



Innovative
Research
Universities

Calibrator Guide

Information for reviewers in the Academic Calibration Process

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Executive Summary

This guide is designed for academics who will be calibrating a unit as part of the IRU Academic Calibration Process.

For further information on having a unit calibrated, or for any questions you may have please see:

- Guide for Unit Coordinators
- FAQ for Prospective Participants

Roles and definitions

The calibration process is highly transactional, and dependent on a number of roles. It is important to be familiar with these roles as this will help you in understanding the broader process.

Innovative Research Universities	The IRU is a policy group comprising of seven universities around Australia: http://www.iru.edu.au/
Calibration Coordinator	Each IRU institution has a designated calibration coordinator, who is the central point of contact and facilitates all calibrations for the institution. The calibration coordinator manages all incoming and outgoing calibration communications for the institution.
Calibrator	An academic who has been nominated as the external reviewer of a unit from another institution.
Unit Coordinator	The academic who is the responsible for the unit that will be externally reviewed.
Calibrating University/Institution	The participating university where the nominated calibrator is employed
Corresponding University/Institution	The participating university where the unit coordinator is employed.

Background

The Academic Calibration Process (ACP) is an external peer review process that is undertaken in collaboration with other Innovative Research Universities (IRU).

The calibration process aims to provide a comparable review and constructive feedback for selected higher education units on:

- grades awarded
- the relationship between assessment and learning outcomes
- the relationship and appropriateness of a unit, within its designated course structures
- the clarity and appropriateness of assessment design, learning outcomes, and supporting material for a unit
- the comparison of the assessment and supporting items to that of other institutions.

ACP as an inter-institutional quality process aims to:

- demonstrate the appropriateness of the standards of learning outcomes and grades awarded in IRU universities
- maintain and improve the academic standards of IRU
- enable comparisons of learning outcomes in similar subjects across IRU
- promote discussion on good practice in learning and teaching across IRU.

IRU Development of the Academic Calibration Process

ACP supports IRU institutions in meeting the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards), in particular the requirement that:

Review and improvement activities include regular external referencing of the success of student cohorts against comparable courses of study, including... the assessment methods and grading of students' achievement of learning outcomes for selected units of study within courses of study.

Higher Education Standards Framework 2015 (Cth)

The 2015 standards came into effect January 1, 2017.

While ACP meets the threshold standards, after much consultation and a two year pilot period, this particular approach was developed by the IRU to ensure the process at its core is beneficial and efficient for academics, acknowledging there is existing confidence in the sector on the professionalism of academics in delivering units and grading assessments¹.

IRU through its trial period received positive feedback regarding the process, as it helps academics to learn more and continuously improve their units, often from both the unit coordinator and calibrator perspectives.

¹ Trounson, A. (2012, July 23). IRU unis to trial external benchmarking, Higher Education, *The Australian*. Retrieved from <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/iru-unis-set-to-trial-own-external-benchmarking-system-following-on-from-go8-system/news-story/b63e64dc3863644f0530674654722879>

Academic Calibration Process

Academic Calibration has four key components

1. Engagement	2. Preparation
Each university selects units they would like to calibrate. These are distributed to calibration coordinators at each university to find suitable calibrators. The university having the unit calibrated will select a calibrator from the nominations provided.	The unit coordinator will select one assessment task from the unit, and collate student samples and supporting materials relating to the unit; Student samples are de-identified and sent on to the calibrating university.
3. Review	4. Evaluation
Once the calibrator receives materials they have a two-week window to evaluate all items provided and fill out the templated reports. This will then be returned to the unit coordinator via the calibration coordinators to review.	Once the review process is complete, a process evaluation will be filled out by both the calibrator and unit coordinator to allow for continuous review and improvement of the calibration process.

The Review Process

Calibrator Selection

Calibrators are nominated from multiple institutions, and it is the final decision of the corresponding University to make the calibrator selection.

Calibrators are not expected to have currently or previously taught a similar unit, and it is sufficient that the nominated calibrator is experienced in the discipline and has a well-developed sense of academic standards.

Calibrators are either approached directly, or sought out from the IRU Calibrator Register. If you would like to register your interest as a Calibrator please contact your calibration coordinator who will either take your details, or supply a link to the Calibrator registration form.

