Assessment Procedures

Section 1 - Purpose, Definitions and Scope

(1) These Procedures give effect to the University's [Assessment Policy](#). They must be read in conjunction with the [Rules Relating to Awards - Rule 3 - Coursework Awards - Student Assessment and Examinations](#) (Rule 3).

Definitions

(2) For the purposes of these Procedures, the following definitions apply:

a. Assessment Rubrics are guides to assist markers to make consistent and reliable judgements about the quality of student work. Rubrics are sometimes called "criteria sheets", "grading schemes", or "scoring sheets". They are also used to provide feedback to students about the quality of their work and how they might improve.

b. Compassionate and Compelling Circumstances are generally beyond the control of the staff member and have an impact on the staff member's capacity to meet set timeframes. These could include: serious illness or injury, bereavement of close family, political upheaval or natural disaster at home requiring emergency travel, or other traumatic experience.

c. Feedback means one or more pieces of written, verbal and digital communication to students on their academic performance. Clear, helpful and timely feedback:

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

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

    iii. can guide students about how to improve the quality of their work. Formative feedback is delivered through formative assessment tasks.

d. Formative Assessment means a task designed to monitor student learning and provide feedback that can be used to improve the quality of students' learning and performance. As such it has a diagnostic nature. Formative assessment tasks help students learn to self-regulate their learning through helping them identify their strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement to achieve academic success.

e. Generic Grade Descriptors are 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](#).

f. Group Assessment Task is one that necessitates 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 and/or combined team effort.

g. Invigilated Examinations are formal examinations that are supervised by an invigilator who is responsible for ensuring compliance with the University Rules and Policies.

h. Moderation of Assessment 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 judgements.

i. Peer Review of Assessment is a common 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.

j. Standards-based Assessment involves awarding marks to students based on their performance in relation to

predefined standards. These standards are generally explicitly communicated to students through assessment criteria that outline different levels of achievement.

k. Summative Assessment is an evaluation of student achievement generally at the end of a unit or course. Summative assessment is sometimes referred to as 'high stakes' assessment due to the higher point value that is usually attributed to the task. Feedback from summative tasks may be used formatively when it guides student's efforts and activities in subsequent units.

l. Study Period refers to both the three sessions and the six study periods over a calendar year unless specifically referenced otherwise.

Scope

(3) These Procedures apply to all students enrolled in, and all staff with responsibility for, undergraduate and postgraduate coursework units at Southern Cross University.

(4) For research-based Awards, refer to:

a. [Rules relating to Awards - Rule 5 - Honours Awards (Separate Year)](#) and [Honours Course Development and Administration Policy](#);
b. [Rules Relating to Awards - Rule 7 - Masters by Thesis Awards](#);
c. [Rules Relating to Awards - Rule 8 - Professional Doctorate Awards](#); and
d. [Rules Relating to Awards - Rule 9 - Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) Award](#).

Section 2 - Assessment Procedures

Assessment Design

Unit-level weightings and workloads

(5) Units worth 12 credit points will have between two and four assessment items. Units with other weightings will have a commensurate number of assessment items.

(6) The following weighting patterns for assessment apply to all units unless exemptions are approved by Accreditation Committee:

a. with the exception of theses, the maximum weighting of any assessment task, including examinations, is 60% of the mark for the unit;
b. the maximum weighting for the collective component of a group assessment is 30% of the mark for the unit; and
c. the total maximum weighting of any non-invigilated tests or exams which are administered online and/or automatically computer-marked is 20% of the mark for the unit.

(7) Graded assessment tasks that occur during the first half of the Study Period will be designed to maximise the development function of assessment through formative feedback.

(8) Formative feedback from at least one assessment task will be provided to students in the first half of the Study Period, and where possible before the census date. Subsequent assessment tasks should be spread across the remainder of the Study Period.

(9) With the exception of exams which are subject to centralised timetabling and the initial assessment task described in clause (8), Unit Assessors, in conjunction with Course Coordinators, will distribute the assessment load as evenly as practicable to ensure student and staff workloads are reasonable and to avoid excessive clustering in a Study Period.

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(10) Unit assessment load should be proportionate and consistent within AQF levels and disciplines.

(11) The Accreditation Committee may grant exemptions to clauses (5) to (9) where:

a. 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, and/or for preparation for laboratories; or
c. a strong pedagogical rationale can be articulated which remains consistent with the Assessment Policy.

Standards-based assessment with explicit criteria

(12) The criteria and standards for assessment tasks will be described in a transparent marking scheme via an assessment rubric that is available and communicated to students prior to the first week of teaching of a unit.

(13) Generic grade descriptors apply to all assessment tasks (see Rule 3, Sections 8 - 12, and the Grade Descriptors Guidelines).

(14) Marks and grades awarded to students will be based solely on merit and academic achievement derived from academic standards with explicit criteria. Normative distributions are not to be used.

Inclusive and equitable assessment

(15) Reasonable adjustment in assessment methods will be made to accommodate students with a documented disability or impairment. Adjustments will be in accordance with Rule 3, Section 3 and the University's Academic Adjustments for Students with Disabilities Policy, and, where necessary, in consultation with the Disability Liaison Officer.

