Higher Education Assessment (Coursework) Policy and Procedure

Section 1 - Preamble

(1) Charles Darwin University ('the University', 'CDU') is committed to providing effective and high-quality learning and teaching experiences in which staff, students and external stakeholders have justified confidence in the University's Higher Education (HE) learning and teaching processes and outcomes.

(2) The University is committed to producing innovative HE graduates who effectively meet the challenges of a complex, changing world. To do this, we will use academic assessment as a key mechanism to measure and assure students learning outcomes and achievements.

Section 2 - Purpose

(3) This policy and procedure outline the principles that underpin the University's approach to the assessment of student learning, and the expectations and processes relating to assessment and feedback.

a. Students who are required to undertake centrally organised examinations should read this policy in conjunction with the Higher Education Examination Policy.

(4) This policy does not apply to higher degree research awards or Honours theses.

Section 3 - Scope

(5) This policy and procedure applies to all students enrolled in HE coursework or ELICOS courses at the University.

(6) This policy and procedure applies to units delivered from the start of the 2023 academic calendar.

Section 4 - Policy

(7) The University is committed to ensuring that assessment practices maintain high academic standards and provide assurance of student learning outcomes. In doing so, CDU wants to engage students in learning that is rigorous, authentic, and relevant to workplace contexts and aligns with personal learning aspirations.

(8) The University aims to foster assessment practices that promote student engagement and support student learning. To do this CDU will:

a. design and develop assessment tasks that are diverse, support teaching and learning objectives, and that provide evidence of a student's achievement of the relevant learning outcomes;
b. ensure assessments are robust, valid, fair, flexible and foster reliable judgments about performance, with learning outcomes based on multiple sources of evidence and student achievement;
c. ensure the total assessment workload required for a student is proportionate to the unit's volume of learning

and aligned to the relevant AQF level;

d. clearly articulate assessment criteria, weightings, and level descriptors so that students have a clear understanding of each assessment task;
e. ensure students in coursework units are given the opportunity to receive early feedback on their learning progress, by way of a summative assessment, prior to the Census Date of the unit;
f. ensure assessment practices are equitable and take into consideration any disadvantage to a student resulting from disability or unforeseen circumstances; and
g. monitor the effectiveness of both student achievement and teaching methods, and ensure assessment practices are subject to regular review, moderation, continuous evaluation, and improvement.

(9) Staff and students are responsible partners in learning and assessment and have key roles to play in the achievement of learning outcomes. Academic staff are responsible for:

a. engaging students in productive and meaningful learning and supporting the development of ethical and professional behaviour;
b. providing clear explanations of what is required to complete an assessment task successfully, providing opportunities to reflect on learning and practice;
c. providing timely feedback to students that is informative and constructive throughout the learning process to support students' transition to university studies and enable them to improve the quality of their work; and
d. fostering academic honesty and excellence, modelling good practice, and educating students in appropriate academic integrity techniques.

(10) The University expects that students will be proactive in their learning, act honestly and complete assessment tasks in a responsible and conscientious manner. To meet the required standards for assessment, students have a responsibility to:

a. understand all assessment, unit, and course requirements by reviewing unit outlines and all other materials that support and direct their enrolment, learning and assessment;
b. follow guidance from teaching and support staff, reflecting on feedback and seeking further clarity as required;
c. complete all requirements for the units and course in which they are enrolled to the best of their ability;
d. always conform to the requirements of the Student Academic Integrity Policy, acknowledge the work of others and engage in assessment activities in an honest way; and
e. request a reasonable adjustment to support participation in their study under the Students with Disability Policy or seek special consideration measures where circumstances have impacted their performance on an assessment item.

Section 5 - Procedure

Assessment tasks

(11) All students are required to complete assessment tasks as relevant for each unit in which they are enrolled.

(12) Students will complete assessment tasks honestly and with integrity. Students must not cheat or plagiarise in any way. All cases of contract cheating will be investigated as a serious breach of academic integrity, per the Student Academic Integrity Policy.

(13) Assessment for a unit will include assessment tasks undertaken during the semester/study period of the related unit or as directed by the Higher Education Examination Policy and Higher Education Examination Procedure.