When you receive information about a unit, you will be notified of when the materials will be available to calibrate, and of any specific dates the report must be completed by; it is important you look at these dates and ensure that you have the capacity to undertake the work within this time frame.

Prior to the review

It is important to become familiar with the process by reading this guide in full and asking your calibration coordinator any questions you might have.

Commencing the review

Your calibration coordinator will send you a link to the calibration report form, and the set of documents for your calibration of which you will have two weeks to review and complete the reports provided. The amount of information selected for calibration has been designed to take less than one working day to review and complete the report. If you think you will require more time than the designated time frame, please alert your calibration coordinator immediately so they can make arrangements with the corresponding institution.

Make sure you have read all documents and view web links provided prior to commencing your evaluation. If you have any questions about the information provided or require more information to complete the review please contact your calibration coordinator. Do not commence calibration until the calibration coordinator has confirmed all information has been made available to you.

The documentation set will typically include:

- **Student samples:** a selection of de-identified marked student works will be made available to you. There should be 12 assessments, 3 from each low, mid, and high range of each grade band (pass, credit, distinction, high distinction), however this can vary.



While you may review student samples and disagree with some of the grades provided, the calibration exercise focuses on retrospective quality verification instead of moderation, so no grades are be modified following calibration.

- **Supporting documentation:** A set of documents that provide information on the course, unit, and assessment will be provided. In some instances, all information may not be available which your calibration coordinator may alert you to. Supporting documentation includes:

University level	Course Level
A copy of the grading nomenclature for the institution may be provided.	Information about the course structure in which the unit is located, and course learning outcomes. Please note that a unit may be a component of several courses so you may receive more than one set of information relating to course.

Unit Level	Assessment Level
<p>The full unit outline will be provided, as well as unit level learning outcomes and their relationship to course level outcomes. Grade distribution for the student cohort for that particular semester may be provided also.</p> <p>The unit coordinator may also provide a brief context statement to describe any context that is applicable, but may not be immediately obvious in existing documentation.</p>	<p>Specific details of the assessment that has been selected will be provided, which will also include a marking rubric, or grading criteria such as a solutions file to assist in the evaluation.</p>

Writing the report

Reports are completed online using a web form. Your calibration coordinator will supply related links when the materials are available to review.

1. External Reviewer Report

You will be supplied with a link to the report and will be required to log in using the credentials provided.

