

# Assessment Policy

## Section 1 - Background and Purpose

(1) Assessment at La Trobe University is central to subject and program design, to promote, reinforce and reward student learning. There should be a systematic approach that builds and enhances graduate capabilities through tasks that are diverse, complementary and embedded strategically throughout a program of study, to enable students to demonstrate coherent integrated learning.

(2) The University's approach to assessment in all subjects is criterion-referenced, and includes both summative and formative assessment. Assessment should be consequential, equitable, objective and auditable.

(3) This Policy and Procedure articulates the University's approach to assessment of student work as a central component of curriculum design.

## Section 2 - Scope

(4) Applies to:

- a. All campuses
- b. All coursework subjects
- c. All modes of study
- d. All staff assessing student work in subjects
- e. All students completing assessment tasks

### Background

(5) Assessment at La Trobe University is regarded as central to subject and course design, to promote, reinforce and reward student learning. There should be a systematic approach that builds and enhances the La Trobe Essentials and graduate capabilities through tasks that are diverse, complementary and embedded strategically throughout a program of study, to enable students to demonstrate coherent and integrated learning. Assessment practices also need to afford evidence that students' accomplishments can be measured against external reference points.

(6) The University recognizes that students are significant partners in their education, engaging fully and actively in assessment to demonstrate their capabilities and maintain the standards of our degrees.

## Section 3 - Policy Statement

(7) There must be demonstrable alignment between intended learning outcomes and assessment tasks. Assessment of student work must be criterion-referenced, based on defined standards against assessment criteria. Norm-referencing is not practiced for assessment of students at La Trobe University.

(8) Assessment tasks should be significant learning experiences integrated into the curriculum. They are not solely intended to enable judgements to be made about what has been learned. Tasks should form an interlinked,

constructive, organised and coherent sequence with a combination of formative and summative assessment tasks, to engage students in productive learning.

(9) Students are to be advised of the assessment regime in advance. Handbook entries about assessment must include (at a minimum) proportional allocation and types of assessment.

(10) Changes to the handbook entry may be made up to two weeks prior to the commencement of the teaching period. All changes to handbook entries must be published in the Subject Learning Guide and reflected in the Course Information Management System and in the Learning Management System.

(11) Each subject should normally be assessed with at least 2 and no more than 3 different major assessment tasks, where a major task represents 20% or more of the final grade.

(12) No individual assessment item should be worth more than 70% of the final grade in non-thesis subjects.

(13) When teamwork is an explicit learning outcome major group assessment tasks may be used and students should be adequately prepared to work in a team.

(14) It is recommended that a small formative assessment item be assigned in the first three weeks of the teaching period

## **Feedback**

(15) Feedback, including marks or grades, on all assessment tasks other than final examinations or honours theses should normally be provided within three (3) weeks of the submission date. The nature of feedback should be consequential, bearing in mind how it will inform future subject or course requirements. It should provide specific information, against the relevant assessment criteria, about what has been done well, what has not and how work could be improved.

## **Adjustment of Marks**

(16) In those circumstances where marks adjustment of the entire cohort is routinely used, such as may be required by professional bodies, the mechanism for doing so must be agreed by the School or College and published to students. Other than routine marks adjustment, in exceptional and unforeseen circumstances there may be a need to adjust marks. In these cases the methods used must be transparent and equitable and available on request to students.

## **Hurdle Requirements**

(17) Hurdle requirements are conditions that apply for a student to be eligible to receive a passing grade in a subject, such as the requirement to complete a specific assessment task or meaningfully attempt all assessment items. Such conditions require a clear academic rationale based on pedagogical needs, or discipline practices, or external requirements such as mandatory occupational health and safety training, or professional accreditation requirements where there is a clear written guideline from the accrediting body.

(18) The rationale and conditions for hurdle requirements must be consistent with the principles of the assessment policy and be clearly specified in the Subject Learning Guide.

