Higher Education Assessment Policy

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Document History

Version	Approval Date	Effective Date	Change(s)
1.0	23 June 2016	Term 3, 2016 (except for new Grading Scale to be effective from T4, 2016)	-
1.1	5 August 2016	Term 4, 2016	Inclusion of Withdraw-Fail grade under Sections 6.1 and 7.3
2.0	June 2017	Term 3, 2017	Updated the policy: • to change the name of the Policy. • Section 3: to clarify the definition of Formative Assessment and Summative Assessment. • Section 5: to add principles. • Section 7: to remove invalid courses. • Section 11: to amend the contents of subject outlines, subject outline review and assessment briefs and to include the procedure of assessment brief review and approval. • Section 15.3: to include information of student consultation.
2.1	11 May 2018	Term 2 2018	• Updated to account for eLearning and electronic delivery of courses and assignments • Minor grammatical and formatting changes

Approved by: **Academic Board** on **11 May 2018**

Distribution List

To: RCDC Academic Staff
RCDC Student Services Staff
Associate Colleges, College Directors and Academic Leads

Cc: Chair, Senior Management Committee
Chair, Council

Table of Contents

1   Purpose

The purpose of this manual is to detail the policies for assessing Raffles College of Design and Commerce (RCDC) students enrolled in its higher education award courses.

2   Scope

The manual applies to students enrolled in all course work programs at RCDC, including those enrolled at offshore campuses.

3   Definition of Terms

Baseline Assessment: an assessment that is used to determine the starting or entry state of students to a subject or program of study.

Subject Learning Outcome (SLO): A learning outcome that is defined for a subject. The outcome is defined according the convention in *Learning Taxonomies*.

Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA): This is the cumulate average grade point for all semesters to date. It is computed by dividing the cumulative number of grade points earned over all semesters by the cumulative total number of credits undertaken.

Double Mark: The second marker re-marks the assessment. The first and second marker marks must be clearly distinguished on the assessment. The sub-totals for the two markers must be indicated for each question and the grand totals for the two markers indicated. The final agreed mark must be shown and clearly distinguished from the first and second marker totals.

Formative Assessment: an assessment that provides feedback to students to help them improve future performance in that subject.

Grade Point Average (GPA): The average grade point in one semester. It is computed by dividing the total number of grade points earned in a semester by the total number of credits undertaken.

Summative Assessment: an assessment that typically occurs towards or at the end of a subject without the opportunity to provide feedback to the students to help them improve their future performance in that subject.

4   Purpose of Assessment

There are three main purposes of assessment:

1. To determine whether students are ready to proceed to the next stage or to graduate;
2. To classify the performance of students in terms of rank order; and
3. To improve learning.

There are three different types of assessment: baseline, formative and summative. Baseline assessment is used to determine the starting or entry state of students to a subject or program of study. The assessment identifies students that may require additional learning resources and determines the range of student abilities. This information is used to improve the delivery of the teaching/learning process (Purpose 1).

Formative assessment refers to assessment that provides feedback to students to help them improve performance (but does not count towards the subject grade); for example, tutorial problems (Purpose 3).

Summative assessment refers to assessment that contributes marks for a subject; for example, a closed book examination at the end of a subject (Purposes 1 and 2). Course work assessment may be both summative and formative.

5   Principles of Assessment

The key principles of assessment are:

1. Be aware that changing the method of assessment changes learning.

2. Match assessment criteria to learning outcomes, both subject and course levels.

3. Match the method of assessment and assessment tasks to assessment criteria and learning outcomes.

4. Keep assessment criteria simple; however, ensure you provide sufficient detail so feedback is structured, relevant and meaningful to students.

5. Be fair, reliable and valid in your marking.

6. Provide meaningful and timely feedback on student performance.

Learning outcomes define what the student is expected to be able to accomplish at the end of a subject. Assessment criteria define a students' level of achievement of the learning outcomes. Best practice separates threshold criteria (the level needed to pass the subject) from the performance criteria (how well students have done). The assessment methods and tasks have to be matched to the assessment criteria and learning outcomes. They define what will be assessed, when and how.

