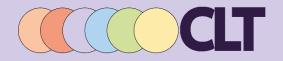
# LEEDS BECKETT UNIVERSITY

# INCLUSIVE ASSESSMENT GUIDE

Centre for Learning and Teaching February 2022









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#### 1 Introduction

This guidance is designed to support academic staff in providing all our students with inclusive assessment and academic support. Leeds Beckett University have a wide range of courses e.g., undergraduate and postgraduate degrees (including degree apprenticeships and online distance learning courses) with diverse student populations who have different learning and support needs. The development of inclusive learning and assessment opportunities to meet the needs of all our learners is central to our <a href="Education Strategy">Education Strategy</a>. <a href="Student Charter">Student Charter</a>, and principles of fairness and equality enshrined in our academic regulations.

<u>The Academic Regulations</u> of our University are built on eleven principles which support the overarching values set out in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Equality Act (2010) and inclusive practice. The principles include:

- Consistency, fairness and equity The University will apply its regulations fairly, equitably and consistently
- **Rigour and standards** The University will ensure that the academic standards of assessment are rigorous and of comparable standing with the rest of the sector.
- **Feedback** The University will ensure that feedback is timely, promotes learning and facilitates improvement. The university will ensure that students will have the opportunity to discuss their academic work with staff.
- Information to Students The University will provide students with appropriate information in respect of the requirements for completion of modules, level and award; assessment requirements of their modules; provision for submitting extenuating circumstances; provision for publication of results; provision for requesting and appeal hearing or making a complaint; a course handbook.
- Confidentiality The University will provide for due and appropriate confidentiality

Our University's <u>Education Plan for 2021</u> sets out how we will support all students, from diverse backgrounds, including international, mature, disabled or BAME home- based students, to have an equal opportunity to succeed and flourish at our University. Our commitment to access and success, and specific priorities in our <u>Access and Participation</u> Agreement provide our institutional context for inclusive assessment. The wider sector expectations set out in the UK Quality Code and the <u>Equality Act (2010)</u> inform our approach and guidance.

Inclusive assessment practice is part of an inclusive approach to learning and teaching and should not be viewed in isolation. Inclusive teaching involves creating a diverse learning environment that can meet the individual needs of all students.

There is not one single definition of inclusivity. Its meaning depends on the particular nature of the situation- for example, an issue or practice which includes one student may exclude another. "The only constant is its purpose: that all are able to achieve."

(Rodriguez - Falcon et al, 2010).

A useful definition of an inclusive approach "necessitates a shift away from supporting specific groups through a discrete set of policies or time bound interventions, towards equity considerations being embedded within all functions of the institution and treated as an ongoing process of quality enhancement." (May and Bridger, 2010, p.6).

# 2 Course Development

An inclusive environment not only involves behaving in a non-discriminating way and being respectful of others ourselves, but also encourages students to do the same. The design of our courses can help to create an inclusive environment which accommodates the learning needs and experiences of all our students.

The Course Development Principles for <u>Undergraduate and Postgraduate</u> courses alongside our <u>Inclusive Course Design Tool</u> are available through the Teach Learn website and promote inclusive course design which in turn supports inclusive assessment practices.

# 3 Inclusive Assessment Design

Good inclusive assessment practice must be underpinned by excellent teaching- for example, engaging students effectively by providing accessible resources and engaging learning opportunities. Interactive activities will help students enjoy their experience of learning and thus support their achievement of the module outcomes through whatever form of assessment is offered. Inclusive assessment needs to be scaffolded by effective, collaborative, and equal learning opportunities, with students as co-creators and be taught with an approach that facilitates the development of a positive attitude to diversity and difference. Assumptions about students' knowledge, lives, experiences and interests should be avoided as a basis for teaching, with opportunities provided for students to share this insight if they choose and it is appropriate to the activity.

Good assessment design is important for a range of purposes. It enables:

- all students to demonstrate their learning and, through feedback and feedforward, further their learning and their development and,
- evidence that a student has achieved the intended learning outcomes of the course, apprenticeship, or module at the relevant academic standard for the award.

The UK Quality Code expects that:

"In designing assessments, consideration is given to all students, including those with protected characteristics. Barriers which impede access to assessments (such as biased language, inaccessibility and cultural assumptions) are avoided or removed." (QAA, 2018 – assessment pg9)

Inclusive assessment does not mean easier assessment -it does not compromise

academic or professional standards but improves the opportunities for *all* students to demonstrate how they have achieved learning outcomes.

