MEMBERS OF THE ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION STANDING COMMITTEE
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) (Winthrop Professor Jane Long) – Chair
Associate Chair of Academic Board (Professor Brett Kirk)
Director of Centre for Advancement of Teaching and Learning (Winthrop Professor Denise Chalmers)
Director of Institutional Research Unit (Dr Greg Marie)
President of the Guild (Ms Emma Greeney)
Director of Student Services (Mr Jon Stubbs)
Faculty representatives from the University’s Teaching and Learning Committee:
- Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning), Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Mathematics (Dr Angus Tavner) – Deputy Chair
- Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning), Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences (Dr Brenton Knott)
- Associate Dean (Teaching and Learning), Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences (Associate Professor Sandra Carr)
Assistant Professor Eileen Thompson (CATLyst, UWA Business School)
Professor Sid Nair (Higher Education Development (Evaluations), CATL)

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION STANDING COMMITTEE MEETING –
THURSDAY 10TH JUNE 2010

This is to confirm that the next meeting of the Assessment and Evaluation Standing Committee will be held from 10.00am to 11.30am on Thursday 10th June 2010 in the Office of Development meeting room (Level 1)

Part 1 of the agenda is to be dealt with en bloc by motion of the Chair. There are no items in Part 2. Part 3 is for discussion. A member may request the transfer of an item from Part 1 to Part 3.

Jan Cardy
Executive Officer
**AGENDA**

**WELCOME**
The Chair will welcome members to the meeting.

**APOLOGIES**
The Chair will record any apologies. Members are reminded that apologies should be forwarded to the Executive Officer prior to the meeting.

**DECLARATIONS OF POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT OR PERCEIVED CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**
The Chair will invite members to declare potential for conflict or perceived conflicts of interest, if applicable, with regard to items on the agenda.

1. **MINUTES – REF: F29275**
   Confirmation of the minutes of the Assessment and Evaluation Standing Committee meeting held on Monday 1st March 2010.

2. **ITEMS/BUSINESS IN PROGRESS FOR NOTING – REF: F7739, F25751, F27278, F29500, F29501, F8744, F7739**
   Members are asked to note the following items as ‘business in progress’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM/BUSINESS IN PROGRESS</th>
<th>ACTION</th>
<th>RESPONSIBLE</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F7739 Assessment Practices within respective faculties</td>
<td>Feedback is being sought from Associate Deans (Teaching and Learning) on the extent to which the advice, provided in the paper entities “Response to assessment Committee on Examinations” had impacted on assessment practices within respective faculties – no feedback was received from faculties. Chair to follow up with Associate Deans</td>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>In progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F25751 Special Consideration</td>
<td>Review Special Considerations policy and procedures in the context of faculty feedback and develop a matrix to determine appropriate adjustment of marks in relation to special consideration</td>
<td>Second Stage Working Party convened by Academic Secretary, Ms Sylvia Lang</td>
<td>In Progress – Funding has been granted for dedicated project officer to progress procedures and matrix to give effect to the policy - due Nov 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F27278 Review of Evaluation of Teaching at UWA</td>
<td>Report referred to the University’s Executive</td>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>In progress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
F29500  
Development Assessment Framework (DAF)  
Finalise DAF  
Director of CATL  
In progress – due mid 2010

F29501  
Review of the University’s Assessment Policies  
Develop policy  
Chair  
In progress – informal working party convened

F7739  
Publication of Examination timetables  
Establish student perspective on:  
- The ability to withdraw from a unit at a late date, OR  
- The earlier release of the examination timetable  
Guild President  
In progress

PART 1 – ITEM FOR COMMUNICATION TO BE DEALT WITH EN BLOC

3. APPROACH TO ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK TO STUDENTS – REF:F28685

The Teaching and Learning Committee’s Teaching and Learning Development Fund supports priorities in teaching and learning focussing on strategies outlined in the Education Section of the University's Operational Priorities Plan. In support of the operational objective (EDU 3) "to extend high-quality teaching approaches and improve learning outcomes", enhanced feedback to students has been targeted for further action.

At its meeting held on 1st April 2010, the Teaching and Learning Committee considered and endorsed (R7/10) the Teaching and Learning Development Fund 2010 Scheme on Assessment and Feedback.

