POLICY DOCUMENT

ASSESSMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

1   Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this Policy is to outline the principles that underpin the College's approach to assessment.

This Policy should be read with the *Schedules/ Procedures/Guidelines*, which guide the conduct and management of assessment and grading practices.

Scope:

- This Policy applies to all course offerings in which the College certifies attainment of learning outcomes.
- It will be relevant to all academic staff, including sessional teachers, and students.

2   Policy Statement

2.1   Purpose of Assessment

2.1.1   Assessment serves two equally important purposes. Firstly, assessment is designed to engage students in the learning process and should encourage and support learning. Secondly, at certain points, assessment measures achievement, accredits learning and provides evidence to satisfy measures of quality.

2.1.2   Assessment of student learning performance and feedback on progress are pivotal and important processes in Higher Education learning and teaching.

2.1.3   Assessment is an integral part of the learning process for students and strongly influences what and how students learn in their courses.

2.1.4   Well-designed assessment tasks communicate to students what is important and are vehicles by which the College assures itself, and society, of its graduates' capabilities.

2.1.5   This Policy acknowledges that assessment serves a variety of purposes and that the forms of assessment used throughout the College are diverse, and vary according to the academic discipline. In acknowledgment of this, the Policy aims to provide

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flexibility to staff and students, whilst ensuring that all assessment meets a common set of minimum standards as outlined in this Policy.

2.2 Principles of Assessment

The *Assessment Policy* is underpinned by seven principles of assessment. All principles apply equally and must be read jointly.

2.2.1 Assessment is standards-based

- Assessment is made by reference to explicit and pre-determined criteria and standards that reflect the learning outcomes and not by reference to the achievement of other students.
- Clear criteria and performance standards for the assessment of student work are made available to students in the descriptions of the assessment tasks no later than the point at which the task is given.
- Students will have access to the standards expected and examples of relevant and related assessment tasks.
- The College will award common result grades.
- Decisions regarding grades awarded to students must be based on the attainment (or otherwise) of the pre-determined criteria and standards.
- Procedures exist to ensure that all staff involved in teaching share a common understanding of assessment practices and criteria. Assessment must be conducted in a way that is consistent with the pre-determined criteria and standards for the task.
- Moderation will occur at all stages of the assessment lifecycle including subject planning, task design of the assessment regime, standards, pre-marking, post-marking and evaluation in accordance with the *Moderation Policy*.

2.2.2 Assessment must be fit for purpose, and efficient in its application

- Assessment items across a course should be sufficient to assess achievement of both course and subject learning outcomes.
- Assessment tasks must be aligned to learning outcomes and should not address material outside of their scope.
- Assessment must be designed and implemented so that it allows students to demonstrate the extent to which they attained the assessment standards, while avoiding unnecessary assessment load. This applies both to the work required of staff in setting and assessing student work and in the work required of students to complete the assessment tasks.

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2.2.3 Assessment will be course-based

- Subject Coordinators and Heads of Department are responsible for ensuring a course-based approach to assessment. This is a holistic, coherent and integrated approach to assessment design and implementation where students develop and demonstrate their achievement of course learning outcomes.
- Course design must demonstrate how the scaffolding of assessment tasks across the course ensures that students can achieve the course learning outcomes without unnecessary duplication.
- Courses must include one or more significant tasks that assist students to consolidate, integrate and synthesise learning across their study, and offer the opportunity for group work.
- Assessment tasks may be shared across subjects in a course or explicitly build on tasks from prior subjects.
- A variety of different types of assessment tasks, such as authentic tasks, will be used and embedded strategically throughout a course of study to develop and demonstrate the achievement of course learning outcomes and graduate capabilities.
- Assessment workloads, and the timing of assessments across a course, will be considered to ensure they are reasonable and sustainable for students, staff and organisational units.
- Assessment practices are collaborative and promote continuous improvement. Assessment practices are open and should be shared across disciplines, curses and subjects.
- Professional development opportunities related to design, implementation and moderation of assessment will be provided to all staff where possible.

