A3.0 Coursework Assessment Policy

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1. **Context**

Assessment is an integral part of the learning and teaching cycle and an important aspect of maintaining academic standards. It measures learning outcomes, evaluates the effectiveness of the learning environment, and formally certifies student achievements for external audiences.

Assessment at Torrens University Australia is linked to specific learning outcomes and based on clearly articulated criteria that help students understand the characteristics of high quality work. In keeping with the University’s strongly applied focus to teaching and learning, assessment tasks are designed to draw on real-life practice through case studies, simulations, studios, internships and other forms of practica, as well as traditional assessment methods.

2. **Definitions**

**Course Profile:** a detailed description of a course provided to each enrolled student which includes course aims and learning outcomes, assessment tasks and due dates, teaching staff contact details, course structure, and relevant University policies and procedures.

**Disability:** has the same meaning as in section 4(1) of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth), and includes physical, psychological and psychiatric conditions and injuries, and ongoing medical conditions.

**Formative Assessment:** monitors student learning to provide ongoing feedback that can be used by instructors to improve their teaching and by students to improve their learning.

**Learning Outcomes:** are the expression of the set of knowledge, skills and the application of the knowledge or skills a student has acquired and is able to demonstrate as a result of learning.

**Summative Assessment:** provides information to judge the extent to which a student has achieved the learning outcomes of a course and is used to determine a final mark/grade for the course.

3. **Scope**

This policy applies in respect to all undergraduate and postgraduate coursework programs offered by Torrens University Australia. All staff must comply with this policy whenever they are engaged in any aspect of the assessment process.
4. Principles
The University’s approach to assessment is based on the following principles:

Assessment must:
- be undertaken with honesty and integrity by staff and students and allow fair judgments about student performance;
- be marked by appropriately qualified assessors, with grades applied consistently in accord with the Grading Scheme;
- be equitable, and cater for any disadvantages to a student that result from the student’s disability, special needs or unforeseen circumstances;
- be aligned with course learning outcomes, program specific graduate attributes and University Graduate Attributes;
- encourage and reinforce learning through the provision of meaningful and timely feedback;
- be intellectually challenging, engaging and relevant;
- measure achievement by referencing to pre-determined and clearly articulated criteria; and
- maintain academic standards.

5. Assessment design
Assessment is designed to develop student learning (formative), to make judgments about student learning relative to stated learning outcomes (summative) and to monitor student learning as a measure of teaching effectiveness. The design of the assessment requirements for a course should:

- include both formative and summative assessment elements;
- apply an appropriate weighting for each assessment task to reflect the importance of the course learning outcome being tested by the task;
- include assessment types that are sufficiently extensive and varied to permit fair judgments to be made about student performance;
- be transparent, with the requirements of the assessment tasks and the means by which student work will be judged and overall grades determined clearly articulated;
- take into account student workload expectations as described in the Coursework Program Structure Policy;
- take into account assessment schedules of other courses whenever possible;
- ensure that assessment is timed to enable students progressively to build their understandings and capacities;
- relate to any discipline accreditation requirements and be explicitly linked to specified learning outcomes for the course;
- be comparable when offered at more than one location and/or study mode; and
- be inclusive and reflect awareness of potential gender, racial and cultural bias.

The Coursework Assessment Guidelines provide advice on assessment design, marking, providing feedback, and ensuring academic integrity.

6. Course Profile
The Course Profile is used to inform students of the assessment schedule and details for a course. The Course Profile must:

- be available electronically to students before the commencement of study;
- clearly state the relationship between the assessment methods and the learning outcomes expected for the course;
• provide details of the circumstances under which extensions may be granted (consistent with this Policy) and of any penalties that may be applied for non-compliance in assessment tasks;
• advise students if plagiarism software will or may be used, and in what circumstances it will be used; and
• comply with the Examinations Procedures and the provisions of this Policy.

Other than in exceptional circumstances, assessment items as specified in the Course Profile must not be changed without negotiation with students. Any such amendments must be approved by the Head of School and be promptly communicated by email to all students.

7. Feedback to students
Timely and constructive feedback allows students to monitor their progress and determine where improvements can be made to enhance their learning. Before students begin their final examinations, they must receive feedback on all assessment tasks completed during the study period, with the exception of items submitted within the last two weeks of the study period.

8. Quality assurance
Assessment practices and processes must be continuously monitored for quality assurance and improvement purposes. The Academic Council will be responsible for establishing a quality assurance regime which must include:

• a review of the final results in each course to ensure comparability of standards;
• a documented moderation process to verify that the application of criteria and the allocation of marks is consistent, especially when there is more than one marker for a course. This process may include consideration of the performance of current students against past cohorts, or the performance of individual students across a range of courses;
• a process for review and approval of course assessment types and weightings; and
• a process for giving students an opportunity to provide constructive feedback on the assessment process and tasks.

The Academic Council may conduct other internal and external monitoring and benchmarking for quality assurance purposes, and may make recommendations for changes to assessment practices for future course offerings.

9. Modified arrangements for assessment
The University acknowledges that students may be academically disadvantaged when special needs or unforeseen circumstances impair their ability to complete their assessment tasks by or on the specified date. In circumstances where a student’s capacity to demonstrate their true level of competence in an assessment task is seriously impaired because of medical, compassionate or extenuating circumstances, the student is eligible for an assessment extension, replacement examination or other form of modified assessment. Extenuating circumstances include:

• religious obligations
• formal legal commitments
• military service
• service with a recognised emergency management service
• representing the University, State or nation at a significant sporting or cultural event.
The student must provide documented, independent evidence of the nature of the medical, compassionate or extenuating circumstances and their effect on the student’s ability to demonstrate their true level of competence.

9.1 Assessment deadline extension
Extensions must provide a reasonable time, given the nature of the student’s circumstances for the student to complete the task without giving the student an unfair advantage over other students. A reasonable time does not extend beyond 10 working days or the last day of teaching in the course, whichever is earlier. For all extensions, the University’s grading scheme applies in full. Course co-ordinators are responsible for assessing requests for assessment deadline extensions.

9.2 Replacement examination
A replacement examination tests the same areas that were covered by the original examination. A replacement examination is counted in full towards the final grade for the course. A student’s attendance at a replacement examination constitutes acceptance that the mark for the replacement examination will replace the mark, if any, received for the primary examination. The Academic Director is responsible for assessing requests for replacement examinations.

9.3 Other modified arrangements
In exceptional circumstances and if the original assessment task is worth less than 20%, the final grade for a course may be determined by averaging the student’s work over the whole course, provided the student has completed all other assessment tasks and it is to the student’s advantage. This arrangement is at the absolute discretion of the course co-ordinator.

In exceptional circumstances, a student who cannot complete an assessment task within a reasonably extended time because of medical, compassionate or extenuating circumstances, may be permitted to withdraw from the course without a fail grade being recorded. The Academic Director is responsible for assessing requests for withdrawal without a fail grade.

9.4 Reasonable adjustments for students with a disability
Reasonable adjustments to assessment that enable a student with a disability to participate at University on the same basis as other students without a disability will be made according to the Students with a Disability Policy.

10. Supplementary assessment on academic grounds
Supplementary assessment for students who have failed a course and who cannot demonstrate special needs or unforeseen circumstances will only be available at the discretion of the Academic Director in exceptional circumstances.

11. Appeals
A student who is dissatisfied with the mark given for an assessment task or with the final result in a course or program, may appeal the mark or result by following the Academic Grievance Procedures of the Student Grievance Management Policy. Appeals can also be made against decisions not to approve a student request for modified assessment.

12. References