For members’ information, the following submissions have been received to date and grants allocated:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty/School</th>
<th>Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Architecture, Landscape and Visual Arts</td>
<td>Develop, test and implement online assessment and feedback software and comprehensive procedures for first year design studio in ALVA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences</td>
<td>Standardising and Improving Assessment and Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UWA Business School</td>
<td>Adaptation of SPARK (Self and Peer Assessment Resource Kit). SPARK has been developed to improve learning from team assessment tasks and make the assessments fairer for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Assessing Professional Growth and Learning through the Development of an E-portfolio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering, Computing and Mathematics</td>
<td>Development of an assessment strategy for the four integrated Engineering Foundation units in the Engineering Science Major.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Life and Physical Sciences                 | Three projects:  
  - Repeat lectures versus split lectures  
  - Assessment understanding and the concept of standards by Faculty staff  
  - Developing an understanding of Level 1 undergraduate student’s perceptions of assessment |
**PART 2 – ITEMS FOR DECISION TO BE DEALT WITH EN BLOC**

No items

**PART 3 – ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

4. MODERATION PRACTICES – REF: F8744

Moderation of assessment is a quality review and assurance process that seeks to ensure that assessment procedures and practices are valid and reliable and are aligned with stated standards, principles and ethos.

In early 2010 the Chair of the Assessment and Evaluation Standing committee, W/Professor Jane E Long, requested information from faculties regarding their existing moderation practices:

‘moderation practices and any other activities that may address students’ perceptions about bias in formal exam marking, fears of such bias and their overall confidence level in the University’s formal assessment processes.’

Tackling fears about bias by informing students of the extent of existing moderation is a measure strongly supported by the Guild as one means to ensure confidence in our approaches to assessment.

At it’s meeting in March 2010 members considered a document which summarised the feedback received from four faculties. The content of the feedback, and the wider subject of moderation, was discussed and the following points were noted:

- The feedback received did not address moderation practices / procedures currently in practice
- There may be a lack of clarity on what moderation is
- To what levels were assessments moderated internally throughout UWA?
- Are assessment practices comparable across faculties?
- Have moderation practices been embedded within UWA guidelines on assessment?

Members resolved (R 2/10) ‘to send an email, to Associate Deans (Teaching and Learning) requesting further feedback on moderation practices and the email would clearly define moderation and seek feedback on the issues raised.

A second round of feedback has been received and a summary document is attached (Attachment B)

For discussion
5. REVIEW OF THE UNIVERSITY’S ASSESSMENT POLICIES: F29501

At its meeting held on 8th December 2009, members considered a paper entitled ‘Assessment Policy at UWA’ and the minute of the discussion is available on the web at http://www.teachingandlearning.uwa.edu.au/staffnet/committees/assessment/_nocache.

Members will also be aware that the Chair has convened an informal working party to assist the development of an appropriate policy.

To progress this item further, a paper titled ‘Core Assessment Policies at Australian Universities’ has been prepared by Dr Zoe Anderson, Research Assistant, Centre for Advancement of Teaching and Learning (CATL) and is attached for members information (Attachment C).

For discussion

6. THE RESTRUCTURE OF STUDENT PERCEPTION OF TEACHING (SPOT) – REF: F24800

The first version of student feedback to teachers was developed in the late 80s as a formative tool to assist teachers to obtain student feedback so as to affect improvement. Since its introduction a number of concerns (see Appendix A of the attached document) were raised on the tool and effectiveness of the tool for quality improvements in teaching (Orrell, J., 2009; Stubbs et.al, 2008).

A paper, prepared by Professor Sid Nair, Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning (CATL), presents a framework for the redesign of the survey tool so as to achieve a systematic approach across the university which in turn will provide a number of benefits to the teaching and university community. A copy of the paper is attached (Attachment D).

For discussion

7. DISTRIBUTION OF MARKS/GRADES AT UWA, 2009 – REF: F7739, F8744, F29501

The paper ‘Distribution of Marks/Grades at UWA, 2009, developed by the Institutional Research Unit, is circulated (Attachment E) for members’ information. Members will recall a similar paper pertaining to the previous year was circulated and discussed within the group. The Chair will invite Dr Greg Marie, Director of the Institutional Research Unit to introduce this item and open a discussion of the 2009 data

For discussion

8. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Assessment and Evaluation Standing Committee will be held on Thursday 12th August 2010 from 10am to 11.30am in the Office of Development meeting room (Level 1).
Assessment policy review: Good practice principles and policy for UWA

Introduction:
As UWA moves forward towards 2012 with the implementation of New Courses, it will no longer be feasible or practical to leave assessment policy to the local level, as cross-school/discipline study becomes standard through broadening courses, and degrees are not issued through the Faculty level. This indicates that the creation of a strong framework of university-wide assessment policy is timely.

