

1 Assessment at SNMCI

The assessment of students is one of the most important elements of higher education. The outcomes of assessment have a profound effect on students' future careers. It is therefore important that assessment is carried out professionally at all times and that it takes into account the extensive knowledge which exists about testing and examination processes. Assessment also provides valuable information for institutions about the effectiveness of teaching and learners' support.¹

See QA TAB Assessment on Moodle for further information on Assessment Policies



¹Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2005.

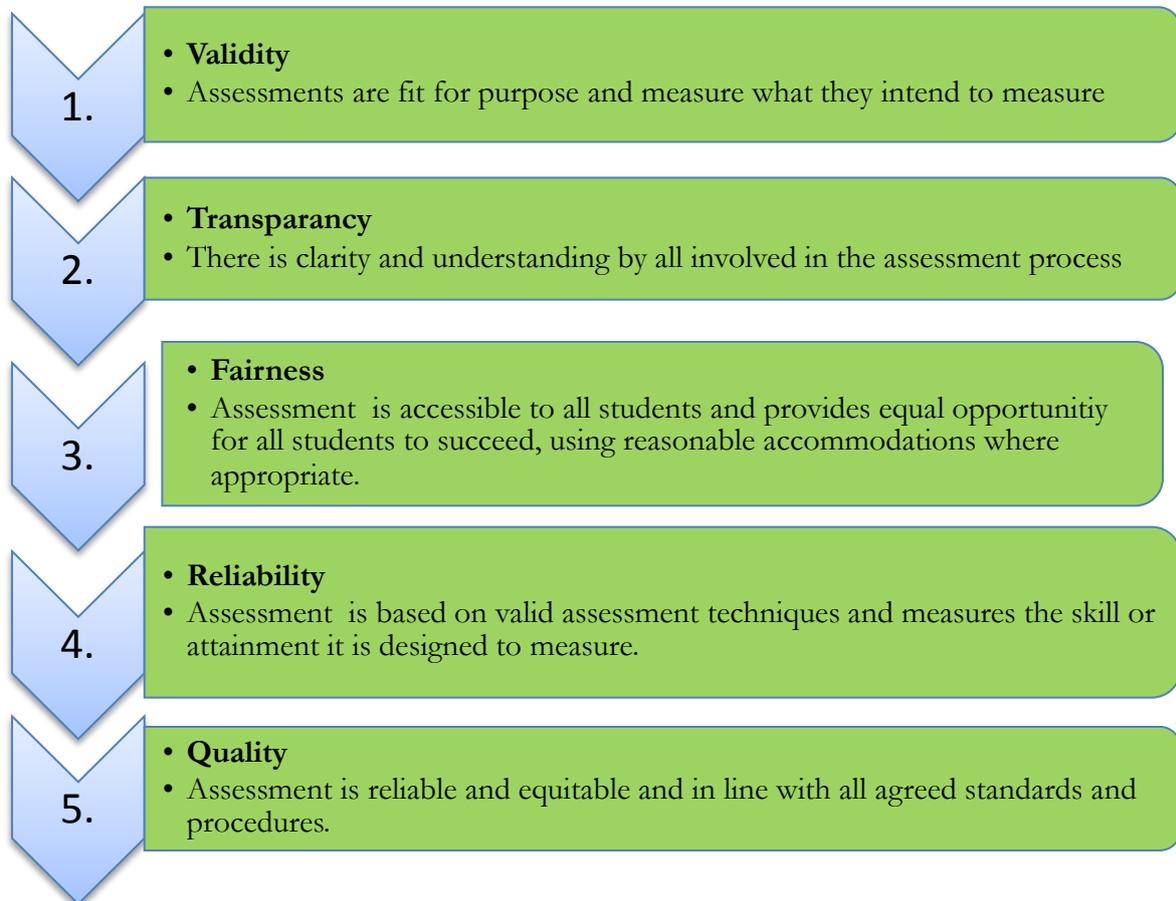
1.1 Purpose of Assessment

Assessment is a systematic process for gathering and evaluating information on a student's academic progress. It refers to the wide variety of methods or tools that educators use to evaluate, measure and document the academic readiness, learning progress, skill acquisition or educational needs of students. It can be used for one or more of the following purposes

- To provide certification: identifying different levels of achievement of the learning outcomes for the purposes of making an award upon completion of a module or programme of study.
- To improve student learning: motivating students and creating a learning environment. Allowing students to assess their progress.
- Quality assurance and enhancement: providing evidence of academic standards and student progress to staff and stakeholders
- To inform teaching or curriculum enhancement.

1.2 Underlying Principles

SNMCI's Assessment Strategy aims to ensure that there is fair and consistent assessment of learning across all programmes. In line with QQI Policies and Procedures and international best practice, the following principles underpin SNMCI's assessment strategy...