2.2.4 Students and teachers are responsible partners in learning and assessment

- Assessment is designed to engage students in the learning process and should encourage and support learning.
- Ongoing opportunities for formative feedback will be built into all subjects. Examples include formal or informal assessment tasks, peer assessment, self-assessment or other assessment activity.
- Students must receive some feedback prior to the census date in every session.
- Students are responsible for their learning and are expected to:

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- actively engage with assessment tasks, including carefully reading the guidance provided, understanding criteria, spending sufficient time on the task and submitting work on time;
- read, reflect and act on feedback provided;
- actively engage in activities designed to develop assessment literacy, including taking the initiative where appropriate (e.g. seeking clarification or advice, negotiating learning contracts, developing grading criteria and rubrics);
- provide constructive feedback on assessment processes and tasks through student feedback mechanisms (e.g. student surveys, suggestions for future offerings, student representation on committees);
- ensure that their work is their own; and
- be familiar with College policy and Department procedures and act in accordance with those policies and procedures.
- responsibilities will be communicated to students during the period of orientation.

- Heads of Department, Subject Coordinators and Teaching staff are jointly responsible for designing assessment regimes that enable students to demonstrate attainment of subject and course learning outcomes. Staff must:
  - advise students in relation to expectations relevant to specific assessment tasks by providing appropriate guidance, supporting material, standards and rubrics;
  - assess student work fairly, consistently, transparently and in a timely manner;
  - ensure moderation of all assessment tasks as per the moderation policy;
  - provide timely feedback which enables students to further improve their learning and performance wherever possible;
  - be able to justify student results against the stated criteria; and
  - be familiar with College policy and Department procedures and act in accordance with those policies and procedures.

2.2.5 Assessment is fair, transparent and equitable

"Fairness in assessment should be considered from at least three perspectives. First, we should consider the fairness of what we ask students to do to demonstrate their learning. Second, we should consider the fairness of our judgements about the quality of students' performance. Third, we should consider the fairness of the educational decisions we make as a result of these judgements." Killen 2005, p.118.[i]

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- Assessment regimes must provide all students a fair opportunity to demonstrate their subject and course learning outcomes.
- Across a course, students will be given a variety of tasks to demonstrate achievement of course learning outcomes.
- Assessment practices take into account equity and inclusiveness to accommodate the diversity of the student body as required.
- The process of awarding results in accordance with the standards will be transparent to students, staff and moderators.
- All assessment tasks must comply with the requirements outlined in *Subject Assessment Requirements.*
- If a final examination is used it must comply with the requirements outlined in the *Examinations Policy.*

2.2.6 Assessment is valid, aligned and reliable

- Assessment tasks will be fit for purpose and valid (i.e. assess what they claim to assess).
- There should be an explicit and logical alignment between learning outcomes, assessment tasks, the task criteria, feedback and the grades associated with different levels or standards of performance.
- Assessments should also be reliable, that is, they should consistently and accurately measure learning. This involves making judgements about student learning that are based on a shared understanding of standards of learning and should not be dependent on the individual teacher, location or time of assessment.

2.2.7 Assessment design and implementation promotes academic integrity

- Academic integrity and honesty will be promoted through careful task design, clear explanations and education, together with appropriate monitoring of academic honesty by academic staff.
- To ensure academic integrity, assessment tasks are reviewed regularly, and refreshed and renewed appropriately according to the level of risk.
- Academic support services will be offered to staff and students to embed a culture of academic honesty.
- Plagiarism detection software will be used for all text-based electronically submitted summative assessment unless approved otherwise.

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2.3 Subject Assessment Requirements

2.3.1 Maximum weighting

No single assessment task can be worth more than 60% of the total assessment of the subject unless required by an external accrediting body.

2.3.2 Group Work

- Group work should encourage peer learning and peer support, and group work tasks should be designed to promote collaboration between group members.
- Group work should only be assessed where there is a learning outcome pertaining to group work. Assessment may target group processes, product or both, depending on subject learning outcomes.
- Group work will be structured in such a way that all students will be able to demonstrate attainment of all the learning outcomes of the task. It also needs to be structured in a way that individual performance can be measured.
- At least 50% of group work assessment shall be allocated to individual performance. Group work assessment tasks may not constitute more than 30% of the total assessment in the subject.
- Staff shall ensure students are prepared and monitor groups to ensure that:
    - the group's progress is satisfactory
    - group members are collaborating effectively and fairly