Assessment is a key driver for learning. Good design starts with well-written learning outcomes and clear, transparent assessment criteria. Formative and summative assessment should accurately test the extent to which the student has met the intended learning outcomes. When choosing an assessment type, you must also consider whether it is appropriate for the learning outcome which you are intending to assess. Assessment design should be inclusive, anticipating students' needs and enabling all students to undertake assessment equitably. However, where individual reasonable adjustment is necessary, this will be accommodated.



It is important to recognise that true inclusion caters for the needs of each individual and therefore there can be no single correct model for an inclusive learning environment. The environment should, therefore, be constructed in a manner that allows and encourages students to apply their learning to their own experiences and interests. It is important to consider the multiple perspectives that students bring to a learning situation because of gender, age, disability, sexuality and ethnicity. (Hockings et al. 2009a in Ashwin et al.2015, p. 317.) In addition, it is important for staff to be mindful of the power disparity between the teacher/facilitator and the students.

Learning environments can be online and/or face-to-face and recommendations to enhance inclusion should include clear guidelines for website navigation, accessibility of document types and consideration regarding the implications of the sense of isolation which this mode of study may generate in some students (Ashwin, et al., 2015, p.321). Where the learning is taking place wholly or predominately online, equitable access to technology and connectivity should be considered and advice through the Library and ITS

should be provided about where software/hardware can be borrowed, purchased and freely accessed on site.

Further information is available on <u>inclusive virtual learning environments</u> and <u>accessible</u> <u>documents and resources</u>.

# 4 Principles of Inclusive Assessment

Inclusive assessment should:

- be accessible and equitable for all students.
- be explicit and transparent.
- fairly evaluate students' ability to meet module learning outcomes, academic and professional standards.
- support student engagement in learning, their progression and retention.
- address the needs of all our diverse student population.
- involve authentic, contextualised, meaningful, tasks and valid and reliable processes.
- reduce the need for modified assessment e.g. alternatives/extra time.
- allow staff and students to develop a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made.
- develop and enable good academic practice.
- enable students to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes.

Inclusive assessment means inclusive practice and a clear move away from ad hoc arrangements which require assessments to be modified for individual students, where possible.

In order to do this, we need to:

# a) Think more about inclusive curricula and assessment design

We need to think more about inclusive curricula and assessment design which offer all students choices which align with their capabilities (rather than adopting practices which predominantly focus on adjustment). For example, all students are likely to benefit from the flexibility in time, mode and place that is often seen as the basis of making reasonable adjustments. This may be especially important on apprenticeships, professional qualifications, part-time students and those studying on distance learning programmes. We aim to reduce the requirement for individual adjustments by increasing accessibility and embedding inclusivity generally. In doing this we hope it gives all students the opportunity to fully participate in their chosen course and their university experience.

#### b) Engage the students

We need to engage students in debate about curriculum design - so that a more inclusive practice is informed by student voices. Try to see learning from the students' point of view and ask them specifically about how they want to be prepared, supported and engaged in the assessment process. Use inclusive language so all students can engage: explore learning objectives at the start of the session in jargon free language, avoid abbreviations and slang. Be clear and explicit with your objectives so that students do not misinterpret them. You may want to provide a glossary of terms used in your module. When a student asks a question across a lecture theatre, repeat it out loud so all students can benefit from your answer or if the question is sent via email/chat then post your response in a communal online space such as MyBeckett or MS Teams, being mindful to not identify the original student.

#### c) Design in alternatives

Design in alternatives to your chosen assessment/re-assessment instruments at the outset so that all students can be enabled to have an equal and equivalent assessment experience, e.g. for presentations offer in person face to face as well as synchronous online.

#### d) Maintain standards

Ensure our standards are maintained in terms of the quality, scope and academic outcomes of the work expected. Lower standards are not expected or accepted from any student. Just because an assessment has been designed to suit all students does not mean it is of lesser quality.

#### e) Use our Inclusive Course Design Tool

In parallel with our <u>Course Design Principles</u>, use our LBU <u>Inclusive Course Design Tool</u> as part of your teaching practice and annual course enhancement. This offers a series of reflective questions for you and your course team to consider as you focus on the design and delivery of your high quality, inclusive UG and PG courses. Course teams should consider the questions listed as a way of interrogating and reflecting on their inclusive practice.