(19) Attendance is not to be used as a hurdle requirement, other than where it is clearly and explicitly mandated by professional accreditation bodies (as in the case of clinical or teaching placements) or to meet external requirements such as mandatory occupational health and safety training or to complete an internship.

## **Assessing Participation**

(20) Assessment of participation may be used to develop in students the orientation and ability to engage in, and contribute to, group learning processes such as those involved in tutorials, seminars, laboratories and workshops. There may be differences in the extent to which students are prepared to engage publicly in certain activities. This does not mean that such activities should not be required if they are relevant to the achievement of the learning objectives. However, Subject Coordinators must be sensitive to differences such as those associated with culture and gender.

(21) Students must be provided clear criteria by which their participation in those activities will be judged. The assessment of participation needs to be evidence-based and may involve elements of peer and self-assessment (such as a written reflection).

(22) Participation cannot constitute a Major Assessment Task in a subject. Participation means more than attendance, and marks should not be awarded simply for students attending scheduled classes.

## **Section 4 - Procedure**

### **Reliability of Assessment**

(23) To ensure consistency in grading, marking schemes or rubrics indicating expected standards for levels of achievement of the assessment criteria should be provided to all markers for all items of assessment.

### **Veracity of assessment**

(24) An assessment task should measure performance against the intended learning outcomes. Grades should be fully aligned with assessment criteria and standards.

### **Choosing Assessment Methods**

(25) Based on the professional judgement of the subject co-ordinator or discipline expert, consideration should be given to:

- a. The appropriateness of the method to assessing intended learning outcomes (pedagogical basis)
- b. Credit points allocated to the subject (See Credit Points and Course Structure Policy)
- c. Staff workload
- d. Use of a range of assessment methods as appropriate to the discipline

### **Formative and Summative Assessment**

(26) A combination of formative and summative assessment tasks should be used.

### **Formative Assessment**

(27) Types of formative assessment may include:

- a. Self-assessment
- b. Peer assessment
- c. Teacher individual feedback
- d. Teacher group feedback

## Information to Students

(28) Handbook entries must show the assessment regime for each subject, including broad information about the assessment types and allocation towards the final result.

(29) Students should be advised in the Subject Learning Guide of the nature, extent and timing for each assessment task. 'Surprise' tests do not form a part of the University's assessment regime.

(30) Students should also be fully informed of assessment criteria, their relationship to intended learning outcomes and the performance expectations or standards on which grading is based.

## Sample Handbook Entries

(31) Example 1:

one 2,000-word major essay	50%
one 1-hour multiple choice exam (1,000-word equivalent)	25%
one 1000-word assignment	25%

(32) Example 2:

one 2-hour final examination	40%
one 45-min mid-semester examination	20%
(33) Laboratory component A (34) (Participation evidenced by pre-prac tests, summaries, oral presentation)	18%
(35) Laboratory component B (36) (Participation evidenced by accuracy of recording and presenting drawings and/or annotation of photographs, tables or graphs)	12%
Group learning exercise	10%

(37) Example 3:

Blogging exercises (2000 words equivalent)	50%
Exegesis (1000 words)	25%
Quizzes (1000 words equivalent)	25%

## Consequentiality of Feedback

(38) Feedback should aim to promote learning, be informative and constructive. It should address intended learning outcomes, identify strengths and weaknesses, give guidance on how to perform better and encourage students to develop strategies to prepare for future subject or course learning requirements.

## Approaches to Feedback

(39) Various forms of feedback may be given, including:

- a. On line discussion
- b. Tutorials

- c. Written individual explanations
- d. Lists of assessment criteria provided to students
- e. Group feedback (eg given verbally to students in a tutorial group)
- f. Voice recordings

(40) Feedback should be effective in its communication to students and its demands on staff time.

### **Feedback Timing**

(41) Except for final examinations, feedback, including marks or grades, should be provided with sufficient time (ie normally within three weeks of submission) to enhance the learning experience and enable students to rectify misconceptions.