In order to ensure that marking is fair, reliable and valid a systematic method of marking should be used, e.g. assessment criteria, model answers, marking schemes and rubrics. A checklist on good assessment practice is provided to guide program leaders and lecturers in the setting, approval and marking process of assessments (Appendix A).

6   Grading for Higher Education Courses

6.1   Grading System

Student performance is assessed using both a GPA (Grade Point Average) and a CGPA (Cumulative Grade Point Average) throughout the course of study, except for the English Language Programs where students are assessed by grades.

The GPA and CGPA are calculated as follows:

$$GPA = \frac{\text{Sum of (grade value} \times \text{subject credit points)}}{\text{Sum of subject credit points}}$$

The grading system for subjects is as follows:

Grade	Marks	Description	Grade Points
HD - High Distinction	85 – 100%	Work of outstanding quality on major objectives of subject	7
D - Distinction	75 – 84%	Work of superior quality on major objectives of the subject	6
C - Credit	65 – 74%	Work of good quality on major objectives of the subject	5
P - Pass	50 – 64%	Work of satisfactory achievement of all objectives of the subject	4
PS – Pass with Supplementary Exam	50%	Pass after being granted supplementary examination	4

Grade	Marks	Description	Grade Points
CP – Conceded Pass	45-49%* for eligibility	Original grade of fail but granted a pass subject to applicable conditions	4
F - Fail	0-49%	Unsatisfactory performance in meeting the major objectives of the subject	0
WF - Withdrawn Fail	N/A	Withdrawn from subject after census date with academic penalty	0
I Incomplete	N/A	Due to medical grounds (clearly documented with records held by Student Services)	Not included in GPA calculation
N - Result Pending	N/A	Result pending: grading not completed	Not included in GPA calculation
Y - Continuing	N/A	Continuing: subjects of more than one term	Not included in GPA calculation
W - Withdrawn	N/A	Withdrawn from subject before the census date	Not included in GPA calculation
WS – Withdrawn special circumstances	N/A	Withdrawn from subject after census date without academic penalty (only under special circumstances)	Not included in GPA calculation

*Refer to conditions for Conceded Pass under Section 7.1.

6.2   Degree Awards Classification

Students must obtain a minimum CGPA of 4.00 to be awarded a Degree.

The awards classification for Degrees is:

CGPA	Award
6.00 or higher	Distinction
5.00 – 5.99	Credit
4.00-4.99	Pass

A student must achieve the minimum pass mark to gain credit for a subject. A student has failed a subject when the minimum pass mark for the subject is not achieved, except in cases where a conceded pass is granted (see 7.1 below).

Students are not permitted to repeat for credit any subject which they have already passed.

7   Provisions relating to failed and incomplete subjects

7.1   Conceded Pass

The Learning and Teaching Committee may award a Conceded Pass for a subject where the student is six credit points short of completing their course, and:

a. the student has been awarded a mark between 45% and 49% (inclusive) for the subject for which the pass conceded grade is being considered

b. the student has not failed any hurdle requirement for that subject

c. the student has not been awarded a pass conceded grade for any other subject in the course or for an articulated suite of courses

    d. the student has received a fail grade for no more than the number of subjects specified below for each course type:

        i.   three-year undergraduate course: a fail grade in no more than three other subjects

        ii.   combined courses: a fail grade in no more than two other subjects in the relevant course - a student is eligible to be considered for a pass conceded grade in each of the component courses

7.2 Repeating a failed subject

Students who have failed a subject are required to repeat the whole subject (or equivalent subject in the case of electives) at the next available opportunity.

The maximum number of attempts to pass any subject is limited to three per subject.

Exclusion from the program may result if a student:

    (i) has failed any subject three times, or

    (ii) exceeds the period of candidature.

A failed grade (F) for the subject will be recorded in the academic transcript. A student failing an elective subject may either repeat the subject or select another elective, where this is permissible.

