Assessment, Teaching and Learning Procedures

Section 1 - Purpose and Scope

Purpose

(1) These Procedures give effect to the Assessment, Teaching and Learning Policy, and should be read in conjunction with Rules Relating to Awards - Rule 3 - Coursework Awards - Student Assessment and Examinations.

Scope

(2) These Procedures apply to all staff involved in teaching and assessing student learning in coursework units at all locations, including through the University's Educational Collaborations.

(3) Non-coursework research and thesis units are excluded, as are professional development courses and other similar non-accredited offerings such as English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students (ELICOS) teaching.

(4) These Procedures apply to all coursework units unless exemptions are endorsed by the relevant Associate Dean (Education) and approved by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Innovation) on the basis of the following reasons:

  a. documented and justifiable external accreditation requirements exist;
  b. there is a demonstrated need to manage risk for clinical placements, internships, work integrated learning, and other external learning experiences, or for preparation for laboratories; or
  c. a strong pedagogical rationale can be articulated which remains consistent with the Assessment, Teaching and Learning Policy.

(5) Aggregate data on exemption approvals for each Faculty or College will be reported to each Teaching and Assessment Committee.

(6) Reasonable adjustment in assessment, teaching methods and learning resources will be made to accommodate learners with a documented disability or impairment. Adjustments will be in accordance with Rules Relating to Awards - Rule 3 - Coursework Awards - Student Assessment and Examinations, Section 3 and the Support for Students with Additional Requirements Procedures and Schedule.

Section 2 - Definitions

(7) For the purposes of these Procedures refer to the Definitions (Academic) Policy and the definitions below:

  a. Assessment Scheme – the approved schedule, weighting and type of assessment item for a unit, or in the case of programmatic assessment, a course.
  b. Assessment Type – the assessment types approved by the University.
  c. Authentic Assessment – tasks that replicate or simulate real-world industry or discipline-based challenges, problems and standards of performance that students will typically face.
  d. Collective Component (of Group Work) - the mark for group work that is applied across the group, and thus is the same for each group member.

e. Feedback - one or more pieces of written, verbal or digital communication to students on their academic performance for the assessment task. Clear, helpful and timely feedback:

    i. is informative, constructive and can facilitate a positive attitude toward future learning;

    ii. can assist students to judge and improve the quality of their learning and work;

    iii. can feedforward into subsequent assessments and units.

f. Feedforward – refers to the process of providing students with constructive guidance and actionable suggestions focused on their upcoming assessments or future learning activities.

g. Formative Feedback – feedback on tasks and activities that is responsive and usually diagnostic in nature. It is designed to monitor student learning and provide feedback that can be used to improve the quality of students' learning and performance.

h. Generic Grade Descriptors - general guides to the standard of work required at each grade level (i.e. High Distinction, Distinction, Credit, Pass, Fail) and are detailed in the [Grade Description Guidelines](#).

i. Group Work Assessment – necessitate group cooperation and teamwork among two or more students in order to complete the task. The assessment task can be graded in a combination of ways including: the allocation of marks to the process; the product/outcome; individual effort or combined team effort.

j. Moderation - is a quality assurance process to uphold the appropriate standards of assessment required by the University and external quality agencies. Moderation ensures all students receive fair treatment in their assessment processes and that marks are awarded appropriately and consistently. Moderation involves quality checks and reviews of assessment schemes, tasks and judgments.

k. Peer Engaged - collaborative educational strategies where students actively participate in their learning process by working together to solve problems, complete tasks, or create products.

l. Peer Engaged Assessment – Assessment Types that include active participation of peers in the learning and assessment process.

m. Peer Review - is a way to moderate assessment to ensure quality. Peer review can include internal peer review processes as well as regular external benchmarking against a range of reference points including comparable courses of study.

n. [Programmatic Assessment](#) – is a consciously designed systemic program of assessment in which the outcomes of purposefully selected assessment tasks are collated and combined to obtain triangulated information about a student's progress.

o. Rubrics - guides to assist markers and students to make consistent and reliable judgments about the quality of submitted assessment work.

p. Substantial Piece of Research – a body of research work normally leading to a recognised research output such as a paper, thesis, creative work or seminar.

q. Sub-tasks – are graded submissions sitting underneath the assessment item, such as quizzes or portfolio tasks.

r. Summative Assessment – assessment tasks used to cumulatively evaluate what students have learned over a certain time period, or across a set amount of unit content. Summative assessment tasks are usually graded, and feedback should be provided for all types of summative assessment.

s. Unit Assessment Hurdle – any assessment task that requires a student to pass the assessment task to pass the unit.

t. Whole-of-course Approach – focuses on course learning outcomes, feedback and the process of learning during an entire course, rather than individual units, for assured learning.

