

## Academic Board Resolutions:

### Assessment and Examination of Coursework

#### Table of Contents

<b>Part 1 - Preface .....</b>	<b>2</b>
1. Purpose.....	2
2. Definitions .....	3
<b>Part 2 - Principles of Assessment .....</b>	<b>4</b>
1. Statement of Principles .....	4
1. Effective Assessment .....	4
2. Efficient Assessment.....	5
3. Acceptable Assessment.....	5
2. Criteria for Effective, Efficient and Acceptable Assessment .....	6
1. Curriculum .....	6
2. Scope of Assessment.....	6
3. Assessment Instruments .....	6
4. Assessment Timetable .....	7
5. Assessment Tasks and Papers .....	7
6. Marking.....	7
7. Feedback .....	8
8. Remediation.....	8
9. Re-assessment .....	8
10. Appeals.....	8
3. Implementation of the Principles - Rights and Responsibilities .....	9
1. Responsibilities of the University.....	9
2. Responsibilities of Departments and Faculties .....	9
3. Responsibilities of Academic Staff.....	10
4. Rights and Responsibilities of Students.....	10
<b>Part 3 - Grades .....</b>	<b>12</b>
1. Common Result Grades .....	12
2. Distribution of Grades – Criterion Referencing.....	12
3. Honours Courses and Grading .....	13
4. University Medals .....	13
<b>Part 4 - The Conduct of Examinations .....</b>	<b>14</b>
1. Examination Procedures .....	14
2. Conduct of Examinations and Determination of Results.....	15
3. Processing and Releasing Results .....	16
4. Security of Examination Papers and Results .....	16
5. The Use of Calculators and Computers in Assessments.....	17
6. Examinations – Emergency Evacuations .....	18
<b>Part 5 – Illness and Misadventure.....</b>	<b>18</b>
1. Introduction.....	18
2. Faculties and Departments.....	19
3. Illness or Misadventure During a Semester .....	19
4. Illness at the Time of an Examination .....	20
5. Satisfactory Documentation.....	21
6. The Use of Documentation.....	21
7. Aegrotat and Posthumous Awards .....	22
<b>Part 6. Special Examination Conditions for Students with Disabilities or Other Needs .....</b>	<b>22</b>

## **Part 1 - Preface**

### **1. Purpose**

The purpose of this document is:

1. To set out the principles underpinning the University's approach to assessment and examination of coursework award courses and units of study;
2. To identify responsibilities for ensuring that the principles are implemented;
3. To be a resource document containing the Academic Board's policies relating to assessment and examination of undergraduate and postgraduate coursework; and
4. To be a resource document containing the procedures used in the assessment and examination of undergraduate and postgraduate coursework award courses, pursuant both to Academic Board policies and to the requirements of the relevant administrative systems.

The document is maintained by the Academic Board in consultation with the Registrar.

## 2. *Definitions*

In this document:

**Academic unit** includes a Faculty, Academic College, Board of Studies, School, Department, Centre or interdisciplinary committee of the University.

**Course** means a program of units of study that leads to the award of an undergraduate or postgraduate degree or diploma of the University, unless otherwise specified. Each course is the responsibility of a Faculty.

**Coursework** means the learning activities of an award course designated to be a coursework program by Senate or the Vice-Chancellor. All award courses are categorized as “coursework” or “research.”

**Dean** means the Dean of a Faculty or the Director or Principal of an academic College.

**Department** includes a Faculty (if the Faculty does not have an internal Departmental structure), Board of Studies, School, centre or interdisciplinary committee of the University. Departments are responsible for Units of Study.

**Faculty** means a Faculty, College Board or the Australian Graduate School of Management Limited, as established in each case by its constitution, or where applicable a Board of Studies. Faculties are responsible for courses, and in this document the term refers to the Faculty responsible for the course concerned.

**Student** means a person enrolled as a candidate for a course or unit of study.

**Unit of study** or **unit** means a stand-alone component of a course. Each unit of study is the responsibility of a Department.

## Part 2 - Principles of Assessment

This Part of the document identifies the principles that should underpin student assessment, and, based on those principles, sets out the criteria which student assessments should satisfy. This will then lead on the responsibilities of the University, Departments and Faculties, academic staff, and students, in ensuring that these criteria are met.

### 1. *Statement of Principles*

Any system for assessing the progress and achievement of students must be effective, efficient and acceptable.

#### 1. *Effective Assessment*

Effective assessment achieves the goals and purposes for which it is undertaken, and does not create perverse incentives.

Assessment can have a number of goals and purposes, some of which may be mutually exclusive. These potential conflicts can be minimised by explicit statements about the goals and purposes of each assessment.

The goals and purposes of assessment must reflect and reinforce the goals and purposes of the curriculum. In doing so, the assessment must be a representative test of the knowledge, understanding and skills to be achieved by successful completion of the curriculum. This requirement for representativeness also applies to any supplementary assessment or re-assessment which students may be required to undergo.

Assessment is often classified as formative or summative.

**Summative** assessment is used to certify competence, or to arrange students in a rank order of merit. It certifies the attainment of a standard, and is used as the basis for progression to the next part of a program, or to graduation.

Success at summative assessment is clearly an important goal for students, and will have a powerful impact on the way they study and learn. Nevertheless, the threat of summative assessment should not be used as a motivator for learning. “Knowledge acquired under compulsion has no hold on the mind” (A.N.Whitehead).

