



Learning & Teaching Development Unit  
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**On-line submission and feedback of  
coursework: Procedures and good practice  
guidelines.**

## **About this document**

Advances in technology make the use of on-line assignment submission and on-line feedback to students an efficient and effective alternative to traditional assignment submission and feedback processes. Moreover flexible study patterns make this practice attractive to students as it allows students who are required to submit work to do so without making an unnecessary journey. The principal advantages of on-line submission and feedback are: more efficient administration, (less paper), improved accountability and better assignment tracking and security.

A number of programmes in UWIC are already using on-line submission methods to increase the flexibility of provision for students and to make feedback more comprehensive and prompt. However, developing effective use of on-line submission and feedback requires UWIC to address both the quality assurance implications and the effective use of technologies. Accordingly the following procedures set out the minimum expectations for all forms of on-line submission and feedback used within UWIC and provide information on how to access further advice and support.

*Please note that this guidance document will be developed further in the light of experience and technological change. It sets out minimum expectations and will frequently be supplemented, but must not be changed, by School or programme level procedures.*

## 1. Introduction

These procedures and guidelines are designed to enable staff to use on-line submission of assignments and online feedback to students efficiently and securely. There is no current requirement for UWIC programmes to offer on-line submission or feedback but if they do, they should adhere to these procedures.

They explain how to ensure that:

- student assignments and feedback are kept secure and meet the requirements of data protection;
- evidence is provided for students that their work has been submitted;
- students have made the appropriate declarations, e.g. that the work is their own;
- work is not lost and is assigned to the correct student;
- sets of work can be archived for sending to external examiners.

These procedures and guidelines relate to any form of assignment that can be submitted in a digital format. This may include images, video, websites and other multi-media work as well as word-processed assignments, provided that they do not exceed the appropriate file size.

It is recommended that programmes use a secure, password protected environment such as Blackboard™ for on-line submission and feedback. It is recommended that if email submission is current practice within a programme, this should be stopped with effect from the start of the 2010-11 academic year.

It is also recommended that the on-line submission of assignments should be introduced at a programme level wherever possible in order that students experience a consistent method of submitting their assignments throughout the duration of their study.

## **2. On-line submission**

### **2.1. Requiring students to submit on-line**

Programmes should normally require students to submit an electronic copy of their coursework where this is appropriate to the task. Exceptionally, students may be required to submit an electronic as well as a hard copy or only hard copies of their work. Whatever the case, the requirements should be decided in advance and published to students at the beginning of the relevant module or programme.

### **2.2. Information to students**

As with traditional assignment submission the requirements and procedures for on-line submission should be defined by programmes or modules and should be clearly stated in programme and/or module handbooks or on the relevant Blackboard™ site. The students should be provided with on-line, step by step instructions on how to submit their work and this should be in a consistent place, for example on Blackboard™ under the 'assignment' button.

### **2.3. Preparation of file (for conventional written assignments)**

Students should be instructed to put their name and student ID number and module code at the top of each page of their assignment;

A digital coursework coversheet should be made available on Blackboard™ for students to download and include as the first page of their assignment. The coversheet should indicate that, in sending the work using a password protected environment, they are 'electronically' signing a declaration of intellectual integrity that should be included on the sheet. Where other applications are used students should be required to make a similar declaration as part of their submission of work. An example of such a declaration is:

You are submitting this work as your own, and have read the Academic Regulations relating to assessment of work and declare that this work complies with those regulations. You agree to allow your work to be compared against the work of others to detect plagiarism and collusion. Where software is used for this, you are aware this means it will be held on a (secure) external database for the sole purpose of detecting plagiarism.

### **2.4 File naming**

Students should be provided with very clear instructions on what to name their file in order to avoid tutors finding themselves with different files called by the same name. A recommended file name is 'lastname\_stuNumber\_modulecode\_assessmentnumber'. If programmes employ more anonymous marking the last name may be omitted.

### **2.5 On-line Submission Software**

Assignments should only be submitted and received through a password protected, secure environment such as Blackboard™.

Blackboard™ uses encrypted access protocols to ensure additional security around the use of personal information (eg. usernames, passwords).

## **2.6 Confirmation of receipt**

It is the student's responsibility, as with paper-based coursework, to make sure the work has been received and obtain a receipt where applicable. When using the Turnitin™ option in Blackboard, an automated receipt in the form of an email is generated, which the student should keep as proof of submission.

The Assignment feature in Blackboard™ does not automatically provide an email confirmation for work submitted. However when the student has submitted their work, they will see 'submission history' screen which can be printed as confirmation of submission.

## **2.7 File formats**

Students should be given very clear instructions regarding the type of file format they should submit. Course teams need to be able to open the submitted file on their work PC, so students need to be given guidance on which file format is acceptable. In addition, it is the students' responsibility to ensure that their file is not corrupt and can be opened by the tutor. Further advice on file formats that are currently acceptable can be obtained from the IT Help Centre.

Within Blackboard™ two options can be used to carry out electronic submission of coursework, and staff should consult with LTDU to evaluate the most appropriate solution to implement in their module. The options are:

- 1) Via Turnitin™
- 2) Via Blackboard's Assignment feature

Further advice on the use of either option is available from LTDU. In addition LTDU holds information on School based expertise in the implementation of electronic submission and can arrange practice exchange meetings between staff facing similar assignment challenges.

