Assessment: Courses and Coursework Programs - Academic Policy

/explore/policies-and-procedures/assessment-courses-and-coursework-programs-academic-policy

1. Purpose of policy

This policy enunciates principles within a standards framework that informs assessment of students' learning within courses and coursework programs.

2. Policy scope and application

This policy applies to all staff, students and members of University decision-making or advisory bodies.

3. Definitions

Please refer to the University's Glossary of Terms for policies and procedures.

4. What is meant by assessment?

4.1 Assessment means the purposeful and systematic processes of gathering, analysing and reflecting on evidence produced by students to enable informed and consistent judgements to be made about their learning.

4.2 These processes serve a range of purposes, including:

a) advancement of the student's learning

b) evaluation of the student's knowledge, understanding, abilities or skills, and

c) identification and recording of a summary level of attainment reached at the end of each course, usually in the form of a mark, result or grade, that establishes the extent to which the student has met the required academic standards set by the University and any external bodies such as professional registration authorities.

4.3 Assessment is primarily formative or summative:

a) Formative assessment is designed to identify, for both the student and assessor, the student's strengths, and any potential gaps in the knowledge, understanding and skills expected for successful completion of a course; to assist students to learn more effectively, for example, through provision of feedback on the student's performance and advice as to how it can be improved or maintained; and to inform teaching decisions in the next phase of learning.

b) Summative assessment is designed to indicate the extent of a student's success in achieving specified learning outcomes for a course or coursework program; and it contributes to the student's final grade in a course or the final grade for the coursework program as a whole.

5. Institutional framework for assessment

5.1 The Academic Board, in its roles of overseeing academic quality, approves a suite of policies and procedures which:

a) set out the principles for the design, documentation, approval, monitoring and review of assessment strategies for courses and coursework programs,

b) ensures methods of assessment are consistent with the learning outcomes being assessed, are capable of confirming that all specified learning outcomes are achieved and that grades awarded reflect the level of student attainment.

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c) ensures on completion of a course of study, students have demonstrated the learning outcomes specified for the course of study, whether assessed at unit level, course level, or in combination.

d) ensures that assessment promotes effective learning and maintains academic standards.

e) ensures that the University provides mechanisms for student's assessment to be externally referenced or benchmarked in other ways.

f) ensures that assessment practices are reviewed as part of the formal program reviews conducted by the University (Program Review – Procedures).

5.2 Heads of School ensure that everyone involved in assessment of courses or programs within their School are competent, have an appropriate level of knowledge and are aware of all relevant University policies, procedures and guidelines that pertain to assessment.

5.3 The University implements processes that ensure that assessment decisions are properly moderated, verified and ratified and that students are advised of the outcomes as quickly as possible and within reasonable timeframes.

5.4 The University's Learning and Teaching Committee periodically monitor and audit assessment practices to determine consistency and/or compliance with university policy and procedures.

6. Principles informing assessment

The following curriculum design principles (Coursework Curriculum Design – Academic Policy) inform assessment within courses and coursework programs at the University of the Sunshine Coast:

Assessment is learning centred when it:

a) engages students in learning;

b) provides high quality feedback to students on their performance and gives students an opportunity to actively improve their learning; and

c) links formative and summative assessment information to improve student learning and engagement.

Assessment is constructively aligned when:

d) assessment tasks, including criteria, are aligned with course and program learning outcomes.

e) the student's learning experience aligns with the assessment tasks required to be undertaken.

Assessment is Standards Based when:

f) the results of assessment are an inclusive and trustworthy representation of student achievement of academic standards; and

g) it is a valid, fair and reliable measure of specified learning outcomes and is moderated to ensure consistent and appropriate judgements.

Assessment is Career and future focussed when it:

h) is designed to meet students' current and (as far as possible) future learning needs; and

i) includes authentic assessment types that simulate or replicate future work contexts.

4. Records management

Effective recordkeeping and records management is implemented in relation to all assessment, in line with the Information Management Framework – Governing Policy and associated procedures.

END

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