

PROCEDURE



Ref. to Legislative Frameworks:

HESF 2015:

Standard 1.4.3 / 1.4.4 / 1.5.3 /
3.1.1 / 5.2.1 / 5.2.2 / 6.3.2

Higher Education Student Assessments

Version: 2.1

Procedure Owner:
Academic Board

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Review by: 23/02//2020

Revision History

Current Version	Description of Change	Procedure Developer(s)	Effective Date
2.1	Updated with new Academic and Administrative Grades	Academic Dean	23/2/2018

2.0	<p>Extended the list of related documents to include a number of recently updated policies and procedures</p> <p>Updated the procedure to be in line with the AAPoly Higher Education Assessment Framework published in December 2017 and Academic Board decisions on 19 January 2018</p> <p>Changed the Procedure Developer(s) from Chair, Academic Standard and Quality Committee to Academic Dean and the Higher Education Quality Committee</p> <p>Removed Vocational Education and Training elements from the policy and modified it to exclusively for Higher Education</p>	<p>Academic Dean</p> <p>Higher Education Quality Committee (HQC)</p>	<p>25/01/2018</p>
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PURPOSE

The intent of this procedure is to describe the sequence by which the design and writing of assessments for Higher Education (HE) courses delivered by Academies Australasia Polytechnic (AAPoly) align with AAPoly Higher Education Assessment Framework.

POLICY STATEMENT

AAPoly aims to promote innovative, yet academically sound, assessment practices within the defined course parameters and consistent with the expectations of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and HESF 2015. An assessment has to facilitate the student's attainment of the expected learning outcomes and is valid, reliable, equitable and transparent.

SCOPE

This procedure and its underpinning policy apply to all programs, students and staff members of AAPoly in Melbourne and Sydney:

- All HE programs designed and delivered by AAPoly
- All students enrolled in AAPoly HE programs
- All academic staff teaching HE subjects and/or courses at AAPoly

There are regulatory standards and other policies, procedures and forms relevant to this policy (refer to the last page of this document).

This procedure and the associated policy exclude any assessment that AAPoly conducts on behalf of Federation University.

DEFINITIONS

Summative Assessment	A summative assessment is generally scheduled at the end of a subject, such as a final exam or a major report or project. It is designed to formally measure student achievement against the intended learning outcomes for an entire semester. It can also be used to judge program/course/subject and teaching effectiveness and assurance of learning.
Formative Assessment	Formative assessments are building blocks towards monitoring student learning by providing continuous feedback that can help the student identify, maintain or improve their progress towards the subject or course learning outcomes.
Hurdles	Hurdles are conditions for passing a subject other than or in addition to the overall mark.
Bloom's Taxonomy	It is a classification of the level of learning to be achieved in each subject within the overall curriculum to ensure there is subject and learning progression. Bloom's Taxonomy framework specifies 6 categories with an increasing level of learning progression, i.e. Level 1 – Remembering, Level 2 – Understanding, Level 3 – Applying, Level 4 – Analysing, Level 5 – Evaluating and Level 6 – Creating.
Constructive Alignment & SOLO Taxonomy	Constructive alignment is a design for teaching in which what it is intended students should learn and how they should express their learning is clearly stated before teaching takes place. The SOLO Taxonomy helps to map levels of understanding that can be built into the intended learning outcomes and to create the assessment criteria or rubrics.
Valid	Each assessment is based on clearly articulated criteria that correspond to the expected subject or course learning outcomes, as identified in the constructive alignment.
Reliable	An assessment is aligned consistently with the respective subject or course design and withstands the rigour of moderation and validation across different cohorts and teaching locations.
Equitable	An assessment is fair and impartial, with provision for reasonable adjustments to be made for students with special needs, who are disabled or face unforeseen circumstances.

Transparent Prior to the conduct of assessments, the relevant students are made aware of the requirements, marking criteria and eligibility. Unambiguous review procedures are published, including the responsibilities of staff and students.

