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Assessment Principles and Requirements

Purpose

This section describes [assessment](#) principles and requirements, including assessment design and student workload, at both course and program level.

If a student does not believe that the requirements in this section are being adhered to, they should discuss the matter with the relevant [Program Director](#) in the first instance. If the matter remains unresolved, the student should discuss their concerns with the Head of School.

Relevant to

All students enrolled in

- enabling programs
- undergraduate and postgraduate coursework programs
- single and cross-institutional courses
- Open Universities Australia units delivered by UniSA

Cross-references

- [Code of Good Practice: University Teaching](#)
- [A-49: Postgraduate Coursework Degrees with a significant research component](#)

1.1 Principles of student assessment

1.1.1 Assessment plays an essential role in shaping student learning.

Assessment practices should promote student engagement as described in the University's Teaching and Learning Framework. Good assessment practices judge levels of performance and support student learning.

1.1.2 Assessment is an integral component of course design.

Assessment tasks should be aligned with the objectives and teaching and learning arrangements of the course. It is not something that is added afterwards to the course requirements.

The assessment of students across the courses within their program should be coordinated to:

- a. ensure coverage and opportunity for student development of the learning outcomes for the program
- b. ensure coverage, development and achievement of the program's Graduate Qualities
- c. ensure consistency in the University's expectation of workload across courses
- d. spread assessment load and intensity across the [study period](#), and
- e. provide a variety of types of assessment.

1.1.3 The design of assessment tasks has a significant impact on student learning.

Assessment design should provide students with the stimulus to learn in depth, to apply their developing skills and knowledge in new situations and challenge and change their ways of thinking and doing. Student engagement is enhanced by including expectations that they may have opportunities to:

- a. negotiate and have choices to make in at least some of their assessment tasks
- b. with some guidance, assess their own performance standards

- c. specify the nature and focus of feedback that they require to improve and enhance their performance
- d. act on the feedback provided by peers, experts and teachers to enhance their learning and their performance.

1.1.4 **Assessment tasks should be diverse.**

Assessment practices should be inclusive and support equity principles, catering for both individual and group diversity. It should be recognised that all assessment models have limitations and a capacity to disadvantage certain students. Every effort should be made to minimise such disadvantage by, for example, using a variety of assessment techniques. Inclusive language must be used to avoid gender, racial, cultural or other language bias.

1.1.5 **Assessment should be used for both formative and summative purposes.**

[Formative assessment](#) helps students and staff to identify strengths, weaknesses, and ways to improve and enhance learning attainment. [Summative assessment](#) provides information to judge the extent to which course outcomes relevant to the Graduate Qualities are achieved within a course or program.

1.1.6 **Good assessment requires clear articulation of purpose, requirements, standards and criteria**

Assessment works best when students have a clear understanding of assessment expectations. Assessment criteria in particular need to be understandable and explicit so that students know what is expected of them for each assessment task.

1.1.7 **Good assessment practice allows students to receive timely feedback on their learning.**

High quality feedback is clear and constructive such that students can make sensible judgements about modifying aspects of their academic performance in order to meet the objectives of a course. Such feedback should enable students to understand both their level of development of the required skills; their level and mastery of the understandings embedded in the assessment activity and how their performance in each domain could be improved in subsequent learning activities.

1.1.8 **Assessment methods should be valid, reliable and consistent.**

Every effort should be made to ensure that assessment methods are valid and reliable, recognising that professional judgement is a significant and reasonable element in indicators of achievement. However, it is also reasonable that such judgement is regularly subjected to peer review and discussion. Moderation (including external moderation where appropriate) of both the setting of assessment tasks and of interpretation and marking should be established to improve the validity and reliability of assessment processes.

1.1.9 **Good assessment practices should promote ethical academic conduct.**

Ethical academic conduct is both a staff and student responsibility. Good assessment design can both minimise academic misconduct and educate students in appropriate academic conduct.

1.2 **Requirements for coursework programs**

1.2.1 For undergraduate programs, the provisions specified in clauses 1.2.2 to 1.2.5 below are required; for postgraduate programs, the provisions are discretionary.

