Assessment for Learning - Standards for Assessment Procedure (HE)

Section 1 - Summary

(1) The following standards set out the expectations that the University holds for assessment in higher education course and units, and should be read in conjunction with the Assessment for Learning Policy.

(2) The standards draw from expected good practice in institutions across Australia, the VU Block Model 2.0 Principles and Descriptors, as well as the work of scholars and researchers in the assessment field. They are not intended to be exhaustive, but rather set the scene for good practice while providing scope for staff to engage in continuous improvement in assessment design.

Section 2 - Scope

(3) These Standards apply to all Higher Education awards undertaken through coursework, and to units of study.

Section 3 - Policy/Regulation

(4) Assessment for Learning Policy

Section 4 - Procedures

Part A - Overview

(5) Assessment drives and shapes learning and it is one of the most important elements within the teaching and learning process for both teachers and students. Assessment also measures what students have learned, their development of skills, capabilities and attributes, and their knowledge and understanding of discipline specific information.

(6) Significant attention is paid by students to assessment activities, their criteria and weighting. The degree to which this information and the way in which assessment can guide and support learning is a critical aspect of ensuring that students are able to succeed through appropriate settings.

(7) The principles outlined in the Assessment for Learning Policy apply to all assessments and are supported by the following rules. Exceptions to these rules may be allowed where supported by an academic justification (for example, professional accreditation requirements). All exceptions must have approval of the Associate Dean, Learning and Teaching in the relevant College and via the relevant Course Approvals processes.

Part B - Timing and weighting

(8) There are no less than two (2) and no more than three (3) formal (graded) assessments in any 12 credit point unit, excepting where progressive assessment involves more regular submission of contributions to a single assessment

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piece. Thesis units will be excluded from this requirement.

(9) In the case of portfolio assessment, individual sub-tasks cannot be hurdle requirements, and should demonstrably build up to a body of work that is assessed in terms of the totality of learning over time. Requirements for students to submit sub-tasks for grading prior to the final assessment must appear in unit descriptions in CAMS, and therefore in unit guides.

(10) No single assessment item is weighted at more than 70% of final grade for a unit. Normally, a weighting of 70% would only be appropriate in capstone units or to meet professional standards requirements.

(11) Unsupervised tests make up no more than 20% of the final grade in a unit.

(12) A first graded assessment weighted 30% or less of the final grade must take place within the first week in a 4-week Block, the first two weeks in an 8-week Block, the first half on an intensive delivery period or the first six (6) weeks of semester.

(13) All assessment in a Block, whether formative or summative, occurs within the Block.

(14) Assessment details such as type, weighting and timing of assessment are provided to students in the learning management system, and wherever possible, discussed with students at the start of the unit.

Part C - Assessing for learning

(15) All assessments are generally formative or developmental in nature - providing students with an opportunity to apply feedback to subsequent assessment activities. This may include the iterative submission of an assessment item.

(16) Assessment encourages academic integrity through the use of progressive assessment (a cumulative series of activities) and/or in-class engagement with assessment activities.

(17) A list of criteria or a rubric is provided for each assessment task in a unit to provide students with clear expectations about the type and level of performance required to successfully complete the task.

(18) Exemplars of relevant completed assessments are provided to students wherever possible.

(19) Qualitative feedback is provided for all in-semester assessments generally within two weeks of submission or within two (2) days in a 4-week Block or within four (4) days in an 8-week Block, excluding those delivered through VU Online. This may be peer-based, whole of group or individual feedback, depending on the nature of the assessment.

(20) Feedback links to supports or resources that facilitate further learning wherever possible.

Part D - Secure Assessment

(21) Every unit should feature at least one secure assessment task provide confidence about student learning and engagement.

(22) Secure assessment task/s should cover at least 60% of the unit learning outcomes and 50% of the marks for the unit to provide confidence in the attainment of learning outcomes and the marks associated with them (where graded) or are implemented as a hurdle requirement.

(23) Secure assessment design should provide students with different forms of secure assessment tasks as they progress through their course.

(24) Secure assessment may involve the use of Gen AI where this is aligned with the learning outcomes of the unit and integral to meeting the Course Learning Outcomes.

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(25) Secure assessment can be designed as either team or individual tasks.

Part E - Open Assessment

(26) Open Assessments are designed to facilitate open dialogue between students and educators about the process of learning and how the learning process is reflected in the design and expectations of an assessment task.

(27) Open Assessments are (usually) designed as formative assessments to develop skills and capabilities.

(28) Open Assessments are purposefully not designed as or intended to be secure assessments. Open Assessments are carefully designed to support student learning.

(29) Open Assessments that can be performed by Gen AI find and retain their rationale in the assessment regime through assessment as learning, specification of what is being assessed, and the learning outcomes that the task is aligned to.

(30) Open Assessments may draw upon human/Gen AI collaboration in a range of ways, such as tasks where students use Gen AI tools to become familiar with a new topic and are assessed on their presentation skills, or to produce and critically analyze artefacts and to reflect and provide/receive feedback on their learning process.

(31) Open Assessments can be designed as either team or individual tasks.