At present, UWA has a short and basic set of twelve core principles governing assessment policy, called Minimum Essentials for Good Practice in Assessment. This is supplemented by two documents covering guidelines: Guidelines on Assessment and Guidelines on Learning Skills.

This review sets out a possible framework of good practice in regard to assessment policy at Australian universities. The following principles have been identified through a review of the literature and existing policies as key components of an effective assessment policy.

1. Philosophical features
   1.1 Assessment philosophy
   1.2 Assessment purpose

2. Assessment strategies
   2.1 Design and loading of assessment tasks
   2.2 Formative assessment guidelines
   2.3 Feedback
   2.4 Timetabling
   2.5 Assignment submission and collection

3. Grading practices and frames of reference
   3.1 Conceptual framework
   3.2 Grade distribution
   3.3 Grade level descriptors
   3.4 Assessment criteria

4. Management and quality assurance
   4.1 Staff development
   4.2 Assessment design moderation
   4.3 Assessment grading moderation
   4.4 Staff and students roles and responsibilities

5. Additional areas for consideration
   5.1 Consideration for Special Circumstance
   5.2 Procedure for examinations

Each will be described with examples from Australian universities in the context of UWA.
1. Philosophical features

1.1 Assessment philosophy
A clear underlying assessment philosophy links strongly with the University’s overall values and mission statements.

UWA: UWA currently has no assessment philosophy stated explicitly in policy.

Example of good practice:

University of New South Wales

The University aims to preserve scholarly values and foster curiosity, experimentation, critical appraisal and integrity, and to cultivate these standards in its students. UNSW acknowledges that the development, implementation and marking of assessment activities is a fundamental part of learning.1

1.2 Assessment purpose

A statement and description of the aims and purpose of assessment makes its role within the learning processes explicit.

UWA: UWA has no specific statement of purpose around assessment policy, though the Guidelines of Assessment states that

“Formal assessment is an integral part of the teaching and learning process and as such should enhance effective learning and contribute, both short and long term, to improved teaching.”

It further briefly refers to the UWA Educational Principles.

Examples of good practice:

University of Melbourne

The University’s assessment and grading are informed by four fundamental principles:

- Assessment tasks are designed to measure accurately the knowledge and skills that a student has obtained up to the point at which the task is completed
- The marking of assessment tasks is designed to quantify the level of student learning against identified objectives for each task or component of a task
- Grading is designed to record and report whether or not students have demonstrated an overall level of performance that warrants successful completion of a subject and to allow excellent achievement to be recognised and rewarded
The University’s assessment and grading practices will treat all students equally and fairly.²

Macquarie

Importantly, this policy is based on the premise that all assessment practices must be aligned with curriculum intentions and measured against externally validated standards and not merely directed at arriving at a grade. Equally, this policy is based on the premise that it is important that through assessment students are encouraged to engage in their education, rather than merely pursue grades. ³

2. Assessment strategies

2.1 Design and loading of assessment tasks

While design of specific tasks is rare within university policies, it is more common to make specific the weighting/loading of assessment tasks across the institution.

UWA: UWA policy states

- “That in each unit careful consideration be given to the number of assessment components, to guard against the possibility of under or over-assessing.”

- In regard to exams, it states “That it is the responsibility of unit co-ordinators to devise examination papers that are sufficiently different from previous papers in the same unit, especially where previous papers are available.”

However, UWA policy does not provide sufficient university-wide detail to ensure the a coherent framework in regard to the form and weight of assessment tasks.