Section 3 - Assessment Design and Validation

(8) Assessment is designed on using a whole-of-course approach, applying the principles and requirements set out in the [Curriculum Policy](#), the [Assessment, Teaching and Learning Policy](#) and the [Academic Quality, Standards and Integrity Policy](#).

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(9) Assessment Procedures will be governed through a University-wide set of Assessment, Teaching and Learning Guidelines. These Guidelines are tailored to each Faculty or College and will be:

  a. developed by a working party led by the Associate Dean (Education) with membership including a representative from the Centre for Teaching and Learning and from the student body, where appropriate.
  b. based on the Centre for Teaching and Learning guidelines and templates including sections on:
      i. University systems for assessment, teaching and learning;
      ii. Best practice moderation and marking; and
      iii. Student matters (e.g. responses to enquiries, at risk students, special considerations, assessment resubmission);
  c. aligned with the Assessment, Teaching and Learning Policy, and.
  d. endorsed by the Faculty Board and approved by the Teaching and Assessment Committee.

(10) Faculty Boards will review their Assessment, Teaching and Learning Guidelines annually with respect to effectiveness in achieving the Assessment principles set out in the Assessment, Teaching and Learning Policy and provide a report to the Teaching and Assessment Committee on outcomes, recommendations, and any proposed actions from the review.

(11) Assessment is designed to assess student demonstration and achievement of unit learning outcomes aligned to the course learning outcomes of the degree in which they are offered.

(12) Assessment is designed based on:

  a. benchmarking of best practice in similar units or courses at Southern Cross and at other universities, where appropriate;
  b. relevant and contemporary disciplinary standards;
  c. previous student feedback, when available;
  d. previous student performance, when available;
  e. iQILT results;
  f. relevant and contemporary ways of assuring academic integrity; and
  g. feedback from other Assessment Monitoring and Review processes, as set out in Section 5.

(13) Design of assessment will include explicit and detailed specification of:

  a. the assessment information and deliverables (i.e. what the student must submit);
  b. how the assessment is designed to uphold academic integrity;
  c. marking criteria;
  d. expected student performance;
  e. the moderation process that will be used; and
  f. the learning resources and teaching activities that will be used to support students to successfully complete the task; and
  g. acceptable use of technologies (including generative artificial intelligence), as outlined in the [Generative Artificial Intelligence Tool Use Descriptors for Students and Staff](#).

(14) All assessment must be peer reviewed by an academic colleague with relevant expertise or the Course Design Team within the Faculty, College, Discipline, Course or Educational Collaboration in relation to:

  a. compliance with the requirements of the [Assessment, Teaching and Learning Policy](#) and Procedures;
  b. alignment of the task and marking criteria with the learning outcomes;

c. appropriateness of the rubric, marking criteria and expected student performance standards; and

d. clarity and presentation of the task description for students.

(15) Assessment will be validated prior to release to students by the Associate Dean (Education), who will check that the processes for design and peer review of the assessment, as set out in clauses (11) and (12) respectively, have been completed appropriately.

(16) Assessment is designed to be authentic for students; for example, setting tasks that are performance-based, practice-based; industry-relevant; work-integrated; project-based; self-reflective or dilemma-based; and/or setting tasks that may include appropriate, authentic engagement with generative artificial intelligence.

(17) Assessment is designed to encourage the appropriate use of technologies, tools and resources by students. Restrictions on specific technologies such as generative artificial intelligence will only be applied if the use could compromise:

a. achievement of the learning outcomes that are intended to be assessed by the task; or

b. professional standards or requirements set by external accrediting bodies; or

c. assurance that the principles of academic integrity were upheld in completing the task.

(18) When the use of a particular technology, tool or resource for completion of assessment is restricted, the method of assessment must enable the Unit Assessor to verify with reasonable certainty that these requirements have been met and academic integrity has not been breached.

Assessment Schemes

(19) The assessment scheme for a unit, or for a course where programmatic assessment is applied, is designed so that tasks are interlinked and progressive; a cumulative set of connected activities that evidence the process of learning and lead to summative assessment.

(20) Submission of the assessment task in a unit should normally occur no later than Week 3 of the Term. If the first task is set later than Week 3, students should be given opportunities for feedback on their progress (see 21).

(21) Formative tasks and activities will normally commence from the first week of the Term, to aid early indication of student performance through feedback

(22) The Assessment Scheme for a course will normally include group assessment in a minimum of 20% of units in a course, and peer-engaged assessment in a minimum of 40% of units in a course.

(23) The Assessment Scheme for a course will be designed to assure assessment security of a course overall.

(24) Where assessment involves group work, or is a specified group task for grading, that assessment links explicitly to learning outcomes.

Assessment load, weighting and distribution

(25) Assessment is designed with an appropriate cognitive workload, commensurate with the credit point weighting, length of the Term, and the unit's Level of Study.