(Informed by Adams and Brown, 2006; O'Neil, 2018. Rodriguez-Falcon et al, 2010; QAA 2018)

# 5 Principles for Good Assessment Design

The following principles underpin effective assessment design:

# 5.1 Clear pre-arrival information for students about assessment

Pre applicant documentation should be clear about the assessment approaches used in the course so students can make an informed choice before applying. If collaborative work is part of the course activity this should be made clear.

Staff at Open Days, Applicant Days and induction sessions should be prepared to answer questions about the assessment strategies for their courses.

Clear outlines for each assessment should be issued in the module handbook, uploaded to the appropriate part of MyBeckett and highlighted in taught sessions. This should detail:

- the assessment criteria
- its type and weighting
- the choices available
- the marking schemes
- the grading criteria
- the format feedback will be given in
- the word count for written assignments
- the formative assessment and support available in each module
- the timetabled dates of any assessment sessions
- referencing convention
- the format and location (e.g., Turnitin) for submitting the assessment
- the submission dates and resit details
- the point of contact for any queries relating to the assessment

All students like to have information as far in advance as is feasible to allow them time to prepare and plan around other commitments and assessments. Give students as much information as possible as early as possible. Having a course level assessment schedule, with staggered deadlines across modules will help students to plan better.

Disability Advice provide guidance on how to create accessible and inclusive information.

# 5.2 Writing clear assessment questions/tasks

Assessment questions/tasks should be written in student- friendly language avoiding jargon, acronyms and localised language. They should be appropriate to the level and subject of study (aligned with the <u>Framework for Higher Education Qualifications</u>

expectations), achievable and clear. You can use the <u>taxonomy</u> to help with this. You should test the meaning and clarity of the assessment with your course team colleagues and seek feedback from your External Examiner before sharing the assessment with students

# 5.3 A mixture of assessment types

More innovative and authentic assessment methods can be used effectively as part of a course assessment strategy to ensure all students have the opportunity to succeed. Various assessment methods should be used including the types of assessment we might all be familiar with (examinations, individual presentations, and assignments, posters). However, more innovative forms of assessment including, podcasts, filmmaking, student conferences and online web spaces have been used successfully at Leeds Beckett. Different types of assessment in different formats, styles and lengths may allow more students to perform well and help students develop a wider range of skills. Asynchronous assessment allows for greater inclusivity/flexibility and helps minimise issues with technology/connectivity. Authentic assessment related to future graduate outcomes, work-related learning and advanced problem-solving help to build graduate and apprenticeship skills. All case studies, assignment titles, project work should reflect the diversity of the wider population and the student group. For advice on using different assessment methods contact our Centre for Learning and Teaching.

# 5.4 Group working and/or group assessment

Collaborative working on group projects prepares and develops students effectively for the workplace and builds interpersonal skills. The principles of groupwork apply whether it takes place in a physical classroom or an online environment. The use of group work needs careful management and design as part of a balanced assessment strategy for the level/ course. There can be concerns about using group work for summative assessment especially where marks can contribute to a student's degree classification. It may be more useful to be used as part of the formative developmental work for an individually marked summative project, or as part of the module assessment.

If students are working in groups, then the process needs to be managed proactively by the tutor. Clear guidance should be issued well in advance of the assessment, which outlines the expectations of the tasks, the nature of the group and student roles, how the process of conflict management is addressed by the group, leadership issues, the generation of ground rules and clear timescales. Setting clear check in points to ensure groups are progressing and identifying issues early can also help. Individual assessment tasks can be included from a group project task if desired. More information can be found on the groupwork document .

If groupwork is set up and managed entirely online, then there are additional resources written by the Distance Learning Unit about activities which can be used when working

with students in online groups. See <u>designing online activities</u> via the Teach Learn website.

# 5.5 Choice of assessment

Offering a range of choice for assessment can empower students to take responsibility for their own learning and accommodates students' interests, enthusiasms, diverse circumstances and environmental needs. Offering a range of assignment titles also help capture students' interests and allow them to perform to the best of their ability.

