

ASSESSMENT GUIDE

A Guide for all CQUniversity Staff



Assessment Guide

A Guide for CQUniversity staff

2009

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COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

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We welcome your feedback on any issues or matters that will help to make this guide more useful.

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Assessment guide for staff 2009

This assessment guide has six sections as follows:

1. Introduction

This section includes definitions, values and purposes of assessment.

2. Types of assessment, referencing guidelines, the reporting of results, and information for students

This section is essentially aimed at students. It contains details of the mark/grade reporting system at CQUniversity. Referencing guidelines are briefly discussed, and students are directed to their faculty's referencing guidelines. It also lists further sources of information available to students, thus this section may be useful for staff when advising students or when responding to student questions about assessment.

3. Responsibilities for assessment at CQUniversity

Responsibilities of staff and students are set out here. The University's policies on plagiarism and cheating are also summarised in this section.

4. Good practice in assessment: strategies, guidelines and advice

This section is for all staff who are involved in the assessment of student achievement. It lists and discusses assessment techniques which produce results which are fair and helpful to the student, and fair to the course. It includes a reading list to enable staff to follow up issues dealt with in this section.

5. Frequently asked questions

This section is an attempt to think of and then answer the sorts of questions which students may have concerning assessment. It is included in the Staff Guide as it contains relevant and succinct information which may be useful for both staff and students.

6. CQUniversity policies, rules and regulations concerning assessment

This section contains all the websites and hard copy locations for all policies, rules and regulations concerning assessment.

Introduction

What is assessment?

Why is assessment important?

What are the main uses or purposes of assessment?

Principles and values

The two approaches to assessment: norm-referenced and criterion-referenced

What is assessment?

In this guide 'assessment' refers to the processes and procedures used to measure or otherwise evaluate student achievement of the learning outcomes of a course of study. 'Continuous assessment' refers to assessment tasks undertaken during the teaching term, while 'final assessment' refers to assessment tasks undertaken or submitted following the conclusion of teaching in the term. For example, formal invigilated exams are one form of final assessment.

Why is assessment important?

Of all the activities associated with teaching and learning, assessment has the potential to have the most influence in directing students' energies, in indicating where they should put their time, and in determining the way they approach learning in the course. In this way assessment is often referred to as the *de facto* curriculum.

Lecturers would prefer students to undertake their course with the intention of engaging with it and understanding it (a deep approach) rather than with the intention of merely reproducing material without having a good understanding of it (a surface approach). Students in turn are bound to have a more satisfying experience of the course if they are actively interested in it, rather than merely carrying out course requirements.

The forms, tasks and timing of assessment can encourage such active and engaged learning by students. However, sometimes the design of such assessment tasks encourages students to cram and rote learn in order to pass the test or exam and, in some cases, to submit work other than their own, rather than to engage meaningfully with the subject. So assessment tasks should always be designed to facilitate and encourage student learning rather than merely to make a judgement about the extent of that learning.

What are the main uses or purposes of assessment?

Assessment has three main functions:

1. provides feedback for students to allow them to judge their own understanding and performance (formative)
2. measures student learning against the stated course learning outcomes (summative)
3. provides a reliable level of accreditation that can be easily judged by others.

Assessment has traditionally been used to judge the extent to which students have achieved the knowledge, skills and attributes required by the course, in order to certify at some point in time the level and acceptability of these measured by formal assessment tasks (summative assessment). Summative assessment has as its purpose the identification and certification of a student's academic achievement or level of performance at some particular time (e.g. end of term, end of program). Thus summative assessment always generates a mark or grade.

The other main purpose of assessment is to provide feedback to students on how well they are achieving the course learning outcomes (formative assessment), without making a final judgement about this. This ongoing feedback can be used by students for diagnosing their learning problems and remedying them. Used in this way giving feedback need not also involve awarding a mark. Such feedback should be useful, relevant to the learning needs of the student, and timely, that is, given in sufficient time for the student to act on the feedback before the next assessment task is due.

There are also at least two other important uses or purposes of assessment:

1. helping students to become realistic self-assessors, because a major objective of undergraduate education at CQUniversity is to foster independence and self-responsibility in students
2. monitoring and evaluating teaching. In this case assessment statistics will indicate areas in teaching and learning which may need to be further investigated.

Curriculum design and assessment

When we design a program at CQUniversity we do so to ensure that our graduates achieve a particular set of attributes. The courses that make up that program are designed to ensure that the stated attributes are achieved by our graduates. More information is available on the University's Learning and Teaching website at:
http://learning.cqu.edu.au/lt_resources/generic_skills.htm.

The course learning outcomes are developed to guide the content and learning experience for students and form the basis of the assessment. Assessment that doesn't seek to measure or facilitate the learning of these outcomes is not valid and is discouraged.

Some learning outcomes are developed specifically to enable learning, but are not critical to a final measurement. In this case they need not constitute part of the summative assessment. Other learning outcomes are critical and do require measurement by assessment.

The learning outcomes are considered to belong to three domains:

1. cognitive—knowledge and its various levels
2. affective—values and attitudes
3. psychomotor—hand-eye coordination and physical skills.

More information regarding these domains is available on the Learning and Teaching website at:
http://learning.cqu.edu.au/lt_resources/curric_design.htm.

Generic graduate attributes

CQUniversity has developed a set of generic graduate attributes and undertakes to ensure that all of its graduates will possess these qualities. In order for that to be achieved, all of CQUniversity's courses must include some learning outcomes that map to these attributes. When all of a program's courses are examined, these graduate attributes, to an appropriate level, must be explicit and able to be referenced in the documentation.

As well as including generic attributes in the learning outcomes, the assessment techniques used and the learning task design need to reflect this inclusion. For example, if team work and/or problem-solving were to be included in learning design, you would need to include activities that allowed for these attributes to be achieved, and the assessment would need to measure the development of the attributes.

More information regarding these attributes is available on the Learning and Teaching website at:
http://learning.cqu.edu.au/lt_resources/generic_skills.htm.

Authentic assessment

Recent research, particularly in the area of information communication technology-supported education, indicates the need to design assessment that is situated and valued in the real world. While this practice is the norm in postgraduate research degrees, it is relatively new for undergraduate and coursework higher degrees.

The research in this area shows that students undertaking authentic assessment encounter greater levels of learning engagement and as such develop deeper levels of understanding. When this assessment is integrated within the learning tasks the authenticity provides additional stimulus and engagement for learners.

An example of authentic assessment could involve the development of an activity plan for an upcoming event such as a triathlon for a Human Performance course, or a report for a State Minister on industry workplace health and safety.

More information on authentic assessment is available on the Learning and Teaching website at:
http://learning.cqu.edu.au/lt_resources/assess.htm.

Assessment rubrics

Assessment rubrics are a systematic way that you can achieve consistency when marking assessment items. Rubrics allow you to measure the learning outcomes according to set performance criteria. They provide a level of consistency for lecturers and multiple markers, and minimise the chances of appeals of grades.

An example of a rubric is shown below:

Table 1: Assessment Rubric

Assessment task 1					
Learning Outcome	Performance Levels				
	Beginning 1	Developing 2	Accomplished 3	Exemplary 4	Score
Stated Outcome or Performance 1	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting a beginning level of performance.	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting development and movement toward mastery of performance.	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting mastery of performance.	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting the highest level of performance.	
Stated Outcome or Performance 2	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting a beginning level of performance.	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting development and movement toward mastery of performance.	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting mastery of performance.	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting the highest level of performance.	
Stated Outcome or Performance 3	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting a beginning level of performance.	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting development and movement toward mastery of performance.	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting mastery of performance.	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting the highest level of performance.	
Stated Outcome or Performance 4	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting a beginning level of performance.	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting development and movement toward mastery of performance.	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting mastery of performance.	Description of identifiable performance characteristics reflecting the highest level of performance.	