PROCEDURE

1. Subject-specific assessment description should be made available to enrolled students before the commencement of the semester and to the relevant academic staff before the start of teaching. Students will be informed about the due dates, including the provision for appeal, at the commencement of the semester. Lecturers should allocate dedicated time during and/or after lectures for students to discuss course expectations and assessment requirements.
2. Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) and Subject Learning Outcomes (SLOs) are essential to the design of assessments in accordance with AAPoly HE Student Assessment Framework.
3. Taking the perspective of a whole-of-course assessment regime, course designers should deter from overusing group work. The use of a three-assessment model, i.e. “one individual, one group and one exam” template, for all the subjects within a course is not good practice.
4. Effective assessment practices include:
 - a. Inducting students into the culture and assessment practices of higher education
 - b. Constructing responsible partnership between students and lecturers in learning and assessment
 - c. Utilising assessments to engage students in learning that will result in achieving the subject and course outcomes
 - d. Using feedback to actively improve learning
 - e. Placing assessments (for learning purposes) at the centre of subject and course design
 - f. Analysing assessments to gain inclusive and trustworthy representation of student achievement
5. Assessment details provided to students must address:
 - a. Specific topics
 - b. Task description
 - c. Intended duration or length, and/or word limits and, if any, specific formatting requirements
 - d. Clear distinction between individual and/or group work
 - e. Weighting, assessment criteria and marking rubric(s)
 - f. Details about what is required to demonstrate attainment of different levels
 - g. Templates, if required
 - h. Timeline for feedback

- i. Information on complaints and/or appeals
6. A subject should have at least two (2) or a maximum of four (4) assessment tasks, incorporating formative or continuous and summative assessments.
7. Assessment design must demonstrate correlation between the subjects with the appropriate levels in Bloom's Taxonomy i.e. Level 1/Year 1 (Entry), Level 2/Year 2 (Intermediate) and Level 3/Year 3 (Advanced) categories.
8. A Final Examination is a time-constrained, verifiable individual assessment task, largely testing recall capabilities. Generally, where there is a final exam, the maximum weighting is 40%. This guideline is to ensure that the learning is progressively assessed throughout the subject. Not every subject has to result in an exam, however where exams are used as an assessment it needs to measure the students' attainment towards the SLOs.
9. Group work:
 - a. Group work assessment should be used purposefully and with an aim to facilitate development of teamwork and leadership skills. A consideration must be given to the weighting allocated for the group work (generally no more than one assessment task) to ensure students are not disadvantaged in the event of unfavourable group dynamic.
 - b. Students must be provided with the avenues to report, influence or change team members, should any such action be required.
 - c. If group work is used, the expectations of the group and its individual members must be made clear. A combination of group and individual contributions is preferred and the marking rubrics should assist students in managing the collaborative undertaking. Group work can be more effective if students do not select their own group. They may prefer to work with friends, but maximising their opportunities to work with students from different backgrounds develop their team work skills more effectively.

10. Considerations in assessment design:

a. Taxonomy of learning

- First year transition – Teaching strategies for the first year transition will address the academic integrity risks as effectively as possible. The success of the first year student learning experience will define the design of assessments. Initial formative pieces will be more achievable to encourage students and build their academic confidence. Subsequent assessments will become increasingly complex as they move through the further stages of their course of study.
- For Year 3 (Advanced Level) subjects, assessment practices which require a higher level of intellectual engagement, critical enquiry and reflection are more effective in achieving course learning outcomes than final examinations.

These subjects may have only two assessments – one formative and one summative project-based learning activity. It is advised to sequence the assessments that have a verifiable presentation in the way that allows students to receive feedback and be able to consider and incorporate changes to the major piece of assessment prior to the due date (minimum one week).

b. Online assessments

Recommendations for conducting assessments in an online environment include measures to minimise opportunities for academic misconduct, such as:

- Providing the exam at one set time only (also applicable for students in other time zones);
- Randomise the question order, and the answer order for some questions
- Present questions one at a time, and do not allow students to move between questions;
- Set a time limit for completion of the exam (that is suited to the level of performance required);
- Allow only a single attempt to be made by each student (stipulate expectations for students to take responsibility for having suitable Internet connectivity etc);
- Do not use the same set of questions each semester offering (change at least 1/3 of questions).

c. Student Workload

When designing assessment tasks, consider the overall workload for students including:

- Credit points, i.e. a subject will normally be 15 credit points and the sum of credit points in a semester taken by a full-time student making normal progress in an undergraduate degree course is 60 (or 4 subjects).
- Time available (per week) students have for assessment preparation, taking into consideration the Contact and Non-contact workload. Contact workload covers teacher-guided activities including lectures, tutorials, seminars, workshops, fieldwork and/or work-integrated learning. No-contact workload is constituted by learner-initiated activities such as self-study, readings, research, assignment preparations, reflective/journal writing, engaging in collaborative group work.
- Time required to complete and submit each assessment task
- The number of assessment tasks a student has in other subjects
- The timing of submission of all the student's assessments in the course.
- Overall workload per student per semester – average 125-150 hours.
- Suggestions for calculating student workload per subject:

Activity	Hours/ week	Hours/ semester 12 weeks
Contact hours (lectures, tutorials, workshops)	3	36
Prescribed reading (printed and electronic)	2	24
Group work/peer interactions	1	12
Assessment preparation		
Small assessment (10-15%)		6
Group/individual assessment (20- 30%)		10
Summative/exams		20
Revision (lecturer's facilitated)		3
Practical/Work-integrated learning*		15
Total		126

* hours in addition to contact hours

d. Hurdles

- A common hurdle is 50% exam marks, i.e. if the student fails to score 50% of the total exam marks (regardless of how small the exam marks might be), they will fail the subject.
- Exam hurdles can be effective if there is concern over the academic integrity of assignments, or if there is a large group assignment for the subject.
- Equity must be considered when setting and applying hurdles.

e. Assessment weighting

- One (1) subject (15 credit points) typically requires 125-140 learning hours per semester, including contact and non-contact hours/workload.
- For AQF 7, the "rule of thumb" is a cumulative (all assessments) workload of 5000-6000 words per subject.
- Examples of assessment type and associated word limits include:

Literature review	1 250 words	30%
Assignment	1 500 words	30-35%
Essay	1 000 words	20-25%
Essay group	1 000 words per member	20-25%
Exam	1 hour = 1 000 words	20-25%
Exam	1 1/2 hours = 1 500 words	30-35%
Exam	2 hours = 2 000 words	40-45%
Group presentation	1 000 per member	20-25%
Oral presentation	15 minutes	20-25%
Poster presentation	1 000 words	20-25%
Multimedia resource	1 750 words	35-40%

Reflective Journal	2 000 - 3 000 words	55-60%
Research project proposal	1 000 words	20-25%
Participation and journal	1 000 words	20-25%

- **Relationship between word limits and weighting of assessments**

Word Limit	Weighting
250 – 300	5%
300-500	10%
500 – 700	15%
750 – 1000	20%
1000-1250	25%
1250 – 1500	30%
1500 – 1800	35%
1750 – 2000	40%
2000-2250	45%
2250-2500	50%
2500-2750	55%
2750-3000	60%
3000-3250	65%
3250-3500	70%
3500-3750	75%
3750-4000	80%
4000-4250	85%
4250-4500	90%
4500-4750	95%
4750-5000	100%

11. Writing (AQF) Standards Descriptors (for assessment rubrics)

a. Writing the Assessment Criteria

The assessment criteria is a vital element in ensuring that assessment is valid and reliable. Effective assessment criteria should measure the SLOs, and should be meaningful to students.

b. Characteristics of Standard Descriptors

- Standards Descriptors inform students of the quality and elements of their work that are required to determine how well they have performed against each SLO. Standards Descriptors also help lecturers determine student grades objectively by providing information about a typical, mid-level achievement within each standard for each SLO. Therefore, Standards Descriptors:
 - Describe evidence in the student's response;
 - Describe the quality of the student's response in terms of the criteria suited to the task;