(14) Assessment requirements will be available to students at least five (5) working days prior to the beginning of semester and should specify all assessment requirements of a unit. This includes, but is not limited to:

a. description of the topic and a brief outline of the requirements for completion of the assessment task and what a student is expected to submit for marking;
b. whether the summative assessment task will attract a mark or be ungraded, and the relevant assessment weighting, in terms of both the marks for the task and the proportion of total marks for the unit;
c. whether units contain hurdle assessments. This is an assessment task requiring a minimum level of performance as a condition of passing the unit;
d. how to submit the assessment task, and the time and date by which the task is due;
e. where group work is included, assessment requirements will clearly indicate both the volume of learning for the individual student and describe how the individual's contribution will be graded; and
f. clear guidelines and relevant sources on the referencing system that must be used.

Marking criteria

(15) Marking criteria will be provided to students clearly outlining how performance in assessment will be measured. All assessments will have a marking schema or rubric.

a. Students will be awarded marks for demonstrating the achievement of the required learning outcomes and provided with individualised and substantive comments and feedback based on the criteria.
b. Details will be provided on how marks will be assigned for group work and/or peer assessment, where relevant.
c. Negative marks will not be awarded for any incomplete, incorrect or missing responses.

Attendance

(16) Attendance is required for the successful completion of a unit. This may be to meet standards for professional accreditation bodies, practice-based assessment tasks, and/or work-integrated learning. Where this is required:

a. attendance will be recorded but no marks will be assigned; and
b. the minimum required attendance as a percentage will be specified as a threshold requirement; and
c. if a student does not attend, a final passing grade cannot be awarded.

Assessment validation and moderation

(17) Assessment and academic standards are monitored by the College Higher Education Assessment Review Panels and across the University by the Learning and Teaching Committee, to ensure the quality and continuous improvement of assessment activities.

(18) The Faculty must ensure that its moderation practices specify:

a. how assessment tasks are reviewed in relation to unit objectives, student workload and, where applicable, professional accreditation requirements;
b. practices ensuring consistent, valid and reliable judgements are made about student performance in relation to learning outcomes within and across courses. This might include the use of; marking guides; second marking, where a second marker assesses a representative sample of student work; double-blind marking, where high-value assessment tasks are marked independently by two assessors;
c. how marks and grades are reviewed; and
d. how breachers of academic integrity, where present, have been addressed.

(19) Assessment validation and moderation practices are undertaken to ensure:

a. judgements about a student's performance are valid, reliable, and consistent, fair, and equitable;
b. the academic standards intended to be achieved by students are consistent with the standards achieved by students in the program of learning; and
c. the quality of learning and the effectiveness of programs are supported by evidence.

(20) Where there is more than one marker for an assessment item in a unit, all assessments that are worth more than 30% will undergo a sampled moderation process. This will involve randomly selecting student submissions from three grade categories (from among F, P, C, D, HD). Any significant difference between the original mark and moderated mark will be discussed between the unit coordinator and the moderator. This process will ensure a between-marker comparison is conducted and provide the opportunity for adjustments to be made where appropriate. This activity should be reported to the College Higher Education Assessment Review Panel.

Assessment submission

(21) Students are expected to submit assessment tasks through Learnline by the time and date specified in the unit outline.

(22) Students are expected to meet their responsibilities in upholding academic integrity as outlined in the Student Academic Integrity Policy.

Penalties for late submission

(23) Assessment tasks that are lodged after submissions have closed, will be penalised 10% of the total assessment mark available, for each calendar day late unless an extension or application for special consideration has been approved.

a. For example, where an assignment is worth 30% of the semester grade and is due at 8.00am on a Monday, and the student submits at 1.00pm on the Tuesday, the student will be penalised 10% for the Monday and 10% for the Tuesday resulting in a reduction of the assigned mark by 6 marks (i.e. 30% x 0.2 = 6 %).
b. Late assessment tasks will not be accepted after five (5) calendar days, and the student will receive zero (0) marks.

Extensions to the due date of an assessment

(24) A student can request an extension to the Faculty via the CDU online form up until the due date and time of submission. Applications for extension after this time will need to be sought as a request for special consideration.

(25) A request for extension can be made on the following grounds:

a. acute illness or medical reasons;
b. disability, as per a formally approved Access Plan;
c. personal or family circumstances;
d. unforeseen employment related circumstances;
e. religious and cultural obligations;
f. volunteer, emergency, or military service;
g. elite athlete; or
h. other unforeseen or extenuating circumstance.