2.3.4 Hurdle Requirements

- A hurdle requirement is an activity for which a minimum level of performance or participation is a condition of passing the subject in which it occurs.
- Hurdle requirements that are not associated with marks/results are still regarded as assessment tasks for the purposes of this policy.
- Hurdle requirements:
    - ➢ Must be clearly specified in the subject assessment guide including the requirements for performance and / or participation.
    - ➢ Must be determined on pedagogical grounds.
    - ➢ Should be used only where it is appropriate to ensure fulfillment of subject and course learning outcomes.
    - ➢ May be used to meet minimum competency standards or to demonstrate 'fitness to practice' for courses related to professional practice.

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- In cases where students have made a serious first attempt at a hurdle requirement but have failed to meet it, they must be given one further opportunity to meet that hurdle requirement. For the purposes of this clause, a serious attempt at an assessment task is one where the student has made an effort to address the set task, but has failed to reach the required standard of performance. For example, in an examination, students are required to attempt a range of question types throughout the paper; for example, simply attempting multiple-choice questions is not sufficient for an attempt to be considered serious. Responses that contain only frivolous or objectionable material will not be considered serious.

- Heads of Department in consultation with the Dean and Operations Director may grant an exception to clause for a particular assessment task on the basis of a sound pedagogical argument.

- A student, who has obtained a raw mark over 50, yet failed all available attempts of or at least one hurdle assessment as described in this policy, fails the subject.

2.3.5 Supplementary Assessment

- Supplementary assessments should be administered in the following circumstances only:
  - ➢ the provision of a further opportunity to successfully complete hurdle assessments,
  - ➢ as the outcome of a Special Consideration notification,
  - ➢ as the outcome of a Grade Appeal.

2.3.6 Academic Honesty

- Students are expected to abide by the College's *Academic Integrity Policy.*
- Text-based work submitted by students for assessment will be subject to plagiarism detection software, such as Turnitin or similar approved software, unless otherwise approved.
- Plagiarism detection methods are to be used on a routine basis to check student work or when plagiarism is suspected.

2.3.7 De-identification

- Consideration must be given to implicit and explicit forms of bias in marking, and employing mechanisms such as the de-identification of scripts where possible and appropriate.

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2.3.8 Electronic Submission

- Unless otherwise approved, all text-based assessment tasks will be submitted electronically using the College's electronic learning management system.

2.3.9 Late Submission

- Late submissions will only be permitted when specified in the subject guide. The College applies penalties to assignments submitted after the due date and without prior request for an extension, and approval having been granted. The penalty will be deducted from the total mark. Penalties are calculated as a percentage of the total mark available for the assignments/essay/academic work as follows:
    - 5% per day late including weekends.
    - More than 1 week late 10% per day including weekends.

    Unless otherwise stated in the relevant assessment task description, all work should be submitted by 11.59pm on the due date.
- Except in cases of an approved special consideration notification, penalties for late submission of assessment where an extension has not been approved are to be consistently applied across all students enrolled in a subject.

2.3.10 Retention of student work

- All assessments worth 20% or more must be archived for benchmarking, calibration or grade review, for a period of six months unless otherwise approved.

2.4 Standardised Numerical Grading

Grades are awarded so that ACPE can provide a statement for students, which indicates the student's achievement in an assessment task or subject.

2.4.1 Grading System

The standardised numerical grades that apply to learning achievement in assessment tasks will be:
- High Distinction (HD),
- Distinction (D),
- Credit (C),
- Pass (P),

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- Fail (F),
- Satisfactory (S) and
- Unsatisfactory (US).

The following grades apply only to unit of study results and are used purely for administrative purposes:

- Fail Non-Attempt (FNA),
- Fail Incomplete (FI) and
- Incomplete (I).

Within the framework described in this policy, it is recognised that assigned grades assume some level of comparability in meaning across the College. Accordingly, the following descriptive guidelines are provided to assist in the interpretation of each grade level.

However, it is fully acknowledged that these descriptions must be interpreted within the context of the subject, discipline and level of study. For instance, subjects the complexity required of responses to assessment tasks in the final year of a degree for at 300 and 400 levels would be substantially higher than for assessments in the first semester of a degree.