1.3 Key Terms

<p>Summative Assessment Includes Continuous Assessment occurring throughout the year and end of semester examinations</p>	<p>Assessment which is primarily for the purpose of providing certification. Assessment that receives a grade that contributes to the overall mark for a module. This assessment may be Continuous Assessment (CA) i.e. an essay or presentation that occurs mid semester/year, or an assessment that occurs at the end of a semester/year e.g a terminal examination, project or dissertation</p>
	<p>Where one piece of summative assessment is given a high weighting in a module, it is often referred to as High Stakes Assessment</p>
<p>Formative assessment</p>	<p>Assessment designed to provide feedback on students' learning. It can help students by providing them with information to self-monitor their academic progress and also provide staff with feedback to inform their teaching approaches. It may or may not be graded. Examples include, in class tests, MCQ's, class participation, in –class activities.</p>
	<p>If graded, it is usually given very low weighting and is often referred to as Low Stakes Assessment</p>

1.4 Range/Examples of Assessment

SNMCI's assessment strategy has been developed with an eclectic approach to ensure a wide range of academic knowledge, skills and competences are assessed and to accommodate different learning styles. Continuous assessment (e.g. essay, presentation) is applied to assess learning against expected outcomes and is a method of assessing learning as it is occurring. The focus is on constructive learning, where feedback is motivational and directed at improvement.

Other types of assessment (e.g. terminal examination, dissertations or projects) tend to occur at the end of a semester or stage.

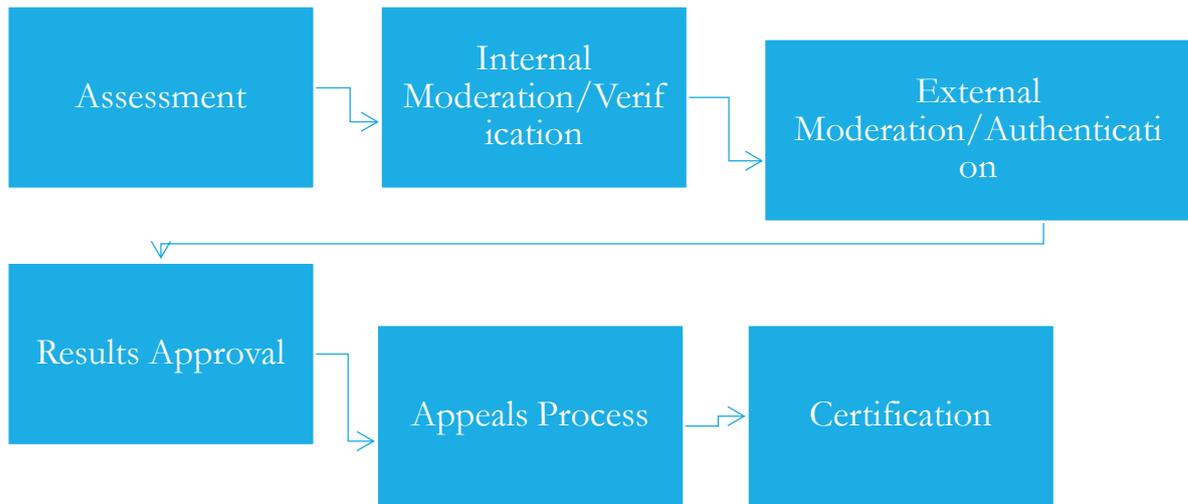
Listed below are some of the assessment techniques used across the programmes.

All assessment techniques have advantages and disadvantages.

Programme developers and lecturers in SNMCI are expected to consider their modules carefully and choose from the range of assessments techniques available, to find those capable of allowing students to demonstrate how well they are learning in any given module.

<p>Written</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Essay ➤ Reflective Diary ➤ Dissertation ➤ MCQ ➤ Written Exam 	<p>Presented/ Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Group Presentation ➤ Debate ➤ Showcase ➤ Poster ➤ Student led symposium ➤ Peer assessment
<p>Presented/Individual</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Poster ➤ Project ➤ Individual Presentation ➤ Practical Presentation ➤ Original materials, design and presentation 	<p>Related to Placement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Teaching Portfolio ➤ Resource File ➤ Placement performance ➤ Planned activities

1.5 Assessment Process



Assessment:

- Devise assessment instruments, marking schemes and assessment criteria
- Assess and judge student evidence
- Record outcome

Internal Verification:

- Verify that all assessment procedures have been applied
- Monitor the outcome of the Assessment Process i.e. the assessment results on a sample basis

External Authentication:

- Assign an external examiner per award, based on broad award/field of learning expertise
- External examiner to moderate assessment results, by sampling student evidence according to the providers own sampling strategy

Results Approval:

- Establish a Results Approval Panel i.e Exam Board
- Approve and sign-off assessment results
- Make results available to learners

Appeals Process:

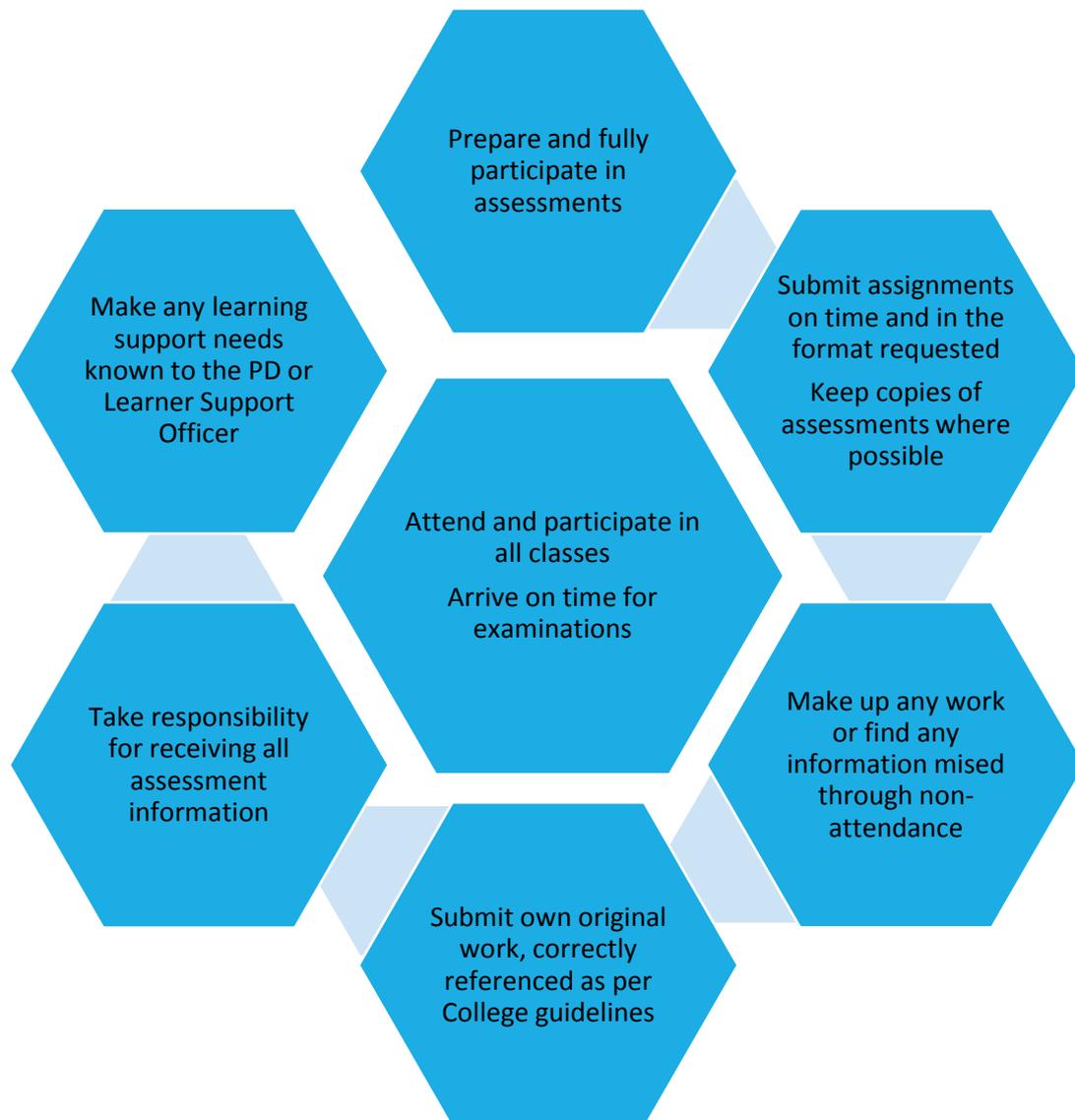
- Establish an Appeals Process
- Allow a minimum of 14 days for learners to lodge an appeal of the assessment process or result
- Process all appeals

Request Certification

- Submit all learner results for progression to next stage or Award

1.6 Student Responsibility with regard to Assessment

- Lecturers will make students aware of upcoming assignments. Each assignment will be discussed in class, giving students the opportunity to clarify and ask any questions they may have regarding the process.
- The assignment briefs will also be posted on each module Moodle section and clearly marked 'assignments'.
- It is each student's responsibility to make sure that s/he has all available information re assignments.



1.7 Assignment Briefs



St. Nicholas Montessori College Ireland

ASSIGNMENT TITLE SHEET

(Programme Title and Stage)

Programme:	<i>Programme name</i>
Module:	<i>Module Title</i>
Assignment Number:	<i>1/1 or 1/2</i>
Date of Title Issue:	<i>Date given to students</i>
Assignment Deadline:	<i>Date of submission</i>
Assignment Submission:	<i>How the assignment is to be submitted</i>
Weighting:	<i>Assignment weighting</i>

Assignment : <i>Clear Title Here</i> Title of the essay/project/presentation etc	
Guidelines: <i>Clear explanatory guidelines setting out what the student has to do and how they might go about it.</i> What to consider when you are putting together your assignment?	
MLO'S <i>The module learning outcomes assessed by this assignment</i> All modules have 4 or 5 Module Learning Outcomes. The assignments are devised to measure these outcomes.	
Assessment Criteria: <i>An explanation of how the marks for this assignment will be allotted e.g.</i> <i>(This is an example. Criteria should match particular assignment)</i>	
<i>Acquisition of Knowledge</i>	25
<i>Argument /Interpretation/Analysis</i>	35
<i>Accuracy/Relevance/Focus/Structure</i>	15
<i>Quality of Writing</i>	10
<i>Presentation</i>	5
<i>Bibliography and Referencing</i>	10

1.8 Sectoral Conventions on Assessment

The Sectoral Conventions for Assessment comprise a set of regulations and benchmarks which, in the interest of fairness and consistency, are agreed at the sectoral level by QQI and all associated providers.

