Chapter 7: Assessment and Grading

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Structures & Responsibilities

Academic Divisions

Executive Dean (ED)

The ED for each academic division is accountable for ensuring that the assessment provision meets the requirements of HCT policy and procedure, and the academic standards appropriate to the field and level of the course, and to the National Qualifications Framework (QFEmirates). The ED approves final course grades prior to their release to students and has the discretion to establish a divisional Grade Review Committee to investigate and resolve any issues prior to finalizing results.

Divisional Academic Committee (DAC)

The DAC is responsible for reviewing and approving the assessment strategy for each course.

Course Team

The course team is responsible for implementing the course assessment strategy and the HCT’s Assessment & Grading procedures and guidelines course delivery and evaluation. The Team
contrtributes to on-going monitoring of the course highlighting any issues related to assessment and grading to the Course Team Leader (see below). After instruction is complete, the Team critically evaluates the course assessments in the course file and by completing the Faculty Course Evaluation Survey. The course team consists of the instructors delivering the course across the campuses

**Course Team Leader (CTL)**

The CTL ensures a common understanding of assessment requirements and standards of achievement by all instructors delivering the course and that the academic rigor of each assessment task is aligned to the relevant level of the QFEmirates, appropriate to the field of the course. The CTL also verifies that assessments and grades are consistent across campuses and sections.

Each semester, the CTL submits a Course Report to the Divisional Academic Committee evaluating the course assessment provision and proposing action plans to deal with issues. CTLs are appointed by the DAC based on experience and credentials in the field of study.

**Programme Chair (PC)**

The PC supervises instructors to ensure that assessment complies with the approved course assessment strategy, and reviews course grades to verify that grading at the campus is fair and equitable identifying any anomalies for further action. The Executive Dean appoints at least one PC at each campus delivering divisional programs. Appointments are based on experience and credentials.

**Teaching and Learning Unit (T&L), Academic Affairs**

T&L designs and delivers professional development activities to promote effective assessment practices including publishing a Faculty guide to assessment which describes the institution’s principles and approach to assessment including task development, and marking and grading student work. The Unit is headed by a Director and has a Professional Development and Practice team which provides training to faculty.

**Organizational Effectiveness (OE) Department**

OE monitors, audits and reports on assessment practices and grades across academic divisions, programs, courses, and campuses and oversees the development and administration of Faculty-Wide Assessments.

**Campus Operations Department**

The Dean of Academic Operations at each campus is responsible for the security and administration of Faculty-Wide Assessments.
Assessment Processes

Course Learning Outcome Assessment

Student achievement of course learning outcomes is assessed by embedded course assessments.

**Overview**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>By</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Review assessment strategy</td>
<td>Start of academic year</td>
<td>Divisional Academic Committee</td>
<td>Update: CMS, course documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop at least one summative assessment for each Course Learning Outcome</td>
<td>Start of academic year</td>
<td>Academic Division (Course Team)</td>
<td>Prepare assessment tasks and required resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement assessment strategy</td>
<td>Throughout academic year</td>
<td>Academic Division (Course Team)</td>
<td>Administer assessments consistently across classes and campuses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collect data</td>
<td>Throughout academic year</td>
<td>Academic Division (Course Team)</td>
<td>Mark and record results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report data</td>
<td>End of each semester</td>
<td>Organizational Excellence</td>
<td>Publish assessment reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze data</td>
<td>Throughout academic year</td>
<td>Academic Division and Organizational Excellence</td>
<td>Submit for review to Divisional Academic Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop action plans to address shortcomings and/or anomalies</td>
<td>Throughout academic year</td>
<td>Academic Division (Course Team)</td>
<td>Submit to Divisional Academic Committee to review and recommend for approval by Executive Dean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement action plans</td>
<td>Following semester</td>
<td>Academic Division (Course Team)</td>
<td>Actions: modify assessment task, marking scheme or rubric, conditions of assessment, resources etc Update assessment documentation Provide required training to course team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor effectiveness of actions</td>
<td>Throughout academic year</td>
<td>Academic Division and Organizational Excellence</td>
<td>Input to planning process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report effectiveness of QA process</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Assessment Strategies**

Divisions develop assessment strategies for each course that measure student achievement of intended learning outcomes which instructors are required to follow. These methods of evaluation
are published on the curriculum management system (CMS). The assessment strategies are also included in the course outlines which are given to students at the start of the course.