Source: San Diego State University 2004
http://edweb.sdsu.edu/triton/july/rubrics/Rubric_Template.html

By specifying the learning outcome being assessed you are able to map your assessment task and demonstrate that the learning outcome is being assessed. By setting specific criteria you ensure a high level of consistency and reliability.

For more information access the Kennesaw State University website at:
<http://edtech.kennesaw.edu/intech/rubrics.htm>.

Principles and values

- Assessment should be fair to the course—it should reflect the learning outcomes of the course both in terms of content and of relative importance.
- Assessment should be fair and consistent to students—it should be transparent in its operation, and its outcomes should constitute an accurate reflection of a student’s achievement.
- Assessment should be designed to enhance student learning, both in terms of the design of the assessment tasks and in the nature and amount of feedback given to students.
- Assessment tasks should assist students to become realistic evaluators both of their own performance and that of others.
- Assessment involves giving students constructive feedback on their learning.
- Assessment assists students to become independent learners and to determine their own learning needs and capabilities informed by timely, constructive feedback.
- Efficient assessment is designed to use the minimum number of assessment tasks needed to make informed judgements about students’ progression and learning.
- Assessment is student-centred and is designed to optimise opportunities for students with different backgrounds and experiences to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes.
- Good practice in assessment should be consciously adopted across the University, and its implementation monitored through the quality assurance procedures adopted at faculty and university level.
- In a flexible learning environment it is essential that the techniques of assessment are understood and valued by all teaching staff, and that conscious incentives and rewards are offered to staff to acquire this understanding and these techniques.

These principles and values reflect the *Assessment of Coursework Policy*—CQUniversity’s framework for decisions on the design, implementation and review of assessment.

The two approaches to assessment: norm-referenced and criterion-referenced

A mark or grade can represent either a student’s comparative standing against the performance of the other students in the class (norm-referenced approach), or it can indicate that the individual student has achieved a specified performance of the learning outcomes against specified criteria (criterion-referenced approach). In norm-referenced assessment (Figure 1) students’ performances are rated against each other, and the outcome is a rank order of achievement (usually expressed in a bell-shaped distribution of grades).

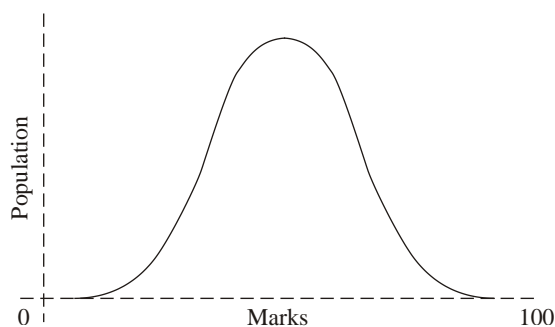


Figure 1: Normal distribution of marks
(Source: CQU Learning and Teaching website, 2005)

In contrast, criterion-referenced assessment occurs where a student’s performance is measured against explicit criteria, not against the performance of other students. While these two approaches to the design and conduct of assessment are profoundly different theoretically, **it is the policy of CQUniversity that a criterion-referenced approach be used.**

The policy states:

A criterion-referenced approach to marking assessment responses is used. Norm-referenced assessment may be used where it is demonstrated to be more appropriate and is approved by the Faculty Education Committee.

(*Assessment of Coursework Policy*, <http://policy.cqu.edu.au>)

Types of assessment, referencing, the reporting of results and grades, and information for students

Types and formats of assessment tasks

Referencing guidelines

Results and grades

Unsatisfactory academic progress

Other contacts and information resources for students

Types and formats of assessment tasks

Specific information about the required assessment tasks in any course is made available to students in the relevant Course Profile.

Exams

Written formal exams are invigilated (supervised) and are conducted at the conclusion of the term of study. Students should know in advance how their formal exam will be constructed (e.g. if it will involve essays, short answers, multiple choice questions [MCQ], problem-solving), and they should understand how much the exam results will contribute to a final score/grade. Formal exams can also be oral, aural or involve practical activities.

Tests

Tests are less formal than exams, and usually occur during the term of study. If they are carried out in the classroom, they are usually supervised by the lecturer. Alternatively, tests can be 'take home', where the paper is given out and the results handed in later (e.g. three hours, 24 hours, three days).

Written assignments and essays

These can vary in length, ranging from a short essay (say, 500–1000 words), which counts for a small proportion of the final mark, to an extended written assignment, which may take the place of a formal exam and may account for the majority of the final mark. Written assignments, being unconstrained by the time requirements imposed by exam procedures, usually require students to demonstrate skills such as information retrieval, wide reading, reflection, reasoned argument, logical planning, clear expression, correct referencing and citation, and redrafting.

Seminars, presentations and workshops

In these activities, which are usually also assessable, one or more students have the responsibility of presenting a paper, leading a discussion or conducting an activity for the student group. A written paper or summary is often presented to the class members and/or the lecturer. These activities also provide opportunities for peer and self-assessment.

Journals/Portfolios/Observation checklists and logbooks

Some programs require students to keep records of their experiences in particular courses or to organise a collection of relevant resource materials over certain time periods as part of the assessment process.

Journals and logbooks usually contain accounts of practical experiences or collections of personal notes and entries which have been recorded on a regular basis over a set period of time. Often used in the social sciences and in education, such items are also used as evidence of the completion of certain professional requirements needed for accreditation purposes.

A portfolio is a term used to describe an organised collection of resource materials for use in professional practice. It is important such collections are well structured and ordered so the lecturer can not only see what is included but why it is there. Usually a table of contents or index section will assist in the presentation of a portfolio. Examples of work and useful references can also be included.

Observation checklists are also used to record findings and may be used to record visits with others, witness reactions (of individuals/groups or of certain chemical processes, for example) or as the basis for possible future research and development activities.

Projects/Contracts

In most instances both projects and contracts are assessment tasks individually negotiated between a student and a lecturer. They are often used in postgraduate studies. Before commencing such a task it is essential that both parties have clearly established what work is to be undertaken and how that work will be assessed upon completion and submission.

In most cases the student will first present a problem or area of specific interest to the lecturer for approval. Upon agreement about the proposed topic, the student will normally provide a more detailed written proposal outlining a description of the topic; what exactly is to be investigated; the method of inquiry to be used; a statement about how the work will be presented; and when it will be submitted. Once the terms have been agreed to, both parties can sign the proposal as a record for future reference.

Computer programs/Model development/Artistic compositions

Some courses will require students to design, plan, write, compose or develop particular products or to evaluate existing products. In all cases, any part of a product that is not the sole work of the student must be fully acknowledged and correctly referenced as part of the submission. As with the assessment of written work, the rules relating to plagiarism are particularly important to this type of assessment.

Group work

Group work is regularly used as a teaching and learning strategy at CQUniversity. It adds an extra dimension to assessment as each person has a responsibility to other members of the group to ensure all assessable tasks are completed. Where assessment is involved, it is important for each group member to be able to demonstrate his or her individual contribution to the submitted work.

Assessing group work

Most university assessment measures or evaluates the achievement of individual students. However, modern teaching strategies like group work are increasingly reflecting the emerging importance of generic attributes like the ability to communicate and the ability to work in groups and teams, both of which feature in the University's list of graduate attributes. The assessment of group work would appear to be rather more of a problem than the assessment of the individual student (Nightingale, 1996)¹.

