



Grading Scheme Handbook

Section C: Using the Grade Descriptors in Assessment

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QAA Recognition Scheme for
Access to Higher Education

1 Introduction to Section C

The grade descriptors assigned to a unit create a framework within which tutors can capture and reward the standard of a student's work in those aspects of performance which are significant for the subject. Access Validating Agencies (AVAs) must give clear direction to centres, through providing written information, training and support (including through moderation and standardisation processes) about how tutors should use the grade descriptors assigned to a unit.

In particular, AVAs should make sure that tutors are made aware of, and have access to, the full requirements of the grading scheme that are specified in this set of regulations and guidance and the documents to which they refer.

2 Planning for assessment with grading

- The seven grade descriptors (see Section B) provide the essential reference point for the grading scheme. The full and current edition is published by QAA on the [Access to HE website](#). This version must be used for all purposes.

a Grade descriptors and units

- AVAs are responsible for deciding which grade descriptors should be assigned to each unit. This decision is confirmed when the unit is validated. At least two descriptors, including grade descriptor 7, must be assigned to each unit.
- All the grade descriptors assigned to a unit by the AVA must be used in the grading of the unit whenever it is delivered. Descriptors that have not been formally assigned to the unit must not be used.

b Unit assessment plans

(See Annex C3 for worked examples of unit assessment plans.)

- Units can be assessed through one, or more than one, assignment. Tutors must develop plans which show how they intend to assess the unit, and these plans must be internally moderated.
- If just one assignment is to be used to assess a unit, all of the learning outcomes for the unit will be assessed through that assignment, and all of the grade descriptors for the unit will be applied in the assessment of that assignment.
- If more than one assignment is used to assess a unit, the unit assessment plan will show how the learning outcomes and grade descriptors are allocated across the assignments. It is important to note that:
 - the learning outcomes for a unit should be formally assessed only once, so the different assignments will be used to assess different learning outcomes or groups of learning outcomes
 - the term assignment includes examinations, which, if used as part of a unit assessment plan, should be the only formal assessment of the learning outcomes covered by the examination
 - grade descriptors may be used more than once within the unit assessment plan, as appropriate for assessing each assignment.

- Planning for grading can become unnecessarily complicated (and the process of grading can become burdensome) if units are assessed through a large number of small, separate assignments. In developing a unit assessment plan, tutors should plan an assignment programme that meets the developmental needs of students and the demands of the unit in as few assignments as possible.
- For units that are assessed through more than one assignment, tutors or course teams must choose which of the unit's assigned grade descriptors to use for each assignment. In making their choices, the following rules apply:
 - All of the assigned descriptors for the unit must be used in the assessment plan.
 - At least two grade descriptors must be used with all assignments.
 - Grade descriptor 7 (Quality) must be used with every assignment.
 - The same descriptor may be used for more than one assignment in a unit. A different combination of the unit's assigned grade descriptors may be used for the different assignments (all of the assigned descriptors do not have to be used for all of the unit's assignments).
- The relative significance of the grade descriptors used with a unit (and the selection of particular components) can be reflected in the extent to which each descriptor is used. For example, for a unit assessed through three assignments, one of the grade descriptors for that unit may be used with all three assignments while another may be used with only one of the assignments. Correctly applied, this mechanism helps to create an assessment plan which reflects the relative significance of different types of performance in the achievement of the unit. Equally, however, tutors should be careful in making their selections to ensure that the assessment plan for a unit is not likely to lead to disproportionate value being given to minor considerations in the assessment of performance.

c Using grade descriptor components

- Each grade descriptor contains a number of components (see Section B.) These components reflect the different types of performance which are important for different subjects, so the full version includes items which are only relevant to certain subjects. Tutors or course teams must consider all the components that are available for each of the descriptors that they are using, and then select and use the components that are appropriate for their subject and the focus and demands of each assignment.
- The rules about how components can be used and combined are given with each grade descriptor provided in Section B, under the heading 'Using this descriptor'.
- Tutors' decisions about which descriptor components to use with an assignment must also ensure that:
 - students can be rewarded for performance which exceeds the standard required for pass in all aspects of the work to be graded, and
 - considerations which are relevant to an assessment about the standard of the student work are identified in the components selected for the assignment.
- If more than one assignment is used to assess the unit and the same grade descriptor is used for more than one of the assignments, tutors may use different components from that descriptor, as appropriate, for the different assignments. This ensures the relevance of the descriptor to the nature of each assignment and can provide greater overall coverage of the descriptor.
- Whenever a grade descriptor is used, matching components at merit and distinction must always be selected; using one set of components from the merit statements and a different set of components (or additional components) from the distinction statements is not permitted.

d Planning for numerical marking

- If numerical marking is to be used for the assessment of any part of a unit, the detailed regulations relating to this (see Annex C1 on page 10) must be considered when the assessment of the unit is being planned. Please note that use of numerical marking as part of the Access to HE Diploma grading scheme will cease on 1 September 2020.

e Planning for the integrated assessment of learning outcomes from more than one unit through one assignment.

Whatever the extent or form of the integration of assessment being used, the general principles of assessment planning and grading must be applied, but careful mapping and tracking of the relationship between assessment tasks and the learning outcomes that they relate to, and how grade descriptors are then used across the whole assignment, will be needed to ensure clarity about what is being assessed and graded where.

3 Providing advance information to students

- Centres must provide students with information about the regulations relating to the submission of student work, such as draft and formal submissions, resubmissions, late submissions and extensions (see Section 4 Managing student submissions).
- Tutors must provide students with an assignment brief for each assignment, which explains how the work will be assessed, including details about the grade descriptors and the components of descriptors that are to be used in assessing the assignment.
- Tutors may provide further information about the expected links between the selected grade descriptor components and the requirements of the assignment, clarifying for students what the descriptors and components mean for the particular subject or expectations of the kind of performance that relate to the individual assignment. In providing grading information, tutors **must not**:
 - embed the language of the grade descriptor components within the task details of assignments
 - change the grade descriptors in any way (other than through the selection or omission of individual components for the assignment), nor attempt to rewrite them as grading criteria
 - reword or change the punctuation of the components from that of the current version provided by QAA
 - provide step-by-step directions which may reduce the level of challenge of the assignment or expectations of autonomous working that are appropriate for study at pre-higher education level.
- In addition to providing the above required information, many centres also ensure that students are provided with a copy of the full set of descriptors, perhaps in a student handbook, placed within a virtual learning environment or provided with the web link to the full guidance on grading on the Access to HE website for reference.

