

**Quality Assurance Policy**

**City College Limited**

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Birmingham

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**Key Person(s)**

**Managing Director**

**Associate Director for Quality and Partnerships**

**Higher Education Manager**

# Quality Assurance Policy

**Policy Statement**

City College strives to deliver the highest standard of teaching learning and assessment to each of its students. To achieve this, the College recognises the need for continual review and improved across all its systems and processes. The overall aim of this policy is to promote, monitor and enhance the development of all City College online engagement, included the College Distance and Blended Learning Programmes and for process of assessment and academic progress for blended and distance learning is applied fairly and consistently across the College and that the processes will comply with requirements of external awarding bodies.

Blended learning is a formal approach to education that creates an integrated learning environment where face-to-face and online teaching and learning become complementary, with the purpose of giving students a more diverse and engaging learning experience. Distance learning differs to blended learning in that students are recruited and enrolled fully in online study, independently using the College virtual learning environment, posted resources, and telephone support.

**Quality of Delivery**

The College will not deliver any programmes through distance learning where there are or requirements for students to demonstrate practical skills or specialist equipment needed to successfully complete assessments and achieve their full potential within the programme. Likewise, no programmes will be delivered where there is a necessity for students to work in collaboration with their peers or to physically meet other students or staff for the purposes of achievement or oversight. All assessment methods the College uses are assured to be the most appropriate to assess students' achievement of the learning outcomes.

The internal annual monitoring process of the student learning and teaching through the City College Programme Management Board (PMB) will provide a regular health check of the quality and standards of programme learning materials. This is achieved through the consideration of key monitoring information which includes the external examiners’ reports, student feedback, monitoring of assessment and observations of teaching, learning and assessment.

City College recognises that hardworking and experienced academic staff members are one of our strongest assets and every effort will be made to recruit and retain high quality lecturers and further develop their teaching and assessment practice and professional specialist knowledge.

 As part of the development of lecturers, the College will use three forms of observation for distance and blended learning programmes, in line with the quality assurance expectations for face to face delivery.

* Developmental Observations – A planned observation of teaching and learning with written feedback provided.
* Themed Observations – Planned observations, between 5 and 20 minutes long, examining a College wide theme for example, Equality and Diversity or Questioning Techniques with verbal feedback provided.
* Virtual Walk Throughs – Unplanned, informal observations of around 10 minutes to assess student engagement.

All observations will be carried out in the spirt of continual professional development. The outcome of all observations of teaching, learning and assessment should be evaluated by the Programme Leads. All information is made available to Programme Leads to submit a report on the quality of teaching learning and assessment within their programmes. An update of this report is shared at each PMB.

**Student Voice**

Student involvement is critical to the success of the quality assurance and quality improvement process. Student involvement could be in the form of verbal or written feedback, formal student surveys, or consultations with staff or stakeholders.

Information about each programme (i.e. awarding body, programme structure, syllabus, entry requirements, duration, assessment criteria etc.) is made available to students and prospective students via various mediums including; the College website, the student handbook and the pre-enrolment interview. Student views and feedback may be used to enhance and improve this documentation. Any student views used will be anonymised.

Students are asked to evaluate all resources provided for them and the quality of their programmes at key points during the academic cycle. This feedback is analysed by the Associate Director for Quality and Partnerships, and a copy shared with the Senior Leadership Team at the earliest opportunity for review. The Higher Education Manager is expected to take the initiative in improving the quality of written material with the support of the Quality Team, using their professional skills and experience. An overall assessment of student voice activities and any developments undertaken are reported during the next nearest Programme Management Board by the Programme Lead.

Student work and summative assessment results are monitored according to external standards. A yearly review of this data, and termly reviews of assessment test results, helps the College to develop future strategies for raising achievement.

Each student group has at least two student representatives. Student representatives can discuss student concerns with the academic input provided by the College during either the terms Student Representative meetings, Programme Management Boards, the Oversight Committee or the Annual Student Representative Committee Meeting.

At the end of their year, the Student Representatives are presented with a summary of actions taken by the College in response to student feedback. The Student Representatives then prepare their annual report which assesses the functionality of the feedback system, together with recommendations for improvement. The annual report of the outgoing Student Representatives is presented to their successors at the beginning of the following year.

