

University of the Highlands and Islands

Assessment retention policy

Table 1: Policy reference

Officers, dates and assessments	Details
Lead Officer (Post):	Head of Academic Development
Responsible Office / Department:	Learning and teaching
Responsible committee and officer:	QAEC, Chair QAEC
Review Officer (Post):	Head of Academic Development
Date policy approved:	07/10/2016
Date policy last reviewed and updated:	14/07/2020
Date policy due for review:	Every 2 years or as required
Date of Equality Impact Assessment:	03/01/2020
Date of Privacy Impact Assessment:	N/A

Table 2: Policy summary

Sections	Description
Overview	The university is required to retain evidence of SQA HE candidate evidence and HE student summative assessment.
Purpose	The policy discharges the university's duty to ensure that it securely retains evidence of summative student assessment where they will remain in good condition until disposed of within the specified time period in a manner which ensures confidentiality.
Scope	All staff with a responsibility for retaining HE SQA and degree (including Post Graduate Research) student summative assessments such as Directors of Studies, RDC, Archives and Records Management, HN and Degree Programme Leaders, lecturers, Module Leaders, Quality Managers, Subject Network Leaders.
Consultation	UHI Quality Managers April 2016
Implementation and monitoring	Implemented by AP Quality Managers, Directors of Studies, Research Degree Committee, HE Module Leaders, Learning

Sections	Description
	<p>and Information Services, and teams delivering SQA programmes.</p> <p>Monitored by Quality Managers, HN and Degree Programme Leaders and Subject Network Leaders.</p> <p>SQA HE candidate evidence is to be retained by the HAP.</p> <p>Digital assessments submitted via the VLE will be deleted automatically by LIS in accordance with this retention schedule.</p> <p>Digital assessments that are not in the VLE must be deleted in accordance with this retention schedule by the staff responsible for the course/unit/module as applicable.</p> <p>Non-digital assessments to be retained by the relevant Academic Partner. Storage, retrieval and deletion costs are the responsibility of the relevant Academic Partner.</p>
Risk implications	Failure to adhere to the policy could expose the university to the risk of serious reputational damage and legal action.
Link with strategy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strategic aim 2 – learning and teaching 2. University archive digital preservation strategy

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Introduction

This policy discharges the university’s academic, statutory and regulatory duty to ensure that it securely retains evidence of degree and SQA programme student summative assessments for a specified period where they will remain in good condition until disposed of in a manner which ensures confidentiality.

The policy ensures that student work is retained for as long as is needed to:

- inform the:
 - assessment process
 - appeals and complaints process
 - the subject review process
- provide sample work to assure the university and external agencies that its assessment processes comply with UK good practice

- ensure that hard and digital copies of level 12 theses are stored indefinitely.

This policy takes into account advice the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) practice on retention of assessments and is informed by the [University partnership retention and disposal policy](#), the [University records management policy](#), the [University archive digital preservation policy](#) and [strategy](#).

Definitions

Coursework includes written scripts, text documents, photographs, paintings, sculptures, videos, software, websites etc.

Dissertations and research projects are extended, structured pieces of writing (or an equivalent body of work) at levels 9, 10 and 11.

Document management system an electronic system that stores and manages documents, automatically applying a retention and deletion schedule to them, such as SharePoint.

Exam script a document containing answers submitted by a candidate taking an examination.

Summative assessments are assessments that contribute towards a final mark and are defined through the university's academic approval process to assess the achievement of learning outcomes. This includes coursework, exam scripts, dissertations and theses.

SQA define **summative assessment** as, 'Assessment, generally undertaken at the end of a learning activity or programme of learning, which is used to make a judgement on the candidate's overall attainment. A key purpose of summative assessment is to record, and often grade, the candidate's performance in relation to the stated learning objectives of the programme'.¹

Thesis a document (or an equivalent body of work) submitted in support of candidature at level 12.

Storage and retention

Non-digital assessments

It is not necessary to hold summative course work in hard copy **if** it is available electronically as specified below. Hard copies of summative course work should only be held in exceptional cases, where it is not possible to hold a digital copy. Hard copies should be held in an appropriately secure physical archive by the Home Academic Partner (HAP). Where a hard copy is scanned it must include a cover sheet with a statement to the effect that it is a

¹ SQA (2015) Guide to Assessment [online] p. 61 Available from http://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/Guide_To_Assessment.pdf [6 October 2016]

true copy. This must be signed, dated and include the name and the title of the person signing the authorisation.