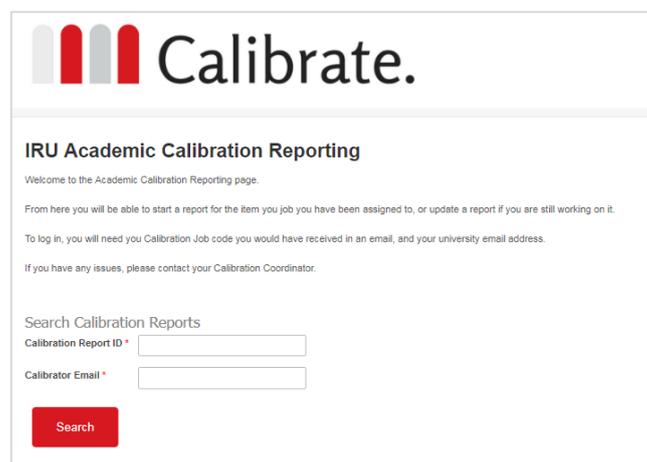


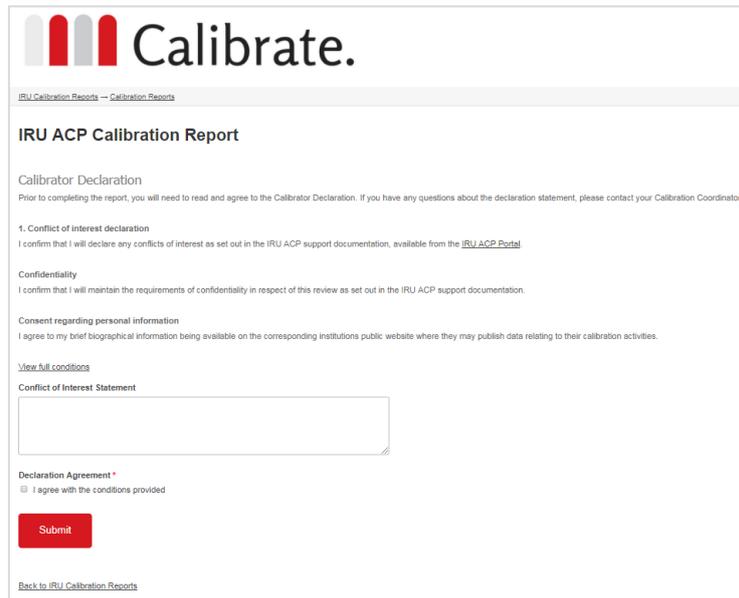
Figure 1 Calibrate Report login



The IRU Academic Calibration management application, **Calibrate**, does not require you to have an ongoing account. You will be supplied with a one-off authentication key specific to the report you will be filling out.

If you are required to calibrate more than one unit, you will have a unique key for each separate report.

Once you have logged in you will be asked to read all conditions, and declare any conflict of interest you may have.

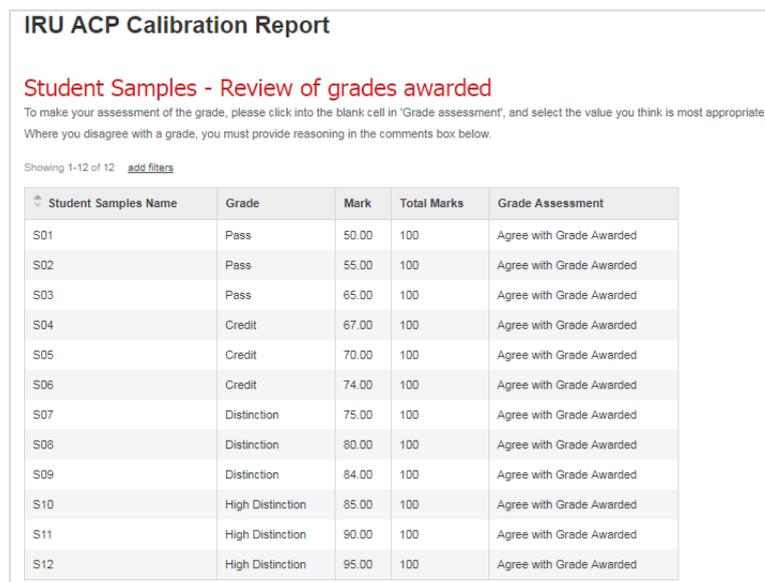


The screenshot shows the 'Calibrate.' logo at the top. Below it, the page title is 'IRU ACP Calibration Report'. The main section is 'Calibrator Declaration'. It includes a 'Conflict of interest declaration' section with a text area for input. There are also sections for 'Confidentiality', 'Consent regarding personal information', and a 'Declaration Agreement' section with a checkbox and a 'Submit' button. A 'Back to IRU Calibration Reports' link is at the bottom.

Figure 2 Calibration Report Declaration Form

Following this you will go to the Calibration Report form. This is the core report for evaluating the unit. It is recommended that you review questions and support information contained in the report prior to your review to assist in your evaluation. If you have any questions relating to the report, please contact your calibration coordinator.

The first part of the report is a table based on the student samples, including their ID and mark.