**Formative** assessment is used principally to provide students with feedback on their progress in learning. Not only does it reinforce successful learning, but it is an opportunity for students to expose the limitations in their knowledge and understanding, rather than to hide them. For this reason, the results of formative assessments should not be used in contributing to decisions about progression or graduation.

Further, feedback from formative assessments should be presented within a timeframe that will enable students to undertake the additional learning they need in order to remedy their weaknesses. Feedback should also be provided in a form that students find useful in identifying their strengths, and in pinpointing areas for improvement. However, feedback should be presented in ways that will encourage self-reliance in learning and in assessment, rather than dependence on authority.

Formative assessment also provides students with opportunities for practice on the types of assessment instrument that will be used in summative assessment. Summative assessments can provide useful learning experiences, but their formative value should not be over-estimated.

Both types of assessment can be used to provide feedback to teachers about the effectiveness of teaching and learning, and information that can be used in program evaluation.

Assessment may have unintended or negative consequences. For example, an assessment which ranks students in order of merit may encourage competitive attitudes and activities, which may not be appropriate in a world where co-operation, collaboration and teamwork are increasingly valued. Likewise, an assessment which is marked solely by academic staff may not be the best way of encouraging teamwork and peer-review, if these are valued activities. Again, an assessment which rewards the recall of isolated facts is unlikely to encourage students to explore the meaning of what they are learning, and to synthesise information from different sources. Thus the potential unintended and negative consequences of an assessment should be explored carefully before it is implemented.

## 2. *Efficient Assessment*

An assessment that is efficient for **students** will maximise the benefit that they derive from the assessment for the effort that they expend on preparation for it. The benefit will depend on the type of assessment: for a final (summative) examination, the benefit will be the mark or merit grade obtained. For a formative assessment, the benefit will be the quality and quantity of information that students receive to assist their future learning.

An assessment that is efficient for **academic staff** will likewise maximise the benefit arising from the effort invested in developing, implementing and marking the assessment. Benefits will include the benefits to students described above, but also feedback to staff on the effectiveness of teaching and learning, and the intangible benefit of contributing to a quality learning environment. Against this must be set not only the effort invested, but also the opportunity costs of assessment – the benefits foregone through non-participation in other valued activities, e.g. research.

## 3. *Acceptable Assessment*

Any assessment system has to be acceptable to a number of stakeholders: the general community, Government, the University, academic staff, and students. While some of these stakeholders' requirements will be largely met by assessments that are effective and efficient, other factors contributing to acceptability should also be recognised.

For the **community**, there must be an assurance of the competence of graduates to carry out whatever roles and functions in society their degree has qualified them to undertake.

For **Government**, there must be confidence that the public funds invested in the University are being well spent. In addition, the assessment system should comply with any quality standards imposed by funding agencies.

The **University's** assessment system must match contemporary best practice, and must be seen to be consistent with current trends such as the move towards competency-based training and assessment.

The assessment system must also be consistent with the image and ethos of the University. Assessments must be conducted in such a way that they do not attract negative publicity to the University, e.g. through the exposure of plagiarism, or impersonation, or unreliable marking.

The system must also maximise opportunities for students in the University's equity target groups to realise their full potential, and should take account of the diverse cultural backgrounds of students enrolled at the University.

For **academic staff**, effectiveness and efficiency will contribute largely to their acceptability.

Likewise, for **students**, effectiveness and efficiency will contribute largely to acceptability. However, for students, there are three additional considerations. First, the assessment system should not generate levels of stress which are so high that they interfere with performance. Secondly, students have an increasing financial investment in their tertiary education, and they too will require value for money. Finally, the assessment system must be seen to be fair.

These are the principles underpinning an assessment system that is effective, efficient and acceptable. The criteria that such an assessment system should satisfy will now be considered.

## **2. *Criteria for Effective, Efficient and Acceptable Assessment***

### **1. Curriculum**

1.1 Each unit of study has an explicit statement of the generic and specific goals of the unit.

1.2 The curriculum for each unit of study is consistent with the University's Generic Attributes of Graduates.

### **2. Scope of Assessment**

2.1 The assessment is generally representative of the generic and specific goals of the unit of study. While it may not be appropriate to test the achievement of all goals on every occasion, each assessment can be shown to address a balanced portfolio of goals.

2.2 The scope and nature of the assessment for each unit of study is explicitly stated at the beginning of delivery of the unit. This announcement should include full details of all aspects of the assessment process (but see 5.4 below).

2.3 The formative or summative nature of each assessment task is explicitly stated.

### **3. Assessment Instruments**

3.1 The assessment instruments employed (written paper, practical task, etc.) are capable of validly testing the goals of the unit of study.

3.2 The assessment instruments possess demonstrable reliability (reproducibility).

**The length of each assessment demonstrates a balance between the demands of validity and reliability on the one hand, and efficiency on the other.**

**Students have had the opportunity for formative practice on each type of instrument that is used summatively.**

#### 4. Assessment Timetable

4.1 Assessments are timetabled to minimise conflicts arising from other academic demands on a student's time, e.g. other assessments, or the requirements of other courses.

4.2 Adequate arrangements are made to cater for students with disability or other needs.

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

4.3 In programs where failure at summative assessment requires remediation and re-assessment before progression in the program, summative assessments are timed to allow adequate opportunity for this remediation and re-assessment.