Consider the balance of the hours, effort and standards between the different assessments and indicate how each of these will enable the learning outcomes to be met and the relevant assessment criteria to be applied.

Consider offering a choice of two assessment methods in a number of your modules at each level and ensure both methods use the same detailed assessment criteria. For example, a presentation or a written piece. Be mindful not to include choice in every assessment as some students may then actively avoid a certain method and never develop a particular skill set, such as presentation skills. To support students who are less confident in certain assessment types you can direct them to the resources and workshops offered by Skills for Learning.

# 6 Preparation for assessment: Formative assessment support

#### 6.1 Formative assessment

Ensure you have a clear formative assessment strategy that is communicated to the course team and students.

You should ensure that all students have multiple opportunities to engage with practising assessments at every level. In the first year, it is good to expose the students to formative "bite sized" chunks of all the assessment types they will get across the whole course- then there are no surprises for them. This is also important for apprentices and mature students who may not have experienced assessment in an education setting for a significant period of time.

You should indicate where **formative opportunities** are offered - for example- if the module you teach has an individual presentation as part of your summative assessment, make sure you indicate in the module timetable where students are given opportunities to work with others to hone their presentation skills or have structured support sessions to practise their skills prior to the final summative event. This will help to prepare all students better and allay anxieties. These can be online or face to face were possible, students could also pre-record the presentation early in the first year ahead of live presentations as they progress through the course. If a new technology is being used for the assessment, e.g. exam software, offer students a trial-run with the software or give

a demonstration and advise them who to contact for technical help if they encounter technical difficulties.

#### 6.2 Information and instructions

Information and instructions for students could also include information on essential and desirable activities all the students can do to enhance their assessment success "You must... You should... You could ...". Differentiating learning speed and challenge within your module handbooks will help to support all students learning needs more effectively and thus help them achieve better assessment marks.

For example, directing students to more focussed reading can help. Add comments in your session's activity sheets and module schedules e.g. "If you want to learn more about this... read XXX", or "if you have struggled with the concepts in this session then re-read XXXXX." The Centre for Learning and Teaching and your academic librarian can help you with this (see <u>Personalised Learning</u>).

## 6.3 Self and peer assessment

In addition, you can use *self and peer assessment* where appropriate. This supports students to develop their understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made. These approaches can be appropriate and useful in some contexts, and even asking students to self-assess before submission can enable the tutor to focus feedback on those students whose self-assessment differs from theirs.

You must provide clear guidance on what the students are expected to do and where peer assessment is taking place it can be helpful to keep it anonymised where possible to reduce the chances of peer pressure and expectations.

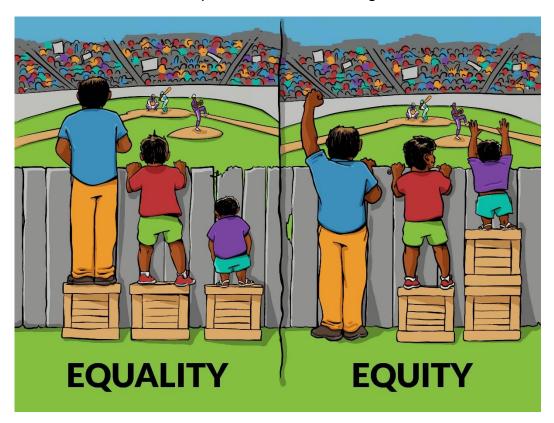
# 6.4 Assessment Exemplars

Using examples of good assessment outputs may help clarify student expectations about what is required for a particular standard and clarify their performance expectations. They can be used in different ways.

You may want to ask your students to "mark" and review a series of assessments against the marking criteria. This does not have to be an assessment they will specifically do but a similar topic. This may also help students envisage what 3000 words, for example, look like if they have never written a long piece before.

It is essential to do this if students are meeting a new form of assessment for the first time or are being assessed at a particular level for the first time. Staff sometimes feel that uploading exemplars can reduce student creativity and diminish enthusiasm. It may therefore be better to discuss the examples and how these outputs relate to the marking criteria in a transparent group setting and allow students to ask questions.

Sometimes the provision of suitably anonymised excerpts (with the student's permission) from different transcripts written to varying standards can be helpful to use in assessment tutorials and students can work together to discuss the marking criteria and the different levels of expectation for each banding.