Sectoral Convention 1 on Award Classifications:

Classification of awards **shall be criterion-referenced** as distinct from norm-referenced.

Criterion Referenced Assessment: ‘A criterion-referenced assessment is one ‘that allows its users to make grade interpretations in relation to a functional performance level, as distinguished from those interpretations that are made in relation to the performance of others’ (SEPT, 1985).

Norm Referenced Assessment: A norm-referenced test is ‘an instrument for which interpretation is based in the comparison of the test-taker’s performance to the performance of other people in a specified group’ (SEPT,1985). (Definitions from QQI Assessment and Standards, Revised 2013)

Note to Students:

- **The above definitions mean that assessors measure and grade a student’s performance against a fixed set of predetermined criteria, clearly set out for each piece of assessment. They assess what each student knows or doesn’t know, can or cannot do etc, at the time of assessment. The student’s performance is NOT compared to other students’ performance on the same assessment.**

The following table describes the classifications available for major awards (made by QQI) in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). It also specifies the required boundary values for grade point average (GPA) and percentage point average (PPA).

Classification of Honours Bachelor’s degrees (Level 8) and Higher Diplomas (Level 8)	GPA boundary values	PPA boundary values	Description
First-class honours	3.25	70%	Indicative descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in most respects is significantly and consistently beyond this
Second-class honours Grade 1	3.0	60%	Indicative descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in many respects is significantly beyond this
Second-class honours Grade 2	2.5	50%	Indicative descriptor: Achievement includes that required for a Pass and in some respects is significantly beyond this
Pass	2.0	40%	Definitive descriptor: Attains all the minimum intended programme learning outcomes

1.9 Assessment Submission

(See QA 6.1)

Assignments are designed to assess the achievement of Module Learning Outcomes. Some modules are assessed by one assignment which is considered to meet all module learning outcomes.

Other modules may have assessment components, i.e. more than one piece of assessment from a range of written work/practicals/placement performance etc.

Where modules have more than one type of assessment, **you are required to attempt all components**. Your overall module mark is determined by the weighted average of each component.

NOTE: All components of Placement modules MUST be passed.

Assignment submission

- Students are obliged to make a 'reasonable attempt' at every assignment
- Students will be issued with a 'date for submission' and a 'submission mode' for all assignments.
- When an assignment is due, students will be notified by the Programme Manager. It is important that you check your smsi e-mail regularly and read these notifications carefully. They will outline clearly how and when the assignment is to be submitted, e.g. the timeframe when Moodle is 'open' to students to **upload a PDF version** of written work and/ or a drop off point, where a sign-in sheet will be available for any hard copy required.
- All assignments must be typed (see style page in Study Guide)
- All assignments must have an Assignment Cover Sheet. Your Programme Director will indicate where to find this on the Moodle area for your stage. This cover sheet must be completed prior to submission.
- Students must upload a cover sheet and their assignment to Moodle (unless otherwise instructed) on the submission date.
- In the case of project work with resources such as a poster, portfolios or materials students must:
 - add an Assignment Cover Sheet
 - submit their assignment to the Programme Manager
 - sign the Assignment Submission Form as confirmation

Deadlines

Assignment submission deadlines are strictly observed. Unless a student has applied for and been granted an **extension** of an assignment, penalties will apply for late submission.

No authorised extension:

- Submitted within **one week** of submission date /deduction of 15% of mark
- Submission within **two weeks** of submission date /assignment mark capped at 40%

- Failure to submit an assignment within 14 days of the deadline will result in an overall grade of NP (Not Presenting) in that subject, regardless of performance in a subsequent exam. If a grade of NP is received, the student will have to submit the assignment for that subject, at the next available opportunity. Please note that this will be seen as a second attempt and will be capped at the minimum pass mark of 40%.

Note: When submitting a late assignment, whether authorised or not, students will send a **PDF** of a written assignment to the Programme Manager who will then upload it to Moodle, or in the case of hard copy, deliver it to the Programme Manager and sign the Assignment Submission Sheet.

Extensions/Late Sub

The granting of an extension on the submission date of coursework is a mechanism to support a student who, **through no fault of his/her own**, is experiencing difficulties in completing his/her assessed work on time.

- A student wishing to apply for extensions must make an appointment to see his/her Programme Director normally **up to one week prior** to the submission date.
- Applications received nearer to the submission date will be considered in terms of their merit and the nature of the circumstances.
- In general, extensions will only be granted in extreme mitigating circumstances (illness, accident, bereavement, etc.)
- When meeting his/her Programme Director, it is the student's responsibility to come with the completed paperwork (Mitigating Circumstances Form, and supporting documents e.g. medical cert). The student will discuss his/her reasons for requiring an extension and, **if** it is granted the Programme Director will communicate this to the Programme Manager.
- Computer or printer failures and pre booked holidays **are not** legitimate reasons for requesting an assignment extension.

