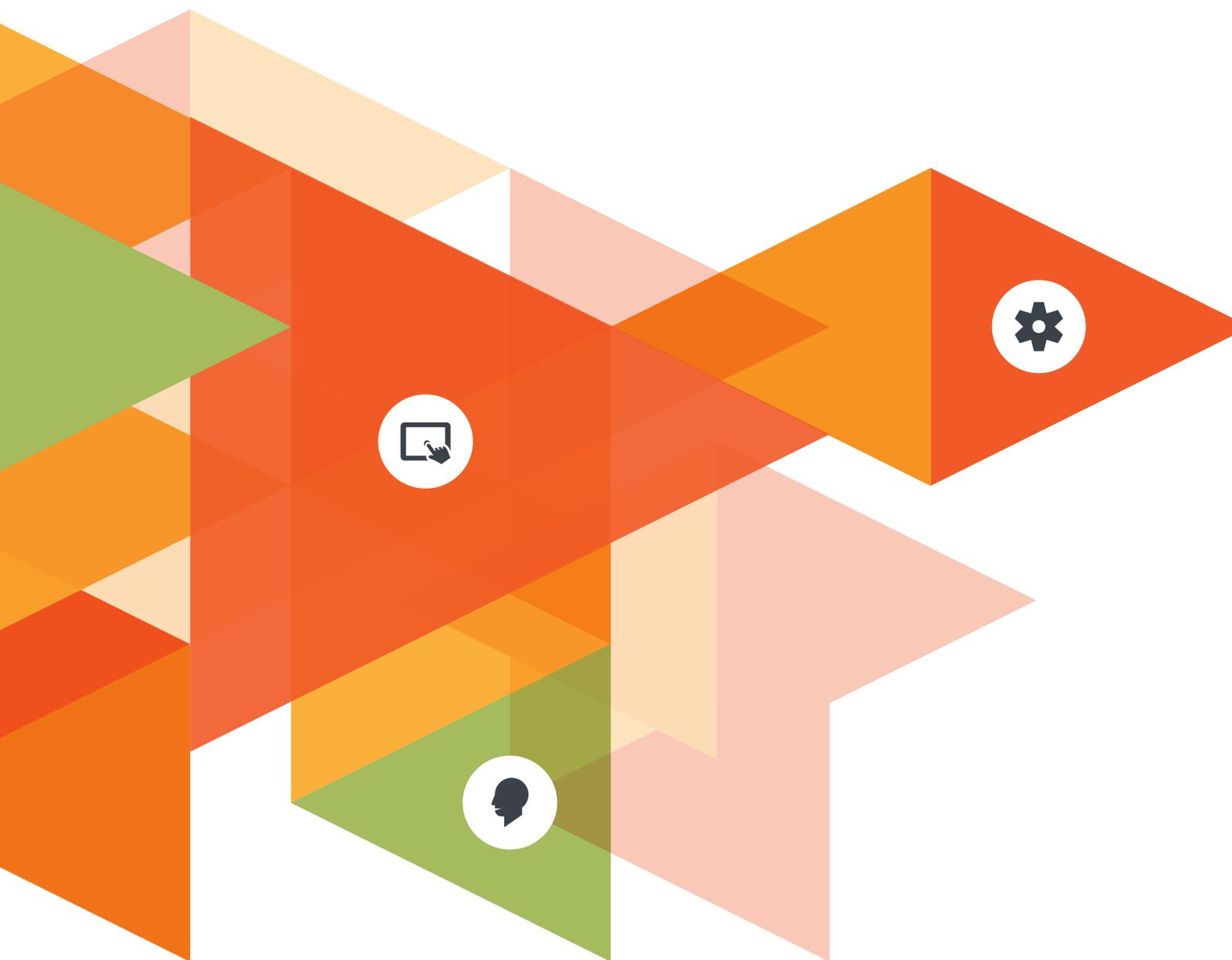# LEADING COURSES

Answers for Deakin staff who offer students
a brilliant education where they are
and where they want to go

CHAPTER 5: ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

First edition, June 2017

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CHAPTER 5: ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

This chapter explains:
- **how to design assessment to support effective learning and assure achievement**
- **policy requirements that affect assessment design**
- **how to provide effective feedback that assists learning**
- **how to ensure that consistent standards are applied in assessing student work**
- **what you need to know about managing assessment and finalising results.**

ASSESSMENT AT DEAKIN

Assessment is at the centre of teaching and learning at Deakin. What principles must I apply in its design and delivery?

