Academic Assessment and Moderation Policy

INTRODUCTION

The University is committed to providing an effective, high-quality learning environment in which staff, students and external stakeholders have justified confidence in the University's learning and teaching processes and outcomes. The University is committed to producing innovative graduates who effectively meet the challenges of a complex, changing world. Academic assessment is one strategy by which the University can measure its achievement of these goals.

STATEMENT OF AUTHORITY

The authority behind this policy is the *Charles Darwin University Act 2003* part 3, section 15.

COMPLIANCE

This is a compliance requirement under the:

- *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards)*;
- *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs)*; and
- *National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students*.

INTENT

The intent of this document is to set out clearly the purposes of academic assessment at the University and the principles on which academic assessment is founded.

RELEVANT DEFINITIONS

In the context of this document

Academic integrity means honourableness and honesty in all aspects of scholarly activity. It is based on the values of decency, trust, justice, respect and accountability;

Assessment means a process to determine a student's achievement of expected learning outcomes and may include a range of written and oral methods and practice or demonstration;

Criterion-referenced assessment (also referred to as criterion-based assessment) means the assessment of student performance against pre-determined criteria. At the University, these criteria are related to the approved learning outcomes of the unit of study;

Feedback (in the context of assessment) means information returned to students on their progress towards unit/ program of learning outcomes. The information can be quantified in the form of marks or grades for assessment tasks, and/or in qualitative form e.g. comments, model answers, suggestions for reading etc. All assessment should incorporate both formative and summative feedback for students to use as life-long learners (assessment for learning) as well as assessment of learning to date (assessment of learning);

Formative assessment means assessment designed to give students feedback on their progress towards the development of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes in a unit. It assists students to identify strengths and weaknesses and ways by which to improve and can assist academic staff to target their teaching;

Learning outcomes means the expression of the set of knowledge, skills and the application of the knowledge and skills a person has acquired and is able to demonstrate as a result of learning;

Moderation means a quality assurance process by which an appropriately qualified independent individual or group confirms that assessment is continuously conducted with accuracy, consistency and fairness. Moderation includes the entire assessment event, including the design and post-event analysis of the fitness of the assessment of student learning. Moderation contributes to the continuous improvement of assessment practices and to sharing good practice among colleagues;

Norm-referenced assessment means assessment decisions made solely on the basis of student performance relative to that of the rest of the cohort;

Program of learning means a course, curriculum, training package, unit of study or structured workplace learning that leads to the award of a qualification;

Summative assessment provides a cumulative summary by which to judge the performance of students in meeting relevant criteria and standards at the end of the module, unit or program of learning. Summative assessment for one unit may provide formative feedback for use in future units or for life-long learning; and

Unit means a single component of a qualification, or a stand-alone unit, that has been approved/accredited. A unit may also be called a 'module', 'subject', 'unit of competency' or 'accredited unit'.

POLICY

The purposes of assessment vary across a range of internal and external stakeholders.

For students, assessment will:

- Engage them in productive and meaningful learning;
- Provide feedback on how effectively they are learning; and
- Provide evidence of their learning achievements.

For academic staff, assessment will:

- Support the integrated development of learning and teaching;
- Provide evidence that their students have reached a required standard; and
- Provide feedback on the effectiveness of their teaching.

For the University, assessment will:

- Provide evidence that students have achieved the designated learning outcomes;
- Provide evidence of effective teaching and student support; and
- Provide evidence of achieving institutional benchmarks and goals.

For the Community assessment will:

- Provide evidence of what students have learned and the standards they have reached;
- Provide evidence that graduates are employable; and
- Provide evidence that institutions and their teaching programs are effective.
  (Adapted from Murdoch University Assessment Policy 2011)

Assessment and moderation at the University will be based on the following principles

- **Assessment for learning is placed at the centre of subject and program design**

  Assessment and moderation will be integral components of design for a program of learning at the University.

  Learning and teaching elements of each unit will be designed with the full knowledge of the sorts of assessment students will encounter and be designed to help them show the outcomes of their learning under favourable conditions.

  Assessment instruments and processes will be the subject of continuous evaluation and improvement as necessary.

  Students' learning should not be impeded by an overload of assessment requirements, nor should the quality of the teaching conducted by staff be impaired by excessive burdens of assessment tasks.

- **Moderation is central to the quality assurance processes built into programs of learning development, implementation and monitoring**

  Moderation at the University, including monitoring and adjustment of the quality of assessment, will be built into quality control processes throughout the program of learning life cycle.

  Moderation should be based on a commitment to open communication and quality improvement.

  Moderation should take a holistic approach, based on the best available data and using a range of appropriate techniques.

  Programs of learning management and coordination, including moderation procedures, ensure consistent and appropriate assessment.

  The academic standards intended to be achieved by students and the standards actually achieved by students in the program of learning will be benchmarked against similar accredited programs of learning offered by other tertiary education providers.

  Moderation assists academic staff to work towards judgements that are valid, reliable and consistent, fair and equitable, and actively improve learning and teaching.

- **Assessment is used to engage students in learning that is productive**

  Assessment should be part of a process, which encourages the development of critical and creative abilities. Students and lecturers become responsible partners in learning and assessment.

  The primary focus of assessment is to encourage, direct and reinforce learning.

  Assessment is an essential part of quality learning and teaching in tertiary education and is usually the key factor influencing how students approach the learning and teaching process. Carefully

designed assessment tasks can positively affect the approach of students to their study and the quality of their learning.

- **Assessment must provide valid evidence of learning achievements**

  Assessment and moderation approaches reflect unit objectives and relevant graduate attributes and align with specified learning outcomes.
  Assessment and moderation methods and criteria need to be clear, explicit and readily available to students, employers and other stakeholders.

