Assessment Practices Guide

Introduction:
This document aims to assist the development of formal assessment items for courses (undergraduate and postgraduate) within the College of Arts and Social Sciences. It is designed to supplement:

a. the University's policies - “Determination of Systems and Consultation on Assessment” and “Code of Practice for Teaching and Learning”
b. the University's guidelines - “Participation and Attendance as Items of Assessment” and
c. the College's guidelines - “Word Limit Guidelines”

Terminology:
Formative assessment - designed to help identify areas in need of improvement for students, staff and/or the course. This includes academic judgments made about students' achievements or performance for feedback. For example, presentations and essay/research/project plans are typically formative assessments.

Summative assessment - used to determine the levels at which students have achieved the desired learning outcomes in order to verify the grades or marks awarded. For example, final tests or exams are summative assessments.

Criteria - characteristics of the assessment upon which it will be judged. For example, a writing task could be assessed via the criteria: Structure, Analysis, Referencing, etc.

Standard - explicit statements which define the qualities or levels of achievement within each criterion. For example, the criterion ‘Structure’ could have the standards: ‘Fail – no coherent essay structure’, ‘Pass – essay has introduction, body, conclusion & references’, ‘High Distinction – essay included abstract, terminology, footnotes & Pass features’.

Moderation - in order to ensure consistency is achieved when marking a task, moderation allows assessors to make academic judgements by jointly determining, discussing and clarifying the statements which define the criteria and standards for a task.

Feedback - responses to students’ work designed to inform them, either individually or as a group, about their performance. It must be provided in a timely manner, identifying strengths and areas for improvement.

Assessment Practices: Checklist
All assessment items which contribute to the final course total should:

1. be explicitly linked to learning outcomes articulated for the course
2. have criteria and standards making expectations clear to students
3. include an outline or description explaining the purpose of the task and other requirements
4. specify the task’s weighting as a percentage of the course total out of 100%
5. specify the word length (for all written tasks) or duration (for oral tasks) or extent of deliverables (for practical tasks)
6. specify the task’s due date and time, and submission format (hardcopy and/or online)
7. provide details about penalties for late submissions and academic integrity
8. provide students with timely and constructive feedback to inform ongoing learning
Modes of Assessment

Assessment should enable learners to demonstrate their achievement of the learning outcomes of the course. Assessment should also guide, encourage and motivate students to actively engage with the content, skills and values being developed in the course. These practices should be varied in format, designed to be inclusive of students' needs and cater to the individual as well as groups. Tasks should also be designed to foster and promote academic integrity.

When used as formal assessment items, all modes of assessment should be moderated by teaching staff in order to determine the final grade. Students should also be given timely and constructive feedback from teaching staff.

It must be noted that ‘assessment’ bears distinct differences to ‘marking’. Assessment is an ongoing process, involving judgement against criteria and standards, and the provision of constructive and timely feedback. Marking is the act to determine whether the information provided meets the set standards.

The modes of assessment outlined below can be adopted as assessment practices for courses.

Self-Assessment

Self-assessment is a mode of assessment which allows students to reflect on their own learning and development in an effort to develop critical thinking, encourage self-improvement and develop vital skills required for lifelong learning. It can be utilised as a formative or summative mode of assessment. If used as a formal assessment item, it is important that self-assessment is moderated by teaching staff using criteria and standards in order to determine the final grade. Students should also be given feedback from teaching staff guiding their ability to self-assess their own learning and development.

Group Assessment

Group assessments are typically used to assess how students perform as an individual within a group or team. They can be also used to assess a whole group based on their group performance and/or teamwork abilities. The resulting grades can be assigned individually or as a ‘group mark’.

If assessing students’ ability to function as a member of a group or team, an individual grade should be assigned rather than a ‘group mark’. In these cases, self-assessment strategies can also be employed so that students can critique their own contribution to the group and/or its performance as a group.

A task which has a ‘group mark’ assigned to it should only assess students’ performance as an entire group or all students’ ability to function as a cohesive group or team. This will ensure that any perceived failures made by an individual student is not attributed by others in the group as the cause of poorer marks for the group’s or team’s performance.

Peer Assessment

Peer assessment is defined as the act of getting students to assess others either as individuals or as a group. It can be a powerful tool for developing students’ communication and interpersonal skills in order to prepare them for real-world situations. Peer assessment items can also help students to develop their ability to provide constructive feedback to others.

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1 For further reading, please see “Biggs, J. (2000) Teaching for Quality Learning at University, Buckingham: Open University Press”


When employing peer assessment, students should be explicitly taught how to assess or critically evaluate their peers using criteria and standards. The criteria used should clearly articulate all skills and knowledge being assessed and employ quantifiable standards. However, assessment of content should be completed by the Academic as the ‘subject matter expert’ rather than students. Below is an example of a peer assessment rubric which can be modified to suit your needs. It exemplifies how students can assess each other’s presentations based on the quality of the presentation rather than the content within the presentation.