### **Students with a Disability**

(42) The University will ensure that students with identified disabilities or needs have appropriate opportunities to demonstrate their achievement of learning outcomes.

(43) Assistance and advice about reasonable adjustments is available from the Equality and Diversity Centre. Options may include additional time in examinations. Any such arrangements should be agreed at the commencement of a subject and provided in writing to the affected students.

### **Integrity and Moderation**

(44) Where there is more than one marker, selected pieces of work from each major assessment task should be moderated to verify the level and consistency of the marks allocated by the markers.

(45) This increases the reliability of the assessment process and promotes consistency, objectivity and a shared understanding of assessment standards.

### **Adjustment of Marks - Routine Cohort Marks Adjustment**

(46) In some disciplines and schools as an accreditation requirement of professional bodies, routine adjustment of marks takes place. If this is the case, information about the nature of the adjustment and the mechanism used in the process must be published in the Subject Learning Guide. In addition, details of the changes made must be included in examination reports prepared at the end of each subject. Routine adjustment of marks should not occur in other circumstances.

### **Adjustment of Marks Exceptional Circumstances - Occasional Marks Adjustment**

(47) Occasionally due to unforeseen circumstances it may be necessary to adjust marks. Any mechanism for scaling or marks adjustment should be determined at School or College level. The mechanism by which this occurs should also be published in the Learning Management System.

(48) Students should be advised in subject learning guides that if marks adjustment were to occur it would be under limited circumstances and directed to the relevant section of the website for more information.

(49) If marks adjustment is used it should be able to be scrutinised by the Board of Examiners and reported in the examination report for the subject.

### **Anonymity**

(50) All examinations should be marked anonymously, except in circumstances where this is not feasible – for example, oral presentations or examinations of practical or clinical skills.

## Group Assessment

(51) When teamwork is an explicit learning outcome major group assessment tasks may be used and students should be adequately prepared to work in a team and assisted in understanding and managing the dynamics of group work.

(52) When group assessment tasks are used in a subject, staff should ensure that students are given clear instructions about what components of the task (if any) are to be prepared individually, and what are group activities.

(53) Normally, no more than 30% of the final mark for any subject would be determined using group assessment.

## Section 5 - Definitions

(54) For the purpose of this Policy and Procedure:

- a. Assessment Criteria: Used to measure the degree to which a student has achieved the intended learning outcomes for the subject.
- b. Consequential feedback: Takes into account the utility to the student, of feedback given, in terms of future subject or course learning experiences.
- c. Constructive alignment: A principle used for devising teaching and learning activities (including assessment tasks) that directly address the intended learning outcomes.
- d. Criterion-referenced assessment: Students work is assessed with reference to written criteria derived from explicit learning outcomes. Each student's grade in a subject is determined by the degree to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes.
- e. Formative assessment: monitoring student progress against intended learning outcomes and providing them with feedback on their progress towards achieving these outcomes.
- f. Marking scheme: an indication of the expected standards for levels of achievement of the assessment criteria
- g. Major assessment task: Any task contributing 20% or more towards the final mark or grade for the subject
- h. Norm-referenced assessment: grades are awarded based on a predetermined distribution. The most common form assumes grades/marks are distributed according to a standard normal distribution curve. Each student's grade in the subject is determined in part by how well other students in the subject do. This is not practiced for student assessment at La Trobe University.
- i. Participation: means individual contribution to class activities and/or discussions.
- j. Standards: The actual levels achieved by the students against the assessment criteria
- k. Summative assessment: making judgement about student achievements against intended learning outcomes and translating that judgement into a grade or an assessment of capability used at the end of a subject.

## Section 6 - Stakeholders

Responsibility for implementation – Course Coordinators; Subject Coordinators; All members of subject teaching teams.

Responsibility for monitoring implementation and compliance – College Pro Vice-Chancellors; Associate Pro Vice-Chancellors (Coursework); Heads of School.

## Status and Details

<b>Status</b>	Historic
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