There appear to be two issues involved in the assessment of group work. One is the assessment of the product of group work, if there is one, and the consequent issue of how that mark or grade is to be distributed to or reflected in the marks of the individual group members who produced it. The second issue is the assessment of the contribution to group process/group effectiveness of each individual member. The difficulty usually expressed about these issues is whether the group shares a mark—do all group members end up with the same mark regardless of the productivity or cooperation of individual members? Or does the group, or the lecturer, decide on the allocation of a mark to each member depending on the individual's productivity or cooperation?

The bane of student groups is the 'free loader'—the student who does not pull their weight in the group effort—the fear on the part of the other students is that this student's marks will nevertheless benefit from the work of the group as a whole, and that this is not fair (as indeed it is not). It is probably the most potent reason for the resistance of students to extended group activities as part of their formal learning requirements.

A discussion of these issues with the class would seem to be a first step in deciding how to proceed, as students may have a strong sense of what they prefer and of what is fair in their eyes. It should also be said in passing that students should be given preparation for working in groups.

¹ Nightingale, P., Te Wiata, I., Toohey, S., Ryan, G., Hughes, C., & Magin, D. (1996). *Assessing learning in universities*. Sydney, Australia: University of New South Wales Press.

Self and peer-assessment

Self and peer-assessment can take three basic forms: intra-group, inter-group and individual.

The intra-group assessment is the most common and involves each member of the group or team responding to an agreed set of criteria for each member and themselves. This information can then be used to provide individual marks for group assessment items or just as a formative tool that allows students to reflect on their own performance. Often this type of assessment is both formative and summative.

Sometimes it is useful to ask groups/teams to comment/assess another group's work. This often results in student appreciation of the grades their groups have achieved and less appeals.

Lastly, you might choose to ask your class to peer assess individual performances such as presentations. In this case class sizes would need to be relatively low for any advantage to be realised.

For more information to assist you in designing appropriate assessment tasks for a course, refer to the section on good practice in assessment later in this Guide.

Referencing guidelines

Referencing is not just about technique; it is also about intellectual honesty, demonstrating the scope of a learner's research and how they are working with the material.

It is an important academic (and ethical) convention to acknowledge the use of someone else's ideas and/or words. Whenever learners are referring to the work of another person, they should cite the source to which they are referring. This includes all Internet sources used.

Any direct quote, paraphrase of another's work, or use of another's idea must be acknowledged by a reference in text and an entry in the reference list at the end of the assignment.

Not only does referencing allow assessors to verify a learner's data but it also allows them to show how much effort they have put into developing their final piece of work. The more varied and integrated the citations (and consequently use of different sources), the greater the likelihood that the learner has constructed a scholarly assignment.

Why reference?

References enhance writing and assist the reader by:

- showing the amount of research work done
- strengthening the academic argument
- showing the reader the source of information
- allowing the reader to consult sources independently
- allowing the reader to verify data
- ensuring the writer cannot be accused of plagiarism.

When is a reference required?

- When quoting—(using someone else's exact words)
- When reproducing information—(for example, using figures, tables or diagrams)
- When paraphrasing—(using someone else's ideas but in the writer's own words)
- When summarising—(giving a brief account of someone else's ideas).

It is essential that you know the specific style that your faculty has directed students to use in their course. Faculties and schools specify the reference style in the course materials, and some put the required style online or is produced as a hard copy that students can purchase. Students are also directed to their required referencing style in the Course Profile.

CQUniversity's Library has extensive information on the referencing expectations of the University and all the schools and faculties at:

<http://www.cqu.edu.au/referencing/>.

If students require further help, they may contact you or the Communications Learning Centre (CLC) or Learning Skills Unit (LSU).

Referencing the Internet

The Internet is a wonderful source of information but in academic assignments, it is important the information is scholarly and maintains the integrity of academic work.

It is important that you and the learner evaluate Internet sources in terms of:

- reliability and accuracy of information
- academic integrity and bias.

The Library website contains valuable information regarding evaluating Internet material for academic purposes.

Results and grades

The University's *Grades and Results Policy* sets out the range of interim results and grades that are applied when assessing student work. To ensure you have the most up-to-date, authoritative information, refer directly to the policy on the University policy website at: <http://policy.cqu.edu.au/>.

Interim results are used to show the outcome of the student's attempt at a course of study. The result may be a grade based on academic achievement or an outcome determined on other grounds (e.g. course withdrawal with or without academic penalty).

Grades are a subset of results, and reflect a judgment of academic achievement by a student enrolled in a course. Grades used by CQUniversity may be criterion-referenced or norm-referenced.

Unsatisfactory academic progress

CQUniversity has an obligation to maintain its credibility and the integrity of its programs and courses by maintaining and insisting upon appropriate levels of achievement from its students in their academic study. The University also acknowledges that, for a range of reasons and at different times during their program of study, some students have difficulty achieving satisfactory academic progress.

CQUniversity addresses this problem by monitoring academic progress to identify students at risk of unsatisfactory academic progress and providing a range of services to support students to improve their academic performance. Where appropriate levels of achievement are not being met by students, they may be called upon to show cause why their enrolment should not be cancelled.

In the process of assessing student work, providing feedback or in communication with students during the term, academic staff are often the first people to recognise if a student may need assistance to improve their academic performance. For this reason, it is important that academic staff are aware of the University's policy and processes that can effectively support a student, particularly in the early stages of difficulty, to improve their performance. For further details, refer to the University's *Monitoring Academic Progress Policy* on the policy website at: <http://policy.cqu.edu.au/>.

Other contacts and information resources for students

Each faculty and school has an office contact point. Details are available in the Course Profile provided for each course.

Each course has a Course Adviser who is able to advise students on a range of issues relating to assessment.

Most faculties, schools and courses have their own web pages which contain specific information relevant to students and assessment.

Responsibilities for assessment at CQUniversity

Responsibilities of Academic Board

Responsibilities of the Faculties

Responsibilities of academic staff

Rights and responsibilities of students

Plagiarism, cheating, and other academic misconduct

Responsibilities of Academic Board

The University through its Academic Board and associated committees should ensure that, across the University:

- assessment practices and requirements are explicit and consistent
- assessment practices meet the criteria for good practice
- resources are available to ensure that staff have information about and access to development activities concerning good practice in assessment
- policies on plagiarism and cheating are explicit and consistent
- appropriate appeal mechanisms are explicit and consistent.

Responsibilities of the Faculties

Faculties have the responsibility to ensure that:

- students are fully informed about the assessment requirements at the start of a course of study before the teaching term begins by providing a Course Profile for each course of study which lists all aspects of assessment in that course
- the guidelines for good practice in assessment are adhered to by all staff with responsibilities for setting and marking assessments
- wherever possible, assessment tasks should also be a learning experience for students rather than primarily be a judgement on their performance
- assessment tasks appropriately reflect the learning outcomes and generic attributes of the course
- students are fully informed about the Faculty's approach to assessment, i.e. whether it is using a norm-referenced or a criterion-referenced approach, and that they understand how grades are allocated in either system
- students are fully informed about sanctions and penalties related to assessment, and that they understand what constitutes plagiarism and cheating
- students are given instruction concerning referencing, and the paraphrasing and acknowledgment of the ideas of others
- intellectual honesty is promoted and modelled
- allegations of suspected cases of plagiarism and other academic misconduct are investigated
- a proforma assignment declaration sheet is provided.