4 Managing student submissions

(See Annex C4 for an illustration of the submission process.)

AVAs are responsible for publishing their own assessment regulations, including regulations about the submission of students' work. AVAs' regulations are based on requirements made by QAA, the key elements of which are listed below.

a Formal submissions

- Providers/Centres must operate a formal approach to the submission of student work for assessment. The approach must be operated consistently across a provider's Access to HE course(s) and the provider must ensure that individual tutors act in accordance with its approach and the AVA's regulations.
- Providers/Centres must specify their approach to the submission of student work in standard course documentation (for example, in a course handbook).
- Providers/Centres must detail in writing any particular requirements which relate to the submission of individual assignments (for example, on assignment briefing sheets).
- Providers/Centres must set deadlines for all work to be submitted for formal assessment and notify these to students in writing before the assignment is undertaken (for example, on assignment briefing sheets).
- Providers/Centres must state their formal procedures for application for an extension to a deadline, and grounds for approval of an extension, in the standard course documentation. The implications for grading if an assignment is submitted late without an extension being granted (see Section 4c Late submissions and extensions) must also be stated in the standard course documentation (for example, in a course handbook).
- Once a formal submission has been made, neither the student nor tutor may later declare it to be a draft (see below).

b Draft submissions

- Opportunities to submit assignments (or parts of assignments) in draft for comment and feedback by tutors before the formal submission date are permitted only for the particular assignments where the tutor has decided that this is appropriate and has specified this in advance. Such opportunities will not be the norm.
- Where the opportunity for the submission of drafts exists, this is specified to all students in writing (for example, on assignment briefing sheets) before they begin work on the assignment.
- Tutors may provide written feedback on drafts and engage in dialogue of a general kind which allows students to see how they might develop their response to the assignment brief. In responding to draft submissions, tutors are **not permitted to**:
 - make detailed corrections to a draft submission
 - provide information about predicted grade indicators, or other detailed information about possible grading judgements.

c Late submissions and extensions

- The provider's standard written procedures for approval of extensions (see Section 4e Resubmissions) must be applied on all occasions when a student requests an extension to the deadline given on the assignment briefing sheet.
- If work is submitted after the formal deadline has passed, and no extension has been granted (and there are no exceptional extenuating circumstances which explain the failure to request an extension), all grade indicators (see below) relating to that assignment must be capped at pass.
- If an assignment is submitted after the deadline without an extension having been granted and the work does not meet the learning outcomes, there is no opportunity for resubmission except via the referrals process. (See Section E).

d Successful and unsuccessful submission

If a submission is not successful at the first attempt (that is, one or more of the learning outcomes for the assignment has not been achieved), the assignment is regarded as an unsuccessful submission. When a submission is unsuccessful, no credit can be awarded, it is not eligible for grading, and the grading process should not be applied. In these circumstances, the student should be offered the possibility of resubmission (see Annex C2 on page 13).

e Resubmissions

- Resubmissions must be managed in accordance with the detailed regulations for resubmissions (see Annex C2 on page 13.) In particular:
 - the original submission must be returned to the student, with written feedback which explains which learning outcome(s) has/have not been achieved
 - no feedback about the standard of the work in relation to grades may be given at this stage
 - the specific requirements of a resubmission opportunity must be made clear to the student
 - successful resubmissions must be graded following the same process as used for successful submissions and grades are given accordingly
 - only one resubmission opportunity may be provided for any individual assignment (unless mitigating circumstances have been accepted).
- If the resubmission is unsuccessful (that is, the resubmitted work still does not meet the learning outcome(s) in full), the only means by which a further opportunity for resubmission can be provided within the same registration period is through referral.

f Referrals

- Normally, a student is permitted only one opportunity to resubmit work which fails to meet all requirements of the associated learning outcomes. The referral process allows the course team to recommend that a student should be permitted a second resubmission opportunity. Referral may also be requested for students who have submitted work after a deadline without an agreed extension, and this work has failed to meet the requirements of one or more of the associated learning outcomes. If this occurs within the duration of a course, the recommendation is referred to the lead/external moderator through the process described in Annex C2.

- If the need for referral occurs at the end of the course (for example, as the consequence of assessments that have been taken in the last weeks of a course), the recommendation is taken to the awards board, as referrals at this stage in a course have implications for staffing, resources and results that need to be fully considered and carefully managed (see Section E, Annex E1).

5 Assessing student work

- The use of a standard set of grade descriptors and the application of a common method of arriving at final grades provide evidence for, and comparability of, grading judgements on all Access to HE courses. At the same time, the choice available within the grade descriptors and the recognition that professional judgement has a legitimate role to play in arriving at grades avoids a purely mechanistic approach that presumes that assessment is a precise science governed by computation which is divorced from judgement.
- In assessment for Access to HE, professional judgement is exercised by tutors who use the grade descriptors in ways that are meaningful and appropriate for their subject, just as they use their professional subject knowledge and expertise in deciding how to teach and assess particular units and in judging whether the learning outcomes have been achieved or not. Tutors' professional judgements in assessment are confirmed, and may be challenged, by the professional judgements of those involved in the quality assurance procedures of AVAs, including processes for moderation and standardisation.
- When assessing student work, tutors must first consider whether the assignment submitted by the student has achieved all the learning outcomes that were specified for the assignment. If all the learning outcomes have been achieved, the assignment is regarded as a successful submission and is graded, following the standard process detailed in 5a Creating a unit grade profile. An unsuccessful submission is not eligible for grading and the resubmission process outlined above applies.
- Tutors may only use numerical marking in the circumstances permitted by the numerical marking regulations. The use of numerical marking must be planned for and included in the unit assessment plan and assignment brief (See Annex C1 on page 10.) **Please note that use of numerical marking as part of the Access to HE Diploma grading scheme will cease on 1 September 2020.**

a Creating a unit grade profile

(See Annex C3 on page 19 for worked examples of unit grade profiles)

- Tutors must consider a student's work in relation to the grade descriptor components chosen for the assignment. The tutor must decide, for each of the descriptors that have been identified for the assessment of the assignment (in relation to the particular components selected), whether the standard of a student's performance is better described by the chosen distinction (D) or merit (M) components, or whether the work does not reach the standard described by the chosen merit component(s) and is at pass (P) standard.
- A grade indicator (P, M or D) is given for each grade descriptor used to assess that assignment. Grade indicators can only be P, M or D: no intermediate or modified grade indicators can be given.
- Where more than one assignment is used to assess a unit (examples b, e and f), the process is the same for each assignment.
- Tutors must record the decisions made as a set of grade indicators (P, M or D) for each descriptor used for an assignment. Together, these indicators create the unit

grade profile. Where only one assignment is used to assess a unit, the unit grade profile mirrors the unit assessment plan, and consists of one grade indicator (P, M or D) for each grade descriptor assigned to the unit. (See examples a, c and d.) Where more than one assignment is used to assess a unit, grade indicators are generated and recorded as the work progresses to create a more extended unit grade profile or matrix. (See examples b, e and f).