7.3 Withdrawn

Withdrawal from a subject without academic is permissible up until census date for the study period. A (W) will be recorded next to the subject for administrative purposes.

7.4 Withdrawn Fail

Students who withdraw from a subject **after the census date** of the study period will have that subject recorded as withdrawn fail or fail on their academic transcript.

7.5 Withdrawn Special Circumstances

If a student withdraws from a subject after census date **due to special circumstances**, he/she may apply for withdrawal without academic penalty with a personal statement outlining the situation. The student will be required to provide independent documentation to support the claim. For the application to be successful, the student must prove that special circumstances which are considered to be unusual or uncommon existed, and were not able to be foreseen prior to census date. The student must also be able to demonstrate that the special circumstances that apply were:

- Beyond his/her control;

- Did not occur or make their full impact on the student until on or after the census date; and

- Made it impracticable for the student to successfully complete the requirements of the subject(s).

If the student's application for withdrawal after census date with special circumstances is approved, his/her academic transcript will record a Withdrawn Special Circumstances (WS) grade.

In all other circumstances, the student will be considered to have withdrawn from the subject, and the academic transcript will record a Withdrawn-Fail (WF) grade.

8 Special Consideration and Supplementary Assessments

Where there are extenuating circumstances (e.g. medical reason) to justify the student's failure to successfully complete a component of a subject, such as an assignment or an examination, the marks for the other components of the subject will remain whilst the student either repeats the failed component or is considered for special consideration.

A grade of N (result pending) will be recorded for the subject until such time as results for the assessment is obtained. Once the result is obtained a final grade will be awarded in the standard manner taking account of the grades for previous assessments and the re-graded assessment component.

Students may experience a disruption to their assessment in a subject as a result of circumstances beyond their control, including but not limited to illness, psychological conditions, significant loss, bereavement, hardship or trauma.

Students who consider that their work during a teaching period or likely performance in an assessment task, which may include a written examination, has been affected as per Rule 9 may request that these circumstances be given special consideration. Requests for special consideration must include relevant documentary evidence from an appropriate professional authority.

Requests for special consideration must be lodged with the Student Services Manager **no later than two working days** after the assessment, in the case of an examination; or prior to the due date in the case of an assessment task that is not an examination. The subject lecturer may extend the due date for submission of requests within guidelines determined by the relevant Responsible Academic Officer.

Supplementary Assessments are typically only offered for examinations as directed under the Examinations Policy. Requests are considered and determined by the relevant Program Director, Dean and Student Services Manager. The outcome of a special consideration request would at worst make no change to the original results, and at best increase a student's result by one band (i.e. from F to P, P to C, and so on).

9   Completion of all Assessment Components

A student must complete all assessment components to pass a subject irrespective of the cumulative marks for each assessment. That is, if a student is required to complete three assessment components and has completed the first two with sufficient marks to guarantee an overall mark of 50% they must also complete the final assessment component to pass the subject, irrespective of the cumulative marks they may have attained for the other assessment components. A student cannot fail to submit the final assessment component and then pass the subject.

10   Rules Regarding Modification of Learning and Assessment Arrangements

10.1 General

A student with a disability or special needs may be permitted to undertake particular learning tasks and assessment with special arrangements in place to accommodate their disability and needs in order to ensure that the assessment is on the basis of academic merit and has parity with the assessment of other students.

Conditions may be set to make the particular arrangements comparable to the standard arrangements for learning and assessment and any such conditions must be strictly observed by the student and all other relevant parties.

10.2 Students with disability or on-going illness

A student with temporary or permanent disabilities, including on-going illnesses that impact upon their ability to undertake assessment tasks including written examinations, may lodge a written application for adjustment to the learning and assessment arrangements with the Student Services Manager.

Applications must include medical certificates or other relevant supporting documentation. Applications should be lodged no later than the teaching period census date.

Variations to assessment arrangements are determined by the Dean, following review of the recommendation by the Student Services Manager and consultation with the Program Director.

