

Guide to UOW Assessment Policies

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1. Background

In its report to Academic Senate in November 2002, the *Review of Assessment Policies and Practices (RAPP) Committee* identified a number of gaps in and inconsistencies between UOW assessment policies. In response to the recommendations of that Committee, a broad review of UOW assessment policies took place, resulting in a number of policy changes, which were approved by Academic Senate on 19 November 2003 (to take effect at the start of 2004).

The key changes are as follows:

- Assessment Committee (formerly Examination Committee) terms of reference were revised and Guidelines for determining and declaring results were developed.
- A new Teaching and Assessment Policy was developed to set out the University's general approach to learning, teaching and assessment.
- The Code of Practice – Teaching and Assessment was restructured and rewritten in plain English to clarify the responsibilities of academic teaching staff.
- A document entitled “Best Practice – Scaling” was developed to support the implementation of policy requirements in the Code of Practice – Teaching and Assessment. (A further document entitled “Best Practice – Assessment” is also being developed which will cover, for example, online assessment, in-session testing, assessment criteria and feedback, group work, class participation.)
- Part 8 of the General Course Rules (“the Assessment Rules”) were streamlined and new minimum rate of progress rules for postgraduate coursework students were inserted.
- Student grievance provisions were clarified and brought together into a new Student Academic Grievance Policy.

A brief explanation of the changes listed above, and any action that needs to be taken to implement them, follows.

2. Assessment Committees

New Assessment Committee (formerly Examination Committee) Terms of Reference and Guidelines will apply from Autumn session 2004.

Academic Unit Assessment Committees (where they exist in a Faculty) will now comprise:

- Head of Academic Unit (or nominee with delegated authority) as Chair
- all full time and fractional members of the academic staff within the Academic Unit who have taught during the session
- other academic staff members who have substantially contributed to teaching and assessment of a subject offered by the Academic Unit, as determined by the Head
- academic staff from Academic Units external to the Faculty or from another University, as determined by the Head

For the Academic Unit Assessment Committee terms of reference, see:
www.uow.edu.au/governance/faculty/deptschoolassmt.html

Faculty Assessment Committees will now comprise:

- the Dean or nominee as Chair
- Sub Dean/ Associate Dean
- the Heads, or their nominees with delegated authority, of all Academic Units offering subjects for courses for which the Faculty has responsibility
- academic staff from Academic Units external to the Faculty, as determined by the Chair
- other academic staff, as agreed by the Chair

There is also provision for combined Faculty Assessment Committee meetings during summer session, when less subjects are offered. These combined meetings would involve the Chairs of the relevant Faculty Committees, Heads of relevant Academic Units and relevant subject coordinators.

For the Faculty Assessment Committee terms of reference, see:
www.uow.edu.au/governance/faculty/assessment.html

Assessment Committee Guidelines

The new Assessment Committee Guidelines set out the core standards for Assessment Committees in determining and declaring students' session results for courses delivered in Australia. The Guidelines, which include a "Checklist of Procedures for Assessment Committees", formalise the process to be followed, while allowing Faculties the flexibility to determine how responsibility for the process is divided between Academic Unit and Faculty Assessment Committees.

The Guidelines cover:

- **attendance at Assessment Committee meetings** – including quorum requirements and the requirement for a note taker to be present, together with appropriate ARD support staff in the case of Faculty Assessment Committee meetings;
- **record keeping** – minutes must be kept of Assessment Committee decisions and the reasons for those decisions; two forms are provided to assist with legal record-keeping requirements – Recording Variation to Marks and Checklist of Assessment Committee Procedures. Note that a copy of the

variation to marks form must be sent to ARD and that the original is retained by the Faculty;

- **responsibility for marks where cross-faculty teaching has occurred** – when a student who is enrolled in a degree with one Faculty takes a subject offered by another Faculty, the Faculty which delivers the subject has responsibility for declaring the marks for that subject – this is a change from the previous practice where marks were declared by the Faculty responsible for the degree;
- **variations to marks by Faculty Assessment Committee** – including a sample form for recording variations, consultation requirements (particularly in the case of cross-faculty teaching), scaling, upwards adjustments where a mark is below a threshold for awarding a particular class of Honours;
- **scheduling meetings** – it is up to the Faculty to schedule meetings, as appropriate, to ensure the timely release of all results; it is recommended that at least five meetings of the relevant Assessment Committees should be held over the course of the year; one of these meetings might include a combined Faculty meeting for summer sessions; Committee members must be given two weeks written notice of each meeting;
- **non-standard session, late or amended results for individual students** – the Faculty Assessment Committee Chair and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) must sign the declaration for submission of results and the results must be tabled for discussion at the next meeting of the Faculty Assessment Committee.

