

## Standards for First Year Assessment

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<b>Document Number</b>	2019/1002091
<b>Description</b>	This document sets out a set of evidence-based assessment practices designed to scaffold commencing students' transition into and success with university study. These standard practices are to be implemented in the first-year of all Griffith degree programs.

### Related documents

[Assessment Policy](#)

[Assessment Submission and Return Procedures](#)

[Academic Standing Progression and Exclusion Policy](#)

[Role Statement Course Convenor](#)

[Role Statement Program Director](#)

[\[Assessment Lifecycle\]](#) [\[The Standards\]](#) [\[First Year Program Consistency for Assessment\]](#)

## 1. ASSESSMENT LIFECYCLE

The Assessment Lifecycle, which has been confirmed as effective in regard to the first year undergraduate student experience in the literature, has four phases:

- Design – designing effective assessment tasks
- Student Preparation and Submission – engaging and enabling students to undertake and submit assessment
- Marking – conducting valid marking of assessment
- Feedback – facilitating assessment feedback and feed forward

This Lifecycle, in combination with a system's approach to assessment which differentiates between individual courses, the first year program and degree program levels of practice, provides the mechanism to guide effective and sustainable practice and establish an evidence-based set of standards for first year assessment.

## 2. THE STANDARDS

### 2.1 Design

Area of Focus	Level of Assessment Practice	The Standard	Rationale for the Standard
<b>Assumed Knowledge</b> Assumed Generic Academic and Study Skills	<b>One first year course</b> in each Degree Program in the first trimester  May also include programs with advanced standing in which second Year students are new to university.	<b>Early Readiness</b>  Each Griffith degree program identifies at least one course in their first trimester which will provide systematic opportunities for students to develop academic and/or study skills relevant to success in the particular discipline (e.g., completion of the Study Smart online tutorial as part of the assessment package).	Program Directors may wish to customise academic and study skills development programs to optimise student success in the particular discipline. <a href="#">Study Smart</a> is an online tutorial covering foundational academic and study skills that are core to academic success. Topics cover researching, writing and studying at Griffith University. This tutorial provides students with strategies, resources and interactive learning activities designed to enhance their academic success.
Assumed entry level Disciplinary Procedural Knowledge	First Year <b>threshold courses</b> (viz. the key disciplinary courses building threshold knowledge, & usually perceived to be the most difficult by students).	<b>Early Readiness</b>  1. Each Griffith degree program identifies the key disciplinary-relevant knowledge and skills assumed that commencing students will possess in key or threshold first-trimester first-year courses.  2. A brief (15 minute) not for marks diagnostic quiz/test be administered to commencing students in the first two weeks of trimester in key courses. This can be either online through Learning@Griffith or in class.  3. A self-scoring process be employed and standard feedback and encouragement provided to students.	Assumed knowledge, in this context, refers to the baseline at which we start to teach our commencing students. That is, the starting assumptions we make about what our commencing students already know or can do and upon which our starting curriculum is founded. The extent to which we 'get this right' can have a potent influence on students' academic efficacy and subsequent success.  Assumed knowledge may vary as a function of a student's pathway into university and their prior level of academic achievement. .  Assumed knowledge, is particularly relevant in courses and

			programs where commencing students are expected to have basic mastery of specific key concepts or procedures (e.g., particular levels/types of numeracy for statistics, accounting, physics & chemistry).
Formative assessment	All first year courses	<p><b>Early Engagement</b></p> <p>All first year courses will include an early assessment task which is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Formative or developmental</b> in nature (so that learning is the primary or equal focus)</li> <li>• <b>Low stakes</b> (weighted so that failure/underperformance is not significantly consequential (e.g., 5-15%))</li> <li>• <b>Typical</b> (representative of an assessment type that will be commonly encountered in the discipline)</li> <li>• <b>Scheduled early in trimester</b> (so that recovery is readily achieved) (within the first 4 weeks)</li> <li>• <b>Offer timely and useable feedback</b> (so that affirmation and diagnosis are incorporated)</li> </ul> <p><b>Linked to mechanisms or resources that facilitate further learning or address skill deficits</b> (so that action can be taken/adjustments made)</p>	Formative assessment has been found to be important to incorporate in the <i>design of an assessment system</i> to optimally support commencing students' engagement and learning. The more that formative purposes or functions are evident in first-year courses, the more likely students are to report being engaged in useful learning, and to be developing the capabilities of self-regulated and independent learning. Assessment systems which demonstrate these features are more likely to be purposefully and progressively scaffolding learner independence and enjoyment.