- No grade is given for individual assignments (although if the unit is assessed through only one assignment, the unit grade will, in effect, be the same as an assignment grade).

b Determining the final grade for a unit

- AVAs are responsible for ensuring that every final unit grade awarded by them has been determined correctly. The regulations governing the process for this are detailed below, and moderators must ensure that providers/centres are complying with both the process and the rules associated with them. Whether units are assessed through one or more than one assignment, the principles and process for determining a final grade are the same.
- The grade for a unit is based on the overall profile of grades achieved across the unit. All of the grade indicators have equal value in the unit grade profile and all are considered in determining the unit grade.
- The final grade for the unit is arrived at by establishing the midpoint¹ of grades in the unit grade profile (see examples 2c to 2f). This midpoint¹ is apparent when all grade indicators recorded in the unit grade profile are recorded in sequence from lowest to highest (for example, PPM or PPPD indicates a pass grade for the unit; PMM or PMMD indicates a merit; MDD or MDDD indicates a distinction).
- Where the midpoint is unclear (for example, if the grade profile is evenly split between two different grades, such as PPMM) the tutor makes a professional judgement about the overall standard of the assessed work for the unit, giving particular consideration to the grade indicator(s) given for grade descriptor 7 (Quality), as a guide to which grade better represents overall performance in the unit. The reasons for the judgement should be clear in feedback to the student.
- The tutor reviews the evidence for judgements made about the standard of performance against different grade descriptors, to confirm grade indicators and in order to be able to explain the grade to the student and records the unit grade. The tutor should be confident that the evidence for the judgement about the unit grade is also clear and transparent for moderation processes.
- Final grades must not be determined by giving grades for individual assignments and then calculating an overall grade from assignment grades. This is because the midpoint of several midpoints from different assignments can sometimes give a misleading outcome. The consideration of performance using the profile of grades across the whole unit better reflects the standard of the totality of the work for the unit.

¹ The unit grade might be seen as a median of the grade indicators, but as there are no standard numerical values for grades, the midpoint cannot be derived by calculating an arithmetical median.

6 Providing feedback on grading to students

- Tutors must provide feedback about graded performance.
- Feedback must be relevant to, and consistent with, the requirements of the learning outcomes, grade descriptors and components used for the assignment.
- Tutors must use their professional judgement to decide whether the language of the grade components is sufficient in itself to indicate how the grade standard has been achieved, or whether additional comment or explanation is needed or might be helpful for the student. If tutors provide additional comments, they must ensure that they are neither inconsistent with the standard represented by the chosen grade descriptors, nor refer to aspects of performance which are not in some way addressed by either the learning outcomes covered by the assignment or the grade descriptors and components that were applied.
- Where more than one assignment is used to assess a unit, tutors should provide feedback in relation to the individual assignments so that students can identify strengths and weaknesses in different areas and improve their performance.
- Feedback on work which has not met the requirements of one or more learning outcomes, and therefore has not achieved the standard for Pass, must only confirm which aspect of a learning outcome has not been achieved. It must not provide information which relates to grading. (See also 4e Resubmission on page 5).
- Feedback in the context of large, developmental, units needs special consideration. Some large credit units focus on development of skills and critical abilities which may be completed over a term or more and may involve significant amounts of discussion between tutors and students as part of the teaching and learning process. (Such units are often found in art and design or creative arts programmes, or to support extended projects.) This may or may not result in a record of the outcomes of the discussions and the subsequent changes a student makes to their work. Whatever the subject or method of assessment, tutors must not provide feedback during the development of student work which is so detailed that it becomes, in effect, coaching. Feedback which provides specific information about how to modify work already in progress or change performance in order to achieve particular learning outcomes or match requirements of grade descriptors is not permitted. (See also 4b Draft submissions on page 4).

7 Changes to grades and grade indicators

- Once an assignment has been assessed, the student is not permitted to resubmit all or part of the assessed work in order to seek to improve or change a grade. (The tutor is not permitted to provide opportunities for 'grade polishing'.) This applies to successful first submissions and to resubmissions.
- The only circumstances in which grade indicators may be amended are:
 - if an **administrative error** has been made (see 7a)
 - as a result of the **representation process** (see 7b and Annex C2 on page 13).

In both cases, a written record of changes must be kept as set out in the regulations.

a Administrative errors

- If a student identifies an error after graded work has been returned, they are expected to draw attention to the error within one week of receiving the assessed work.
- If an administrative error comes to light (for example, in the completion of a unit grade profile, or the calculation of the unit grade), the tutor will correct the error on the student's record (for example, assignment feedback sheet), indicating the nature of the error. The course leader (or equivalent) will provide formal authorisation for the change before the amended record is returned to the student. The correction of an administrative error and authorisation for any change will be included in the formal record of assessment outcomes.
- Once a formal submission of work has been assessed and the assessment decisions notified to the student, there are no circumstances in which a tutor may make any change to grade indicators or unit grades without the course leader (or equivalent) being involved and without a formal record being made.

b Representations

- Students may sometimes ask for grades to be reviewed. This situation should be managed through the formal representations process, as set out in Annex C2 on page 13.
- Under no circumstances may a tutor make any changes to grade indicators or unit grades which have been notified to a student, without the involvement of the internal moderator and without a formal record being made.

8 Maintaining records

- All grading decisions must be recorded both on the written feedback provided to students and in the tutor's own record. The tutor must maintain auditable records of unit grade profiles and final unit grades, which can be used for internal and external moderation and for the award of Diploma grade profiles.
- Tutors' professional judgements in assessment are confirmed, and may be challenged, by the professional judgements of those involved in the AVA's quality assurance procedures for moderation and standardisation. (See Section D).