Checklist of Procedures

The “Checklist of Assessment Committee Procedures” sets out procedures for determining, declaring and releasing results. The Checklist allows for Academic Units and Faculties to decide the division of responsibility for completing procedures, with the exception of some of the later procedures which, by necessity, must be completed at the Faculty level. The Checklist must be signed by the Chair of the Academic Unit Assessment Committee and a copy retained by the Unit before being passed to the Chair of the Faculty Assessment Committee for completion and retention. The Checklist is intended as a tool to help Faculties and Academic Units provide evidence that due process has been followed by their Assessment Committees.

NOTE: Feedback on the Assessment Committee Guidelines will be sought after Autumn session 2004, with a view to making any necessary adjustments. Where the Guidelines are not workable for a particular Faculty, that Faculty may propose modifications for their Faculty, which must ultimately be approved by Senate.

Action required

1. Review the following to ensure that your Faculty/Unit complies with the requirements in the Assessment Committee Guidelines:

- membership of Faculty Assessment Committees and Academic Unit Assessment Committees
- Assessment Committee meeting schedule (to ensure timely release of all results)
- Assessment Committee meeting procedures, e.g. notification of members, quorum, attendance by note taker and appropriate ARD support staff

- ❑ record keeping practices – minutes of meetings, recording procedures followed to declare marks (see checklist) & variation to marks (see sample form)
- ❑ method for recording variations to marks by Faculty Assessment Committee
- ❑ procedures for declaring results

2. Where the Assessment Committee Guidelines are not workable for your particular Faculty, provide feedback and develop proposals for appropriate modifications.

3. Teaching & Assessment Policy, Code of Practice and Rules

Teaching & Assessment Policy

This new policy sets out the following teaching and assessment principles – *equity*, *consistency*, *transparency* and *collegiality*. These principles underpin a number of key supporting policy documents (such as the Code of Practice – Teaching and Assessment, Code of Practice – Honours and the Special Consideration Policy).

Code of Practice – Teaching & Assessment

This Code has been streamlined and rewritten in plain English to make it easier to implement. It is intended that this document be read in conjunction with other relevant policy documents, such as the “Teaching and Assessment Policy”, “Tertiary Literacy Policy and Procedures”, “Special Consideration Policy”, “Assessment Committee Guidelines”, “Student Academic Grievance Policy”, “Best Practice – Scaling” and “Best Practice – Assessment” (currently being developed).

Please note the following policy changes in the Code of Practice – Teaching & Assessment:

- **Subject coordinators:** The responsibilities of subject coordinators are now explicitly listed under section 3.4 and include: preparing and distributing subject outlines (see below); ensuring congruence between learning outcomes, content and assessment methods; identifying learning student outcomes and the methods and criteria for assessing those outcomes.
- **Subject outlines:** Minor changes have been made to the content requirements for subject outlines (see section 4.2 and Sch 1 – Subject Outline Checklist). In particular, the policies and procedures that must be included or referred to in the subject outline (in accordance with Section C of the Subject Outline Checklist) have been modified.
- **Learning outcomes:** It is now explicitly stated that the learning outcomes for a subject must reflect the objectives in the Learning & Teaching Strategic Plan and the Attributes of the Wollongong Graduate (section 4.1).
- **Approving assessment methods:** Each academic unit must have written procedures approved by the Faculty Education Committee (to be tabled at UEC) which specify processes for approving assessment methods, weighting of tasks, submission dates, any minimum performance levels and minimum attendance requirements. Under the requirements of the old Code, these matters were approved by the Head. The new requirements provide flexibility for Faculties to determine their own procedures to suit their own structures and practices.
- **Submitting and returning assignments:** Each academic unit must have written procedures (included or referred to in the subject outline) for submitting and returning written assessment tasks. These procedures must be clearly communicated to students.

- **Reviewing exam papers:** The Chair of the Academic Unit Assessment Committee or nominee (in consultation with Committee members as appropriate) must review and approve all examination papers.
- **In-session tests:** Procedures for in-session tests – covering approval of papers, seating and supervision – must be approved by Faculty Education Committees. Guidelines are currently being prepared – as part of the document “Best Practice – Assessment” – to assist with this process.
- **Scaling:** Assessment Committees need to be aware of new scaling requirements and a supporting document entitled “Best Practice – Scaling”. For example, if scaling is routinely used in a subject, the method of scaling must be clearly stated in the subject outline. Guidance on scaling is provided in the document “Best Practice – Scaling”.

