UCL Academic Manual 2022-23

Chapter 4: Assessment Framework for Taught Programmes

Annex 4.5.1

1   Introduction

UCL is a global university, with a diverse body of students and staff who draw on multiple linguistic and cultural resources to work together in pursuit of intellectual excellence. A student's communicative competence in their discipline area, and their effective communication of ideas and arguments, is a key part of assessment at UCL, and this is integrated into marking criteria in ways appropriate to the subject area and academic traditions of the discipline.

Technical proficiency in English is relevant to the extent that it underlies effective communication, as well as in relation to students' professional life after graduation as this may limit students' employment prospects if their proficiency is below that of the expectations of potential employers.

2   Purpose

This guidance is intended to provide support for markers where the existing marking criteria does not sufficiently cover technical proficiency in English or more general concepts such as "clarity of expression" and "the communication of ideas". This guidance is not intended to replace existing marking criteria where this is already sufficiently covered.

3   Expectations

- Written work submitted by students for assessment is expected to be of a high quality free of errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation that impact the communication of ideas.

- Students are expected to develop the skills of proofreading and students should ensure that they proofread their own work before submission.

- The following areas are highlighted to students as important areas of note which may impact effective communication:

   a. Errors in spelling;

   b. Poor sentence structure, fluency, punctuation, and grammar;

   c. Poor choice of vocabulary;

   d. Poor presentation with the general layout, headings, and referencing conventions;

   e. Poor syntax, and potential ambiguity;

4 Guidance for assessing 'The Written Communication of Ideas'

A comprehensive marking scheme is considered to be the fairest and most effective way to set clear expectations of high standards of communication and to maintain rigour and consistency in assessment.

Given the diverse nature of disciplines across UCL it is acknowledged that existing marking criteria may not always sufficiently cover technical proficiency in English and the impact it may have on the communication of ideas. The following elements may be helpful, where relevant and applicable to the discipline concerned, in order to assess whether a student has clearly communicated their ideas:

1. **The Argument**: the student should be able to construct a clear argument that includes a well-developed perspective and addresses alternative perspectives.

2. **Organisation**: the structure should be clear, and include an introduction and conclusion and the reader should be able to follow a logical progression through the argument.

3. **Presentation and clarity**: the response should be clear, well organised and stylistically appropriate.

4. **Language**: the language used, including spelling, grammar and syntax, should not obscure the meaning of the response.

5 How to respond when marking

Where the written communication of ideas is impacted on the basis of technical proficiency in English markers should take into consideration the following:

*   When deciding the overall mark, the work should not be attracting the highest bands available (i.e., a 1st or Distinction);

*   Students should be provided relevant feedback in a timely manner to the areas which had impacted marking in accordance of UCL's Assessment Feedback regulations;

*   Students should be signposted to relevant resources and support outlined in Section 7 below;

*   Where there are persistent concerns regarding a student's performance a Support to Study Plan may be required to support the student further. See Chapter 2, Section 7: Support to Study.

*   To liaise with UCL Arena and Digital Assessment Advisors in order to update the marking criteria as appropriate.

6 Inclusivity

UCL Student Support and Wellbeing recommends marking is done with reasonableness, inclusivity and a department's standardised practice in-mind. Students at UCL can apply for a variety of support to assist with common barriers around written and spoken English. It should not be assumed that someone with a disability will experience difficulties with written assessments. Conversely, it cannot be assumed that achieving a place at UCL will mean a student will experience no barriers related to assessments. Wherever possible, assessment and marking criteria should be done with inclusivity and fairness in mind.

It is important to note that staff have a responsibility to appropriately signpost and refer to support services within UCL.

7   Support available to students

7.1   UCL Academic Communication Centre (ACC)

The [UCL Academic Communication Centre (ACC)](link) works with students (in collaboration with subject lecturers) to support them in developing their academic literacies. It has an educative/formative remit, guiding students in effective communication, providing scaffolding for their own learning as well as providing space for students to develop these skills by working with other students. The ACC also works with students to help them develop strategies for improving their own work, through tutorials, workshops and courses. It does not proofread students' work.

7.2   Academic communication support and resources at UCL

The [Academic communication support and resources at UCL](link) website contains links to a range of services and resources available across UCL to support students with their academic writing.