- Give meaning to the mid-range or typical standards;
 - Use words which are descriptive and comparative NOT just comparative;
 - Contain positive statements about student achievement;
 - Use language that is not a jargon;
 - Use unambiguous language which students understand.
- The most important thing to remember when writing a standard descriptor is that it should clarify for the students the expectations of the assessment, and “what good looks like”. The language discourse, therefore, must be meaningful to students and does not include vague remarks that invite variable interpretations.
 - Once a descriptor for the “Pass” standard has been assembled, the subsequent action is to describe three standards that exceed the “Pass” standard, at different levels. Often, writing the High Distinction (HD) standard is the easiest place to start, as it describes the ideal performance. This descriptor should include similar elements to the “Pass” standard, albeit at a much higher expectation of how well they are done.
 - It is also important to describe the sort of assessment outcome that does not demonstrate satisfactory attainment of the SLO being measured, i.e. the “Fail” standard.
 - There is no single approach to take when writing Standards Descriptors. However, it is important that the rubric is moderated once it is complete, to ensure clarity for students and academic staff alike.
 - Example of a Standards Descriptor:

Criterion	High Distinction	Distinction	Credit	Pass	Fail
Advise a client about the options available to them within the civil justice and dispute resolution landscape	Distinction plus: The process options are comprehensively explained and applied to the client's circumstances to justify the recommendation made. The nuanced advice supports the client to make a fully informed choice between the options presented.	Credit plus: The advice is accurate, appropriate and sufficiently detailed to enable the client to make an informed choice between the options presented.	Pass plus: The process options raised are appropriate to the client's dispute.	Provides advice about more than one dispute resolution process option that both accurately explains the process and applies the client's circumstances to justify the recommendation.	Fails to mention more than one process option or the explanation of the process(es) is inaccurate or the process(es) recommended are unsuited to the client's circumstances

12. Marking of assessments

When assessing students and making judgements about the extent to which their work or performance demonstrates attainment of the SLO, there are a number of things to keep in mind.

a. Determination and assigning grades

When a grade is awarded for a student's performance in an assessment task, the lecturer uses professional judgments to make decisions. These judgments need to be [valid and reliable](#). The lecturer's judgments are underpinned by transparency and fairness by ensuring that students know the assessment criteria (and marking rubric if available) in advance.

b. Grades awarded for units at conclusion of the teaching period

At the conclusion of a trimester/teaching period, academic staff will allocate one of the following grades for a HE coursework subject. Students are expected to achieve minimum 'Pass' per unit to have the mark counted towards an award.

Grade	Meaning	Percentages	GPA Points
HD	High Distinction	80-100	4
D	Distinction	70-79	3
C	Credit	60-69	2
P	Pass	50-59	1
F	Fail	0-49	0
CP	Conceded Pass – awarded by Academic Review Committee		
FR	Final subject Re-assessment – granted by Academic Dean		
NA	Not Assessed – no assessments attempted		
AD	Assessment Deferred – to be finalised within three (3) months		
ALS	Approved Leave from studies. Enrolment to be carried forward, no financial penalty		
W	Withdrawn without Academic Penalty – withdraw before census date		
WF	Withdrawn with Academic Penalty – withdraw after census date. WF is considered a Fail		
CT	Credit Transfer –credit has been given for a subject, based on successful completion of equivalent study within five (5) years		
PRL	Prior Recognition Learning - for professional recognition of knowledge and skills acquired outside accredited training providers		

c. Utilisation of a marking rubric

When marking a task in reference to a rubric of criteria and standards descriptors, lecturers are encouraged to make a holistic judgment about the standard that mostly matches, or is equivalent to, the way the student has demonstrated what they know, understand or are able to do. It is important to note here that students sometimes demonstrate achievement in the form that may not be described within any of the standards. If this occurs, lecturers will need to go back to the criterion and the SLO it seeks to measure, then use their professional judgement to determine the appropriate grade.

d. Prudent use of the Standards Descriptors

After a determination is made that a student has achieved a particular standard (grade) for each criterion, an overall grade for the task has to be determined. No matter which approach is utilised, results must be moderated to ensure validity and reliability of assessment outcomes.

e. Course or subject moderation approach to determining an overall grade

Moderation at AAPoly is an internal quality assurance process designed to provide a reasonable level of assurance that assessment activities are accurate, consistent and fair. The moderation may result in marks being adjusted or confirm that marks awarded are consistent across locations, mode and schedule of study. The internal assessment moderation procedure of AAPoly covers three (3) main stages:

1. **Before the Assessment** (This is a quality assurance process to ensure that the exam questions are clear, fairly addressing the key learning areas, and free from error conducted through a peer review process before the exam questions are approved for printing).
2. **During the Assessment Marking** (This is an internal peer review moderation process to check the accuracy and consistency of exam marking conducted before the results are recorded in the student records)
3. **Post Assessment Moderation** (This is an internal process used to make sure there is no variation between student results of a subject delivered by different lecturers or different locations)

The post-assessment ratification procedure is the last academic quality check before the students' results are released to students. The following post assessment moderation process could be implemented should the variation of student results between two or more locations (or lecturers), is outside the tolerance level of 10%:

- 3.1. Academic Ratification Committee (ARC) will select an independent academic moderator (a discipline expert but not necessarily teaching the subject) to post moderate the results.
- 3.2. A sample (a minimum of five (5) exam papers or 10% of the subject's exam papers) from each cohort is selected randomly; covering a range of grades, and remark the sample exam papers using the same marking guide or rubric used in the initial marking by the lecturer.
- 3.3. If the moderator agrees with the marks in the sample (variation between moderated and original results less than 10%), no change will be made to the students' original marks.
- 3.4. If the moderator marks are outside the variation tolerance, the moderator needs to moderate (adjust) all students marks by:
 - 3.4.1 Multiplying student marks by a certain percentage (up or down) in each location if the moderated marks are consistently above or below the original marks.
 - 3.4.2. Using regression analysis approach, If the moderated marks vary differently from the original marks (some above and some below the original marks), AAQA portfolio holder will perform the moderation.
4. If the moderated new marks did not bring the gap between two (2) student groups below the tolerance level, the ARC will moderate the students marks by a certain percentage to bring the variation (gap) between campuses or lecturers below the tolerance level of 10%.

f. Marking and re-marking of assessment tasks

- Academic staff must apply the stated marking criteria consistently so that students with the same level of achievement in different cohorts and/or different teaching locations receive comparable grades.
- Assessors responsible for marking assessment tasks ensure feedback to students that is timely (15 working days turnaround time from date of receipt of assessment item) and informative (related to the criteria established at the commencement of the semester).
- A student may request that an assessment task be re-marked, via an academic Appeal process, in circumstances where the student presents a strong case arguing that the original marking was unfair or inconsistent with the marking guidelines.
- A request for a re-mark does not guarantee it will be granted. The Academic Dean approves requests for re-marking.

- Only a single re-mark will be permitted, and the result of the re-mark will be recorded as the final mark for that assessment task, irrespective of its position relative to the original mark.

13. Providing feedback to students

Feedback is a fundamental learning and teaching activity that has a significant impact on student learning and achievement. It is an important function of assessment. Ideally, opportunities for feedback should be integrated within the subject's learning activities.

a. Effective, helpful feedback

Students are generally enthusiastic about receiving feedback. Typically, the sort of feedback on performance and students' work that is most effective:

- Identifies and positively reinforces what was done well;
- Makes useful suggestions about specific ways students could improve their work or change their approach for future work;
- Corrects misapprehensions revealed in the work;
- Is respectful of the individuality and worth of each student;
- Is timely - when it still matters to students and they can make the most of it.

b. Providing written comments

Written comments, in addition to the standards descriptor, provide specific feedback to each student, an overall comment on the task, or comments that address each criterion separately. Written comments that students are most likely to engage with, and use to improve future performance usually:

- Start by highlighting a strength - something the student has done well (although this can be difficult when the student has failed a criterion) for which the standards descriptor contains a range of elements to highlight
- Identify one to three important areas where and how improvements could be made. When determining the areas for improvement, refer to the SLOs, to include only the most important aspects
- End on a note of encouragement - make sure that it is truthful sincere, for example, "You showed obvious improvements in how you use evidence" or "You presented some interesting ideas that made me think further about this subject".

c. Other forms of feedback

- A major piece of assessment (usually a summative assessment) can be divided into a few components, with a specific intent of providing feedback to students. Examples include:

- i. A presentation (10 marks) and a report (30 marks) - Students can get feedback during their presentations which will assist in their report preparation.
- ii. Provide a plan (5 marks) and a report (25 marks) - By asking students to submit a plan before their formal report, lecturers can ensure that students are properly engaged and the feedback will ensure that students are responding appropriately to the assessment criteria.
- iii. Submit a draft (5 marks) before a formal report (25 marks) - This is particularly useful if there is a formal structure required in the final report e.g. a business proposal. Requiring a draft to be submitted early can assist students in better time management and hopefully improve the quality of the final report.

d. Individual Student Consultation

Sometimes it may be more time efficient to ask students to book a 10-minutes feedback session each after their work and grades have been released. In this way students have opportunities to ask questions and receive feedback on specific areas of concern or interest to them. This approach can also work well if students do not receive your grade prior to attending, but use the rubric to self-assessment and predicts a grade for their work. The two can be compared and provide useful points for discussion during the meeting.

14. Recordkeeping and publication of assessment results

- To ensure students receive their assessment results on time, all lecturers have to adhere by the timelines for marking and reporting on the grades.
- As soon as the grades have been finalised, lecturers are to provide the relevant AAPoly departments with the students' grades to be released in due course.
- Assessment documentation is to be handed over to Heads of HE courses for secure recordkeeping.

RESPONSIBILITIES

- The Academic Board (AB) is responsible for overall quality assurance and continuous improvement in assessments across AAPoly. The HQC oversees such quality assurance and continuous improvements as a standing AB committee.
- The Academic Dean is responsible for developing and implementing this procedure, monitoring the practice of the procedures and evaluating the effectiveness of the policy and procedure.

- The Designated Heads of Academic Departments (or Course Coordinators) for HE are responsible for incorporating the requirements of the procedure and its associated policy into their respective department's teaching-learning plans or strategies. They are also responsible for communicating the policy and procedure to all their academic team members responsible for the teaching, design, and development of all learning assessments.
- The academic team members responsible for the design and development of learning assessments must ensure all writing and activities are consistent with the procedure and its associated policy. Lecturers are required to publish details of learning/assessment tasks in the subject guide and ensure they are consistent with the formally approved learning/assessment tasks
- The Designated Heads of Academic Departments (or Course Coordinators) should conduct external referencing or peer review of assessments, to ensure that the assessments meet the requirements of the regulatory standards and are continuously improved.
- The Designated Head of Student Services department and relevant team members must ensure that the conduct of examinations is consistent with this policy and its associated procedures.
- Students have the responsibility to submit assessment/learning tasks by the published deadline and to sit tests and examinations at the time and date published.

FEEDBACK

Any queries, feedback or concern about this procedure should be emailed to the Academic Dean at academicdean@aapoly.edu.au. The Dean will respond within two (2) business days, unless circumstances require AAPoly to act immediately. The outcomes will be utilised in continuous improvement measures at AAPoly.

References

Source	Document Title	Version/Date
Internal	Access to and Use of Past Exam Policy	v1.2 06042018
	Assessment Moderation and Results Ratification Policy and Procedure	v1.2 29012018
	Benchmarking and Continuous Improvement Policy and Procedure	v1.1 28122017
	Student Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure	v4.4 21042018
	Diversity and Equity Policy	v1.2 06042018
	AAPoly Final Exam Writing Activity Plan	2018
	Higher Education Student Assessment Framework	v4.1 13012018
	Higher Education Student Assessments Procedure	v2.1 23022018
	Quality Assurance Policy	v3.2 29012018
	AAPoly Teaching and Learning Framework (2018-2020) and the associated Teaching Learning Plan	December 2017
	AAPoly Assessment Methodology for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelor of Tourism and Hospitality Management (BTHM) • Bachelor of Business (Leadership and Management) 	Current
External	Australian Qualifications Framework	2013 (2 nd edition) < https://www.aqf.edu.au/ >
	Deakin University Higher Education Courses Policy	26 July 2016
	Higher Education Standards Framework	2015
	University of Melbourne Assessments and Results Policy	v. 5.0/ November 25, 2016
	University of Tasmania Assessment Policy and Procedure	December 2016