Responsibilities of academic staff

Individual members of staff have responsibilities to:

- familiarise themselves with and carry out the requirements for good practice in assessment in setting and marking all assessment tasks
- be aware of the distinction between formative and summative assessment, and explain clearly to students whether the course assessment is norm-referenced or criterion-referenced and thus how grades are awarded
- ensure that assessment is congruent with the learning outcomes of the course
- advise students at the beginning of the course of study of all assessment requirements and components, including due dates, types of tasks, standard of presentation and relative weightings, and permissible aids in exams
- abide by faculty requirements concerning due dates, assignment cover sheets and the reporting of plagiarism and cheating
- return continuous assessment tasks to students within a reasonable time frame together with appropriate and useful feedback to allow enough time for the student to respond to feedback before completing the next assessment task
- where appropriate, liaise with other staff teaching the same cohort of students in order to rationalise the assessment workload of the cohort across the term
- recommend to Faculty Education Committees and relevant Assessment Committees a final grade for each student and ensure that this is based only on relevant data

- reject any assignment which is not submitted with a cover sheet.

Rights and responsibilities of students

Students have a right to and are responsible for ensuring that they:

- be informed about all aspects of assessment in the course of study at the beginning of the course
- be informed in writing of any subsequent change to the assessment schedule after teaching has commenced in the course
- receive timely and appropriate feedback on assessment tasks
- be informed about the Faculty's approach to assessment and be fully informed about the procedures and requirements of the approach
- be treated fairly and equitably in assessment procedures
- be instructed in faculty requirements concerning referencing, and be fully informed about standards of presentation and layout by course lecturers
- be informed about mechanisms of appeal.

Students have a responsibility to:

- inform themselves about all aspects of CQUniversity's assessment policies and practices, including sanctions and penalties concerning due dates, plagiarism and cheating
- abide by Faculty regulations and requirements concerning assessment including due dates, plagiarism, cheating and the signing of cover sheets
- behave ethically and avoid actions which would unfairly advantage or disadvantage other students
- make themselves aware of the requirements for completion of a course, including exam timetabling and other due dates
- optimise their learning through assessment feedback
- notify the course lecturer promptly about difficulties concerning exam and other due dates, illness or other situations which may impinge on the student's ability to successfully complete a course of study.

Plagiarism, cheating, and other academic misconduct

The University takes a very strong stand on these issues and regards plagiarism and cheating as forms of academic misconduct. The policy *Academic Misconduct—Student* is on the University's policy website at:

<http://policy.cqu.edu.au/>

The policy states that:

CQUniversity values intellectual honesty. Intellectual honesty is the cornerstone of the development and acquisition of knowledge. The University insists on intellectual honesty in scholarship. Consequentially CQUniversity does not tolerate intellectual dishonesty.

According to the University Glossary *plagiarism* is defined as 'the presentation of work, ideas or data of others as one's own without appropriate acknowledgement' (Source: Academic Board). Refer also to the University's *Plagiarism Policy* on the policy website.

Most commonly, plagiarism exists when:

1. the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an exam or test)
2. parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author
3. the whole work, such as an essay, is copied from another source, and
4. a student submits or presents work in one unit which has also been submitted in another unit (although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of, or prior agreement, of the instructor involved.

While it is recognised scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires such references be explicitly and clearly noted. Plagiarism is an extremely serious academic offence.

The *Academic Misconduct—Student Policy* lists some examples of *cheating* as:

1. dishonest or attempted dishonest conduct such as speaking to other students or communicating with them, in tests or exams by any means whatsoever
2. bringing into the exam room any textbook, notebook, memorandum, other written material or mechanical or electronic device not authorised by the exam
3. writing an answer paper or part of it, or consulting any person or materials outside the confines of the exam room without permission to do so, and
4. leaving answer papers exposed to view, or persistent attempts to read other students' exam papers.

The University lists some examples of *other academic misconduct* as:

1. tampering or attempts to tamper with exam scripts, class work, grades or class records
2. failure to abide by directions of an instructor regarding the individuality of work handed in
3. acquisition, attempted acquisition, possession or distribution of exam materials or information without the authorisation of the instructor
4. impersonation of another student in an exam or other class assignment
5. falsification or fabrication of clinical or laboratory reports
6. non-authorized tape recording of lectures, and
7. behaving in a way that compromises the integrity of an exam process whilst under the directions of an exam invigilator.

Furthermore, the policy describes *complicity* as 'any student who voluntarily and consciously aids another student in the commission of one or more of these offences is also guilty of the offence of academic misconduct'.

The responsibilities of the Faculty, lecturer and student together with corrective procedures, sanctions and penalties will be found in the policy listed above and the University's *Plagiarism Policy*.

Good practice in assessment: strategies, guidelines and advice

What is good practice in assessment?

The need for alignment between assessment requirements and learning outcomes

Setting and marking assessment tasks

- Formal exams: a comment
- Moderation
- Validity and reliability
- Guidelines to ensure validity
- Issues in setting exam papers
- Guidelines to ensure reliability

Writing multiple choice questions (MCQs)

- MCQ item writing checklist

Feedback

- Guidelines for giving verbal feedback

Helping students to become realistic self-assessors

Choosing appropriate forms of assessment

- Types of assessment tasks

Assessing group work

Using marking ranges, adding scores, standardising and scaling

Deadlines, sanctions and requirements for continuous assessment

Equity and disability

Short reading list on assessment

- Assessment of student performance in general
- Assessing PBL and small groups
- Oral examining.

What is good practice in assessment?

Good practice is achieved when:

- assessment design includes both formative and summative procedures
- the requirements of validity and reliability in assessment are adhered to
- the processes are fair to the student and to the course, and
- assessment aids student learning through the tasks set, the nature and amount of feedback given, and through the opportunity to be self-critical and reflective.

The need for alignment between assessment requirements and learning outcomes

Summative assessment tasks should reflect the learning outcomes of the course, in terms of the knowledge and skills specified. For example, if a course outline listed outcomes which required students to *identify, solve, differentiate, evaluate* within the discipline, then the assessment tasks should require students to demonstrate these cognitive skills, not merely to recall information. Summative assessment tasks should also reflect the relative importance of the learning outcome; it should be clear to students which outcomes are more important and thus where they should invest their time.

The mark given to a summative assessment task should reflect the relative importance of the learning outcome and the time expected of the student in carrying it out. For example, it would be unfair on students to require an essay of, say, 1500 words on a substantial issue to be worth 5%—the reward is disproportionate to the effort / time required to produce it.

Setting and marking assessment tasks

Formal exams: a comment

Formal examining as a final assessment which contributes to a score out of 100 has declined in comparative importance with the emergence of continuous assessment and the more recent understandings about the effect of assessment on student learning. Nevertheless a formal exam period at the end of each term may be programmed at CQUniversity, and in many courses the results of formal exams contribute significantly to the final mark.

There may still be something to be said for formal exams, that is, that they test all students under uniform conditions and are thus equitable, or, that they are an efficient form of assessment. However, the argument is less likely to be made nowadays that they promote an intention to learn meaningfully in the subject, as research has shown that this is less likely to happen when preparing for a formal exam, and more likely to happen when other assessment tasks are given which allow for a more thoughtful approach and are not so time-constrained. Most lecturers would agree that the learning outcomes in their course extend beyond the mere acquisition and recall of information, which can of course be tested effectively in a formal exam. However, these learning outcomes usually include higher levels of cognitive activity, which require skills like critique, analysis, research, information retrieval, reflection and creativity, for example, for their acquisition and demonstration. Formal time-constrained exams are less likely to allow students to deploy these skills and thus are less likely to allow students to demonstrate higher cognitive skills effectively. However, it may well be the case that one of the major if unstated reasons for retaining so much formal final examining is that in this assessment mode one can be reasonably confident that the product is the student's own work.

Moderation

When marking student assessment, moderation is used to assist you in achieving valid and reliable outcomes. Put simply, moderation is a quality management process to ensure comparability of assessment results within and across campuses/teaching sites and delivery modes. It involves taking a sample of student responses to assessment tasks in a course and comparing achievement by examining the standard of students' work. Moderation ensures that markers make consistent judgments about the standard of student work.

