

Assessment Principles Policy

Section 1 - Purpose

- (1) This Policy applies to all courses and subjects of Charles Sturt University.
- (2) This Policy establishes a framework of minimum quality standards for assessment within which Faculties/Schools will devise procedural guidelines for assessment and grading that are consistent with the intent and directions of this Policy.
- (3) This Policy should be read in conjunction with the [Moderation Policy](#) and the [Assessment Policy - Coursework Subjects](#).

Introduction and Background

- (4) The University is committed to providing a variety of learning environments to meet the different needs of students drawn from diverse educational, social, ethnic and economic backgrounds.
- (5) Assessment is based on the professional judgment of staff and others, and takes place in a variety of contexts including classrooms, online and distance learning environments and work placement locations.
- (6) Assessment is widely thought to be the single most important determinant of learning behaviour. It is an integral part of the teaching and learning process and contributes significantly to learning outcomes. What is assessed and how it is assessed gives clear messages to students about what the University considers to be important in their learning and achievement.
- (7) Assessment at the University must cater to the needs of several stakeholders:
 - a. students, who need a fair assessment process that contributes to their learning, does not place unreasonable demands on their time or competence and gives them a reputable qualification;
 - b. staff, who have a concern for students and a commitment to professional integrity;
 - c. the University, which has an obligation to set standards and define graduate learning outcomes and has a reputation to maintain and a budget to consider;
 - d. the community, which must have confidence in the University's qualifications and capacity to lead academic endeavour in our regions;
 - e. potential employers and accrediting bodies which must be able to trust the standards, reliability and validity of the University qualifications;
 - f. government bodies and external accreditation agencies; and
 - g. other external parties, including colleagues in workplace learning locations, who assist with the assessment and grading of the University students.

- (8) Assessment is the process of attributing value to the examined outcomes of any task (examination, assignment, practical work and any other activity) that a student is required to undertake and complete in order to satisfy the requirements of their studies. The application of this value may be summative (part of the official system of recording performance and grades) or formative (which provides feedback to help students to evaluate their understanding of

specific matters, develop their skills and improve their performance).

(9) At the University, assessment and grading are based on a criterion-referenced standards-based approach. Assessment is clearly aligned to pre-determined and defined criteria and related standards of skills, knowledge and competencies. The assessment task must be demonstrably consistent with the stated learning outcomes of the course and the subject. Criterion-referenced and standards-based assessment practices require both knowledge and performance standards to be identified and stated so that students understand clearly the level of performance required for each assessment task. In this context, criteria are defined performance attributes to which the assessor refers when forming a judgment about the student's response to the requirements of the assessment task. Standards describe the quality of student performance in relation to the criteria in any assessment task. The explicit statements of assessment criteria and related standards of performance enhance transparency and consistency and enables students to develop better judgments about their own performance.

(10) Standards established must be aligned with the [Australian Qualifications Framework \(AQF\)](#) level of the award and to the year of study. Students must graduate with appropriate standards of achievement.

(11) At the University, there are no pre-determined failure rates for courses and subjects and there are no guidelines or requirements specifying what percentage of students in a specific cohort will achieve each passing grade.

Section 2 - Glossary

(12) For the purpose of this Policy:

- a. Assessment - is the process of attributing value to the outcome of any assessment task that a student undertakes.
- b. Assessment tasks - include, but are not limited to: essays, tests, examinations, laboratory, field and clinical work, workplace learning tasks, portfolios, projects, productions, presentations, performances and online activities.
- c. Benchmarking - is a structured, collaborative process for comparing practices, processes and outcomes of courses across the Higher Education sector. It assists universities to identify comparative strengths and weaknesses that will support ongoing improvements in academic quality.
- d. Cohort - refers to all students enrolled in a subject in a specific mode of delivery, on a particular campus, or studying with a partner institution in a specific teaching session.
- e. Criterion - is a specific aspect of performance that is specified by the assessor and which the student must consider and address in their submitted response to an assessment task. Where a grade is assigned, it is assigned on judgement of the standard the student has achieved on each of the criteria specified for the task. It provides a focus for teaching and learning and specifies for both student and assessor what is required from the assessment task.
- f. Criterion-referenced assessment - involves the use of predetermined criteria and standards to support judgments about the quality of a student's performance rather than reference to the achievement of other students and/or a scaled distribution of grades across a cohort it is often defined in contrast to norm-referenced assessment defined below.
- g. Formative assessment - an assessment task is formative when it provides feedback to students on how their work can be improved. Formative assessment aims to help students to monitor and reflect on their learning progress and determine where improvements can be made.
- h. Learning outcomes - are statements about what students are expected to be able to know and do as a result of engaging in the learning experience provided by the subject and course.
- i. Moderation - is the process of reviewing subject assessment tasks and learning materials to achieve appropriateness and constructive alignment with the stated learning outcomes of the subject or course. It is

also the process of reviewing and checking the marking and grading of individual assessors to achieve consistency in judgement about the application of subject learning outcomes, performance standards and marking criteria. At the University, moderation has three phases: pre-delivery moderation; moderation during delivery; and post-delivery moderation.

- j. Norm-referenced assessment - means awarding marks and grades by reference to the performance of other students in the cohort, according to a prescribed distribution of grades. Assessment at the University is not norm-referenced.
- k. Reasonable adjustment - refers to a measure or action taken to assist a student with a disability to participate in studies on the same basis as other students who do not have a disability. An adjustment is reasonable if it does this, while taking into account the student's barriers to study and balances the interests of all parties affected, including those of the student with the disability, the education provider, staff and other students. ([Disability Standards for Education 2005.](#))
- l. Rubric (or assessment rubric) - a rubric is an evaluation tool or set of guidelines used to promote consistent marking of an assessment task. A rubric communicates the application of expectations about learning outcomes, the criteria that will be used to judge their achievement and the standards of performance or quality expectations around a particular criterion for demonstrating achievement of the learning in an assessment task.
- m. Standards - are statements describing the level of the quality of performance in relation to stated criteria in an assessment task. When specific criteria are established in standards-based assessment specified levels and qualities of performance are developed as standards-based assessment specified levels and qualities of performance are developed as standards to demonstrate achievement of those criteria for each assessment task. Marks can be awarded by reference to the standards of performance specified across the various criteria of the assessment task. To achieve this, staff must identify and articulate clearly the different levels of performance that are connected to the grade and communicate those standards to students and other staff.
- n. Summative assessment - assessment is summative when it forms part of the final grade in a subject. The student's work is assessed in terms of pre-determined standards so that it can be classified in terms of levels of achievement (grades).

Section 3 - Policy

Part A - The Purposes of Assessment and Charles Sturt University (the University)

(13) The purposes of assessment are to:

- a. ensure that students know what is expected of them in order to learn and excel in their studies;
- b. guide, encourage, evaluate and assign grades to student learning, fairly and reliably, by ensuring that assessment tasks are aligned with the stated learning outcomes which in turn reflect course and subject learning outcomes;
- c. discover areas of strength and weakness in a student's knowledge and to provide positive and informative feedback designed to help them improve their future performance;
- d. encourage students to focus their efforts on developing appropriate knowledge, understandings and skills;
- e. prepare students for life-long self-assessment and the professional judgment of others;
- f. identify students who have achieved excellence, for example in determining winners of scholarships, and prizes;
- g. measure and certify performance at the end of a course against established criteria and standards so that the level of competency is communicated externally, including to employers and accrediting bodies;
- h. ensure that the University's courses comply with the [Australian Qualifications Framework \(AQF\)](#), and

assessment practices are consistent with the level of attainment required before a qualification is granted by the University.