Note:

- Authorisation for granting an extension rests with the Programme Director.
- Students should be aware that there is no automatic entitlement to an extension and, should an extension not be granted, their work is subject to late submission penalties if they do not submit their work on time.
- Due to the time restrictions involved in the submission of assessments a student can normally only appeal the outcome of his/her application for extension, if he/she requested it at least one week before the submission date and if he/ she appeals, in writing, to the Director of Quality and Academic Affairs (DQAA) within one working day of having his/her application refused.
- Work submitted late, without documented approval of the Programme Director will be penalised.

Feedback and Results

When assignments are corrected students will receive notification of results and will be able to access feedback on Moodle. All assignment results and feedback will be given within a reasonable amount of time. In the event of non-submission of an assignment, the student will be required to submit a repeat assignment. Please note that all repeat work takes place at the end of a semester and is capped at 40%.

Declaration: Students submitting assignments, essays, dissertations or any form of work for assessment are required to sign a declaration that the material in question is wholly their own work (or the joint work of the named participants in the case of a group project) except where indicated by referencing or acknowledgement. In modules where anonymous marking is the practice, students sign the declaration with their student number and date.

Note: In this academic year, as we all contend with the ongoing COVID situation, students are requested to check their smsi emails carefully and regularly for information on assessment processes.

Note: Students should be aware that the College takes an extremely serious view of any breach of the Academic Integrity Policy.

See QA 7.8 Academic Integrity Policy on Moodle

Note: Turnitin/Plagiarism Detection: Work submitted for assessment may be subject to electronic or other detection methods. When an assessor suspects that a student has engaged in plagiarism the matter is referred to the Programme Director. The Programme Director will conduct an investigation which will include an interview with the student concerned. At this interview the student will have the opportunity to offer an explanation, oral or written, of his /her actions. S/he may be accompanied by a witness/advocate of his/her choice. The Programme Director will then decide on a course of action in light of (a) the extent of the plagiarism suspected and (b) what stage the student has reached in his/her course of study.

Note: An incident of plagiarism in an Award Year is considered to be a case of Major Academic Misconduct and may impact on a student's final award classification.

Presentations

As part of their programme's assessment strategy, students may be required to engage in presentations either individually, in pairs or in groups. Please note the following

- As with all other assignments, a brief will be issued with clear guidelines as to content, duration, time, place, and marking criteria. Read the brief carefully so that you are clear about...
- **Content:** was it assigned? Can you choose from a range of topics? What is the lecturer looking for?

- **Time and place:** Are you clear about the date and time of the presentations?
- **Duration:** Have you noted the expected duration of the presentation, e.g. 10 minutes or 12 minutes? Will you be asked to stop if you reach your time allowance? What are the consequences if you are allowed to complete your presentation but you run way over time?
- **Process and Product:** Do you know to what extent the lecturer is looking for product (presentation content) and process (how well the group worked together and presentation skills)
- How will individual performance be assessed?
- How will group product be assessed?
- What are the consequences if you do not arrive on the day of presentations?

Note: The general rules for extensions and late submissions outlined above apply for presentations.

- For individual presentations, students may apply for late submissions in the usual way. Students, who are granted extensions, will have the opportunity to present during the next exam/presentation week (December for Semester One and May for Semester Two). With valid late submissions these will be assessed as ‘first attempts’.
- Students, who miss presentations and do not have valid late submissions or extensions, will have the opportunity to present during the next exam/presentation week (December for Semester One and May for Semester Two). Without valid late submissions these will be assessed as ‘second attempts’ and subject to late penalties.

Paired and Group Presentations

Paired and group presentations are used in Higher Education for a variety of reasons. These types of assignments can help students to develop communication skills, share perspectives, develop approaches to resolving difficulties, establish relationships, pool knowledge etc. As assessment tools they have many benefits but they can also present challenges for both students and staff. Please note the following...

- When you are part of a pair, or a group **you have a responsibility to your partner or team mates.**
- All students are responsible for contributing equally to the preparation and the presentation.
- Sharing the work does not mean reducing individual effort
- Conflict may occur if a member is perceived as not pulling his/her weight. This must be addressed early, either by the students themselves or by the moderating influence of the lecturer or PD. Group conflict issues brought to the attention of the lecturer following the presentation, will not be considered.
- There will also be an individual component to the marking scheme, as well as a group mark.

Note: The general rules for extensions and late submissions outlined above apply for paired and group presentations.

- Where one member of a pair or a group is unable to attend, or fails to attend on the assigned day, the pair /group forfeits their place on that day and must wait for the next presentation date. (See Programme Manager)
- Students, who miss paired/group presentations with valid late submissions, will be assessed as 'first attempts'. Students who are part of a pair or a group who miss presentations without a valid extension will be assessed as 'second attempts' and subject to late penalties. Other members of the group will be assessed as a 'first attempt'.

1.10 Examinations

All examinations held during the academic year 2020-2021 will be in Open Book Format due to the ongoing COVID 19 situation.

What is an Open Book Examination?

An "open book examination" is an assessment method designed in a way that allows students to refer to lecture notes, articles, textbooks, or other approved material while answering questions, in an agreed timeframe.

