

# ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK TOOLKIT

## ASSESSMENT DESIGN

### CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE ASSESSMENT

This guidance is linked to Principle 7 in the CU Assessment Strategy and is underpinned by the CU Assessment Policy

*Diversity is the norm rather than the exception in Higher Education. We are driven by the recognition that universities “have a responsibility to cater to the learning needs of all students” (Leask & Carroll, 2015:8)*

#### INTRODUCTION

Assessments are inclusive when they are designed to “benefit most learners without losing the requirement that assessment should aid learning and should demonstrate the acquisition of the module or course learning outcomes.” (Waterfield and West, 2006, p.219).

CU has made an explicit commitment to developing students’ intercultural competence, international perspectives and global citizenship. More specifically, the Coventry University Principles of Assessment promote inclusive practice where “All assessments enable equal attainment opportunities for all students; whether home or overseas and regardless of socio-economic background or ethnicity” (Coventry University 2015:2). This guidance document therefore focuses on some specific guidance on designing culturally inclusive assessment.

For overall guidance on inclusive assessment, please see this 7-step guide to inclusive assessment: [https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/2/2401/7\\_Steps\\_to\\_Inclusive\\_Assessment.pdf](https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/2/2401/7_Steps_to_Inclusive_Assessment.pdf)

Leask and Carroll (2013) define culture in the broadest sense to encapsulate the following: lifestyle, traditions, knowledge, skills, beliefs, norms and values shared by a group of people, and is not only defined by nationality or ethnicity. This is pertinent to our local and internationally diverse university context. It remains critical to acknowledge that individuals are unique even within different cultural groups.

#### HOW DO WE PUT THIS INTO PRACTICE?

The tables below show extracts from Leask and Carroll’s ‘Good Practice Principles in Practice’ in relation to assessment and include:

1. The name of each principle (six in total)
2. Key question/thought for course teams to consider when implementing each principle
3. What the principle means in practice and how to implement

**INCLUSIVE PRINCIPLE 1: FOCUS ON STUDENTS AS LEARNERS**

**KEY QUESTION for TEACHERS: How can assessors focus on diverse students as learners of content and learners of assessment skills?**

**WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN PRACTICE?**

**PROGRAMS ARE DESIGNED SO THAT LEARNERS ARE TAUGHT AND PRACTISE NECESSARY SKILLS BEFORE THEY ARE NEEDED FOR ASSESSMENT**

- Assessment tasks are structurally aligned with what students are doing and learning in class.
- Skills such as critical reading and writing, application of theory in practice, use of examples as evidence and structuring an argument are not presumed to be present at enrolment.
- Students are given specific guidance on how to structure an 'essay', a 'position paper', or a 'case study' in the discipline. Teachers who need assistance with providing this type of guidance look for resources and guidance from specialists within the university, such as academic language and learning staff (e.g. CAW).
- There is guidance on referencing protocols. Expectations for citation and source use are embedded within assessment task descriptions and/or course materials.
- Students for whom English is an additional language are provided with specific feedback on and support in the development of their use of discipline-specific and academic language.

**THE CONNECTION BETWEEN WHAT IS TAUGHT AND WHAT IS ASSESSED IS MADE CLEAR**

- Whilst all students report the paramount importance of assessment, only some will see how lecture material, seminar activities and personal research are linked to assessment via examinations or coursework. Links need to be made frequently and explicitly.
- One way is by stating connections in lectures; another is by providing a rationale for readings that explain their use in subsequent examinations.
- Strategies for revision are discussed and explained. Revision stresses the use and application of knowledge and students' capacity to evaluate its significance, rather than the reproduction of memorised facts

### **PROGRAM-LEVEL ASSESSMENT TASKS AND STANDARDS KEEP PACE WITH STUDENTS' EVOLVING LEVELS OF COMPETENCE AND UNDERSTANDING THROUGHOUT THE PROGRAM**

- As students become more familiar with the discipline and are more competent users of English, standards and expectations are also modified.
- Most changes include higher demands and expectations of more accurate and complex language use.

## **INCLUSIVE PRINCIPLE 2: RESPECT AND ADJUST FOR DIVERSITY**

**KEY QUESTION FOR TEACHERS: What adjustments to assessment might ensure that all have a chance for success?**

**WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN PRACTICE?**

**TEACHERS AND PROGRAM DESIGNERS RECOGNISE THAT ASSESSMENT METHODS DIFFER IN VARIOUS ACADEMIC CULTURES**

## ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT SERIES

- Teachers are aware of forms of assessment in their students' previous educational settings; they know that the range, purpose and timing of assessments varies in different cultural contexts.
- Students are provided with opportunities to seek clarification around all aspects of assessment requirements early in the course.
- Group work is likely to be particularly novel for some groups of students. For example, students who studied outside Australia before starting university may have never used this method and some Australian learning environments seldom if ever ask students to collaborate for an assessed task. Group work will need careful management (see SB group guide).

### TEACHERS ANTICIPATE AND MANAGE COMMONLY OCCURRING PROBLEMS

- Teachers provide examples of coursework questions along with sample answers of variable quality to clarify what is expected. These exemplars are specifically designed to help students understand what is required as well as grade threshold standards.
- The program includes a range of assessment tasks (such as portfolios, simulations, case-based evaluations, presentations and self and peer assessment). The benefits of this are that students can demonstrate what they have learned in different ways using a range of language and communication skills. The problem of unfamiliarity amongst some students needs careful management. Care is needed to introduce novel formats slowly, to provide exemplars, give time for opportunities to practise and avoid higher-order complex methods towards the beginning of programs.
- Formative feedback on academic writing stresses correct ways to acknowledge sources and how to use referencing systems.
- Teachers provide pre-exam practice and feedback, especially in the early stages of the program.
- Teachers stress the value of starting promptly on coursework which is due in weeks or months. A sample time line is provided to assist those students who have had little or no experience of self-managing multiple assessment tasks.