#### 5. Assessment Tasks and Papers

5.1 Each task or paper is demonstrably valid (it tests achievement of one or more of the goals of the unit of study).

5.2 The set of tasks or papers comprising the assessment of a unit of study can be shown collectively to test a balanced and sufficient proportion of the goals of the unit of study.

5.3 The scope and nature of each task or paper is explicit. This includes such matters as the goals to be tested, the criteria against which performance will be measured, the weighting of items and of tasks / papers, the due date for submission or testing, the conditions under which papers will be sat, the conditions for extensions of time (if any), the penalties for lateness or for violation of assessment specifications (e.g. length).

5.4 Any necessary modifications to the scope or nature of any assessment task are communicated in writing to all students enrolled in the unit before the halfway point of the unit, and are applied so that no student is disadvantaged.

#### 6. Marking

6.1 Tasks and papers are marked according to the published criteria.

6.2 Tasks and papers are identified by student ID only; student names are not available to markers unless this is absolutely unavoidable.

6.3 Decisions which may impact on a student's progression or graduation do not depend on judgments made by a single marker without review by colleagues for calibration or moderation.

6.4 Decisions which may impact on a student's progression or graduation are based solely on the assessments specified for that purpose.

6.5 When marks from tasks and / or papers are combined, the methods used are statistically and educationally defensible.

6.6 Any necessary retrospective modifications to the marking criteria are published at the same time as the results of the assessment.

6.7 Academic judgments, particularly adverse academic judgments, are supported by documented evidence of failure to satisfy academic standards.

6.8 Due account is taken of applications for special consideration arising from illness or misadventure.

## 7. Feedback

7.1 Feedback to students is sufficiently timely to allow remediation where necessary.

7.2 Feedback to students is sufficiently detailed to be a useful identification of strengths and deficiencies, yet not so detailed as to discourage self-reliance in learning and assessment.

7.3 Feedback to students includes access to their own scripts, and to other relevant assessment material that is not part of a secure database.

7.4 Feedback to academic staff is incorporated into teaching and learning strategies, and into future assessments.

7.5 Where results are posted publicly, students are identified by ID only.

## 8. Remediation

8.1 Adequate academic support is given to students to clarify both process and content requiring remediation.

8.2 Appropriate support is given to students undertaking remedial learning.

## 9. Re-assessment

9.1 Re-assessment of students who were unsuccessful at a first attempt at assessment is delayed long enough for useful remedial learning to have been possible.

9.2 Re-assessment is conducted using assessment instruments which are either identical to those used at first assessment, or are demonstrably similar in their validity and reliability.

9.3 The criteria for successful re-assessment are published, and consistent with the criteria applied to the first assessment.

## 10. Appeals

10.1 The grounds for, and mechanism for, appeals (against academic judgments which will impede progression or graduation) are explicit.

The responsibilities of the University, Departments and Faculties, academic staff, and students in meeting these criteria for effective, efficient and acceptable assessment are detailed in the next section.

### 3. *Implementation of the Principles - Rights and Responsibilities*

#### 1. *Responsibilities of the University*

**The University, through the Vice-Chancellor and the Academic Board, has a responsibility to ensure that:**

- (a) assessment practices are explicit, fair and consistent across the institution;
- (b) assessment procedures are monitored at the level of Departments and Faculties to ensure that they meet the criteria for good practice;
- (c) resources are available to provide staff with access to information and expertise on the theory and practice of assessment;
- (d) support for good assessment practice is available to staff and students;
- (e) policies on legitimate cooperation, plagiarism and cheating, including sanctions and penalties for breaches, are explicit and consistently applied;
- (f) appropriate mechanisms of appeal are available and publicised.

#### 2. *Responsibilities of Departments and Faculties*

**Faculties and Departments have responsibilities to ensure that:**

- (a) the principles of assessment are adhered to;
- (b) policies, consistent with the principles, are clear and available to all staff;
- (c) wherever appropriate, individuals are identified and given appropriate authorities to act as (1) the Co-ordinator and (2) the Principal Examiner, of each course and unit of study. It is often good practice to appoint the same member of staff into both roles.
- (d) information on all aspects of assessments, including criteria for satisfactory and meritorious performance, attendance and class requirements and the weighting of those assessments, are explicit to students within one week of commencing a unit of study;
- (e) assessment tasks reflect the relevant objectives of the unit of study, the goals for the degree and the generic attributes of graduates, as appropriate to the academic level of the students;
- (f) formative assessment is incorporated so that feedback is provided in a timely fashion during each unit of study;
- (g) appropriate amounts and a range of valid assessment methods are applied, monitored by Faculty Teaching and Learning Committees;
- (h) students have an opportunity to become familiar with all assessment methods that will be used summatively;

- (i) when marks are combined, statistically defensible methods are applied;
- (j) sanctions and penalties are made clear in advance and are applied fairly;
- (k) examination scripts and other forms of summative assessment (other than secure databanks) are held for up to six months for review by students;
- (l) written work is identified only by student number;
- (m) publicly posted results are identified only by student number;
- (n) mechanisms of appeal against decisions on assessments are in place.