9 Further information

Full details of the Access to HE Grading Scheme, and all associated guidance documents for AVAs, course providers and HE admissions staff, are available on the [Access to HE website](#).

Annex C1: regulations for use of numerical marking²

For most units, the grade descriptors can be used effectively to differentiate student performance by providing a basis for broad, qualitative judgements about the standard of the aspects of performance relevant to the unit. In any subject, however, there may be units which include outcomes for which there is a fixed response (that is, where answers are either right or wrong, such as in the discrete testing of the knowledge base of the unit); a numerical mark may then be the most appropriate way of indicating a direct relationship with the standard of performance required by the learning outcome.

Rules

Where numerical marking has been approved for use (through the internal moderator's approval of the unit assessment plan), the following rules apply.

- a The use of numerical marking is limited solely to those assessment situations where the only possible response is either right or wrong.
- b Numerical marking is used only to derive a mark for individual grade descriptors which can assess a fixed response; these are grade descriptor 1 (Understanding of the subject) and grade descriptor 3 (Application of skills).
- c Because all units must use a minimum of two grade descriptors, and one of these is grade descriptor 7 (Quality), no unit can be assessed entirely through grade descriptors 1 and/or 3. The numerical mark therefore only contributes to part of the final unit grade.
- d Even where numerical marking is applied to a unit, a pass is always defined through a student's achievement of the associated learning outcome(s), and not through a specific mark on a scale, unless it can be shown that achieving that mark guarantees that the student has also achieved the learning outcome. Numerical marking is, therefore, only used to clarify the achievement of merit or distinction.
- e Students are informed through the assignment brief of the numerical scale that is being used and the numerical mark required for the award of merit and distinction.
- f Numerical grade boundaries for merit and distinction are determined at centre level, in relation to the nature and standard of the assessment set and the expectations of the merit and distinction statements for grade descriptors 1 and/or 3. Numerical scales and boundaries must be quality assured through moderation processes; neither QAA nor any AVA can or will provide or endorse standard numerical equivalents for grades.
- g If numerical marking is used for both grade descriptor 1 and 3, the mark for each should come from the assessment of different aspects of the work (and points e and f apply), to derive separate grade indicators for each of the descriptors.
- h Final unit grades cannot be directly derived from, or converted into, numerical marks.
- i All outcomes recorded on the unit grade profile are grades (P,M,D), not numerical marks.

² Please note that use of numerical marking as part of the Access to HE Diploma grading scheme will cease on 1 September 2020.

FAQs on numerical marking

Q1 What sort of units can numerical marking be used for?

Units where numerical marking may be appropriate are most frequently found in subjects such as mathematics and the sciences, but may also be found in other subjects, where a concrete knowledge base is being assessed, and where the assessment does not allow for interpretation, judgement, degrees of understanding or alternative responses.

In a science unit, for example, a learning outcome may specify aspects of knowledge (facts, principles, formulae and so on) that students need to acquire. Numerical marking could legitimately be used for the assessment of this knowledge, although the application of the knowledge (for example, in an experiment) would be graded using other descriptors, such as grade descriptor 2 (Application of knowledge).

Q2 Why is it possible to use numerical marking with grade descriptor 3 as well as grade descriptor 1?

In mathematics, it is the skillful application of knowledge to calculation that generates different standards of performance in a way that can be graded. In this context, numerical marking may be used for grade descriptor 3 (Application of skills). (Assessment of any other type of application of skills, such as the practical skills involved in media or art, is of a different kind and numerical marking would not be appropriate.)

Q3 Some units are assessed entirely through fixed response assessment. How does grade descriptor 7 work for these units?

As a general principle, level 3 units on an Access to HE Diploma should require more of a student than can be captured through assessments based on responses that are either right or wrong. As a minimum, therefore, grade descriptors 1 or 3 should be balanced and supported by the use of grade descriptor 7 (Quality). It is recognised, however, that there are some limited instances of Maths units which focus on ensuring students have acquired the mathematical skills they need to apply in their main subject, and where the assessment of the learning outcomes of that unit is concerned entirely on the accurate use of mathematical concepts or procedures. Where this is the case, it is acknowledged that there is little or no other content within student work for that unit that could be taken into account when deciding the grade for grade descriptor 7, and that, therefore, grade descriptor 7 will reflect the grade given for whichever other grade descriptor is being used.

Q4 Why is there no national or AVA endorsed scale for grades and numerical marking?

Tutors delivering units on Access to HE courses devise their own assessment tools, and a tutor's ability to devise an assessment that is valid, reliable, relevant and appropriate is quality assured through the moderation process. For this reason, decisions about the mark that equates with performance at merit and distinction level can only be made by the tutor, who must be able to provide the rationale for that decision to students and moderators. In this context it is entirely inappropriate for any external requirement for a particular point on any scale of marking to be used to equate to merit and distinction grades.

As with the operation of the grading model generally, tutors must ensure that the first judgement made about student work is whether or not the learning outcomes have been

achieved and this should be the basis of a judgement about whether the pass standard has been reached, rather than the achievement of a numerical mark.

Q5 Can I use numerical marking with all the grade descriptors?

No. For the reasons discussed above, numerical marking can only be used with grade descriptors 1 and 3, and only then in the context of the fixed response assessment.

Q6 Can I use numerical marking for other forms of assessment, such as exams?

No, unless the specific conditions of the use of grade descriptor 1 and/or 3 apply to the exam, and the numerical mark achieved becomes a grade indicator for the assessment. Tutors needs to remember that where exams are used for assessment, they must create opportunities for students to demonstrate the achievement of the learning outcomes of the unit being examined, and no other way of measuring or recording achievement is acceptable.

Annex C2: regulations relating to reassessment (resubmissions, representations and referrals)

Each AVA publishes, and is responsible for the management of, a set of assessment regulations which apply to all its validated Access to HE courses. AVAs' assessment regulations must include, in full, the detailed specifications set out below. If AVAs provide any additional regulations, such regulations will neither provide greater advantages, nor limit opportunities for students' achievement on a particular course or group of courses, or between one AVA and another.

