

Assessment (Coursework, Tests and Examinations) Policy

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Application

This policy applies to all staff members, and students in undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses. Separate policy documents govern the assessment of postgraduate research and doctoral students.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the processes of **assessment** in undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses align with the University's principles of assessment.

This policy should be read with the Assessment (Coursework, Tests and Examinations) Procedures.

Principles of Assessment

1. Assessment is learning-oriented through tasks which require the understanding, analysis, synthesis and/or creation of new information, concepts, and/or creative works
2. Assessment design is coherent and supports learning progression within courses and across programmes
3. Assessment tasks are demonstrably aligned with course-level learning outcomes, and programme and University-level Graduate Profiles
4. Assessment is reliable and valid, and is carried out in a manner that is inclusive and equitable
5. Assessment practices are consistent and transparent, and assessment details are made available to students in a timely manner
6. Feedback is timely and provides meaningful guidance to support independent learning
7. Assessment design and practices support academic integrity
8. Professional development opportunities and guidance related to the design, implementation and moderation of assessment are available to staff
9. Assessment is manageable and quality assured

Note: The relevant principles of assessment appear below in brackets at the conclusion of each clause

Policy

Roles and Responsibilities

1. An Associate Dean with responsibility for learning and teaching must ensure that all academic teaching units in the faculty consistently meet the standards required for assessment of student learning
2. An Academic Head, Head of School, Department, disciplinary area or other academic unit must ensure that the academic unit meets the quality standards required by the University for assessment of student learning
3. A Course Director must oversee design of assessment processes to ensure that assessments are relevant and aligned with learning outcomes; that the assessment complies with all aspects of policy; and that the structure of assessment is available to all students at the start of semester. Course Directors are responsible for ensuring appropriate support and supervision is provided for tutors and/or laboratory demonstrators in a marking role.
4. A Course Coordinator is responsible for the administration and organisation of the course and its assessment acting in conjunction with, and under the supervision of, the Course Director

Note: Director and Coordinator roles will often be combined in one person, with the Course Coordinator role here referring only to situations where the roles are separate

5. An Examiner for undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses is responsible for setting and marking course assessment(s); including the preparation of question papers, and confirming the quality and fairness of results through participation in the Examiners' meeting
6. An Assessor for undergraduate or postgraduate taught courses is responsible for maintaining appropriate and adequate academic standards for all aspects of the assessment process, and provides an independent quality review of assessments and results. An Assessor must be appointed for any undergraduate or taught postgraduate course which has only one Examiner

Note 1: Where required at undergraduate level, an Assessor is normally appointed from within the University but may be external. Assessors for Bachelors Honours, Postgraduate Diploma and Certificate and Masters courses should normally be external to the University, but there may be instances where internal appointments are necessary because of expertise in the field or where the course is subject to a process of external moderation. The appointment of an overseas assessor is appropriate where there is no suitable assessor in New Zealand. Financial considerations preclude an overseas assessor being invited to visit New Zealand.

Note 2: Course Directors, Course Coordinators and Examiners cannot be appointed as assessors in the same course.

7. An external Moderator for postgraduate taught work must undertake, for all or some postgraduate courses taught by an academic unit, a review of the content and grading of examination papers and/or (a sample of) other assessed work
8. The Examinations and Timetable Services Office manages, maintains, coordinates, advises and reports on assessment processes and examinations, and provides academic units with support and guidance (see [Assessment \(Coursework, Tests and Examinations\) Procedures](#))

Assessment design

9. Assessment is **criterion-referenced**, i.e. judgements about the quality of students' performance must be made by reference to explicit or predetermined **criteria** and **standards** (2, 3, 5)
10. Assessment design must be considered in the context of:
 - the course and its learning outcomes. Assessment in all courses must demonstrate coherence and a consideration of learning progression
 - the entire degree programme and programme graduate profiles
 - University graduate profiles
(2, 3)

Note: in programmes where students may choose multiple pathways for progression, faculties have discretion to determine the ways in which assessment design across the programme is as holistic as possible.