Deakin recognises that well-designed assessment is central to good teaching and learning. It is also critical to assuring that our students have achieved learning outcomes at the appropriate level. All course learning outcomes must be assessed and evidenced by the end of the course.

The principles underpinning assessment at Deakin are set out in the Deakin Curriculum Framework.

Assessment at Deakin:
- is fair, equitable and inclusive
- places assessment for learning at the centre of unit and course design
- prompts diagnostic, timely, and meaningful formative feedback, and summative judgments about performance against clearly articulated criteria and standards
- is reliable and valid
- simulates the challenges students will encounter in their future professional, personal and civic lives
- ensures academic and (where relevant) research integrity and elicits inclusive and trustworthy evidence of student achievement
- ensures students are inducted into assessment practices and cultures
- includes self-assessment and peer assessment where appropriate
- is manageable and sustainable for staff and students
- inculcates in students the lifelong practice of creating and curating evidence of their achievements and professional readiness.

EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT DESIGN

How do I design authentic assessments that support effective learning and elicit good evidence that students have achieved course learning outcomes?

Assessment should be designed to:
1. progressively build students' knowledge and skills and encourage effective approaches to learning
2. protect academic standards by assuring achievement of learning outcomes at the appropriate level.
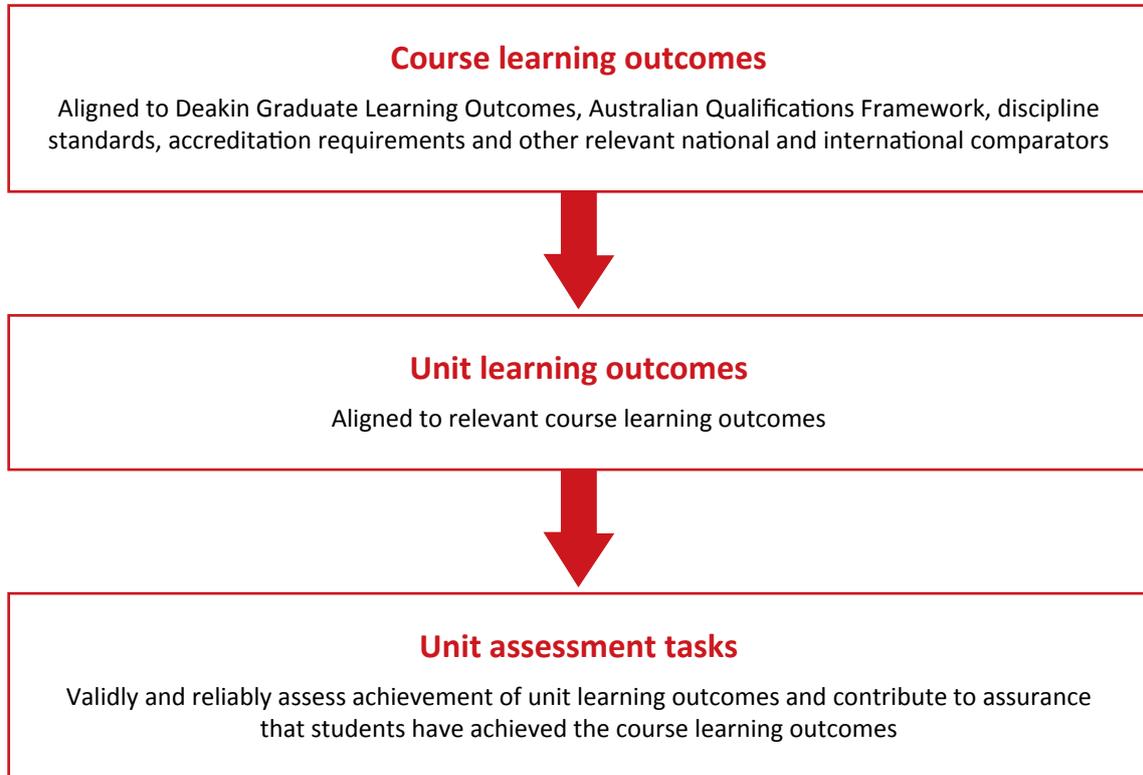
This is done through a balance of:
- formative assessment that provides feedback on student learning
- summative assessment that measures the level of a student's success in achieving learning outcomes and contributes to the student's final grade/mark.