## Additional Learning Support

All students wishing to join a distance learning programme with City College must follow the application process as defined in the City College Recruitment and Admissions Policy. Students must meet the programme minimum entry requirements and successfully complete an online interview. All interviews will be conducted by a member of the Admissions Team and one other member of City College staff. Both interviewers need to agree on the applicant’s suitability for them to be offered a place. All interviews will be recorded, consent from the applicant is obtained to record and store the interview. Recordings are kept only to capture evidence of the student’s identity and their understanding of the programme and associated programme and College expectations.

All applicants must provide evidence of their identity either before or during the interview to enable the Admissions Team to assess the applicant’s right to study with City College. Evidence must be an eligible photographic document.

The interview process will enable students to identify any additional learning support needs. Academic certificates or statements of additional learning needs will usually determine whether a student requires learning support, although the assessment of the students’ abilities is also determined at the interview stage, through the assessment test and students are actively encouraged to self-disclose any additional learning needs. Lecturers are encouraged to make continuous, informal assessments as the programme progresses and are expected to provide a diverse range of E-learning support resources.

Students receiving learning support are expected to evaluate their support classes via the plethora of Student Voice opportunities they are also asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme as a strategy for raising achievement.

**Monitoring Student Progress**

In addition to continuous, diagnostic assessment of students through the observation and student voice processes, the College timetables electronic tutorial sessions and formative assessments in order to track the progress of students. The responsibility for recording and tracking of students is ultimately that of the Higher Education Manager supported by the Programme Leads, Lecturers and SSWs. Tracking of all students is reported by the Higher Education Manager to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

Underperforming students will virtually meet with the lecturer or the relevant Programme Leader to assess their progress. Virtual meetings examine progress using the results from formative assessment activities and then set and review targets by means of personal action plans. These action plans are noted in the student’s file. Student monitoring and progress is reported to the SLT.

Students are encouraged to meet their targets, and their progress in this respect forms the basis of review and discussion at their next progress meeting. The implications of not meeting targets should be made clear to each student. This could include non-progression and academic failure. Both targets and the implications of not meeting targets will be provided, in writing for each student.

**Attendance**

Students on distance learning programmes are expected to maintain the same high standards of attendance and engagement as those students on face to face and blended learning programmes as defined in the College Attendance and Engagement Policy. Attendance is defined as students attending a planned live online session, such as a lecture, guest speaker or tutorial and engaging with the learning opportunities within that session. Engagement is defined as students being actively involved in online learning materials such as, attendance in a live session, reading online module content, completing formative assessment activities, watching prescribed videos or recordings of lectures they may not have attended. City College recognises that engagement complements attendance and does not replace the need for students to attend live learning opportunities outline above.

City College recognises that students are more likely to achieve their programme aims and reach their full potential by taking advantage of the learning, teaching and other activities available. In contrast, research has shown that, inconsistent attendance makes students less likely to succeed. There is an expectation that students should aim to have 100% attendance but maintain at least 85%. Students falling below 85% will be offered Additional Support. In the event that the student knows they will not be able to attend a planned live online session, the student should contact the College before the start of class. Any non-attendance that is not reported prior to the start of a class will be recorded as ‘Unauthorised Absence’.

**Assessment Strategy**

The purpose of any assessment must be to enable students to demonstrate their ability to meet an intended learning outcome, unit or programme and that they have achieved the required standards. All learning outcomes must be assessed at least once and no more than twice. Each unit descriptor clearly indicates the number and type of assessment components expected within a given assignment brief.

All summative assessments will be available through the College VLE at the start of each unit. Students submit summative assessments through the VLE, using the Turn it In app. Devising summative assessment assignment briefs is the responsibility of the unit assessor supported by the Programme Lead. Programme Leads may develop assignment briefs themselves, in turn supported by the Higher Education Manager. When devising all summative and formative assessments, assessors should take into consideration the following.

* Formative and summative assessments must take into consideration the diversity of the student groups and effectively reflect and represent that diversity.
* Formative assessment will not replicate any summative activity.
* The sequence of assessments will be methodical and support the programme pedagogy.
* Teaching and learning will support the process of assessment.
* Summative assessment will be rigorous but will not overburden the student with activity outside of the programme outcomes.

Within all assessments, students will be expected to demonstrate an ability in written communication appropriate to higher education. Assessments which require skills such as critical evaluation, reflective practice, synthesis and analysis should be given consideration ensuring assessments are not lengthy.

