

ITEM 5.1: ASSESSMENT POLICY REVIEW

Issue:

In September the Assessment Policy working group attended an intensive, off-campus 'hack-a-thon' with the aim of producing a draft policy for consideration.

Significant progress was made and members of SLTC previewed the draft Policy and accompanying Schedules on 30 September 2015.

At this meeting, it was felt that SLTC could move to endorse the principles of assessment at its next meeting, but that further discussion was required in regards to the Schedules.

The Policy is broadly underpinned by seven principles of assessment, which are listed below in the order they appear in the Policy. Importantly, it should be noted that all principles apply equally and must be read in concert:

- Assessment is standards-based
- Assessment must be fit for purpose and efficient in its application
- Assessment will be program-based
- Students and teachers are responsible partners in learning and assessment
- Assessment is fair, transparent and equitable
- Assessment is aligned, valid and reliable
- Assessment promotes academic integrity

The Schedules will return to SLTC at its meeting on 9th November for more detailed discussion.

Consultation Process:

The following offices have been consulted prior to the submission of this paper:

- Chair of Academic Senate
- Pro-Vice Chancellor Learning and Teaching
- Members of the Assessment Policy working group

Recommendation:

That SLTC endorse the Principles of Assessment outlined in Section 5 Policy Statement.

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The principles were approved, with minor amendments, at the meeting of SLTC on 12 October, along with schedule 1. The remaining schedules will be discussed at the meeting on 9th November.

ASSESSMENT POLICY

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this Policy is to outline the principles that underpin the University's approach to assessment.
- 1.2 This Policy should be read in concert with the Schedules/ Procedures/Guidelines, which guide the conduct and management of assessment and grading practices.

2 BACKGROUND

Purpose of Assessment

- 2.1 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.'
- 2.2 Assessment of student learning performance and feedback on progress are pivotal and important processes in University learning and teaching.
- 2.3 Assessment is an integral part of the learning process for students and strongly influences what and how students learn in their courses.
- 2.4 Well-designed assessment tasks communicate to students what is important and are vehicles by which the University assures itself, and society, of its graduates' capabilities.
- 2.5 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.

3 SCOPE

- 3.1 This Policy applies to all program offerings in which Macquarie certifies attainment of learning outcomes.
- 3.2 It will be relevant to all academic leaders and managers of learning and teaching, all teaching staff, including sessional teachers, and students.

4 DRAFT DEFINITIONS (to be continued)

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

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

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

Feedback: means information provided to students on the quality of their learning in relation to an assessment activity, which forms the basis of improved student learning. [Define types of feedback: Student self assessment etc]

Final Examination: an examination held within a specified examination period that is defined by the University and conducted in compliance with this Policy. *Final examinations only are managed through the Examinations Section; all other examinations are managed locally by the relevant department/faculty.*

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

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.

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.

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.

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

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.

Program Teams: includes the program director and individual unit convenors working collegially and collaboratively.

Summative Assessment: 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.

Formative Assessment: 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.

5 POLICY STATEMENT

Principles of Assessment

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

5.1 Assessment is standards-based

- 5.1.1 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.
- 5.1.2 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.
- 5.1.3 Students will have access to the standards expected and, where appropriate, examples of relevant and related assessment tasks.
- 5.1.4 The University will award common result grades as specified in Schedule 1.
- 5.1.5 Decisions regarding grades awarded to students must be based on the attainment (or otherwise) of the pre-determined criteria and standards.
- 5.1.6 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.
- 5.1.7 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.

5.2 Assessment must be fit for purpose, and efficient in its application

- 5.2.1 Assessment items across a program should be sufficient to assess achievement of both program and unit learning outcomes.
- 5.2.2 Assessment tasks must be aligned to learning outcomes and should not address material outside of their scope.
- 5.2.3 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.

