

Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy



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Intent

To provide academic direction to enhance the quality of learning and teaching at James Cook University (JCU).

Definitions

Definitions of terms used in this policy are as per the [Policy Glossary](#).

Horizontal and Vertical Alignment: Horizontal alignment deals with the assessment and content standards for a subject area at a particular grade/year level. Vertical alignment refers to the development of skills and capacities within an overall course of study through sequential year levels.

Satisfactory completion or Pass Grade: is specified in the subject outline or assessment criteria for grading. It may vary with particular courses due to professional accreditation.

Assessment Items: may be comprised of sequential learning activities or clusters which achieve the subject learning outcomes e.g. essay synopsis preceding a major essay; an exam may be preceded by a series of short quizzes; an assignment may be comprised of documented research activities plus an oral presentation and workshop activities or practicals may precede either a journal or a report. Demonstration of professional and technical competencies may also be required, alongside graded assessment.

Group work: refers to learning activities, (usually project based) undertaken by a number of students, resulting in an outcome that presents a single piece of assessment or a number of associated pieces of assessment.

Formative assessment: is designed to foster development and improvement within an ongoing learning activity (skills, concepts, approaches, etc.).

Summative assessment: is used to assess whether the learning activity being evaluated has met stated criteria or learning outcomes.

Curriculum: is the overarching layout for a path of study referring to the philosophies and intention, delivery methods and outcomes of a course; more specifically the learning goals, teaching and assessment methods, course content and learning activities.

Scope

This policy applies to staff and students within undergraduate and coursework postgraduate courses, and relates to the teaching and learning aspects of the University's Academic Plan, whilst acknowledging that the total student experience depends on all aspects of the University Plan.

Course: an integrated set of discrete learning units within a curriculum comprised of core, major, minor and elective subjects. Courses are defined by degree rules which determine study plans for individual students. Upon completion of a course study plan a student will be admitted as graduate of a prescribed degree with a testamur certified by the University Chancellor.

Subjects: specific units of study within a course usually designated by year level and specialisation. Subjects may be determined as core, introductory, capstone, advanced, and electives. These individual units of study are the building blocks of course structure and will develop skills, concepts, approaches and capacities which contribute to the graduate attributes and qualities.

Plagiarism: reproduction without acknowledgement of another person's words, work or expressed thoughts from any source. The definition of words, works and thoughts includes such representations as diagrams, drawings, sketches, pictures, objects, text, lecture hand-outs, artistic works and other such expressions of ideas, but hereafter the term 'work' is used to embrace all of these. Plagiarism comprises not only direct copying of aspects of another person's work but also the reproduction, even if slightly rewritten or adapted, of someone else's ideas. In both cases, someone else's work is presented as the student's own. Under the Australian Copyright Act 1968 a copyright owner can take legal action in the courts against a party who has infringed their copyright.

Self Plagiarism: the use of one's own previously assessed material being resubmitted without acknowledgement or citing of the original.

Reasonable Adjustment: allows a staff member/Subject Co-ordinator, to vary assessment activities to meet the needs of a student with a disability wherever it is possible, necessary and reasonable to do so.

Work Integrated Learning: 'is an umbrella term for a range of approaches and strategies that integrate theory with the practice of work within a purposefully designed curriculum' (Patrick C-J et al., 2009)

Core Principles

The following principles of learning, teaching and assessment are derived from the scholarship of teaching and learning and are informed by current practices across the higher education sector:

CP1. Students are at the heart of our University

We are committed to student engagement and success by responding to the student voice, and to working in partnership with our students.

CP2. Students' success is built on their whole of University experience

It is the responsibility of all staff across Colleges and Divisions to contribute to a positive and manageable student experience.

CP3. The diversity of our students is recognised and welcomed

Opportunities will be offered to all students to succeed through engagement, reflection and commitment to learning

CP4. Courses and subjects are designed with clear learning outcomes, coherent structure and manageable workloads for both staff and students

Students will be provided with learning experiences that develop Graduate Attributes and accomplish James Cook University's intent of building a brighter future for life in the tropics world-wide. Clear statements of intent are reflected in course and subject design.

CP5. The integrity of the University's grades and credentials is fundamental

Students and staff are responsible for ensuring the

authenticity of assessment materials submitted and the standard of grades awarded and to be aware of the consequences of academic misconduct.

