

Assessment Guideline 2016 January 01

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| Policy Supported: | Assessment Policy 2016 January 01 | | |
| Procedure Supported: | Assessment Procedure 2016 January 01 Assessment Policy Exemption Procedure | | |
| Audience: | Staff, Students | | |
| Contact Officer: | Secretary to Educational Policy Review Committee | Phone: | See Campus Directory |

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Preamble:

These Guidelines are to be read in conjunction with the *Assessment Policy* and *Assessment Procedure*. The information provided in the *Assessment Guideline* assists staff to set assessment that meet the requirements of the *Assessment Policy* and to implement appropriate and innovative assessment.

Objective:

1. To provide staff with specific guidance on implementing the *Assessment Policy* and *Assessment Procedure*.

Guidelines:

1. HIGH QUALITY ASSESSMENT PRACTICE (*Assessment Policy Clause 2.0*)

Clause 2.1 of the *Assessment Policy* says that "Students should be provided the opportunity to demonstrate, in different ways and at different times, what they have learned". Professional judgment will sometimes be needed in order to maintain the spirit of this requirement. For example, a mid-semester test/exam and an end-of-semester test/exam would not be seen as "different ways"; whereas a practical exam and a theory exam might be.

There are many valid methods of assessing student work. Unit Coordinators are encouraged to vary assessment types over the breadth of a unit. For example, a student may be assessed by way of research assignments, problem questions, oral examinations, tests and exams (regarded as the same), self-assessment, peer assessment, group work, engagement and/or work integrated learning. Assessment may also include individually negotiated tasks.

1.1 Guidelines for Volume of Assessment

This *Assessment Guideline* provides guidance for setting specific requirements for volume of assessment. The underlying principle is to avoid over-assessment for students and an excessive marking load for academic staff by limiting the amount of time that each group needs to devote to unit assessment. College Academic Committees are responsible for approving discipline specific guidelines regarding the assessment volume of assessment.

The guidelines will apply to 3 credit point units. The assessment volume for higher credit point units should be scaled up proportionately.

- 1.1.1. Unit Coordinators should aim to provide a balanced approach to assessment by setting the number of assessment items and their total volume, such that (i) students and staff are not overburdened, and (ii) students have appropriate opportunities for assessment and feedback on their work. An optimal level of assessment will allow staff to assess the effectiveness of their teaching methods and ascertain whether those methods need to be modified for future offerings. To comply with Clause 2.0 of the *Assessment Policy*, two items of assessment are the minimum. Four items of assessment are the maximum, with three preferred. Unit Coordinators are in the best position to determine their requirements on pedagogical grounds.
- 1.1.2. Well-designed assessment often consists of continuous assessment items with multiple coherent parts. If these multiple parts are linked and ongoing they can be counted as one item of assessment (for example, multiple short tests/quizzes, a series of laboratory reports or problem-solving activities, or a portfolio of written exercises).
- 1.1.3. Cumulative assessment where a student builds from early work to later work is encouraged on pedagogical grounds. This could include, for example, a draft followed by a final essay, with the latter demonstrating a response to earlier feedback.
- 1.1.4. The weighting of an assessment item should be reflective of its volume, purpose, and relationship to the unit's Learning Outcomes.
- 1.1.5. For disciplines where words are a sensible measure, the volume of assessment for 3 credit point undergraduate units should not exceed 4500 words.
- 1.1.6. For disciplines where words are a sensible measure, the volume of assessment for 3 credit point graduate units, including level 8 and level 9, should not exceed 6000 words equivalent.
- 1.1.7. Where 1.1.5 and 1.1.6 do not apply, College Academic Committees are responsible for approving College and, where necessary, discipline specific guidelines for volume of assessment. This process should give effect to clauses 1.1.1 to 1.1.4, and vary the unit of measurement from words to word equivalents having regard to clause 1.1.8.
- 1.1.8. In many disciplines word length is not a good measure of the volume of assessment. The following text provides useful guidance where word length is not self evident:

"As not all assessment items will be essay based, broad equivalences for other means of assessment should be applied in achieving the total word requirements. In establishing relativities between different styles of assessment, consideration should be given to:

 - (a) the complexity of the assignment;
 - (b) the estimated amount of time required for the student to think about, sort and structure the response
 - (c) the proportion of the response that will require creative, reflective, analytical thought and evidence of deep learning that is not able to be routinely drawn from texts and lecture notes."

| Assessment type | Broadly Equivalent to 1000 essay words |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Written/Multiple Choice Examination | 1 Hour [50% less for Multiple Choice] |
| Essay in foreign language | 500 words |
| Group essay | 750 words/member |
| Unstructured reflective journal | 2000-3000 words |
| Oral presentation | 20 minutes |
| Group presentation | 15 minutes/member |
| Clinical practicum assessment | 20 minutes |

(Adapted from the La Trobe University *Student Assessment Workload Guidelines*)

1.1.9. Reading time should not be included as part of the total volume of assessment allocated for an exam

1.1.10 First year units should have a low stakes assessment task due early in semester with feedback provided to students no later than the end of week 6 (or equivalent for a non-standard teaching period).