- Open-book exams don't test your memory; they test your ability to find and use information, and to deliver well-structured and well-presented arguments.
- Open-book exam questions do not merely ask you to 'give back' information. They usually require you to analyse, evaluate, reflect and apply knowledge, to self and/or real life situations.
- Open-book exams require you to learn for understanding rather than just remembering
- In the case of SNMCI, Open-book exams are essay style.
- Open-book exams are not an easy option. Answering the questions well requires more than just copying information straight from texts. For example, having access to a textbook can stop you from giving a wrong answer if you can't remember a fact, but just getting that fact correct won't get you good marks.
- In open-book exams, it's how you locate, apply and use the information that is important.

Should I study for an Open-book Exam?

Yes

- Probably the biggest misconception about open-book exams is that there is no need to study. You should study just as you would for any other exam. Having books and notes

to refer to might mean you don't have to memorise as much information, but you still need to be able to apply it effectively.

- You must fully understand and be familiar with the content and materials of your module so you can find and use the appropriate information.
- In open-book exams, you need to quickly find the relevant information in the resources you have. If you don't study, you won't know where to find the information. This style of learning equips you well for exams and 'real life' experiences.
- **You don't need to know everything, but you need to know how to find the relevant information.**

Before the Exam

Get a good night's sleep

On the night before the exam, don't stay up until all hours studying. You will be fuzzy, stressed and unable to think clearly.

Don't panic

- When you're sitting an exam, it's OK to be nervous, but try not to panic. An open-book exam is another form of intellectual analysis. It is not very different from preparing an assignment at home, except that time is more limited.

Prepare your examination space

- Gather module notes and resources together beforehand and organise them neatly in a quiet study area at home.
- Set up a quiet space where you can concentrate and work without interruptions.

Getting Started

- Find out the exam requirements
- For open-book exams, know:
 - How much time you have been allocated
 - Whether you need to reference
- Read the guidelines as stated on your paper

Information Gathering

- Once you have received your exam question **Read it carefully** and make sure you understand what you are being asked to do. Look for 'clue' words in the questions.
- Underline key parts of the question
- Work out the main concepts or information.
- Select your materials and resources carefully and organise them for quick reference.

- A large amount of materials might make you feel secure, but you'll probably work best relying on no more than a few pages of notes and a few well-chosen texts.
- You are on a time limit so try to have the essential facts, etc. at your finger-tips.
- Make brief and legible notes and prepare a list of key information (key definitions etc.) likely to be used.
- Use index cards to list key topics and relevant page numbers of texts. Use one card per book. This can help you find information quickly.
- Apply the information in your sources to the questions

Writing your essay

- You **can't copy** chunks of text directly from textbooks, notes or the internet. This is **PLAGIARISM**.
- In open-book exams, the resource materials have been made available throughout your module, so you are expected to do more than just reproduce them.
- You must be able to find, interpret and apply the information in your sources to the exam question/s.
- You usually need to reference as well, just as you would for any other assignment but don't use too many quotations. Use the time and information to build a well-constructed answer.
- Don't over-answer: With lots of materials available, it can be tempting to over-write and waffle on. **Answer the question**, and aim for concise, accurate, thoughtful answers that make good use of supporting evidence.

Eat something and take breaks

- You might feel too nervous to eat, but your brain needs fuel! If you don't eat, halfway through the exam, you'll find yourself feeling tired, hungry and losing concentration.
- Take some bottled water into your 'exam' room /area.
- Take breaks as needed.

1.11 Results

Students will be advised of their results within one week following the deliberations of the end of semester/year **Examinations Board**. **Students** will be sent their Transcript of Results by email to their SMSI account.

The transcript indicates:

- (a) The percentage achieved in each component (examination / assignment) of each module for which the student is registered.
- (b) The overall percentage and grade achieved in each module.
- (c) The overall award achieved, where applicable.
- (d) Where appropriate, a recommendation to discuss results with Programme staff.

Indicators you may see on your transcript:-

F	Fail
I	Deferral of Result
NP	Not presented/Absent
W	Withdrew
WH	Withheld
X	Exemption

1.12 Reviews, Rechecks, Appeals

Reviews

Students are given the opportunity to review and discuss their assessment results with lecturers. These reviews are aimed at providing guidance to the student on how to improve on future performance.

Reviews may be requested up to **10** days following the receipt of assignment mark.

Recheck

A recheck is the operation of checking the administrative addition and recording of marks. A request for a recheck may be made up to **5** days following the receipt of assignment mark. There is a fee for the recheck service (refundable if any fault in recording has been made by the College)

Appeals

The following extract from **QA document 7.12** outlines grounds for an appeal of an assessment

See QA

Section 6: 6.8 Examinations Policy, Procedures and Regulations on Moodle

Grounds for an Appeal of an assessment

The student must clearly identify the module(s) and the elements for which the appeal is being made. The application must also specify the grounds on which the appeal is sought and must contain all information that the student requires to have taken into account in the appeal.

