

IRU Academic Calibration Process

External Reviewer Report – Guidance notes for reviewers

This document has been created as a guide; it presents possible themes that you might like to consider when peer-reviewing a unit for a partner IRU. Use these prompts when reviewing your report and be aware that not all prompts will be relevant for the unit and assessment task you are benchmarking.

For your convenience, the document layout mimics the sections and questions included in the formal Calibration report.

Background to Calibration

Calibration was derived from a need to fulfill legislated requirement and assurance that ongoing standards in learning and teaching are maintained. TEQSA Provider Registration Standards require universities to compare performance on teaching and student learning outcomes with other higher education providers. The Academic Calibration Process (ACP) supports the IRUs in meeting the standards set out in the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) as required by TEQSA. The standards include:

5.3 Monitoring, Review and Improvement

- 4a. *“Review and improvement activities include regular external referencing of the success of student cohorts against comparable courses of study, including:*
 - b. *the assessment methods and grading of students’ achievement of learning outcomes for selected units of study within courses of study.*
- 7. *The results of regular interim monitoring, comprehensive reviews, external referencing..... are used to mitigate future risks to the quality of the education provided and to guide.....improvements...”*

While the information provided by reviewers may be collated and published by the University, individual review reports and the names of reviewers will not be publicly available.

Completing the Report

- *Please ensure the calibration report includes aspects of **positive feedback** as well as commenting on areas that **need improvement**.*
- *For all sections, please provide explanations for your observations.*
- *If the unit under review forms part of a professionally accredited course, consider making comment in relation to compliance with accreditation body requirements.*
- *If any material is missing from the Calibration package that would assist you in compiling this report, please notify the Calibration Coordinator immediately. They will request the additional information on your behalf.*

Section 1: Executive Summary

Please tick one of the following three options for your overall summary judgment of the unit/subject you have reviewed.

| | |
|--|--------------------------|
| The learning outcomes, assessment tasks and assessment processes set for the unit/subject I have reviewed were appropriate. Any recommendations made are for the purposes of enhancement to the unit/subject and its assessment. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| The learning outcomes, assessment tasks and assessment processes set for the unit/subject I have reviewed were appropriate. HOWEVER, there are some risks to the future quality assurance of the unit/subject and its assessment, as outlined in my recommendations. | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| There are immediate concerns or risks relating to the learning, outcomes, assessment tasks and/or assessment processes set for the unit/subject I have reviewed. These require immediate action on behalf of the University to prevent reoccurrence in the next review. | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Comment

In this section please provide an overall synopsis that supports your summary judgement. The following categories may be useful:

Constructive Alignment

- *Are the learning outcomes and assessment tasks constructively aligned?*

Authentic & Transferrable Skills

- *Comment on the authenticity of the task and relevance of the task.*
- *Where relevant: How does the assessment task provide opportunity for students to develop general graduate attributes such as communication, organizing and planning, problem solving, conflict resolution, teamwork, decision making.*

Clear & Sufficient Detail

- *Are the assessment requirements explained in sufficient detail ensuring students are clear in their understanding of expectations?*
- *Where a rubric has been provided, does it provide students with enough breakdown that both markers and students know how much weight has been given to each criteria?*

Scaffolding, Weighting & Balance

- *Provide overall impression of the balance between assessment tasks (for example, commenting on the assessment plan that may include formative developmental tasks early in the semester through*

to the summative tasks at the end of semester/trimester).

- *Are the assessment tasks scaffolded as students move from first assignment to last? i.e. progression of assessment.*
- *Comment on the weighting distributed across assessment tasks, does this reflect value in learning?*

Workload

- *Comment on the spacing of assessment tasks. Is this appropriate, does the assessment layout give students adequate time to understand content before being assessed. Is there enough time between assessment task to allow students adequate time to reflect on the outcome of the previous task?*
- *Consider how the assessment tasks might impact overall student workload with respect to a student studying in a semester or trimester model.*

Overall

- *Summarise what you understand the expectations of the unit to be.*
- *Provide any suggestions or recommendations to nuance the assessment or unit.*

Section 2: Review of Grades Awarded

| STUDENT SAMPLES | AGREE WITH GRADE AWARDED | BELIEVE GRADE AWARDED TO BE UNDULY LOW | BELIEVE GRADE AWARDED TO BE UNDULY HIGH |
|-----------------|--------------------------|--|---|
| S01 | | | |
| S02 | | | |
| S03 | | | |
| S04 | | | |
| S05 | | | |
| S06 | | | |
| S07 | | | |
| S08 | | | |
| S09 | | | |
| S10 | | | |
| S11 | | | |
| S12 | | | |

*Please provide reasons for disagreeing with any of the grades awarded.
Please refer to aspects for consideration on page 8.*

***Include feedback for each student sample that you feel has been graded unduly high or low.
Your feedback could include commentary on the following:***

- *Students adequately addressing learning outcomes for the assessment task, quality of discursive argument in the paper, critical analysis, relevant and appropriate referencing.*
- *Consistency in marking context, grammar and/or referencing.*
- *The quality of feedback given to students. Does the feedback provide constructive commentary that students can action to improve future work?*

Section 3: Review of Learning Outcomes

NB: Definition of Learning outcomes: "Learning Outcomes are statements that describe or list measurable and essential mastered content-knowledge — reflecting skills, competencies, and knowledge that students have achieved and can demonstrate upon successfully completing a unit of study".