(26) Normally, there will be no more than three summative assessment tasks set in a unit, inclusive of any graded sub-tasks. Approval from the Associate Dean (Education) is required to include more than three summative tasks per unit.

(27) Independent research project units must include a substantial piece of research which, except for ungraded or

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continuing units, is the primary assessable component.

(28) The maximum weighting of any graded assessment task is 60% of the mark for the unit except for substantial pieces of research in independent research project units, which may be worth more than 60% of the mark for the unit.

(29) Independent research project units must incorporate opportunities to provide students with regular formal feedback on their progress towards completing a substantial piece of research,through formative or summative tasks.

Assessment Constraints

(30) Authentic assessment is preferred over examinations, as per clause (14).

(31) Examinations must only be set as an assessment where there are documented and justifiable external accreditation reasons approved by the relevant Associate Dean (Education) at the assessment design stage.

(32) Where proctored examinations must be used, they will be held via an online proctoring service approved and supported by the University.

(33) Examinations are managed and scheduled through the Faculty or College.

(34) Quizzes should not be set as a major summative task of more than 15 per cent weighting.

(35) Unless explicitly identified in the Assessment Scheme for a course, the final assessment in a unit must not be prescribed as a barrier to pass the unit regardless of the student's overall grade in that unit.

Assessment information and transparency

(36) Full assessment details, as set out in clause (11), are provided to students in a timely manner, included in the Learning Management System seven days prior to commencement of the teaching period.

(37) Course Coordinators and Unit Assessors can only make changes to the type, timing or weighting of assessment tasks after the teaching period has started, where exceptional circumstances apply and:

  a. approval has been given from the relevant Associate Dean (Education);
  b. an additional notice is posted to the relevant unit learning site advising students that a change has occurred;
  c. an email is sent to the relevant student email list advising all students that a change has occurred.

(38) In the first week of teaching, the Unit Assessor and Teaching Staff will discuss the unit's assessment requirements with students, in the context of the University's [Assessment, Teaching and Learning Policy](#) and these Procedures.

(39) Clear and explicit marking criteria are provided to students, in the form of a rubric where appropriate.

(40) Where available, annotated exemplars of best practice assessment are provided to students at the commencement of teaching.

Section 4 - Assessment Submission, Marking and Feedback

Submission and penalties for late submission

(41) Assessment will occur and be submitted within the defined Term.

(42) Normally, assessment tasks will be due on Mondays, at the beginning of the week in which that assessment task

is due.

(43) Assessment tasks are submitted online via the Learning Management System, wherever possible.

(44) All written assessments are submitted through Turnitin, and similarity reports reviewed prior to grading by the marker (or by the Unit Assessor in the case where the marker is external to the University).

(45) Except when special consideration is awarded under [Rules Relating to Awards - Rule 3 - Coursework Awards - Student Assessment and Examinations](#), late submission of assessment tasks will lead automatically to the imposition of a penalty. Penalties will be incurred as soon as the deadline is reached.

(46) The University's penalty scheme is as follows:

   a. 'available marks' in this context means the maximum marks available for the piece of work (for example, 30 is the available mark for an assessment task that is allocated 30 percent of the unit's marks);
   b. all assessments tasks will be due at the time specified by the Unit Assessor;
   c. a penalty of 5% of the available marks may be deducted from the actual mark after the time described under clause (40).
   d. a further penalty of 5% of the available mark will be deducted from the actual mark achieved by the student on each subsequent calendar day;
   e. penalties will be applied until the mark reaches zero.

(47) Where required for practical reasons, the relevant Associate Dean (Education) may approve a different penalty scheme for the non-completion of certain forms of assessment or for certain cohorts, such as those undertaking enabling courses. In such cases, the alternate scheme should be applied consistently and must be recorded in the "Additional Assessment" section of the UCMS.

(48) Resubmission of assessment tasks is allowed in limited circumstances, as set out in [Rule 3 – Coursework Awards –Assessment and Examinations](#), Section 6.

Marking and moderation

(49) The Unit Assessor will develop, implement and articulate a consistent moderation process for each task, at all locations and partner collaborations, in line with the [Assessment Moderation Guidelines](#).

(50) The moderation process is approved as part of the assessment validation and design process, and prior to release of that task to students.

(51) Marks will be based solely on merit and academic achievement assessed against academic standards with explicit criteria.

(52) Once the assessment item is marked and moderated, the Unit Assessor will obtain data on grading distribution of previous student cohorts for the same assessment task. Working with the Course Coordinator, a decision is made as to whether marking standards have been applied fairly and consistently, and as against the criteria set out in Assessment Design.

(53) If marking standards have not been met, the assessment task will be re-marked and re-moderated. If standards have been met, marks can then be released to students.