Pass (P) Numerical range: 50-64	A Pass response is characterised by work that satisfies the requirements of the assessment task and subject outcomes. The response demonstrates a competent grasp of the knowledge and skills required. It may exhibit occasional minor errors in style and/or performance. Consistent errors especially in relation to knowledge and understanding are not acceptable at this or any other higher level.
Credit (C) Numerical range: 65-74	A Credit response is characterised by work that capably satisfies the requirements of the assessment task and subject outcomes. The response demonstrates a well-rounded grasp of the knowledge and skills required. It may exhibit occasional minor errors in style and/or performance.
Distinction (D) Numerical range: 75-84	A Distinction response is characterised by high quality in satisfying the requirements of the assessment task and subject outcomes but is less sustained than for a High Distinction. The response demonstrates a predominantly insightful understanding of the knowledge required and a high level of skill performance. It may exhibit rare minor errors in style and/or performance.
High Distinction (HD) Numerical range: 85-100	A High Distinction response is characterised by sustained, superior quality in satisfying the requirements of the assessment task and subject outcomes. The response demonstrates an insightful understanding of the knowledge required and a high level of skill

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	performance. It avoids all minor errors in style and/or performance.
Fail (F) Numerical range: less than 50	A Fail response is characterised by work that does not satisfy the requirements of the assessment task and subject outcomes. The response contains frequent errors in the knowledge and skills required. It may also exhibit poor communicative competence and major errors in style and/or performance.
Satisfactory (S) versus *Unsatisfactory (US)*	In some units, the grading system may make more sense organised on a satisfactory/unsatisfactory (pass/fail) basis. If such a grading system is employed, the appropriate descriptors for a criteria-based assessment model are to be used.
Fail Non-Attempt (FNA)	The Fail Non-Attempt grade indicates that the student did not complete any mandatory subject requirements (including assessment tasks and/or other subject requirements as specified in subject documentation). This grade applies only to students who remained enrolled after Census Day in each semester.
Fail Incomplete (FI)	The Fail Incomplete grade indicates that the student did not complete all mandatory subject requirements (including assessment tasks and/or other subject requirements as specified in subject documentation). This grade applies only to students who remained enrolled after Census Day in each semester.

The grades of pass and standardised numerical grades (SNGs) are both disclosed to students on their examination results notification and on their transcripts.

There are therefore three sets of marks or grades which apply over the duration of a subject:
1. the **immediate feedback** on the piece of work being assessed
2. the **grade** (High Distinction, Distinction etc.) which the examiner judges to be appropriate for the subject, after all the assessments in (1) above are totalled
3. the **standardised (scaled) numerical grade**, or **SNG** - out of 100 - which corresponds to the grade awarded in (2) above

Teaching staff should think carefully about how marks - item (1) - are reported to students throughout the semester since students receive a final Standardised Numerical Grade and not a raw mark.

2.4.2 Grade Point Average

A Grade Point Average (GPA) is a calculation that reflects the overall grades of a student in a coursework program. It will be calculated on the basis of the units completed at ACPE

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towards the course. It will not take into account credit points granted through RPL or non-award study. The calculation will be based on the following:

The GPA will be calculated on a 7-point scale as detailed below:

	Mark Range	Points
HD	85-100	7
D	75-84	6
Cr	65-74	5
P	50-64	4
F	0-49	0

2.4.3 Incomplete Grade

An Incomplete grade ('I') may be awarded due to extenuating circumsctances, at the discretion of the Unit Coordinator in instances where the work presented is of a good standard but not complete due to extenuating circumstances (e.g. certified illness on exam day). It is the student's responsibility to submit all necessary work so that the 'Incomplete' can be finalised no later than the end of the fourth week after the publication of grades for the teaching period. Failure to do so will result in the conversion of the 'I' to an 'FI.' In exceptional circumstances, the Dean and Operations Director/Head of Department has the authority to vary the deadline for completion of assessment tasks. Instances where the Dean and Operations Director/Head of Department extends the deadline should be reported to the Academic Examiners' Committee.