1.2. **Self-Assessment**

Self-assessment may be used to develop students ability to think critically about their learning, to determine what criteria should be used in judging their work, and to apply these objectively to their own work in order to facilitate their lifelong learning.

There may be differences in the extent to which students are prepared to self promote and Unit Coordinators must be sensitive to such differences and provide a proforma which increases the likelihood that students are able to apply the same criteria.

Mechanisms that can be used include:

Students are provided with detailed model answers and commentaries for the purpose of comparing their own responses. In addition, a marking sheet is provided upon which students are asked to detail the differences between the model responses and their own and to award a mark accordingly. Teaching staff review the responses maintaining or modifying the marks awarded.

1.2.1. **Class Generated Criteria**

Assessment criteria for an assessment item are generated and agreed by the class in discussion with the staff member. These criteria are used by each student to develop a critique of their own assessment item. Both the assessment item and the critique are provided to the staff member who marks the assignment and then compares their critique with the student's. Marks may be awarded for both the assignment and the critique.

1.3. **Peer Assessment**

Peer assessment may be used to develop students' ability to be critical of others' work and receive critical appraisals of their own work. Peer assessment may also be undertaken as a learning activity; i.e., without a mark being recorded.

Peer assessment must ensure that students are treated with fairness, consistency and respect by other students and are not subjected to

unnecessary embarrassment. There should be clear guidelines and criteria for students judging each others' work.

A mechanism that can be used is:

The assessment item and the assessment criteria are discussed by the staff and students. There is an agreed understanding as to the Learning Outcomes required. Completed assessment items are randomly distributed to students who are required to complete a marking sheet identifying whether their peer has met the assessment criteria. These marks are reviewed by the staff member and together with the peer marking sheets are returned with the assessment item.

1.4. Equivalence of Assessment

Equivalent assessments are ones where each is of equal value, worth or importance to the assessor in making judgements about a learner's achievements or performance against the same Learning Outcomes. When a unit is offered in differing modes or locations, there may be valid reasons for varying the assessment. However, when this occurs, it is important that equivalent assessment is in place. This does not imply identical assessment. When Unit Coordinators are establishing equivalent assessments the comparability framework (Attachment 1) should be used to develop and ensure equivalence. The various characteristics identified in the framework must be equivalent.

1.5. Class attendance (*Assessment Policy 2.1.6*)

Reasons for requiring mandatory attendance must go beyond the educational benefit to the individual and may involve:

- (i) statutory issues such as mandatory occupational health and safety training;
- (ii) a professional accreditation requirement, where there is a clear written guideline from the accrediting body that a minimum number of hours should be spent on an activity; and
- (iii) the impact of a student's absence on other students (for example, in team or group activities).

Where class attendance requirements are part of the assessment for the unit, the Unit Coordinator will give due consideration to the student's length of absence in determining any exemption. The Unit Coordinator should, in the first instance, consider opportunities for 'making up' missed classes. Alternatively consideration should be given to assessing the student under the same requirements as an External student, prior to providing any alternative assessment methods.

1.6. Engagement

Assessment of engagement may be used to develop students' ability to engage in, and contribute to, group learning processes such as those involved in tutorials, seminars, laboratories and workshops.

There may be differences in the extent to which students are prepared to engage publicly in certain activities. This does not mean that such activities should not be required if they are relevant to the achievement of the unit Learning Outcomes. However, Unit Coordinators must be sensitive to differences such as those associated with culture and gender. They must provide clear criteria by which engagement in those activities will be judged.

Unit Coordinators may wish to consider including within the criteria, broader characteristics of learning that may help students achieve success in the unit,

such as the ability to think creatively, resilience and open-mindedness. A good source for these is: *Developing an Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory: the ELLI Project*.

The marking of engagement may often involve elements of self- and peer assessment.

A mechanism that can be used is:

The Learning Outcomes for the tutorials, seminars, laboratories and workshops are discussed by the staff and students. The Unit Coordinator/tutor provides the criteria by which engagement will be judged, for example, task focus/level of engagement with task, quality of analysis of arguments, capacity to listen, responsiveness to feedback/criticism, risk-taking behaviour. The mark awarded for engagement is accompanied by feedback on these criteria.