(54) When learning is being assessed in the workplace (e.g. in a clinical setting), Unit Assessors are responsible for overseeing moderation of assessment and reporting of grades. Workplace or clinical supervisors may contribute to but are not responsible for grading students.

(55) Any substantial piece of research in an independent research project unit must be marked by at least two markers, of whom:

a. neither is the supervisor of the student;
b. both possess a qualification at least one AQF level above the AQF level of the course, or equivalent; and
c. at least one has expertise in the relevant Field of Research at the Group level under the [Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classification](#) 2020.

(56) The Unit Assessor must establish, and clearly communicate to students beforehand, a process that is consistent with the [Assessment Moderation Guidelines](#) to reconcile any variation in marks awarded by markers of a substantial piece of research in an independent research project unit.

Feedback, grades and results

(57) The University's Grade Descriptors apply to all assessment tasks.

(58) Results for assessment items are recorded in the Learning Management System and not released to students until moderation and calibration against academic standards has taken place.

(59) Marked assessment submitted on time will be returned to students within 7 days of submission in Terms.

(60) Where required for practical reasons, or in exceptional circumstances, the relevant Associate Dean (Education) may grant exemptions to clause (59). Such reasons may include, but are not limited to, marking of large submissions such as Honours theses, or where markers external to the University are required to be involved.

(61) Markers of a substantial piece of research will provide reasoning supporting their judgment, which must be provided to the student.

(62) Where these exceptional circumstances result in delays in the timely return of graded assessment tasks, the Unit Assessor must:

a. notify the Associate Dean (Education); and
b. notify students as soon as possible and make any necessary allowances.

(63) Students are provided an opportunity to discuss assessment results and may query assessment grades as set out in [Rules Relating to Awards - Rule 3 - Coursework Awards - Student Assessment and Examinations](#), Section 14 – Student Query of Assessment Results Other Than Final Grades.

Section 5 - Assessment Monitoring and Review

(64) Following each Term, and when all relevant reporting data, student feedback and iQILT results are available, the Unit Assessor will review this information and use it to inform assessment design for future unit delivery, as set out in clause (11).

(65) Each Faculty Board will develop and maintain a rolling two-year schedule for external benchmarking of assessment validity and reliability, as set out in the Benchmarking Schedule of the [Academic Quality, Standards and Integrity Policy](#). Outcomes from this process will be reported to the Teaching and Assessment Committee annually.

(66) The effectiveness of assessment at the whole-of-course level will be reviewed annually with respect to the provisions of clause (7) of the [Assessment, Teaching and Learning Policy](#) as part of the annual Course Reporting process, set out in clause (14) of the [Academic Quality, Standards and Integrity Policy](#).

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(67) At the end of each Term, a Grade Distribution Report will be produced to document the alignment of grading standards and moderation requirements of the Assessment, Teaching and Learning Procedures. Report to Faculty Board and Academic Standards and Quality Committee.

(68) Before approving any assessment task, a peer review is conducted by the Accreditation Committee or the Associate Dean (Education) to ensure the assessment design complies with policy requirements. This review will verify that the assessment design aligns the course learning outcomes and/or the unit learning outcomes, and upholds academic integrity and quality standards.

Section 6 - Teaching and Learning Procedures

(69) Teaching and Learning Procedures will be governed through a University-wide set of Assessment [Teaching and Learning Guidelines](#). These Guidelines are tailored to each Faculty or College and will be developed per clause (x) above.

Learning Resources for Students

(70) Learning resources are prescribed to support student learning and build knowledge. As described in the [Curriculum Design and Development Procedures](#), learning resources will:

a. directly and demonstrably contribute to the achievement of one or more of the unit or course learning outcomes;
b. provide students with opportunities to engage with learning resources irrespective of their study location or mode of participation;
c. meet the learning needs of all students, irrespective of cultural and family background, age, and disability.

(71) When prescribing learning resources, academic staff must consider any potential barriers that may prevent students from engaging in the unit, including the cost of learning resources and digital rights management restrictions.

(72) The University promotes the adoption of Open Educational Resources (OERs) as the preferred option to prescribed textbooks, in line with the Zero Textbook Cost initiative.

(73) Textbooks will only be prescribed in a unit where:

a. There is prior approval of the textbook by the Associate Dean (Education) within the past two years;
b. There is a stated accreditation or formal discipline-specific requirement to prescribe the textbook;
c. The cost of the textbook is less than AUD$200.

(74) Prescribed learning resources, such as journal articles, book chapters and other assigned readings, will not exceed 20 items per undergraduate or postgraduate coursework units. Academic staff are able to use additional, non-prescribed citations and references in the content of their teaching activities when required. If more than 20 learning resources are required in a unit, approval is required from the Associate Dean (Education).

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