An appeal of an assessment result shall be considered only where a student believes that:

1. He/she was adversely affected by an irregularity in how the assessment was conducted e.g. in written examinations, insufficient/inaccurate information on examination papers and continuous assessments or faulty IT equipment.
2. He/she was adversely affected by extenuating circumstances which the Examinations Board was unaware of when making its decision, e.g. personal or medical reasons.
3. He/she was adversely affected by an administrative error, resulting in an incorrect grade being recorded on the student database, e.g. missing assessment component.
4. SNMCI did not follow due process;

The following statements **DO NOT** constitute the basis for an appeal:

- Student disagrees with the grading criteria and grading scheme
- Other students in class achieved a higher grade
- Student expected a higher grade for assessment
- Student is disappointed with their result
- A request to have work rechecked by a different assessor
- Student had to work to earn money and could not attend class
- Lecturer X is a hard marker

Deferrals

A deferral is where a candidate has been granted permission by the Programme Director, not to take one or more assessment elements on the date scheduled for assessment, due to documented circumstances.

Students may only defer on the following grounds:

- (a) Illness.
- (b) Bereavement.
- (c) Circumstances, beyond the student's control, which cause an extended period of absence during the teaching term.

To apply for a deferral, the student must discuss his/her reasons for requiring a deferral with the Programme Director. They must complete the *Mitigating Circumstances Form*

(MCF) (See Programme Manager) and where applicable attach relevant supporting documentation. The onus is on the student to make his/her case for obtaining a deferral.

If the student wishes to defer a further sitting, he/she must submit another MCF to the Programme Director.

Once you decide to return to the programme, you should notify the PD of your intention. You must also contact the Head of Examinations and Registration in order to re-register on the programme.

1.13 Academic Integrity

The College's policy on Academic Integrity (QA 7.8) is one of the most important. Here is a short guide to the policy which can be found in full on Moodle.

Learners at SNMCI are expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. You will complete a wide variety of assignments during the course of your programme and this short guide has been developed to help you understand the importance of academic integrity in the preparation of your assignments. It is organised as a question and answer session which explains: academic integrity, plagiarism and how to ensure that your work meets the College's standards and references the College's full Academic Integrity Policy document;

QA 7.8: Academic Integrity which can be found on the QA tab in Moodle.

What is academic integrity?

SNMCI uses the following definition of Academic Integrity as per the International Centre for Academic Integrity (ICAI, 2013) i.e.

Academic Integrity is

- *'a commitment, even in the face of adversity to five fundamental values: honour, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility'.*

SNMCI Considers that Academic Integrity is

- something to be achieved through good practice rather than 'misconduct' to be avoided;
- goes beyond understanding and avoiding plagiarism, although this is a key part of it.
- involves the learner demonstrating knowledge and understanding through a process of evaluation and research, expressing understanding and original ideas independently, honestly and in an appropriate academic style, using good referencing and acknowledging all sources;

At each stage of your programme you will have assignments to complete. These are designed to advance your learning and understanding of your subject by requiring you to demonstrate how well you have engaged with and understood the material you have studied. Assessment tasks will vary from subject to subject and may be e.g. essays, presentations, laboratory reports, dissertations, portfolios, reflections, examinations etc. requiring problem-solving skills, evaluation skills, reflective skills and the presentation of coherent and cogent arguments.

It is expected that in producing an assignment, you need to read and gather information from a range of sources including e.g. books, journals, official reports, newspapers, material from the Internet as well as ideas generated in discussion with lecturers and peers.

When presenting your assignment it is vital to remember that:-

- you **cite** correctly, i.e. you are explicit about any material or ideas presented by other people that you have included in your assignment;
- you **reference** correctly, i.e. you include a complete list of references acknowledging the information that you have used to inform your assignment.

These actions are **the basis of good practice** in the presentation of your assignment and this is **what academic integrity looks like!** It means that you are being honest about showing how the work of others has helped you to form your own understanding and explanation of a topic.

Why is academic integrity important?

Academic Integrity is important:-

- To uphold the academic reputation of the College and to ensure that stakeholders see SNMCI as a reputable college that maintains the standards of its awards
- To ensure that learners receive due credit for the work they submit
- To protect the interests of all learners so that there can be no academic advantage or disadvantage
- To meet SNMCI's reporting and compliance obligations as a Higher Education Provider delivering QQI validated awards.
- To assure employers that our graduates, who have been awarded degrees, have met the standards and professional requirements for the program of study e.g. Teaching Council, CORU, PSI, DCYA. .
- To assure employers that our graduates, who have been awarded degrees, have met the professional expectations of honesty, ethical standards, respect and responsibility.
- Because it is an extension of your own personal integrity.

What is plagiarism?

SNMCI understands plagiarism to be the inclusion of another person's writings or ideas or works, in any formally presented work which forms part of the assessment requirements for a module or programme, without due acknowledgement, either wholly or in part, of the original source of the material through appropriate citation.

Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty and means that you have presented information or ideas belonging to someone else, as being your own original thoughts on a subject. This may happen in a number of ways, and these are explained further below, but in general there are two main ways in which you could potentially plagiarise:

- By incorporating ideas, phrases, or whole sections of text in your assignment which have been written by somebody else; or
- By failing to use proper citation methods which show all of the material you consulted in researching your assignment

What constitutes plagiarism?

