



# **South Eastern Regional College**

## **Higher National Programme Regulations (RQF)**

**2025-26**

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## Document Change History

Version	Date	Change Detail
1.0	Sept 2025	<p>Introduction of Document Change History.</p> <p>3.2- List of programmes added to clarify.</p> <p>3.3- New section added to explain Creative industries Calculation of the Overall Qualification.</p> <p>6.3- Additional clarity added around formative and summative assessment.</p> <p>6.4- Further clarity provided around resubmissions</p> <p>6.5- Further clarity added around repeating of units</p> <p>6.7- Additional clarity added around extenuating circumstances.</p> <p>6.9- New section added to clarify around marking spelling, punctuation and grammar</p> <p>7.0- Update of terminology to reflect Pearson requirements.</p>

## 1 Introduction

These regulations apply to all Pearson HNC/HND RQF awards offered by the College. It should be read in conjunction with the Programme Regulations section in the HE Student Handbook. The College reserves the right to make reasonable changes to the regulations where it will assist in the proper delivery of education. These changes will normally come into effect at the beginning of an academic year. The College may introduce changes during the academic year when it reasonably considers these to be in the interests of students or where this is required by law.

## **2 Responsibilities**

### **2.1 Responsibilities of the College**

The College will ensure that students have access to the Pearson Higher National Regulations and supporting policies and procedures. All relevant processes required by Pearson to deliver a Higher National are detailed in the policies and procedures of the College. The main processes can be found in the HE Higher Education Programme Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). This, along with any other relevant SOPs can be found in the key policies and procedures section of the SERC website and programme Virtual Learning Environments (VLE). These include:

- Academic Misconduct
- Mitigating circumstances and leave of absence
- Appeals and Complaints

The Programme Coordinator will ensure that the assessment requirements for the course are published. This will include:

- Student handbook including programme specification
- Assessment schedule (including reassessment dates)
- Learning outcomes, assessment criteria, weightings, and mode(s) of assessment for each unit
- Procedures for the submission of assignments, including the procedure for dealing with late submission of work, and indicative feedback dates
- Criteria relating to grading and marking schemes

### **2.2 Responsibilities of students**

It is their responsibility to ensure that they read and comply with the assessment regulations for the Pearson Higher National course, supporting policies and procedures.

### 3 Duration and Structure of the RQF Award

Since September 2021, all HN awards delivered by SERC are from the Pearson RQF qualifications.

The table below summarises examples of the normal duration of a programme for students studying on full-time or part-time RQF HNC/HND awards.

Mode of attendance	Normal Duration of programme	Normal credits per year
Full-time HNC	1 years	120 credits
Part-time HNC	2 years	60 credits
Full-time HND	2 years	120 credits
Part-time HND	4 years	60 credits

Exceptionally, schools may offer a bespoke method of delivery for courses.

If the normal duration of a course is exceeded there may be funding implications for confirmed registrations.

BTEC Higher Nationals consist of core units, specialist units and optional units:

- Core and specialist units are mandatory.
- Specialist units are designed to provide a specific occupational focus to the qualification and are aligned to Professional Body standards.

The specific units offered are published on the Course Descriptors on the SERC website. Any changes to these will be communicated in-line with the Admissions SOP. Student choice in specialist units will be determined by level of demand and availability of resources including staffing.

#### 3.1 Conditions and Compensations

##### Conditions for the award of the HNC

To achieve a Pearson BTEC Higher National Certificate qualification, a student must have:

- Completed units equivalent to 120 credits at Level 4

### Compensation provisions for the HNC

Students can still be awarded an HNC if they have not achieved a Pass in one of the 15 credit units completed but have completed and passed the remaining units.

Students must have completed at least 90 credits at level 4 before progressing to level 5. The remaining 30 level 4 credits can be completed while undertaking level 5 study.

