THE UNIVERSITY
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Good Practice Guidelines on Assessment for Staff and Students

(Approved by the Vice-Chancellor on behalf of Council, 9 March 2005 on the recommendation of the Academic Board at Meeting 1/05, 2 March 2005. Amended by the Vice-Chancellor on behalf of Council, 11 November 2005 on the recommendation of the Academic Board at Meeting 8/05, 2 November 2005)

Assessment practices may vary with discipline, but all assessment practices should be based on the principles and guidelines outlined below. Individual students, teaching staff and coordinators are required to ensure, and be able to demonstrate, that these principles and guidelines are used in the local context.

The format consists of a statement of principle, followed by the expected responsibilities of students and staff.

1.   Assessment may be used for diagnostic, formative or summative purposes. Diagnostic assessment is usually undertaken before a learning activity and informs the student and teaching staff of the prior knowledge and understanding of the student in a particular area. Formative assessment is undertaken as part of the learning process and informs the student and teaching staff of the progress of student learning and ways to improve. Summative assessment usually occurs after the learning activity and is used to judge competence and standards.

Students: students are expected to prepare adequately and undertake all assessment tasks to the best of their ability. In addition to studying the appropriate content for an assessment task, this preparation will include reading the appropriate documentation on assessment guidelines and rules, plagiarism, assessment times and submission dates and staff consultation times. If a student is unable to meet a deadline for an assessment task, it is their responsibility to inform the staff member concerned as soon as possible and discuss the consequences.

Staff: teaching staff are expected to inform students whether an assessment task is diagnostic, formative or summative, any course specific requirements for assessments, consultation times, submission times and penalties for late submissions, grading schemes and descriptors, weightings for individual tasks and the format for assessment feedback.

2.   Students need to be advised of the objectives and standards expected for assessment tasks. It is particularly important to inform first year students of the grading scheme and grade descriptors, and how the marking scheme at University may differ from that used in secondary schools. There should be a direct link between the intended learning outcomes, actual student work and student grades.

Students: students are expected to familiarise themselves with the standards expected for an assessment task, including the grading scheme and grade descriptors.

Staff: teaching staff are expected to provide, where appropriate, examples of previous assessment tasks and standards expected. The format for these examples should be determined by the discipline area. A marking scheme will be used to ensure consistency, particularly if assessment

tasks are marked by more than one assessor. Assessment tasks should be aligned to the stated objectives and outcome(s) for the course and program.

Double or multiple marking may be appropriate in some circumstances.
- Double marking is where the same assessment task is marked by two people. Double marking is usually used in upper-level courses or honours. Honours theses should always be double marked.
- Multiple marking is where a number of people mark an assessment task with each person marking the work of a discrete group of students. Multiple marking is normally used in large classes. Where multiple marking is used there should be processes in place to calibrate the marks.

3.   Assessment information should describe which program graduate attributes are being tested. Since assessment practices often drive student approaches to learning, it is important to articulate to students which program attributes are being developed in a particular course and the evidence that will be used to show their development.

Students: students should be familiar with the transferable capabilities that are being developed and tested as part of their assessment tasks and keep copies, where appropriate, of examples of their work for later use in portfolios.

Staff: teaching staff are expected to match the type and form of assessment to the requirement for evidence of development of program graduate attributes.

4.   Assessment practices will be transparent and fair, take into account the needs of students with disabilities, and support equity principles such as inclusive language and avoid gender, racial or cultural bias.

Students: students should avoid waiting until close to the assessment deadline to commence their work and be aware of multiple assessment deadlines that fall within a small space of time and spread their work evenly over the available time. Students with a disability should consult with the University of Adelaide Disability Liaison officer for support and assistance. Students should be aware that the University supports an environment that avoids gender, racial or cultural bias.

Staff: where group work is being assessed, students should be provided with a written statement setting out the appropriate rules, procedures and expectations. Where possible, teaching staff should avoid concurrent deadlines for multiple, major assessment tasks that fall within a short space of time. Students with a known disability should be referred to the University of Adelaide Disability Liaison officer for support and assistance. Assessment has a major impact on student workload and on staff time and the appropriate level and extent of assessment should be planned with these criteria in mind. Staff are expected to provide assessment tasks that avoid any obvious gender, racial or cultural bias.

5.   Where possible, diagnostic and formative assessment tasks should provide meaningful feedback to students, in a timely manner, on how they might improve their performance.

Students: students are expected to use diagnostic and formative assessment feedback to direct their learning and improve their performance in later assessments.

Staff: teaching staff are expected to develop appropriate feedback for assessment tasks so that students may judge and revise their work and performance. All feedback is potentially useful to student learning and feedback should be directed towards student work, not the student.

6.   Assessment methods are required to be as valid and reliable as possible. If criterion referenced assessment is used, students should be informed of the criteria to be used and their relationship to the grading scheme and descriptors. If normative assessment is used, students should be informed of the expected standards and how they relate to the marks assigned.

Students: students should be aware of the different forms of assessment and take note of the specific criteria for each assessment task.

Staff: teaching staff should inform students whether a criterion referenced or normative assessment process is being used and the criteria associated with assessment marking and grading.

7.   Student feedback on the assessment process should be sought through such means as the course evaluation process and student representatives on School or Faculty committees.

Students: students should convey their constructive comments on assessment practices and procedures to the teaching staff or through the appropriate student representative on the various University committees

Staff: teaching staff, Schools and Faculties are expected to provide appropriate opportunities for student feedback on assessment practices and procedures and discuss the feedback, and where appropriate, inform students of the outcomes of these discussions.