The same assessment task can be both formative and summative.

Aligning learning outcomes and assessment

Assessment design is driven by the learning outcomes for the course and unit. A course-level view should be adopted to ensure that assessment is balanced and inclusive, supports progressive learning and assures student achievement at the appropriate level.

The achievement of course learning outcomes is usually assured through assessment in units with aligned unit learning outcomes. Assessment tasks in turn should be aligned to the unit learning outcomes. This alignment enables us to demonstrate achievement of expected learning at the appropriate standard.

Course learning outcomes

Aligned to Deakin Graduate Learning Outcomes, Australian Qualifications Framework, discipline standards, accreditation requirements and other relevant national and international comparators

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Unit learning outcomes

Aligned to relevant course learning outcomes

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Unit assessment tasks

Validly and reliably assess achievement of unit learning outcomes and contribute to assurance that students have achieved the course learning outcomes

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Alignment is documented in course proposals using approved templates.

A unit typically contributes to assurance of the achievement of several course learning outcomes, although capstone units may involve the holistic assessment of the full suite of course learning outcomes.

Appropriate assessment tasks

A variety of types of assessment task can be used as appropriate through a course to meet the objectives of assessment, the needs of our diverse student body and the requirements of external accreditation bodies.

When choosing and designing assessment tasks, use the following criteria as a guide (Boud 1998):

- Are the tasks authentic and set in a realistic context?
- Are worthwhile activities included in their own right?
- Do they permit a holistic rather than a fragmented approach?
- Do they prompt student self-assessment?
- Can students tailor them to their own needs and interests?
- Are they likely to be interpreted by students in a way that is fundamentally different to that of the designer?
- Do they make assumptions about the subject matter or the learner which are irrelevant to the task and which are perceived differently by different groups of students (e.g. use of unnecessarily gender-specific examples, assumptions about characteristics)?

Source: Boud, D. (1998, November). Assessment and learning– unlearning bad habits of assessment. *Presentation to the Effective Assessment at University Conference*, University of Queensland. Used with permission of the author. Retrieved from http://damianeducationresearchlinks.wikispaces.com/file/view/unlearningassessment_Boud.pdf.

The use of **authentic assessment** that simulates the challenges that students will encounter in their future professional, personal and civic lives is a key principle that should inform assessment design at Deakin. Authentic tasks can be more stimulating and motivating than traditional abstract assessment tasks and enable students to practise and develop skills that will equip them for success beyond the educational environment.

Authentic tasks may take place in an external setting but can also be included as part of normal course activity by, for example, asking students to identify and solve a problem and/or present information in a real setting (see Authentic activities on the Assessment Futures website).

Examples of authentic formats for presenting information

- Business plan
- Tender for a contract
- Report for a community group
- Pitch or proposal
- Product for a client
- Report to a manager
- Blog post

- YouTube clip
- Press release
- Book review
- Film trailer
- Debate
- Research ethics proposal

Want to know more?

For further information about authentic assessment, check the Deakin Learning Futures module Curriculum Development for Unit Chairs, Authentic Assessments.

When choosing assessment tasks, you should also consider **strategies for minimising opportunities for student cheating**. These are discussed in Chapter 6.

Assessment task checklist

When you are choosing and designing a new assessment task ask yourself these questions:

- How authentic is the task?
- How validly does it assess relevant learning outcomes?
- Are the assessment instructions as clear as possible?
- Does the assessment rubric support students to address the task?
- Do learning activities prepare students for the task?
- Is the workload to complete the task reasonable (noting that the total workload for a one credit point unit is typically 150 hours)?
- Does the task take into consideration disabilities that students may have?
- Does the task minimise opportunities for student cheating?
- Does the task require new forms of referencing and citation?
- Will students have reasonable access to any resources and/or facilities required to complete the task?
- Will the completion of the task involve ethics clearance?
- Does the task meet Deakin's policy requirements?
- Does the task meet the requirements of external accreditation bodies where relevant?