### INCLUSIVE PRINCIPLE 3: PROVIDE CONTEXT-SPECIFIC INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

**KEY THOUGHTS FOR TEACHERS:** Ways teachers describe, discuss and design assessment briefs can be crucial in ensuring students are clear on what is expected

**WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN PRACTICE?**

### GUIDANCE IS CLEAR, SPECIFIC AND APPROPRIATE TO THE LEARNING CONTEXT

- Structural aspects such as word count, referencing system and use of sub headings are stated.
- When feedback is given, it refers frequently and specifically to assessment criteria. Formative feedback concentrates on what needs to be done rather than what is wrong.
- Information and instructions are provided using a variety of forms and media.

### PROGRAMS PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHECKING UNDERSTANDING OF ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS

- Students know when and how they can ask questions. Academic writing skills include tips on decoding questions. What is the assessor looking for?
- Class tasks prepare for and reflect on assessment items.
- Early assessment(s) are both formative or summative. They alert students to specific gaps and strengths and highlight what is expected. Feedback includes advice on plagiarism.

## INCLUSIVE PRINCIPLE 4: TEACHING WILL ENABLE MEANINGFUL INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AND ENGAGEMENT

**KEY THOUGHT FOR TEACHERS:** It is important teachers support and manage dialogue amongst culturally diverse groups of students with care

**WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN PRACTICE?**

**THE TEACHER CREATES A SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR INTERACTION**

- Interaction is a frequent and normal aspect of teaching, learning and assessment.
- All students are required to complete a minimum amount of assessed group work as part of their degree program. For assessment, all students are prepared for and supported in the process of working in culturally diverse groups before they are required to work in such groups to create assessed work.
- Intercultural skills are taught and assessed at different year levels in the program. Programs, provide multiple opportunities for practice in a safe environment and feedback is given so that students progressively develop their skills as they progress through the course of study.

### ASSESSMENT TASKS ARE SET SO AS TO DEVELOP CULTURAL SENSITIVITY AND AWARENESS AMONGST STUDENTS

- Assessment tasks are not culturally context-specific. For example, a question in a sociology examination would not assume knowledge about how 'locals' generally resolve arguments unless this has been specifically taught.
- Tasks draw upon intercultural wisdom in the group. For example, students might be asked to compare and reflect on various ways they have seen a particular problem addressed. Who takes the lead in seeking a solution and why was that person the most appropriate?
- Where appropriate, tasks allow students to be provide each other with information on their cultural perspectives and to utilise previous knowledge and experiences to complete the assessment task.

### INCLUSIVE PRINCIPLE 5: BE ADAPTABLE, FLEXIBLE AND RESPONSIVE TO EVIDENCE

**KEY THOUGHT FOR TEACHERS: As with all other aspects of teaching, teachers need to monitor the impact of assessment on students' learning**

#### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN PRACTICE?

### TEACHERS CRITICALLY REFLECT ON THEIR TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

- Feedback from students on teaching approaches specifically invites comments on approaches to assessment.
- Teachers keep abreast of research and participate in staff development on matters related to teaching and assessment

### AT THE PROGRAM LEVEL, THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES FOR REACHING CONSENSUS ON STANDARDS

- Teaching staff discuss at what stages in the program 'reading through' awkward language is appropriate and when students will be required to correct and/or seek assistance from academic language and learning staff.
- Moderation includes discussion of real and/or simulated work. It is a regular part of course team discussions prior to critical assessment points in courses.
- Staff avoid practices such as penalising students once for poor language, then a second time for weak structure, when a student's lack of academic vocabulary has meant the reader cannot discern the student's organisation of the work.

### INCLUSIVE PRINCIPLE 6: PREPARING STUDENTS FOR LIFE IN A GLOBALISED WORLD

**KEY THOUGHT FOR TEACHERS:** Teachers encourage students to consider the global application and impact of course content and the impact of culture and language on disciplinary knowledge and professional practice

**WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN PRACTICE?**

### ASSESSMENT ENCOURAGES GLOBAL AWARENESS. THE PROGRAM TEACHES SKILLS FOR GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

- Program documentation states the knowledge, skills and attributes graduates will demonstrate. In professional accreditation programs, skills and knowledge are specific to working within the profession.
- Students are taught to be reflective and use this ability in assessment tasks.
- The program develops and assesses students' global awareness and citizenship.
- All students are assumed to leave with the necessary capabilities to exercise global citizenship responsibilities

### ASSESSMENT ITEMS ARE DESIGNED TO SHAPE STUDENTS' GLOBAL AWARENESS AND INTERCULTURAL SKILLS

- Assessment items are culturally inclusive and where appropriate, have a global perspective. Tasks use and value students' experiences before and after study in a UK university.
- Assessment tasks test students' ability to gather and apply knowledge in and across disciplines in a globalised world.
- Assessment items promote learning and skills beyond the task itself. They are intrinsically useful and encourage life-long learning.

### PROGRAMS EXPLICITLY AIM TO CREATE STUDENTS WHO ARE REFLECTIVE ABOUT AND ABLE TO MOVE BETWEEN DIFFERENT SYSTEMS

- Some assessment tasks in the program test actions and decisions where context is important. Students must show they deal with multiple competing national, cultural and/or linguistic perspectives.

### REFERENCES

International Education Association of Australia (2015) *Learning and Teaching across Cultures Final Report*. Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

Leask, C. and Carroll, J. (2013) *Learning and Teaching across Cultures Good Practice Principles and Quick Guides*. International Education Association of Australia: Melbourne.

### WANT TO FIND OUT MORE?

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