Example of good practice:

University of Adelaide

Ensure every course has a variety of types of assessments in accord with the total course assessment limits specified:
- a. Group assessment tasks: no more than 30%
- b. participation: no more than 10%
- c. Self or peer assessment no more than 10%
- d. Any single item of summative assessment: no more than 70%
- e. Ensure each course contains at least one assessment task which is set, submitted, marked and returned to students by the midpoint of the course.⁴

Macquarie University

Executive Dean of Faculty (or delegated authority):
Have regard to the relationship between the assessment methods and the learning outcomes expected for the unit and the workload for staff and students. Ensure assessment designs for all units meet the following minimum requirements:

a. there must be at least three assessment tasks that require more than one mode of performance and that address higher order thinking capability (or if the assessment is a large task, it should be disaggregated into stages for assessment)

b. inclusion of an early, low risk diagnostic task to provide feedback for students and teachers to address likely learning challenges

c. description of the assessment requirements, their relative weightings and the methods for grading

d. description of the type and timing of feedback that will be provided

e. if participation is to be assessed, a description of how it will be determined and how it is justified in relation to learning objective

f. how the workload for the assessment requirements is calculated based on the amount of time required to master both the assessment mode and the content.

To foster student engagement through learner managed learning, students may be offered a choice of assessment tasks provided the forms are consistent with the unit objectives, in which case, the learning outcomes and the expected standards of achievement must be clearly specified to ensure parity and validity.

Assessment design must be developmental, and promote increased complexity in problem solving; increased sophistication in the understanding, analysis and application of theoretical frameworks; increased capacity to synthesise and critique concepts; increased expectations for creativity and originality in the generation of a hypotheses; and increased independence and responsibility in engagement and directions setting learning objectives.

Assessment design must balance opportunities for practice when learning new skills with task diversity.

The complexity and challenge in assessment tasks must reflect the level of the unit.

First year assessment must provide low risk opportunities for students to learn and develop the necessary academic performance, knowledge and capabilities.

Final year assessment must provide some opportunity for synthesis of knowledge, opinion formation and development of a portfolio of evidence of capabilities developed.

2.2 Formative assessment guidelines
Providing a concise statement regarding the importance/place of formative assessment ensures that it is valued and implemented.
UWA: UWA currently specifies: “That there be a method of feedback and analysis of any assessment component which forms part of the assessment process to the students. Wherever practicable, this should also apply to formal examinations.”

This, however, is not sufficiently detailed in its effective application and interpretation at local level.

Examples of good practice:

University of Queensland

| A first principle is that all assessment, whether graded or not, should be seen as formative. A second principle is that students should be given the opportunity to develop as a result of such feedback, and that this should be reflected in the weighting given to and timing of summative assessment across the semester. Providing feedback to students on their progress throughout a course of study is critical to improving student learning.6 |

University of NSW

| Formative feedback will be provided within three weeks of completion of a task and in a form that will: |

| Assist students in preparing for future tasks |

| Enable students to make judgements about their learning and how they can improve their learning outcomes |

| Allow evaluation against explicitly stated assessment critters and standards7 |

Macquarie

| Unit assessment designs must provide an explicit formative function, in which the extent to which students have progressed towards the desired learning outcomes is indicated to both students and teachers. Both formative and summative functions may be accomplished in the execution of the same task. |

| Unambiguous, timely and useful feedback on learning products or performances must be provided to all students through a variety of written and verbal formats to assist students improve and enhance their performance and to become personally effective in self assessment. |

| Students must be provided with opportunities to learn to self assess the quality of their own work. |

| Students must be provided with opportunities to peer assess in order to equip them to function as discerning professionals with a commitment to life-long learning.8 |
2.3 Feedback

Detailed and clear guidelines about the timing and substance of feedback (as well as its importance to the learning process) resolve confusion around staff responsibilities and student entitlement.

UWA: UWA’s policy currently lists the following principle relating to feedback: “That an assessor’s comments on any piece of work should indicate the strengths and the weaknesses of that work in relation to specific learning outcomes.”

More specific parameters of what is expected in this area would provide better teaching and learning outcomes across the University, as well as ensure consistency in application.

Examples of good practice:

University of Adelaide

Ensure all assessment, other than the last assessment in a course is returned within 4 weeks of the deadline for submission, or such earlier period as specified by the relevant school. Ensure constructive feedback on how a student or students can improve is provided after each assessment task except the last one in a course.