Part B - Principles of Assessment

(14) This Policy is founded on the following principles:

- a. assessment at the University is criterion-referenced and standards-based, where a student's work is assessed against stated criteria that reflect the expected learning outcomes of the course and subject;
- b. the level of difficulty /complexity of the assessment tasks will align with, and be consistent with, the AQF requirements for the qualification level of that course;
- c. all assessment tasks and practices will be developed from a whole-of-course perspective using assessment mapping so that all assessments are aligned with the approved course standards;
- d. assessment will be sequenced and scaffolded to enable students to build progressively their capabilities and skills;
- e. assessment requirements in subjects, including the weighting of assessment tasks and the criteria against which tasks are assessed and marked, and the standard required to achieve each grade level against each criteria will be made clear to students and communicated to them in the [Subject Outline](#), before the subject commences. Assessment criteria and standards may be communicated to students in the form of an assessment rubric;
- f. in the same subject offered across different cohorts, courses, modes and sessions, assessment tasks will be equivalent, and assessment processes will be fair, and consistently applied, for all students;
- g. students will be encouraged to engage actively in their own education, so that they progressively manage their learning and develop as active partners in the learning process;
- h. in relation to students with disabilities, reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure fair and equitable practice in accordance with policy and legislation, for example the University's [Disability and Work or Study Adjustment Policy](#) and the Federal [Disability Standards for Education \(2005\)](#);
- i. assessment will be conducted within the supportive framework and context of academic integrity at the University that aims to minimise the occurrence of academic dishonesty and misconduct;
- j. the responsibilities of both staff and students in regard to assessment tasks, processes and reporting should be stated clearly and unambiguously in course documentation;
- k. wherever possible, especially in first year undergraduate subjects, students will be required, early in the teaching period, to complete an item of assessment with low weighting, the purpose of which is to scaffold learning and provide feedback to students;
- l. each course will include an identified early assessment task suitable to identify students in need of additional English language and numeracy proficiency support, as specified in the [English Language Literacy and Numeracy Policy](#);
- m. students will receive constructive, adequate and timely feedback on their performances in assessment tasks;
- n. assessment will be complemented by appropriate and approved moderation processes, as outlined in the [Moderation Policy](#);
- o. assessment tasks and marking will allow students to clearly demonstrate their level of capability and achievement where differentiation between the performances of students may be required; and
- p. summative assessment marks cannot be awarded purely for attendance in an online or face-to-face class.

Part C - Students' Responsibilities

(15) Students are responsible for their own learning and for reaching appropriate standards in their studies. Students must ensure that reasonable measures are taken to satisfy assessment requirements. These include:

- a. ensuring that they have the necessary assumed knowledge, skills and experiences for enrolment in the subject;
- b. ensuring that they understand what is expected of them for each subject of enrolment (by reading carefully the online subject outline);
- c. ensuring that they understand and comply with the assessment requirements, including the timing of examinations and other assessment tasks, as well as the mode and location of examinations and the methods for submitting assignments and other assessment tasks;
- d. completing all assigned activities, as well as preparing for those activities;
- e. becoming familiar, and complying, with the University's academic policies regarding [academic integrity](#) and [misconduct](#);
- f. completing and submitting assigned tasks by the due date and in the required manner;
- g. keeping a copy of submitted assignments, where appropriate;
- h. taking the time to read and learn from all feedback provided; and
- i. obtaining assistance, including but not limited to that provided by academic and general support services, as soon as it becomes clear that assistance is necessary.

Part D - Staff Responsibilities

(16) Staff have the following pre-assessment responsibilities for every subject offered by the University:

- a. developing assessment items in subject and course teams, to ensure that assessment tasks are moderated in accordance with the [Moderation Policy](#) before they are adopted for use;
- b. establishing valid criteria and standards of performance that are consistent with the assessment task, aligned with the stated learning outcomes and experiences as specified in the subject outline and compliant with pre-delivery moderation processes;
- c. situating assessment regimes for a subject within the assessment map for the course;
- d. ensuring that, once set and communicated to students, assessment tasks are not altered, unless approved by the Head of School;
- e. communicating to students the assessment criteria and performance standards in the subject outline no less than two weeks before the subject offering commences. Students must be informed about: the expectations and requirements of assessment tasks; the marking criteria and standards for each assessment task, including the levels of performance required to achieve each passing grade in each task; and, the submission dates and presentation requirements of each task;
- f. ensuring that assessment tasks enable all students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills or competencies. This includes assessment situated in field trips, clinical or workplace learning, research reports and theses and other course or subject requirements;
- g. when developing assessment tasks and subject requirements, ensuring that consideration is given to the diverse backgrounds of students, including those who identify as Indigenous, low socioeconomic status, first-in-family to attend university, mature age, or who have accessed the course through alternative entry programs such as TAFE; and
- h. ensuring that consideration is given to the provision of reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities.