(26) Submitting a request does not guarantee an extension will be granted and students should make all reasonable efforts to submit the assessment task by or as soon as possible after the due date, where practicable.

a. Discretionary activities or circumstances within the student's control, for example attendance at sporting events, holidays, and other discretionary travel will not constitute grounds for an extension.
b. Students should be aware that an extension may prevent feedback from being received in time to be used in preparation for the next assessment task.

(27) Students must complete the formal CDU extension request form online and include the following information in their request:

a. student name and student number;
b. unit name, unit code, the assessment task name and task number;
c. current due time and date, and the proposed adjusted due date;
d. reason for requesting an extension, accompanied by relevant evidence to support the request (i.e., a medical certificate, or statutory declaration); and
e. a copy of the current draft of their assessment task (where applicable).

(28) Students may be asked to provide further information to support their application.

(29) Extensions without penalty may be approved for up to five (5) calendar days for an assessment.

a. Extension requests beyond this timeframe (up to a maximum of three (3) months) will need to be submitted as a Special Consideration request and will be subject to endorsement by the Associate Dean Learning and Teaching prior to approval.

(30) Students will receive an outcome in writing within three (3) working days of submission. Outcomes may include:

a. approval of the extension request in full or for a lesser specified duration; or
b. the request is not approved, and advice about the late submissions must be provided.

Release of marks and feedback to students

(31) Students will be given timely, instructive, and constructive feedback about their performance on assessment tasks, including examinations, which will explain how they have performed against the relevant assessment criteria, and where their performance can be improved.

a. Every effort will be made to provide marks and feedback to students within ten (10) working days of assessment submission.
    i. Where the content of one assessment item relates to a subsequent assessment, the feedback on that assessment must be provided at least ten (10) working days before the subsequent due date.
b. Students are encouraged to review assignment feedback and reflect on the basis for the assessment outcome to inform further learning and improvement.
c. Unit Coordinators must be prepared to justify the allocation of marks in accordance with the marking criteria and provide students with further feedback, if requested.

(32) Where a student has concerns about how marks have been awarded or does not understand why they achieved their mark for their assessment task should contact their Unit Coordinator within five (5) working days of receiving the marked assessment for further feedback.

Reporting course progress of under-18 ELICOS students

(33) The University will report the assessment outcomes and course progress of under-18 ELICOS students to their parent or guardian at the end of each teaching period.

Special consideration

(34) Requests for special consideration must be made in writing to the Faculty via the CDU online form within three (3) working days after the due date of an assessment task.

a. Applications must be accompanied by relevant supporting evidence (e.g., medical certificate, letter from employer, statutory declaration, copy of an accident report etc).
b. The student may be asked to clarify information or provide additional evidence to support their application.

(35) Students will receive a written response within three (3) working days of their submission, including details of the basis of any decisions.

a. Where an application for a special consideration is accepted, the outcome may include either the opportunity for re-submission or an alternate assessment task.

(36) A student who undertakes an alternate assessment task will have their new mark applied, which may be lower than the first mark originally achieved.

Review of a marked assessment item

(37) A student may request a review of an assessment item mark to the Course Coordinator within ten (10) working days of receiving the assessment mark.

(38) The following reasons will not be accepted as a reason to initiate a review of a marked assessment item:

a. disagreement with the mark awarded without academic grounds;
b. the amount of effort and work a student has put into the assessment task;
c. financial or other implications of not passing;
d. a study overload; and
e. marks or grades received by the student in other units.

(39) The Course Coordinator will review the request for the assessment re-mark and advise the student within five (5) working days of the outcome and reasons for the decision.

(40) Where an assessment re-mark is granted, the assessor will be given a de-identified copy of the student's original assessment task submission and asked to mark the assessment with consideration to the unit outline and the relevant marking criteria.

a. The original marker's grade and comments will not be provided to the second assessor.

(41) The Faculty will notify the student in writing within ten (10) working days whether the outcome of the re-mark resulted in:

a. a change of assessment result and/or unit grade; or
b. no change to the assessment result and/or unit grade.