John Biggs provides a description of the intended learning outcomes in his discussion on constructive alignment.

Biggs, J. (2014). Constructive alignment in university teaching. *HERDSA Review of Higher Education*, 1, 5-22.
<https://www.herdsa.org.au/herdsa-review-higher-education-vol-1/5-22>

| | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| Not at all <input type="checkbox"/> | Somewhat <input type="checkbox"/> | Adequately <input type="checkbox"/> | Very Well <input type="checkbox"/> | Completely <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--|

Please list up to three reasons for making this rating

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

Consider the following aspects about the learning outcomes:

Clear and Measurable

- *What aspects make the learning outcomes clear or unclear?*
- *Would a student be able to understand the learning outcome and gauge the level of learning required?*
- *Are the learning outcomes measurable?*
- *Is the design of the learning outcomes theoretically informed (e.g. Bloom's Taxonomy?)*

Quantity and Order

- *Is the number of learning outcomes appropriate? Are there too many or too few, what suggestions would you offer to remediate this?*
- *Is the order of learning outcome suitable or should the order be changed?*

- 2. To what extent are the specified learning outcomes appropriate for the unit/subject in its delivery year?**

For this response, your observations may include/consider the following:

- *Do the learning outcomes cover the aims of the unit (if applicable)? Or is there something that should be added that would benefit student learning?*
- *Based on the information provided, do the learning outcomes represent the content of the unit well?*
- *Do the learning outcomes target the appropriate higher order thinking skills for the year level? For AQF criteria (where relevant) refer to:*

<https://www.aqf.edu.au/sites/aqf/files/aqf-2nd-edition-january-2013.pdf>

3. How do the specified learning outcomes compare with those of units/subjects from similar universities in the same delivery year?

Things to consider:

- *Comment on similarities of learning outcomes with a similar unit you teach.*
- *An in-depth report would include a brief internet search to analyse learning outcomes for equivalent units at similar universities and comment on the quality of learning outcomes under review in comparison.*
- *Include a list of your topic learning outcomes to offer a comparison (optional).*

Section 4: Review of Assessment Task/s and Feedback

| | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| Not at all <input type="checkbox"/> | Somewhat <input type="checkbox"/> | Adequately <input type="checkbox"/> | Very Well <input type="checkbox"/> | Completely <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--|

Please list up to three reasons for making this rating

1. To what extent is the assessment task suitable for the specified learning outcomes? (Please mark the box that best represents your view).

This question is asking about constructive alignment. In your view, comment on how the assessment task has embedded the learning outcomes appropriately in its design or instructions. The following prompts can be used in the review of assessment task:

Aims and Learning Outcomes

- *Do the aims of the assessment task meet learning outcomes?*
- *How does the assessment task ‘pull together’ the learning outcomes in a meaningful way?*
- *Does the wording of the assessment task match the wording of the learning outcomes?*
- *Include feedback on whether the assessment task could be enhanced to incorporate other learning outcomes (if appropriate).*

Application and Understanding

- *How does the assessment task allow students to demonstrate their understanding and application of knowledge and development of graduate attributes?*

Exams

- *If the assessment task is an exam, comment on how well the exam covers the most important concepts within the subject and reflects the learning outcomes.*
 - *Is there sufficient evidence in the exam for students to demonstrate application of knowledge (for example, problem solving, case scenario)?*
 - *Comment on the clarity of exam questions in terms of the marks assigned and expected response to gain full marks (for example, if a question is 10 marks, is it clear how many responses are expected for the 10 marks).*

2. To what extent is the assessment requirements and marking criteria explained clearly? (i.e., Is the assessment task and marking criteria clear for students to understand?)