**Please Note: Compensation does not apply to the HNC in Graphic Design and HNC in Film and Television Production qualifications.**

### Conditions for the award of the HND

To achieve a Pearson BTEC Higher National Diploma qualification, a student must have:

- Completed units equivalent to 120 credits at Level 5
- Completed units equivalent to 120 credits at Level 4

### Compensation provisions for HND

Students can still be awarded an HND if they have attempted but not achieved a Pass in one of the 15 credit units completed at Level 4 and similarly if they have attempted but not achieved one of the 15 credit units at Level 5. However, they must complete and pass the remaining units for an HNC or HND as per the unit rules of combination of the required qualification.

Units are usually 15 credits in value, or a multiple of this. Each 15-credit unit approximates to a Total Qualification Time (TQT) of 150 hours which includes 60 hours of Guided Learning (GL). TQT is the estimated total amount of time that a student could achieve a qualification in. GL is the time when a tutor is present to give specific guidance towards the learning aim being studied.

**Please Note: Compensation does not apply to the HND in Graphic Design and HND in Film and Television Production qualifications.**

### 3.2 HNC/D Calculation of the Overall Qualification

This calculation method relates to the following programmes within the College:

- HNC/D Animal Management
- HNC/D Applied Science
- HNC/D Computing
- HNC/D Engineering
- HNC/D Healthcare Practice
- HNC/D Music
- HNC/D Performing Arts
- HNC/D Social and Community Work

The calculation of the overall qualification grade is based on the student’s performance in all units. Students are awarded a Pass, Merit or Distinction qualification grade using the points gained through all 120 credits, at Level 4 for the HNC or Level 5 for the HND, based on unit achievement. The overall qualification grade is calculated in the same way for the HNC and for the HND.

All units in valid combination must have been attempted for each qualification. The conditions of award and the compensation provisions will apply as outlined above. All 120 credits count in calculating the grade (at each level, as applicable).

The overall qualification grade for the HND will be calculated based on student performance in Level 5 units only.

Units that have been attempted but not achieved, and subsequently granted compensation, will appear as ‘Unclassified’; i.e., a ‘U’ grade, on the student’s Notification of Performance, that is issued with the student certificate.

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Points per credit</b>	<b>Point Boundaries</b>
<b>Pass</b>	4	420-599
<b>Merit</b>	6	600–839
<b>Distinction</b>	8	840 +

### **3.3 HNC/ D Creative industries Calculation of the Overall Qualification**

This calculation method relates to the following programmes within the College:

- HNC/D Graphic Design
- HNC/D Film and Television Production

The calculation of the overall qualification grade is based on the student's performance in both units. The units are assessed against the following 5 assessment criteria:

- Contextual Knowledge
- Ideas Generation and Development
- Technical Knowledge and Skill
- Professional Practice
- Communication

Each assessment unit criteria is graded, with the following points recorded:

- Pass- 1 Point
- Merit- 2 Points
- Distinction- 3 Points

These are totalled to provide an overall unit performance.

A student's overall qualification grade is based on their performance in all modules. The unit points are added together to provide total qualification points which equates to an overall Higher National Diploma grade determined by the points boundaries below:

- Pass- 10 points
- Merit- 16 points
- Distinction- 23 points

## 4 Admission Requirements

Admission requirements are publicised annually through Course Descriptors on the SERC website. The admission process may include vocational assessment as well as interview process and academic achievement. The admission process is detailed in the Higher Education Admissions SOP in the key policies and procedures section of the website.

### 4.1 English Language Requirements

Pearson require that non-native English speakers show the following proficiency in English language to gain admission.

Language of delivery/ assessment	English language requirements
HN is taught and assessed in English	<p>Non-native English speakers and those students who have not had their final two years of schooling in English must have evidence of English Language Level B2 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IELTS 6.0 (Academic) minimum of 5.5 in all skill sets, or secure equivalent score from an approved UKVI Secure English Language Test (SELT) provider;</li> <li>• PTE Academic 51 (minimum of 46 in each part); or</li> <li>• Have GCSE in English, Essential Skills in Communication Level 2, ESOL Level 2 or another qualification gained at an Institution within the UK (this will be assessed by the College and the College will still request a SELT)</li> </ul>

The International Office will provide guidance and Course Coordinators must involve them in the admission process of a non-native speaker.