Review of a final grade

(42) Official final grades will be conveyed to students in accordance with the Grading Policy.

a. Assessment marks/scores displayed in Learnline are indicative only, and may not be reflective of the final grade.

(43) The following reasons will not be accepted as a reason to initiate a review of a final grade:

a. disagreement with the grade or mark awarded, without academic grounds;
b. the amount of effort and work a student has put into the assessment task;
c. the grade being in close proximity to the grade of the next level;
d. financial or other implications of not passing a unit;
e. a study overload; and
f. marks or grades received by the student in other units.

Applying for a review of a final grade

(44) A student may request a review of a final grade within ten (10) working days of the grade release date by emailing reviews@cdu.edu.au.

a. Applications must clearly outline the grounds for which the review is made and provide supporting evidence where relevant.

(45) Student Policy and Complaints will acknowledge receipt of the application within two (2) working days and assess the request.

a. Students may be asked to clarify the application, provide a detailed statement or provide additional evidence.

(46) The Student Policy and Complaints team will either:

a. refer the review to the relevant Review Officer; or
b. reject the application based on it failing to meet the conditions of application. In this instance the existing final grade will stand.

(47) The student will be notified in writing, by the Review Officer, of the outcome of their application within ten (10) working days of receipt and include the reasons for the decision and actions to be taken.

a. A copy of the outcome will also be sent to the Student Policy and Complaints team.

(48) The outcome of such a review will be final.

Circumstances where all grades in a subject may be reviewed

(49) In certain circumstances, the University may make a determination to review and adjust the final grades of all students or a group of students within a unit (i.e., either upwards or downwards).

(50) A decision to adjust grades may only be determined once the grades for all students in a unit are available, and will occur in circumstances that include:

a. where a significant number of students in a unit receive bunched, or extremely high or extremely low grades; or
b. if there are significant inconsistencies between student cohorts undertaking the unit in different locations or by different modes, which may indicate incorrect application of the criteria and assessment standards in the subject; or
c. other evidence that may indicate a failure to properly assess student outcomes and achievements.

(51) Only those students who may be affected will be informed that the process is being undertaken and that original grades may be adjusted.

a. It may be necessary for some or all results for a unit to be withheld pending investigation and resolution. Where there are delays, students will be advised appropriately by the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor or delegate.

(52) Where it appears that the criteria and standards have not been appropriately applied, the Associate Dean Learning and Teaching will conduct the investigation in consultation with the Unit Coordinator and Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor. The re-marking of assessment tasks or the adjustment of marks may be undertaken in these exceptional circumstances.

a. In these circumstances, the mapping of every grade range may be adjusted individually, and all decisions must be clearly justified and documented.
b. In all cases, the Unit Coordinator (or equivalent) and the Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor will be advised of the outcome and any remedial action required.

(53) The Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor must report to the Learning and Teaching Committee and the Student Policy and Complaints team any such instances and include the background, rationale, method, and outcomes of the adjustment and actions implemented to avoid any similar problems in the future.

Retention of assessment

(54) Assessment items not collected by students, other than completed examination papers, may be destroyed in accordance with the Records and Information Management Policy and Procedure.

Complaints

(55) A student who is not satisfied with the quality or delivery of the unit and its associated assessments, or believes they have experienced unfair treatment, can submit a complaint in accordance with the Complaints Policy - Students.

Section 6 - Non-Compliance

(56) Non-compliance with Governance Documents is considered a breach of the Code of Conduct - Staff or the Code of Conduct - Students, as applicable, and is treated seriously by the University. Reports of concerns about non-compliance will be managed in accordance with the applicable disciplinary procedures.

(57) All staff members have an individual responsibility to raise any suspicion, allegation or report of fraud or corruption in accordance with the Fraud and Corruption Control Policy and Whistleblower Reporting (Improper Conduct) Procedure.

Status and Details

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Responsible Executive	Louise King Provost
Implementation Officer	Lisa Papatraianou Deputy Provost
Enquiries Contact	Lisa Papatraianou Deputy Provost Teaching and Learning Connect

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Academic integrity" - Is the demonstration of the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility in achieving academic outcomes, resulting in a growing sense of ethical and professional behaviour.

"Course Coordinator" - An academic staff member who is responsible for the academic management of a course.

"Faculty" - An organisational and academic unit in the University that delivers courses and conducts research.

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