Assessment Implementation

Consistent communication of assessment information to students

(16) Blackboard will contain full details and descriptions of all assessment tasks, including relevant learning resources, assessment rubrics, marking criteria and performance standards, and due dates.

(17) Unit Assessors will ensure that the description of all assessment tasks is completed and published to Blackboard 7 days prior to the commencement of the relevant Study Period. These must be consistent with the assessment details listed on the University's unit web page.

(18) Course Coordinators and Unit Assessors can only make changes to the type, timing or weighting of assessment tasks after the Study Period has started, where:

a. exceptional circumstances apply;
b. approval has been given from the relevant Director of Teaching and Learning;
c. an additional notice is posted to the relevant unit Blackboard site advising students that a change has occurred; and
d. an e-mail is sent to the relevant unit student e-mail list advising all students that a change has occurred.

Timely feedback for learning

(19) Marked assessment tasks submitted on time, other than examination scripts, will be returned to students within 14 days of submission and no later than 7 days before the next assessment item is due.

(20) The relevant Director of Teaching and Learning may grant exemptions in exceptional circumstances to clause

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(19).

(21) Where there are Compassionate and Compelling Circumstances resulting in unavoidable delays in returning assessed tasks within the above timeframes, the Unit Assessor must:

a. notify the relevant Director of Teaching and Learning; and
b. notify students as soon as possible and make any necessary allowances.

Academic Integrity & misconduct including plagiarism

(22) Staff and students must follow the [Rule 3](#) and the [Text Matching Software Policy](#).

Penalties for late submission

(23) In cases where there are no accepted mitigating circumstances as determined through Special Consideration procedures, late submission of assessment tasks will lead automatically to the imposition of a penalty. Penalties will be applied as soon as the deadline is reached.

(24) 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, 100 would be the available mark in a percentage marking scheme);
b. all assessments will be due at the time specified by the Unit Assessor;
c. a deduction of 5% of the available mark from the actual mark achieved by the student will be imposed at one minute after the time described in clause 24(b);
d. a further deduction of 5% of the available mark from the actual mark achieved by the student will then be imposed on each subsequent day;
e. under (a) and (b) above penalties will be applied until the pass mark for the assessment has been reached, after which point no further penalties will be applied unless the work is deemed to be a non-submission (see (f) below); and
f. any piece of work submitted 10 or more days after the expiry of the deadline will be deemed a non-submission and assigned a mark of zero.

(25) Where required for practical reasons, the relevant Director of Teaching and Learning may approve a different penalty scheme for the non-completion of certain forms of assessment, such as presentations, or for certain cohorts, such as those undertaking enabling courses. In such cases, the alternate scheme should be applied consistently.

(26) The relevant Director of Teaching and Learning is authorised to introduce appropriate variations to the scheme set out above where the turnaround time for marking is less than 14 days.

Workplace, professional placement and clinical assessment

(27) When learning is being assessed in the workplace (e.g. in a clinical setting), Unit Assessors are responsible for overseeing assessment, moderation of assessment and reporting of grades.

(28) Although workplace supervisors may have an active role in the assessment process, their assessment of a student's performance has the status of advice to the Unit Assessor who is responsible for the marking, overall feedback and allocation of grades.

(29) Workplace supervisors who are involved in providing advice on performance will be given clear and explicit criteria, assessment rubrics and standards in relation to satisfactory and unsatisfactory performance.

(30) Unit Assessors will not make graded judgements in relation to workplace or clinical performance which is not

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overseen by an appropriate member of the academic staff of the University. In such instances, the unit will be an ungraded unit and a result of 'Satisfied Requirements' or other grade as per Rule 3 Section 8 will apply.

Examinations and vivas

(31) Protocols for the conduct and supervision of invigilated examinations during the University's designated examination periods are detailed in Sections 6 and 7 of Rule 3.

(32) Unit Assessors are responsible for ensuring the quality and accuracy of all examinations, tests, or other assessment documentation provided to students, including all online materials.

(33) The relevant Director of Teaching and Learning will monitor errors in assessment documentation, including examinations, and report to Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) at the end of each Study period.

(34) In preparation for examinations, Unit Assessors will:

a. review the quality, content and accuracy of examination papers, content, or viva format, in consultation with a colleague within the relevant School/College or course, before releasing the document to students; and

b. where possible, provide access to past examination papers, sample questions or other opportunities which allow students to prepare for and practise their examination performance.

(35) Unit Assessors will provide feedback on examination or viva performance, if requested, by a student.

Moderation

(36) Unit Assessors will ensure that all academic staff involved in teaching, assessing and/or moderating understand and implement the Unit's academic standards and rubrics consistently.

(37) The Unit Assessor will implement a moderation process, which must include, where appropriate:

a. provision to markers of sample responses for short answer questions;

b. discussion within the marking team about a sample of submitted assessments prior to the commencement of marking; and

c. sampling by the Unit Assessor of marked assignments/tasks to ensure consistency (with adjustment as necessary).