Principles

The principles which inform the regulations that relate to reassessment are that:

- the number and type of opportunities for reassessment are limited and clearly defined
- the opportunity to be reassessed does not confer an undue advantage on those who achieve only after reassessment or diminish the achievements of those who achieve at the first attempt
- reassessment opportunities do not undermine confidence in the standard of the Access to HE Diploma
- account is taken of any extenuating circumstances affecting the student
- course tutors play a central role in making decisions about reassessment and tutor decisions about reassessment are confirmed through moderation
- opportunities for reassessment do not place unreasonable or unmanageable burdens on tutors or moderators
- assessment regulations are consistent with the broader principles and procedures for the award of credits and grades on the Access to HE Diploma.

Resubmissions

The process for resubmission applies when an assignment has been submitted which does not meet the learning outcomes specified for that assignment, in which case it cannot contribute towards the award of credit or be eligible for grading (See 4e Resubmissions, page 5).

Resubmission requirements must:

- a. **be proportionate to the degree of non-achievement**

Normally, this will mean:

- **a matter of minor detail has been omitted**, so a single learning outcome has not been achieved: the resubmission requirements may ask for the submission of additional material
- **a particular skill has not been fully demonstrated**, so a single learning outcome has not been achieved: the resubmission requirements may address that one learning outcome and assess it in isolation. (Individual assessment criteria cannot be considered in isolation of the learning outcome to which they relate.)
- **a number of learning outcomes have not been achieved**, or the non-achievement is deemed substantial in some other way (for example, where the evidence for a single learning outcome is derived from the whole piece of work): the

resubmission requirements are likely to involve a full reconsideration and reworking of the assignment as a whole.

b. be consistent with the way in which the learning outcome(s) were originally assessed

Normally, this will mean the assessment method used for the resubmission is the same as that used for the original submission, except:

- **if it is not possible or practicable** for resubmission requirements to replicate the original assignment or assessment task (for example, some types of group work, or practical research), the (unmet) learning outcome(s) should be assessed through an assignment which makes comparable demands to those of the original assignment
- **if undue advantage** could be gained by resubmission of the same assignment or assessment task an equivalent assignment should be devised to assess the learning outcome(s) not yet achieved and the return of other students' work should be delayed until the resubmission has been made
- **if the learning outcomes for a unit are distributed across more than one assignment**, the resubmission applies to the assignment for which learning outcomes have not been met, and grade indicators already awarded for any other assignments within the unit are unaffected. When the results of the resubmission are known, if the learning outcomes have been achieved, the full unit grade profile can be created, and the unit grade determined
- **if the assessment of learning outcomes for a unit is integrated** in an assignment which is also used for the assessment of learning outcomes for another unit, the focus of reassessment should be the particular unit for which learning outcomes were unmet at first submission. Where learning outcomes that relate to a different unit have been achieved in the assignment, grades for that different unit are derived from the original assignment.

c. be subject to a clear deadline for resubmission

Normally, this will be:

- as soon as possible after the feedback on the formal submission has been given
- practicable and reasonable for the specific resubmission requirements (including specifying a very limited time frame, if appropriate)
- agreed and confirmed with the student
- appropriate for the stage reached in the course (wherever possible allowing reassessment to be completed before the final awards board (See Section E).

d. be applied consistently in equivalent assessment situations, so that all students have equivalent opportunities for resubmission and reassessment

e. ensure that the additional or revised work being resubmitted is clearly distinguishable from the work for the unsuccessful submission by, for example, the student returning the original as well as the resubmitted work

f. be subject to moderation

Moderation procedures relating to resubmission will:

- confirm that resubmission practices at course level are consistent with this guidance and the AVA's assessment regulations

- confirm the consistent application of resubmission practices across the provision for which the moderator has responsibility
- consider examples of resubmissions, accompanied by original submissions, and confirm consistency in tutors' assessment decisions relating to resubmission.

Representations

The procedure for representations applies when a student asks for unconfirmed grade indicators to be reconsidered, after work has been graded but prior to moderation.

- If a student wishes to ask for reconsideration of one or more of the grade indicators given by a tutor for any individual assignment, he/she must do so at the earliest opportunity. This will normally be within one week of receiving the graded work.
- In the first instance, the tutor will discuss the assessed work with the student to explain the grading decisions made.
- If the student is not satisfied with the explanation and wishes to pursue a representation, the relevant student work will be considered by the internal moderator or considered through such other alternative mechanisms as have been approved for the purpose by the AVA. A formal record of the student's representation will be made.
- If, as a result of this process, it is concluded that there is no case for regrading (that is, the tutor's original decision is confirmed), the student is informed of the decision, and the outcome is recorded on the formal record of the representation. Any appeal against this decision will be made through the appeals procedures that apply (see Section E). The formal record of the representation and its outcome will be available in any subsequent appeal.
- If the internal consideration concludes that an error of judgement has been made, the relevant assignment(s) is/are re-assessed and new feedback, relating to any revised grade indicators, is provided. A copy of both the original and the revised feedback, with the revised grade indicators, must be retained. The outcome is recorded on the formal record of the representation.
- The formal representation record will include:
 - the date the representation is made
 - the nature of the representation
 - the nature of any change made
 - the reason for the change or decision not to change
 - the date the change is approved
 - the name of the tutor responsible for the initial assessment and of the internal moderator (or other authorised person) who approved the change.
- The formal records of all representations will be considered by the external moderator, who will a) confirm that the representations process has been properly operated and b) may sample and review individual cases.
- Under no circumstances may a tutor make any change to grade indicators or unit grades without the involvement of the internal moderator and without a formal record being made.

Referrals (for second resubmission)

(See Annex E1 for an illustration of this process.)

When a student has not achieved one or more of the learning outcomes of an assessment on first resubmission, or when work has been submitted late without an agreed extension, the student may be referred for permission to make a second resubmission. When this occurs within the duration of the course, the process described below must be used. Where this occurs at the end of the course (for example, in final assessments) the process described in Section E must be followed.

a Before referral

The tutor concerned raises the possibility of a referral with the internal moderator (IM). The IM ensures that the following requirements are complied with:

- the student completed the resubmission process and failed to achieve all the learning outcomes for the work being referred
- tutors have discussed with the student the best way for the student to progress
- the student has been informed that referral does not automatically result in approval for a second resubmission
- the student has been informed that the decision to allow a further opportunity to submit one or more assignments at this stage of the course is made by the lead/external moderator (L/EM) on the basis of evidence presented.

b Evidence

Evidence to support the case for referrals must make reference to:

- any special circumstances affecting the individual student
- the particular assignment in which it is recommended to the L/EM that a student is referred
- details of the achievement in the original submissions and resubmissions for the unit(s) in question (including any other assignments that contribute to the assessment of the unit which have been achieved)
- the student's total achievement profile up to the point on the Access to HE course that the referral is requested (including the title of units, credit value and indicative grades, and whether or not they were achieved on the basis of a second resubmission of work as a consequence of referral). Requests for referrals will not normally be considered where the total credit value of the units which have already been achieved through referral or might be achieved as an outcome of a further referral, is more than 15.