The Assessment Strategy stipulates each assessment that contributes to the final course mark providing information regarding:

- Assessment tasks e.g. exam, project, portfolio etc.
- Weighting of each assessment i.e. percentage contribution of the task to the final course mark
- Course learning outcomes addressed by each task

Course teams develop and administer assessment tasks in line with the Assessment Strategies ensuring consistency in meeting course requirements and academic standards across campuses.

**Common Assessments (CA)**

A CA is an assessment task that is developed and marked in accordance with an assessment specification approved by the divisional Executive Dean. The assessment task (e.g. portfolio, project, oral defence, written test etc.) is the same for all students and provides a means of comparing student performance across classes and campuses. Taken together the CAs in any particular course will assess student achievement of each course learning outcome.

**Faculty-wide Assessments (FWA)**

A FWA is a form of Common Assessment in which all students registered in the same course sit a common invigilated written examination. Each exam is prepared by the appropriate course team leader and moderated by the Divisional Academic Committee and Executive Dean prior to administration. The exams are administered under strict security. See diagram below.

The results of each FWA are analyzed by the Academic Division to determine if any moderation is required prior to being finalized and released to students.
FWA development and administration process

1. System Course Team Leader
   Develops Exam Specifications

2. Moderator (Appointed by DAC)
   Validates Exam Specifications

3. System Course Team Leader
   Develops 3 versions of the exam

4. Moderator (Appointed by DAC)
   Reviews each version of the exam

5. Associate/Executive Dean
   Reviews and Approves 3 Versions. Shares with Campuses online and pdf based exams

(Oversees the Exam Development and Administration Processes)

6. Head of Academic Operations
   Prints and puts in envelopes

7. Head Invigilator
   Collects Envelops before exam time

8. Head of Academic Operations
   Receives Envelops After exam time

9. Program Chair
   Receives Envelops for marking

10. Instructor
    Marks/Enters Exam Marks

11. Program Chair
    Reviews Approves Marks

12. Head of Academic Operations
    Stores Marked Papers

DVCA Office: Exam Development Process

DVCO Office: Exam Administration Process
**Scheduling**
The schedule of assessments is provided to students at the start of the course. The schedule ensures that the timing of assessments through the course is appropriate and manageable for students and instructors.

**Grading Processes**
Assessment and grading at the HCT is criterion-referenced and grades are awarded based on the evaluation of student work using the rubric provided in LP220.1 Assessment and Grading Procedures i.e. students must demonstrate that they have met the relevant standard required for the award of a grade. There is no fixed allocation of grades: grades should be awarded solely on the evaluation of student performance against relevant academic standards.

The rubric below expands on the descriptors given in LP209 Grading System Policy in order to identify the distinguishing features of academic progression in terms of Knowledge and Skills to guide grading scheme developers and markers, and to enhance consistency in grading between markers across programmes.

**Grading Rubric**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Student performance on assessments provides evidence that the student has:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A</strong></td>
<td>Achievement that is outstanding relative to the course and GPA requirements</td>
<td>Deep comprehension of course content, and, where appropriate to the course, has shown exceptional practical skills, critical thinking, inquiry and analysis skills, problem solving or creative/innovative work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>B</strong></td>
<td>Achievement that is significantly above the course and GPA requirements</td>
<td>Superior knowledge of course content and, where appropriate to the course, has shown advanced practical skills, critical thinking, inquiry and analytical skills, or problem solving.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong></td>
<td>Achievement that satisfactorily meets the course and GPA requirements</td>
<td>The knowledge of facts, theories, and concepts, the practical and thinking skills, and the competencies required by the course learning outcomes: the student is ready to move on to the next level of studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>D</strong></td>
<td>Achievement that minimally meets the course requirements but may not meet the GPA requirements</td>
<td>Significant weaknesses in the knowledge, skills, and/or competencies required by the course learning outcomes: the student is unlikely to cope with the next level of studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>F</strong></td>
<td>Achievement that does not meet the course requirements</td>
<td>did not demonstrate adequate knowledge, skills, or competencies to meet the course learning outcomes: the student is not ready for the next level of studies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Before Teaching the Course</strong></td>
<td><strong>Course Team Leader</strong></td>
<td>Establish common understanding of assessment requirements and standards of achievement by all instructors delivering the course (and offer ongoing advice as required throughout the semester). Ensure that the academic rigor of each assessment task is appropriate and aligned to the relevant level of the National Qualification Framework of the Emirates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Throughout the teaching of the course</strong></td>
<td><strong>Instructor</strong></td>
<td>Maintain up-to-date course file adding a copy/details of the task, samples of student work, and grade distributions for each assessment as it is completed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Throughout the duration of the course** | **Course Team Leader** | Monitor course files, identifies anomalies/outliers  
Take any necessary action including re-assessing students or re-grading student work in consultation with the Instructor concerned  
Submit final course grades to the Programme Chair |
| **After the final assessment period** | **Programme Chair** | Verify final course grades in consultation with the Course Team Leader and take necessary action to manage anomalies or outliers  
Submit final course grades to the Executive Dean  
Hold a meeting with all instructors at the end of each semester to discuss experiences and concerns, and to learn from practice. |
| **Before the announcement of final course grades** | **Executive Dean** | Verify the final course grades and appoint ad-hoc committee to manage anomalies or outliers.  
Approve the release of the final grades to students |
Grade Guidelines