11. Assessment tasks will reflect increasing levels of complexity through a programme (1, 2)
12. Except where it is necessary to test basic conceptual understanding, assessment tasks will be **authentic** and appropriate to disciplinary and/or professional contexts (1, 3)
13. Allowing for disciplinary and or professional contexts, the range and **weighting** of assessment tasks must give students an opportunity to develop competence through **formative** tasks, and demonstrate mastery through **summative** tasks (1, 2, 3, 7)
14. A variety of assessment tasks including, where appropriate, peer-, self- and group-assessment, will be used to provide students with a range of appropriate learning opportunities (2, 3, 4)
15. The timing of assessment components, where possible, must consider student workloads, coherent learning progression, and provide sufficient opportunities to utilise **feedback/feed-forward**. Students must have the opportunity to complete an early appropriately-weighted or formative assessment exercise, which may vary in scope and type across discipline or class size. Feedback/feed-forward on this exercise must be received in time to assist students in preparing for their first substantive assessment in the course (4, 5, 6, 7).
16. Assessment tasks must ensure that students with disabilities are provided with appropriate opportunities to demonstrate their achievement of learning outcomes (4)

Note: see [Inclusive Learning and Teaching of Students with Impairments Guidelines](#)

17. Assessment tasks must be designed to develop students' awareness of and a capacity for **academic integrity** (7)
18. Group assessment tasks must be demonstrably fair and clear. To ensure an appropriate component of group work assessment is individually assessed: where an individual group work task has a weighting of higher than 30% of the final grade, a minimum component of 40% must assess individual contribution; where group work tasks across a course comprise more than 30% of the final grade, a minimum component of 40% (calculated across those tasks) must assess individual contribution. Exceptions must be approved by Education Committee (see [Assessment \(Coursework, Tests and Examinations\) Procedures](#)) (4, 5).
19. Tests which count toward the final result for a course will be conducted under **examination conditions** (4, 7)
20. For stage one courses at least 50% of course assessment must occur in invigilated settings, normally achieved through formal examinations and/or tests sat under examination conditions. Exceptions must be approved by Education Committee (see [Assessment \(Coursework, Tests and Examinations\) Procedures](#)) (2, 3, 7)
21. To ensure diversity of assessment no more than 70% of weighted assessment tasks may be exams and/or tests conducted under examination conditions (2, 3, 5)

*Note: Forms of **plussage** should only be used where it is appropriate to the structure of course assessment and the learning outcomes to which they relate. The use of plussage in a course must be approved by an Associate Dean with responsibility for learning and teaching. Where plussage is employed, a minimum of 30% of the final grade must be derived from coursework unless an exception is approved by an Associate Dean with responsibility for learning and teaching*

22. Tests with a weighting higher than 20%, including take-home tests, must not be conducted in the final week of teaching, unless justified by the distinctive requirements of the course (4)

Note: exceptions are subject to the approval of an Associate Dean with responsibility for learning and teaching

23. Examinations at stage one will normally be two hours in length. In determining the length of the examination Course Directors must consider the needs of students and the appropriate scope of the examination, relative to course content and the need for diversity of assessment (2, 3)
24. Education Committee will monitor the balance of two-hour and three-hour examinations at stage one across the University through the annual report from the Examination and Timetabling Services Office (2, 9)
25. Where different levels of courses are taught concurrently the courses must be assessed separately, with different assignments and examinations set for each level using methods and standards appropriate to the level of enrolment (3, 4)

Note: see [Concurrent Teaching Policy](#)

26. Coursework assessment, tests and examination details must be approved by the Academic Head (or delegate) and are reviewed and approved through the online Course View application managed by ETSO (see [Assessment \(Coursework, Tests and Examinations\) Procedures](#)) (5)

Language of assessment

27. Assessment is conducted in English except where:
- the use of another language is a required part of the course
28. Students with an appropriate level of language fluency have made provision to use te reo Māori in assessments, for coursework, tests and/or examinations

Note: See [Assessing Te Reo Māori in Coursework and Examinations Procedures](#)

Feedback on coursework

29. Feedback to students must specifically address performance against the learning outcomes and criteria of the assessment task (3, 6)
30. Feedback must be provided in a timely manner and no later than three weeks after the day the assessment was submitted, or sooner when the feedback is required to prepare for subsequent assessments (6)

Note: this clause does not apply to the early assessment requirement described in s.15

31. Where a coursework task or test result is relevant to the students' preparation for the final examination, it must be marked and available to students by the end of the last teaching week of semester (except where an approved test is conducted in the last teaching week of semester) (6)
32. In peer, self or group- assessment exercises staff must provide guidance to support students' understanding of their responsibilities when evaluating their own and others' work (4, 5)

Advice to students

33. Detailed information about assessments for each course must be available in the Canvas course outline and published no later than two weeks prior to the start of teaching. This will include:

- the intended learning outcomes to be assessed
- an assessment table, with: (i) a description of the assessment tasks (ii) the weighting of items; (iii) the due date for submission or testing; (iv) the mode of examination (digital or paper-based); (v) the conditions under which the examination will be sat (if relevant) and (vi) information about minimum pass requirements and plussage, where applicable

