Assessment Policy

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) The purpose of this Policy is to outline the principles that underpin the University's approach to assessment.

(2) This Policy should be read in concert with the Schedules / Procedures / Guidelines, which guide the conduct and management of assessment and grading practices.

Background

Purpose of Assessment

(3) Assessment serves two equally important purposes. Firstly, assessment is designed to engage students in the learning process and should encourage and support learning. Secondly, at certain points, assessment measures achievement, accredits learning and provides evidence to satisfy measures of quality.

(4) Assessment of student learning performance and feedback on progress are pivotal and important processes in University learning and teaching.

(5) Assessment is an integral part of the learning process for students and strongly influences what and how students learn in their courses / programs.*

> *Note – In accordance with the [Curriculum Architecture Policy](), from 1 January 2020 'programs' are known as 'courses'.

(6) Well-designed assessment tasks communicate to students what is important and are vehicles by which the University assures itself, and society, of its course learning outcomes.

(7) This Policy acknowledges that assessment serves a variety of purposes and that the forms of assessment used throughout the University are diverse, and vary according to the academic discipline. In acknowledgment of this, the Policy aims to provide flexibility to staff and students, whilst ensuring that all assessment meets a common set of minimum standards as outlined in this Policy.

Scope

(8) This Policy applies to all course / program offerings in which the University certifies attainment of learning outcomes.

(9) It will be relevant to all academic leaders and managers of learning and teaching, all teaching staff, including sessional teachers, and students.

Section 2 - Policy

Principles of Assessment

(10) The Assessment Policy is underpinned by seven principles of assessment. All principles apply equally and must be read jointly.

Assessment is Standards-based

(11) Assessment is made by reference to explicit and pre-determined criteria and standards that reflect the learning outcomes and not by reference to the achievement of other students.

(12) Clear criteria and performance standards for the assessment of student work are made available to students in the descriptions of the assessment tasks no later than the point at which the task is given.

(13) Students will have access to the standards expected and examples of relevant and related assessment tasks.

(14) The University will award common result grades as specified in Schedule 1: Grading Requirements.

(15) Decisions regarding grades awarded to students must be based on the attainment (or otherwise) of the pre-determined criteria and standards.

(16) Procedures exist to ensure that all staff involved in teaching share a common understanding of assessment practices and criteria. Assessment must be conducted in a way that is consistent with the pre-determined criteria and standards for the task.

(17) Moderation will occur at all stages of the assessment lifecycle including unit planning, task design of the assessment regime, standards, pre-marking, post-marking and evaluation in accordance with Schedule 5: Moderation Requirements.

Assessment Must Be Fit for Purpose and Efficient in its Application

(18) Assessment items across a course / program should be sufficient to assess achievement of both course / program and unit learning outcomes.

(19) Assessment tasks must be aligned to learning outcomes and should not address material outside of their scope.

(20) Assessment must be designed and implemented so that it allows students to demonstrate the extent to which they attained the assessment standards, while avoiding unnecessary assessment load. This applies both to the work required of staff in setting and assessing student work and in the work required of students to complete the assessment tasks.

Assessment Will Be Course / Program-based

(21) Course / Program teams are responsible for ensuring a course / program-based approach to assessment. This is a holistic, coherent and integrated approach to assessment design and implementation where students develop and demonstrate their achievement of course / program learning outcomes.

(22) Course / Program design must demonstrate how the scaffolding of assessment tasks across the course / program ensures that students can achieve the course / program learning outcomes without unnecessary duplication.

(23) Courses / Programs must include one or more significant tasks that assist students to consolidate, integrate and synthesise learning across their study, and offer the opportunity for group work.

(24) Assessment tasks may be shared across units in a course / program or explicitly build on tasks from prior units.

(25) A variety of different types of assessment tasks, such as authentic tasks, will be used and embedded strategically throughout a course / program of study to develop and demonstrate the achievement of course / program learning outcomes.

