

Dear Ray

Thank you very much for your commentary on the draft new University Policy on Assessment. I have read your letter and 8 page document and appreciate the time you put into preparing your comments. We have already taken your comments into consideration as we have revised the policy and certainly will continue to take your comments and those of others into consideration as we work toward presenting the revised draft policy to Academic Council. Moreover, there is a 16 month period of implementation where we will work on good practice guides and professional learning.

I briefly respond to your comments using your same headings below.

1. Tension in policy recommendations on criterion-based assessment and grading

I completely agree with the issue raised as we acknowledge and discuss in the working group report. This is a real tension in real university classrooms. We recommend UWA is strongly oriented towards criterion-referenced approaches (already the case in most classrooms at UWA). The working party also takes a pragmatic approach to mitigate poor assessment practices and grade creep in the revised draft policy by limiting D+HD in UG units to not more than 50% (60% for PG units) and HD at least 10% for both UG & PG. We also include a clause that variation to these parameters, in particular due to the size of the cohort, can be approved by the relevant Board of Examiners.

2. Uneven development of University wide policy

- a. The revised policy includes “assessment based on: active participation, which does not include attendance alone” as a legitimate assessment item.
- b. I agree, better guidance on design of group-based projects is a great idea and something that can be worked on during implementation. The policy includes a clause to address current student anxiety over group assignments in some schools where all students are given the same mark regardless of their individual input and that mark makes up a considerable proportion of the students’ final mark for the unit.
- c. Optimal word count is something that can be considered in a good practice guide. Thank you for highlighting this issue.

3. Imbalance in treatment of late submissions and academic misconduct

The revised policy states 10% deduction of marks of the assignment for every 24 hours an assignment is late. We are seeking consistency across the University and fairness for those students who do submit their assignments on time.

4. Undue reliance on technology to maintain academic standards

Completely agree about the importance of a range of methods to address possible academic misconduct. Many of our energetic academics already have in place appropriate strategies. It will be important to continue implementing excellent pedagogy to address this problem especially as class sizes increase. We have added more into the Working Group report on formative and summative assessment. As you will see the policy supports formative assessment. We have specifically included Turn-it-in on recommendation and feedback from a number of people so that there is a consistent approach across the University. We are currently exploring similar non-text tools.

5. Issue in mandating digital technology

The University has a digital first strategy that has been supported by the Vice-Chancellor. This isn't new or unique to this policy. We are very much looking forward to working with academic and professional staff over the next 16 months to ensure they have ownership of the process of implementation of this policy with ample support for professional learning in this area.

6. Thank you for your comments here, I agree. I note the issue raised about improving quality. We certainly hope that over the next 16 months of implementation that we can improve the quality of pedagogy around assessment and the student experience. We will definitely be working towards that goal and look forward to your enthusiasm and support in this regard.

Kind regards
Grady Venville
Dean of Coursework Studies.