(17) Staff have the following during-assessment responsibilities:

- a. providing relevant feedback on all items of assessment. In providing feedback to students, staff will:
 - i. ensure that the feedback is timely, informative and supportive;
 - ii. outline what the student did well, what they did not do well and how the work could be improved;
 - iii. ensure that marks are justified against the stated assessment criteria and standards; and
 - iv. refer relevant students to appropriate academic and support services;

- b. ensuring that student achievement in individual subjects is graded in accordance with the [Assessment Policy - Coursework Subjects](#);
- c. ensuring that the University timelines and deadlines for the submission of examination papers are met;
- d. ensuring that Grade Centre is used for recording students' marks. Staff will submit assessment marks in Grade Centre and release marks to students progressively through the teaching session, and submit final grades for processing within the required timeframe;
- e. ensuring that assessment processes and grading are consistent with the Moderation Policy and guidelines and that:
 - i. examination papers and assignments have been checked independently and contain no errors;
 - ii. the allocation of final grades in their subjects has suitable moderation checks that help to eliminate errors.

(18) Staff have the following post-assessment responsibilities:

- a. ensuring that adequate and accurate records, of marks and grades of individual student performances in their subject, are maintained and are accessible by relevant School staff;
- b. reviewing learning and assessment tasks for their effectiveness in the assessment and grading processes;
- c. recommending grades to relevant School committees; and
- d. ensuring they can be contacted to provide feedback to School Assessment Committees and Faculty Assessment Committees, if required.

Part E - The Role of Faculties and Schools and Assessment Committees

(19) The Executive Dean is responsible for applying this Policy.

(20) The Faculty Assessment Committee is responsible for determining the grades of students in each subject and monitoring the moderation of subjects.

(21) Course Directors or equivalent should ensure that a 'whole of course' approach is adopted for assessment tasks, including the alignment of criteria and standards with the [AQF](#) level of the award, the level (year) of study, and the subject and course learning outcomes and learning experiences.

(22) The Executive Dean, or nominee will be responsible for the quality of assessment tasks and processes of courses and subjects taught by the University teaching partners, in consultation with Head of Schools.

(23) The Head of School, or nominee, with the support of Course Directors, will ensure that assessment methods and practices of all staff, including sessional staff, comply with this Policy and the [Moderation Policy](#).

(24) With a view to continual improvement, School and Faculty committees regularly will review and monitor the outcomes of subject assessment and moderation and will facilitate appropriate action plans to address issues of concern, and notify School Boards and Faculty Boards of any potential academic risk identified in this process.

(25) For the responsibilities of relevant staff refer to the [Delegations and Authorisations Policy](#), Schedule 9 - Academic and Course Delegations.

(26) In extraordinary circumstances, the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) or nominee, in consultation with the relevant Executive Dean and with appropriate disciplinary input, may determine the grades of individual students or of a cohort of students, and these grades will be reported to Academic Senate, along with the reasons for the determinations.

(27) The Executive Dean (or nominee) will provide a summary report to Academic Senate (or an appropriate sub-committee of Academic Senate) in a format to be determined by Academic Senate.

Part F - The Role of the Academic Senate

(28) Academic Senate is responsible for:

- a. approving and amending this Policy; and
- b. with the assistance of the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), monitoring the implementation and regular reporting on the outcomes of this Policy.

Section 4 - Procedures

(29) Nil.

Section 5 - Guidelines

(30) Nil.

Status and Details

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