CP6. Effective teaching is inspiring, motivating and research-informed

Students' engagement in University learning enriches their intellectual lives.

CP7. Approaches to teaching are varied and adaptive to new demands in learning and will include effective use of appropriate technologies and innovation

Teaching staff will develop and draw on a repertoire of teaching skills to respond to changing circumstances, contexts and settings.

CP8. Open communication builds shared understandings

Transparent, timely, explicit and mutually respectful communication is important between and among staff and students.

CP9. Teaching that develops learning is well organised and enhancement led through the cyclical process of reflection, revision and improvement

Teaching will be supported by timely and orderly procedures developed within the University's Quality Enhancement system.

Application of the Core Principles to Design and Management of Learning, Teaching and Assessment

CP1. Students are at the heart of our University

We are committed to student engagement and success by responding to the student voice, and to working in partnership with our students.

- 1.1. The design and teaching of all subjects and courses will be responsive to the needs of our students; based upon institutional data collected from marketing, demographic reports and student surveys.
- 1.2. Course and subject development and review will respond to student feedback.
- 1.3. Students will be included in the process of designing courses through participation in appropriate committees (staff-student liaison committees, staff-student consultative or student focus groups).

CP2. Students' success is built on their whole of University experience.

It is the responsibility of all staff across Colleges and Divisions to contribute to a positive and manageable student experience.

- 2.1. Students will be given opportunities to develop and extend academic skills and build social community, including peer support and mentoring particularly in first year.
- 2.2. Information literacy, academic writing, career information and time management will be embedded into course design and implementation through relevant support service.

CP3. The diversity of our students is recognised and welcomed

Opportunities will be offered to all students to succeed through engagement, reflection and commitment to learning.

- 3.1. Course design will endeavour to respond to the rich diversity of student backgrounds and pathways including: Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, international, intercultural, low socio-economic backgrounds, rural or remote, first family member attending a university, return to study and people with accessibility issues.
 - 3.1.1. In all subjects a variety of resources, teaching methods and approaches to learning will be considered and adopted, in recognition of the diversity of the student body,
 - 3.1.2. While meeting learning outcomes, assessment and accreditation demands, courses and subjects will be offered in ways that provide students with some flexibility and choice, through the use of information and communication technologies,
 - 3.1.3. Teaching, learning and assessment must provide reasonable access, availability and opportunity and adjustments for students with accessibility issues.

(see [Students with Disabilities Policy](#))

CP4. Courses and subjects are designed with clear learning outcomes, coherent structure and manageable workloads for both staff and students

Students will be provided with learning experiences that develop Graduate Attributes and accomplish James Cook University's intent of building a brighter future for life in the tropics world-wide. Clear statements of intent are reflected in course and subject design.

4.1. Courses will be designed with clear demonstrable learning outcomes including those which:

- 4.1.1. are of high cognitive order (as described in the **Australian Qualifications Framework**).
- 4.1.2. address employability and professional accreditation standards where appropriate,
- 4.1.3. align with graduate attributes for undergraduates/postgraduates
- 4.1.4. align with any discipline standards.

4.2. All teaching and learning activities, resources, assessment and criteria for grading, and learning outcomes (including graduate attributes) will be aligned so that courses and subjects are explicitly coherent. All courses will be monitored through annual Course Performance Reports to ensure:

4.2.1. course curriculum will be mapped to achieve an audit of the horizontal and vertical alignment wherever possible, acknowledging the partial nature of this mapping in courses with few core subjects.

4.2.2. curriculum will be designed to recognise requirements of AQF and different year levels.

4.3. Courses will be designed on the basis that a 3 credit point subject will require a 130 hour work load of study-related participation including class attendance

over the duration of the study period irrespective of mode of delivery.

4.4. Where a subject is offered across different campuses and/or modes and/or teaching periods within the one calendar year, the learning outcomes will be the same, and other than in exceptional circumstances, there will be no variation in assessment type or weighting. Any minor variation in assessment type or weighting must be authorised through relevant College/Division processes and by the relevant Heads of Academic Group, and documented in the subject outline/s, prior to the commencement of the subject. The design of course content and learning experiences across different campuses and/or modes and/or teaching periods within the one calendar year will ensure equivalent opportunity for students to achieve the stated learning outcomes.

4.5. Time-constrained assessments, e.g. exams and oral presentations, must be appropriate to the stated outcomes of the subject, and of duration appropriate to the demands of the questions.