1.2.2 When planning teaching, learning and assessment activities academic staff need to take into consideration the total time that students will need to allocate to all major and related tasks required to engage with the course content and successfully achieve the desired course outcomes. This includes attendance at lectures, tutorials, practicals, laboratory sessions and studio classes, participation in online activities and completion of

assessment tasks and self-directed, independent course related reading, research and reflection to enable meaningful engagement with theories and concepts. In total, the time students need to spend on all such activities should not exceed 35 hours per unit (ie number of course credit units x 35 hours = total hours worked eg 4.5 unit courses x 35 hours = 157.5 hours).

- 1.2.3 The mapping of assessment load and intensity across a program is essential. Program Directors are responsible for monitoring assessment within courses in their program to ensure that assessment requirements comply with this section, and that timing of assessment tasks is varied across core courses in a program. This may include supporting a variation to the assessment requirement at clause 1.2.5 (b) below.
- 1.2.4 For the purpose of this policy, assessment tasks which contribute to the final [grade](#) in the course are divided as follows:
- a. [Continuous in-class assessment tasks](#) occur within regularly scheduled class time and do not require any additional preparation time other than what would normally be expected for class participation. A course may have a number of these tasks during the semester. Collectively these are known as a set of continuous assessment tasks.
 - b. An [assessment point](#) occurs when students are asked to submit work at a specified point of time in the course, including an end of course [examination](#) where these are used. Tasks associated with assessment points require students to work beyond their regular contact and preparation time.
 - c. Additional assessment requirements (sometimes referred to as assessment hurdles) are conditions for passing a course or assessment task other than the overall [mark](#). They include, but are not limited to, such things as achievement of a specified minimum in a particular part of the course or attendance requirements.
- 1.2.5 Unless a specific case is made for variation, and this is accepted by a majority of members of the relevant program approval bodies at division level (school and division boards), the following requirements apply:
- a. normally, there will be no more than three assessment points in any 4.5 unit course plus the option of one set of continuous assessment activities.
 - b. at least 15% of the total assessment for the course will occur in the first half of the study period in which the course is taught
 - c. for a 4.5 unit course, individual students will be required to complete learning activities that are equivalent to no more than 4,500 words of assessed writing. This word count should be adjusted proportionately for less complex forms of writing such as journals and examination answers.
 - d. where possible, due dates for assessment tasks in core courses will be coordinated to ensure students are not unreasonably overloaded at any one time during a study period.
 - e. where participation is assessed it should be clear how it is related to course objectives and on what criteria it will be judged. In undergraduate courses the percentage weighting given to participation in class or by electronic means will be no more than 10% and will count as one assessment point.
 - f. all text-based assessment tasks should be submitted electronically using the University's assignment lodging system. Special provisions will be made for those students who do not have access to electronic communication.

These requirements apply particularly to courses where assessment is principally text-based. In courses where assessment is of a different kind, the requirements should be adjusted, but seek to be equivalent in complexity and workload. This requires being aware of the workload involved (eg in group work or the creation and development of a performance) and the degree of intellectual independence and creativity required. Staff should avoid the overuse of continuous assessment tasks, particularly in higher level courses.

1.3 Communication of assessment requirements to students

- 1.3.1 The expectations of the assessment task, its relationship to the program Graduate Qualities, and the criteria and standards by which performance is to be judged, will be made clear to students from the outset in the course information booklet.
- 1.3.2 Students will also be made aware of assessment requirements such as expected learning objectives, performance standards, length, weighting, submission dates, provisions for extension and re-submission, form of presentation and the extent to which these (and the assessment task itself) are negotiable between academic staff and students.
- 1.3.3 Additional assessment requirements (see clause 1.2.4 c) should be included in the course statement and the section of the course information booklet headed 'Additional assessment requirements'.
- 1.3.4 Students are responsible for ensuring they are aware of and understand the assessment requirements for the courses in which they are enrolled.