2.4.5 Distribution of Grades

While the College adopts a standards-based approach towards grading, it is normally expected that the percentage of High Distinctions in a given cohort of students will be in the range 5-10%, Distinctions approximately 15%, and Credits approximately 25%. It is recognised that this distribution can be affected by a range of factors, including the number of students enrolled in a subject and the academic quality of students in a particular cohort.

Recommended Percentage Distribution of Grades			
	HD	D	Cr
100 Level	3% ± 2%	11% ± 4%	23% ± 5%
200 Level	3% ± 2%	12% ± 4%	25% ± 5%
300 Level	4% ± 2%	14% ± 4%	28% ± 5%
400 Level	5% ± 2%	20% ± 4%	40% ± 5%

Benchmarks are set for High Distinction, Distinction and Credit grades only, and are expressed in terms of percentages of the total number of students assessed (subject to rounding to whole numbers to facilitate their practical application). There are no benchmarks for Pass and Fail grades. The benchmark values are adjusted annually on receipt of the latest year of data. Roughly speaking, though, a submitted assessment task of median quality would normally qualify for a mark in the region of an upper credit or low distinction. Examiners may find it useful to keep this in mind when determining criteria and marking students' submitted work.

As a general rule, it is expected that the percentage of results falling within each grade category from Credit to High Distinction will fall within ± 5 percentage points of the benchmark value for that grade. These expectations are applicable to any specific reasons that may explain and justify results that fall outside these parameters.

Any examiner who wishes to recommend a grading distribution which is outside the tolerances given in the table above must implement the following procedure:

➢ the Record of Previous Performance -should be referred to
➢ if the Record shows that this cohort is unusual in a way that explains the proposed distribution, a note to that effect should be written and presented to the Head of Department; if accepted, it will be tabled at the Examiners Committee Meeting
➢ if the Record does not support the proposed distribution, either
   o the cut-offs should be revised and a new distribution submitted, or
   o independent validation (such as an external referee's report) on the distribution should be tabled.

2.4.6 Steps in Grading

Academic staff should therefore:
   a. Assess each piece of work, and report and record their assessment by whatever means Head of Department recommends
   b. At the end of semester, total the assessment scores for each student and produce a distribution of raw marks for the subject.
   c. Using the recommendations in the table above, determine the cut-offs on the raw-mark distribution for the grades HD, D, C, and P
   d. For each raw mark, determine the appropriate scaled mark (according to the grade they have awarded on the basis of the table above.
   e. The range of marks for each grade in a particular unit or assessment task/s may be adjusted for example where the range for a 'C' grade is 65% to <75% and the

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adjustment is to shift the range to 63% to <73% to compensate for an overly harsh assessment instrument.

f. Marks from an assessment with unexplained differences in teaching or assessment prior to determining the final grade may be excluded. This approach is appropriate if marks from one assessment task deviate strikingly from those in other assessment tasks, for example students achieving greater than 80% on three assessment tasks receive marks of less than 60% on a fourth assessment task. This approach requires careful consideration of the purpose of individual assessments. All such decisions must be clearly documented or where an adjustment is undertaken, the Head of Department will provide a report detailing the background, rationale, method and outcomes of the adjustment and actions implemented to avoid any identified problems in the future.

g. Students who are borderline failures need to be remarked and discussed at the examiners committee. Students who attain 47% - 49% may be scaled to 50% at the discretion of the examiners committee. Students who have failed for academic dishonesty or who have not submitted assessment tasks (unless it warrants special consideration) will not be considered for a possible scaling of the failure to a pass grade.

3   Definitions

- **Assessment Task:** Illustrative task or performance opportunity that closely targets defined learning outcomes, allowing students to demonstrate their learning and capabilities.
- **Assessment (Formative): M**onitors student progress against agreed standards and provides them with feedback comparing their progress to the standards with a view to helping them to achieve the standards. The goal of formative assessment is to map and monitor learning progress and to provide ongoing feedback to learners and teachers.
- **Assessment (Summative):** is an assessment the result of which is used to determine a final mark or grade. The goal of summative feedback is to document the level of achievement on a task, which contributes to the final mark or grade. A summative assessment task should also have a formative component through feedback.

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- **Census date:** means the date on which a student's enrolment in a subject becomes final.

- **Examination script:** the student's attempt at the examination paper.