The needs of disabled students should be anticipated when all assessment activities and assignment briefs are being designed. Considerations to students with disabilities and learning difficulties will be considered along with any other protected characteristic. Efforts will be made to vary the assessment methods as appropriate, bearing in mind the intended learning outcomes and the need to assess each student on equal terms without disadvantaging any students. If an alternative assessment method is required that only applies to students with a disability or learning difficulty, the variation must be approved by the internal verifier.

As a part of the assessment strategy the Higher Education Manager will create an annual assessment schedule. All assessment submission dates will be scheduled to allow for marking, internal verification and the collation of results to take place prior to the Assessment Board (see below). Schedules will also allow teams to plan assessment requirements using information from the student voice and representatives to schedule student workload and deadline bunching. The assessment schedule will be published within the Programme Handbook and the Programme Specification. During the academic year, unforeseen events can alter the original scheduling of the assessments. Should this occur, changes to the schedule are effectively communicated to students.

City College is dedicated to assuring the standards of assessment for each programme delivered are consistent, transparent and in accordance with the requirements of the awarding bodies. Work being assessed must serve the stated Learning Outcomes of the programmes offered and facilitate the student to achieve the stated qualification. The ensure this, the College maintains an Internal Verification Policy. Internal verification is a process undertaken to ensure that:

* An appropriately structured sample of assessor work from all programmes, sites and teams is verified.
* Assessment and grading are consistent and fair across the programme.
* Assessment instruments (assignments) are fit for purpose - i.e. they enable the student to produce evidence which meets the grading criteria.
* Assessment decisions accurately judge student work (evidence) against the unit Assessment Criteria.
* Feedback provided supports the development of each student.
* Ensure that all centre assessment instruments are verified as fit for purpose.

Assessment feedback and provisional grades will be returned to students within a maximum of 20 working days from the hand-in date. If in exceptional cases this cannot be achieved, changes to the schedule are effectively communicated to students by the Higher Education Manager.

**Extenuating Circumstances**

Students who submit assessments up to 14 days after the set deadline, without formal approval through the extension and deferral process as outlined in the Extenuating Circumstances Policy, will be capped at pass. If an assessment is submitted beyond 14 days without formal approval through the extension and deferral process described in the Extenuating Circumstances Policy, the work will receive a mark of No Submission (NS)

Assessment components submitted by the deadline that do not achieve pass threshold or assessment components not submitted at all, will be subject to Reassessment Opportunity by the Assessment Board (see below) which will decide whether:

* Coursework will be accepted in a revised form capped at pass.
* A new assignment brief with no cap will be set with a deadline prior to subsequent Assessment Board.
* A request for unit resit with/or without attendance is made without a cap.
* An application to apply compensation is made.

Any student has the right to draw to the attention of the College any personal extenuating circumstances which impair their ability to undertake an assessment, and request either an extension (short term) or deferral (longer term) of the assessment. Requests for extension or deferral on grounds of extenuating circumstances may only be made using the procedure described in the Extenuating Circumstances Policy. No request for extension of deferral shall be considered after the deadline for submission or examination date has passed unless there are valid and exceptional reasons (such as physical incapacity due to a serious accident).

**E Communication**

City College recognises e-safety issues and the potential harm and risks it can pose to staff and students and the increased risk when all communication takes place electronically. All staff and students have a duty to understand e-safety issues as part of their wider safeguarding duties recognising their role in remaining safe online, free from sexual, emotional, peer to peer and financial abuse. The College maintains an E-Safety Policy aimed at recognising and limiting the risks associated with Digital and Mobile Technologies (IDMTs). The promotion of good e-safety is as much about behaviour as it is electronic security, limiting the risks to staff and students when using IDMTs through a combined approach to policies and procedures, infrastructures and education and training.

In addition to issues relating to E-Safety, the College is committed to meeting the requirements for the handling of personal data. The College needs to hold personal data about its staff, students and other users of its facilities for administrative purposes: for example, to administer programmes; to record progress; to collect fees. Certain statistical returns are also required by government and funding bodies. To ensure data accuracy and the safe sharing of information relating to distance learning programmes, the College maintains a Data Management Policy.

**Related policies**

This policy needs to be read in conjunction with other policies including:

* Internal Verification Policy
* Safeguarding and Prevent Policy
* Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure
* Staff Development Policy
* Health and Safety Policy
* Equality and Diversity Policy
* Whistleblowing Policy
* E-Safety Policy
* Data Management Policy
* Quality Assurance and Delivery Policy
* Complaints Procedure
* Appeals Procedure
* Governance Code
* Academic Freedom Policy