Plagiarism: (From SNMCI QA 7.8: Academic Integrity)

- Attempting to pass off others' effort, intellectual property, or any other work as their own by copying without consent or failing to use academic referencing conventions (deliberately or otherwise);
- Unclear referencing: taking parts of the work from a source or sources and using them without acknowledgement in a submitted assignment. SNMCI is aware that this type of plagiarism often arises because learners are unsure how and when to reference material;
- Inadequate paraphrasing: when a learner closely follows a source and partially changes words and phrases;
- Copying another's work;
- Representing collaborative work as one's own.
- Cutting and pasting from the web – even if it is referenced;
- Previously submitted work: submitting a piece of work that has previously been submitted in another module, in another programme of study, or for assessment in another college, (self-plagiarism).

Attempting to pass off others' effort, intellectual property, or any other work as their own by copying without consent or failing to use academic referencing conventions (deliberately or otherwise);

This could include getting someone else to write part or all of your assignment, using an assignment written by another learner, including those from previous years of your programme, copying parts of the work of another learner or buying an essay from an 'essay mill' or the internet. **Tip:** essays bought from the internet are usually poor value as they rarely address the question you have been asked to write about. They are usually badly written and often inaccurate.

Presenting work copied extensively with only minor textual changes from the internet, books, journals or any other source;

It is acceptable and even expected and that you will wish to incorporate the ideas of others into your work but in doing so you must be explicit that the information included is not your own original thought. **Tip:** check referencing guide

Inadequate paraphrasing: when a learner closely follows a source and partially changes words and phrases;

If you want to use somebody else's idea indirectly as an illustration of the argument you are making, be careful that you express it as a short summary or paraphrase of their argument and acknowledge that it is not your own original idea. Then cite your source to indicate that you are using someone else's ideas. **Tip:** It is not acceptable to change just a few words or phrases from someone else's text and then present the idea with citation. A **paraphrase** means you express the idea directly in your **own words**, and you must also include a reference to the original source.

Unclear referencing: taking parts of the work from a source or sources and using them without acknowledgement in a submitted assignment;

References should include all books, journals, official reports, newspapers or material from the internet, which informed the presentation of your assignment.

Tip: check referencing guidelines re how to reference internet sources correctly

Representing collaborative work as one's own;

If you are part of a study group or a group formed for assessment purposes, you may spend time discussing topics with peer. If you discuss an assignment with a fellow learner, you need to be conscious that when you write up your part that you are expressing your own ideas not the opinions expressed by others. Be careful to show your individual understanding and effort towards the task.

Can plagiarism be unintentional?

SNMCI is aware that plagiarism may arise from a range of situations e.g. not having enough time to complete an assignment properly, careless referencing (**negligence rather than deliberate intent**) or a lack of understanding of the correct referencing methods. However, these are not valid excuses and plagiarism is defined **by the action** rather than the intention.

The SNMCI **QA 7.8 Academic Integrity** policy states that

- Learners have a responsibility to make themselves aware of College policy;
- Learners are responsible for following all guidance related to good practice and academic integrity as given by academic staff;
- Learners should demonstrate initiative and be proactive about investigating good academic practice and about learning how to express themselves clearly without resorting to replicating other's words, while citing, and referencing as per guidelines.

All learners are responsible for being familiar with the College's policy and if in doubt, are encouraged to seek guidance from a member of the academic of staff.

How is plagiarism detected?

- Lecturers will be familiar with the references in your subject area and are likely to recognise particular phrases, sentence constructions and even entire paragraphs, as parts of well-known published works, particularly where they are not referenced properly.
- It is routine practice in the College to use Turnitin (electronic detection) to identify instances of plagiarism.
- Lecturers will correct a whole range of assignments and that familiarity with the range of work presented will alert them to similarities in learners' work.

What happens if I plagiarise?

- In line with College philosophy and values, SNMCI, will, in the first instance, move from framing 'academic integrity issues' as 'misconduct and dishonesty' to a more supportive and educative approach, aimed at the encouragement of good academic practice and learner success;

- The College has clearly outlined its own responsibilities with regard to Academic Integrity and also outlined learner responsibilities as part of a joint effort to maintain academic standards and to avoid unfair academic advantage or disadvantage for any member of the SNMCI academic community.

The following principles underpin the College's approach to dealing with breaches of academic integrity:-

- First instances of infringement of academic integrity will be viewed as arising from **negligence rather than deliberate intent** and learners will be offered extra support and instruction on acceptable academic practice. **Note:** first instances in Award Year may have further consequences.
- Each instance will be considered in light of (a), the extent of the plagiarism suspected and (b), what stage the learner has reached in his/her programme of study; **Note:** first instances in Award Year may have further consequences.
- Repeated offences: Each incidence is counted over the entire duration of a learner's programme. If a learner offends a second time, the incident is deemed to be more serious;

Note: Cases of major plagiarism, plagiarism in postgraduate or award year, or cases of repeated plagiarism will be referred to the Disciplinary Committee;

Please read SNMCI QA 7.8: Academic Integrity

Further information on new laws in Ireland prohibiting cheating and cheating services, is available [here](#).

END