- **Feedback:** means information provided to both teachers and students on the quality of their performance, in order to improve it.

- **Final Examination**: an examination held within a specified examination period that is defined by the College and administered centrally by the Registrar's Office.

- **Hurdle requirement:** an assessment task mandating a minimum level of performance as a condition of passing the subject in which it occurs.

- **Invigilation:** direct in-person supervision on behalf of the College for the entire duration of an assessment task to prevent cheating and to prevent students using aids other than those permitted for that assessment task.

- **Learning and Teaching Committee:** established by the Academic Board to provide it with advice on a wide range of academic matters. In addition, the Committee will facilitate the coordination of the:
    o development and implementation of courses;
    o maintenance and moderation of academic standards; and
    o enhancement of the quality of courses and the quality of teaching.

- **Learning Objectives:** the set of knowledge, skills and/or competencies a person has acquired and is able to demonstrate after completion of a learning process; in the AQF these are expressed in terms of knowledge, skills and application.

- **Learning Outcomes:** A statement of what students will be able to do, know, understand or value at the completion of a class, subject or course.

- **Moderation:** Moderation is a quality review and assurance process that occurs at all stages of the assessment lifecycle. It involves using other academics and qualified staff to confirm that the assessment design, tasks and marking are valid and reliable.

- **Course-based assessment:** a holistic, coherent and integrated approach to assessment design and implementation, where students develop and demonstrate their achievement of course learning outcomes.

- **Course of Study:** The minimum sequence of required study which would enable a student to qualify for an award, including both the general requirements of a specific award and the specific requirements of a qualifying major or specialisation where applicable.

- **Serious attempt:** a serious attempt at an assessment task is one where the student has made an effort to address the set task, but has failed to reach the required standard of performance. For example, in an examination, students are required to

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attempt a range of question types throughout the paper; simply attempting multiple-choice questions is not sufficient for an attempt to be considered serious. Responses that contain only frivolous or objectionable material will not be considered serious.

- **Rubric:** A brief outline of the assessment criteria; a marking scheme or guidelines used to interpret and grade the student's work against the assessment criteria and standards.

- **Take home examination:** A special type of open examination where students are provided with the exam paper and complete it away from the College without the help of others over a set period of time.

4   Related Documents

- Academic Progression Policy and Procedure
- Grievances, Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure
- Student Code of Conduct
- Student Consultation Policy
- Examinations Policy and Procedure
- Special Consideration Policy and Procedure
- Intervention Strategy for Students at Risk
  Legislation:
- Higher Education Standards Framework 2015
- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011
- National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018

5   Document Administration

Policy Name & Code:			Assessment Policy and Procedure (POL-03)
Policy Owner:			Dean and Operations Director
Approval Authority:			Academic Board (ACPE)
Next Review:			September 2023
Approval Date	Effective Date	Version	Summary of changes
13 Feb 18	09 Mar 18	1	Document developed. Policy approved by Academic Board. Effective Date: 09 March 2018.
26 Jun 18	27 Jun 18	2	• Policy de-harmonised from other SGA brands. • Policy content revised to ensure it reflects current

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			ACPE's practices and titles.
			• Content revised to ensure it complies with relevant HES (1.4).
			• References to Director of Education have been replaced with Dean & Operations Director.
			• References to Director, Student Services & Retention replaced with Student Services and Learning Support Manager.
			• References to Course Convenors replaced with Head of Department.
			• Changes made to policy format include:
			- Document code, version and dates moved to Policy Administration Section.
			- Paragraphs numbered.
			- 'Further information section' with references to related policies moved to new 'Related Documents' section. It includes list of all related policies, procedures, and other documents.
			- 'Policy Administration' table reformatted.
			- Numbering system updated.
			- Footer updated to include document title, document number and document version.
04 Oct 18	05 Oct 18	3	• Document benchmarked (MQ University policy. Revision conducted to ensure content is accurate, up to date, and addresses the relevant standards of the Higher Education Standards Framework.
			• Policy title changed from *Assessment Policy* to *Assessment Policy and Procedure*.

* Unless otherwise indicated, this policy will still apply beyond the review date.

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[i] Killen R. 2005, *Programming and Assessment for Quality Teaching and Learning*, Social Science Press, South Victoria.

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