GROUP ASSESSMENT

How can I use group assessment effectively to develop students' skills and assess their achievement?

Group work is a valued method of developing and assuring Deakin graduates' ability to work flexibly and productively in teams. Assessment of this learning outcome usually needs to be assessed directly, that is, in terms of students showing that they can work in teams, rather than indirectly through knowing about working in teams. This can be done through various kinds of group assessment.

When designing group assessment tasks you need to decide:
- whether the group will be allocated one mark for the assessment task or whether the individual efforts of team members will be assessed
- whether the process or the product (or both) of the group task will be assessed.

The decision depends on exactly what form the relevant learning outcome takes.

Before they start, students need to understand the assessment criteria and how evidence of their work needs to be documented.

Assessing the process of a group task

Assessment of the process of a group task enables the development and demonstration of skills relevant to the following Deakin Graduate Learning Outcomes: teamwork, self-management, problem-solving and (at times) global citizenship. The marking rubric must detail the visible attributes of group work behaviours that are being assessed.

Approaches to assessing the process of group work can include:

Evaluation work log	Students record and evaluate their own and others' contributions to the task. This requires a strong framework, and students should be provided with specific questions.
Definition of roles	Roles are specified for individual students within the group. Part of the task could involve students defining the roles and responsibilities of group members.
Self-evaluation	Students provide a structured self-assessment of the process of group work that contributes to the assessment of the task.

Assessing the product of a group task

Groups can be asked to produce a range of outputs, including reports, posters, webpages or other forms of media, models or artefacts.

Technologies are available that can assist in assessing the products of group work. For example, MediaWiki allows a number of students to create and edit a webpage. Groups of students can collaborate on creating an assessment product (and the assessor as the wiki administrator can identify individual students' contributions if desired).

When assessing a product it needs to be clear how the judgement of the product enables inferences to be made about the learning outcomes specifically related to group work.

Assessing individual students' contributions can also be achieved by using a jigsaw method of task allocation. Each group member is allocated a section of the whole assessment task. The successful completion of the task relies on collaboration between team members.

Want to know more?
The Health Innovative Learning and Teaching Network has some excellent resources.

Curriculum Development for Unit Chairs—self-enrol via the 'More' tab in CloudDeakin.

POLICY REQUIREMENTS RELEVANT TO ASSESSMENT DESIGN

What minimum policy requirements should I be aware of when designing assessment?

Assessment design should take into account Deakin's policy requirements that provide a baseline for implementing our assessment principles. These requirements are set out in the Assessment (Higher Education Courses) Procedure and are summarised below.

Number of summative assessment tasks	Every unit has at least two summative assessment tasks that occur during the study period.
Maximum weighting of summative assessment tasks	With the exception of theses portfolios and units worth two or more credit points, the maximum weighting of any assessment task, including examinations, is 60% of the mark for the unit.
	The maximum weighting of the collective component of a group assessment is 50% of the mark for the unit.
	The total maximum weighting of any unsupervised tests that are administered online and automatically computer marked is 20% of the mark for the unit (see below for administration standards).
Repeat of assessment tasks	Assessment tasks, including examination papers, cannot be repeated in subsequent offerings of a unit in a way that compromises academic integrity.
Choice of alternative questions or topics	When an assessment task allows students to choose from alternative questions or topics, the standard and degree of difficulty of the options must be the same as far as is reasonably practicable.
Hurdle requirements	A hurdle requirement is a condition that must be met (other than the overall mark) for a student to pass a unit. It must be clearly linked to course learning outcomes and standards.
Examinations (centrally organised)	Examinations are between 1½ and 2 hours in duration unless professional accreditation requirements specify otherwise.
	Two papers are prepared for use during the examination period; one is randomly allocated for use in Australia and the other for use in other time zones.
	Each different examination is at least 75% different from each of the other examinations set in a study period.
Online tests	Online unsupervised tests which are automatically computer marked are conducted in accordance with Standards set out in Schedule C. The standards cover size of question pool, time limits for completion, period of availability, release of answers. Tests provided by publishing companies cannot be used unless granted an exemption by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education.