CP5. The integrity of the University's grades and credentials is fundamental

Students and staff are responsible for ensuring the authenticity of assessment materials submitted and the standard of grades awarded and to be aware of the consequences of academic misconduct. In all academic endeavour it is necessary to acknowledge the work of others when developing material for assessment or publication.

Assessment Design

5.1. Assessment will be designed for learning and to determine student capabilities based on their own endeavours; students will also demonstrate their ability to:

- acknowledge the precedence of others' work,
- show how work is linked with other

groups of authors, and other intellectual and research traditions, and

- make the reader aware of omissions in the work being quoted verbatim.

A student who submits work containing plagiarised material for assessment will be subject to the provisions of the **Student Academic Misconduct Requirements**.

- 5.2. For all assessment students must be given the grade that their individual work deserves, based on a clear set of criteria or scales. The Course Co-ordinators must ensure reliability and consistency of grades, while recognising that academic professional judgement is a significant element in the process.
- 5.3. Strategies will be employed to ensure that the student is the author (including creator) of the work submitted for assessment. Integrity of grades will be demonstrated through use of some or all of the following strategies appropriate to particular subjects and modes:
 - 5.3.1. assessment is designed to encourage students to demonstrate their own learning, and to make connections with their own experiences,
 - 5.3.2. some assessment is undertaken under direct supervision, and other assessment is compared with this supervised work,
 - 5.3.3. draft versions of the work are monitored,
 - 5.3.4. use of Safe Assignment by staff and students to detect and avoid plagiarism,
 - 5.3.5. oral examination occurs to ensure the skills, knowledge, understanding and values of the student are consistent with those illustrated in the work submitted for assessment,
 - 5.3.6. Colleges must provide a secure system (including via Learn)CU) for submission and return of work to safeguard against plagiarism and claims of non-receipt and non-return.
- 5.4. Except where required for external accreditation, or for subjects with a designated research component, or in special circumstances approved by the Head of Academic Group, a 3 credit point subject will have:
 - 5.4.1. the number of assessment items appropriate to the year level and to the quantity and quality of learning outcomes for the subject, and that takes into consideration the 130 hour student workload expectations. In most cases, this will be a maximum of four assessment items.
 - 5.4.2. assessment must be varied, distributed and weighted across the duration of the study period in order to create manageable workloads for staff and students and to enable timely feedback for students. No assessment item worth more than 30% of the total grade in a subject will be given within 3 weeks of the examination period for subjects wherein there is a final (centrally administered) examination, unless the subject is delivered in block mode and the assessment is authorised by the Head of Academic Group.
 - 5.4.3. no assessment item will be weighted less than 10% or more than 70% (except in subjects with a designated research project),
 - 5.4.4. no assessment item will use the practice of 'negative marking', specifically the deduction of marks for any wrong answer or blank answer,
 - 5.4.5. there will be no more than 50% assessment for group work, unless there is scope for individual differentiation of the components of the shared group grade. Where an individual student has plagiarised, without the knowledge of the group, that student will be subject to the Student Academic Misconduct Requirements and the remainder of the group will be assessed based upon individual components.

- 5.5. For group work Subject Co-ordinators must provide plans for alternative individual assessment where the Subject Co-ordinator has agreed that a group will be disbanded.
- 5.6. The total weighting allocated to peer or participation based assessment in a subject shall not exceed 20%.
- 5.7. Any individual assessment task which must achieve a satisfactory grade or pass grade in order to meet subject requirements, will be clearly identified in the Subject Outline.
- 5.8. Other than in exceptional circumstances, assessment items as specified in the Subject Outline, must not be changed without negotiation with students. Timely written notification of assessment changes will be communicated to all students by the Subject Co-ordinator. Amendments must be approved by the Head of Academic Group.
- 5.9. Where a student has submitted work for assessment and received a grade, either at another time or at another institution, such a submission will be considered a breach of academic integrity unless the resubmission is authorised by the subject coordinator.
- 5.10. Attendance at specified classes will be a mandatory requirement for satisfactory completion of some subjects (this must be stated in the Subject Outline); in such cases attendance records must be kept.
- 5.11. Students are encouraged to attend and participate fully in scheduled learning experiences and in the wider intellectual life of the university. Participation may be assessed, but attendance alone must not be a component of graded assessment in any subject.
- 5.12. The University is obliged by the Disability Discrimination Act – Education Standards 2005 – to provide ‘reasonable adjustments’ for students with disabilities. Any Adjustments for a student with a disability are to be made in such a way as to ensure that the fundamental nature of

the assessment or examination remains the same. Students with disabilities are still required to demonstrate a pre-determined level of ability in relation to essential learning outcomes and inherent course requirements. (See Students with Disabilities Policy).