### 4.2 Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) and Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL)

Applicants to Higher Nationals who hold relevant industrial experience may use the APL and APEL processes for admission.

Studies pursued and examinations passed in respect of other qualifications and/or evidence from the accreditation of prior experiential learning, may be accepted as exempting candidates from part of an approved programme.

This process is detailed in the Higher Education Accreditation of Prior Learning SOP.

## 5 HN Global

HN Global is an online resource that supports students and helps in planning delivering Pearson HNs. It is a **requirement** that HN RQF students are registered on HN Global. This should occur early in the first semester through tutorials. [HN Global | BTEC Higher Nationals](#)

## **6 Assessment**

### **6.1 Assessment schedule**

Students will be given an assessment schedule, detailing assessment submission dates, within the first two weeks of study of each unit.

### **6.2 Assessment submission**

Assignments are to be submitted at the time, date, and method stated by the subject tutor. An electronic and a hard copy of an assignment must be submitted unless otherwise stated by the unit tutor. Electronic assignments should be submitted in a format agreed with your unit tutor, and the student should check their own work for plagiarism and unauthorised use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools prior to submission using Turnitin. Tutors will also check work for plagiarism. Assignments are on time only when they are submitted by the time stated.

All assignments, whether submitted electronically or as a hard copy, must be accompanied by the relevant front cover sheet (signed as a declaration of own work) and task sheet. Assignments will not be marked without them. Assignments should be submitted as identified by the unit tutor. It is the student's responsibility to ask for a receipt of submission if paper based.

### **6.3 Assessment**

A key feature of RQF Higher Nationals is the use of holistic assessment. Holistic assessment is based on the principle that the student's work is evaluated as a whole, rather than as a set of individual tasks. Holistic assessment encourages the student to see how theories, concepts and skills work together.

For each unit in a HN qualification, we define learning outcomes which define the skills and knowledge that students should be able to evidence on completion of the programme. Because we are designing assessments against the learning outcome, students will see the potential to achieve at different levels. In holistic assessment, we are evaluating the work to see if students have achieved Pass, Merit or Distinction.

### **6.3.1 Formative Assessment:**

Students working at higher levels should be capable of undertaking independent study and research, developing strategies to improve their own performance, supported by teaching staff. Formative assessment is an integral part of the BTEC assessment process, involving both the Assessor and the student in a two-way conversation about their progress. It takes place prior to summative assessment and does not confirm achievement of grades but focuses on helping the student to reflect on their learning and improve their performance. The main function of formative assessment is to provide feedback to enable the student to make improvements to facilitate summative assessment achievement. When giving formative feedback it is important to avoid giving students advice that directly informs the work that they may do for summative assessment. This is referred to as 'coaching' and is inappropriate. Feedback should provide students with general advice on how to progress in their studies but should not tell them what to do. For example, a tutor might say "...your analysis of the research is not clear, you will need to look at the research more critically..." rather than "...what you should be writing is..." In the former, the tutor is supporting the student understand their current progress and how to improve. While the latter is 'coaching' the student.

Formative feedback is given to students during the learning journey. This is to say that it relates to formative assessment that may be undertaken, at any point, prior to the summative assessment. Just as formative assessment is undertaken to support students to understand their progress, the associated formative feedback must be aimed at helping the student to recognise their current position and how to move forward.

This feedback should be prompt so it has meaning and context for the student and time must be given following the feedback for actions to be completed prior to summative submission.

If a student feels that an unreasonable delay has occurred in returning work, they should speak to their tutor in the first instance and the Course Coordinator if the issue is not resolved.

Following formative assessment and feedback, students can:

- Revisit work to add to the original evidence produced to consolidate a Pass grade or to enhance their work to achieve a higher grade.
- Submit evidence for summative assessment and final unit grade.