  While assessment tasks are implemented within units, consideration needs to be given to the pattern of assessment across entire programs of learning.

  Assessment and moderation contribute to maintaining academic standards: assessment will comprise planned processes and elements that are justifiable on pedagogical grounds, or by virtue of being requirements of an accreditation or professional registration or relevant body that is external to the University, and which will enable a student to demonstrate a level of performance against institutional and any relevant external academic standards.

  Norm-referenced assessment is not used at the University.

- **Assessment must be reliable and consistent**

  Assessment and moderation approaches will ensure that reliable and consistent judgments are made about a student's performance and that academic integrity is maintained.

  Assessment methods and the criteria by which work will be judged are based on pre-determined, clearly articulated and rigorous academic standards.

  Assessment will be moderated to ensure appropriateness to the unit and level of difficulty; that assessment criteria have been applied consistently; and that the outcomes are reliable.

- **Assessment must be fair and equitable**

  Assessment and moderation methods may take a variety of forms: the key criterion for choice among methods will be appropriateness to the learning outcomes.

  Judgements on student achievement of learning outcomes will be based on multiple sources of evidence, catering for diversity within a student cohort.

  In order that students can pursue and demonstrate achievement of a wide range of specified learning outcomes and of appropriate standards, and within the context of professional, statutory and regulatory requirements, there will be a range of forms and types of assessment between and within programs of learning, including components that are formative and summative in purpose. As far as possible this range should be demonstrably fair to all students; address equity principles; reflect student learning goals; support diversity in learning styles; and demonstrate progression of learning outcomes.

- **Feedback is used to actively improve learning and teaching**

  Feedback is fundamental to the learning process. It must be informative, constructive, timely, provided throughout the learning process, fair, justifiable and reasonable.

Feedback must assist students to understand the learning objectives achieved and how they can improve the quality of their work.

Assessment will provide staff and students with opportunities to reflect on their practice and their learning.

Feedback will assist students to develop their ability to evaluate the quality of their own work in order to equip them to function as professionals with a commitment to life-long learning. Further, assessment is regarded as a form of feedback on teaching that can be used to facilitate improvements in teaching and learning.

ESSENTIAL SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Internal

Academic and Scientific Misconduct Policy

Common Course Rules - Associate Degree

Common Course Rules - Bachelor Degree

Common Course Rules - Bachelor Honours Degree

Common Course Rules - Diploma

Common Course Rules - Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)

Common Course Rules - Graduate Certificate

Common Course Rules - Graduate Diploma

Common Course Rules - Masters Degree by Coursework

Common Course Rules - Masters by Research

HDR Examination Procedures

Student Academic Grievances Procedures

Student Administrative Complaints Procedures

Students - Breach of Academic Integrity Procedures

Students - Grievances with Staff or Other Students Procedures

Students Policy

External

Higher Education Standards Framework (Thresholds Standards) 2015 (commonwealth)

[National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2017](#) (Commonwealth)

[Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015](#) (Commonwealth)

Academic Assessment and Moderation Policy – pol-002	Version: 6.02	Page 6 of 8

Governance Document once printed is considered an uncontrolled document. Only documents in the University Governance Document Library online are considered to be the most current version.

Document History and Version Control

Last amendment:	15 Dec 2017		Next Review:	Dec 2015
Sponsor:	Provost			
Contact Officer:	Pro Vice-Chancellor, Education and Student Success			

Version	Date Approved	Approved by	Brief Description
1.00	13 Sept 2006	Council	Adjustment to grades and reclassification of grade headings.
1.01	01 Dec 2006	Academic Board	Amendment to: F Grade change – Fails to satisfy some of the basic requirements of the unit after attempting all assessment tasks to Fails to satisfy some of the requirements of the unit. And Change the word "Registrar" to "Director of Student Services".
1.02	11 Oct 2007	Council	Introduction of PR Grade
1.03	8 Feb 2008	Governance	Place the PR grade (HE) under Advanced Standing Status, and not Grades as it was previously placed.
2.00	23 Apr 2008	Council	Include the Practicum Ongoing (PO) grade in 2.2 Higher Education Assessment Grades.
3.00	10 Dec 2008	Council	Removal of para 2.1.2 from 2. Grades –re Merit based Competency Assessment Plans. Remove from 2.3 Competency Based Assessment Grades – CH, CM, CP, CU, NC and the para from each fees are applicable, funding is available; and add the following grades CA, NYC, OWA, with amendments to the CE grade and 6. WGPA.
4.00	27 Mar 2009	Academic Board	Major amendments.
5.00	25 May 2009	Council	Major amendments.
5.01	28 Aug 2009	Council	Insert Competency Based Assessment Grades – SP and UP.
5.02	24 Feb 2012	Governance	• Converting document from old template to new template • Removing numbering • Changing Dean to Pro Vice-Chancellor to reflect current title • Changing Director, Student Services to Director, Student Administration and Equity Services to reflect current title • Change Examinations Officer to Coordinator, Examinations and Timetabling to reflect current title • Changes to formatting, grammar and spelling • Addition of essential supporting information and hyperlinks • Changed contact officer to PVCA
6.00	7 Dec 2012	Academic Board (approved policy) Council (approved rescinding of rule)	Major review of document. • Convert document from rule to policy in line with current practice. • Changed name of document from Assessment Rules to Academic Assessment and Moderation Policy
6.01	27 Jan 2013	Governance	• Minor changes to grammar and formatting

6.02	15 Dec 2017	Governance	• Conversion to new governance template due to new University branding • Updated the list of Common Course Rules • Updated hyperlinks • Amended Contact Officer from PVC, Academic to PVC Education and Student Success • Amended Sponsor from VC to Provost

(continued from previous row)
| | | | • Assign document number
• Updated hyperlinks |