Assessment, Moderation, and Progress Policy

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1. Purpose and Scope

The policy provides a framework for maintaining and enforcing the standards of the Conservatory's assessments, and outlines the procedures for ensuring the implementation of these standards. Specific assessment requirements are contained in the unit outlines.

This policy applies to all members of the Conservatory's higher education community.

2. Objectives

This policy outlines:

- Assessment and grades
- Moderation
- Student progression
- Students at risk
- Academic misconduct

The Conservatory will adhere to the following principles:

2.1. Well-designed assessment

- Assessment tasks align with unit and course learning outcomes and incorporates graduate attributes
- A range of assessment types are used, both formative and summative, including alternative assessment methods for students with a disability, where appropriate
- Assessments are designed to enable students to receive feedback at an early stage as appropriate to the unit (for example, before week 5)
- Assessment task weighting is commensurate with the complexity and effort required to complete the task
- Scheduling of assessment due dates takes into account student workload to ensure it is manageable
- Assessments will be reviewed prior to their release to students to ensure they reflect good practice.

2.2. Valid and reliable assessment

- Moderation of assessment is conducted using grading criteria to achieve consistency of outcomes
- Assessment grade cut-offs are published
- External moderation is utilised to benchmark assessment criteria and outcomes

2.3. Timely information

- Assessment criteria are made available to students early in the semester or at least well prior to the assessment being undertaken
- Feedback on assessment is constructive and timely
- Penalties for late assessment are published and applied consistently

2.4. Fair and equitable treatment

- Students are treated fairly and equitably
- Assessment judgements are made against stated criteria to ensure consistency of assessment outcomes
- Mechanisms are in place to identify and monitor student progress

- Students are advised of unsatisfactory progress in a timely manner and offered support
- Students are made aware of the grievance processes and how to appeal assessment marks and grades
- Appeal processes apply the principles of natural justice

2.5. Academic integrity and misconduct

- Students are responsible for academic honesty and ensuring that all assessment submitted is their own work
- Plagiarism is monitored to ensure academic integrity
- Appropriate penalties are in place that are administered fairly

3. Implementation

Implementation is to be carried out by all academic teaching staff under the leadership of relevant Unit Coordinators and the Director of Higher Education.

4. Procedure

4.1. Assessment

All lecturers and tutors will ensure that they adhere to this policy when developing and marking assessment items, and providing feedback to students.

4.2. Grading Codes

Grades will be awarded in accordance with the table of grades in this policy. In order to pass a unit, students must attempt all assessment tasks and achieve an overall pass mark of 50% or higher. The system of grades that apply to learning achievement in assessment tasks and in units of study will be **High Distinction** (HD), **Distinction** (D), **Credit** (C), **Pass** (P), **Fail** (F), **Fail Non-Submission** (FNS) and **Withdrawn** (W).

The following grades will apply to all assessments throughout the higher education courses offered at The Conservatory:

Result	Grade	Grade (numeric)
>80%	High Distinction (HD)	7
70 – 79%	Distinction (D)	6
60 – 69%	Credit (C)	5
50 – 59%	Pass (P)	4
<50%	Fail (F)	0
<50%	Fail Non-submission (FNS)	0
	Withdrawn (W)	

4.3. Assessment Tasks

Assessment items for each unit will be designed in accordance with the course learning outcomes and graduate attributes. Lecturers work with the Director of Higher Education to ensure that assessment tasks are appropriate. A range of assessment types are to be developed for each unit that are appropriate for the unit content and will assess students' achievement of the learning outcomes. Assessment criteria are to

be provided for each unit, and assessment tasks are to contain the appropriate level of complexity for the year level and to reflect an appropriate workload for the unit based on the credit points allocated. All units must have a unit outline that details unit rationales, learning outcomes, content, delivery and assessment. Further details such as mapping to learning outcomes, weighting and assessment details must also be provided.

Changes to assessment may only be made under exceptional circumstances and with the approval of the Director of Higher Education. Students are to be notified of the change as soon as possible so that students are not disadvantaged. Changes to units must be approved by the Academic Board and recorded in the Feedback and Improvements Register. Significant changes may require a Material Change to be submitted to TEQSA for approval. A full review of units and courses is conducted for the renewal of course accreditation submission to TEQSA when it is due.

Assessment details will be made available to students at the commencement of each term. Final students' results will be published after they have been ratified by the Academic Board.

Types of Assessment Tasks

The following types of assessment tasks are applicable depending upon the purpose of the task (i.e. summative or formative) and whether or not the task is undertaken under examination conditions. Methods of assessment are consistent with the learning outcomes being assessed.