Alternative assessment arrangements for students with a disability or health condition

Alternative assessment arrangements may be provided for students with a disability or health condition (see cl 40 of the Assessment (Higher Education Courses) Procedure).

The Disability Resource Centres liaise with the associate dean teaching and learning to prepare a learning access plan (LAP) for the student and to ensure that the assessment is equivalent in academic standard to assessment provided for other students. The Division of Student Administration is also consulted where the LAP involves a change to examination arrangements, including extra time, changes to the physical environment or alternative examination materials.

FEEDBACK ON ASSESSMENT

How can I provide effective feedback that assists student learning and engagement?

Clear and meaningful feedback is a critical part of effective teaching, learning and assessment practice. Feedback should be clearly linked to the assessment criteria and aim to:

- assist learning
- reward achievement
- provide encouragement
- explain results
- enable students to improve their understanding and performance.

Individual and group feedback should be provided to students in multiple formats, including audio/video feedback. Mechanisms for synchronous feedback and communication between teachers and students in the online learning environment should be provided.

Feedback on summative assessment

Summative assessment provides an important opportunity to offer constructive information to support student learning. The challenge is to deliver it so that it will be heard and acted upon when students are focussed on an accompanying mark or grade.

Effective summative feedback is:

Timely	Students should receive feedback on assessment tasks in time to benefit them in preparing for the next assessment task, normally within 15 working days of the original due date. **This is a policy requirement**.
Specific and actionable	Provide students with specific feedback that explains how they could do better next time.
	Focus on priority areas for improvement rather than commenting on every small matter. Too much feedback can distract students from the feedback they need most.
	Direct attention to resources that may assist students improve future work, e.g. models or exemplars.
Positive and respectful	Tell the student specifically what they did well and not so well. Keep your tone sympathetic. Avoid using words such as 'weak' or 'poor' that might close down communication.
	Express feedback in a style that makes it clear that you believe that the student can improve.
	Focus comments on the text rather than the student, particularly where comments are critical.
Structured	Marking rubrics, with explicit criteria and descriptions of expected performance at each grade level, are a useful tool for providing structured feedback (see below).

You can encourage students to engage with and learn from feedback by, for example, asking them to:

- indicate when submitting their work on which aspects they would particularly like comments respond selectively to comments
- indicate what feedback they found useful
- develop a short action plan in response to feedback
- explain in their next assignment how they incorporated the feedback.

Keep in mind that the provision of helpful information during a unit while students are still engaged with the subject has a greater impact on their learning that at the end.

Students can request feedback from the unit chair on their performance in an examination within four weeks of the examination.

Formative feedback

Formative feedback on student activities where no mark is involved is also an important part of effective teaching and learning practice. This includes:
- responding to questions in class
- commenting on work in class
- commenting on discussion boards for group work
- joining in student group discussions
- guiding self and peer review using assessment rubrics.

Want to know more?
- The CloudDeakin resource Curriculum Development for Unit Chairs has a practical guide to formative assessment practices under the topic *Feedback*. Self-enrol via the 'More' tab in CloudDeakin.
- The Health Innovative Learning and Teaching Network has an excellent resource about formative assessment.
- Vanderbilt University's Center for Teaching has many examples of useful face-to-face and online formative assessment activities.
- This Johns Hopkins University Innovative Instructor blog post about formative feedback is interesting.

MARKING AND MODERATION

How do I ensure that consistent standards are applied in assessing student work?

Deakin uses criterion-referenced assessment strategies. Students' performance on an assessment task is assessed by a qualified marker or group of markers against pre-determined standards and criteria, not against the performance of other students.

Assessment usually results in a mark or grade that represents the level of achievement for each student. Marks or grades are linked to the learning outcomes being assessed by a marking rubric which describes criteria (what is being assessed) and standards (level of achievement). Deakin's grading schema is set out in Schedule A to the Assessment (Higher Education Courses) Procedure.

Deakin's grading schema

Grade	Percentage marks for unit/other criteria
High distinction	80% or over
Distinction	70–79%
Credit	60–69%
Pass[1]	50–59%
Fail	Below 50%
Ungraded Pass	When pass or fail are the only possible outcomes

[1] A Pass Conceded grade may also be awarded in limited circumstances prescribed by the Assessment (Higher Education Courses) Procedure.