1.4 Feedback to students

- 1.4.1 Feedback is one of the most important aspects of the learning process and serves the critical function of enabling students to make timely and informed judgements about their performance so that subsequent assessment can be undertaken with improved likelihood of success and enhancement.
- 1.4.2 Feedback is provided in a variety of ways, including:
 - a. model answers to questions,
 - b. comments from teaching staff, both individually and to the whole class,
 - c. emails and online discussion comments, both individually and to the whole class,
 - d. oral comments on presentations and participation in class discussions,
 - e. preliminary assessment task advice,
 - f. face-to-face assessment task discussion, individually, and in groups, and
 - g. written feedback comments on drafts and assessment tasks.
- 1.4.3 Feedback on assessment tasks for students studying internally will normally be provided within 10 working days, but no longer than 15 working days. For those students studying externally and transnationally, feedback is to be provided within 15 working days.
- 1.4.4 Where a subsequent assessment task builds on earlier assessment tasks, all assessment tasks will be returned at least ten working days before the due date of the later assessment task (or equivalent for intensive teaching).
- 1.4.5 Where possible some expectation should be built into the assessment design and grading process for students to acknowledge and act on the feedback provided.
- 1.4.6 Program teams will develop and implement appropriate moderation to ensure inter-assessor and intra-assessor consistency in judgments made about student achievement and the quality of feedback given in and across courses. Feedback for summative assessment will be provided on a feedback proforma (a copy of which will be in the course information booklet) and will include as a minimum:
 - a. an indication of the Graduate Qualities being assessed by the task
 - b. marks and/or comments in response to key components of the task, and
 - c. a summary comment.

- 1.4.7 Where summative examinations are used in a course, [Course Coordinators](#) will ensure that arrangements are made for appropriate feedback (eg provision of worked solutions on the course homepage or group feedback sessions).
- 1.4.8 Students may also request the opportunity to receive feedback from a summative examination by making an appointment with their course lecturer within 10 working days of the finalisation of results for that study period (see clause 8.1.1). In the case of transnational, OUA or external students, this may be by telephone. As part of this process students have the right to sight their examination scripts, but are not entitled to either the original or a copy. Students wanting to see their examination script need to submit their request in writing to the Director: Student and Academic Services on the appropriate form outlining what they expect to learn by reviewing the script which they have not been able to gain as a result of the feedback processes provided.
- 1.4.9 Where students are undertaking placements (see Section 4), it is expected that they will be provided with regular and constructive feedback about their performance, either by the Course Coordinator, designated University placement supervisor and/or the supervising professional in the workplace.

1.5 Examinations as an assessment technique

- 1.5.1 It is expected that a variety of assessment models will be used and that:
- formal summative examinations will contribute to no more than 70% of the marks on which final grades for any course are based.
 - where a professional association requires that formal summative examinations in any course count for more than 70%, schools must seek a formal exemption from the division.

1.6 Management of assessment

- 1.6.1 The University is obliged, under the Higher Education Support Act 2003 to take reasonable steps to protect the personal information it holds against loss, unauthorised access, use, modification or disclosure, and misuse, as provided for by the Privacy Act 1988. This obligation extends to the management of assessment, the submission of assessment tasks, and the provision of results and feedback to students.
- 1.6.2 The University requires that students complete a cover sheet when submitting paper based assessment tasks. The requirement to use cover sheets for assessment tasks submitted electronically is determined by the Course Coordinator¹.
- 1.6.3 A student's username and password is equivalent to their signature when used to submit an assessment task electronically. Information on the cover sheet constitutes 'personal information'.
- 1.6.4 Where assessment tasks are submitted electronically, and the Course Coordinator requires a cover sheet, the cover sheet is to be included at the start of the assessment task as the first page.
- 1.6.5 In the case of group assessment tasks, each member of the group is required to complete and sign the cover sheet. As such, each individual student will receive written feedback on their group assessment task.

¹ Where the assessment task is lodged using AssignIT and is returned electronically, a separate cover sheet is not required as AssignIT provides the same information, in an automated form, as the cover sheet. However if a student submits an assessment task with AssignIT but it is returned in hard copy form, a hard copy cover sheet may still be useful.

- 1.6.6 Where practical, students are required to keep a copy of all work submitted and maintain it until the final course grades are recorded, submitted and released.
- 1.6.7 Course Coordinators will determine the method of distribution of marked student assessment tasks for each course. This information is to be included in the course information booklet.
- 1.6.8 Marked assessment tasks must not be left unattended for collection.
- 1.6.9 Acceptable means by which marked assessment tasks can be returned to students include:
- a. collection during class, only by the student
 - b. collection from school office or a staff member where students will need to present their student ID card for proof of identity
 - c. collection from Course Coordinator, lecturer or tutor by prior arrangement
 - d. by post (students attach an A4 stamped self-addressed envelope with correct postage to their assessment task)
 - e. electronically to the individual student.

1.7 Online staff resources

- [Graduate Qualities](#)
- Code of Good Practice: [University Teaching](#)
- [Learning Connection Staff Resources - Teaching Resources](#)
- [Learning Connection Student Resources - Assessment](#)
- [UniSA student services](#)