5.3 Assessment will be program-based

- 5.3.1 Program teams are responsible for ensuring a 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 program learning outcomes.
- 5.3.2 Program design must demonstrate how the scaffolding of assessment tasks across the program ensures that students can achieve the program learning outcomes without unnecessary duplication.
- 5.3.3 Programs must include one or more significant task that assist students to consolidate, integrate and synthesise learning across their study, and offer the opportunity for group work. Assessment tasks may be shared across units in a program or explicitly build on tasks from prior units.
- 5.3.4 A variety of different types of assessment tasks, such as authentic tasks, will be used and embedded strategically throughout a program of study to develop and demonstrate the achievement of program learning outcomes and graduate capabilities.
- 5.3.5 Assessment workloads, and the timing of assessments across a program, will be considered to ensure they are reasonable and sustainable for students, staff and organisational units.
- 5.3.6 Assessment practices are collaborative and promote continuous improvement. Assessment practices are open and should be shared across disciplines, programs and units.
- 5.3.7 Professional development opportunities related to design, implementation and moderation of assessment will be provided to all staff.

5.4 Students and teachers are responsible partners in learning and assessment

- 5.4.1 Assessment is designed to engage students in the learning process and should encourage and support learning.
- 5.4.2 Ongoing opportunities for formative feedback will be built into all units. Examples include formal or informal assessment tasks, peer assessment or other assessment activity.
- 5.4.3 Coursework students must receive some feedback prior to the census date in each session.
- 5.4.4 Students are responsible for their learning and are expected to:
- actively engage with assessment tasks, including carefully reading the guidance provided, understand criteria, spend sufficient time on the task and submit work on time;
 - read, reflect and act on feedback provided;
 - 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);
 - provide constructive feedback on assessment processes and tasks through student feedback mechanisms (e.g. student surveys, suggestions for future offerings, student representation on committees);
 - ensure that their work is their own; and
 - be familiar with University policy and faculty procedures and act in accordance with those policy and procedures.
- 5.4.5 Program Directors, Program Teams and Teaching staff are jointly responsible for designing assessment regimes that enable students to demonstrate attainment of unit and program learning outcomes. Staff must:
- advise students in relation to expectations relevant to specific assessment tasks by providing appropriate guidance, supporting material, standards and rubrics;
 - assess student work fairly, consistently, transparently and in a timely manner;
 - provide timely feedback which enables students to further improve their learning and performance wherever possible;
 - be able to justify student results against the stated criteria; and
 - be familiar with University policy and faculty procedures and act in accordance with those policy and procedures

5.5 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.

- 5.5.1 Assessment regimes must provide all students a fair opportunity to demonstrate their unit and program learning outcomes.
- 5.5.2 Across a program, students will be given a variety of tasks to demonstrate achievement of program learning outcomes.
- 5.5.3 Assessment practices take into account equity and inclusiveness to accommodate the diversity of the student body as required.
- 5.5.4 The process of awarding results in accordance with the standards will be transparent to students, staff and moderators.
- 5.5.5 All assessment tasks must comply with the requirements outlined in [Schedule 2](#).
- 5.5.6 Examination of HDR theses must comply with the requirements outlined in [Schedule 3](#).
- 5.5.7 If a final examination is used it must comply with the requirements outlined in [Schedule 4](#).

5.6 Assessment is valid, aligned and reliable

- 5.6.1 Assessment tasks will be fit for purpose and valid (ie. assess what they claim to assess).
- 5.6.2 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.
- 5.6.3 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.

5.7 Assessment design and implementation promotes academic integrity

- 5.7.1 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.
- 5.7.2 To ensure academic integrity, assessment tasks are reviewed regularly, and refreshed and renewed appropriately according to the level of risk.
- 5.7.3 Academic support services will be offered to staff and students to embed a culture of academic honesty.
- 5.7.4 Plagiarism detection software will be used for all electronically submitted summative assessment unless approved otherwise.

SCHEDULE 1: GRADES

- 1.1 The following grades are common to all coursework units that are offered by or on behalf of Macquarie University:
- 1.2 The attainment (or otherwise) of learning outcomes for units of study are reported:
(i) by grade and mark: the mark and grade must correspond as indicated in the Schedule below;
(ii) by grade only: the grade should be either Satisfactory or Fail.
- Unit convenors may develop criteria and standards for specific assessment tasks, but these must be aligned with the grading descriptors given below.
- 1.3 Grades for all individual assessment tasks will be released to students, it is not essential to also release the mark.
- 1.4 Grading decisions for each assessment task will be moderated against the standards before task results are released.
- 1.5 The method by which the results in individual assessment items are employed to arrive at the final result for a unit will be simple, transparent and communicated to students in their unit guide.
- 1.6 Final grades must reflect the descriptors given below:

Table 1 - Final Grades for Units Receiving a Mark

FINAL GRADE	Range	DESCRIPTION
High Distinction (HD)	85-100	Provides consistent evidence of deep and critical understanding in relation to the learning outcomes. There is substantial originality and insight in identifying, generating and communicating competing arguments, perspectives or problem solving approaches; critical evaluation of problems, their solutions and their

		implications; creativity in application as appropriate to the discipline.
Distinction (D)	75-84	Provides evidence of integration and evaluation of critical ideas, principles and theories, distinctive insight and ability in applying relevant skills and concepts in relation to learning outcomes. There is demonstration of frequent originality in defining and analysing issues or problems and providing solutions; and the use of means of communication appropriate to the discipline and the audience.
Credit (C)	65 -74	Provides evidence of learning that goes beyond replication of content knowledge or skills relevant to the learning outcomes. There is demonstration of substantial understanding of fundamental concepts in the field of study and the ability to apply these concepts in a variety of contexts; convincing argumentation with appropriate coherent justification; communication of ideas fluently and clearly in terms of the conventions of the discipline.
Pass (P)	50-64	Provides sufficient evidence of the achievement of learning outcomes. There is demonstration of understanding and application of fundamental concepts of the field of study; routine argumentation with acceptable justification; communication of information and ideas adequately in terms of the conventions of the discipline. The learning attainment is considered satisfactory or adequate or competent or capable in relation to the specified outcomes.
Fail (F)	0-49	Does not provide evidence of attainment of learning outcomes. There is missing or partial or superficial or

		faulty understanding and application of the fundamental concepts in the field of study; missing, undeveloped, inappropriate or confusing argumentation; incomplete, confusing or lacking communication of ideas in ways that give little attention to the conventions of the discipline.
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Table 2 - Final Grades for Units not receiving a mark

GRADE		DESCRIPTION
Satisfactory (S)	No mark	To be awarded in units of study where student achievement is measured as a pass or fail only without a mark to students who, in their performance in assessment tasks, demonstrate the learning outcomes for the unit at an acceptable standard.
Fail (F)	No mark	Student has not met defined standards at an appropriate level within a specified time.

STATUS

- I Indicates the unit is incomplete
- IS Indicates the unit is incomplete and supplementary assessment is granted
- K Indicates that a postgraduate unit or honours program continued over more than one session
- W Denotes withdrawn without penalty
- Z Indicates a thesis or dissertation has been submitted and is being assessed
- FI Insufficient attendance and/or work submitted
- FW Awarded when a student withdraws from a unit or units after the census date. This also denotes that financial and academic penalties have been applied.

- H1 Honours Class One
- H21 Honours Class Two Division One
- H22 Honours Class Two Division Two

H2 Honours Class Two (law programs only)

H3 Honours Class Three

1.7 A Grade Point Average (GPA) is a calculation that reflects the overall grades of a student in a coursework program. It will be calculated on the basis of the units completed at Macquarie University towards the program. It will not take into account credit points granted through RPL or non-award study. The calculation will be based on the following:
[To be determined at a later stage]

SCHEDULE 2: UNIT ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

1. Maximum weighting

- 1.1 No single assessment task can be worth more than 60% of the total assessment of the unit, unless required by an external accrediting body.
- 1.2 HDR theses and units where a single project forms the assessment are exempted from this requirement. In these cases, detailed formative feedback will be provided throughout the process and, for project units, submission of stages/portions of the project may constitute separate assessment items.

2. Group work

- 2.1 Group work will be structured in such a way that all students will be able to demonstrate attainment of the learning outcomes of the task.
- 2.2 At least 50% of assessment shall be allocated to individual performance.
- 2.3 Staff shall ensure students are prepared and monitor groups to ensure that they are functioning effectively.