The records of this process and the request for a referral are forwarded to the L/EM (by whatever means the AVA directs) for a decision.

c Decisions

Decisions about referrals made by the L/EM must include:

- whether a second resubmission opportunity should be offered
- the nature and extent of the requirements for resubmission. This must comply with the relevant requirements for first resubmissions (see Resubmissions, paragraphs a,b,d and f)
- the deadline for the second resubmission. For referrals during the year, the deadline will take into account:
 - the need to inform the student of the decisions, which should be at the earliest opportunity following the request for referral being sent to the EM
 - the need to allow a limited but reasonable time for the student to complete the resubmission
 - the need to assess the resubmitted assignment(s)
- the L/EM informs the IM of the decisions made and details of the resubmission requirements where a referral has been granted, who then informs the tutor.

d Assessment of referrals

In most cases it will be clear whether or not assessed work resubmitted for a second time (that is, as a result of a referral) demonstrates that a student has achieved the standard required. If, however the assessor is uncertain about the sufficiency of the evidence to justify an assessment decision that the standard is adequate to meet the requirements of the associated learning outcome(s) (that is, to pass) and wants to have this raised for consideration the following process must be used:

- The tutor must request a review with the internal moderator (IM). In this review, the focus is on a professional judgement as to whether or not the relevant learning outcomes have been achieved.
- The IM then refers the assessed work and the judgement (with a commentary) to the L/EM for a moderation of the decision as to whether or not the assessment standard for Pass (and, therefore, the unit) has been achieved. The L/EM informs the IM of this decision and keeps a record to bring to the Awards Board and thereby to the AVA. The IM informs the assessor, and the judgement is recorded in the student's record.
- Every use of this mechanism, with the grounds for the judgement, is recorded in course records and by the L/EM to report to the awards board and thereby the AVA. The AVA should take action if this information suggests that there are features of the way a unit is written or an assessment is designed that lead to ambiguities or other unreasonable difficulties for students in providing appropriate work for the assessment.
- The implementation of this approach to the assessment of referrals must be supported by AVAs with appropriate training for assessors, internal moderators and external moderators.

e Possible outcomes from a referred resubmission

- Grade indicators for the referred resubmission are capped at pass; these pass grade indicators are added to the unit grade profile, and the unit grade is calculated in the usual way (see Assessing student work, page 6 in this section). If the resubmitted assignment represents the totality of evidence of achievement for the

unit, the unit grade will therefore be pass. Where the assignment represents part of the evidence for achievement on the unit, the final unit grade will depend on other grade indicators within the unit grade profile.

- If a referred resubmission is unsuccessful (that is, the work resubmitted after referral does not demonstrate that the student has achieved the learning outcome(s)), no credits or grades for the unit can be awarded. A partially completed unit grade profile has no formal status.
- If a referred resubmission made within the duration of a course is successful (that is, the work resubmitted after referral demonstrates the achievement of the learning outcomes) this result is recorded in the student record, to be taken forward to the awards board at the end of the course. Successful referred resubmissions at the end of the course must be dealt with in the way described in Section E.
- Both the IM and the L/EM keep their own records of requests for referrals as they occur. These records should include: the frequency of the use of this mechanism, the nature of the inadequacies in student performance that led to the non-achievement of one or more learning outcomes, the frequency with which requests for referrals are approved, and the final assessment outcome. The AVA should take action if this information suggests that there are features of the way a unit is written or an assessment designed that lead to ambiguities or unreasonable difficulties for students in providing appropriate work for the assessment.
- A complete record of all requests for referrals and their outcomes is provided for the awards board and thereby to the AVA for information and review.
- Referrals that can only be pursued at the end of the year because they are the consequence of an assignment attempted at a late stage in a course must be referred to the awards board, as referrals at this time require opportunities for students to undertake assessments after the end of the course, and have implications for staffing, resources and results that need to be fully considered and carefully managed (see Section E).

Annex C3: unit assessment plans (examples a - b), unit grade profiles and unit grades (examples c - f)

Example a)

Assessment plan for a unit for which all learning outcomes are assessed by a single assignment, and to which three grade descriptors have been assigned

Unit title		
Grade descriptors		Assignment 1 (covers all learning outcomes)
1	Understanding of the subject	x
2	Application of knowledge	
3	Application of skills	
4	Use of Information	
5	Communication and presentation	x
6	Autonomy and/or Independence	
7	Quality	x

Example b)

Assessment plan for a unit with five learning outcomes, assessed by more than one assignment, to which five grade descriptors have been assigned

(Plan shows how grade descriptors are allocated across the assignments)

Unit title			
Grade descriptors		Assign. 1 (LOs 1 and 2)	Assign. 2 (LOs 1 and 2)
1	Understanding of the subject		
2	Application of knowledge	x	
3	Application of skills		x
4	Use of Information		x
5	Communication and presentation	x	x
6	Autonomy and/or Independence		
7	Quality	x	x

Example c) unit grade profile for example a)

Unit assessed by single assignment: odd number of grade indicators

Unit title		
Grade descriptors		Grade indicator
1	Understanding of the subject	M
2	Application of knowledge	
3	Application of skills	
4	Use of Information	
5	Communication and presentation	P
6	Autonomy and/or Independence	
7	Quality	M
Unit grade profile		PMM
Unit grade		Merit

Example d) unit grade profile

Unit assessed by single assignment: even number of grade indicators (mid-point at two different grades)

Unit title		
Grade descriptors		Grade indicator
1	Understanding of the subject	
2	Application of knowledge	D
3	Application of skills	
4	Use of Information	M
5	Communication and presentation	M
6	Autonomy and/or Independence	
7	Quality	D
Unit grade profile		MMDD
Unit grade (noting quality grade)		Distinction