A student may request the unit chair to check that their mark for an individual assessment task is correct or to provide additional feedback on their performance. Students may also apply in writing to the unit chair to have work re-marked where they can demonstrate that it was not initially marked in accordance with the marking criteria.

Marking rubrics

The assessment panel develops a marking rubric for each assessable task where marking involves the exercise of academic judgement.

Marking rubrics make explicit the criteria against which students' work will be assessed and describe the expected performance at each grade level. Marking criteria should directly reflect the learning outcomes developed in the unit. They are important in guiding students through the task and improving comparability of marking. They also provide a useful teaching tool that can be used for peer and self-assessment and for providing constructive feedback.

Sample criterion and descriptors for an essay presenting an argued position

Criteria	High distinction	Distinction	Credit	Pass	Fail
Degree to which ideas are developed and evaluated	Clearly-stated, big picture position is elaborated and supported both in additional argument and reference to evidence, in detail, over the course of the essay. Contains systematic, reasoned explanations for the critical, evaluative points made	Ideas support big picture, with evidence, over the course of the essay. Includes evaluative points about strengths and weaknesses of evidence/content in the essay	Evidence of development of central ideas, with some, but inconsistent evaluative explanations	Basic ideas presented; not all ideas relevant or supported.	Inadequate, oversimplified exploration of ideas, lack of development

Descriptors should be as explicit as possible to make it clear to students and markers what performance for each criterion looks like at each performance level. Avoid using general words that may be interpreted differently by different people, e.g. inadequate, accurate, coherent, creative, quality, strong.

Want to know more?
For information on how to write and use marking rubrics effectively check the following:
- Deakin Learning Futures CloudDeakin resource—Curriculum Development for Unit Chairs, Writing rubrics for effective feedback. Self-enrol via the 'More' tab in CloudDeakin
- Using Assessment Rubrics (The University of New South Wales)
- Using Rubrics (Cornell University, Center for Teaching Excellence)
- Rubric gallery (Rcampus)
- Guidelines for Good Assessment Practice (University of Tasmania)

Comparability of assessment

Where assessment is marked by more than one person, the marks must be moderated to ensure that standards are consistent and there is no marker bias. Approved methods for ensuring that marks or grades are comparable are set out in Schedule B to the Assessment (Higher Education Courses) Procedure. A summary is provided below but you should check the Schedule for the detailed requirements.

Method A: Objective test questions	Objective test questions have answers that are unique and unequivocal or have a limited range of possible answers (e.g. multiple choice, calculations, single word or simple phrase answers). Comparability of assessment can be assumed even with multiple markers, as long as they are correctly instructed.
Method B: Single marker assessment with marking guide or rubric	A single marker marks the work of all students (or a component of it) using a marking guide or rubric. From time-to-time the marker reassesses work already marked to ensure that the standard is consistent. Where the marker is not a member of the assessment panel or is new to it, a sample is re-marked across grade levels to confirm the standard. The unit chair and marker may first mark a sample of work and agree on assessment standards before marking commences.
Method C: Second marking	Where there is a group of markers, the unit chair (or qualified nominee) second marks a sample of work marked by each marker across grade levels. All markers may mark a sample of work and agree on assessment standards before marking starts.
Method D: Blind double marking	This method can be used, for example, in project marking. Two markers independently mark the work of each student. Marks are averaged where they are within 10 percentage points of each other. Where they differ by more than this, a third marker examines the work and the mark is determined as set out in the Schedule.
Method E: Panel marking	This involves independent assessment by two or more markers and may be used, for example, for oral presentations, poster presentations, performances and other transient assessment work. Where the panel is not the same for all students, where possible one member of the panel chairs all panels. Records must be kept to verify the independent assessment of each panel member.

When marking it is important to ensure the scale being used is not more fine grained that can be justified by the task set as it may generate indefensible outcomes. For example, it is unlikely that typical essays can be reliably marked to greater than 5 per cent accuracy.

MANAGING ASSESSMENT AND FINALISING RESULTS

What do I need to know about managing assessment and fnalising results?

