ensuring that technology serves pedagogical purposes rather than driving them (Laurillard, 2011; JISC, 2020¹⁹).
- Our approach to digital pedagogy is informed by the interrelated dimensions of teachers' pedagogical orientation, teaching practices, and digital competence (Väättäjä & Ruokamo, 2021²⁰). We are committed to supporting staff in using technology purposefully and reflectively to enhance student engagement, promote inclusive learning, and realise the full potential of digital education.

¹⁹ JISC (2020). *The future of digital learning and teaching*. Bristol: JISC

²⁰ Väättäjä, J. O., & Ruokamo, H. (2021). Conceptualizing dimensions and a model for digital pedagogy. *Journal of Pacific Rim Psychology*, 15, pp. 1-12.

12. Sustainability, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Aligned with the Office for Students' Conditions A1 and B2 (2022), the QAA Quality Code (2023), and the Professional Standards Framework (Advance HE, 2023), our approach to sustainability, equity, diversity, and inclusion is integral to our academic culture. We are committed to cultivating an inclusive learning environment that actively promotes social justice, environmental responsibility, and equitable access to high-quality education for all students.

- We are committed to embedding principles of sustainability, equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout our curriculum and teaching practices, supporting the development of students as global citizens who understand the interconnectedness of global challenges, as per the guidance from QAA and Advance HE on Education for Sustainable Development (QAA and Advance HE, 2023²¹).
- Our teaching approaches aim to create learning environments where all students have equitable opportunities to succeed, reflecting our institutional value of inclusivity and aligning with the UEA Inclusive Education Policy (UEA, 2023²²).
- We recognise the importance of cultural competence and global perspectives in higher education and seek to incorporate these dimensions into our teaching and learning activities.

This policy is informed by the regulatory framework of the Office for Students (2022), particularly the Conditions of Registration under Part V. It reflects our institutional commitment to delivering a high-quality academic experience (B1), supporting positive student outcomes (B3), maintaining rigorous assessment and sector-recognised standards (B4 and B5), and ensuring inclusive access and participation (A1) (OfS, 2022).

²¹ QAA and Advance HE (2023). *Education for sustainable development guidance*. Gloucester: Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

²² UEA (2023). *Inclusive Education Policy*. Norwich: University of East Anglia