For further information, refer to the following policies on the CQUniversity policy website (<http://policy.cqu.edu.au/>):

- Australian International Campuses and CGH (GMC) Campuses Academic Roles and Responsibilities Policy
- Multi-Campus/Teaching Site Academic Roles and Responsibilities Policy.

Validity and reliability

Summative assessment tasks must conform to the principles of *validity* and *reliability*, so that one can have confidence that the final mark is an accurate reflection of a student's achievement.

Valid assessment examines what the course purports to be about. Assessment tasks should reflect the weighting and importance of the course learning outcomes and the major content areas of the course. Issues of validity thus centre on the choice, construction, wording and layout of the assessment tasks, including exams.

Guidelines to ensure validity

- Summative assessment in a course should usually include a variety of forms of assessment to reflect the variety of skills and abilities expressed in the learning outcomes and the generic aims of the course or program.
- Each piece and form of assessment should be appropriately related to the learning outcomes of the course.
- Faculties should devise systems to produce a formal exam paper which ensure that at least two cognate colleagues review it and that it is checked for spelling, layout and instructions by two other independent persons.
- All staff teaching in a course should be consulted about the setting of assessment tasks.
- Choice in assessment allows students to follow and develop interests and is thus intrinsically more motivating for the learning process. However, there may be core material which must be mastered and assessed in which case choice is less important than the careful sampling of the core material.

Issues in setting exam papers

As formal examining remains an important part of the assessment process, the following set of questions are suggested to assist in producing valid exam papers:

- Who sets the paper? Who has responsibility? How do others contribute? How many people see the paper before it is printed?
- When is it set? How far through the course/ when in the term?
- How well does the paper reflect course learning outcomes? What are the major learning outcomes specified in the course?
- Will your exam paper consist of essays, or short answers, or problems, or MCQs? Why?
- How much choice will there be? Why? Will students be told?
- Will students know in advance what is to be on the paper? Why?
- Who decides on the marking scheme, and when? In how much detail?
- How important will memory be for students in this exam? What, if anything, will students be allowed to take into the exam with them?
- Do you encourage students to work through old exam papers? Why?
- Should the lecturers concerned work through the paper before it is printed? Before it is marked?
- Are instructions clear and unambiguous? Is spelling correct? Is the layout clear? Are the tasks appropriate for the time available?

Reliability is a function of the extent to which students would achieve the same result on an "identical but different" assessment task, that is, they would receive a consistent result for the same performance on another task which had equivalent requirements of knowledge and skills. Reliability is thus inherent in the way the assessment task is marked.

Written exams and tests in which there are possibilities for disagreement about what constitutes a proper or superior response have considerable potential for unreliability, that is, that one person will evaluate a piece of written work differently from another person although both are experts in the field. This includes all written work, as well as other forms of creativity and performance, for example, works of art and clinical performance. Unreliability can be diminished if there is clear prior agreement between markers about criteria and standards.

Guidelines to ensure reliability

- Markers for an assessment task should meet before marking begins to discuss their approach to the marking of the task (e.g. exam scripts/papers/problems/essays/reports/design/performance).
- This discussion should include establishing common standards, use of the marking range and dealing with difficult cases. All markers should then work through an identical sample of scripts and compare and discuss their results, before formal marking begins.
- Policy covering unfinished papers should be decided before marking begins.
- If different markers are marking identical scripts or questions, then a sample of scripts needs to be cross-marked and differences discussed early in the process.
- It is better for different markers to mark a limited set of questions across all papers than to mark the whole paper for a small number of the students.
- However, when one marker must mark more than one question (or must mark the entire paper), reliability is increased if they mark one question for all students before marking the next question.
- If a student's paper, question, essay, design etc. is marked by only one marker, the student is at the mercy of the personal bias and random errors of that marker. Double marking will result in a more reliable mark for that piece of work for all students, not just for those who are failing.
- For the same reasons, unreliability increases if the one staff member designs and teaches the course, and sets and marks the assessments. Some input from cognate colleagues must be sought, at least in the assessment procedures.
- Markers should not record marks for individual questions on the paper itself, as this will lead to a halo effect, that is, a second person coming fresh to a script will have their judgement contaminated by seeing a mark already given to that student.
- When marking, first mark about 20 scripts/answers/questions to get an impression of standards then return these at random to the pile for remarking.
- Keep marking periods short enough to avoid fatigue and loss of discrimination.
- When recommencing working, review some marked scripts to regain a feel for standards.
- Shuffle scripts between questions, (even if there are different markers for different questions), so that they are not consistently marked in the same order.
- In end-of-term standard and supplementary exams, scripts should be identified only by Student Identification Number where it is appropriate.
- Where possible, standards and criteria should be benchmarked with the equivalent course in a comparable institution.
- Oral exams should be conducted within the principles of fair, reliable and equitable assessment. There should be a minimum of two and a maximum of five examiners present.
- Remember that informed professional judgement lies at the heart of university-level assessment.

Writing multiple choice questions (MCQs)

MCQ tests are also known as closed or objective tests. The most common form of MCQ is that of a stem (the question or problem) followed by a short list of possible answers, which contains the one correct or best answer known as the key, and several—usually three—incorrect answers known as distracters.

It is difficult but quite possible to construct MCQs which test complex cognitive levels, but it is often the case that MCQs do not rise above the level of recall. If only one person is associated with writing the MCQs then students are at the mercy of that person's way of communicating in the discipline. It follows that a group of people should be involved in the production of MCQs, both in generating the questions and particularly in trialling the questions. In the trialling process a group of cognate colleagues work through the MCQs **without** knowing the keys. Group discussion of their results then follows, which will refine and focus the MCQs. It is quite possible for good students to be less successful in

MCQ tests because they can see ambiguities in the distractors which less able students are not able to see. Such ambiguities can be diminished through the trialling process.

Short well-constructed MCQ tests can be very appropriate for allowing students to gain formative feedback quickly, that is, students take the short test to find out how they are going, but MCQ tests are often chosen for summative purposes because they are the quickest way of testing large student groups—but note the disadvantages listed below.

Summative MCQ tests work best when an item (question) bank is built up over a period of time from questions subjected to item analysis when they are used in testing (see Isaacs, 1994). This analysis is used to identify the extent to which a question can discriminate between good and poor students in the course, and can indicate its degree of difficulty. This information about each MCQ is subsequently used to construct an appropriate exam or test paper using MCQs from the item bank. It follows from this that an item bank must remain secure, that is, an MCQ exam paper should not be released to students.

MCQ item writing checklist

1. Decide on the learning outcomes you wish to test. What is its level of cognitive complexity?
2. Think of ways of wording the problem or issue you want to test. Be aware that it is much easier to test recall than higher levels of cognitive complexity, and that many MCQs do in fact only test recall.
3. Use either a direct question or an incomplete statement as the item stem, whichever seems more appropriate to the effective presentation of the item.
4. Each item should have only one correct or best answer.
5. Base each item on a single central problem.
6. Avoid negative statements and double negatives.
7. Ensure that the distractors are grammatically consistent with the stem, and of an approximately equal length to each other.
8. Ensure that distractors are plausible and attractive. Avoid absurd, jokey and idiosyncratic distractors—they are easily spotted.
9. Ensure that responses are independent and mutually exclusive.
10. Arrange responses in a logical order if one exists.
11. Use “none of the above” with caution.

In summary:

Advantages of MCQs:

- Can test knowledge quickly with large groups
- Can be used to give quick feedback on student performance
- Can be mechanically scored
- Can be analysed for difficulty and discrimination
- Can be reused/item banked
- With careful writing, can test higher cognitive skills.