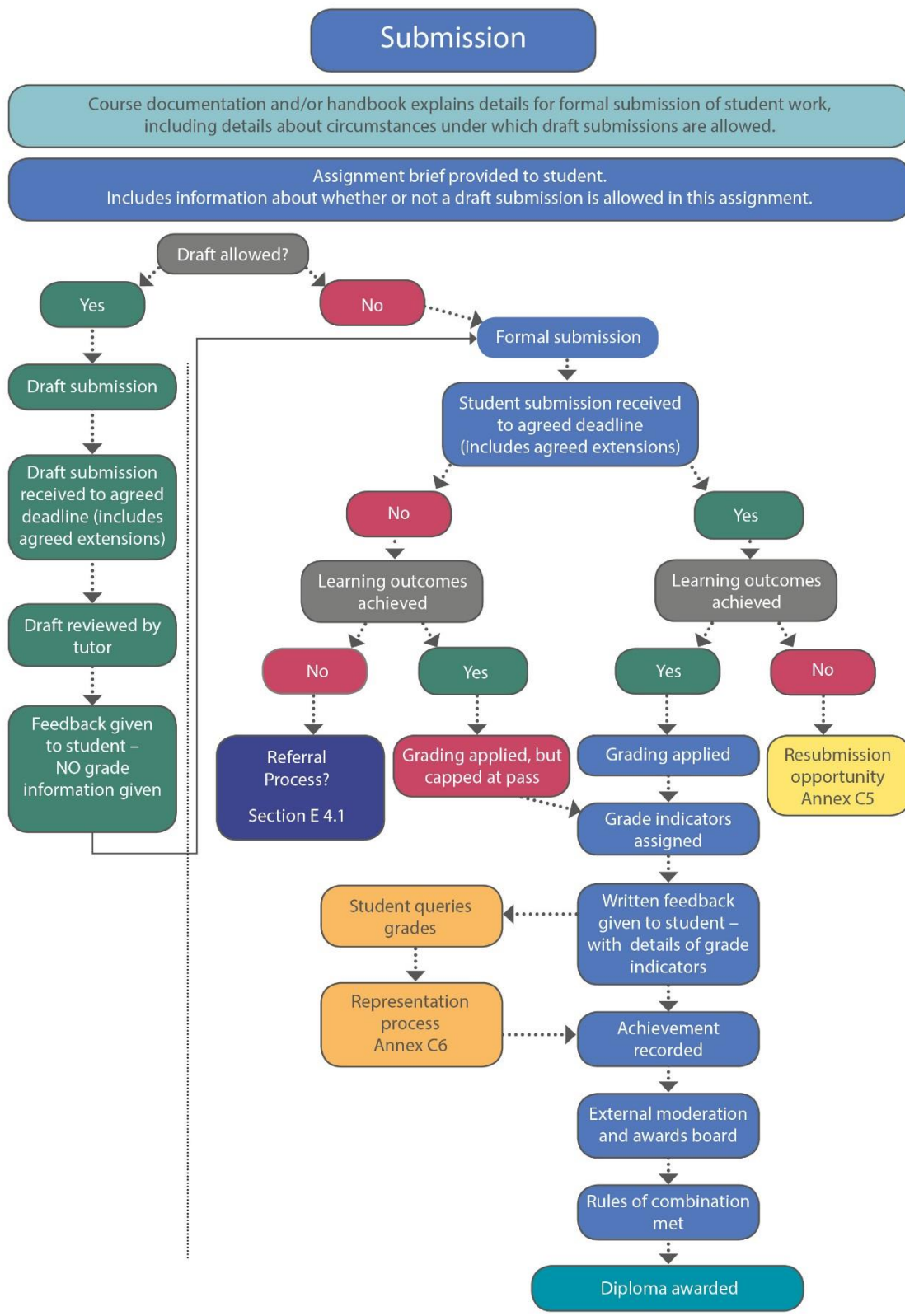
Example e) Unit assessed by more than one assignment

Unit title		
	Unit coverage	
	Assign. 1 (LOs 1 and 2)	Assign. 2 (LOs 3, 4, 5)
Grade descriptors		
1	Understanding of the subject	P
2	Application of knowledge	M
3	Application of skills	
4	Use of Information	M
5	Communication and presentation	P
6	Autonomy and/or Independence	
7	Quality	P
Unit grade profile		PPPPMM
Unit grade		Pass

Example f) Unit assessed by more than one assignment (even number of grade indicators mid-point grades the same)