Monash

1. Feedback must be conducted according to the principles stated in the assessment policy
2. Depending on the nature of the assessment task, feedback may take the form of: written comments on student work; and/or oral comments from teaching staff to commend and/or correct the student’s learning; oral comments in group sessions; and/or provision of sample answers for the assessment tasks; and/or marks provided for student work.
3. Feedback must address the assessment criteria of the task, and include marks and/or comments about the student’s performance on each criterion.

2.4 Timetabling

Reference to the need to ensure adequate timing for assignments in relationship to university holidays and other forms of assessment creates structure for students and staff.

UWA: Timetabling is limited within UWA’s current policy as: “That, so far as possible, the timing of assessment across units within the same course/program is appropriately spaced and does not place an undue burden on students.”

Example of good practice

University of Sydney
1. Assessments are timetabled to take account of other academic demands on a student’s time, e.g. other assessments, or the requirements of other units of study.

2. Adequate arrangements are made to cater for students with disability or other special needs to ensure transparency, fairness and equity.

3. Formative assessments are timetabled to provide adequate time for feedback and remediation before summative assessment.

4. In courses or units where failure at summative assessment requires remediation and re-assessment before progression in the course or unit, summative assessments are timed, if possible, to allow adequate opportunity for remediation and re-assessment.

5. Where an assessment requires the submission of an assignment, students are given reasonable opportunities to attempt and submit the assignment. Submission deadlines take reasonable account of practical difficulties that students might encounter, such as equipment failure and the temporary unavailability of materials, reference texts and so forth (technical and other difficulties should also be taken account where they affect other types of assessment, e.g. oral presentations, laboratory work, etc).

2.5 Assignment submission and collection

Clear guidelines specifying the format, practice, and structure of assignment submission and collection, including possible sub-categories:

1. Citation
2. Format
3. Electronic submission policy
4. Cover pages
5. Late submission

UWA: UWA has no university-wide policy on submission guidelines.

Example of good practice

University of Melbourne

26. Preparation of assignments
The following are guidelines for the preparation of assignments for submission.
Assignments submitted that do not comply with these guidelines may attract a marking penalty.

Cover Sheets: Unless otherwise specified, work completed independently should (and all longer assignments must) be submitted accompanied by a coversheet provided by the University. Each coversheet includes a unique identifier that assists with document tracking, and includes a plagiarism declaration that the student signs. Work not accompanied by the University coversheet will not be accepted, with the exception of shorter assignments that are either submitted in person in class, or submitted via subject-specific assignment submission boxes.

Format: Unless otherwise specified by the Subject Coordinator, written assignments will be:

a. typed;
b. identifiable only by the inclusion of the relevant student number on each page. Students’ names (with the exception of shorter assignments submitted in person, in class) should not be included in assignments;
c. double-spaced;
d. presented with margins of at least 2cm (right margin) and 4cm (left margin);
e. page-numbered; and;
f. if submitted in hard copy, either stapled together or appropriately bound.

Citation: All referenced material must be acknowledged using an appropriate, consistent system within the document. Some teaching departments will recommend particular style guides specific to the relevant subject area. In the absence of such a recommendation, students should follow the Harvard system. Assignments with references should include either a reference list or a full bibliography of all works, as specified by the teaching department. Non-compliance with these requirements may constitute academic misconduct (potential plagiarism) that can attract a range of penalties from deprivation of credit for that work to termination of enrolment.

Style: The teaching department may specify a style of academic writing appropriate to the discipline or area of study. Written assignments should conform to the specified style, or may attract a marking penalty.

3. Grading practices and frames of reference

3.1 Conceptual framework

Providing a clear policy on the place and preferences for criterion and norm referencing, and ways in which these are implemented.

UWA: UWA does not have university-wide policy governing a specific conceptual framework.

Examples of good practice

University of Queensland

The University of Queensland uses criterion-referenced assessment as the method to explicitly define the relationships between summative assessment and the
(i) learning objectives,
(ii) standards to be met
(iii) performance expectations held of students, and
(iv) award of grades. In criterion referenced assessment, judgments about the quality of students’ performance are made by reference to predetermined criteria and standards and not by reference to the achievement of other students.

The following definitions apply:
**Criterion**: a property or characteristic by which the quality of something may be judged. Specifying criteria nominates qualities of interest and utility but does not have anything to offer, or make any assumptions about, actual quality.