Action required

- Subject Coordinators to review Subject Outlines to ensure compliance with Subject Outline Checklist.
- Subject Coordinators to check learning outcomes for subjects to ensure that they comply with section 4.1.
- FECs to approve Academic Unit processes for approving assessment methods, weightings, submission dates, minimum performance levels and attendance requirements.
- If they do not already exist, each Academic Unit to develop written procedures for submission and return of written assessment tasks – to be included or referred to in Subject Outline.
- FECs to approve procedures for in-session tests (to cover approval of papers, seating and supervision). (Support to be provided by Best Practice – Assessment document, currently being developed.)

FEC Chairs will be consulted to discuss the timeframe for implementing these requirements.

Assessment Rules (Pt 8, General Course Rules)

The Assessment Rules (located in Part 8 of the General Course Rules) have also been streamlined and rewritten to make the requirements clear and unambiguous. Note in particular that:

- All assessment responsibilities of students have been brought together into new rule 8.2.
- The new methods of determining Honours grades (approved by Senate in September 2003) have been included in new rule 8.5, Pt II.
- New minimum rate of progress requirements for postgraduate coursework students have been inserted as rule 8.8(4). Failure by a student to maintain satisfactory progress is dealt with by the Sub-Dean, Associate Dean or other member of academic staff specified by the Faculty.

4. Student Academic Grievance Policy

A new Student Academic Grievance Policy has been developed to provide uniform grievance and appeal procedures. Formerly, grievance provisions were contained in a number of different policies and requirements were at times inconsistent and unclear.

The new policy applies to all on-shore Australian campuses and sets out:

- the general approach of UOW to resolving grievances relating to decisions, acts or omissions of UOW staff or committees which affect the academic experience of students; and
- informal and formal procedures which students should follow to pursue such grievances.

Types of complaints covered

The types of complaints covered by the policy include:

- failure to assess work in accordance with specified criteria
- bias by a marker
- technical marking or collating error
- failure to manage requests for special consideration in accordance with UOW policy
- failure of an Honours project supervisor to fulfil his/her responsibilities
- failure to follow assessment or examination requirements

The policy does not currently cover grievances by postgraduate research students regarding supervision or the examination of theses. These are covered in the Code of Practice – Supervision.

Stages of grievance resolution process

The policy sets out the five stages in the UOW academic grievance resolution process:

Stage 1 – approach the person directly involved

Stage 2 – formal grievance resolution by Faculty

Stage 3 – Referral to Dean of Students

Stage 4 – Appeal to Academic Review Committee

Stage 5 – Appeal to Council Committee of Appeal (Student Matters)

Students are encouraged to seek to resolve any issues or concerns informally under Stage 1 before initiating formal grievance resolution procedures under Stage 2.

Faculty procedures

Each Faculty must develop written procedures for resolving grievances at Stage 2, which comply with requirements set out in section 6.3 of the policy and which stipulate processes for receipt and acknowledgement of applications. It is anticipated that, in most cases, this will only require modifications to existing Faculty procedures. The requirements in section 6.3 deal with, for example, the content of grievance applications, time limits for lodging applications, referral where a student is not satisfied with the original decision, documentation, conflict of interest.

The following must be clearly communicated to students:

- Faculty grievance procedures
- Names and contact details of relevant staff

Action required

- ❑ Each Faculty must develop written procedures for resolving grievances covered by the policy which comply with the requirements in section 6.3 and stipulate processes for receipt and acknowledgement of applications. This will usually only involve the modification of current Faculty procedures.
- ❑ Each Faculty must communicate its grievance procedures clearly to students, including the contact details of relevant staff. A sample flowchart that can be adapted for this purpose is attached as Schedule 1 to the policy.
- ❑ Each student grievance must be documented, together with the response of each of the people to whom the grievance has been referred. A sample form that can be adapted for this purpose is attached as Schedule 2 to the policy.
- ❑ Faculties must, upon request, provide the Dean of Students with a copy of all documentation regarding a grievance.

5. Role of Faculty Education Committees

The terms of reference of Faculty Education Committees (FECs) has been changed to give the highest priority to their role in overseeing the quality assurance of teaching and learning practices in Faculties. FECs also have an important role in, among other things, monitoring and reviewing educational policy, practice and programs in the Faculty.