All records should be available for auditing purposes, as we may choose to review records of formative assessment as part of our ongoing quality assurance.

Please note that if an External Examiner feels that the formative assessment surmounts to 'coaching' then they may be unable to release certification.

### **6.3.2 Summative Assessment**

Using the formative feedback students should prepare for the summative submission. Summative assessment is the final consideration by an Assessor of a student's assignment, agreeing which learning outcomes, and to which level of achievement, the student has met in the assignment and recording those decisions.

It is at this stage that resubmission opportunities can be formally processed and granted by the Programme Lead or Assessment Board. Assessors should annotate on the student work where the evidence supports their grading decisions, and feedback. Students will need to be familiar with the assessment criteria so that they can understand the quality of what is required. They should be informed of the differences between grading criteria so that higher skills can be achieved.

Summative assessments should be made in line with the agreed submission date. Summative assessment is the final consideration by an Assessor of a student's assignment, agreeing which assessment criteria the student has met in the assignment and recording those decisions.

Students should be aware that summative assessment is subject to confirmation by the Standards Verification Process and the Assessment Board which take

place in January, June and August, and thus is provisional and can be overridden by the Assessment Board.

#### **6.4 Resubmissions**

A student who, for the first summative assessment opportunity, has failed to achieve a Pass for that unit specification shall be expected to undertake a reassessment. This request must be authorised by the Programme Lead IV, using Form 14- Programme Lead IV Resubmission Approval form, and outcome recorded formally at the next Assessment Board and meet the following requirements:

- One resubmission is allowed if a student does not achieve a pass on first submission (same assignment).
- Reassessment for course work, project or portfolio-based assessments shall normally involve the reworking of the original activity.
- The original evidence submitted for the assessment can remain valid and be extended or may need to be replaced partially or in full.
- For examinations, reassessment shall involve completion of a new activity.
- A student who undertakes a reassessment will have their grade capped at a Pass for that unit.
- A student will not be entitled to be reassessed in any component of assessment for which a Pass grade or higher has already been awarded.
- The resubmission must be recorded in the relevant assessment documentation.
- The student must have a clear and realistic deadline (usually 15 working days of the student being notified that a resubmission has been authorised).
- The resubmission must be undertaken with no further guidance.
- The resubmission must be recorded in the relevant assessment documentation
- Arrangements should be made for resubmitting the assessment in such a way that does not adversely affect other assessments and does not give the student an unfair advantage over others.

The programme team may opt to conduct a resubmission of the assignment under supervised conditions, even if this was not necessary for the original assessment. For example, this may be necessary to ensure that plagiarism cannot take place.

The External Examiner (EE) is likely to want to include assessments that have been resubmitted as part of the sample they will review.

## **6.5 Repeat Units**

The following applies to a student who, for the first assessment opportunity and resubmission opportunity, still failed to achieve a Pass for that unit specification:

- At the Centre's discretion and Assessment Board, decisions can be permitted to repeat a unit.
- The student must study the unit again with full attendance and (if required) payment of the unit fee.
- The overall unit grade for a successfully completed repeat unit is capped at a Pass for that unit.
- Units can only be repeated once.

When a student repeats a unit, they should not be treated any differently to those students completing the unit for the first time, in terms of the deadlines given and the assessments provided.

Any evidence previously produced by the student for the unit being repeated that did meet the Pass criteria remains valid and may be used for assignments within the repeat unit. Students who are repeating a unit only need to generate evidence for any Pass criteria that they did not achieve in their previous submissions.

If a student repeats an RQF unit and still does not achieve a Pass in neither their first submission nor resubmission, they will be required to either complete a different unit in full or take the unit as compensation. In either instance, the centre must make sure that the relevant rules of combination and requirements have been met.

The External Examiner is likely to want to include assessments that have been repeated as part of the sample they will review.