### 3. Responsibilities of Academic Staff

#### **Individual members of staff have responsibilities to:**

- (a) familiarise themselves with the University and Faculty requirements for best practice in assessment;
- (b) ensure that each assessment is congruent with the objectives of the unit of study;
- (c) adhere consistently to the policies of the Faculty and Department on submission of assignments;
- (d) review and give timely and adequately detailed feedback on work submitted;
- (e) communicate clearly the requirements for assessment (including the balance of formative and summative assessment, procedures, weighting of marks and methods to be used) at the commencement of each unit of study and, if changes are needed, discuss them with the students; such changes should not occur later than halfway through the semester and should be applied so that no student is significantly disadvantaged;
- (f) ensure that reports of students' progress and achievement are based only on relevant evidence;
- (g) contribute to the setting and review of assessment tasks within their discipline to ensure fairness and the application of agreed standards;
- (h) ensure that students are assessed in a variety of ways and have opportunities to develop their own skills in self-evaluation;
- (i) evaluate their own performance as assessors and examiners against the guidelines. Such evaluations will provide evidence to support applications for promotion.

### 4. Rights and Responsibilities of Students

#### **Students have a right to:**

- (a) 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;

- (b) the timely return of detailed results of assessments with appropriate feedback;
- (c) information which allows them to calibrate their own performance against the criteria for each unit of study;
- (d) review their examination scripts and other forms of summative assessment (except those related to secure databanks) for up to six months;
- (e) appeal against decisions made on the basis of flawed processes;
- (f) be informed of mechanisms for appeal.

**Students have a responsibility to:**

- (a) behave ethically and appropriately, avoiding any action or behaviour which would unfairly disadvantage or advantage another student;
- (b) be aware that a major objective of assessment is the facilitation of learning rather than the achievement of grades;
- (c) use assessments to help them develop criteria and strategies for self-assessment;
- (d) be aware of the rules of progression for each unit of study and the requirements for the award of the degree;
- (e) inform themselves about assessment policies and practices, including the definitions of legitimate cooperation, plagiarism and cheating (see the Academic Board document on this subject);
- (f) be aware of the means for seeking assistance and advice on assessment within departments and the university;
- (g) ensure that they understand the requirements, including timetables, for examinations and other assessment tasks;
- (h) submit work on time, ensuring that it is their own except when they share ownership of a group project;
- (i) notify staff if difficulties arise with the timing or other requirements of assessment tasks;
- (j) advise departments of any substantial absence or withdrawal and be aware of the appropriate use of medical and other certificates;
- (k) inform themselves of appropriate mechanisms for appeal.

### Part 3 - Grades

This Part summarises the merit grades awarded in the University's assessment system, and the University's approach to the determination of grades, Honours and Medals.

#### 1. *Common Result Grades*

The Academic Board has adopted a set of grades that will be common to all undergraduate and postgraduate courses which award merit grades for coursework, effective from Semester 1, 1999. These grades are set out in the Academic Board's policy **Common Result Grades**.

#### 2. *Distribution of Grades – Criterion Referencing*

There are two main approaches to the award of grades. The **criterion-referencing** approach assesses the work of students against a pre-determined standard or criterion. The **norm-referencing** approach, on the other hand, grades students by comparing their work with that of other students undergoing the same assessment.

Traditionally, merit grades have largely been awarded on a norm-referenced basis, based on the expectation that, within a certain range, from year to year a relatively constant proportion of the class will achieve a High Distinction, a Distinction, etc. Such an approach is feasible if the purpose of assessment is to rank students in order of merit.

However, norm-referencing may fail to take account of secular changes in the quality of students enrolled in the program or in the academic standards reached in the course or unit. It is also difficult to provide a clear statement of expected levels of performance using the norm-referencing approach. While acknowledging that some Departments and Faculties already engage in criterion-based assessment, the University has committed itself to increasingly rely on criterion referencing across all academic programs in an effort to redress the problems of norm-referenced assessment.

The University recognises that the transition from norm-referencing to criterion-referencing may take time and, to facilitate the transition, the University accepts that, for the time being, it is likely that the traditional proportions of merit grades will continue to be awarded in specific units of study.

These proportions have been refined over a number of years to provide a basis for equity of examination results between Faculties, particularly the 'generalist' Faculties of Arts, Economics and Science, as well as Education which shares many of its students with the other three faculties. The proportions are cumulative and are based on the number of students who gain a Pass or better in the particular unit of study.

	% HD	% D+	% CR+
First Year	3	14	42
Senior/Upper	4	18	50

The proportions of merit grades may vary from course to course, and from year to year, reflecting differences in the capabilities of different groups of students.

It is anticipated that, over the course of the next three years, Faculties and Departments will move to the development of a grade descriptor for each grade that they propose to award for each unit of study. A grade descriptor is a clear description of the standard of performance to be demonstrated by a student who is to achieve that grade, from High Distinction through to Fail. The grade descriptor should be sufficiently explicit to result in a high level of inter-rater reliability when two or more

assessors grade the same piece of work independently. Academic units will seek to maintain comparability of standards as this conversion is completed.

### **3. *Honours Courses and Grading***

An Honours degree is awarded by the University to signal a high standard of academic achievement in a specialised area of study at undergraduate level.

Each Honours degree awarded by a Faculty will have an identifiable, discipline-specific, individual research, scholarly or creative component.

Annually, Faculties will publish a clear statement in plain English:

- describing the Honours component in degrees in which the award of honours is made;
- explaining what is to be achieved by students to graduate with Honours;
- describing the means by which the final grade of Honours is determined and the formulae that are applied; and
- describing the criteria for admission and selection into honours courses which require an additional year of study (the 'Honours' year)

Junior level or level 1000 units of study should not count for more than 20% in calculations to determine the final grade of Honours.

### **4. *University Medals***

A Faculty may signal outstanding achievement by the award of a University Medal to one or more students who have satisfied the requirements of an Honours degree.