Retention of hard copies of dissertations (levels 9, 10 and 11), other than Masters by research dissertations, is at the discretion of the HAP. Such hard copies are to be retained in the HAP library.

Hard copies of Masters by research dissertations and theses (level 12) are to be retained indefinitely in the HAP library.

Each AP is responsible for ensuring appropriate local storage facilities for SQA HE candidate evidence and degree assessments.

Teams delivering SQA programmes and Degree Module Leaders are responsible for the retrieval and secure deletion of non-digital summative assessments in accordance with this retention schedule.

Degree Module Leaders are responsible for ensuring that non-digital summative assessments are recorded and stored by the relevant Academic Partner.

The university libraries are responsible for the retention of Level 11 Masters by research dissertations/research projects and Level 12 research theses at the HAP.

Digital assessments

All digital records of summative assessment and SQA candidate evidence are to be stored either in the university VLE or other approved core technologies as specified below.

HE degree assessments must be submitted and shared via core technologies. Email may not be used for submitting or sharing assessments. Large files must be encrypted and shared via [UHI Drop box](#).

LIS is responsible for deleting assessments in the VLE in accordance with this retention schedule. Module Leaders are responsible for deleting assessments housed in other core or approved technologies (e.g. the ePortfolio system or the streaming server) in accordance with this retention schedule.

The university libraries are responsible for uploading Level 11 Masters by research dissertations/research projects to the university archive and Level 12 research theses to the university's research repository, the university archive and the British Library.

HE degree assessment samples

Module Leaders are responsible for ensuring that the required sample of digital summative assessments is made available via the VLE or submitted to the university's digital document management system.

LIS is responsible for deleting assessment samples in the VLE in accordance with this retention schedule. Module Leaders are responsible for deleting assessment samples housed in other core or approved technologies (e.g. the ePortfolio system or the streaming server) in accordance with this retention schedule.

Intellectual property rights

Where the Intellectual Property rights belong to the student (see the university's Intellectual Property Policy):

the university and/or HAP may retain work submitted for summative assessment that contains data that may be required, providing the work has been anonymised and written consent of the student concerned has been obtained and the retention period agreed. To anonymise the work, the identity of the student must be completely removed, including from the metadata, e.g. author's name. Examples of the type of work that may be retained are:

- project work which includes original data and/or analysis;
- work for longitudinal surveys of trends in student achievement.
- coursework and dissertations from past students may be retained by the HAP and/or university and in the university's document management system as exemplars, provided the student's written consent has been obtained and retention period agreed. To protect intellectual property rights, it should be made clear that such work is read only and cannot be copied.

Where the Intellectual Property rights do not belong to the student, for example they belong to the HAP, university or the organisation that funded the research (see the university's Intellectual Property Policy), coursework and dissertations from past students may be retained by the HAP and/or university in the university research's repository and/or in the university's document management system.

Theses, both hard and digital copies, will be stored indefinitely.

In accordance with university regulations and policy, work may be retained indefinitely in online originality checking systems used by the university.

Sampling

Formative work (work submitted solely for formative assessment, which is returned to students with comments) is not retained by the university.

Marked digital coursework should be returned to students, with a sample taken and retained for quality and subject review purposes. This should include a minimum of 10% or six pieces of coursework/scripts, whichever is the greater, of the total. This sample should be taken from across the module or unit teaching team. This must include a sample of coursework/scripts considered by the first marker to be failed, mid-range for each grade and worthy of distinction for each individual assessment.

Students must be informed that they are responsible for downloading all electronic assessed work and feedback and for retaining all of their assessed work. It is their responsibility to produce the work should they wish to use it in the future as the basis of an academic appeal or any other reason.

Academic appeals or other procedural or legal challenge

Staff must ensure that appropriate evidence is available in the event of an assessment appeal. For this reason, feedback for all assessments, digital, hard copy or in another format should be provided via the university's VLE. Evidence of examiner's and external examiner's comments should also be retained.

Any student work that is the subject of an assessment appeal, or other procedural or legal challenge, and other records relating to the appeal, should be retained for eight years following the conclusion of the appeal.

Accrediting professional and statutory body requirements

Staff should ensure that the university retention policy will meet the requirements of any accrediting professional and statutory body (PSRB). Should PSRB requirements exceed those specified in this policy, they will take precedence. Such requirements should be documented and reviewed annually.

