ACADEMIC POLICY

including

Assessment and Moderation

and

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November 2020

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ASSESSMENT

Purpose of Assessment

Assessment of student performance is central to a fundamental aim of the School to provide learning opportunities that achieve the best results for individual students and to award its qualifications at a recognised and consistently high standard.

Assessment should foster and provide evidence of the achievement of programme learning objectives, which themselves contribute to the development of the programme and in turn reflect the graduate profile of the qualification.

The purposes of assessment are:

a) **To foster student learning:** Assessment allows students to identify what is expected of them in relation to the stated learning objectives. A strong and explicit link between the learning objectives and assessment performance better enables students to understand the purpose of the course and to develop self-efficacy in achieving that purpose. Feedback on performance makes an essential contribution to improving performance.

b) **To assess student achievement:** Assessment is the way of determining whether a student has achieved the objectives of a course to a satisfactory standard. Assessment at one level can provide assurance that a student is ready to progress to the next.

c) **To inform teaching practice and provide evidence of delivery quality:** Reflection on student accomplishments offers teachers insights into the effectiveness of their teaching practice. Gathering and interpreting evidence can determine how well student learning matches outcomes and expectations for programme delivery. This feedback informs programme development.

Principles

Assessment is based on six key principles:

Contribution to learning

Assessment should be recognised as a learning activity. Assessment tasks should contribute to the development of skills and knowledge that can be applied within the course and in other contexts. Student assessments should be used by teachers to evaluate teaching practices and inform and refine teaching approaches and development. As assessment, including constructive feedback, is a central part of the learning experience, a strategy for the development of effective assessment should be integral to course and project design.

Validity

Assessment tasks should be appropriate to the content and learning objectives and to the graduate profile of the qualification and should be selected to most effectively engage students. In order to address students' differing learning responses a range of assessment tasks should be employed. A valid assessment task is one that does measure what it purports to measure.

Reliability

Assessment should provide an accurate and consistent measure of student performance. This implies consistency in marking. Assessment tasks should be designed to encourage integrity of student work and prevent opportunities for plagiarism and cheating.

Transparency

Students must be assured that engaging with assessment is worthwhile. The intention and practice of assessment should be clearly described to students and staff teaching on a programme so that its benefits, purposes and procedures are understood by all parties, in the spirit of the teaching/learning partnership. This should also involve having clear procedures for both internal moderation of assessments and external moderation of consistency, reliability and validity of assessment tasks and marking.

Fairness and inclusivity

Assessment tasks should provide every student with an equitable opportunity to demonstrate their learning, with appropriate consideration for issues of culture, language, disability, age and gender etc,.

Manageability

Assessment tasks should be reasonable and practicable in terms of time and resources for both students and teaching staff.

PROCEDURES

Communicating the assessment scheme

Course requirements and an overview of assessment should be provided to students, in the departmental handbook, at the commencement of each year.

Definitive written details of assessment tasks including very clear guidelines on how marks will be awarded should be provided to students at the beginning of each assessable component of a course to enable students to direct their learning and to effectively manage their time.

Any changes to the original assessment scheme must be clearly communicated to all affected students through a written statement.

Where appropriate, a certain level of attendance may be set as a mandatory course requirement.

Prolonged absence or persistent lateness may be reflected in a student's assessment.

Self-Evaluation

Self-evaluation is encouraged as part of reflective practice and where possible should be an integral part of all programmes. A necessary component of self-evaluation requires students to reflect on and analyse their learning from assessment tasks.

Equity

Te Reo Maori is an official language of the School. The School will endeavour to provide opportunities for assessments in te reo Maori for those considered to have the necessary level of competency, subject to approval of the Director.

Those wishing to pursue this option should make application to the Director prior to commencement of the course into which they have been accepted.

Where it is deemed necessary assessment will be tailored to accommodate students with special needs.

Appointment of Assessors

It is the responsibility of the Head of Department or designated departmental representative to appoint suitable assessors.

Departments should take active measures to ensure assessors are given adequate training, guidance and monitoring in assessment procedures and processes.

External Assessment

In some cases, at the discretion of the Head of Department or designated departmental representative, External Assessors will be asked to evaluate, mark or grade students' assessment tasks and School staff may take account of these evaluations in setting the final assessment or grade.