Part F - Group Assessments

(32) Group assessment tasks are only used where a learning outcome of the unit requires students to learn or demonstrate collaboration or teamwork skills. Such a learning outcome may involve:

a. learning from and with others who are different to oneself.
b. learning how to engage in peer-review.
c. learning how to manage time, navigate working with others to achieve an outcome.
d. undertaking a project of greater complexity than would be possible for an individual student working alone.
e. developing interpersonal and communication skills through presenting to peers and acting on feedback.

(33) Where a group assessment task is weighted at 50% or more of the final grade in a unit, individual students are given an opportunity to demonstrate their individual achievement of the learning outcomes.

(34) The Unit Convenor advises students how group assessment tasks will be assessed and the extent to which students will receive individual or a shared group mark.

Part G - Assessment of attendance

(35) Students enrolled in in-person (IP) or online real time (ORT) coursework units at VU are encouraged and expected to attend their classes as scheduled on the timetable in order to optimise their academic success. Except as in instances outlined below, attendance at scheduled activities is not compulsory and students will neither be awarded marks for attendance alone nor have marks deducted due to non-attendance.

(36) Units and/or courses may require mandatory attendance at specific activities due to professional or regulatory accreditation requirements, or where a unit learning outcome has a significant competency component or where assessment is based around the placement of a student in a workplace or community setting.

(37) The following are examples where a mandatory attendance requirement may be appropriate:

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a. A student is assessed upon performance in a clinical, teaching or other placement over a defined period of time.
b. A student is assessed on their artistic or sporting performance.
c. A student is required to demonstrate their development of skills in a laboratory or similar environment.
d. A student is required to engage in team-based learning to satisfy a learning outcome.

(38) In units where mandatory attendance for specific activities is required the following must occur:

a. This information must be provided in the accredited unit information under 'assessment' and recorded in CAMS.
b. Students must be advised at the commencement of the unit that specified minimum attendance at a particular activity or series of activities is required. This should be done in writing in the introduction section on the LMS and verbally or in writing at the commencement of the particular activity.
c. Students must be advised under what circumstances and with what documentation a student is permitted to miss a session. These requirements must conform with the rules for special consideration. See Assessment for Learning - Adjustments to Assessment Procedure.
d. Attendance records must be kept, using the Attendance register in VU Collaborate. Students must be given access to their own attendance records upon request.
e. Students must be notified at the commencement of the unit of any options for completion if they fail to meet the attendance requirements, e.g. make-up sessions, alternative activities.

Part H - Hurdle task requirements

(39) Within a unit, it is expected that the unit learning outcomes will be assessed using a variety of assessment tasks. However, in certain instances it may not be possible to assess a particular learning outcome using more than one assessment task. Such a learning outcome may involve:

a. the demonstration of a particular essential skill or activity where the level of competency can only be assessed through an actual demonstration;
b. the demonstration of a particular skill which is intrinsic to the student's ability to complete professional registration requirements.

(40) If the learning outcome associated with this task is considered to be critical to the student's progression in this unit then it is appropriate that this assessment be a hurdle task for the unit.

(41) The following are examples of where a hurdle assessment task may be appropriate:

a. A culminating artistic or sporting performance;
b. Demonstration of a critical laboratory skill;
c. Completion of a clinical, teaching or other placement that is required for practice.

(42) Where online participation is established as a hurdle requirement, this must be clearly communicated to all students and must not cause disadvantage to students with restricted online access. Online participation can only be a hurdle requirement if it meets the criteria established above.

(43) In units that have a hurdle assessment task the following must occur:

a. Students must be advised at the commencement of the unit that at a particular assessment is a hurdle task. This should be done in writing through the unit guide on the LMS and verbally at the commencement of the unit.
b. Students must be notified as to the reasons why this assessment is considered a hurdle requirement and the learning outcome or competency that is being assessed in the hurdle task.

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Part I - Submission and resulting

(44) Assignments are submitted online within VU Collaborate wherever possible.

(45) All essay and report, or similar written assessments, are submitted for Turnitin review, and originality reports reviewed by the assessor prior to grading.

(46) Results for assessments are recorded in VU Collaborate and are only released to students following moderation.

(47) Final aggregate unit results are submitted for upload to Student One. These grades are not released within VU Collaborate. See also Assessment for Learning - Management of Results and Grade Sets Procedure.

(48) Students are advised within VU Collaborate that all grades reported in the system are subject to moderation processes, and that final validated unit grades are released via Student One.

(49) Students must be informed at the commencement of the unit of their options if they fail the hurdle task. Information on requirements for second chance, supplementary assessments and conceded passes can be found in the Assessment for Learning - Supplementary Assessment and Conceded Pass Procedure.

Section 5 - HESF/ASQA/ESOS Alignment

(50) HESF: Standards 1.3 Orientation and Progression; 1.4 Learning Outcomes and Assessment; 2.3.1 Wellbeing and Safety.

Section 6 - Definitions

(51) Block

(52) Semester: One of two usually 15-week periods, including breaks, that make up the academic year when the Block Model is not utilised.

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Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Block" - A delivery period in which all learning activities and assessments, moderation and result release in units of study are completed within: Four-weeks for all undergraduate units, and postgraduate units in the Colleges of Arts & Education, Health & Biomedicine, Law & Justice and Sport & Exercise Science; or Eight-weeks for postgraduate units in the VU Business School and College of Engineering & Science and units/courses delivered through VU Online.

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