Assessment Monitoring

- 5.13. Progressive moderation of assessment will be undertaken for all subjects. Validity and reliability may take the form of pre and post assessment moderation including: exchange marking, double marking, blind marking or the use of pre-determined criteria based rubrics and comprehensive marking guides.
- 5.14. The sample for moderation will be nominated by a Subject Co-ordinator and can focus upon grade bands, selected students or specific items of assessment. If formal moderation is undertaken across a full subject it should consist of an analysis of top grades, borderline pass grades and a selection of mid-range grades.
- 5.15. Where major differences emerge in assessment grading the Subject Co-ordinator will determine strategies to resolve the final grade. This may include convening moderation panels or an external examiner. Where moderation outcomes are irreconcilable, matters should be referred to the Head of Academic Group.
- 5.16. In cases where oral or performance presentations are to be assessed, and where the value of the presentation is over 20% of the aggregate mark for the subject, staff must provide a means by which a remark is possible if a student should appeal the grade given (e.g. by AV recording or including two markers at the initial presentation).
- 5.17. Subject Co-ordinator must seek a biennial peer review of the subject’s assessment plans and grading practices.
- 5.18. Course Co-ordinators will conduct an annual review of assessment and moderation processes.

Assessment Management

- 5.19. Examination papers must be endorsed by Subject Co-ordinator, checked by another member of staff with appropriate content expertise and approved by the relevant Head of Academic Group.
- 5.20. Unclaimed assessment items for the subject must be retained for a period of six months after the end of the study period.
- 5.21. Students' examination scripts will be kept for a period of twelve months following the end of the examination period.
- 5.22. In order to provide students with quantitative feedback on assessment items, numerical grades or the JCU Grading system (5.21.1) may be used; this may be augmented with + or – grades where appropriate. Students must be notified that assessment during the lecture program is always subject to final ratification following the examination period and that no single result represents a final grade in a subject.

5.22.1. The following cut-off points reflect the recommended JCU Grading system.

Grade	Range
High Distinction (HD)	85%-100%
Distinction (D)	75%-84%
Credit (C)	65%-74%
Pass (P)	50%-64%
Fail (N)	<50%
Pass Conceded (PC)*	48-49%

*Only available for specific subjects (see Subject Outline)

- 5.22.2. Assessment may also be defined as Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory (or equivalent terms) where all students are required to meet the stated levels of competence.
- 5.23. Results will be finalised in accordance with the provisions of the **Finalisation and Publication of Student Results Policy** and the **Distribution of Grades Policy**.

- 5.24. Student grades and results will be released only to those with the legitimate rights of access. **Review of Assessment and Student Access to Scripts and Materials Policy**.
- 5.25. Students have the right to request a review of marks for an individual item of assessment or the final grade for a subject. Such requests will be processed under the provisions of the **Review of Assessment and Student Access to Scripts and Materials Policy**.
- 5.26. Assessment decisions are complex and no single policy can cover all variations across Divisions and Colleges. In cases where decisions need to be made about specific circumstances not covered by this policy, the relevant Dean will have the right to make determinations. Such determinations will be recorded by the Curriculum Management Officer to facilitate consistency.

CP6. Effective teaching is inspiring, motivating and research-informed

Students' engagement in University learning enriches their intellectual lives.

- 6.1. Contemporary, disciplinary and interdisciplinary pedagogy will be incorporated into subjects and courses.
- 6.2. Courses will demonstrate relevance and impact beyond the University, including elements of work integrated learning which must be benchmarked against the TEQSA Threshold Standard (See Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2011 chapter 3 section 4.5).
- 6.3. Teaching will build student research capacity.
- 6.4. Within each subject, a range of assessment tasks will be designed to enable, motivate and challenge students to extend their learning in ways that demonstrate a higher order engagement with the discipline.
- 6.5. Where appropriate, academic staff will model and encourage an enquiry-based approach to learning.