In order to provide guidance in awarding grades, faculty are provided with projected grade distributions as a benchmark to review the spread of the grades they have awarded for any course.

The projections are based upon the expected average course GPAs for lower level courses (approximately 2.6) and upper level courses (approximately 2.85) with an expected cumulative programme GPA of approximately 2.7 (approximately B-/C+).

The projections are not prescriptive and it is expected that there will be exceptions for particular sections or courses. However, faculty may be required to explain grade distributions that are significantly outside of the projections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Lower level courses e.g. BAS: 100, 200 level</th>
<th>Upper level courses e.g. BAS 300, 400 level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>17%-23%</td>
<td>22% -28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>27% -33%</td>
<td>32% -38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>33%-39%</td>
<td>27%-33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>11%-17%</td>
<td>7%-13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>There is no projected percentage of F grades: F grades are awarded when students do not meet course requirements.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Course File Review

Course files are a key element in the quality review of courses. They are the means by which the delivery of a course, student performance and grades are recorded, and should contain sufficient information so that internal reviewers or external accreditors can determine whether the course is meeting its learning outcomes and grading has followed appropriate academic standards for the field and level of the course.

The course file should also provide up-to-date information on progress through the curriculum that would facilitate a new instructor to take over delivery of the course should need arise.

Furthermore, for the purposes of accreditation, the CAA requires that the HCT maintains updated course files for each course of instruction in compliance with Stipulation 7, 2011 Standards for Licensure and Accreditation.

Each course file must be updated throughout the delivery of the course and contain:

- Name and contact details of the course instructor
- Approved course outline including:
- Course topics and contents on a week-by-week basis and
- Details of and dates for assessments
- Course outline from the last delivery of the course
- Copies of assessment tasks
- Marking schemes and/or model answers for all assessment tasks
- Samples of student performance representing where possible grades A – F for each assessment task
- Instructor review of the course including:
  - Appropriateness of the course learning outcomes
extent to which the syllabus was covered
extent to which learning outcomes were met (with evidence)
appropriateness of textbooks and other learning resources
appropriateness of assessment tasks in relation to learning outcomes
appropriateness of the balance of assessments
appropriateness of prerequisites

- general comments on any problems encountered with the course
- Grade distributions for each assessment task and for the final grade
- Summary of student feedback on the evaluation of the course.

Academic Honesty

Students are made aware of academic honesty rules and regulations through campus-run orientation sessions at the beginning of the academic year dealing specifically with academic honesty, and require students to sign an academic conduct pledge. Sections addressing academic honesty are published in the HCT Catalog and in the HCT Student Handbook.

Instructors have responsibility to check that work presented is the student's own work. Instructors and campuses employ a range of tools and methods to monitor and authenticate student work. Plagiarism detection software such as Safe Assign is used for digitally submitted text-based assignments and reports. In the delivery of online assessments, security measures such as 'guided access' in iPad environment, and the Lockdown browser in Blackboard are used by all campuses in order to reduce the likelihood of cheating.

Assessment Guides for Faculty

The Teaching and Learning Unit, Academic Affairs, produces guidelines to faculty for effectively assessing and grading student work.

The Education Division also produces a guide specifically for Education Division faculty.

Education Division Assessment Handbook

Policy and Procedures

LP209.3 Grade Appeal Procedure
LP201 Unified Academic Honesty and Plagiarism Policy
LP248 Plagiarism Policy
LP 217 Special Needs Accommodation Policy
VC Directive (04) - 2016 - Assessment and Grading Procedures