Valuable feedback on Faculty issues was obtained from FECs during the development of the new assessment policies and was incorporated into the proposals. If you have any further feedback or questions about the new policies, please contact your FEC Chair.

6. Locating policy documents

The new policy documents and terms of reference can be located on the UOW website at the following locations:

- Assessment Committee Guidelines and terms of reference:
<http://www.uow.edu.au/about/teaching/assesscom.html>
- Teaching and Assessment Policy:
<http://www.uow.edu.au/handbook/courserules/teach&assesspol.html>
- Code of Practice – Teaching and Assessment:
http://www.uow.edu.au/handbook/codesofprac/teaching_code.html
- Best Practice – Scaling: <http://www.uow.edu.au/about/teaching/scaling.html>
- Assessment Rules:
<http://www.uow.edu.au/handbook/courserules/assessment.html>
- Student Academic Grievance Policy:
<http://www.uow.edu.au/handbook/courserules/studacgrievpol.html>
- Academic Review Committee Terms of Reference:
<http://www.uow.edu.au/governance/review.html>

SAMPLE FORM FOR RECORDING VARIATIONS TO MARKS

Date:

Chair:

Note taker:

Unit/Faculty:

Name	Student number	Postgrad/ Undergrad	Subject number	Original mark	Final mark/grade	Rationale for decision

Head/s of Academic Unit/s

Unit
Signature
Date

Unit
Signature
Date

Unit
Signature
Date

Unit
Signature
Date

Chair of Faculty Assessment Cttee

Signature

Date

CHECKLIST OF ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE PROCEDURES

Faculty & Academic Unit:

Session & Year:

Academic Unit

Faculty

<u>Procedure</u>	<u>Initial</u>		<u>Remarks</u>
	Unit Chair	OR Fac Chair	
Distribution of marks for each subject			
<input type="checkbox"/> Distribution of marks discussed and recorded			
<input type="checkbox"/> Distribution compared with historical data			
<input type="checkbox"/> Subject anomalies identified			
<input type="checkbox"/> *Scaling applied if appropriate			
<input type="checkbox"/> Results submitted to ARD			
<input type="checkbox"/> *Service subject grades' distribution supplied, if required			
Individual students' results			
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual students' consolidated results considered, including anomalies identified			
<input type="checkbox"/> Decisions made on special consideration applications/ medical certificates and WAs/WMs/WOs allocated			
<input type="checkbox"/> Honours grades determined			
<input type="checkbox"/> Variations to consolidated results recorded on Form for Recording Variation to Grades			
<input type="checkbox"/> Form for Recording Variation to Grades presented to FAC for approval			
<input type="checkbox"/> All variations to grades confirmed/ rejected and documented			
<input type="checkbox"/> *Interfaculty results reviewed, if			

required			
<input type="checkbox"/> Decisions made on late applications for special consideration and further WAs/WMs/WOs documented			

Variations to marks sent for an opportunity for comment to:			
<input type="checkbox"/> Chair of Academic Unit Assessment Committee*			
<input type="checkbox"/> Subject coordinator			
<input type="checkbox"/> Comments on variations to marks considered			

Declaration of results

<input type="checkbox"/> Results declared by Faculty Assessment Committee			
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Finalisation of results

<input type="checkbox"/> Results submitted to ARD for release			
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Non-standard sessions and late or amended results

<input type="checkbox"/> †Declaration for submission of results for each student signed by Unit Head, FAC Chair and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Results tabled at Faculty Assessment Committee meeting			

*Optional procedures, if required

†Procedure outside meeting procedures, but part of process

Academic Unit Assessment Committee

Meeting date/s:

Chair's signature _____

Date / /

Faculty Assessment Committee

Meeting date/s:

Chair's signature _____

Date / /

Further comments:

Sample Faculty academic grievance resolution flowchart:

WHO TO APPROACH WITH A PROBLEM OR CONCERN CONCERNING YOUR ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

A student who has a question or concern about a decision, act or omission of a member of a member of staff of the Faculty of [name] that affects their academic experience should follow the steps set out below. You should take careful note of the deadlines for following up your grievance at each step.

Stage 1 – Informal discussion with person(s) directly involved

You should first approach the person(s) directly involved as soon as possible to discuss any question or concern. For example, you might approach your:

- marker for an explanation of a mark awarded for an assessment task;
- Subject Coordinator or Honours Coordinator (as appropriate) to discuss a mark awarded by an external marker, or a final mark or grade;
- Honours supervisor where there is an issue or concern about supervision;
- Subject Coordinator where you are unhappy about their decision regarding a special consideration application.