## **6.6 Late Submission**

If a student submits an assignment after the submission time and date and there are no extenuating circumstances, it will be treated as a 'late submission'. The work will be marked at the tutor's discretion. It is likely that the late work will not be marked until the end of the semester. The assignment will be assessed as normal with written feedback and assignment performance recorded by the unit tutor. This feedback will provide guidance for future development and recognise the learning that has been achieved. As the work is late a penalty will be applied at this stage and a Pass is the maximum grade that will be awarded.

As with all assessment results, both the uncapped and capped marks should be recorded and ratified by the Examination/Assessment Board; taking into account any mitigating circumstances that may have been submitted.

A late assignment may take advantage of the Resubmission opportunity (see 6.4).

## **6.7 Extenuating Circumstances**

If you can satisfy the Programme Coordinator that you were unable to complete all or part of an assignment through illness or extenuating circumstances you may be permitted to submit coursework or complete a written examination at an agreed date.

Extenuating circumstances are circumstances beyond your control which either prevented you from attending an examination or submitting part or all of your coursework by the due deadline. It could also be the case that you attended an examination, or submitted coursework, but your performance was adversely affected by extenuating circumstances. As a result, you may be entitled to an adjustment in assessment submission dates or retakes of assessment elements.

The following list are examples of circumstances likely to be accepted for extenuating circumstances to be considered by your programme team. This list is not exhaustive and each case will be reviewed on an individual basis. It is also important to note that you will be required to provide appropriate evidence to authenticate your request.

- Serious short-term illness or injury
- Worsening of an ongoing illness or disability, including mental health conditions

- Symptoms of an infectious disease that could be harmful if passed on to others
- Death or significant illness of a close family member or friend
- Unexpected caring responsibilities for a family member or dependant
- Significant personal or family crises leading to acute stress
- Witnessing or experiencing a traumatic incident
- A crime which has had a substantial impact on the student
- Accommodation crisis such as eviction or the home becoming uninhabitable
- An emergency or crisis that prevents the student from attending an exam or accessing an online assessment
- A technical problem that prevents the student from accessing online teaching or assessment
- Safeguarding concerns

The following list are examples of circumstances that are not appropriate to be considered for extenuating circumstances.

- Holidays, house moves or other events that were planned or could reasonably have been expected
- Minor illness such as common colds or hay fever, unless the symptoms are particularly severe
- Assessments that are scheduled close together
- Misreading the exam timetable
- Poor time management
- Minor transport disruption
- Computer or printer failure where the student should have backed-up their work
- Normal exam stress
- Minor life events, unless the circumstances have had a disproportionate impact

The Extenuating Circumstances (EC1) request form can be accessed on our “Assessment Regulations and Key Forms” section of the College website. It should be completed by the student and supporting evidence should be attached. Both the EC1 and the evidence should be submitted to the Programme Coordinator.

Supplementary evidence including medical certificates must be presented within 10 days of the submission date. Illness will not be accepted as an extenuating circumstance unless accompanied by a medical certificate.

Any EC1 approvals must be made by the Programme Coordinator. An accepted EC1 form removes late submission restrictions. EC1 approvals and extensions should be minuted at course team meetings and recommendations made, along with all evidence, to the Examination Boards.

The student must agree a revised submission date with the subject tutor and Programme Coordinator. The revised submission date should be recorded in writing by both tutor and student on the reverse of the front cover sheet. Extensions **should not** be after summative feedback has been issued for other students on the programme.

All extensions granted by the Programme Coordinator must be recorded and made available at the Assessment Board and to the External Examiner (EE). Recording details of extensions enables the Examination Board and the EE to confirm that the programme is operating consistently in accordance with the College and Pearson's policies and guidance.

## **6.8 Leave of Absence**

Students can apply for a Leave of Absence if they need to defer their studies, until the following semester or following academic year, due to exceptional circumstances. A Leave of Absence will normally be for the minimum period of at least one semester and the student will be guaranteed their place on the course if they return to their course on the agreed return date.