This section provides a quick reference to the requirements for managing assessment and finalising results. For more detail, you should check:
- the requirements in the Assessment (Higher Education Courses) Procedure; and
- your faculty's unit chair guide, which outlines the detailed processes that you should follow.

Assessment Panels

Assessment panels are appointed by faculty boards for each unit on the advice of schools to:
- review and approve assessment design and associated rubrics
- approve examination papers
- consider achievement of students undertaking the unit.

They comprise at least two continuing or fixed-term (at least three years) academic staff members, including the unit chair who chairs the panel.

Assessment panels should actively engage in the assessment of the unit by ensuring that students are provided with assessment that matches the unit level and challenges students appropriately. Members of the panel should also be involved in assuring that appropriate standards are set, communicated to students and assessed.

See Assessment (Higher Education Courses) Procedure, cl 10-11.

Submission of assignments

For most units, students submit assessment tasks electronically into a designated folder on the unit site. Work may then be checked by Turnitin for matches to text available on the web (see Chapter 6).

Students sometimes experience difficulties that prevent them from submitting an assignment by the due date. In these circumstances, unit chairs can provide an extension for up to two weeks or may arrange for the student to undertake a different assessment task. Extensions will normally only be approved when students apply before the due date and supply appropriate supporting documentation. Evidence of the work completed so far may also be requested. Where rescheduling is impractical or more than two weeks' extension is requested, the unit chair may advise the student to apply for special consideration (see below).

Where an assessment task is **submitted after the due date without an approved extension** the following **penalties** will apply:
- 5 per cent will be deducted from available marks for each day up to five days
- where work is submitted more than five days after the due date, the task will not be marked and the student will receive 0 per cent for the task.

'Day' means working day for paper submission and a calendar day for electronic submission.

The unit chair may refuse to accept a late submission where it is unreasonable or impracticable to assess the task after the due date.

See Assessment (Higher Education Courses) Procedure, cl 41-47.

Special consideration

Where circumstances outside their control prevent a student from undertaking or completing an assessment task or end-of-unit examination at the scheduled time, the student may apply for special consideration. Grounds for special consideration are:
- acute medical condition that prevented student from attempting the task
- compassionate reasons (e.g. recent death of close family member, family breakdown, service obligations)
- hardship/trauma (such as severe disruption to domestic arrangements or impact of crime).

Circumstances within a student's control (such as misreading timetables, exam stress, holidays or family occasions) and minor ailments (such as colds, sleeplessness or gastric upsets) are not grounds for special consideration. Religious or faith-based issues are also not in themselves grounds.

The faculty's academic progress committee assesses the application in consultation with the unit chair. If granted, special consideration provides an opportunity for a student to take additional time to complete an assessment task, to complete a special examination or to compete another special assessment task administered by the faculty.

See Assessment (Higher Education Courses) Procedure, cl 38-39.

Finalising results

The Assessment (Higher Education Courses) Procedure includes requirements relating to the finalisation of results.

The unit chair, on advice of the assessment panel, recommends a result for each student and submits the results to the Division of Student Administration electronically via the Electronic Submission of Result system.

Before submission, final grades for any student who received a mark between 44–49 per cent must be verified. For each of these students, all assessment tasks that receive a mark of 49 per cent or less must be marked by a second marker and the mark verified (cl 38-39).

The Division of Student Administration generates reports compiling data on the results for each unit which are reviewed by the faculty committee dealing with assessment and academic progress matters. The committee considers result distributions, any adjustments made by the assessment panel and any other relevant information. Where a report shows that marking criteria have not been appropriately set or applied, the committee may adjust the results before approving them for release (cl 68).

After results are submitted, it is sometimes necessary to amend a result due to, for example, an identified error, an outstanding result or a review of results. Amendments are submitted to the Division of Student Administration on an approved Amendment of Results form.

Review of results

Students may apply for an academic review of a result in a unit, including assessment in any part of the unit (cl 77-85). Applications must be within five working days from the date of official notification of results or the date on which the results for that student were finalised and released.

Applications will normally only be approved where the student provides evidence that their work was not marked according to the marking criteria or there was a misapplication of other relevant policies or procedures.