3. Hurdle Requirements

- 3.1 A hurdle requirement is an assessment task for which a minimum level of performance is a condition of passing the unit in which it occurs.
- 3.2 Hurdle tasks which are not associated with marks/results are still regarded as assessment tasks for the purposes of this policy.
- 3.3 Hurdle requirements should be:
 - clearly identified in the unit guide
 - determined on pedagogical grounds
 - used only where it is appropriate to ensure fulfillment of unit and program learning outcomes (especially in Disciplines where there are professional and / or technical applications as is the case for example with placements in the Medical and Health Sciences)
 - used to meet minimum competency standards or to demonstrate 'fitness to practice' for courses related to professional practice

3.4 In cases where students have made a serious attempt but failed to meet the hurdle requirement, they must be given more than one opportunity to meet each hurdle requirement, except in cases where they have failed to submit. For hurdles that are final examinations or major requirement assessments, there will be a maximum of one such further opportunity.

4. Supplementary Assessment

4.1 Supplementary assessments are limited to application to the following:

- the provision of a further opportunity to successfully complete hurdle assessments,
- as the outcome of a Disruptions to Study application,
- as the outcome of a Grade Appeal on the grounds that:
 - due regard was not paid to an illness or misadventure that had been found to be eligible for special consideration,
 - the student had been disadvantaged in some way due to the conduct of an assessment task,
 - the assessor's judgement was not objectively applied.

5. Academic Honesty

5.1 Work submitted by students for assessment will be subject to plagiarism detection software, such as Turnitin, unless otherwise approved.

6. De-identified

6.1 Student work is de-identified before marking where appropriate.

7. Electronic submission

7.1 Unless otherwise approved, all text-based assessment tasks will be submitted electronically using the University's electronic learning management system.

8. Late submission

8.1 Penalties for late submission of assessment where an extension has not been approved are to be consistently applied across all students enrolled in a coursework unit.

8.2 For coursework units assessment tasks are not accepted after the earlier of the following:

- (i) the tenth calendar day after the due date; or

(ii) the return of the assessment items that were submitted on time.

8.3 Where a student has been granted an extension which will ultimately extend beyond the return date, an alternative task must be set, except where the task is an individual project or similar.

8.4 Unit guides will publish the penalties for late submission, which will not exceed 10% per day.

8.5 Late submission of take home assessment or resubmissions is not permitted.

9. Retention of student work

9.1 All assessments worth 20% or more must be archived for benchmarking, calibration or grade review, for a period of six months unless otherwise approved.

10. Applications for reasonable adjustments

10.1 Where sufficient notice has been provided the University will cater for students with a disability or other special needs to ensure fairness and equality of opportunity for all students

SCHEDULE 3: HIGHER DEGREE RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS

To be discussed

SCHEDULE 4: FINAL EXAMINATION REQUIREMENTS

The Assessment Policy does not prescribe the use of a final examination. However, should a final invigilated examination be set, it must be conducted in accordance with this Schedule 4.

1. Timetable

- 1.1 The University will publish the exam timetable of each final examination period a minimum of 4 weeks before the commencement of that period.
- 1.2 The University will keep available the final day of the final examination period for final examinations that need to be rescheduled.
- 1.3 Each student will be responsible for:
 - checking the final examination timetable
 - adhering to the final examination timetable
 - ensuring they are available for the full duration of the final examination period.
- 1.4 The University will notify external students of the location of external final examination centres.

2. Preparation of Examination

- 2.1 Where an assessment task for a unit includes an examination, two papers must be prepared.

3 Duration of Examination

- 3.1 The maximum duration of a final written examination will be two hours per unit (excluding reading time).
- 3.2 Fifteen minutes reading time will be allowed at the beginning of each final examination. Students must not commence writing until advised by the supervisor at the conclusion of reading time.
- 3.3 If the start time of a final examination is delayed for any reason, the concluding time of the examination may only be extended by the amount of the delay.
- 3.4 If a final examination is disrupted for any reason, the examination may be:
 - Continued, with an adjustment made up to the length of the disruption
 - considered completed, with the examination scripts marked

- abandoned and rescheduled (to the last day of the official final examination period where possible).

4. Quality Assurance

4.1 Details of the structure and format of the final examination paper will be made available to students prior to the start of the final examination period. This detail will include:

- a copy of the examination coversheet, giving the conditions under which the examination will be held
- information on the types of questions the examination will contain, and
- an indication of the unit content the paper will examine.