The following prompts can be used in the review of assessment task:

Language and expectations

- *Comment on whether the marking criteria are generally clear and measurable.*
- *How well will students be able to interpret the marking criteria to meet the expectations of the assessment task and assist in responding to the task?*
- *Is the assessment task aligned with the marking criteria?*
- *Do the marking criteria incorporate the same language used in the learning outcomes, for example if a learning outcome asks students to ‘critically evaluate’; do the marking criteria also contain reference to ‘critically evaluate’?*
- *Do the marking criteria contain a summary of minimum expectations to assist students in their understanding of assessment expectations?*

Marks and weighting

- *Comment on the marks allocated to content, structure, flow and referencing.*

Design of rubric

- *Comment on the layout and design of the marking rubric. Is it easy for students to interpret?*

No marking rubric/criteria

- *If no marking rubric/criteria is present, please comment how this impacts quality assurance for marking and student learning.*
- *Consider supplying a copy of the rubric you use.*

3. To what extent is the assessment task and the marking criteria appropriate for a unit/subject in its delivery year? Please mark the box that best represents your view.

Does the assessment task capture the learning, critical thinking skills and graduate attributes students should achieve for the year level? Include a review of the overall assessment plan as presented in the unit outline. Is the assessment plan appropriate?

This section may also include comments on the assessment task with respect to:

- *The number of assessment items in the unit*
- *The weighting of the assessment task under review in relation to other assessment tasks.*
- *Whether there is enough variety in assessment tasks for the year level*
- *Whether tasks are distributed adequately during a teaching period*
- *Does the assessment task contain enough originality and complexity reflecting what students might do in the real world or for the year level?*

4. How does the assessment task and the marking criteria compare with unit/subjects from similar universities in the same delivery year?

For this section, please comment on how the assessment task compares with the assessment at your University. An in-depth report would include a brief internet search to analyse the assessment tasks for equivalent units at similar Universities. Provide insights into your assessment practices for an equivalent assessment task.

5. To what extent is the feedback provided by the marker to the student appropriate for student learning?

For this section comment on feedback with respect to:

- *Does it enable students to make judgements on their performance and enact improvements in future assessment tasks?*
- *Could the quality of feedback be improved?*

Section 5: Additional Comments

If the unit under review forms part of a professionally accredited course, consider making comment in relation to compliance with accrediting body requirements

Notes for ACP External Reviewers²

Submitting ACP reports to the University

1. Within two weeks of receiving the relevant materials, you are required to submit a written report to the ACP coordinator of the university being reviewed.
2. Reports should be addressed and sent to the ACP coordinator of the university for which you conducted the review (see below a list of ACP coordinators for all the IRU universities).

Report structure and content

1. Your report is expected to address the following key questions for each subject you review:
 - Are the learning outcomes appropriate?
 - Are the learning outcomes comparable to those of final year subjects in similar universities?
 - Are assessment processes and the determination of grades sound and fairly conducted based on the materials that have been provided for the review?
2. Avoid discussing individual staff by name as your report will be considered by the committees of the relevant Faculties/Departments/Schools which are likely to include student representatives.
3. In general, you will draw upon your academic experience and judgment to review the materials provided to you. The following is a list of issues which are suggested for inclusion in your ACP report³.

Suggestions for review of specified learning outcomes

- To what extent is the information provided about learning outcomes clear and sufficient?
- To what extent are the learning outcomes “precise, challenging and complete” (Laurillard 2002: 183)?
- How do the learning outcomes specified for the unit/subject compare with those of final year units/subjects in similar universities?

Suggestions for review of the assessment task and assessment processes

- To what extent is the assessment task suitable for the specified learning outcomes?
- To what extent is the assessment task timed appropriately?
- Is the language used in the assessment task unambiguous, appropriate and inclusive of all students?
- Are the marking criteria sufficiently clear?

- How does the assessment task and marking criteria compare with those of final year units/subjects in similar universities?
- Based on the materials provided for the review, to what extent have the assessment items provided been graded in rigorous, equitable and fair manner?

Suggestions for overall summary comments

- How do the specified learning outcomes and student achievements compare with those of final year units/subjects in similar universities?
- Are there key issues which should be brought to the attention of supervising committees in the faculty/department/school, or wider university?
- Are there examples of good practice that might be noted and disseminated more widely as appropriate?

General points

1. Submitted reports will only be used in accordance with IRU member university policy (for the monitoring of academic standards within the institution).
2. The university being reviewed will own the copyright of all the materials produced in relation to the ACP review.
3. You will assign all present and future rights relating to the reports and any other materials created in relation your appointment as a ACP External Reviewer to the university being reviewed. You will also waive any rights including moral rights in connection with those materials.
4. The university being reviewed will make reasonable endeavors to ensure the accurate reproduction of material and information provided by you; all other warranties and undertakings are excluded, including liability for direct or indirect loss to you.
5. You give consent to the university being reviewed to publish any part of your report, electronically or in hard-copy, in internal or publicly accessible websites, reports and/or brochure

²Adapted from the University of Cambridge’s coversheet for external examination

³Adapted from the QAA code of practice on external examination (2004)