Faculties should reach agreement on the normal minimum levels of academic performance required for the award of a Medal, preferably using broadly comparable University-wide criteria based on the conditions for the award of First Class Honours. In those cases where Departments submit results and recommendations to more than one Faculty, the award of both Medals and First Class Honours in all of the Faculties should be consistent overall with the Departmental order of merit.

The merits of each candidate for a Medal should be debated by each Faculty. The award of a Medal should not be based solely on a numerical mark/Faculty formula (i.e. a minimum criterion should be regarded as a necessary but not sufficient condition for the award of a Medal).

A distinction should be made between the requirements for the award of First Class Honours and of Medals. For example, in Faculties in which an Honours Fourth Year is prescribed the Honours awards could be based solely on final year marks. On the other hand, Medals should be awarded taking account of students' academic performance throughout their university studies. Recipients of Medals would be expected to have not only outstanding performances in the Honours year, but also meritorious undergraduate performances (particularly in their major subjects), especially after first year. Faculties should allow consideration of students who exhibit ever-improving academic performance.

Faculty Honours Boards should consider candidates for Medals within the context of the whole field of candidates for First Class Honours within the Faculty. Members of Honours Boards should have before them the complete academic records of students recommended by Departments for the award of First Class Honours. Students entering the University with advanced standing should be assessed for Medals in the same way.

## Part 4 - The Conduct of Examinations

This Part summarises the thrust of the policies adopted by the University to ensure that assessments are fair. A commitment to fairness has a number of implications for the conduct of the University's assessment system.

Implementation of the University's Equal Opportunity in Education Policy includes the provision of special examination conditions for students with disabilities or other needs. Students may apply to sit examinations under special conditions if they have a medical, physical, sensory or psychiatric condition or impairment, or if they have a documented learning disability, which may prevent them demonstrating the extent of their knowledge in an examination. Academic Board policies for such circumstances are set out in the document **Special Examination Conditions for Students with Disabilities or Other Needs**.

Assessments are designed to provide feedback on performance or to establish that students have reached an adequate standard to proceed or to graduate. The University's assessment practices are designed to ensure that conditions are fair to all students and are as consistent as possible, and that individual students are not disadvantaged by adverse personal circumstances beyond their control, or by the activities of other students. It is acknowledged that particular circumstances may have different effects on students from different cultural backgrounds.

Generally therefore, illness or misadventure will be taken into account when considering a student's performance in a course or program. On occasion, students' study and / or assessment performance may be adversely affected by illness, misadventure or other circumstances beyond their control. The principles and practice governing the treatment of such students are set out in the Academic Board policy **Illness and Misadventure**.

The principles and practice in respect of Appeals may be found in the Academic Board documents *Student Appeals Against Academic Decisions – Undergraduate and Postgraduate Course Awards* and *Student Appeals Against Academic Decisions – Resolutions of the Senate*.

The policies approved by the Academic Board in respect of the general implementation of the Principles of Assessment are set out in the following sections.

### 1. *Examination Procedures*

Examinations during the formal examination period will normally be no longer than two hours. The responsible Dean may make provision for three-hour examinations in special cases, provided that no unit of study has examinations which are in total longer than the equivalent of 30 minutes per credit point.

Where a formal examination is conducted for a unit of study:

- any unit of study with a value of 6 or fewer credit points will be examined in no more than one examination in the formal examination period; and
- any unit of study with a value of more than 6 credit points will be examined in no more than two examinations in the formal examination period.
- Two two-hour and one three-hour examination session(s) will be scheduled each day during the examination period. The three-hour session will be the last one of each day in order to allow students to complete by 6.00 p.m.

- No student will be required to sit for more than two examinations on the same day. In cases where a student has three examinations scheduled for the same day, provision must be available for one of those examinations to be taken at an alternative time.

There is no formal provision for supplementary examinations, but Departments may arrange for further testing in cases of special consideration, in accordance with Academic Board policy **Illness and Misadventure** and any relevant Faculty policies.

Examinations may be held during classes provided that Faculties ensure that the assessment regimes for all units of study are reasonable and not structured in a way that may disrupt attendance at other classes. Examiners should consider which forms of assessment may be appropriate to use during classes.

The week after the end of lectures in each semester will be a study break (Stuvac) with examinations to commence the following week.

Faculties whose examination processes are fully quarantined or contained may conduct examinations outside these guidelines, within the spirit of the agreed procedures. This dispensation cannot apply when it leads to timetable clashes, for example for students taking combined degrees.

## ***2. Conduct of Examinations and Determination of Results***

Each unit of study is the responsibility of an academic unit, which is often a Department but may be a Centre, Faculty or interdisciplinary committee. In this section 'Department' and 'Head' refer to that academic unit and its Head. The Head of the relevant Department shall be responsible for all academic aspects of the conduct of examinations in the undergraduate and postgraduate coursework units of study taught in that Department and shall ensure that they are conducted in accordance with the policies and directions of the Academic Board and the relevant Faculty.

The Head shall appoint a Principal Examiner for each unit of study.

The Head shall determine the results of the unit of study for each candidate after considering the recommendations of the Principal Examiner(s). The Head may appoint a Departmental Examination Board to facilitate this function.

In cases where the teaching of a unit of study is shared by more than one Department, the relevant Dean(s) will appoint a Head to undertake the responsibilities of a Head as set out in section 1 above, following consultation between the Departments concerned.