You might then seek advice informally from other appropriate persons in the Faculty (e.g. Subject or Program Coordinator).



Stage 2 – Formal grievance resolution by Faculty

Where an issue or concern is not resolved informally by directly approaching appropriate Faculty staff under Stage 1, you may take the following steps to have the matter formally resolved by the Faculty.

Step 1

You may refer matter, in writing [or specify relevant application form], to [name of first person designated in Faculty procedures and contact details]. Your application must:

1. include your name, identification number and contact details;
2. set out the nature of your grievance, any specific issues involved and the form of resolution that you are seeking;
3. be lodged with [name of relevant staff member] within twenty-one (21) days of the decision, act or omission about which you are complaining or of receiving your mark for an assessment task or a final result or grade awarded for a subject.

↓ (if unresolved)

Step 2

You may refer the matter, in writing, to [name of second person designated in Faculty procedures and contact details] within fourteen (14) days of receiving a response from [name of first person as specified in Step 2].

Note: If a person specified in one of these steps is involved in the grievance, the matter will be referred directly to the next specified person.



Stage 3 – Referral to Dean of Students

If the matter is not resolved by the Faculty under Stage 2, you may refer the matter, in writing to the Dean of Students for consideration within fourteen (14) days of receiving your final response from the Faculty. The Dean of Students may:

1. refuse to take the matter further if there are insufficient grounds for the grievance;
2. conciliate the matter; or
3. decide whether the Faculty has failed to observe “due process” in dealing with the grievance.

“Due process” means your procedural rights under this or other policies, your right to be given a fair hearing and your right to have your case decided by someone who is not biased.

Where the Dean of Students decides that the Faculty has not followed due process, she may decide to refer the matter back to the Faculty for reconsideration of the matter or make a decision regarding the matter.



Stage 4 – Appeal to Academic Grievance Committee

After you have gone through the processes explained above, you may appeal to the Academic Review Committee if you believe that there has been a failure to follow due process in Stages 2 or 3, or relevant new or additional information is available to you.

You must lodge your appeal in writing with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) within fourteen (14) days of receiving written notification of the decision of the Dean of Students. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) will either: refer the matter to the Academic Review Committee where the appeal is based on lack of due process; refer the matter back to the Faculty or Dean of Students where the appeal is based on relevant new or additional information; or refuse to take the matter further where the appeal is not based on lack of due process.

Where the Academic Grievance Committee hears the matter and decides that the Faculty or Dean of Students has not followed due process, it will generally refer the matter back to the Faculty or Dean of Students for reconsideration. The Committee will not reconsider the matter itself.



Stage 5 – Appeal to Council Committee of Appeal (Student Matters)

Where you believe that there has been lack of due process in the proceedings of the Academic Review Committee, you can apply, in writing, to the Vice-Principal (Administration) to refer the matter to the Council Committee of Appeal (Student Matters). The application must be lodged within fourteen (14) days of being notified of the decision of the Academic Review Committee.

Sample grievance form:

**Faculty of [Name]
Appeal against Decision or Action affecting Academic Experience**

If you have a grievance concerning a decision or action of a member of the academic staff of this Faculty that you believe has affected your academic experience and that you are unable to resolve informally, you may lodge a formal grievance with the Faculty by:

1. completing the front page of this form; and
2. submitting the form to the Faculty of [name] Administration Office [room number] where it will be date stamped and delivered to the relevant person.

DO NOT COMPLETE THIS DOCUMENT IF YOU ARE SEEKING SPECIAL CONSIDERATION.

There are potentially two steps of the grievance process. If you are not satisfied with the response of one person in the process, you may submit this form to the Administration Office for consideration by the next person.

Important Note: You must lodge your formal grievance within twenty-one (21) days of the decision, act or omission about which you are complaining. After you receive a response from [first person in process] you have fourteen (14) days to refer the matter to [second person in process] if you wish to take the matter further.

Retain a copy of this document for your records

Student Number	Name	
Current Address		
Telephone	Email	Course Name

Subject Number	Subject Name

REASONS FOR APPEAL

1. Include details of the grievance, any issues that you would like addressed and the outcome that you are seeking.
2. Attach any supporting documents, including the original of the marked assessment (where applicable).

Student Signature	Date

**STAGE 2
REVIEW BY [TITLE] - COMMENTS**

[Title]'s Signature	[Title]'s Name (Please Print)	Date

STUDENT RESPONSE

Student Signature	Date

**STAGE 2
REVIEW BY [TITLE] - COMMENTS**