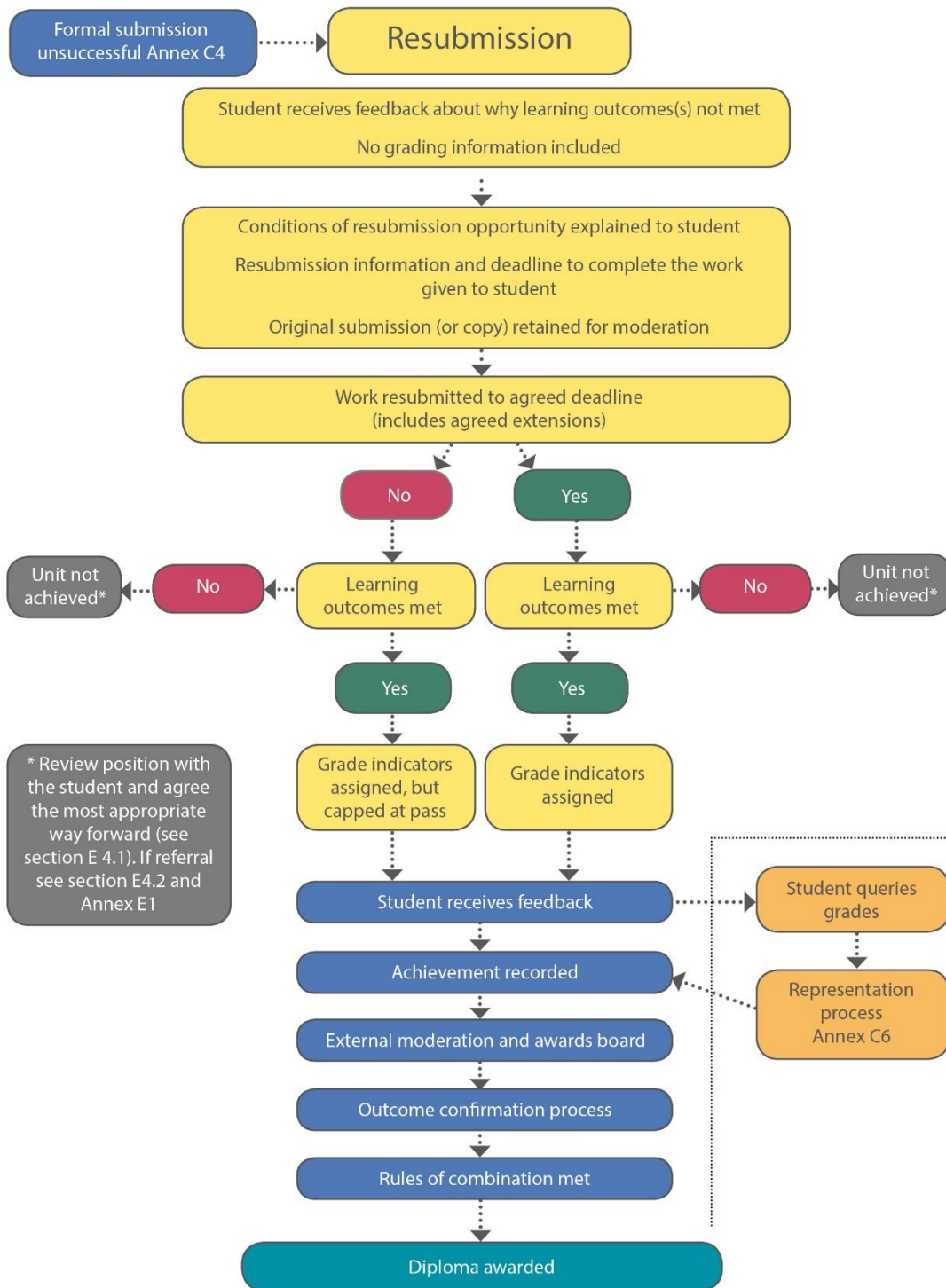
Unit title		
	Unit coverage	
	Assign. 1	Assign. 2
Grade descriptors		
1	Understanding of the subject	M
2	Application of knowledge	
3	Application of skills	P
4	Use of Information	
5	Communication and presentation	P
6	Autonomy and/or Independence	
7	Quality	P
Unit grade profile		PPPPPPMM
Unit grade		Pass

Annex C4: flow chart of the submission process

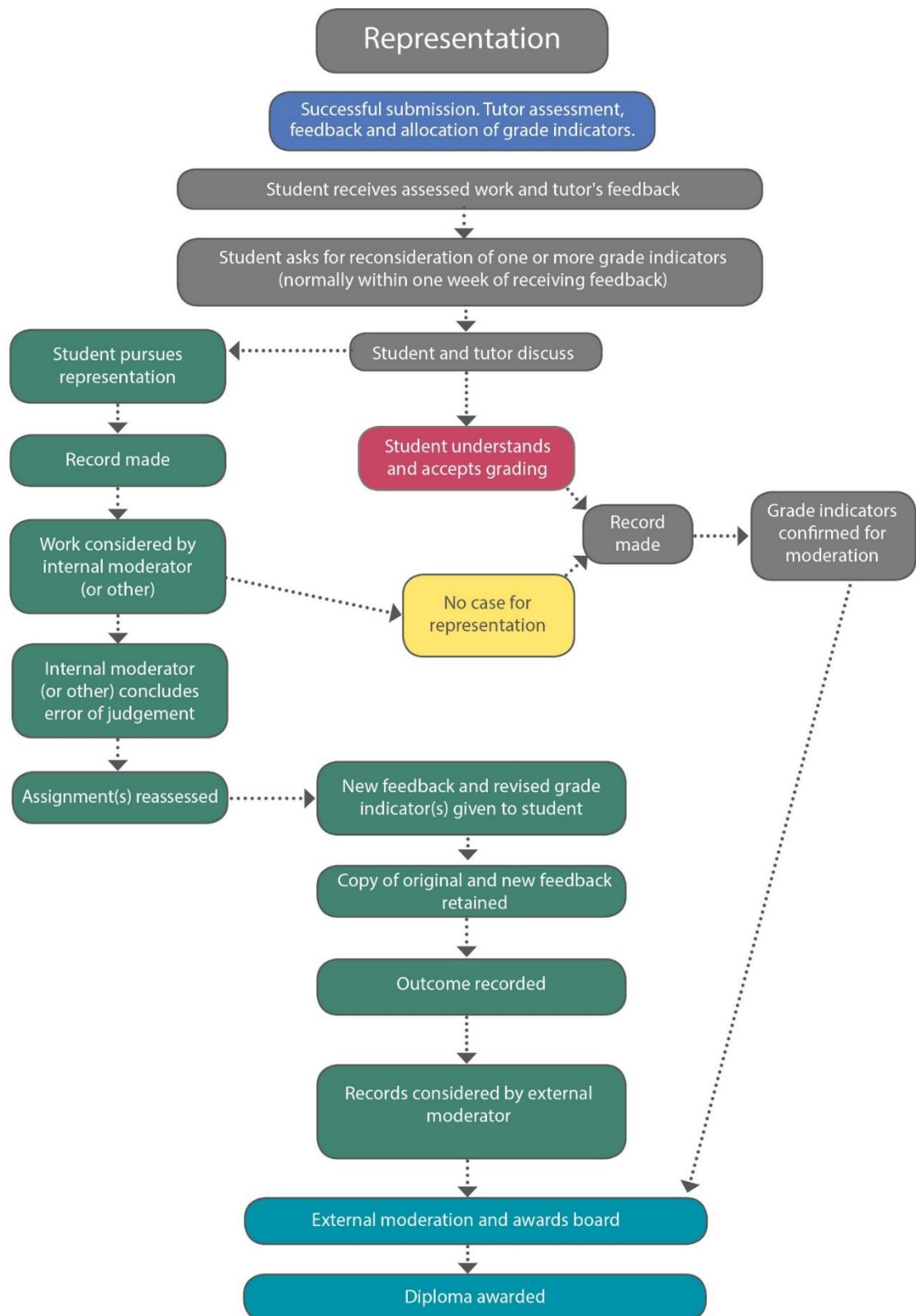


Annex C5: flow chart of the resubmission process

Annex C5: flow chart of the resubmission process



Annex C6: flow chart of the representation process



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