Principal Examiner(s) are responsible for:

- providing a copy of examination paper(s) to the Examinations Section by the specified deadline. Failing this, examiners will be required to print their own examination paper(s).
- ensuring security of working papers developed in preparation for the examination, and ensuring that all secure papers are accounted for.
- for all candidates in the unit of study concerned, ensuring the security of marks, arranging the collation of marks, and transmitting final results to the Head by a date specified by the Head.
- justifying the returned result from evidence such as marksheets, examination scripts, transcripts of Departmental meetings, in case an appeal process requires such evidence. This evidence must be held for six months from the date of the release of the final result and, if the subject of an appeal, until such time as the appeal is complete.

The relevant Faculty will determine the award of Honours degrees and the levels at which they are awarded.

The relevant Faculty will establish mechanisms for review of results, including those for students affected by illness or misadventure, in accordance with the policies of the Academic Board.

### ***3. Processing and Releasing Results***

The Head will forward the results to the Student Records Office on a date to be determined by the Registrar. In order to minimise delays in the transmission of results to students, the Registrar will normally set this date no later than five working days after the last scheduled examination. This tight timetable requires that special attention be given to scheduling large enrolment examinations as close as possible to the commencement of the examination period.

Departments are encouraged to make results available to students directly after they have been confirmed by the Head.

The Registrar shall ensure that results are released to students as soon as possible after receiving them from the Head.

The final numerical marks obtained by undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students in completed units of study will be made available to them by printing such marks on the Examination Result Notices forwarded to them.

Departments are asked to make arrangements for providing undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students, on request, with the numerical marks for the various components of assessment (where there is more than one), which comprise the final numerical mark reported on Examination Result Notices. Records of such marks should be retained for four months.

Departments are asked to make arrangements for undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students, on request, to peruse and, where they so desire, to obtain (a copy of) their examination scripts or any other written answers to examination questions, provided that:

- the request is made within four months of the release of the results of the examinations, and
- in the case of examinations involving confidential examination papers, where examination questions are used on more than one occasion, students may peruse under supervision, but not obtain a copy of, the examination paper and their answers to the questions.

### ***4. Security of Examination Papers and Results***

In the preparation of examinations, it is essential to ensure the security of questions and papers so that examinations are fair to all students and preclude (as far as possible) opportunity for unfair advantage for any individual or group. There is also a need to keep results secure while they are being entered and summed so that they cannot be changed.

Computer systems used to prepare examinations and to record results are potential sources of security breaches. Information transmitted over networks (including networked printers and email), and information saved on shared devices is potentially insecure. The most secure computer system may be a non-networked computer with data stored on removable media (e.g. floppy discs) that are normally locked away, and with a non-networked printer. Care should be taken to avoid casual observation of computer screens by unauthorised persons.

Working papers should be kept secure at all times, without clearly indicative labelling. When finished with, all rough papers should be shredded or discarded via the University's Confidential Bag Waste service.

To prevent any breakdown in security when questions are re-used in subsequent examination papers, variation is encouraged as much as is practicable, within the constraint that questions requiring selected responses (including multiple choice variants) need to be trialed adequately to ensure their validity and reliability.

The Principal Examiner of a Unit of Study is responsible for security of working copies of examination papers during in the examination preparation process for that unit. Complete copies of the examination paper should not be circulated by mail, by fax or by any other electronic means, but should be delivered by hand or courier.

It is assumed that the University Printing Service and Central Duplicating are secure. All final examination papers should be delivered to Examinations by hand or courier. All reproduction of examination papers should be undertaken by University Printing Service through the Examinations Office.

The Principal Examiner will ensure that all secure papers used in the examination are returned/accounted for by the Examinations Office or internally if the examination was a Departmental one.

Students' written papers should be retained by the Department for the period required under Academic Board policy (four months). During this time, students have a right to access their own written papers unless the questions were drawn from a secure bank. Papers should then be destroyed.

All examination results recorded by individual staff members must be held securely, and handed on expeditiously to Principal Examiners.

Final results, appropriately checked and validated, whether recorded in the form of hard copy or removable media, should be sent by courier or by hand to the Student Records Office.

Possible breaches of security or misconduct during an examination must be reported to the Principal Examiner and, if appropriate, to the Registrar. All unusual events, breaches of security or difficulties encountered in the setting, transport, marking or entering of marks should be reported to the Head.

Any paper whose security may have been compromised should be re-set.

### ***5. The Use of Calculators and Computers in Assessments***

It is generally expected that student assignments will be presented as word-processed documents. The ability to prepare such documents is an expected generic skill of graduates, and the University provides access in a variety of ways to computers that may be used by students to prepare assessment items. Where the submission of word-processed work is required, students shall be given adequate advanced notice of the requirement.

Departments should recognise that hand-held computing devices may allow students to take large amounts of information into examinations. Acknowledging the equity issues associated with the cost of powerful advanced hand-held computing technologies, and the difficulty faced by Examination Supervisors in assessing the power of particular devices, it is University policy that laptop or palmtop computers normally are not permitted in formal examinations. Departments may however develop examinations and assessments in which such devices are permitted, and in doing so should consider the equity, supervisory and logistical implications. The use of non-programmable calculators is

normally permitted in examinations where calculation of numbers is required, but may be forbidden if students are given adequate notice.