### Peer assessment scheme

Use the table below to mark your peer’s presentation. Tick the applicable standards within each criterion. Remember to be honest and assess your peer’s performance based on the criteria and standards listed only. Construct your feedback beginning with a positive comment then identify areas for improvement, if there are any.

**Peer’s name:**

### Delivery: How well did the presenter use their verbal & non-verbal communication skills?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Needs improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ was relaxed and confident</td>
<td>□ did not look as audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ maintained direct eye contact</td>
<td>□ read straight from screen or notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ spoke clearly at all times</td>
<td>□ fidgeted with things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ used gestures to signal audience’s attention to resources</td>
<td>□ paced the room aimlessly or stood rigidly in one spot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ only paced the room when necessary</td>
<td>□ spoke too softly or quickly making it hard for me to hear what was said</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ used changes in voice to show enthusiasm</td>
<td>□ paused continually or mumbled when unsure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Presentation organisation: Was the presenter well organised?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Needs improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ introduced the presentation</td>
<td>□ did not introduce topic of presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ timed the presentation well so that there was time to ask questions at the end</td>
<td>□ ran over-time so could not ask questions at the end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ PowerPoint or visual resources were clear, easy to read/see</td>
<td>□ PowerPoint or visual resources were difficult to read/see/follow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ had all notes and resources organised</td>
<td>□ notes and resources not ready or organised e.g. needed to find notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ presentation was well-organised: structure sequentially/coherently</td>
<td>□ Seemed unprepared because lost track of their presentation points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Engagement: How well did the presenter engage the audience members?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Needs improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ asked open-ended questions to get me thinking and to respond</td>
<td>□ did not ask questions or only asked ‘yes/no’ questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ used visuals or other resources to attract audience attention</td>
<td>□ there were no visuals or other resources to engage audience attention</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Feedback:**

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________

Grade: __________
### Peer Marking and Student Privacy

If a peer marking task is employed as part of an assessment task, its educational purpose, benefits, criteria and standards should be made clear to students prior to the task. Then, once students have completed the task, in order to avoid breaching student’s privacy, de-identification strategies should be used.

For example, an assessment task is designed in 2 parts: 1) students demonstrate their ability to write in special characters & 2) students demonstrate their ability to read special characters written by others by marking someone else’s work. The purpose, benefits, criteria and standards are explained to students prior to completing the 1st part of the task. Students then complete the first part of the task but they do not write their names on their answer sheets. Teaching staff then collect the sheets, place either a number or code onto each student’s tests (which is only identifiable by the teaching staff) and re-distribute the sheets to random students for the 2nd part of the assessment. After the task is completed, students are given the opportunity to discuss their learning and staff provide students feedback as a group and individually after the task has been completed.

### Participation & Attendance

The inclusion of participation and/or attendance as assessment components can be weighted at no more than 10% for each component towards a course total. If either or both are used as assessment items, they should be assessed against explicit criteria and standards, as with all other assessment items which contribute to the final course total⁴. For example:

**Participation assessment scheme**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fail</th>
<th>Pass</th>
<th>Credit</th>
<th>Distinction</th>
<th>High Distinction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homework tasks</td>
<td>Submission of 0/5 tasks = 0/5 marks</td>
<td>Submission of 1-2 tasks = 2/5 marks</td>
<td>Submission of 3/5 tasks = 3/5 marks</td>
<td>Submission of 4/5 tasks = 4/5 marks</td>
<td>Submission of 5/5 tasks = 5/5 marks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Discussion Forum contributions</td>
<td>No contributions = 0/5 marks</td>
<td>1-3 contributions = 2/5 marks</td>
<td>4-6 contributions = 3/5 marks</td>
<td>7-9 contributions = 4/5 marks</td>
<td>&gt; 10 contributions = 5/5 marks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Links:

- **Participation and Attendance as Items of Assessment**  -  (http://policies.anu.edu.au/guidelines/participation_and_attendance_as_items_of_assessment/guideline)

**For further assistance**

- Le Hoa Phan, Educational Developer - CASS Education Development Studio, e: lehoa.phan@anu.edu.au, p: ext: 57444
- Dr Elizabeth Beckmann, Senior Lecturer – Centre for Educational Design and Academic Development, e: elizabeth.beckmann@anu.edu.au, p: ext:50057

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⁴ Please see “Guidelines: Participation and Attendance as Items of Assessment” for more information.