(38) Additional moderation processes to assure assessment quality and consistency may include:

a. sampling by the Unit Assessor of marked scripts that are on the border between grades (with adjustment as necessary);

b. members of the marking team are paired - each pair member marking a sample of the other's papers; and/or

c. double blind marking of all or a sample of submitted papers followed by a discussion where both markers reach agreement on grade to be awarded.

(39) The Unit Assessor must also follow the Educational Collaborations Moderation Procedures, where a unit is delivered through a Third Party Provider.

(40) The Head of School will ensure that Educational Collaborations Moderation Procedures are enforced and that the relevant Committee of Examiners report to the Head of School on compliance for each unit.

(41) The Head of School will ensure appropriate resources are available such that appropriate moderation of assessment in units that are administered by multiple academic staff or delivered to multiple campuses, offshore, or via educational collaborations can occur.

Conflicts of Interest

(42) All staff must comply the University's [Code of Conduct](#) and the [Personal Relationships Policy](#).

Documenting assessment judgements

(43) The Unit Assessor will confirm that the recommended grades are correct, fair and consistent before submission to the Committee of Examiners.

(44) Where an assessment judgement is changed as a result of the Committee of Examiners, this must be clearly documented in the minutes of the Committee including the date and rationale for the change.

(45) The Unit Assessor is responsible for the derivation and reporting of all student grades at the end of a Study Period as per Sections 8 - 12 of [Rule 3](#) and the [Committees of Examiners Meeting Procedures](#).

(46) The Unit Assessor will report all results through Gradebook in the Learning Management System by the required date for the Study Period.

(47) Unit Assessors will submit their grades on time. Where publication of results will be delayed, Unit Assessors will notify students as soon as possible.

(48) Assessment items, including feedback, completed rubrics, etc, must be retained in accordance with the State Records' General Retention and Disposal Authority that applies to University Records.

Section 3 - Assessment Quality Assurance and Enhancement

(49) Course Coordinators, in consultation with Unit Assessors, will monitor student academic performance as a means of ensuring early intervention in cases where academic progress is not consistent with course expectations.

(50) Where attrition and/or academic failure in a unit is high, the Unit Assessor, in consultation with the relevant Course Coordinator, will implement specific practices to address the issue in the relevant unit and any related units.

(51) These practices may include:

a. peer review of assessment tasks and how students are prepared to perform to standards required
b. mentoring of new students by senior students;
c. a restriction that no first year assessment task be worth more than 40% weighting towards a final mark;
d. reviewing weighting, timing and number of assessment tasks in a unit or a course;
e. offering supplementary exams on the recommendation of the Committee of Examiners;
f. assessment re-design; and/or
g. other initiatives which comply with the University's Assessment Policy and Procedures and which are approved by the School/College Board to support the learning of students.

(52) The Office of Planning, Quality and Review will produce a report on attrition and pass rates in all introductory and designated first year units by 31 August each year and sooner if possible. The report will be submitted to the Academic Standards and Quality Committee at least once a year for its consideration.

Assessment monitoring and review

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Frequency of review and renewal of assessment items

(53) The Unit Assessor, in consultation with the relevant Course Coordinator, will review the assessment tasks and practices at the end of each Study Period in light of student feedback.

Review of assessment tasks before their release to students

(54) All assessment tasks, including examinations, will be reviewed by an academic colleague within the School/College or course before being made available to students.

(55) A course may be periodically reviewed as described in the Course and Unit Accreditation Policy.

External moderation and review of academic standards

(56) External assessment moderation and review processes will occur in tandem with other benchmarking and peer review activities within a course or School/College.

(57) External assessment moderation and review processes will be undertaken for selected units within a course on a rolling cycle and at least once every five years such that this occurs within the 7 years course review cycle.

(58) Where a course is externally (or professionally) accredited, the Course Coordinator in consultation with Unit Assessors will ensure an appropriate cycle of external assessment and moderation is undertaken within the external accreditation cycle.

(59) The external moderation process for each unit will include:

a. comparison of assessment methods and the nature and degree of difficulty of assessment tasks in equivalent units;
b. comparison of criteria and performance standards relative to equivalent assessment tasks;
c. analyses and comparisons of student achievement of learning outcomes and grading;
d. comparison of overall assessment load in an equivalent unit; and
e. double-blind marking by an external assessor of a sample of marked scripts, followed by a documented dialogue that clearly explains any differences and variations in grading between institutions.

(60) External moderation and review processes, along with any resulting actions, will be recorded and reported to School/College Boards and ASQC and incorporated within the unit and course reviews described in the [Course and Unit Accreditation Policy.](#)

Confidentiality and security

(61) Staff will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that privacy, confidentiality and security are maintained throughout the administration of student assessment and in accordance with the University's [Privacy Management Plan](#) and the [Examination Paper Handling Policy](#). This includes:

a. the security of examination papers, including digital content, and student scripts;
b. the confidentiality of assessment results;
c. obtaining the written prior permission from the student to reproduce or use assessment material beyond normal marking processes; and
d. access to grades and authority to disclose grades to students.

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