Disadvantages/limitations of MCQs:

- Takes a lot of time to construct good MCQs
- Unless care is taken, MCQs tend to test knowledge and recall only
- Can never test literacy, ability of the student to arrange, justify and analyse ideas
- Can never test creativity, or provide evidence of unique thinking processes and progressive problem solving
- Reinforces students’ tendencies to see things in black and white
- Inclines students to take a surface approach to learning, that is, swotting for recall
- Unless items are trialled by cognate colleagues, students are at the mercy of the random bias of the test writer.

Feedback

Feedback can be a powerful tool for learning if it is useful and timely. Useful feedback usually involves explicit comment on what was wrong, why this was the case, and how the student could remedy this. Feedback needs to be given to students as close to the event as possible, otherwise interest in learning from this information will be diminished if not extinguished. It is particularly important that students in their first year of university studies should receive penalty-free feedback on their performance. Such feedback will indicate to them more directly than by other methods what is expected of them in university studies. It is unfair to students to be penalised for not meeting requirements of which they were unaware.

However, many lecturers are coping with larger classes and have less time in which to deal with issues like giving effective feedback. Some techniques for giving feedback in larger classes (Habeshaw et al., 1993) include:

- Use a cover sheet on an essay/project which stipulates the criteria to be used in assessing the task, then give feedback against these headings.
- Write two sentences about the work: What you liked about it, and What could be improved?
- Ask students when they hand work in whether they want feedback and, if so, about what?
- Use class time to give general feedback based on your marking of all students' work.
- Invite students to include a blank audiotape when they hand work in—you can then put a number on the appropriate place in their work, and speak to it on the tape. This allows for much more feedback to be given than could be achieved in writing.

Remember:

Feedback should be given as soon as possible after the completion of the task.

Specific feedback is preferable to general feedback (e.g. "try harder"), and should be focussed on what the student can change.

If feedback is given verbally (e.g. in the clinical or performance setting), lecturers should be aware of the effect of interpersonal competence or lack of it on both sides, and of the consequences of the presence of a third party such as a patient or pet owner.

Guidelines for giving verbal feedback:

- Pay attention to the person.
- Remember the power and motivation of praise.
- Make the getting of feedback a desired learning experience for students.
- Create a climate where students will not feel the need to hide their inadequacies.
- Give the student first option to comment on their performance e.g. "how do you think you went with that?"
 - If you need to criticise, say something positive first.
 - Describe the activity or outcome, not the person—not "you are clumsy" but rather, describe what you saw, and the consequences.
 - Be as specific as possible—not "that was a rather poor performance" but rather, say what it was that made it poor.
 - Only comment on what the person can change.
 - Give feedback as close to the event as possible.
 - Be sensitive to the power relationship between you and the student.

A final point: it is usually claimed that continuous assessment tasks set during the term are formative because they give students feedback before a final exam. However, insofar as these tasks attract marks which contribute to a final mark or grade they are also summative, and encourage students to conceal deficiencies in pursuit of the mark, rather than reveal deficiencies without penalty. Thus, opportunities should be given to students during the term to undertake assessment tasks that do not attract marks which contribute to the final mark, that is, students would undertake these tasks in the service of their own learning.

Helping students to become realistic self-assessors

A major objective of undergraduate education at CQUniversity is to foster independence in students. So it follows that undergraduates should not always depend on the judgements of lecturers for an assessment of their own learning, but should be given some opportunity to learn to do this for themselves.

One non-threatening situation might be that of inviting students—as a group—to nominate the criteria by which they would wish to see a piece of their work evaluated (e.g. by what criteria an essay or an oral presentation or a design project should be judged).

A more rigorous position might be that of expecting students to complete for a piece of work a cover sheet on which they write an estimate of their own performance against the criteria by which the work will be judged. Their estimate will then be judged against the lecturer's estimate of their performance. Finally, a lecturer might expect that students will apply criteria and allocate marks or grades to the work of their peers, and ultimately will apply criteria and allocate marks to work of their own. While, in general, staff are not comfortable with such marks contributing to summative assessment, and often wish to retain the power of veto, nevertheless there are ways of imposing checks and balances which can allow some senior undergraduate student estimates to be counted for summative purposes (Boud, 1995).

Choosing appropriate forms of assessment

What assessment tasks a lecturer chooses will depend on their answers to questions like the following:

- What sorts of assessment tasks best reflect the learning outcomes and generic aims of this course?
- Do I need to find out if students are learning the material during the term, or will that be clear in the final assessment task (exam, project etc.)? When in the term might they need feedback? Do I encourage them to ask for feedback, for example, through some form of purely formative assessment? (See final paragraph in *Feedback* above).
- Is it better to set a major task as the main assessment procedure which allows a thoughtful and integrative approach to the course learning outcomes (e.g. a long essay or project) by the end of the term do I need to find out how much students know about a subject, and whether students can think quickly under duress, that is, in an exam.
- If a formal invigilated exam constitutes the major part of the assessment procedures in a course, can I justify this on pedagogical grounds?
- What sorts of assessment tasks in this course are more likely to encourage a deep approach to learning in the subject?
- What sorts of continuous assessment tasks are able to be marked quickly enough to give students useful feedback? Can IT help me here?
- Do all students in the course need to undertake identical assessment tasks? How much choice should they have?
- How much assessment is enough assessment? Enough for whom, and enough for what?

Types of assessment tasks

Conventional or traditional approaches to assessment include exams, tests, problem sheets and essays, together with the demonstration of professional skills and abilities in vocational areas like architecture, teaching, medicine, dentistry etc.

However, there has been a movement away from conventional assessment to the adoption of forms of assessment which are more authentic in that they mirror and integrate the learning outcomes in a realistic way, particularly in professional programs. This can include variations on conventional tasks, for example, instead of writing a “compare and contrast” essay on some aspect of social policy, students would be asked to produce a briefing paper for the local council, or an opinion piece for the newspaper, or prepare a case for an interest group. Another interesting approach to real-life situational assessment is seen in PBL²-taught courses where the assessment consists of a time-dependent problem-solving activity, often of a day's length (Feletti & Ryan, 1994).

Assessment formats which are more authentic in that they require students to carry out tasks and procedures which would be required of them in the workplace or which simulate those requirements might include:

- projects
- case studies
- simulations
- journals

² PBL refers to problem-based learning.

- designs
- presentations
- interviews
- models
- diagnosis and treatment
- clinical caseload
- case management
- reports
- moots
- slice of life (e.g. setting up a business)
- performance
- laboratory analysis.

Well-designed authentic assessment will encourage involvement and interest, and enhance student learning.

Assessing group work

Helpful resources on assessment of group work are available on the Learning and Teaching website at: <http://content.cqu.edu.au/FCWViewer/view.do?page=7941>.

Resources and presentations about various aspects of assessment are available on the Learning and Teaching website at: <http://content.cqu.edu.au/FCWViewer/view.do?page=8012>.

Using marking ranges, adding scores, standardising and scaling

Refer to the University's Learning and Teaching website (<http://learning.cqu.edu.au/>) which publishes a range of marking-related resources, including a workshop and materials presented by Associate Professor Janice Orrell of the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education.

Deadlines, sanctions and requirements for continuous assessment

Faculties will be responsible for devising policy concerning their approach to deadlines for the handing in of student work in continuous assessment, the sanctions to be applied to late submission, and the reasons for granting extensions to such deadlines. It is important that such policy and its implementation should be seen to be fair and transparent, thus it should be widely promulgated within the Faculty and be seen to be operating without individual bias. Granting an extension should be defensible to the Faculty Course Adviser if ever appealed by either a disaffected student or a grantee.