'Where oral presentations are used, a clear statement of the assessment criteria must be provided to students as part of the directions for the presentation. This should include an example of an assessment summary sheet that will be completed during the presentation and provided to the student as feedback. If a written submission based on the presentation is to be graded as well, criteria should also be given for assessment of that component and how the score is to be combined with the mark for the presentation. If a remark of a presentation is not possible, at least two independent assessments must be made of the presentation (e.g. two staff members, or a staff member and independent peer assessment). The assessment criteria should explain how the marks of the independent assessors will be combined.'

2. ASSESSED GROUP WORK (Assessment Policy Clause 3.0)

2.1. Collaborative learning is an important element of the learning process at Murdoch University. It may be used for a variety of purposes; for example:

- (a) As a process for teaching interactive working techniques (teamwork, negotiation skills, role allocation, task completion and conflict management).
- (b) As a means for enhancing students' understanding of course content (peer support, clarification and refinement of concepts through discussion, rehearsal, and the resolution of conflict).
- (c) As a means of demonstrating achievement of graduate attributes.

Group work, under proper conditions, can support student learning and be a positive experience. Under less than ideal conditions, however, it can become the vehicle for conflict. It may also impose a host of unexpected stresses on, for example, students with overcrowded home and work schedules living long distances from the University. Helpful resources on good practice in group work can be found at:

<http://www.olt.gov.au/resources?text=assessing%20groupwork>

http://melbourne-cshe.unimelb.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1770717/Group.pdf

<http://melbourne-cshe.unimelb.edu.au/resources/assessment>

<https://www.clear.auckland.ac.nz/en/teaching-development/group-work.html>

<https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/designteach/design/instructionalstrategies/groupprojects/assess.html>

Collaborative learning may occur without the product of that learning being assessed. The skills developed in group projects, however, are vital in work and community life since many tasks and projects are performed by teams, not separate individuals. Learning to be part of a team also involves accepting that a collective judgement will often be made of the whole project. Where the development of collaborative learning processes, teamwork or joint production is seen as an important outcome of a unit, a well-rounded assessment regime is expected to include some group assessment.

Where students are required to complete assignment tasks in groups and/or to be assessed as a group they should be provided with effective material, instruction and support.

- 2.2. The management of the planning, development and implementation of processes and procedures for learning through group work should consider that students have other commitments which make it difficult to attend the University outside of scheduled class hours. In units that use group assessment it is recommended that some scheduled learning activities be dedicated to group dynamics. Supervision and discussion of group assignments should be built into the schedule in a way that reflects the weighting of assessment allocated to group work.

Staff should provide advice and support to students about the formation and conduct of groups and, in consultation with students, establish ground rules about:

- (a) The selection of group members.
 - (b) The role(s) of group members and the responsibility of members to each other.
 - (c) The conduct of group meetings – frequency and timing and group contact outside of scheduled class times.
 - (d) The management of group conflict (the emphasis should be on conflict as a breakdown in the system/process rather than the attachment of blame to individuals. If employees in the workplace, for example, are unable to deal with a problem they are expected to take it to someone who can deal with it).
 - (e) Feedback stages to report on group progress and final outcomes.
 - (f) Assessing the real contribution of each member to the group project (e.g. using individual process diaries, peer/external assessment of collaborative process and assignment content).
- 2.3. The weighting for group assessment in the determination of unit grades requires careful consideration, keeping in mind that the *Assessment Policy* and *Assessment Procedure* require Unit Coordinators to ensure that they can judge the individual contribution of each student and that grades properly reflect the levels of performance of each student. Group assessment, like any assessment, must meet the criteria of rigour, validity, fairness and appropriateness to the unit Learning Outcomes.

It is generally preferable that assessment takes into consideration the collaborative process (i.e. the way individuals collaborated during the project) not just the assignment content in the final group document and/or presentation.

3. ENSURING FAIR ASSESSMENT (*Assessment Policy Clause 6.0*)

3.1. Feedback

3.1.1. Feedback should show respect for diversity and individuality and should be directed at the work rather than the student.

- (a) Feedback should be given to students as soon as possible.
- (b) Feedback should accompany the mark or grade.
- (c) Feedback should be critical, but supportive to learning, so as to encourage a student's confident scrutiny of their future work.
- (d) Feedback should be related to Learning Outcomes and assessment criteria, so that students are very clear on what was and will be expected of them.
- (e) Feedback on work should go beyond editing (grammar, spelling, mathematical notation, presentation).

3.1.2. Timing

Where a specific assessment task has a function to improve student performance within the unit, it must provide informative and constructive feedback in time to be useful for subsequent assessment in the unit. The timing of assessment components in the unit must therefore consider both whether the student has had sufficient time to master the materials and skills addressed in the assessment task and whether sufficient time has been allowed for constructive and informative marking to provide feedback to the student. Similarly, where ongoing activities are being assessed, such as in workplace based units, feedback must be timed to allow the student an appropriate period in which to improve their performance.