(26) Assessment workloads, and the timing of assessments across a course / program, will be considered to ensure they are reasonable and sustainable for students, staff and organisational units.

(27) Assessment practices are collaborative and promote continuous improvement. Assessment practices are open and should be shared across disciplines, course / programs and units.

(28) Professional development opportunities related to design, implementation and moderation of assessment will be provided to all staff.

Students and Teachers are Responsible Partners in Learning and Assessment

(29) Assessment is designed to engage students in the learning process and should encourage and support learning.

(30) Ongoing opportunities for formative feedback will be built into all units. Examples include formal or informal assessment tasks, peer assessment or other assessment activity.

(31) Coursework students must receive some feedback prior to the census date in every session.

(32) Students are responsible for their learning and are expected to:

- a. actively engage with assessment tasks, including carefully reading the guidance provided, understanding criteria, spending sufficient time on the task and submitting work on time;
- b. read, reflect and act on feedback provided;
- c. actively engage in activities designed to develop assessment literacy, including taking the initiative where appropriate (e.g. seeking clarification or advice, negotiating learning contracts, developing grading criteria and rubrics);
- d. provide constructive feedback on assessment processes and tasks through student feedback mechanisms (e.g. student surveys, suggestions for future offerings, student representation on committees);
- e. ensure that their work is their own; and
- f. be familiar with University policy and faculty procedures and act in accordance with those policy and procedures.

(33) Responsibilities will be communicated to students during the period of orientation.

(34) Course / Program Directors, Course / Program Teams and Teaching staff are jointly responsible for designing assessment regimes that enable students to demonstrate attainment of unit and course / program learning outcomes. Staff must:

- a. advise students in relation to expectations relevant to specific assessment tasks by providing appropriate guidance, supporting material, standards and rubrics;
- b. assess student work fairly, consistently, transparently and in a timely manner;
- c. provide timely feedback which enables students to further improve their learning and performance wherever possible;
- d. be able to justify student results against the stated criteria; and
- e. be familiar with University policy and faculty procedures and act in accordance with those policy and procedures.

Assessment is Fair, Transparent and Equitable

> "Fairness in assessment should be considered from at least three perspectives. First, we should consider the fairness of what we ask students to do to demonstrate their learning. Second, we should consider the fairness of our judgements about the quality of students' performance. Third, we should consider the fairness of the educational decisions we make as a result of these judgements." Killen 2005: 118.

(35) Assessment regimes must provide all students a fair opportunity to demonstrate their unit and course / program learning outcomes.

(36) Across a course / program, students will be given a variety of tasks to demonstrate achievement of course / program learning outcomes.

(37) Assessment practices take into account equity and inclusiveness to accommodate the diversity of the student body as required.

(38) The process of awarding results in accordance with the standards will be transparent to students, staff and moderators.

(39) All assessment tasks must comply with the requirements outlined in Schedule 2: Course and Unit Assessment Requirements.

(40) Examination of HDR theses must comply with the requirements outlined in Schedule 3 - see the [Higher Degree Research Thesis Preparation, Submission and Examination Policy](#).

(41) If a final examination is used it must comply with the requirements outlined in Schedule 4: Final Examination Requirements.

(42) Unit Guides must comply with the requirements outlined in Schedule 6: Unit Guide Requirements.

Assessment is Valid, Aligned and Reliable

(43) Assessment tasks will be fit for purpose and valid (i.e. assess what they claim to assess).

(44) There should be an explicit and logical alignment between learning outcomes, assessment tasks, the task criteria, feedback and the grades associated with different levels or standards of performance.

(45) Assessments should also be reliable, that is, they should consistently and accurately measure learning. This involves making judgements about student learning that are based on a shared understanding of standards of learning and should not be dependent on the individual teacher, location or time of assessment.

Assessment Design and Implementation Promotes Academic Integrity

(46) Academic integrity and honesty will be promoted through careful task design, clear explanations and education, together with appropriate monitoring of academic honesty by academic staff.