The ability to formally resubmit a continuous assessment task will be subject to the pedagogical style of the individual lecturer, but must be clearly flagged in the Course Profile, and will be subject to the same requirements concerning deadlines as outlined above.

Equity and disability

It is the responsibility of all Faculties to ensure that appropriate accommodations are made in assessing students with a disability so that they will not suffer disadvantage as a result of their disability compared to the assessment performance of their classmates. All academic staff must be informed of the personnel and resources within the University which underpins this commitment, and this aspect of assessment should feature regularly in the development programs offered to academic staff.

It is the responsibility of academic staff to ensure that students from minority groups and non English-speaking backgrounds have a thorough understanding of the requirements of assessment that will be made of them in a subject, and that the assessment tasks are free of social and cultural bias.

Short reading list on assessment

Two excellent books on university teaching:

Biggs, J. (1999). *Teaching for quality learning at university*. Buckinghamshire, United Kingdom: SRHE and Open University Press.

Ramsden, P. (1992). *Learning to teach in higher education*. London: Routledge.

Assessment of student performance in general

Boud, D. (1985). *Implementing student self-assessment. Green Guide No 5*. Canberra, Australia: Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia.

Boud, D. (1995). Ensuring that assessment contributes to learning. In P. Forsberg & L-O. Dahlgren (Eds.), *Proceedings of the international conference on problem-based learning in higher education*. Linköping, Sweden: University of Linköping.

Brown, G., Bull, J., & Pendlebury, M. (1997). *Assessing student learning in higher education*. London: Routledge.

Courts, P., & McInerney, K. (1993). *Assessment in higher education: Politics, pedagogy and portfolios*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger.

Crooks, T. J. (1979). *Assessing student performance, Green Guide No 8*. Canberra, Australia: Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia.

Gronlund, N. (1988). *How to construct achievement tests*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Habeshaw, S., Gibbs, G., & Habeshaw, T. (1993). *53 interesting ways to assess your students*. Bristol, United Kingdom: Technical and Educational Services.

Heywood, J. (1989). *Assessment in higher education*, London: John Wiley & Sons.

Hounsell, D., McCulloch, M., & Scott, M. (Eds.). (1996). *The ASSHE Inventory: Changing assessment practices in Scottish higher education*. Edinburgh, United Kingdom: Centre for Teaching, Learning and Assessment. The University of Edinburgh and Napier University.

Hudson, N. J. (2000). Assessment: putting it all together. *Medical Education*, 34(11), 953–954.

Isaacs, G. (1994). *Multiple choice testing: a guide to the writing and the analysis of multiple choice tests, Green Guide No. 16*. Canberra, Australia: Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia.

James, R., McInnis, C., & Devlin, M. (2002). *Assessing learning in Australian universities*. The Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne, Australia. Retrieved November 15, 2004, from <http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/assessinglearning/index.html>

Miller, C. M. L., & Parlett, M. (1974). *Up to the mark: a study of the examination game*. London: Society for Research into Higher Education.

Nightingale, P., Te Wiata, I., Toohey, S., Ryan, G., Hughes, C., & Magin, D. (1996). *Assessing learning in universities*, Sydney, Australia: University of New South Wales Press.

Reynolds, M. (2000). Assessment: a critical perspective. *Studies in Higher Education*, 25(3), 267–278.

Rowntree, D. (1987). *Assessing students: how shall we know them?* London, New York: Harper & Rowe.

Assessing PBL and small groups

Boud, D., Cohen, R., & Sampson, J. (1999). Peer learning assessment. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 24(4), 413–426.

Conway, R. (1993). Peer assessment of an individual's contribution to a group work project. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 18(1), 45–56.

Feletti, G. (1997). The triple jump exercise: a case study in assessing problem solving. In G. Ryan (Ed.). *Learner assessment and program evaluation in problem-based learning*. Newcastle, Australia: Australian Problem Based Learning Network.

Feletti, G., & Ryan, G. (1994). The triple jump exercise in enquiry-based learning: a case study showing directions for further research. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 19(3), 225–234.

Freeman, M. (1995). Peer assessment by groups of group work. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 20(3), 289–300.

Oral examining

Humphris, G., & Kaney, S. (2000). The objective structured video exam for the assessment of communication skills. *Medical Education*, 34(11), 939–945.

Joughin, G. (1998). Dimensions of oral assessment. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 23(4), 367–378.

Note: *Viva voce*, as a form of exam, is hardly addressed in assessment literature. When examining for content knowledge it is sometimes used for supplementary/confirmatory purposes, and in clinical and pseudo-clinical situations (like OSCE). It is usually mentioned in relation to assessment of foreign language learning and generic skills (e.g. presentation, communication). Issues of reliability and validity regarding *viva voce* may be addressed in passing in the relevant sections or chapters of books on assessment in universities, or on teaching and learning in universities.

Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

- *How do students know what assessment is involved in a course?*

The Course Profile will provide a detailed explanation of all the assessment requirements for satisfactory completion of each course. Additional information may also be obtained from the lecturer in charge of the course.

- *Are off-campus students assessed differently from on-campus students?*

In some cases, depending upon the nature of the content and the availability of resource materials, off-campus students may be assessed in different ways to on-campus students. Any differences in assessment will be clearly outlined and explained in the Course Profile provided for each course.

- *How negotiable is assessment in CQUniversity courses of study?*

While it is difficult to generalise across all courses, it is fair to say that some allow for assessment to be negotiated with students. Usually this will involve the student and the lecturer discussing and agreeing on the completion of particular activities to be used for assessment purposes together with an approach for presenting or documenting all relevant outcomes. More information on negotiated assessment can be obtained from the lecturer in charge of each course.

- *Is attendance linked to course assessment?*

Attendance is a formal expectation of all on-campus students at CQUniversity. It is also a prerequisite for successful completion of some courses. Lectures, tutorials, residential schools, laboratory sessions, fieldwork and other practical classes are an integral part of the total learning experience offered at CQUniversity. Absence from scheduled classes can impact heavily on students' overall result in a course of study. Compulsory attendance at residential schools/workshops is also a requirement of some courses offered by distance. Any absence (planned or unexpected) should be communicated as soon as possible to the lecturer so appropriate arrangements can be made. More information on attendance requirements can be obtained from the lecturer in charge of each course.

- *What arrangements does CQUniversity have for credit transfer, articulation and recognition of prior learning?*

Students can obtain information about credit transfer, articulation and recognition of prior learning in the University Student Handbook at: <http://handbook.cqu.edu.au/>.

Refer to the University's policy website (<http://policy.cqu.edu.au/>) for the relevant policies and manual:

- *Credit for Previous Studies (Credit Transfer) Policy*
- *Recognition of Prior Learning for Credit Policy*
- *Articulation Manual.*

- *Are there special assessment arrangements for students with a disability?*

Consideration will be given to all requests for special assessment arrangements for students who may be temporarily incapacitated or those with a permanent disability. All requests must be made in writing accompanied by a medical certificate or other documentary evidence as may be appropriate. More detailed information on special assessment arrangements for students with a disability can be obtained from the University's Student Support Centre (helpme@cqu.edu.au).

- *What happens if students don't understand the instructions relating to assessment activities?*

After reading the Course Profile thoroughly, any questions concerning the instructions relating to assessment activities should be directed as soon as possible to the lecturer in charge of the course.

- *What happens if students can't meet the requirements for assessment activities?*

If circumstances arise which make it unlikely that a student can meet the requirements for assessment activities the student should immediately contact the lecturer in charge. Depending on the reasons for the difficulty, additional assistance or alternative arrangements may be initiated.