4.2 Students should be advised that the content or style of previous examination papers may not be representative of that of the final examination paper for the current offering.

5. Conduct

5.1 There will be a Final Examination Supervisor in charge at every final examination. Students must follow directions given by the Final Examination Supervisor.

5.2 The Unit Convenor will be contactable by phone for the duration of the final examination.

5.3 Students will be required to present their Macquarie University Campus Card as photographic proof of identity for the duration of the final examination. This must be visible at all times during the examination. In exceptional circumstances, the Final Examination Supervisor may allow alternative photographic proof of identity such as a current Australian driver's licence, a current Australian Proof of Identity card or a current passport

5.4 Students are not permitted:

- into a final examination venue once one hour from the time of commencement (excluding any reading time) has elapsed
- to leave a final examination venue *before* one hour from the time of commencement (excluding any reading time) has elapsed
- to be readmitted to a final examination venue unless they were under approved supervision during the full period of their absence
- to obtain, or attempt to obtain, assistance in undertaking or completing the final examination script
- to receive, or attempt to receive, assistance in undertaking or completing the final examination script.
- Communicate in any way with another student once they have entered the final examination venue

6. Authorised material in examinations

- 6.1 It is a student's responsibility to ascertain whether an examination is an open book or closed book examination. This information will be published in the Unit Guide and will be specified on the examination paper.
- 6.2 Students must be notified in the Unit Guide of the range of materials that may be taken into an examination. This information must also be included on the cover sheet of the examination.
- 6.3 Students should bring their own writing equipment in a clear non-coloured plastic bag to examinations, e.g. pens, pencils and erasers. These items will not be supplied at the examination.
- 6.4 In open book examinations, students may bring in any hardcopy written reference material, including hardcopy dictionaries, textbooks with any annotations and study notes. Annotations can include the use of post-it notes or other adhesive markers. The range of materials may be limited by the unit convenor.
- 6.5 Calculators may only be brought into examinations where their use has been specifically authorised. Where calculators are authorised, any type of calculator may be used, except devices that are not primarily calculators but which have a calculator function. Calculators will not be supplied at the examination.
- 6.6 Where specific materials are required for a particular examination, such as a legal document or a table of data, they will be provided as part of the examination paper.
- 6.7 Electronic devices (such as computers, tablets, phones and all watches), purses and wallets may be brought into an examination room but must be placed under the student's examination desk throughout the examination. All devices must be switched off.

7. Unauthorised material in examinations

- 7.1 Materials other than the authorised materials described above must not be taken into the examination venue. Materials prohibited from being brought into examinations include (but are not restricted to):
- bags (these may be left outside examination rooms, however students should note that there will not be any security monitoring provided in these areas)
 - pencil cases
 - notes of any kind including those written on rulers, calculators, calculator covers or anywhere else

- blank paper, note pads, writing paper/pad

7.2 Any unauthorised material detected will be confiscated by the supervisor. Cases of alleged academic misconduct will be referred to **XXX**.

8. Application for reasonable adjustments

8.1 Where sufficient notice has been provided, the University will cater for students with a disability or other special needs to ensure fairness and equality of opportunity for all students.

9. Feedback

9.1 A marker is required to annotate each page of a final examination script to indicate that it has been marked.

9.2 A student is entitled to view their annotated final examination script. The viewing will be conducted in a secure faculty location. The Unit Convenor (or nominee) will be present at all times. The student is not entitled to copy, destroy, alter or annotate the script in any way. The script will remain the property of Macquarie University.

10. Storage

10.1 All necessary measures must be taken to ensure that all copies of a final examination paper, whether in draft or final form, are stored and transmitted in a secure manner.

10.2 Each final examination script will be kept by the University for a minimum of six months, or longer if deemed appropriate by the relevant Executive Dean. The six months starts from the end date of the relevant final examination period. Where an appeal has been lodged, the final examination script is to be kept for a minimum of six months following the outcome of the appeal.

10.3 Completed final examination scripts will be disposed of via confidential waste.

10.4 The final examination paper for each unit will be made available by the University after the official end date of the scheduled final examination period.

SCHEDULE 5: MODERATION REQUIREMENTS

In progress