3.2. Comparability of Marking within Units

Unit Coordinators must take steps to ensure that marks awarded by tutors/demonstrators are equitable. Unit Coordinators shall provide tutors/demonstrators with marking guides and, where appropriate, solution lists. They should also discuss with tutors/demonstrators marking techniques to ensure consistency in the allocation of marks. In particular, the link between numerical marks and final grades, the meaning of those grades should be discussed carefully with tutors/demonstrators prior to any marking taking place. The purpose here is to minimise inconsistencies between tutors/demonstrators in the same unit, and inconsistencies from offering to offering of the same unit.

Where comparison of marks across different tutors/demonstrators within a unit offering reveals substantial differences in the severity of marking between different tutors/demonstrators over several assessment components the Unit Coordinator should consider the need to adjust the marks retrospectively to bring each group mean into line. The adjustment of marks should occur in a timely fashion.

Adjustment of group means should only be used where there is clear evidence of a substantial discrepancy (e.g. a range of 25% or greater across groups with substantial numbers of students), where there is no evidence that this difference arises from differences in student ability or engagement (i.e. all groups appear to be equivalent) and where the overall correction applied for each assessment task does not move any individual student's overall score for the unit by more than 5% (e.g. moves the final mark reported from 60% to 65%).

Systematic use of thoroughly prepared marking guides and thorough induction into the unit assessment strategy for each tutor/demonstrator should substantially reduce the need for adjustment of group means.

3.3. **Formal Moderation**

Moderation is a quality assurance strategy directed at ensuring the reliability and validity of assessment. It is a process of independently evaluating whether there is consistency in the standard of marking being applied across particular assessment components or whether significant deviations have occurred from some previously defined standard. It is normally applied in situations where there is potential for the validity of assessment results to be compromised, or where extra reassurance on the validity of assessment outcomes is required. More information regarding the Formal Moderation process is detailed in Attachment 2.

4. **SUPPLEMENTARY ASSESSMENT (*Assessment Policy Clause 8.0*)**

4.1. It is reasonable to offer Supplementary Assessment (Supplementary Assignment (SA) or Supplementary Exam (SX)) to a student where they can demonstrate that:

4.1.1. They have met a significant proportion of the Learning Outcomes for the unit and passed at least one assessment item, such that a further opportunity to demonstrate that they can achieve a pass in their area of weakness would allow them to progress.

or

4.1.2. Their final result was a consequence of failure in a single item of assessment, especially where that item is weighted heavily (e.g. they pass continuous assessment items but fail the exam).

Other considerations when 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 are inconclusive include:

4.1.3. Where the student has demonstrated a commitment to the unit e.g. by attending classes regularly or consistently engaging with the unit as an external student, and by submitting assignments on time.

4.1.4. Where their performance in this unit is at odds with their previous academic record, and/or the Unit Coordinator is aware of reasons that may explain their poor performance.

4.1.5. Where the unit is the last unit the student needs to meet the requirements of their course. This consideration does not apply if the last unit is the capstone unit for the students' major(s).

4.2. It is not advisable to offer Supplementary Assessment to a student where:

4.2.1. They have met few of the Learning Outcomes for the unit, or marginally failed most or all assessment items, or have failed a significant piece of assessment that has Learning Outcomes necessary to the student's achievement of the Learning Outcomes in subsequent units.

4.2.2. They did not engage with the unit and/or failed to submit multiple items of assessment.

4.3. Unit Coordinators must exercise their discretion such that:

4.3.1. The decision reached is based solely on the student's demonstrated achievement of the unit Learning Outcomes (as reflected in their assessment), and not on grounds related to the academic's preference or circumstances.

- 4.3.2. Students under similar circumstances are treated similarly (i.e., that there is no extraneous bias).

Definitions:

The definition of these terms appears in the "Dictionary of Terms". Please refer to the "Dictionary of Terms" in Policy and Procedure Manager™ to ensure you are referring to the latest version.

There are no key terms.

Related Documents:

[Assessment Policy 2016 August 01](#)

[Assessment Policy 2016 January 01](#)

[Assessment Procedure 2016 August 01](#)

[Assessment Procedure 2016 January 01](#)

[Assessment Policy Exemption Procedure](#)

References:

Assessment in Education: *Principles, Policy & Practice* (0969-594X), 09/2004, volume 11, Issue 3, pp 247-272.

La Trobe University, *Student Assessment Workload Guidelines*,
<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/policy/documents/student-assessment-workload-guidelines.pdf>

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