



Foundation Year Assessment Policy

Rationale

The assessment of student work serves formative (learning) and summative (grading and selection) purposes. The formative purposes are structuring, guiding and enhancing student learning. The summative purposes involve certifying student achievement and admitting students to subsequent learning opportunities. The purpose of this policy is to document the guidelines and procedures that will contribute to high quality assessment of student performance.

Principles

1. Foundation Studies assessment policy will reflect University of Otago policy, where relevant, as found on the following web page: <http://www.otago.ac.nz/administration/policies/otago070388.html>
2. Assessment practices are expected to conform to the following principles.
 - The formative functions of assessment will be given as least as much emphasis as the summative functions.
 - Both formative and summative assessments will centre on knowledge, skills and attitudes which really matter.
 - The number, timing and percentage weights of individual assessments will be chosen to maximise validity (both formative and summative).
 - The workload associated with assessment requirements will be reasonable. Assessment tasks will be fully described early enough to give students time to fit them alongside their other commitments.

Detailed guidelines on the following policy issues are appended to this policy.

- Norm Referenced & Criterion Referenced Assessment
- Relative Weights Given to Different Paper Goals
- Relative Weights Given to In-course Assessments Final Examinations
- The Use of Terms and In-course Assessment
- Feedback on Student Work
- Assessment of Group Work
- Oral Examinations
- Student Workload
- Procedures for Approving & Reviewing Assessment Arrangements
- Monitoring and Moderation Procedures
- Grievance and Appeal Mechanisms
- Staff Development Processes

Outcome

Assessment procedures will be valid in that they will fulfil their intended purpose(s). They will fairly and reliably measure what they set out to measure, guiding student learning and motivating student learning activity.

Glossary of Terms

Criterion-referenced assessment (also known as standards-based assessment)

Students' performance is assessed against stated objectives and expected standards rather than against the performance of other students.

End-point assessment

Assessment, usually in the form of a test, done at the end of an academic term.

Examination

In Foundation Year, the end-of-paper assessment that takes place at the end of a semester, within the examination period, which is outside the 13-week teaching period for a paper. See also internal assessment.

Formative uses for assessment

Uses of assessment that are intended to help students to improve their academic performance.

Internal assessment

All components of assessment which contribute to a final grade but which are not derived from performance on a final examination; internal assessment takes place within the timetabled teaching times for a paper. In Foundation Year, the proportion of marks awarded through internal assessment may vary from paper to paper, but must not exceed 40% of the final mark.

Norm-referenced assessment

Students' performance is judged or interpreted by comparing the levels of performance of different students taking a paper.

Paper

The smallest individual academic component of a course (and thus of a Programme). Papers are characterised by:

- being recorded as a separate entity on an academic record
- having some form of result attached to it
- generating a definable portion of the tuition fees available.

Language Centre example papers are Intermediate General English or Intermediate level IELTS.

Paper Coordinator (PC)

An academic staff member who is responsible for co-ordinating the organisation of a paper and the efforts of staff members involved in the paper.

Programme

The entirety of what students do while they are in the Language Centre or at Foundation Year.

Reliability of an assessment

The extent to which an assessment produces a stable or reproducible pattern of results. Reliability is only important to the extent that it enhances validity.

Summative uses for assessment

Uses of assessment in which student performance is summarised, or decisions about awarding of credit or admission to educational programmes are made.

Validity of an assessment

The extent to which an assessment fulfils its intended purpose(s), such as fairly measuring what it sets out to measure, guiding student learning, and motivating student learning activity.

Guidelines

UOLC and Foundation Year assessment policy guidelines will reflect University of Otago policy, where relevant, as found on the following website:
<http://www.otago.ac.nz/administration/policies/otago006217.html>

Numbering

The numbering used in these detailed guidelines reflects that used in the University of Otago policy. Parts of the University policy are not relevant to Foundation Studies (for example post graduate oral examinations) and therefore 'not applicable' has been used in these guidelines to maintain the integrity of the numbering system.

Detailed Guidelines

1. Norm Referenced & Criterion Referenced Assessment
 - 1.1. Grades should be awarded only on the basis of demonstrated achievement (not on progress, potential, or other grounds).
 - 1.2. Each student's work should be judged on its own merits. Predefined pass rates or grade distributions should not be used.
 - 1.3. Students should receive specific, clear and early information about what they need to do to pass or gain a higher grade. The information should include details about the allocation of marks and the timing, percentage weight and focus of each assessment.
 - 1.4. Internal assessment tests will be held in normal class time.
 - 1.5. Changes in announced assessment arrangements in a paper should not take place without approval by the Head of Department (Foundation Year) or the Head of Academic Programmes (UOLC).
2. Relative Weights Given to Different Paper Goals
 - 2.1. Assessment should give credit to both learning core factual material and to the development of conceptual understanding and skills in applying knowledge to new situations.
 - 2.2. Adjustments (weightings) of internal assessment marks should be clearly identified in paper outlines. (See also 1.3).
3. Relative Weights Given to Internal Assessments and End-Point Assessments
 - 3.1. The weights given to different assessment components included in final grades should be selected to best describe students' capabilities at the end of the paper. Assessment methods should be appropriate to the performance being assessed. For example a speech is best assessed by its delivery. Aspects which are taught early in a paper, and have no further development, may be best assessed after completion of the teaching of that aspect.