**Standard**: a definite level of achievement aspired to or attained. Standards specify levels of quality (or achievement, or performance) for each criterion.\(^\text{12}\)

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**University of Adelaide**

Ensure an individual student’s marks are determined by reference to their performance against predetermined criteria and standards linked to the specified course learning objectives and not by ranking against the performance of the student cohort in the course.\(^\text{13}\)

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**3.2 Grade distribution**

Where grade distribution is accepted a statement regarding its place/ rationale whether either at university or faculty level clarifies university policy.

**UWA**: UWA does not have a university-wide policy on grade distribution.

**Example of good practice**:

**Monash**

Each Faculty Board will approve grade distribution guidelines for their Board of Examiners, to benchmark the distribution of marks of the units against relevant faculty data (eg course, discipline and unit level benchmarks, etc) having regard to the size and selectivity of the unit cohort.

Where the distribution of marks within a unit falls outside the relevant faculty guidelines, the Chief Examiner must provide to the Board of Examiners, together with the recommended marks, an explanation for the variance.

When a Chief Examiner determines that scaling of marks is required to ensure equality of outcomes and consistency across different cohorts of students, he/she must provide to the Board of Examiners, together with the recommended marks, a justification for the scaling and the method used to adjust the marks.\(^\text{14}\)

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**3.3 Grade level descriptors**

Institutional grading plan providing coherency to faculty implementation provides integration to university policy.

**UWA**: UWA does not specify a singular framework describing grade levels.

**Example of good practice**
The following generic descriptors provide university-wide standards for awarding final grades. Course coordinators may develop criteria and standards for specific assessment tasks but the determination of the final grade must reflect the descriptors given below. Each passing grade subsumes and goes beyond the grades lower than it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Final Grade</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fail. Fails to demonstrate most or all of the basic requirements of the course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fail. Demonstrates clear deficiencies in understanding and applying fundamental concepts; communicates information or ideas in ways that are frequently incomplete or confusing and give little attention to the conventions of the discipline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Fail. Demonstrates superficial or partial or faulty understanding of the fundamental concepts of the field of study and limited ability to apply these concepts; presents undeveloped or inappropriate or unsupported arguments; communicates information or ideas with lack of clarity and inconsistent adherence to the conventions of the discipline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Pass. Demonstrates adequate understanding and application of the fundamental concepts of the field of study; develops routine arguments or decisions and provides acceptable justification; communicates information and ideas adequately in terms of the conventions of the discipline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Credit. Demonstrates substantial understanding of fundamental concepts of the field of study and ability to apply these concepts in a variety of contexts; develops or adapts convincing arguments and provides coherent justification; communicates information and ideas clearly and fluently in terms of the conventions of the discipline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Distinction. As for 5, with frequent evidence of originality in defining and analysing issues or problems and in creating solutions; uses a level, style and means of communication appropriate to the discipline and the audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>High Distinction. As for 6, with consistent evidence of substantial originality and insight in identifying, generating and communicating competing arguments, perspectives or problem solving approaches; critically evaluates problems, their solutions and implications.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.4 Assessment criteria

Making assessment criteria available to students and a requirement of School/faculty practice ensures that grading policies are coherent across the university.

**UWA:** Current UWA policy contains three principles that refer to the provision of providing appropriate information to students:

- “That each School provide to students a written statement of its overall assessment policy and principles, to include any penalties system for late submissions of assessment pieces, and a time frame within which assessed work be returned to students.”

- “That within each Faculty and for each degree, diploma and certificate offered at undergraduate and postgraduate level, a set of desired learning outcomes be established and these outcomes be provided to students.”
• “That each unit co-ordinator provide to students a unit outline, which contains a written statement of the unit learning outcomes aligned with the assessment tasks and explicit marking criteria for each assessment task, no later than the second week of the semester in which they are offered.”

These principles may be adequate in this area; however, additional detail setting out the parameters of criteria would create a stronger and more coherent University framework.

Example of good practice

University of Melbourne

Making assessment criteria explicit helps ensure that students direct their efforts appropriately. Given that assessment sends powerful signals to students about the learning most valued, providing such clarity of expectations is critical. The way in which criteria are explained will differ depending upon the task, discipline and subject level. Highly detailed, quantitative ‘score-based’ numerical criteria (e.g. 20% for grammar and expression, 20% for use of readings”, etc.), are appropriate in some circumstances but not all.