10.3 Students with carer responsibilities

A student whose responsibilities as a primary carer impact upon his or her ability to undertake assessment tasks including written examinations may lodge a written application for adjustment to the learning and assessment arrangements with the Students Services Manager.

Applications must include relevant supporting documentation. Applications should be lodged no later than the teaching period census date.

Variations to assessment arrangements are determined by the Dean, following consultation with the Program Director and the Student Services Manager.

11   Subject Information and Assessment Briefs

11.1 Subject eLearning information

The information formerly provided in subject outlines is now provided via eLearning. Students are given access to the subject's eLearning portal which informs them of the requirements for that particular subject. The subject's eLearning portal:

1. Prepares the student for the subject in terms of classes, teaching, texts, readings, resources and assessment items;

2. Links the subject the relevant academic policies, course learning outcomes and graduate attributes; and

3. Specifies the conditions that must be met by the students to successfully complete the subject.

Subjects' eLearning portals should be designed following the template held by the Dean.

The following information must be included on the subject's portal:

1. Subject name and code.

2. Whether the subject is a core, major or elective subject.

3. Credit points.

4. Duration of the subject.

5. Names of teaching staff.

6. Pre-requisites.

7. Teaching mode(s).

8. Study hours.

9. Lecturer availability and consultation hours.

10. A brief introductory description of the subject.

11. A weekly breakdown of topics covered.

12. Student resource requirements.

13. Learning outcomes specific to the subject (subject learning outcomes).

14. All learning outcomes for the entire course (course learning outcomes).

15. RCDC's Graduate Attributes.

16. Details of assessments, assessment type, weighting, due dates and their related subject learning outcomes.

17. Required learning materials.

18. Recommended learning materials.

19. Reference to important policies regarding attendance, late submission of assessment and academic misconduct.

11.2 Subject Information Review

Before being submitted for approval, assessments should be reviewed by the Program Director to ensure they align with the requirements set out in this Policy.

11.3 Assessment Briefs

Assessment briefs must be provided on the relevant subject's Moodle page. It is important that students are able to access all of the necessary information regarding the subject they are studying in one place, that is, the subject's Moodle page.

Summative assessment must be fair, equitable and reliable. Moderation will be used to ensure consistency of marking and grading between staff within and across programs.

Studio and coursework assignments will mainly be open ended, requiring individual student answers. Rubrics are the preferred evaluation tool for this reason. Assessments should be aligned with the descriptors given in the following templates depending on the type of assessment proposed:

- *Essay Assessment Rubric*
- *Studio Based Learning and Assessment Rubric*
- *Logbook or Reflective Journal Assessment Rubric*
- *Project Assessment Rubric*
- *Oral and Written Presentation Assessment Rubric*

The following information must be included in Assessment Briefs:

1. Details of the assessment tasks to be used to assess the subject.

2. Weight to be given to each assessment task in determining the final result.

3. Details of criteria used to assess each assessment task or details of where the criteria can be found.

4. Where a student is required to perform to a specified level in an assessment task in order to gain a pass for the subject, a statement that students who do not meet the minimum performance level requirements as set out in the assessment brief will be given a Fail grade on their Academic Transcript.

5. Requirements on student contributions to tutorials and/or seminars and details of criteria for assessing such contributions.

6. Dates for submission or presentation of any assessment task and times, where relevant.

7. Clearly stated penalties for late submission of assessment tasks.

8. The details of the type of referencing system to be used for written work.

    a. the Author-Date (Harvard) referencing system is the College's default referencing system to be used in the absence of a documented preferred referencing style. Include a link (Refer to the Library Referencing and Citing link); or

    b. if a preferred referencing style is to be used include this link (Refer to Referencing Style Guides).

9. Use of internet resources and any restrictions placed on use of internet sources.

10. A reference to the College's Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism Policy, along with the statement below:

- "The College's Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism Policy, and subject Moodle pages, clearly set out the College's expectation that students submit only their own original work for assessment and avoid plagiarising the work of others or cheating. Re-using any of your own work (either in part or in full) which you have submitted previously for assessment is not permitted without appropriate acknowledgement. Plagiarism can be detected and has led to students being expelled from the College.