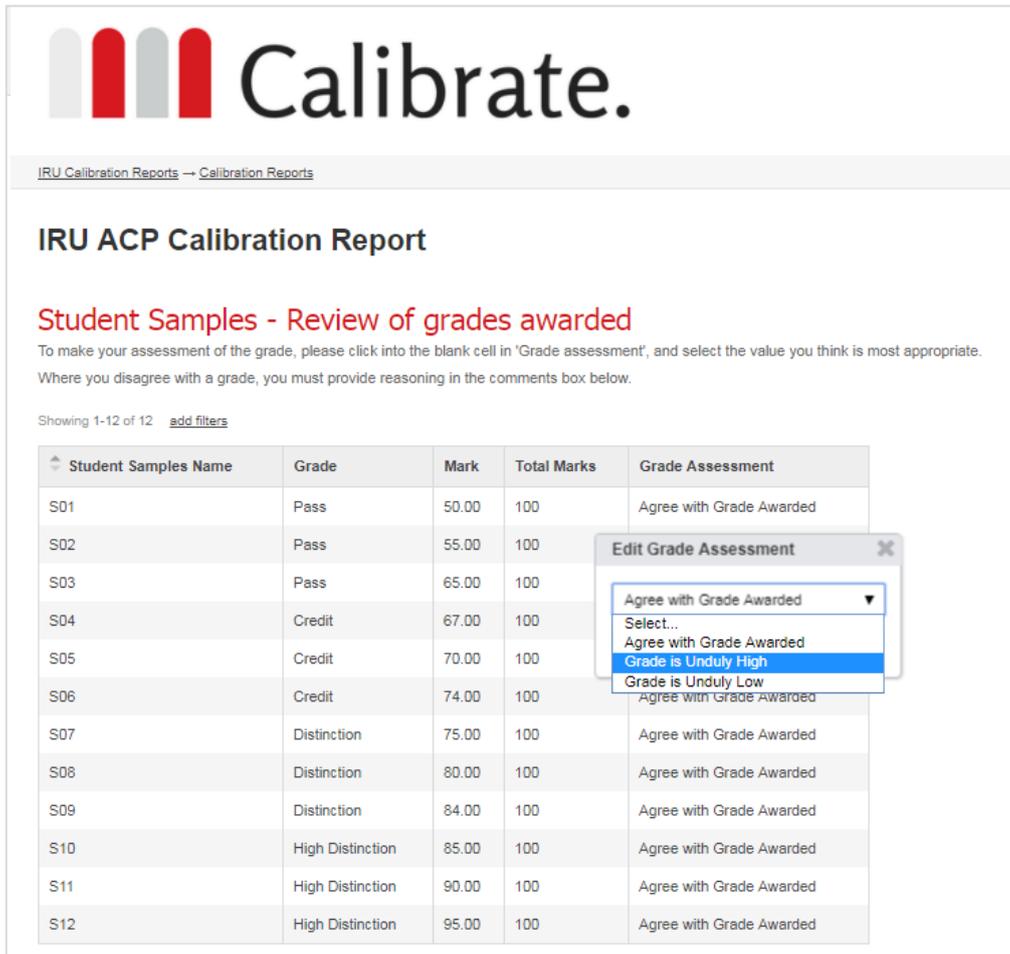


The screenshot shows the 'IRU ACP Calibration Report' header. Below it is the section 'Student Samples - Review of grades awarded'. The text says: 'To make your assessment of the grade, please click into the blank cell in 'Grade assessment', and select the value you think is most appropriate. Where you disagree with a grade, you must provide reasoning in the comments box below.' Below this is a table with 12 rows and 5 columns. The columns are 'Student Samples Name', 'Grade', 'Mark', 'Total Marks', and 'Grade Assessment'. The 'Grade Assessment' column contains the text 'Agree with Grade Awarded' for all rows.

Student Samples Name	Grade	Mark	Total Marks	Grade Assessment
S01	Pass	50.00	100	Agree with Grade Awarded
S02	Pass	55.00	100	Agree with Grade Awarded
S03	Pass	65.00	100	Agree with Grade Awarded
S04	Credit	67.00	100	Agree with Grade Awarded
S05	Credit	70.00	100	Agree with Grade Awarded
S06	Credit	74.00	100	Agree with Grade Awarded
S07	Distinction	75.00	100	Agree with Grade Awarded
S08	Distinction	80.00	100	Agree with Grade Awarded
S09	Distinction	84.00	100	Agree with Grade Awarded
S10	High Distinction	85.00	100	Agree with Grade Awarded
S11	High Distinction	90.00	100	Agree with Grade Awarded
S12	High Distinction	95.00	100	Agree with Grade Awarded

Figure 3 Calibration Report - table of student samples

By default all grade assessments are set to 'Agree with Grade Awarded'. To change the values for those you believe are unduly high or low, select the value inside the cell of the student sample and change the value.