Criteria should be published with the details of each assessment task.

It is desirable to make assessment standards explicit, where possible, in addition to explaining criteria. This involves providing an explanation or example of the qualities of work required to achieve particular grades. Making explicit the standard required to achieve the higher, honours grades is particularly desirable.

Explanations of assessment criteria presented to students should be:

a. specific to each task;

b. clearly worded in plain English;

c. sufficiently detailed so as to provide guidance to students undertaking assessment tasks, but not so detailed as to make the task meaningless (i.e. by providing ‘the answer’);

d. justifiable (i.e. linked to the learning objectives of the subject); except for pass/fail subjects, structured to enable differentiation between levels of performance;

e. appropriate to assessment weightings (of sufficient detail given the relative importance of the task);

f. supported by a verbal or written statement about what constitutes the various levels of performance.

4. Management and quality assurance

4.1 Staff development
Strong support and resources provided to teaching staff and markers ensures that not only are guidelines and policy clear and understood in all areas, but that implementation is consistent and of high quality.

**UWA:** UWA has strong staff support through the Centre for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning; however, as referenced in policy, this is limited to: “That, as part of their induction, new staff members – full time, fractional and casual staff – receive all relevant documentation as to the School’s assessment policies, practices and procedures.”

More explicit reference to specific resources available to staff in this area, and expectations of faculties and schools to ensure staff awareness of, and adherence to, such guidelines, would strengthen these tools.

**Example of good practice**

**Macquarie**  
*Giving Assessment feedback*[^16]  
*Assessment Review Checklist*[^17]

**University of Queensland**  
*Grades*[^18]

**Griffith University**  
*Good practice guide for developing effective assessment*[^19]  
*Developing Effective Feedback for learning*[^20]

(See Appendix I)

### 4.2 Assessment design moderation

There need to be processes in place that provide moderation of the design of assessment tasks, with formal, but local, committees or procedures, being a sign of good practice. Clear guidelines about the form these committees/procedures should take is part of this element of policy.

**UWA:** UWA currently refers to assessment moderation in three core principles:

- “That the Head of School ensure there is a mechanism (whether a committee or an individual) to monitor and co-ordinate assessment practices”.

- ‘That the mechanism for monitoring and co-ordinating assessment practices within a School be responsible *inter alia* for ensuring comparability between assessors in a particular unit/course.”

- “That all examination papers be checked by a colleague in their discipline area for alignment with unit learning outcomes, clarity of questions and absence of typographical errors.”

While these principles are a good first step, more stringent provisions could be set out in policy to ensure the effectiveness and consistency of assessment across the University.
Example of good practice

Monash

The implementation of the assessment regime of a unit is a coordinated process under the direction of the Chief Examiner or nominee who must ensure that all assessment tasks are aligned with unit objectives, content and learning methods and that criteria by which the student work will be judged are defined and applied. The Chief Examiner must ensure that all major assessment tasks are scrutinised by one or more other relevant members of academic staff who will validate compliance with the principles of good assessment practice outlined in the university policy. 21

4.3 Assessment grading moderation

Clear and explicit guidelines for the processing of regular grade moderation, whether from faculty or external, forms a crucial aspect of best practice.

UWA: UWA has no specific reference to moderation of grading.

Example of good practice

University of Adelaide

Responsibility: Executive Dean

Establish assessment committee(s) and allocate every course to such (a) committee(s). These committees may be at Faculty, School Discipline or Program level, as determined for each Faculty. Each committee may have other roles and duties additional to those listed below.

a. Appoint the chair of each committee, having regard to the desirability of the chair having a degree of independence from the committees business
b. Appoint the membership for each committee: minimum 5 academic staff for committees covering multiple disciplines, or 3 academic staff members for a single discipline, no maximum.

Responsibility: Assessment review committees

a. meet at a time specified by the Executive Dean after the end of the teaching and assessment period for every course
b. review the grades in each course by:
   i. scrutinising grade recommendations from Course Coordinators to ensure comparability of standards and consistency
   ii. seeking advice from Course Coordinators about any concerns.