Note: see [Policy note s.21 relating to plussage](#)

- the conditions for extensions of time (if any)

- penalties for lateness or violation of assessment specifications (e.g. length)
(3, 5)

34. Students must be provided with the criteria against which performance will be measured at the time an assessment is set (4, 5)

35. **Substantive changes to assessment arrangements** that have been approved and published cannot be made without unanimous agreement from students, and approval by the Academic Head and Dean of Faculty

- substantive changes to assessment arrangements must be agreed and publicised to students within the period of deleting the course from a student's enrolment without penalty
- minor changes to assessment arrangements may be made with the approval of the Academic Head, and must be notified to students.
(5, 9)

36. Examination papers from previous iterations of a course must be available to students on the Libraries and Learning Services Exam Papers database unless an exemption is approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) (5)

Examinations for taught courses

37. Examinations are prepared, approved and conducted according to the [Examination Regulations](#) and the [Assessment \(Coursework, Tests and Examinations\) Procedures](#) (9)

Marking assessment items

38. Coursework assessment and tests must be marked against the standards and criteria set for each assessment task (4, 5)

39. Marks and grades awarded must align with the University grade descriptors (4, 5)

40. Adjustment of marks for coursework, tests and examinations in taught papers may be undertaken where it is evident that the assessment criteria and standards have not been consistently applied in an individual assessment task (4, 5)

41. Students affected by any such adjustments must be advised as to the rationale for adjustment of marks. Records must be kept within the academic unit and the Associate Dean (Academic) will report on these instances to Education Committee (4, 5)

Final marks and grades

42. Final results will be expressed as a letter grade, with a corresponding numerical mark, as outlined in Table A (3, 4, 5)

43. A pass mark is 50 percent or more (3, 4, 5)

44. Use of a 0.5 rounding scheme is considered a standard practice and must be applied consistently within programmes (3, 4, 5)

45. Final marks on grade or pass/fail boundaries may be reviewed by the Examiners on a case-by-case basis (3, 4, 5)

For a table of University grade descriptors for undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses, see [Assessment 2020](#).

46. The attainment descriptors may be adapted to different levels of learning or degree study (3, 4, 5).

47. Education Committee must approve a course to carry an ungraded pass/fail result and may do so where:

- the course involves a substantial amount of practical work (a minimum of 60 percent) which is carried out over a period of time in which the student is expected to acquire knowledge, understanding and skills to a required standard. A fail indicates that the student's performance is below the minimum level of competence
- the course is a required part of a programme but carries no points
(4, 5)

48. Ungraded passes do not carry a grade point and are not included in **Grade Point Average** calculations (5)

49. All undergraduate or taught postgraduate coursework and test results must be returned electronically to students via Canvas, the University's Learning Management system (5, 6)

Moderation

50. Academic units must have documented processes in place to ensure the appropriate validity, **moderation** and approval of results for undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses, before finalisation of marks and grades. This may include:

- the use of marking guides
- reviewing a sample of work
- reviewing borderline results
- statistical analysis
(5, 9)

51. External moderation of postgraduate (non-doctoral) coursework will take place on a two or three-year cycle. See [Assessment \(Coursework, Tests and Examinations\) Procedures](#) (9)

Academic misconduct

52. Most students starting a new programme at the University of Auckland are required to complete the online Academic Integrity Course (7)

Note: see Section 12, Enrolment and Programme Regulations for exclusions

53. The following text must be included in all course outlines:

'The University of Auckland will not tolerate cheating, or assisting others to cheat, and views cheating in coursework or tests as a serious academic offence. The work that a student submits for grading must be the student's own work, reflecting his or her learning. Where work from other sources is used, it must be properly acknowledged and referenced. This requirement also applies to sources on the world-wide web. A student's assessed work may be reviewed against electronic source material using computerised detection mechanisms. Upon reasonable request, students may be required to provide an electronic version of their work for computerised review' (7).