Summative Assessment

All summative assessments should address the learning outcomes listed in the unit outline and will be used to determine the final grade for the course. A 10 cp unit should have a maximum of (4) summative tasks (excluding progressive tasks), but including any examinations. No assessment task will be weighted at more than 50 percent of the overall unit weighting.

Summative Non-Examination Tasks

Assessment tasks designed for completion under non-examination conditions (e.g., assignments throughout a semester of study, major papers, research reports or problem sets) provide information to enable judgement of a student's ability to achieve the learning outcomes of a course.

Examinations

Assessment using examination conditions (including invigilated exams and in-class tests) should be at a level consistent with the expectations of the course and will employ an appropriate range of assessment tools and strategies.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment tasks, which may include class discussion activities and online quizzes, allow for feedback on progress towards achieving the learning outcomes of a unit. These do not contribute to the calculation of the final mark and grade.

Group Assessments

Group assessments must contain a component/s that can be assessed individually. A maximum of 35% of the assessment marks for the unit may be allocated as a group mark. Prior to undertaking group assessment, students must be informed of how the individual marks will be determined.

Tutorial Participation

Tutorials are an important part of the learning process. Students are expected to actively attend and participate in all tutorials.

Assignment Referencing and Submission

Students are required to use the Harvard referencing system when referencing a direct source or paraphrasing other person's work. Students are to use footnotes and bibliographies to comply with expectations of an academic paper. Students are to complete all assessment in the format specified in the unit outline, and include details of their name; unit name; lecturer's name; unit code; student ID; and the assessment topic.

Cover pages for assignments should contain the following information:
- Student name and number
- Unit name
- Teacher's name
- Title of assignment
- Date due

Students must keep a copy of all assignments submitted for assessment.

Copyright and academic integrity (such as plagiarism) rules apply. The Conservatory sets work for assessment with the expectation that it is either:
- the individual effort of the student;
- effort of an individual student who may discuss with others to better understand the topic, but who is responsible for submitting an individual piece of work;
- sole effort of the student based on an answer given in course textbooks.

Acknowledgement of all sources used in an assignment or work submitted for assessment in any written essay is expected by the Conservatory. It is considered as plagiarism when work is not sourced. Work that is not completed by a student yet deliberately submitted as that student's work is considered as cheating.

Moodle contains the following statement for students to accept when submitting assignments.

This assignment is my own work, except where I have acknowledged the use of the works of other people.

Note: Moodle is the prime means of notifying students of results. Official Results are not released until they have been through a process of review and approval. I understand the results found on Moodle are unofficial.

Assessment Due Dates
Students must hand in all assessment items by the due date specified.

Late Assignments
Late submissions handed in without prior consultation with the unit lecturer will result in penalties being imposed.

Students will receive a 10% decrease in their mark for every day a non-practical/performance assessment is late. If a student does not show up for a Practical/Performance, Rehearsal, or Presentation assessment, they will be automatically awarded a fail. If an extension has been applied for and granted (due to extenuating circumstances) before the the due date for all assessment types, then the penalty does not apply. If students fail to hand in their assignment by the granted extension date, then the 10% decrease in marks applies from the granted extension due date.

Students can only obtain a pass mark if an assignment is more than 2 weeks late, noting that this does not apply to approved assignment extensions.

Absent for In-class Assessments

Students are expected to be present for all in-class assessments including, but not limited to, mid-semester exams, presentations and practical skills tests. Failure to attend the assessment may result in a fail grade for the assessment task. Students must notify the unit lecturer of their intended absence in advance and produce a valid reason in writing. If students encounter extenuating circumstances and cannot notify the lecturer prior to the in-class assessment, students must show cause for special consideration within 48 hours following the assessment task.

4.4. Feedback to Students

Feedback may be provided in a number of ways such as via verbal or written comments from lecturers directly on the assessment, or via Moodle. Feedback should be respectful, timely and in a form that will allow students to improve their learning, including suggestions for improvement. The criteria for assessment should be such that it is clear to students why they received their mark and how they could improve next time. Feedback on summative assessment should be provided to students within two weeks of the due date for the assessment item, or at least two weeks prior to the next assessment item due date. All semester feedback should be provided to student before the final examination.

4.5. Examination Rules and Procedures

Attendance at Examinations

Students are required to attend all examinations. Students will receive a fail for an examination unless they produce evidence of a valid reason for being absent in writing, such as a doctor's certificate for illness, or other evidence of an event that was beyond their control.