Responsibility: Executive Dean

Ensure the Faculty has an Assessment Quality assurance Process which includes

a. a process for review and approval of course assessment types and weightings
b. a documented moderation process in each School to ensure consistency of marking, when there is more than one assessor of the same assessment task
c. giving students an opportunity to provide constructive feedback on the assessment process and tasks through the application of course and program SELTS. 22
4.4 Staff and students roles and responsibilities

The policy should stipulate clear and distinct roles and responsibilities for staff (from Deans to Course Coordinators to examiners) and students/

UWA: While there is reference to roles and responsibilities ‘normally expected’ in the Guidelines on Assessment, and more comprehensively in Guidelines on Learning Skills, there is little in this regard in the Minimum Essentials policy.

Example of good practice:

University of Sydney

| Students have a right to:                                                                 |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • be informed of all aspects of assessment policies and practices in each unit of study, including the criteria to be met and sanctions or penalties for breaches; | |
| • consistent application of policies and practices;                                     | |
| • the timely return of the results of assessments with appropriate feedback;            | |
| • information which allows them to calibrate their own performance against the criteria for each unit of study; | |
| • review their examination scripts and other forms of summative assessment (except those saved for reuse in subsequent testing) for the duration of the script retention period; | |
| • have access to their student file and any other documents relating to the assessment; | |
| • appeal against academic decisions made on the basis of flawed processes, during the appeal period; and | |
| • be informed of mechanisms for appeal.\(^{23}\) | |

5. Additional areas for consideration:

5.1 Consideration for Special Circumstance

UWA: UWA has recently completed a review on Special Consideration in assessment. This can be viewed at (XXXX)

5.2 Procedure for examinations

UWA: At present, there is no UWA policy on examination procedure.

Example of good practice

Monash

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<th>Use of materials and equipment in examinations</th>
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<tr>
<td>The front cover of the examination paper lists details of any additional material or</td>
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equipment that is authorised for use by students during the examination (see permitted materials below). Material or equipment brought into the examination room that is not on the list of permitted materials may be treated as “unauthorised material” under Statute No 4 (Student Discipline and Misconduct).

Note that –

The University has wireless technology installed on all campuses and this may be accessible from examination venues. However, unless expressly approved in the examination instructions, access to the internet or other external communication devices is not permitted in examinations.

Calculators and other electronic devices of an approved type may be used in examinations wherever permitted by the relevant course coordinator. The course profile and the list of permitted materials on the examination coversheet lists approved electronic devices.

Except in "open book" examinations, calculators with alphanumeric/advanced text storage capability are not permitted.

Unless specifically permitted, no other form of electronic device, or device capable of allowing communication within or beyond the examination room, is permitted in an examination.

Examination supervisors do not determine the appropriateness of electronic devices.

Examination supervisors are authorised to use devices to detect the use of unauthorised electronic devices.

The following paragraphs describe types of examinations with respect to materials that may or may not be permitted in an examination room.

**Open book:** Any additional material is permitted.

**Permitted materials:** The specific items of material permitted in the examination room and details regarding the extent to which it may or may not be annotated will be described on the question paper. Any item not listed on the question paper will be regarded as not permitted. Any restrictions on the type of calculator or other devices permitted must be included on the list of permitted materials. The examiner is responsible for establishing a process to ensure students use an approved calculator.

**Closed book:** No additional material is permitted.

**Use of dictionaries**

Students may be allowed access to either English, foreign language, or dual language dictionaries at the discretion of the examiner.

A student may bring a dictionary (in paper form and unannotated) into an examination, provided that it is on the list of permitted materials. For the purposes of this provision, unannotated means the dictionary must not be marked with handwriting, other than personal identification, or with printed material(s) attached to or interleaved with the original. Highlighting and/or underlining will not be regarded as annotation under this provision.
During the examination material brought into the examination room will be checked by a supervisor to confirm that it is permitted. If the material is deemed to be not permitted (e.g. contains annotations when none are permitted), the materials may be treated as unauthorised material under Statute No 4 (Student Discipline and Misconduct).

6. Conclusion

This paper has presented a comprehensive survey of good practice in assessment policy across Australian universities, with the intention to contextualise UWA’s current practice and present implications for future policy directions. Following from this paper will be the preparation of a reframed draft assessment policy for UWA, ready for discussion in August 2010.

References

1 University of New South Wales Assessment Policy
2 University of Melbourne Assessment Policy
3 Macquarie University Assessment policy
4 Adelaide University Assessment policy
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<th>University of Queensland Assesment Procedure</th>
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