- Student use of any website that provides access to essays or other assessment items (sometimes marketed as 'resources'), is extremely unwise. Students who provide an assessment item (or provide access to an assessment item) to others, either directly or indirectly (for example by uploading an assessment item to a website) are considered by the College to be intentionally or recklessly helping other students to cheat. This is considered academic misconduct and students place themselves at risk of being expelled from the College."

11. If relevant, dates, time and location of in-session tests.

12. The following procedures for assessed work must be included on the subject's Moodle page:

    a. Method of submitting each assessment task.

    b. Arrangements for acknowledging submission of written work.

    c. Procedures for the return of assessed work.

    d. Procedures for the retention of written work.

11.4 Assessment Brief Review

Before being submitted for approval, assessment briefs should be reviewed by the Program Director to ensure they align with the requirements set out in this Policy.

The review should check the following:

- The format of the assignment is correct.

- The instructions are clear.

- The submission date for coursework and the duration for examinations are clearly indicated.

- The mark allocation for questions and parts of questions is clearly indicated.

- There are no spelling mistakes or grammatical errors.

- The assessment provides sufficient coverage to test the SLOs.

- The assessment tests the SLOs at the correct level of difficulty.

- The time given to complete the assessment is adequate for students to successfully complete the amount of work required at the specified level of difficulty.

- Where unique answer questions are used, it is important to check the questions are not repeated from recent previous assessments. A unique answer question is a question where all students are expected to give the same answer; there is one and only one answer for the question, e.g., a Multiple Choice Question. This type of question should not be repeated for a period of at least two years to prevent a student from obtaining model answers from previous students and memorising them, thus gaining an unfair advantage. The one exception to this policy is where large randomised test banks are used. In this case, the sub-set of questions from the large test

bank means that few questions will repeat and the randomisation means students will not know which questions will be selected from the test bank.

- The answers are correct.
- The mark allocation for the questions is fair and consistent among the parts of the assessment.

11.5 Approval

The Dean must approve all subject Moodle pages and assessments before they are published as part of course materials. The same assessment must be used for all students in a particular subject, irrespective of their study location, although the Dean, in conjunction with the Program Director, may approve minor alterations to account for local contextualisation in specific locations. The Dean and Program Director must only approve such changes if they do not materially alter, from the original question, the learning outcomes that are being tested.

12   Student Submission of Assignments

Coursework assignments must be submitted by the stipulated date, and via the stipulated method. Students will be required to agree to or sign a declaration of the originality of the work and recognition of sources. All assessments submitted electronically must be submitted via a plagiarism detection system.

Late assignments will be penalised 10% of the grade for each day they are late. An assignment that is submitted more than 10 days late will be awarded a zero grade. An assignment cannot be submitted more than 10 days after the due date except where an appropriately approved extension is granted beyond 10 days. Non-submission of an assignment will result in failure of the subject (see 9 above).

The stipulated date for submission may be extended after the assessment has been issued to students, under extenuating circumstances.

A lecturer must seek permission from the Program Director (RCDC Sydney) or Dean to extend deadlines.

13   Marking

Summative assessment must be fair, equitable and reliable. Benchmarking will be used to ensure consistency of marking and grading between staff within and across programs.

Assessments shall be marked in line with the expressed aims and learning outcomes of the assignment or examination, and in terms of the evaluation method.

Dissertations are double blind marked; the first and second marker shall mark separately on their respective copies of the papers on separate mark sheets.

14   Retention of Student Work

Retained assessments will be stored in secure cabinets or rooms.

All student work that has been submitted for summative assessment shall be retained for a minimum period of 3 months after marks have been approved. The Student Services Manager will be responsible for storing and disposing of students' summative assessments.

Where summative assessments involve physical models, students will be required to submit a digital version of these (e.g. photographs).

