

# Policy on Assessment Practice

## Background

The Policy on Assessment Practice seeks to provide the broad policy framework for assessment practice in the University of Tasmania taking into account current ordinances, rules, policies, codes of conduct and guidelines. Current formally approved documentation with some bearing on assessment practice are the following:

Ordinance of the Academic Senate

Ordinance of Academic Structure

Rule of Academic Assessment and Rule of Admission and Student Progress

Ordinance of Student Discipline

Ordinance of Student Complaints

Code of Conduct for Teaching and Learning

Guidelines Governing the Access of Students to their Examination Scripts

Guidelines for Awarding Supplementary Examinations

Building an Inclusive Community: University Equity Plan 2003-5

## The Role of Assessment in Teaching and Learning

- Assessment is the process of evaluating the quality and extent of student achievement or performance in learning and as such influences the focus and approach of students to learning.
- Assessment has two principal purposes – a formative purpose and a summative purpose. The assessment tasks within a course may range from primarily formative to primarily summative but the overall balance of the assessment tasks must be to facilitate the learning process.
- The formative purpose of assessment is to encourage a ‘deep’ approach to learning through students’ own activity and engagement with the subject.
- The summative purpose of assessment is to lead to the certification of achievement or ability of students for external audiences.
- An important aspect of assessment is that it should develop in students the ability to independently evaluate the quality of their work.

## **Principles of Student Assessment**

Assessment practices vary across the disciplines, nevertheless the University believes that all assessment practice should be underpinned by a common set of principles:

1. Assessment practices must be transparent and fair.
2. Assessment must be designed both to support student learning and to test achievement. Such design involves not only the methodology of assessment but its timing and the provision of constructive feedback.
3. In the Unit Outline, students should be informed of the relationship of assessment tasks to the unit's aims and objectives and the expectations of assessment in the units in which they are enrolled, including any formal criteria and standards against which their performance is to be evaluated, length (words/duration), weighting, submission/sitting dates for all assessment tasks, and penalties for late submission.
4. Assessment practices should be inclusive of the needs of a diverse student population and support the principles of equity, recognising individual and group diversity and eliminating any capacity to disadvantage students on grounds other than academic merit. Language must avoid gender, racial, cultural or second language bias (however this does not preclude the use of discipline specific terminology where appropriate).
5. Assessment practices should be diverse and support student-centred approaches to teaching.
6. Student understanding of the assessment process should be facilitated by explaining assessment approaches, how the approaches relate to the unit's aims and objectives and the criteria by which students will be assessed.
7. Assessment practices should provide constructive feedback to students which is timely to permit students to benefit in preparing for future assessment tasks; which provides students with a measure of their progress against stated learning objectives; and which enables students to learn from their work.
8. Final grades for a unit should not rely on only one assessment task or examination.
9. There should be a clear process available to students who wish their results to be reviewed and a process by which students can appeal against decisions made.

## **Responsibilities and Obligations of the University and its Faculties and Schools**

The ordinances *Of the Academic Senate* and *Of Academic Structure* formally ascribe responsibility for coordinating assessment duties of staff to Schools in the units for which they are responsible, for monitoring assessment in courses to Faculties, and for approval of assessment methods and recommendation of rules concerning assessment to Academic Senate (through its Teaching and Learning Committee).

In order to ensure fair and effective assessment, consistent practices must be in place.

1. The Rules of Academic Assessment, the Rules of Student Progress, the Ordinance of Student Discipline, the Ordinance of Student Complaints and the Equal Opportunity for People with Disabilities Policy, as they relate to assessment, must be applied consistently across the University.
2. The provision of information about assessment and the application of all assessment procedures must be consistent within a unit.
3. Practices for setting of examination papers, reviewing papers (including the typescripts) and the security of the papers and written scripts must be consistent across the University.
4. The administration of ordinary and supplementary examinations must be consistent across the University.
5. The composition, responsibilities and procedures of assessment committees must be consistent within Faculties.
6. The use of result codes must be consistent across the University and the definition and operation of the criteria by which students are awarded grades of pass must be consistent within Faculties.

Academic Senate, through its Teaching and Learning Committee, will promote good assessment practice and monitor assessment at School and Faculty levels.

Faculties and Schools in their assessment practices should take cognisance of the Code of Conduct for Teaching and Learning as it relates to assessment practice.

Faculties should ensure that staff development resources are available to develop expertise of staff in good assessment practices and that assessment practices and issues are regularly addressed in their staff development programs.

### **Responsibilities and Obligations of Academic Staff**

Academic staff must be committed to using good assessment practices and to maintaining or acquiring knowledge and expertise concerning assessment, examinations and the role of feedback in student learning. The individual responsibilities of academic staff, complementing the responsibilities of the academic structures, include:

1. Understanding and applying effective assessment practice for a diverse range of students.
2. Ensuring assessment is consistent with the aims, objectives, content and teaching/learning processes of the unit.
3. Giving constructive and timely feedback on work presented by students.
4. Adhering to the documented policy on deadlines for submission of assessment tasks for the unit.
5. Informing students of the relationship of assessment tasks to a unit's aims and objectives and the expectations of assessment in the units for which they are responsible, including any formal criteria and standards against which their performance is to be evaluated; length (words/duration); weighting; submission/sitting dates for all assessment tasks other than ordinary/supplementary examinations; and penalties for late submission of assessment tasks.

6. Ensuring that students are aware of the appropriate system of referencing for the discipline concerned and of the policies and penalties related to plagiarism.
7. Ensuring that reports on student progress and achievement are honest, clear and based only on relevant data.

## **Rights, Responsibilities and Obligations of Students**

Students' rights, responsibilities and obligations in relation to assessment are detailed in the Code of Conduct for Teaching and Learning, the Rule on Academic Assessment, the Ordinance on Academic Progress, supplemented by the Academic Senate's Guidelines Governing the Access of Students to their Examination Scripts.

The rights of students in relation to assessment include:

1. To be informed of the assessment policies and procedures of the University and the relevant Faculty and School.
2. To be informed in writing in the first week of the academic timetable of the criteria and methods of assessment for a unit, specific attendance and performance requirements, and a timetable of all assessment tasks; penalties for late submissions of assessment tasks; and, the relationship of assessment procedures to the aims and objectives of a unit.
3. To receive fair, helpful and timely feedback on their academic work, including evaluation of their performance and progress in a unit or course.
4. To have assessment tasks returned with feedback and examination results available as expeditiously as possible after completion.
5. To have access to examination scripts for a period of one year.

The responsibilities and obligations of students include:

1. Engaging in assessment tasks and other teaching and learning tasks of the unit;
2. Being aware of the specific requirements to pass a unit, including submission of work, assessment and progress policies and the rules of progression and requirements for an award.
3. Being aware of mechanisms within the University, Faculty and School for seeking assistance and advice, in particular in relation to problems in meeting assessment deadlines, absence or withdrawal from a unit and special consideration due to illness or other misadventure.
4. Behaving honestly, ethically and professionally, in a manner that does not result in either academic disadvantage to any student or unfair advantage to one or more students.
5. Being aware of policies and penalties related to plagiarism and cheating, and not engage in plagiarism or cheating of any kind.
6. Being aware of procedures for appeal against academic decisions.

**Advising staff early in the semester if disability, health conditions or other factors are likely to impact on assessment.**