Admission to the Examination Room

Students are to be respectful of other students and upon entering the exam room they are to go directly to their seats, and must present their Student ID before admission to the exam room. Students are not permitted to enter the exam room after fifteen minutes of the start of the exam.

The person supervising the examination distributes the exam papers at the commencement of the exam and then collects the completed papers at the end of the exam. Students may hand in papers if they are leaving the exam early. An exercise sheet may be distributed to students and then collected at the end of the exam.

Conduct of Students

Communication between students during an examination is not permitted. A student should raise their hand if they need to clarify a question on the examination only during perusal time. Any student found cheating or disrupting other students will be required to leave the room and forfeit the chance of completing their examination. Disciplinary action is to be determined by the Director of Higher Education.

Material or Equipment in the Examination Room

- Students are permitted to bring bottles of water into the exam room.
- Students are not to bring anything other than a pen, pencil, paper, and eraser. Bags are to be left with the supervisor.
- Electronic devices, including phones and devices that connect to the internet, are not permitted and must be turned off prior to entering the exam room, unless they are required for the exam.

Leaving the Examination room

Students may leave the exam room upon completing their exam, but no earlier than 30 minutes before the stated end time.

Deferred Examination

A student can request to defer examinations through illness, misadventure, or other approved reason. Requests may be made in writing to the Director of Higher Education. The Director of Higher Education will notify the student when the next possible time the examination can be held if the request is approved. A new examination must be developed for the deferred examination.

Special Consideration

A student may apply for special consideration if they fall ill during an examination and need to leave early. Other unforeseen circumstances that may affect a student's results, such as a death in the family, may also be grounds for special consideration. Written evidence must accompany an application for special consideration, such as a medical certificate, death certificate.

4.6. Moderation

Moderation of assessment and grades is a quality assurance strategy directed at ensuring the reliability and validity of assessment in units. It tests whether the standard of marking across particular assessment components is appropriate and consistent. Moderation is required for all summative assessment tasks and moderation activities should include all teaching staff involved in the unit.

The Academic Board is responsible for oversight of moderation of assessment. The Director of Higher Education is responsible for ensuring that moderation processes are implemented. The Academic Board reviews the Moderation Report from the Director of Higher Education and ratifies the results for publication.

Operational responsibility is devolved to the Director of Higher Education unless the Head is the single teacher and marker in the unit.

Effective moderation requires:
- That the objectives of the assessment component, and the criteria on which marks will be awarded, are explicit and well justified, and are well explained to both students and markers
- That clear, well-understood marking guides are used
- That there is a mutually agreed and timely process of feedback to ensure that corrections to marking strategies or levels of assessment (i.e. "soft" versus "hard" marking) can be appropriately applied.

Moderation activities will occur each term for all higher education units offered. Collaborative activities will occur throughout the semester to ensure that effective and consistent assessment occurs.

At the commencement of each term, the Director of Higher Education will meet with teaching staff to discuss assessment expectations. Any new academic staff will be provided with exemplars of students' work from previous semesters, where possible, so that they understand the levels required. A moderation schedule will be developed to determine the assessment items that will be cross-marked internally and externally. A sample of written assessments will be cross-marked blindly.

If concerns are identified during the term, the Director of Higher Education is responsible for initiating discussions to investigate concerns. If systemic issues arise, then further investigation is required to determine a solution. The Director of Higher Education must be satisfied that the solution will minimise the risk of the issue continuing.

The Academic Board may request an external review of assessment with other higher education providers to ensure assessments are at the appropriate standard.

Examiners' Moderation Meeting

Lecturers must submit assessment all results in an Excel spreadsheet to the Director of Higher Education. The Director of Higher Education will check all results and investigate reasons for any student who does not have a result.

The Board of Studies will hold an examiners' meeting at the end of each term for the purpose of moderating assessment. Items for discussion will include any major discrepancies arising from cross-marking (differences of more than 10% between the original mark and the cross-marked item). Borderline grades will also be discussed to determine whether supplementary assessment is warranted or conducting a re-assessment is appropriate. A report from the meeting will be prepared for review by the Academic Board and for determining the approval of grades before publishing the grades for students.

Students receive all results online through Moodle.

4.7. Appeals against Marks or Grades

Students can appeal a mark or grade if they believe that an error has been made, or if they believe that the assessment has been unjustly marked. The student should discuss the issue with the relevant lecturer in the first instance and request a review of the mark.

If this does not resolve the issue, then the following formal processes should occur:
- the student should submit a formal request for a remark to the lecturer. Another lecturer will be requested to mark the assessment and the new mark will apply (even if it is less than the original mark).
- If this does not resolve the issue, then the student may continue the grievance process in accordance with the Student Grievance Policy.