## 2.2 Student Preparation and Submission

Area of Focus	Level of Assessment Practice	The Standard	Rationale for the Standard
Providing clear assessment goals and standards	<b>All</b> first year courses of study	<p><b>Early Performance</b></p> <p>All first year courses will provide students with</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A list of <b>detailed criteria</b> for all assessment tasks undertaken in their courses.</li> </ol> <p>Criteria need to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• aligned with the goals of the assessment task which align with the learning outcomes of the course, and</li> <li>• specific and detailed in order to give students clear expectations about the types and standard of performance required to successfully complete the task.</li> </ul> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. <b>Moderated exemplars</b> of completed assessment at a range of standards (HD to Fail) available on Learning@Griffith.</li> </ol>	<p>Explicit assessment criteria are a pre-requisite for effective student performance on assessment tasks. There is evidence to indicate that commencing student's failure on first assessment tasks can be increased as a function lack of clarity concerning performance requirements.</p> <p>Exemplars of completed assessment tasks allow students to operationalise and internalise academic standards. The educational value of these exemplars can be increased if they are appropriately annotated with explanatory comments or discussed in class.</p>
Submission of first assessment tasks	<b>All</b> first year courses of study	<p><b>Early Performance</b></p> <p>Students who don't submit their first/early assessment in a first-trimester first year course</p> <p>Responses to non-submission need to be timely, to enable students to recover. Responding to non-submissions at the same time as marks for the assessment task are returned defeats the purpose of this exercise.</p>	<p>Commencing students may 'fall at the first hurdle' for a wide range of reasons (some out of their control), and are routinely not aware of the capacity of the system to respond flexibly to genuine concerns (e.g., extensions, special consideration, study support).</p> <p>Students, especially non-traditional students, commonly do not seek timely help. This provides an early chance to problem solve and recover.</p>

## 2.3 Feedback

Area of Focus	Level of Assessment Practice	The Standard	Rationale for the Standard
Facilitating assessment feedback and feed forward	<p>Optimally for <b>all first year courses</b></p> <p>As a minimum, for all first year <b>threshold courses</b></p>	<p><b>Early Outcomes</b></p> <p>Failure or poor result on first/early assessment in a first-trimester first year course.</p> <p>All, or selected first year courses will implement an academic recovery process for commencing students who fail, or marginally pass a first/early assessment task in a first year course.</p>	<p>Students who succeed on early university assessment are likely to experience enhanced self-efficacy, and those who do less well (e.g., fail, just pass or who do worse than expected) are likely to experience a loss of personal and academic confidence. There is empirical justification for focusing on commencing students' performance on assessment as a point of early intervention. For example, a first-year course grade has been found to be a better predictor of students' overall academic performance than high school grades or university entrance scores.</p>
<b>Academic Recovery</b>	<p>Optimally for <b>all first year courses</b></p> <p>As a minimum, for all first year <b>threshold courses</b></p>	<p>The nature of this intervention will vary across disciplines, but will involve, as a minimum, an invitation to the student to meet with their tutor or an academic/learning advisor to understand the reasons for their underperformance and to plan appropriate action</p>	<p>Students, who fail their early assessment and who participate in an academic recovery intervention, are more likely to pass subsequent assessment, and more likely to pass the course overall, than comparable students who do not.</p>

## 3. FIRST YEAR PROGRAM LEVEL CONSISTENCY FOR ASSESSMENT

A range of mechanisms need to be established at the Program level to ensure **consistency**, **horizontal integration** between first year courses offered in each trimester, and across the first year,

as well as **vertical integration** between first year and later year courses. Key to this is the process of **moderation of practices** across all phases of the assessment lifecycle.

Moderation involves consideration, discussion and decision-making by **first-year course convenors working as a team of colleagues** (e.g., Student Success and Retention Teams) on a range of related issues:

▪	<b>Workload</b>	Benchmarking and equalising the assessment workload (number of tasks & total word length) across courses in a trimester  Benchmark the assessment profile for the first year with comparable programs in other Australian universities to check whether students are being over assessed.
▪	<b>Assessment Types</b>	Ensuring diversity in the assessment types used and that students are introduced in first year to the range of assessment types that are used throughout the program.
▪	<b>Weighting</b>	Ensuring comparable weightings are allocated for assessment tasks of similar length/work across courses in a trimester
▪	<b>Submission</b>	Coordinating the timing or scheduling of assessment submission dates across courses in a trimester to minimize clashes
▪	<b>Terminology</b>	Employing consistent terminology to describe similar types of assessment tasks within a program and across courses (e.g. critical reflection/critical analysis/essay/critique)
▪	<b>Consistency of assessment information</b>	Ensuring consistent information and resources are provided by lecturers and sessional staff on all assessment tasks within a course. This is the Course Convenor's responsibility.
▪	<b>Clear assessment goals and standards</b>	Ensuring all course convenors provide detailed criteria and exemplars of standards for all assessment tasks in their courses
▪	<b>Referencing</b>	Employing, where possible, a single referencing style across all first-year courses
▪	<b>Feedback and Feedforward</b>	Adopting a consistent or compatible approach to the provision of scaffolding, enabling and consultation information and activities