(47) To ensure academic integrity, assessment tasks are reviewed regularly, and refreshed and renewed appropriately according to the level of risk.

(48) Academic support services will be offered to staff and students to embed a culture of academic honesty.

(49) Plagiarism detection software will be used for all text-based electronically submitted summative assessment unless approved otherwise.

Section 3 - Procedures

(50) Nil.

Section 4 - Guidelines

(51) Nil.

Section 5 - Definitions

(52) Commonly defined terms are located in the University [Glossary](). The following definitions apply for the purpose of this Policy:

a. Assessment Task: illustrative task or performance opportunity that closely targets defined learning outcomes, allowing students to demonstrate their learning and capabilities.

b. Assessment (Formative): monitors student progress against agreed standards and provides them with feedback comparing their progress to the standards with a view to helping them to achieve the standards. The goal of formative assessment is to map and monitor learning progress and to provide ongoing feedback to learners and teachers.

c. Assessment (Summative): is an assessment the result of which is used to determine a final mark or grade. The goal of summative feedback is to document the level of achievement on a task, which contributes to the final mark or grade. A summative assessment task should also have a formative component through feedback.

d. Census date: means the date on which a student's enrolment in a unit of study becomes final.

e. Examination script: the student's attempt at the examination paper.

f. Feedback: means information provided to both teachers and students on the quality of their performance, in order to improve it.

g. Final Examination: an examination held within a specified examination period that is defined by the University and administered centrally by the Registrar's Office.

h. Hurdle requirement: an assessment task mandating a minimum level of performance as a condition of passing the unit in which it occurs.

i. Invigilation: direct in-person supervision on behalf of the University for the entire duration of an assessment task to prevent cheating and to prevent students using aids other than those permitted for that assessment task.

j. Learning Objectives: the set of knowledge, skills and / or competencies a person has acquired and is able to demonstrate after completion of a learning process; in the AQF these are expressed in terms of knowledge, skills and application.

k. Learning Outcomes: A statement of what students will be able to do, know, understand or value at the completion of a class, unit or course.

l. Moderation: Moderation is a quality review and assurance process that occurs at all stages of the assessment lifecycle. It involves using other academics and qualified staff to confirm that the assessment design, tasks and marking are valid and reliable.

m. Course / Program-based assessment: a holistic, coherent and integrated approach to assessment design and implementation, where students develop and demonstrate their achievement of course / program learning outcomes.

n. Course / Program of Study: The minimum sequence of required study which would enable a student to qualify for an award, including both the general requirements of a specific award and the specific requirements of a qualifying major or specialisation where applicable.

o. Course / Program Teams: includes the course / program director and individual unit convenors working collegially and collaboratively.

p. Serious attempt: a serious attempt at an assessment task is one where the student has made an effort to address the set task, but has failed to reach the required standard of performance. For example, in an examination, students are required to attempt a range of question types throughout the paper; for example, simply attempting multiple-choice questions is not sufficient for an attempt to be considered serious. Responses that contain only frivolous or objectionable material will not be considered serious.

q. Rubric: a grading tool that outlines the task expectations and assessment criteria. It may be accompanied by more detailed marking guidelines or performance descriptions that outline expected achievement at different standards / level.

r. Take home examination: A special type of open examination where students are provided with the exam paper and complete it away from the University without the help of others over a set period of time.

Status and Details

Status	Historic
Effective Date	22nd February 2021
Review Date	1st July 2021
Approval Authority	Academic Senate
Approval Date	5th April 2016
Expiry Date	30th June 2021
Responsible Executive	Rorden Wilkinson Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
Responsible Officer	Yvonne Breyer Associate Professor and Director, Learning and Teaching +61 2 9850 4412
Enquiries Contact	Yvonne Breyer Associate Professor and Director, Learning and Teaching +61 2 9850 4412