Student Samples Name	Grade	Mark	Total Marks	Grade Assessment
S01	Pass	50.00	100	Agree with Grade Awarded
S02	Pass	55.00	100	Agree with Grade Awarded
S03	Pass	65.00	100	Agree with Grade Awarded
S04	Credit	67.00	100	Grade is Unduly High
S05	Credit	70.00	100	Agree with Grade Awarded
S06	Credit	74.00	100	Agree with Grade Awarded
S07	Distinction	75.00	100	Agree with Grade Awarded
S08	Distinction	80.00	100	Agree with Grade Awarded
S09	Distinction	84.00	100	Agree with Grade Awarded
S10	High Distinction	85.00	100	Agree with Grade Awarded
S11	High Distinction	90.00	100	Agree with Grade Awarded
S12	High Distinction	95.00	100	Agree with Grade Awarded

Figure 4 Calibration Report - selecting a different grade assessment

For any grades that you disagree with, you must provide an explanation in the text box provided:

Please provide reasons for any grades you have disagreed with

Figure 5 Calibration Report - grade disagreement statement

The remainder of the report is a mixture of quantitative and qualitative information for the Calibrator to add information to based on their evaluation of materials provided.

Review of Specified Learning Objectives

1. To what extent is the information provided about learning objectives clear and sufficient? (Please mark the box that best represents your view).

1. Not at all
 2. Somewhat
 3. Adequately
 4. Very Well
 5. Completely

Please list up to three reasons for making this rating

Figure 6 Calibration Report - example questions

At the end of the report you have the option of either saving the report, to continue filling the report out at a later date, or if you have completed the report you can submit the report.

Save or Submit

If you'd like to save your report and come back to it, please select the 'save for later' option.
 If you'd like to submit your final report please select the 'final submission' option. Note, that you will not be able to access the report after this, unless directed by the Calibration Coordinator.

Submit Completed Report *

Save for later Final submission

Figure 7 Calibration Report - submitting the report

Once you have made the final submission you will not be able to access the report again, unless you are asked to by your calibration coordinator.

2. External Reviewer Evaluation Form

This is a short web-based survey that will allow you to reflect on your impression of the calibration process itself, and any improvements you think can be made. A link will be provided to you by your calibration coordinator.

Returning Reports

Once you have submitted your report it will be sent to your calibration coordinator for review. If they have any enquiries they will re-open your report access to amend the report.

i *Once reports are returned the corresponding University will own copyright of material produced in relation to the review, and you will not retain any rights (including copyright and moral rights) in connection with the materials produced for the review.*

It is expected that when the calibration is completed, you destroy all documents and student samples provided by the corresponding institution.

Further Requests

Once the report is finalised internally it is sent to the corresponding University. In some cases your calibration coordinator may be in contact seeking further information or clarification at the request of the corresponding University. It is expected that clarification or further information will be provided where the request has been deemed reasonable by the calibration coordinators.

Report dispute

Where a corresponding institution may disagree with the report provided, after consultation with the calibration coordinators this may result in a request to discuss the calibration further, engage another calibrator, or repeat the calibration exercise the following year.

Use and publication of reports

Reports provided may be used as part of the corresponding institutions re-registration requirements, and therefore may be made available to the Tertiary Education and Quality Standards Association (TEQSA).

Reports will also often be reviewed at a course and school level and may also be made available as part of the professional accreditation and course review processes.

Calibrator Expectations

The standard expectations of peer review which often applies to research, are still applicable and expected in the teaching and learning context². These include:

- Being fair, and timely in your review
- Providing feedback that is comprehensive and constructive
- Acting in confidence and not disclosing the content or outcome of the calibration in which you are involved
- Ensuring you are informed about, and comply with, the criteria being applied
- Declaring all conflicts of interest, including personal prejudice, which may influence the calibration process
- Giving proper consideration to teaching and assessment that challenges or changes accepted ways of thinking
- Not participating in calibrations where the unit is outside of your area or level of expertise, or where this occurs, declaring your limitations.



While it is critical that a calibrator's feedback is constructive so that it imparts a level of usefulness to the unit coordinator, the calibrator is not expected to remedy any faults apparent in the unit, nor is expected to provide future support or assistance unless agreed between the calibrator and the unit coordinator through their respective calibration coordinators

² Peer Review in Research Policy, Charles Darwin University (2013).