## **6. Examinations – Emergency Evacuations**

When an examination room is evacuated, the University accepts and endorses the following principles and procedures:

- Only the examination/s in the affected rooms are deemed to be abandoned. Students should be advised by the room Supervisor-in-Charge that the examination will not resume after the evacuation. Where the examination is also being held in other buildings (not affected by the emergency), those sessions will continue as normal.
- The moment the Supervisor-in-Charge leaves the examination room, the examination question papers, whether confidential or not, are deemed to be compromised and must be declared invalid for future use.
- Students' work (i.e., answer booklets, computer answer sheets, etc) must be deemed null and void for the purposes of marking.
- At the time of evacuation, examination supervisors must inform the Department concerned of the abandonment of the examination and advise the students to contact their Department in person as soon as possible and no later than the following working day to obtain information about re-assessment.
- Departments should ensure that the affected students re-sit the examination/s as soon as possible.
- Students are advised to remain in Sydney and not make any overseas or interstate travel plans until the official end of the examination period.
- The University's policy on Illness and Misadventure applies in the circumstances of an abandoned examination.

## **Part 5 – Illness and Misadventure**

### **1. Introduction**

Assessments are designed to provide feedback on performance or to establish that students have reached an adequate standard to proceed or to graduate. The University's assessment practices are designed to ensure that conditions are fair to all students, are as consistent as possible, and that individual students are not disadvantaged by adverse personal circumstances beyond their control or by the activities of other students. Generally, illness or misadventure will be taken into account when considering a student's performance in a course or program

There is a distinction between longstanding illness or difficulties which prevent students from attending classes or completing required work or which seriously interfere with their capacity to study for long periods (see 3 Illness or Misadventure During a Semester), and short-term illness or misadventure that may prevent a well-prepared student from sitting for an examination or completing a particular assignment (see 4 Illness at the Time of an Examination).

Only well-attested serious illness or misadventure during a semester or occurring at the time of an examination will warrant special consideration. Some students submit "precautionary" medical

certificates for occasional brief absences throughout the semester and/or for trivial complaints occurring at about the time of the examinations. However, occasional brief or trivial illness would not normally be regarded as sufficient to explain poor performance, and students should be discouraged from submitting certificates for absences totalling less than one or two weeks. Frequent, recurrent short absences would need documentation. While it is important to ask for a medical certificate for illness of longer than a few days duration at the time of the first visit to the medical practitioner, there is no need to submit the certificate unless the illness becomes prolonged or further frequent absences are indicated.

In some circumstances, students fear that they may be disadvantaged if they seek special consideration. Faculties and Departments have an obligation to indicate clearly the ways in which submitted certificates and documents will be used.

The exact nature of misadventure will vary, but serious illness or death of a close family member, particularly at the time of the examinations, would clearly warrant special consideration.

One member of a Department (or Faculty) should take responsibility for the collection of medical certificates and other documentation to ensure that decisions are made fairly and consistently across the academic unit. Students should be notified promptly if documentation is inadequate.

The case of each student who has missed substantial but documented periods during the year should be considered by the Head or his/her nominee(s) to ensure that their marks or grades and those of students with similar cases are dealt with in a consistent fashion by all the relevant Departments. In large faculties, appropriate Sub-Deans or Associate Deans may review students' submissions. While some Faculties and/or Departments report to the student the decision regarding their application for Special Consideration, it is not required that they do so, since the student may often determine the outcome from published examination results.

After the examination period, in order to ensure consistency and fairness across all the subjects studied, the Head or his/her nominee(s) will not only make decisions on the acceptability of documentation relating to the examination periods but may also review decisions taken during the year and report back to the Faculty and Departments.

## **2. *Faculties and Departments***

When students experience illness or misadventure, practices in different Departments and Faculties vary. Some offer additional assessment (in which the marks may or may not count as annual marks); some allow students who achieved a pass standard to re-sit if a higher grade was reasonably expected; some aggregate or average marks already obtained when examinations or assignments have not been completed and/or extend deadlines for assignments.

Each Faculty has a responsibility to develop clear and appropriate guidelines, consistent with the University's policies, so that students are treated fairly and equitably. These guidelines should be published in Faculty handbooks and/or displayed on Departmental and Faculty noticeboards or websites. Faculties have a particular responsibility to ensure that individual Departmental policies and practices are consistent.

## **3. *Illness or Misadventure During a Semester***

Students who, because of serious illness or adverse circumstances, are prevented from attending classes for prolonged periods should seek an interview with a member of the Department(s) concerned and/or the relevant Sub-Dean. Even if they do not exceed any specified permitted period of absence, they may need to consider whether their best academic interests are served by obtaining permission to discontinue from the course until they are able to resume their studies effectively.

Faculty and Departmental policies should be published in Handbooks and/or displayed on noticeboards or websites and should include:

- a) a clear statement about the requirements to provide documentation, the nature of the required documentation (see 5. Satisfactory Documentation), and where and when information should be sent or handed in;
- b) an indication of the use to which medical and other certificates will be put (see 6. The Use of Documentation)
- c) although it is impossible to outline the possible range, an indication of the seriousness of circumstances that would lead to decisions to allow latitude in handing in assignments or requirements for normally compulsory work;
- d) in all cases, consistent penalties should be indicated for failure to complete an assignment or for late submission in the absence of an explanation accepted by the Faculty or Department;
- e) possible arrangements for late submission of assignments when evidence of illness or misadventure is provided either beforehand or after the due date, including dates beyond which they would not be considered (eg after return of work to other students);
- f) if attested absences have occurred, whether marks are aggregated and averaged;
- g) in the case of serious illness necessitating a substantial absence from classes, the maximum period of absence beyond which the student's work could not be considered to be completed must be indicated. The period will vary, given that Faculties or Departments may require regular attendance at activities considered essential for successfully completing the program or course (practical classes, clinical work, excursions, group work);
- h) when marks are awarded for ongoing attendance or participation, an indication should be made of the way in which absence will be handled (both that without adequate excuse and that due to attested illness or misadventure);
- i) any means to make up work missed or to complete assignments not submitted during a prolonged period of illness or misadventure must be indicated;
- j) a reference to, or statement of, the relevant Appeals processes.