## **2.8 Extensions**

Procedures for obtaining coursework extensions are generally the same as for traditionally submitted assignments. However where tutors use Turnitin™ for on-line submission, there is an option for due date and post date; the post date allows students with an extension to submit work after the due date. With this method, the submission facility remains open to the entire cohort after the due date but work is time 'stamped' to identify late work with or without an extension. In addition it provides tutors with a clear indication of late submissions so that they can check their own records to see which assignments have been given advanced permission.

## **2.9 Network failure**

Where there is network failure and Blackboard™, Turnitin™ or the University network is not accessible at the time of submission or in the 12 hour period before that time, the submission deadline should be amended to the next working day on which Blackboard™, or Turnitin™ and the University network becomes available.

## **2.10. Security of electronic coursework**

Schools should have clear procedures for transferring student assignments to relevant tutors and marking in a secure way. Normally, this will involve tutors batch downloading the assignments from Blackboard™ or accessing the work directly on-line.

Coursework should only be stored for a reasonable length of time. Once grades have been confirmed by an examination board work should only be stored centrally in the school and the work should be deleted from the PCs and laptops of academic staff. Centrally stored work should be deleted 12 months after the student has completed their award.

Where student coursework, feedback or mark-sheets are taken off UWIC premises (e.g. on staff laptops or pen-drives), they should be subject to normal precautions for the security of sensitive material.

### **3. On-line Feedback**

#### **3.1. On-line feedback**

Electronic feedback can make it easier to get feedback to students quickly and helps to get feedback to students who are unable to come onto campus to collect their marked work. It is particularly useful for part-time, work-based and distance learning students. It also enables staff to provide feedback in different ways such as embedded sound files, internet links to relevant further reading or links to study skills and other advice.

Grademark by Turnitin™ offers additional functionality to enable ease of use, and allows annotated comments on the student's work. It is integrated in Blackboard™ Gradecenter to allow marks and feedback to be collated and feedback provided to the student.

The Assignment feature within Blackboard™ allows staff to send back plain text comments and files to the student.

Tutors may also want to consider the use of audio feedback to their students using other functionalities within Blackboard. Please contact LTDU for more information.

#### **3.2. Data protection**

Feedback and marks are personal data and should be protected as with all other personal digital data. Written, summative feedback and grades should only be made available to students through a secure on-line environment, not email.

Whilst it is preferable that formative feedback be given within a secure environment, it is recognised that under some circumstances, formative feedback may need to be sent via email. If this is necessary, tutors need to be mindful of the fact that email messages are not secure.

#### **3.3. Shared feedback**

There will be occasions where feedback and marks for student work are shared as part of peer-based learning, as might equally take place with paper-based assessment. For example, students and tutors may share feedback as part of on-line discussion groups, learning sets and similar. There can be great value in this for helping students learn from taking an active role in assessment, giving feedback and seeing the way other people tackle academic tasks. Judging and giving constructive feedback on performance is a key part of most professional roles. Where this is the case, the module outline should clarify the process, purpose and limits of such on-line sharing. The work should be shared within a secure environment and students should also be given clear instructions regarding the confidentiality of any material they have seen as part of the process. Of course, students may well choose to share their work and feedback in non-secure digital environments but these should not be used as part of the formal course delivery.

## Frequently asked Questions

<p>Is the assessment valid without a student signature?</p>	<p>Yes, because the student is required to log into an institutional system (e.g. Blackboard™) to submit their assignment.</p>
<p>How does the student prove they have submitted an assignment?</p>	<p>It is the student's responsibility to ensure their assignment has been uploaded to the correct assignment area. It is preferable for the tutor to set up an assignment in an area that automatically generates an email receipt e.g. Turnitin™ within Blackboard™ or provide students with clear instructions on how to verify that their assignment has been submitted.</p>
<p>I don't like marking assignments on screen.</p>	<p>Introducing on-line submission of an assignment is a good opportunity to weigh up the benefits and drawbacks of on-line submission. Some paper based assignments (e.g. portfolios) are unwieldy and heavy to transport. You may find that although you don't like reading on screen, you do find that you can get feedback to your students faster or that your students are submitting richer pieces of work that include photographs and other multimedia files.</p>
<p>My external examiner won't like on-line submissions!</p>	<p>Before you introduce any changes, contact your external examiner and ask about any experiences they have had. Many universities now are using on-line submission of coursework and this is an opportunity to share practice and experience.</p>
<p>I like to scribble comments in the margins so that the student knows exactly where to apply my feedback.</p>	<p>Turnitin™ with Blackboard™ allows the tutor to add comments in specific places in the text, adding a rubric if you prefer. The comments will probably be much easier to read than your handwriting.</p>
<p>What about archiving?</p>	<p>In Blackboard™ you can batch download files to store offline (in the 'z' drive).</p>

Some of my students don't have access to the internet at home.

Build in time for your students to submit their assignment on campus if they need to. Alternatively, your students may need to be made aware that their local library has PCs with internet and they can book a slot there. Encourage these students to submit in good time, so that any problems can be ironed out before the final deadline.