Assessment Policy

Responsibility: Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic
Approving authority: Academic Board
Last reviewed: October 2026
Next review: October 2031

Application

1. This policy applies to all staff involved in the assessment of papers and programmes at the University of Waikato; students are governed by the Assessment Regulations.[1]

Purpose

2. The purpose of this policy is to establish the principles relating to assessment at the University of Waikato, Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato.
3. This policy is supported by an integrated outcomes framework that:
   a. connects the University's graduate attributes to assessment practice
   b. establishes shared institutional principles about the purposes and conduct of assessment
   c. sets requirements for assessment design at programme and paper levels
   d. provides operational Assessment Regulations for the administration of assessment, examinations, special consideration, and grade review, and
   e. ensures that all students have opportunities to demonstrate and develop the competencies that define a University of Waikato graduate.

Scope

4. This policy applies to all undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes (papers at 000, 100, 200, 300, 400, 500, 700, and 900 levels) at the University of Waikato; details of the University's assessment of dissertations and theses are set out in the Dissertation and Theses Regulations.

Related documents

5. The following documents set out further information relevant to this policy:
   - Academic Integrity Statement
   - Assessment Procedures
   - Assessment Regulations
   - Dissertation and Theses Regulations
   - Pacific Strategic Plan
   - Students with Disabilities and Impairments Policy
   - Te Rautaki Māori | Māori Advancement Plan

Definitions

6. In this policy:
   academic integrity means acting with honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage in all academic work. It ensures that a student's work reflects their own genuine effort and learning

[1] Until such time as the Assessment Procedures are in place.

alternative examination arrangement means an approved modification to the conditions, time, or location under which a student sits a scheduled examination during the examination period. This includes accommodations under a Reasonable Adjustment Plan, rescheduling due to timetable clashes, and arrangements for sitting examinations off campus.

assessment means the internal assessment (details of which are prescribed in the relevant Paper Outline) and, if one is offered, the examination that a student must undertake in order to be awarded a grade for the paper concerned

examination means the portion of the assessment for a paper that a student undertakes under formally supervised conditions, at a time and place notified by the University

feedback means information shared about past actions or performance to help someone understand what worked and what did not, with the goal of guiding improvement. Feedback can take multiple forms, including peer-peer, written, oral, whole of class and example answers, amongst others. It is often paired with feedforward which refers to forward-looking suggestions for how to improve

grade means the overall result for a paper, calculated by aggregating (and, where applicable, weighting) the marks awarded across its constituent summative assessment components. A grade may be expressed numerically, as a percentage, or as a letter/classification, and is the outcome formally recorded against a student's academic record

graduate attributes mean the University-wide capabilities, dispositions and qualities expected of all graduates, regardless of discipline. Graduate attributes are not directly assessed, but are demonstrated through programme-level graduate outcomes, which are delivered through paper-level learning outcomes

graduate outcomes mean the demonstrable knowledge, skills, and capabilities that students will achieve on completion of a qualification, synthesised across constituent papers and aligned to the University's graduate attributes

internal assessment means the portion of the assessment for a paper that is assigned, supervised and marked internally; it may include assignments, practical work, work in tutorials, seminars, written or oral tests, recitals, performances or attendance requirements

learning outcomes mean statements describing what a student will know, understand, or be able to do at the successful completion of a paper. Learning outcomes are directly assessed through the design and conduct of assessment and contribute to the achievement of programme-level graduate outcomes

marking means the process of reviewing an individual piece of student work, providing evaluative judgement and/or feedback against stated criteria and awarding a mark in the form of numerical or other score reflecting the performance on that assessment item. A mark relates to a single piece of assessment only and does not, by itself, represent a student's overall result in the paper; that outcome is expressed as a grade

mātauranga Māori means Māori knowledge, a living body of knowledge that encompasses the worldviews, values, practices, and epistemologies developed by Māori over generations, which has its own standards of rigour and validity

moderation means a quality assurance process in which markers reach agreement on the application of assessment criteria and standards and check for consistency in marking across a paper or programme

Paper Outline means the document distributed by the relevant department providing detailed information about the nature and requirements of a paper

programme means an approved combination of papers, typically organised around a major or subject, that a student completes in order to be awarded a specific qualification

Reasonable Adjustment Plan means a mutually agreed schedule of appropriate adjustments made to a student's learning environment to lessen the impact of an impairment when it is necessary, possible and reasonable to do so in accordance with the Students with Disabilities and Impairments Policy. Reasonable accommodations must not compromise academic standards, the essential nature of the paper or programme or what are deemed to be essential skills or knowledge in relation to the paper or programme as shared through teaching and demonstrated through assessment.

special examination means an examination prepared and scheduled for a student whose application for special consideration has been approved as valid by the Special Consideration Committee. A special examination is conducted as a separate assessment and is distinct from an alternative examination arrangement

staff means a general or academic member of staff of the University of Waikato or a contractor to the University.

student means a person enrolled in one or more University of Waikato credit-bearing papers

summative assessment means assessment whose primary purpose is to certify the extent to which a student has achieved the learning outcomes of a paper, contributing to the final grade

teaching period means the full length of a paper offering as listed in the Subject Regulations; in most instances this period is longer than the recorded teaching weeks.

Principles and key requirements

7. Assessment at the University of Waikato serves multiple interconnected purposes:
    a. to engage students in productive learning and support their development as independent, self-directed learners
    b. to provide timely and meaningful feedback that guides improvement and enables students to monitor their own progress
    c. to inform teaching and learning decision-making at paper, programme and institutional levels
    d. to provide evidence that students have achieved the learning outcomes for individual papers, the graduate outcomes for specific programmes, and the University's graduate attributes
    e. to ensure comprehensive, accurate, consistent and trustworthy certification of individual student achievement, and
    f. to maintain professional, disciplinary and academic standards, including meeting requirements of professional and accrediting bodies where relevant.