#### **4. *Illness at the Time of an Examination***

Students who, through serious illness or misadventure, are unable to complete an assessment, may be given special consideration. Students have a right to ask for such consideration, which will be determined by a Department or Faculty. Students have an obligation to know their Faculty's requirements for an application for special consideration. Difficulties must be fully documented so that an appropriate evaluation of the circumstances and severity of their experiences can be made. Students are required to provide the information to Faculties and/or Departments as soon as possible.

Faculty and Departmental policies should include:

- a) consistent advice which will be given to students who become ill during the examination period or on the day of the examination (e.g. whether they are best advised to sit if at all possible even if special arrangements are needed - for example through the Health Service - or whether it is considered more appropriate to re-sit at a later date);

- b) the means of requesting special consideration in relation to the period of the annual examinations must be specified;
- c) a statement about the arrangements for students who fail to sit examinations at the end of first semester or at the annual examinations when evidence of illness or misadventure is accepted (eg additional assessment on recovery, or prior to the subsequent Semester). For fairness, any such retest should be similar to the style of the original examination.
- d) at the time of the annual examinations, documentation may be quite late in arriving, and students may have difficulty in delivering it in person. Whether copies need to be provided to each relevant course supervisor or Department and/or to the relevant Sub-Dean and/or directly to the Head or his/her nominee(s) should be indicated.

### **5. *Satisfactory Documentation***

Medical Certificates submitted by students in support of applications for special consideration should comply with the following criteria:

- a) the certificate is submitted and signed by the student's own medical practitioner or a practitioner from the University Health Service. The practitioner must have seen the student during an illness, or immediately afterwards when it was first possible to seek help.
- b) certificates signed by family members are not acceptable.
- c) the certificate indicates the date on which the student first sought attention and further information about the duration of an illness or the after-effects of an accident, and/or further visits if appropriate.
- d) within the limits of confidentiality, the certificate describes the nature and seriousness of the student's problem, so that an assessment of the possible effects of the illness or accident on performance can be made.
- e) the certificate indicates the degree of incapacity of the student and its duration or probable duration.
- f) certificates submitted in connection with examinations should be submitted before the examination, or within one week of the examinations if the nature of the illness and the timing of its occurrence prevented submission of the certificate beforehand (unless circumstances beyond the student's control prevent it).

Only those certificates meeting the requirements listed above will be acceptable. No special consideration will be given when the condition is determined to be unrelated to performance in the examinations or is considered not to be serious.

Documentation submitted in support of a request for consideration on the grounds of misadventure will depend on the nature of the misadventure, but it should be provided to support the student's account of the circumstances, and should indicate the likely duration and the effect of the problem on the student's performance.

### **6. *The Use of Documentation***

Faculties and Departments should indicate to students the likely use of certificates and other documentation submitted. Departments and Faculties should regularly review current local practices

and experiences to ensure that these are consistent with the University's policies. This will provide information that is helpful to staff administering courses and to students who find themselves in difficulties.

#### **7. *Aegrotat and Posthumous Awards***

In exceptional circumstances involving serious illness or death, award of aegrotat and posthumous degrees and diplomas may be made. In this circumstance, the Head of Department would recommend to the Dean, acting on behalf of the Faculty, who would then authorise the Registrar to certify that the conditions for the award of the degree or diploma had been met.

### **Part 6. Special Examination Conditions for Students with Disabilities or Other Needs**

1. Students may apply to sit examinations under Special Conditions if they have a medical, physical, sensory or psychiatric condition or impairment, or if they have a documented learning disability, which may prevent them demonstrating the extent of their knowledge in an examination. The provision of these conditions is in keeping with the University's Equal Opportunity in Education Policy.
2. Students who may be likely to need to avail themselves of these special conditions should consult the University's Disability and Welfare Officer. Students will be required to supply current relevant documentation in support of their application to be placed on the register of such students, maintained by the Disability and Welfare Officer. To ensure consistency and equity in the application of these procedures, students may be referred to services on campus (e.g. Health, Counselling) for validation of their application.
3. When the draft examination timetable is released, students on the register are contacted by the Disability and Welfare Officer to ascertain their requirements for Special Examination Conditions.
4. Examinations under special conditions are organised and supervised by the University Examinations and Exclusions Office, using a designated room and experienced supervisors, or a separate room if a scribe or computer is required. Departments are occasionally asked to arrange special conditions for In-Department exams and to supervise those examinations.
5. Special Examination Conditions may include but is not restricted to the provision of:
  - extra time for reading or resting or writing or toilet breaks,
  - use of a scribe or a computer,
  - examination papers in braille or large print,
  - ergonomic furniture,
  - better lighting, etc.
6. If students are to take an unfamiliar form of examination under Special Conditions, they should be advised to practice and become familiar with that method of examination as far as practicable