Examination answer scripts must be retained for a period of 5years after marks have been approved.

15   Management of Assessment

15.1 Students with Disabilities

Students with learning or other disabilities must include these in the relevant section of the application form during admission. RCDC may provide some, but limited, support for students with disabilities. Students must be advised by RCDC during enrolment whether it is able to provide support for their particular disability. RCDC will not accept responsibility for support if a student has not declared his/her disability during enrolment. Students, who become disabled after enrolling, will be treated on a case by case basis.

15.2 Extenuating Circumstances

Various factors during a student's career might affect academic performance. Illness is the most common factor responsible for student under-performance but other extenuating circumstances are as valid e.g. bereavement involving a close relative. Examiners can take such factors into account before marks are finalised and before decisions relating to progression or the conferment of an award are taken. Therefore, students must draw any circumstances, which might have affected their performance to the attention of the Student Services Manager before the assessment is conducted or immediately after the assessment, especially examinations. Extenuating circumstances will not be considered after the results have been released. Supporting documents must be provided as evidence.

15.3 Student Feedback

Academic staff is responsible for ensuring students receive relevant, fair and timely feedback on their performance. This means more than just issuing marks and grades. Staff must provide constructive comments that will help students improve their performance. Students should make an appointment to seek further feedback or clarify feedback from their lecturer. Each lecturer provides details of consultation times on the relevant subject Moodle page and the preferred method students should use in making appointments for consultation outside of their declared consultation times.

15.4 Student Appeals

A student may only appeal for his/her final results to be reviewed under genuine circumstances where factors beyond his/her control have affected his/her academic performance. Appeals must be submitted in accordance with relevant procedures outlined in this Policy and the Student Grievance and Appeal Policy and Procedure.

16   Acknowledgements

RCDC acknowledges references from the following sources:

- Deakin University, *Assessment (Higher Education) Procedure*
- Raffles Iskander University, *Assessment Policy Manual*
- University of Technology, Sydney, *Course Rules*
- Australian National University, *Rules for Supplementary Examinations*
- University of Wollongong, *Code of Practice – Teaching & Assessment*
- Pacific Adventist University – *Subject Outline Policy*

17 Appendix A: Checklist on Good Assessment Practice

A checklist on good assessment practice shall guide the program leaders and lecturers in the setting, approval and marking process of assessments. Likewise, it ensures that meaningful and timely feedback is given to students.

General Principles of Assessment	Specific guide questions to good practices:	Confirmed by the Lecturer	Verified by the Program Director/Dean
VALIDITY. A valid assessment will assess what it claims to assess.	❖ Do the assessment tasks actually test what you want the students to know and understand? ❖ Are the subject learning outcomes assessed in one way or another?		
RELIABILITY. Reliable assessment uses methods and procedures that ensure the competency standards are interpreted and applied consistently from person to person and from context to context.	❖ Would a repeat of the assessment produce a similar result/performance? ❖ Is the quantity of assessment appropriate for the size of the subject? ❖ Are the learning outcomes at the right level?		
FAIRNESS. An assessment system and its processes must not disadvantage or discriminate any person or organisation.	❖ Are the scheduling of assignments and the amount of assessed work required are manageable without overloading staff or students? ❖ In setting assessment tasks, were consideration given to whether disabled students might be placed at substantial disadvantage? ❖ Are assessment methods, materials and examination processes fair regardless of gender, race, age, class, wealth and sexuality?		
TRANSPARENCY. All involved in the assessment receive clear accurate, consistent and timely information about the assessment tasks procedures, marking criteria and feedback mechanism.	❖ Does the subject clearly articulate assessment and feedback strategy indicating rationale for the assessment task(s) and how they measure learning outcomes? ❖ Are assignment/project briefs provide clear instructions on the requirements of the assessment including the breakdown of marks for each question or part (where appropriate), word limits, submission due dates and unfair practice policy? Evidence of: ➢ Detailed marking scheme or essay rubric ➢ Assessment feedback form for students ➢ Assessment submission form		