These purposes are not mutually exclusive. Well-designed assessment serves multiple purposes simultaneously, supporting learning while also certifying achievement.

8. The University's approach to assessment is designed according to the following principles and conducted according to the Assessment Regulations:

   a. **Assessment is a learning activity**
   The assessment process engages students in timely, meaningful learning activities that develop their capacity to make independent judgements about the quality of their own and others' work. Assessment is not merely a measurement tool but a crucial part of the learning process itself. Students learn through the process of preparing for, completing, and receiving feedback on assessment. Staff learn about the impact of their teaching and how the assessment design works to support student learning and determining their understanding of the material explored in the paper. This allows academic staff to continue to refine their teaching and assessment practices to enhance student success.

   b. **Assessment is aligned with learning outcomes and graduate outcomes**
   Assessment is explicitly designed to measure achievement of stated learning outcomes at paper level and graduate outcomes at programme level. Students are provided with clear information about what they are expected to learn and how they will be assessed.

   c. **Assessment involves mutual responsibility**
   Effective assessment requires engagement from both staff and students.

   Teaching staff have a responsibility to:
   - design authentic, engaging, and academically rigorous assessment
   - provide timely opportunities for students to demonstrate learning
   - support learning through effective and timely feedback
   - orient students new to university study to university assessment expectations, methods, and standards
   - ensure assessment is fair, valid, accessible, and reliable
   - reflect on assessment design, process, outcomes, and feedback to inform their teaching practices, and
   - engage with students and colleagues in a professional, collegial, and respectful manner throughout the assessment process.

   Students have a responsibility to:
   - engage seriously and honestly with assessment tasks
   - demonstrate evidence of learning through their responses to assessment
   - reflect on and act upon feedback to improve their learning
   - uphold academic integrity and the ethical standards of their discipline
   - seek clarification when assessment requirements are unclear, and
   - engage respectfully and collegially with staff and peers when participating in assessment activities, including group work, peer review, and feedback discussions.

   d. **Assessment is criterion-referenced**
   Judgements about the quality of students' performance are made with reference

to explicit and predetermined criteria and standards, not by comparison with other students' performance. Standard-setting processes may be applied to define minimum performance levels for competency in professional or accredited programmes.

e. **Assessment is transparent**
Students and staff can see that there is an explicit and logical relationship between assessment, the criteria used as the basis for judgement, and the grades associated with different levels of performance. Assessment requirements, expectations, and grading criteria are communicated clearly to students before they undertake assessments.

f. **Assessment is valid and reliable**
Assessment measures the intended learning outcomes and provides a consistent and dependable indication of student performance. Assessment methods are appropriate for what is being assessed. Moderation practices ensure that results are stable across different assessors, contexts, and times where appropriate.

g. **Assessment is authentic**
Assessment tasks represent appropriate, meaningful, and worthwhile forms of accomplishment. Where possible, assessment requires knowledge and/or skills to be demonstrated in ways that reflect how they would be applied by successful practitioners in real-life settings, professional practice, or disciplinary scholarship.

h. **Assessment is fair, inclusive and culturally responsive**
It is designed to:
- respect and accommodate the diverse needs, backgrounds, and experiences of learners
- enable all students to interact with and respond to learning outcomes equitably
- support students' equitable engagement with the content, format, and conduct of assessment
- ensure that no individual or group of students is unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged
- recognise and value diverse cultural perspectives, ways of knowing, and forms of expression, and
- provide opportunities for students to demonstrate learning through culturally appropriate means where pedagogically sound.

i. **Assessment develops critical and creative thinking**
Assessment requires students to do more than recall or reproduce information; it challenges them to think critically, creatively, and independently. Assessment is designed to:
- progressively develop students' abilities to analyse, synthesise, and evaluate information and ideas; apply knowledge and skills to new, complex, and unfamiliar situations
- identify and solve problems creatively and systematically; engage with current and emerging research methodologies, and

- make connections across fields of knowledge.

j. **Assessment develops communication and collaboration**
Where appropriate to the discipline and learning outcomes, assessment provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate:
   - clear communication across diverse modes and formats of human expression, whether spoken, signed, written, visual, embodied or digital
   - the ability to communicate to diverse audiences including specialist and non-specialist contexts, and
   - effective collaboration and teamwork and the capacity to work constructively within diverse groups.

k. **Assessment upholds mātauranga Māori**
Assessment acknowledges that mātauranga Māori has its own standards of rigour, quality and validity. Where students are assessed, assessment criteria should reflect those standards. Staff assessing work grounded in mātauranga Māori should have appropriate cultural competence. Consistent with te reo Māori's status as an official language of Aotearoa New Zealand and a taonga, students may submit assessment in te reo Māori or in English unless the paper has learning outcomes associated with a language other than te reo Māori or English. In matters relating to mātauranga Māori and assessments submitted in te reo Māori, the Associate Dean Māori of the relevant Division and/or the Deputy Vice Chancellor Māori must be consulted.

l. **Assessment maintains academic integrity**
Assessment is designed and conducted to uphold academic integrity and to minimise opportunities for academic misconduct. Students learn the value of integrity in their studies and assessment and develop an understanding of ethical standards in their field of study.

m. **Assessment is sustainable and workable**
Assessment is achievable for both staff and students with reasonable effort within the context of expected workload. Assessment load is distributed appropriately across the programme and teaching period. Assessment methods are feasible given available resources and expertise.