- *What penalties are involved if students withdraw from a course?*

Students may withdraw from a course through CQUcentral at www.cqu.edu.au/erolment/home.htm or telephone the Student Contact Centre, 13 CQUni (13 2786). To withdraw without penalty, notification must be received before the final date for such enrolment changes (shown in the Calendar of Principal Dates). Students should keep a copy of all correspondence relating to enrolment matters, and check to see that their change of enrolment does not affect their entitlements. More information on withdrawing from a course can be obtained from Program Course Advisers or from the Student Contact Centre (scc@cqu.edu.au).

- *What happens if students hand in work late?*

Failure to submit an assessment task on time will most likely incur a penalty, unless there are special circumstances that made late submission unavoidable.

- *How do students get an extension?*

Each faculty handles applications for extensions for assessment tasks in individual courses. The *Faculty Guide for students* or Faculty website will explain the exact procedure for applying for an extension and the grounds under which an extension will be granted.

- *What happens if a student's assignment is lost?*

All students are strongly advised to keep a duplicate of all assignments submitted. If it becomes evident that an assignment has been lost or mislaid, a student will be asked to submit the duplicate copy for assessment. If there is no duplicate copy, the lecturer will consider other appropriate action to assess work by other means such as *viva voce* (oral) exam.

- *What will happen if students do not complete all compulsory assessment activities?*

It will largely depend on the circumstances of each case. If non-completion is due to illness or other acceptable circumstance, extra time may be given or an alternative form of assessment agreed upon. A non-passing result may be recorded. If non-completion is the result of unacceptable circumstances, it is possible for a result of AF (absent fail) or WF (withdrawn fail) being recorded.

- *What happens if a student fails one compulsory assessment task but pass all others?*

Much will depend on the weighting given to each assessment task and to the overall assessment requirements of the course involved. The Course Profile will give all the requirements for satisfactory completion of the course. These requirements vary from one course to another and from one faculty to another. Depending on the circumstances and course requirements, a student may be allowed to submit further (supplementary) assessment in a form determined by the Faculty.

- *What happens if a student cannot cope with the overall assessment workload?*

In the first instance the student should consult with the lecturers in charge of the course being undertaken, or the Course Adviser. Specific reasons for the difficulty with the assessment workload will be ascertained and, if appropriate, alternative arrangements made. It is also possible for them to apply for permission to undertake a reduced study load for one term or one year through the appropriate Education Committee.

- *How do students know what forms of presentation of work are acceptable?*

Presentation is a very important aspect of all student work and care should be taken to follow the various requirements that certain assessment tasks demand. Most faculties have specific requirements regarding format, referencing and citation styles. Make sure students become familiar with these requirements and follow them as closely as possible. Check the Course Profile for any specific requirements regarding presentation.

- *Can students submit assessment tasks electronically?*

As a general rule, the majority of courses require hardcopy submissions although in certain circumstances electronic lodgement of assessed work is permissible or required, in which case this information must be included in the Course Profile. Flex students using Blackboard should consult the Course Profile.

- *How do students know what referencing style to use? Why is it important?*

Accurate referencing and citation of all resources and reference materials used to complete assessable written work for a course is an expectation of all CQUniversity students. Faculties and Schools adopt different referencing and citation styles according to the disciplines involved. If a particular style is specified, students should make sure it is correctly and consistently applied for each task for that course.

- *What if students don't sign the plagiarism statement on the assignment cover sheet?*

Signing the plagiarism statement on the assignment cover sheet indicates ownership and responsibility for the work being submitted. Failure to do so can delay finalisation of assessment as lecturers may choose not to accept the submission without such a declaration.

- *Do students get any feedback on assessed work from the lecturer? When/How?*

It is the responsibility of every lecturer to provide feedback on assessment work when it is returned to the student. While turnaround times vary, it is agreed in principle that feedback should always be provided before the next assessment task is due. If a student believes the feedback provided on an assessment task is inadequate, he/she should make contact with the lecturer in charge of the course to discuss the matter in more detail.

- *What happens if students don't agree with the grade given to their work?*

If a student does not agree with a grade given to an assessment task, the first step would be to discuss it with the lecturer in charge. If the student is still not satisfied with the grade awarded, he/she is entitled to take the matter further and commence more formal procedures within the Faculty or School to have the work reassessed. Each faculty is obliged to have a process in place to deal with such instances. For more information on the review of grades process, refer to the CQUniversity Student Handbook at: <http://handbook.cqu.edu.au> or go to the University's Review of Grade website: <http://www.cqu.edu.au/rog/>.

A formal review of grade application form is available at: <http://www.cqu.edu.au/rog/ReviewOfGradeForm.pdf>

- *What happens if a student fails an exam? Can they sit a supplementary exam?*

Much will depend on the weighting given to each assessment task and to the overall assessment requirements of the course involved. There are no normally scheduled supplementary exams. It will depend on the circumstances of each case and the discretion of the lecturer as to whether some form of supplementary assessment is required. A supplementary exam is not available where students must attend and pass a formal exam as part of course requirements (e.g. program accreditation requirement).

- *What is the difference between exclusion, disciplinary probation, suspension and expulsion?*

If you want more information about these issues go to the CQUniversity Student Handbook website and look in 'Policies' at: <http://handbook.cqu.edu.au/> or refer directly to the *Academic Misconduct—Student Policy* on the University's policy website (<http://policy.cqu.edu.au/>).

- *How are results recorded?*

Lecturers are responsible for recording results from all forms of assessment leading to a student's final result in a course and providing such information to the Student Records Officer, through the Dean of the Faculty. Grades for individual pieces of assessment undertaken throughout the term are usually communicated to students on return of assignment tasks. Students may also access their results on the web through CQUcentral.

CQUniversity policies, rules and regulations concerning assessment

Websites for policies, rules and procedures:*Academic policies and procedures for students and staff*

<http://policy.cqu.edu.au/>

Student Handbook rules and procedures

<http://handbook.cqu.edu.au/>

Websites for assessment policies and procedures:*Assessment of Coursework Policy*

<http://policy.cqu.edu.au/Policy/policy.jsp?policyid=701>

Grades and Results Policy

<http://policy.cqu.edu.au/Policy/policy.jsp?policyid=437>

Review of Grade Policy

<http://policy.cqu.edu.au/Policy/policy.jsp?policyid=465>

Websites of particular interest to students:*Assessment advice for students*

<http://clc.cqu.edu.au/>

Review of grades process for students

<http://www.cqu.edu.au/rog/>

Formal review of grade—application form

<http://www.cqu.edu.au/rog/ReviewOfGradeForm.pdf>

Monitoring academic progress (unsatisfactory academic progress)

<http://policy.cqu.edu.au/Policy/policy.jsp?policyid=194>

Appeals policy and procedures

<http://policy.cqu.edu.au>

Responsibilities of students—Student Charter

<http://policy.cqu.edu.au>

Exams policies—see Assessment of Coursework Policy

<http://policy.cqu.edu.au>

Exam information

<http://handbook.cqu.edu.au/>

Past exams

<http://www.cqu.edu.au/studinfo/admin/examinations/index.htm>

Student misconduct

Full details of the University's policies on *Plagiarism* and *Academic Misconduct—Student* can be found in the CQUniversity Student Handbook and on the policy website at: <http://policy.cqu.edu.au>.

Other websites of interest:

CQUniversity statutes

<http://policy.cqu.edu.au>

Online Student Handbook—(Program information)

<http://handbook.cqu.edu.au>

Student Ombudsman

<http://www.cqu.edu.au/ombudsman/>

CQUniversity Student Association

<http://association.cqu.edu.au/>

Health and safety

<http://facultysite.cqu.edu.au/view.do?site=47>

Websites for Faculties

Faculty of Arts, Business, Informatics & Education

<http://fabie.cqu.edu.au>

Sciences, Engineering & Health

<http://fseh.cqu.edu.au/>