Credit: Interaction Institute for Social Change | Artist: Angus Maguire

# 7 Feedback

Accessible and inclusive feedback should be **useful and timely** and be provided early enough to for students to self-correct and improve in time for their next assessment.

Make it clear **when** students can expect to receive feedback and **in what form**. Feedback methods should be detailed in the course documentation, in the course and module handbooks, on MyBeckett and always explored during timetabled sessions on assessment during the module.

Feedback should be **clearly linked** to all the assessment criteria/learning outcomes.

Feedback sheets are a good idea in **creating consistency** between different markers, but care must be taken with their design. Templates need to be designed to encourage all the students to engage with the feedback e.g. a pre- or post-response to it – for example "what have you done differently on this work on the basis of previous feedback?" - and "to encourage teacher and peer dialogue" (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick (2006).

Equally Royce Sadler's classic guidance (Sadler (1989) *Instructional Science* 18 119-144) states that:

There are **3** conditions for all students to benefit from feedback. The student should know:

- 1. What good performance is (i.e. a concept of the goal or standard aimed for).
- 2. How current performance relates to good performance.
- 3. How to close the gap between current and good performance.

This can be supported before the assessment is submitted by introducing students to the marking criteria and assessment exemplars so they have a better appreciation of why a mark is awarded. See Assessment Exemplars.

Further information about giving good feedback can be found here on the Teach Learn website, <u>Giving feedback to students</u>.

Feedback can be given in many forms, asking students how they prefer to receive feedback can help guide feedback for different assessments. For example, online feedback or audio feedback via Turnitin or another supported tool. Audio feedback via Turnitin gets positive feedback from students, should be verbally structured around the assessment criteria and can save time for staff. Contact <a href="Digital Learning Service">Digital Learning Service</a> about the different tools available to give audio or other types of feedback.

Group feedback in the form of a facilitated discussion post assessment can be undertaken and key points uploaded to a suitable online space for all to see.

Good feedback practice is broadly defined here as anything that might strengthen the students' capacity to self-regulate their own performance. A synthesis of the research literature led to the following seven principles of good feedback practice:

- 1. helps clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, expected standards);
- 2. facilitates the development of self-assessment (reflection) in learning;
- delivers high quality information to students about their learning;
- 4. encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning;
- 5. encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem;
- 6. provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance;
- 7. provides information to teachers that can be used to help shape teaching.

(Nichol and MacFarlane - Dick 2006)

# 8 Marking

#### 8.1 Moderation

Moderation of student assessment is one of the processes undertaken by academic teaching staff aimed at ensuring marks are as valid, reliable, and fair as possible for **all** 

**students and all markers**. It is **integral** to excellent assessment practice. (Bloxham, 2009, Bloxham et al, 2011, Kuzich et al, 2010).

The process usually involves collaborative decision making by academic staff about the design of the assessment and related assessment criteria prior to distribution to students. External examiners and our Degree Apprenticeship employer partners would review these assessments (where assessment contributes to the final award) to ensure that they are appropriate for the course, the level of study and as assessments to evidence the learning outcomes. Prior to marking, academic staff would discuss the assessment criteria and expectations for grading levels *before* the marking process begins, we call this 'Standardisation'. Moderation may also involve *preliminary sample marking*, as well as *cross marking* to check for consistency.

Moderation does **not** change the grades of individual students. If the moderators identify anomalies in the grading of work, then the grades of the whole cohort should be considered and modified, as appropriate.



Moderation of assessment is especially necessary for large student cohorts, where there are multiple markers, for assessments with subjective answers, and assessment that differs across individual students or cohorts of students but should be implemented in all modes of delivery for all assessments. Moderation strategies may differ depending on the number of students studying the module and the number of teaching staff involved.

Moderation should also be used to share good practice among colleagues and as a basis for staff training and development.

Normally moderation of completed assignments is based on a sample of the marked work and moderators have access to all the marks awarded for the module, not just the sample marks. Assessment samples sent to the external examiner for external moderation should consist of internally moderated work, clearly evidencing the moderation process. For information about sample sizes and what work should be selected and the work required of external examiners contact Quality Assurance Services.

Some assessment types may be quicker to mark as well as being more authentic. Students might be asked to develop a poster, make a video, construct a product or map out a process in order to meet the learning outcomes. Good assessment design can encourage originality in submission. For more advice on authentic assessment methods contact Centre for Learning and Teaching.