The Leave of Absence (LOA1) form, located in the HE section of the SERC website should be completed by the student and supporting evidence should be attached. Both the LOA1 and the evidence should be submitted to the Programme Coordinator. Once the Programme Team has reviewed the request a decision will be made and the Programme Coordinator will notify the student of the outcome within four weeks.

Ordinarily students who withdraw during the academic year will continue to be liable to pay the full fees for the academic year, despite their withdrawal. If receiving a tuition fee loan

from Student Loans Company (SLC), through Student Finance NI (SFNI), this will cease when the student withdraws, and the student will have to pay any remaining outstanding tuition fees. The College will, however, consider a Fee Suspension for students who have been granted a Leave of Absence by the Programme Team. If approved, this means that the student will not be charged fees during their Leave of Absence.

In such instances the student should state on their LOA1 that they are requesting a Fees Suspension. The Programme Coordinator will then forward a copy of the completed LOA1 form and evidence to the Finance Unit. Once a decision has been made on the Fees Suspension the decision will be communicated to the student by the Programme Coordinator. If receiving tuition fee support from SLC the Finance department will notify SLC of the fee suspension outcome and update the student's account on the College's Finance System.

### ***6.9 Marking Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar***

It is important that student assessment evidence demonstrates quality written communication; that is appropriate and professional to convey information clearly for different purposes and audiences. Student written communication should be clear, grammatically correct and properly punctuated. It is an expectation at this level of learning that students should be able to demonstrate the following language proficiencies:

- Has a sufficient range of language to be able to give clear descriptions, express viewpoints and develop arguments without much conspicuous searching for words/signs, using some complex sentence forms to do so.
- Produce clearly intelligible, continuous writing which follows standard layout and paragraphing conventions.
- Spelling and punctuation are reasonably accurate but may show signs of mother-tongue influence.
- Generally high vocabulary control, though some confusion and incorrect word/sign choice does occur without hindering communication.
- Have a good command of simple language structures and some complex grammatical forms.

Improving English proficiency levels can be supported and addressed in assignment brief design, to include written communication requirements clearly stated in the submission format, and to sign-post students to relevant support resources for English.

It is good practice for Assessors to “mark” spelling and grammar, i.e. correct mistakes on student work and expect the student to either correct them (at the formative feedback stage) or note them (at the summative feedback stage). Assessors should be providing comments/annotations on the student work that refers to use of English language. If student work has consistently poor spelling, grammar or language it should not be accepted for grading but should be returned to the student to be corrected. The student must be given a deadline by which to correct the work.

If student assignments are accepted by Assessors where either:

- the mistakes are so problematic that they undermine the evidence of student understanding; or
- specific assessment criteria require good communication, spelling and grammar and/or correct use of technical language; then the outcome from external examination will be to class it as an incorrect assessment decision, and a release of certification would not be agreed.

## 7 Progression

To progress to the next stage of the course (usually from Year 1 to Year 2) you must normally pass all modules at the level studied. You may, however, carry one module as long as you have made genuine attempts to complete the module by the August Examination Board or have extenuating circumstances. A student should not rely on the right to carry a module as this will depend on individual circumstances.

Re-sit fees will apply only if you have failed by the August examination board. A fee of £45.00 to cover administration and marking will be applied for each element of coursework to be submitted following the August examination board. These fees will apply where there is resubmission without attendance.

### 7.1 *Final/Overall Grading of Units*

- To achieve a **Pass**, a student must have satisfied all the Pass criteria for the learning outcomes, showing coverage of the unit content and therefore attainment at Level 4 or 5 of the national framework.
- To achieve a **Merit**, a student must have satisfied all the Merit criteria (and therefore the Pass criteria) through high performance in each learning outcome.
- To achieve a **Distinction**, a student must have satisfied all the Distinction criteria (and therefore the Pass and Merit criteria), and these define outstanding performance across the unit as a whole.

The award of a Pass is a defined level of performance and cannot be given solely on the basis of a student completing assignments. Students who do not satisfy the Pass criteria should be reported as Unclassified.