CP7. Approaches to teaching are varied and adaptive to new demands in learning, and will include effective use of appropriate technologies and innovation

Teaching staff will develop and draw on a repertoire of teaching skills to respond to changing circumstances, contexts and settings.

- 7.1. Within all courses staff will provide a range of learning opportunities for example, problem-based learning, small group enquiry, situated learning and evidence-based practice.
- 7.2. Appropriate tools and technologies for learning (including Learn JCU) will be used in all subjects to reinforce and enhance the student experience.
- 7.3. All LearnJCU subject sites will be archived according to the procedures in the LearnJCU 'Subject Site' Lifecycle Management Procedures.

CP8. Open communication builds shared understandings

Transparent, timely, explicit and mutually respectful communication is important between and among staff and students.

- 8.1. Students will be given explicit advance information about learning activities and assessment tasks using commonly accepted terminology and language appropriate to the subject.
- 8.2. A subject outline, complying with the requirements of the endorsed JCU Subject Outline Guide and Template, will be completed for each coursework subject and uploaded to the relevant LearnJCU site at least 7 days prior to the commencement of a prescribed study period.
- 8.3. Any subject that includes work/clinical placement must provide comprehensive information to students in relation to supervision, assessment, work place health and safety, insurance as well as contact information of University based support staff.

8.4. Subject Co-ordinators will take responsibility, across all campuses, modes and concurrent teaching periods, for regular communication with all staff teaching into the subject, including sessional staff.

8.5. Staff will provide students with the opportunity to consult with them. Full-time staff will normally be available for approximately 4 hours per week during study periods. The 4 hour consultation period is a guide which will be managed by staff according to student demand and numbers. Staff may also make use of other forms of communication such as e-mail, LearnJCU and other forums such as additional revision or feedback sessions. Provisions for consultation during study vacation, the associated examination period and release of results for that study period should be arranged with students before completion of the lecture program. Where academic staff hold part-time or sessional positions, a pro-rata provision of consultation time must be offered.

8.6. Arrangements for student access and consultation need to be clearly communicated in Subject Outlines and within the College (e.g., on the staff member's door, or on LearnJCU). This applies to full-time, part-time and sessional staff, and to part-time and full-time students in all teaching modes.

8.7. Staff will be responsible for:

- 8.7.1. provision of early feedback on learning activities to allow students an opportunity to withdraw without academic penalty and to improve performance before further assessment,
- 8.7.2. informing students of their grade for every component of assessment in the subject. This will be within 21 days from the due date of the assessment item,

- 8.7.3. providing feedback that is both explanatory and diagnostic so that students are encouraged to follow up on the feedback to improve their practice,
- 8.7.4. providing feedback that is linked to the purpose of the assignment item and to the criteria,
- 8.7.5. considering a variety of feedback methods, e.g. individual and generic/group; face-to-face; written, electronic; peer, self, external, group review.
- 8.8. Students will be provided with opportunities to give feedback to staff and to identify and diagnose challenges to learning.
- 8.9. Subject Co-ordinators will ensure regular student evaluations of the subject are presented back to students and considered in subsequent subject designs.
- 8.10. Course Co-ordinators will take responsibility for regular communication with all Subject Co-ordinators teaching into the course.

CP9. Teaching that develops learning is well organised and enhancement-led through the cyclical process of reflection, revision and improvement

Teaching will be supported by timely and orderly procedures developed within the university's Quality Enhancement system.

- 9.1. Teaching will be structured around the provision of individual subjects that are fully integrated into courses. All courses will be reviewed annually in the course performance report, which will be produced by Colleges in conjunction with Course Co-ordinators.
- 9.2. The provision of efficient and robust learning experiences within all courses will be based upon a **Quality Enhancement Framework**. Through this process learning and teaching will aim to create a continuous cycle of improvement, with emphasis on self-reflection and critical self-evaluation that draw on evidence to inform and enhance practice.
- 9.3. Specific roles and responsibilities related to learning and teaching, and research are listed in the Charter of Responsibilities for Academic Quality and Governance.

Further information

Further information regarding the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Policy should be directed to your Divisional Associate Dean, Teaching and Learning.

Approval Details

Policy sponsor:	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
Approval authority:	Academic Board
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Modification History

Version no: 16-2 includes amendments approved by Academic Board: Minor amendment – Addition to CP7 of clause 7.3