The use of clear and simple marking rubrics (marking grids): A structured approach to assessment and feedback can save time when marking large numbers.

# Indicators of sound assessment practice: UK Quality Code

The <u>UK Quality Code</u> requires that processes for marking assessments and for moderating marks are clearly articulated and consistently operated by those involved in the assessment process. Regulations and guidance govern, for example:

- 1. processes for first and second marking
- 2. how agreement will be reached on the final marks awarded
- 3. the use of anonymous marking and the point at which anonymity is lifted
- 4. how borderline marks are defined, both in individual assessments and in overall results for a module or course, and what is done with them
- 5. fairness of outcomes in assessment of group working and projects

# 8.2 Scheduling and Inclusive Re-assessment

Inclusivity may be achieved through careful scheduling of examinations and submission deadlines. This may involve, for example, consideration of religious festivals and observances or taking account of students' caring responsibilities or school holiday commitments and on Degree Apprenticeship programmes where there are employment commitments. Wherever possible, re-assessment must be conducted using the same method as the original. Academic staff will design and prepare original assessment and re-assessment concurrently giving due consideration to aspects which may be difficult to replicate on re-assessment such as group work. Resources to support this can be found in the Inclusive Course Design Tool.

# 8.3 Anonymous Marking

At our university, examination script booklets are designed to support anonymous marking. Where anonymous marking is adopted for examinations this should be made clear to students, for example in their module handbook and verbally during assessment briefings. Students should also be informed when anonymity is removed in the marking and moderation process e.g., at the Examination Committee or Boards of Examiners stage.



In respect of other assessments where anonymous marking is adopted, course teams will need to outline their approach so that students are aware of the submission arrangements. This information should be provided in the module handbooks, as appropriate. There are assessment types for which anonymous marking cannot be implemented, for example presentations, vivas or group work or where it is not appropriate for course specific reasons. Also consider how you will manage anonymity when dealing with students who may have additional considerations for example extra time or dyslexia. For information on setting up anonymous marking in MyBeckett please contact the <u>Digital Learning Service</u>.

#### 8.4 Assessment Workloads and Equivalence

A heavy assessment workload leads to surface learning and increased staff workload. It can also have a negative impact on student wellbeing.

Students work hardest when there is a high volume of formative-only assessment and feedback (Gibbs 2007).

It is difficult to establish university-wide assessment equivalence because of the variation between subject disciplines. However, course teams will consider matters of equity between modules as part of their course design and development, reflecting on the number of credits assigned to a module being based on the estimated notional learning hours (where one credit represents 10 notional hours of learning).

#### 8.5 Assessment Methods and Modified Assessment Provision

Where appropriate it is possible to make recommendations for practical reasonable adjustments on an individual case basis. If a student has a disability, then the assessment may have to be modified so that the student can demonstrate their learning. It is good practice to consider whether adjustments should be built into the curriculum and the design of the assessment rather than "tacked on" - Students should not be "singled out". If an alternative assessment which assesses the learning outcomes is available, then consider whether this could be used for all students. This may lead to fewer logistical issues, (room bookings, time allowances) cut down on staff resource and provide optimal opportunities for all students to be assessed similarly.

## 8.6 Promoting Academic Integrity

Good academic practice is a fundamental part of promoting effective student learning. It is an important part of all our students' understanding of the nature of the assessment process, the nature of academic standards, the role of academic judgement as well as how to engage effectively in learning through reflection and dialogue with staff and peers.

Resources to support good academic practice are available through <u>Skills for Learning</u> and colleagues in this team may provide support to students throughout the year in harmony with the teaching and learning on their course.

Where students have fallen short of our expectations, we will provide opportunities for further learning, where it is appropriate to do so. Where students are suspected to have breached our regulations through misdemeanour or misconduct we will investigate, and penalties will be applied which are proportionate to any found or admitted breach. Each School has appointed an Academic Integrity Lead(s) to manage suspected cases.

Where investigation of a more serious case is required this is managed by the University Academic Misconduct Board. Staff development in Academic Integrity is offered by Quality Assurance Services, by visiting the <u>Academic Integrity webpage</u>.

### 9 References and Resources

Inclusive Assessment reading list on Talis.