Secure disposal

Coursework and scripts that are no longer required for the purpose for which they are retained should be destroyed; retention beyond this time could contravene the Data Protection Act 2018. The disposal of physical and digital coursework and scripts must be conducted in a manner which ensures confidentiality. Hard copies, for example, should be treated as confidential waste. Digital copies should be securely deleted, the university's document management system, for example, has a two-tier disposal protocol ensuring secure deletion.

Degree programmes retention schedule

Table 3: Retention schedule

Summative assessment evidence	Retention time Paper or physical evidence	Retention time Electronic copy	Storage Paper or physical evidence	Storage Electronic copy
Student work – coursework with cover and return sheets	Current academic year plus one academic year	Submitted via the university's VLE: Current academic year plus five academic years Not submitted via the university's VLE: Current academic year plus one academic year	HAP	University's VLE, ePortfolio system, Streaming Server or assessment document management system as appropriate ²
Student work – coursework with cover and return sheets: sample	Current academic year plus three academic years	Shared via the university's VLE: Current academic year plus five academic years Not shared via the university's VLE: Current year plus three academic years	HAP	University's VLE, ePortfolio system, Streaming Server or assessment document management systems as appropriate ²

² Note: Digital assignments may only be submitted and returned via UHI core technologies such as the VLE (Assessment, Feedback and Feedforward Policy). Email may not be used to submit assessments. See the [Teaching staff resources](#) for a full list of core technologies. Digital assessments may only be shared with second markers, assessors, verifiers and external examiners via the VLE, the assessment document management area or [UHI Dropbox](#).

Summative assessment evidence	Retention time Paper or physical evidence	Retention time Electronic copy	Storage Paper or physical evidence	Storage Electronic copy
Student work – exam scripts	Current academic year plus one academic year	Shared via the university's VLE: Current academic year plus five academic years Not shared via the university's VLE: Current academic year plus one academic year	HAP	University's VLE, ePortfolio system, Streaming Server or assessment document management systems as appropriate ²
Student work – exam scripts: sample	Current academic year plus three academic years	Shared via the university's VLE: Current academic year plus five academic years Not shared via the university's VLE: Current academic year plus three academic years	HAP	University's VLE, ePortfolio system, Streaming Server or assessment document management systems as appropriate ²

Summative assessment evidence	Retention time		Storage	
	Paper or physical evidence	Electronic copy	Paper or physical evidence	Electronic copy
Taught programme dissertations / research projects (levels 9, 10 and 11)	Current academic year plus one academic year	Submitted via the university's VLE: Current academic year plus five academic years Not submitted via the university's VLE: Current year plus one academic year	HAP – if a hard copy is required	University's VLE, ePortfolio system, Streaming Server or assessment document management systems as appropriate ²
Taught programme dissertations / research projects (levels 9, 10 and 11): sample	Current academic year plus three academic years	Submitted via the university's VLE: Current academic year plus five academic years Not submitted via the university's VLE: Current academic year plus three academic years	HAP – if a hard copy is required	University's VLE, ePortfolio system, Streaming Server or assessment document management systems as appropriate ²
Level 11 Masters by research dissertations / research projects	Indefinitely	Indefinitely	HAP	University's archive
Level 12 research theses	Indefinitely	Indefinitely	HAP	University's research repository. University's archive. British Library

SQA HE programmes

For HN, Graded and PDA units and HE SVQ units, all candidate evidence (including observation checklists) must be retained for the academic year in which the candidate undertakes the award plus the following academic year.

In addition, candidate evidence plus assessment and internal verification records must be retained if subject to:

- internal assessment appeal
- malpractice investigation
- an appeal to SQA against a malpractice decision
- investigation involving a criminal prosecution or civil claim.

These records must be retained in line with SQA retention requirements.³

For SQA digital candidate evidence the AP's or the university's document management system will manage deletion of records at the appropriate interval.

Formative work (work submitted solely for formative assessment, which is returned to students with comments) is not retained by the university.

Information for students

Students should be informed that samples of their work may be retained for quality assurance purposes.

In the case of the submission of written work in hard copy, the work should be returned to the student with the instruction that they are responsible for retaining their assessed work. It is their responsibility to produce the work should they wish to use it in the future as the basis of an appeal for assessment review or any other reason.

This information, together with a link to this policy should be made available to students via the student handbook.

³ SQA Retention of candidate assessment records:
https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/Retention_of_candidate_assessment_records_table.pdf, July 2017.