Members of staff involved should keep records of such discussions, including outcomes, for record keeping purposes.

4.8. Student Progress

The Director of Higher Education is responsible for managing student progress in association with the Managing Director. The Academic Board has responsibility for oversight of student progress. The Conservatory is committed to monitoring student progress and ensuring that students who are potentially at risk of unsatisfactory progress are identified, monitored and offered support. The following mechanisms are used:
- Providing entry processes that are fair and robust
- Outlining course progress requirements for students
- Formative and summative assessment to identify issues early
- Identifying and monitoring students at risk
- Liaising with students regarding unsatisfactory progress
- Providing support and assistance to students
- Ensuring decision-making is transparent and fair
- Regular staff meetings to discuss students at risk

Students are responsible for their own learning and making satisfactory academic progress. Assessment criteria should be used when completing assessment tasks and feedback on assessment should be used to improve future assessment results. Students are responsible for:
- Undertaking good study habits to achieve learning outcomes
- Attending classes to meet the attendance requirements

- Attending performance venues as required
- Submitting assessment by due dates
- Attending examinations
- Notifying staff and seeking help if extenuating circumstances arise, including direct access to the Director of Higher Education and Managing Director.

Unsatisfactory Progress

Processes for assessing and making decisions on unsatisfactory progress must be fair and equitable, and take account of individual circumstances of the students. Student records and evidence outlining monitoring, communication and supports should be utilised. Additionally:

- Students must be involved in the process and provided with opportunities to present their case, and afforded natural justice.
- Students must be permitted to have representatives with them at all meetings and stages of unsatisfactory progress proceedings.
- Review and appeal processes must be available to students.

Students must satisfactorily complete each year level before continuing to the next. A student is deemed at risk of making unsatisfactory academic progress in a course if:

- They fail an assessment
- They fail a unit
- They fail an assessment or unit more than once
- Their grade point average falls below a pass grade
- They do not meet attendance requirements
- They will not complete the course within the maximum timeframe specified

4.9. Students at Risk

Individual lecturers and student support staff are responsible for identifying students at risk in the first instance. The Conservatory will collect data and monitor students' progress. Students identified as 'at risk' will be reported to the Director of Higher Education. The Director of Higher Education will use the following data to prepare reports for the Academic Board.

- the number of units of study passed and specified by the Conservatory as the minimum for a defined period
- compulsory units and professional experience have been completed at the appropriate standard
- student attendance at compulsory teaching and assessment components of a unit of study
- fail grades for units of study and whether the number is within the satisfactory progress requirements that have been set
- significant negative variations in a student's academic performance
- any other progress issues that are observed.

Interventions and Support

Support mechanisms are offered by the Conservatory to give students every opportunity of successfully completing the course. The Student Support Policy outlines the areas of assistance that are offered, including counselling.

Interventions are undertaken as soon as possible to assist students. Remedies include:

- The Director of Higher Education meets with the student and discusses their progress. In the discussion students are involved in deciding upon an agreed resolution.
- Assignment extensions may be granted for up to 2 weeks.

- Academic support may be offered.
- Counselling support may be offered.
- English support may be offered.
- Other support, including external supports.

Further Action

The Director of Higher Education will write to students who appear on the Academic Board's list of students who have performed unsatisfactorily. Students will be asked to show cause as to why:

- Their unsatisfactory progress should not be recorded on the student's academic record
- They should not be placed on probation
- They should not repeat a unit or semester
- They should not be excluded from their course of study.

After interventions and support mechanisms have been offered and a student is still making unsatisfactory progress, the Director of Higher Education may decide to recommend that:

- Students are put on probation for a semester if extension rules have not been observed, and if a student is still at risk due to lack of assignment submissions or if they have failed assessments.

The Academic Board will consider the student's responses to the show cause request and consider all evidence provided by the student. This will include whether the circumstances outlined were outside the student's control, such as: health issues; unexpected family or employment issues or any other unexpected event that could have affected previously satisfactory work.

The Chair of the Academic Board shall provide the Director of Higher Education with lists of students:

- Whose progress was deemed unsatisfactory but whose unsatisfactory progress should not be recorded or result in exclusion from the course;
- Whose progress was deemed unsatisfactory but whose unsatisfactory progress should be recorded but not result in exclusion from the course; and
- Whose progress was deemed unsatisfactory and whose unsatisfactory progress should be recorded and result in exclusion from the course.