- 3.2. The proportion of marks awarded through internal assessment may vary from paper to paper (and in Foundation Year, should not exceed 40%).
 - 3.3. The adjustment of internal assessment marks may be appropriate for some assessment components.
4. The Use of Terms and Internal Assessment
 - 4.1. All assessment components included in final grades should reflect performance on paper objectives. It is not appropriate to give grading credit for attendance at class.
 - 4.2. A paper may have terms requirements, detailing minimum levels of attendance or experience required before a final examination can be sat or a final grade awarded. In this case the requirements and their rationale must be clearly explained to the students to whom they apply.
 - 4.3. Where terms are in force, procedures for monitoring compliance with the requirement should be thorough, with fairness further ensured through proper early warning and appeal procedures.
5. Feedback on Student Work (Internal Assessment)
 - 5.1. Students should receive their work back with feedback as soon as possible and no later than:
 - one teaching week (UOLC)
 - three teaching weeks (Foundation Year),
 - after the work was handed in or due whichever is the later.
 - 5.2. Not applicable.
 - 5.3. Where two or more assessment tasks in a paper are similar in nature and each count more than five percent in the final grade, the later tasks should not be due until at least one week after feedback has been provided on the immediately preceding task.
 - 5.4. In papers which have an end-point assessment or examination, all internal assessed tasks should be marked and available to students before the day of the end-point assessment or examination in the paper.
 - 5.5. In addition to receiving a mark or grade, students should receive a clear indication of the strengths and weaknesses of their work, normally accompanied by guidance on how to perform the task or a similar task better.
 - 5.6. Where internal assessed work will be able to be resubmitted, markers should not give detailed, line-by-line feedback which students could directly incorporate in their resubmitted work. Rather, the feedback should be of a more general nature, identifying key aspects which need attention and suggesting models of how to approach the task. It may also be advisable to impose an upper limit on the extent to which grades can be increased through resubmission. For instance, the maximum increase might be set at two grade divisions (e.g. C to B-).
6. Assessment of Group Work
 - 6.1. Performance on group tasks is an acceptable component of student final grades. The percentage contribution from group tasks should be able to be justified in terms of the objectives of the paper.
 - 6.2. If more than thirty percent of a final grade is associated with such tasks, before individual grades are finalised the teacher(s) should seek and take account of additional information about the contributions of individuals to group task results.
7. Oral Examinations
 - 7.1. Where oral examinations are to be used, students should be given clear information, in advance, about the purpose, nature and scope of the examination. They should also be given organised opportunities to practice the skills involved.

- 7.2. Oral examinations should be used selectively, where the oral examination format is particularly suited to the skills and students being assessed.
 - 7.3. Oral examinations should normally involve at least two examiners. There may be occasions when an independent witness could be desirable. The making of a recording should be considered to protect the participants.
8. Student Workload
- 8.1. Not applicable.
 - 8.2. Teachers should attempt to spread the assessment load for their students throughout the paper.
 - 8.3. Foundation Year should attempt to spread the assessment load across papers in a programme.
 - 8.4. Students should be given sufficient and early enough information about the requirements of any graded task which counts more than five percent towards a final grade that they can fully undertake the task at least one week before it is due to be submitted. This work period should be increased to at least two weeks for tasks which count more than ten percent, and to at least three weeks for tasks which count more than twenty percent.
 - 8.5. No internal assessed work which counts towards a final grade should be scheduled for completion or submission during a vacation or end-point/examination assessment period.
 - 8.6. Guideline 8.5 should normally be extended so that completion or submission of internally assessed work is not scheduled during the last teaching week or before a final examination period.
9. Procedures for Approving & Reviewing Assessment Arrangements
- The assessment policy and procedures will be reviewed every two years. Implementation of the policy and procedures by teachers will be reviewed as part of their annual performance appraisal.
- 9.1. In Foundation Year, when papers are approved initially or reviewed subsequently, adherence to the principles and policy guidelines listed in this document should be checked as part of the approval or review process.
 - 9.2. Existing Foundation Year papers should be reviewed to check adherence to this assessment policy as part of the paper review cycle.
10. Monitoring and Moderation Procedures
- 10.1. Staff should be encouraged to consult appropriate peers when setting assessment tasks and deciding how to grade student responses to tasks.
 - 10.2. The Divisional Manager should ensure that assessment activities are monitored for consistency of standards and quality of feedback provided. This may be delegated.
 - 10.3. Where two or more staff share marking of an assignment or examination question, efforts should be made to achieve consistency and monitor its attainment.
 - 10.4. Where students are offered a choice of examination questions, the comparability of marks awarded for the different options should be monitored, evaluated, and where necessary improved.
 - 10.5. The HOAP/Foundation Year Academic Committee should review the comparability of standards in papers at each level each academic term, making adjustments where necessary.
 - 10.6. Each academic term the HOAP/Foundation Year Academic Committee should check on the consistency of grades between papers at the same level and in the UOLC, report to the Curriculum Committee.
 - 10.7. Not relevant.
 - 10.8. Not relevant.

11. Grievance and Appeal Mechanisms

Concerns about assessment processes should be raised first directly with the staff member responsible for the action giving concern, then if necessary with higher authorities. The usual sequence of authority is:

- 11.1. UOLC - class teacher, Academic Dean, HOAP/Divisional Manager, CEO.
- 11.2. Foundation Year - class teacher, PC, Head of Department/Assessment Manager, appeal to the Academic Appeals Committee, the Academic Board of Studies.
- 11.3. The student is able to use the complaints process through the Student Support Officer.
- 11.4. The Divisional Manager should take steps to ensure that information on grievance and appeal procedures is made available to all students as part of their orientation.

12. Staff Development Process

- 12.1. All staff should be shown how to access the policy and procedures on assessment.
- 12.2. Implementation of the assessment policy and procedures by teachers will form part of their appraisal and teachers who need development will receive assistance.
- 12.3. Each year, the professional development programme for teachers should provide opportunities for teachers to discuss assessment practices and enhance their assessment skills and procedures.
- 12.4. Teachers will be encouraged to become familiar with the provisions of this policy document.
- 12.5. Not relevant.