

Assessment retention policy

Policy number: POL126

Table 1: Policy reference

Officers, dates and assessments	Details
Lead Officer (Post):	Head of Corporate Systems Compliance
Responsible Office / Department:	Governance
Responsible committee and officer:	QAEC, Chair QAEC
Review Officer (Post):	Head of Corporate Systems Compliance
Date policy approved:	07/10/2016
Date policy last reviewed and updated:	28/02/2025
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 candidate evidence and HE 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 in a manner which ensures confidentiality.
Scope	All staff with a responsibility for retaining SQA candidate evidence and degree (including Post Graduate Research) summative assessments such as Directors of Studies, RDC, Archives and Records Management, Programme Leaders, staff teaching SQA courses, Module Leaders, lecturers, Quality Managers, Associate Deans.
Consultation	UHI Quality Managers April 2016, Feb 2025
Implementation and monitoring	Implemented by AP Quality Managers, Directors of Studies, Research Degree Committee, HE Programme and Module Leaders, ITDI, and all staff delivering SQA programmes.

Sections	Description
	<p>Monitored by Quality Managers, Programme Leaders, and Associate Deans.</p> <p>SQA HE candidate evidence is to be retained by the HAP.</p> <p>Digital assessments must be retained and deleted in accordance with this retention schedule by the staff responsible for the course/unit/module.</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 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

1. Policy statement

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

2. 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, such as SharePoint, that stores, manages and applies a retention and deletion schedule to documents.

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.

The 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.

3. Purpose

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 is informed by SQA policy, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) practice on retention of assessments, the University partnership retention and disposal policy, the University records management policy, the University archive digital preservation policy and strategy.

4. Scope

This policy applies to UHI, the UHI Partnership, Learning and Teaching staff and students on SQA and HE programmes.

5. Exceptions

Courses/units that are not SQA or HE.

¹ SQA (2019) *Guide to Assessment* p. 60 Available on http://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/Guide_To_Assessment.pdf [Accessed: 19 February 2025].

6. Notification

The policy will be published on UHI's website and SharePoint Policies area. Staff will be made aware of the policy through team meetings and information being cascaded from senior management teams.

Students will be made aware of the policy at induction, in unit, module and programme related information, (including programme handbooks) as appropriate, and (where appropriate) the VLE.

7. Roles and responsibilities

QAEC is responsible for approving the policy and ensuring its legal compliance.

Academic Partners are responsible for ensuring appropriate local storage facilities for non-digital SQA candidate evidence and degree assessments.

Principals and Senior Management Teams are responsible for overseeing operational compliance with the policy, and cascading information to appropriate teams.

UHI Deans and Associate Deans are responsible for cascading information to appropriate teams.

ITDI is responsible for deleting assessments and assessment samples in the VLE in accordance with this retention schedule.

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.

Line managers are responsible for supporting relevant staff to follow the policy in their day-to-day role.

Teams delivering SQA programmes and Module Leaders are responsible for:

- the recording, storage, retrieval and secure deletion of non-digital summative assessments in accordance with this retention schedule;
- deleting assessments and assessment samples housed in other core or approved technologies (e.g. the streaming server) in accordance with this retention schedule;
- where appropriate, they 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; and
- informing students of their responsibilities, listed in Students below.

- Ensuring 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 examiners and external examiners comments should also be retained.

SQA teaching teams and HE staff are responsible for following the policy in their day-to-day role and highlighting any operational challenges that arise.

SQA teaching teams responsible for HN, Graded and PDA units and HE SVQ units must follow the SQA policy in point [12. SQA programmes](#) below.

Students are responsible for:

- downloading all electronic assessed work and feedback
- retaining all their assessed work
- producing the work should they wish to use it in the future as the basis of an academic appeal or any other reason.

The **Head of Corporate Systems Compliance** is responsible for developing the policy, accommodating any legislative changes, and submitting the policy to QAEC, Academic Council and Partnership Council for endorsement.

8. Legislative framework

The Code issued by Scottish Ministers under [section 61 of the FOISA \(the s61 Code\)](#).

9. Related Policies, Procedures, Guidelines and Other Resources

[Academic Standards and Quality Regulations](#).

[Data Protection Policy](#).

[Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Regulations Policy](#).

[Research Policy and Ethics - Intellectual Property](#).

[Student Conduct Policy](#).

[UHI Partnership Retention and Disposal Policy](#) (staff access).

[University Records Management Policy](#) (staff access).

10. Procedures

10.1 Storage and retention

10.1.1 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 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.

10.1.2 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.

SQA and 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 approved UHI technologies such as [UHI Drop box](#).

10.2 Intellectual property rights

Where the Intellectual Property rights belong to the student (consult 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 (consult 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 retained indefinitely.

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

10.3 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.

10.4 Academic appeals or other procedural or legal challenge

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.

10.5 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.

10.6 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.

11 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.** The [Staff resources index](#) lists the 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 ³
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 ³

³ **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.** The [Staff resources index](#) lists the 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
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 ⁴
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 ⁴
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

⁴ **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.** The [Staff resources index](#) lists the 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](#).

12 SQA 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.⁵

Providing this policy has been implemented, 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.

13 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.

14 Version control and change history

Table 3: version control and change history

Version	Date	Endorsed by	Amendments	Author
01	07/10/2016	QAEC	Original	Andy Brown and

⁵ SQA (2021) *Retention of candidate assessment records*. Available on https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/files_ccc/Retention_of_candidate_assessment_records_table.pdf. [Accessed: 19 February 2025].

				Val Innes
02	25/09/2017	QAEC	SQA update	Andy Brown and Val Innes
03	31/10/2018	QAEC	Retention period and storage update	Andy Brown, Val Innes and Philippa Currie
04	14/07/2021	QAEC	Non-digital and digital assessments, HE degree assessment samples updates. VLE retention period extended	Andy Brown and Philippa Currie
05	28/02/2025	QAEC	Moved to new template. Responsibilities moved to section 7. Section 8 Legislative framework is new. Sections 9 and 10 are new but populated with content from ver 04. Section 12 SQA updated.	Andy Brown