The Director of Higher Education will write to students on each list advising them of the outcome of the show cause action. The Director of Higher Education will advise students about the procedures for appealing the Academic Board's decision. The Director of Higher Education will implement the decision of the Academic Board, unless there an appeal has been lodged.

A student who has been excluded from an academic course may apply for re-admission to that course or another course in accordance with the Conservatory's Admissions Policy.

5. Definitions

Academic Integrity: Demonstrating the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility in all academic endeavours, including preparing and presenting work for assessment as part of coursework or research.

Academic Risk: Potentially not successfully progressing through a course of study and therefore not graduating from the course.

Assessment: A process used to determine student's achievement of expected learning outcomes and may include a range of written, oral and practical methods. It also includes gathering information from multiple and diverse sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can

do with their knowledge as a result of educational experiences; and it culminates when assessment results are used to improve student learning.

Assessment Criteria: Specific student learning outcomes for assessment tasks.

Assessment Exemplars: Prime examples of what level of work constitutes a specific grade, such as the prime example of a Pass or Credit.

Assessment Moderation: The process for ensuring consistency of assessment marking across and within courses

Benchmarking: The process of reviewing materials against what another equivalent Institution is delivering to determine the equivalence and relevancy of standards between institutions

Course: The course or other set of units, *units* of study/competency or other defined work requirements, the completion of which makes the student eligible for the granting of an Award or other formal record of achievement by the college.

Cross-marking: The process whereby another lecturer or other academic personnel marks the same piece of assessment, without knowing the student or the mark given by the first lecturer. It is a method of determining equivalence of assessment outcomes.

Exclusion: The cancellation of a student's enrolment in a *course.* The student may re-apply for entry into a course after a period of twelve (12) months.

Formative Assessment: Any assessment which is used to provide students with feedback about their progress throughout the semester but is not used to calculate the final exit grade.

Learning outcomes: The expression of the set of knowledge, skills and the application of the knowledge and skills a person has acquired and is able to demonstrate as a result of learning.

Moderation: The process of independent checking or verification of assessment results by a properly qualified person or committee.

Natural Justice: The principles of *natural justice* that decision makers under this policy must follow can be broadly summarized as follows:
(a) All parties to the matter(s) in dispute, including respondent(s), shall have a right to be heard before a decision is made, including the right to respond to any statements or evidence that may prejudice their case.
(b) All relevant submissions, information and evidence to be considered by the decision-maker should be disclosed, where requested, to all parties to the complaint prior to the hearing. Matters that are not relevant shall not be taken into account by the decision-maker.
(c) The decision maker/s shall not be biased or appear to be biased (by a reasonable and informed bystander) nor have a vested interest or personal involvement in the matter being considered.
(d) In addition to these principles of *natural justice,* there should be no undue delay in responding to complaints or appeals and all parties to such matters under this policy shall have the right to a representative of their choice, other than a currently practicing solicitor or barrister (except in extraordinary circumstances at a hearing with the prior leave of the Chair)

Plagiarism: Using another person's ideas, designs, words or works without appropriate acknowledgement.

Progression Rules: The progression rates and progression requirements approved by the Academic Board.

Special Consideration: Provisions in these procedures may allow a student to apply for supplementary assessment or some other form of consideration in situations where it can be demonstrated that assessment has been affected by some situation or circumstance beyond the student's control.

Summative Assessment: Any assessment used to calculate the final exit grade.

Unit: A unit of study, unit of competency, module or other similar component of a course that has an allocated identification code and is given a result which appears on a student's record.

Unsatisfactory Progress: Where a student fails to meet defined required minimum standards for progression in a course or fails to comply with a valid conditional enrolment agreement or other requirement, progress may be deemed to be unsatisfactory. Information on minimum standards for progression in courses is contained in associated Procedures.

6. Related Documents
The following policies and procedures are related to this policy:
- Student Handbook
- Student Code of Conduct
- Student Grievance Policy
- Academic Freedom and Ethical Conduct Policy
- Academic Honesty and Misconduct Policy
- Student Support Policy

7. Review
Three years from commencement.

8. Accountabilities
The Academic Board is responsible for review and approval of this policy.

The policy is to be implemented via induction and training of staff and distribution to students and the Conservatory's higher education community via the website and other publications. Performance will be monitored against the following:
- Student retention rates
- Course pass/fail rates
- Student progression
- Student satisfaction
- Graduate destination
- Employer satisfaction

9. Revision History

Approval Authority	Contact Person	Revision Due Date	Revision Date	Approved Date	Version No.	Revision Description
Academic Board	Chair	01/07/19		11/04/2016	1	New document