54. All instances where there is evidence of **academic misconduct** in undergraduate or taught postgraduate coursework, tests or an examination must be dealt with under the provisions of the [Student Academic Conduct Statute](#) (7)

Quality assurance of assessment

55. Academic units must have a process to review and certify course outcomes, and processes for monitoring assessment standards and consistency in coursework, tests, and examinations (see [Assessment \(Coursework, Tests and Examinations\) Procedures](#)) (9)

Storage and retention of coursework

56. Academic units must have processes to ensure the secure storage of assessment questions and records (5, 9)

57. Academic units must retain coursework assessment and tests until the nominated period for collection of work, or resolution of disputed marks, has elapsed (5, 9)

Grievance and appeal procedures

58. Students have the right to query an assessment process in coursework or in a test that they believe to be unfair. See [Resolution of Student Academic Complaints and Disputes Statute](#) (5, 9)

Definitions

The following definitions apply to this document:

Academic misconduct means dishonest or inappropriate practices occurring in the preparation and submission of coursework, in a test, or in the context of University examinations

Assessment means the ongoing process of: establishing clear, measurable expected outcomes of student learning; ensuring that students have sufficient opportunities to achieve those outcomes; systematically gathering, analysing and interpreting evidence to determine how well student learning matches outcomes or expectations; using the resulting information to understand and improve student learning.

For the purposes of this Policy, assessment includes:

- assignments during the teaching of a course, normally called coursework
- practical, aural and oral work
- written tests conducted under examination conditions
- ongoing assessment of competence or performance
- written (or performance) examination normally conducted at the end of the semester or year

Authentic assessment is a form of assessment in which students are asked to perform real-world tasks to demonstrate meaningful application of essential knowledge and skills (Mueller, 2014).

Coursework means assessed components (such as assignments) within a unit of study and does not include tests conducted under examination conditions. In the case of practice disciplines, assessment components may involve ongoing assessment of competence or performance.

Criteria means the properties or characteristics by which the quality of something may be judged.

Criterion-referenced means that judgements about student performance are based on pre-determined standards and criteria and linked to specified course learning objectives.

Examination conditions means occurring at a specified place and time, in invigilated settings and without access to any written or printed matter or any blank paper unless permitted by direction of the Examiner.

Feedback/feed-forward means the provision of information in such a manner that students are able to improve their work, knowledge, or competence in later assessments.

Formative assessment means any assessment practice carried out early enough in a course with the purpose of providing students feedback that enables them to develop their learning. An important goal is to enable students to develop the capacity to realistically and verifiably evaluate the effectiveness of their learning strategies and outcomes. Formative assessment should also alert teachers to any aspects of the course or approaches to teaching with which students are having difficulties, and permit modifications that mitigate those difficulties. Formative assessment may be weighted or unweighted.

Grade Point Average means an average calculated using a scale to give each grade received a numerical value. 'Withdrawals', 'did not sit' and 'did not complete' results are counted as zero.

Learning progression means the description of a continuum of skills, knowledge, and competencies within a course and across a programme that can be mapped to standards or qualities of learning outcomes.

Moderation (for undergraduate and taught postgraduate courses) means activities undertaken to provide confirmation that assessment has been conducted reliably, fairly, and validly and that assessment scores or grades have been dependably calculated or awarded.

Plussage as defined by this policy is a method of calculating marks a student has gained in a taught course by counting either: an examination or test mark; or a combination of exam, test and coursework marks; whichever is to the student's advantage. Additional requirements for eligibility for plussage may apply, including for example: a minimum result required in the examination; a minimum standard for completion of coursework; and/or attendance at laboratories or tutorials.

Note - an assessment arrangement where an agreed subset of coursework marks is counted towards the final grade (e.g. best eight of ten quiz results) is not considered plussage.

Standards are a definite level of achievement aspired to or attained.

Substantive changes to assessment means changes that affect task weighting, timing or the nature of the assessment tasks.

Summative assessment means a judgment regarding each student's level of achievement for any given assignment. The results of this type of assessment are generally expressed as marks, percentages, grades, or qualifications. Summative assessment may be defined as a measure of a student's performance or level of achievement at the end of a unit of study.

University Graduate Profiles means a set of attributes attainable by graduates of the University of Auckland.

Weighting (of assessment) means the percentage of the total assessment for the course allocated to an assessment task.

University means the University of Auckland including all subsidiaries.

Key relevant documents

Include the following:

[Assessment \(Coursework, Tests and Examinations\) Procedures \(From 01 December 2019\)](#)

[Assessing Te Reo Maori in Coursework and Examinations Procedures](#)

[Concurrent Teaching Policy](#)

[Examination Regulations](#)

Table of University Grade Descriptors, see [Assessment 2020](#)

[Resolution of Student Academic Complaints and Disputes Statute](#)

[Student Academic Conduct Statute](#)

[Student Charter](#)

[Student Retention Policy](#)

[The Inclusive Learning and Teaching of Students with Impairments Guidelines](#)

[University Graduate Profiles](#)

Document management and control

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