In the event of inconsistencies in the marking of the External Assessor, the Head of Department or the tutor supervising that assessment will review and determine whether any follow up work is needed.

Where inconsistencies persist the Director will be requested to review and make appropriate recommendations.

Failure to meet assessment criteria

Where a student is regularly not meeting assessment criteria, a Department review will be initiated and where necessary Departmental Disciplinary Procedures will be implemented.

Student Request for Review of Assessment

A student can request a review of assessment through the Assessment Review Procedure (see Assessment Review below).

Extensions

Students are responsible for managing their workload, submitting assignments and assessments on time, attending classes and doing the work involved in a course to the best of their ability

The development of work discipline and time management skills is an important part of the educational process and it is expected that each student takes responsibility for allocating sufficient time for their studies. Nevertheless, reasonable provision must be made for late submission. In some instances, penalties may be involved.

An extension (with no penalty) will be considered on the grounds of exceptional personal circumstances.

Extensions must be applied for prior to the assessment deadline and will be granted or declined on a case by case basis at the discretion of the Head of the Department or Supervising Tutor.

A student who receives an extension must not be unfairly advantaged over other students. The intention is that an extension does not actually give the student more time, but recognises that the student has not been able to use the time allocated. Specific conditions on extensions and the submission of assessments can be found in Department Handbooks, training contracts, module overviews, project briefs and unit outlines.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Plagiarism is defined as :
The presentation of the work of another person or other persons as if it were one's own, whether intended or not. This includes published and unpublished work, material on the Internet and the work of other students and staff.

Academic integrity refers to the overall climate of honesty and ethical behaviour that characterises a strong learning and teaching community.

The School regards issues of plagiarism and breaches of academic integrity as serious matters.

Assessment tasks should be designed to minimise the frequency and seriousness of plagiarism.

All work must be the student's own original work.

Full attribution and reference should be made to the author where original sources are referred to in the students' work.

Plagiarism is considered to be misconduct which will lead to either a cautionary warning or more serious disciplinary action depending on the circumstances.

Markers will actively check for evidence of plagiarism in student's submitted written and visual work.

Where significant plagiarism is detected the marker may refuse to mark the task and this will result in the awarding of a fail grade.

Feedback

It is important that students are informed of how well they have demonstrated competence in relevant areas.

Feedback should be provided on all assessment tasks in such a way that it facilitates student learning.

The nature of feedback that is provided will depend on the type of assessment task, its timing and weighting.

Feedback is provided in a number of ways, including marks and grades, formative comments from markers on individual student work and generic feedback to all course members.

This does not exclude interim written or oral feedback being given during the course of the assessable task or project.

Feedback should be provided in a timely manner as soon as possible, so that it can be of use for subsequent assessments.

The maximum turn-around-time for all assessable work, from hand-in to return of grades and feedback, is four weeks from the designated hand-in date.

If these deadlines cannot be met by staff, an extension may be granted by the Head of Department or Supervising Tutor, (or the Director where the marker is the HOD or Supervising Tutor). This will be communicated to the students concerned within 5 working days of the expected return of assessment.

Marking processes

Individual assessment items and the final Unit should be marked using letter grades or numbers.

The Head of Department or Supervising Tutor must ensure, in the case of multiple markers that all those involved in marking share the same assumptions about what constitutes a particular grade and are agreed on the interpretation of the marking guide and the weighting of marks.

All assessment tasks should be designed and marked against explicit criteria linked to the learning objectives and graduate profile of the course and not marked simply to a standard curve of achievement.

Students should be given basic information on how each assessment task will be assessed before they begin working on it.

Assessment weightings and assessment task requirements should be clearly stated.

If a pass in the assessment task is essential to progress into the next phase of the course then this should be stated clearly in written form and conveyed verbally to the whole cohort at the commencement of the task involved.

At the completion of marking a Marker's Report, signed and dated by the marker, should be completed outlining the range of marks, the number of students assessed, a comparison with the most recently delivered similar assessment task, noting any changes in delivery with relevant comments and a record of recommendations for the subsequent delivery of this task.

Return of assessed items and feedback to students

Return of individual feedback on assessed work should be managed in a way that ensures student privacy.

Record of Student Learning

A record of the results for individual assessment items must be retained by the School. This must include information on any penalties that have been applied or variations to the assessment scheme approved for individual students.

Access to student records is given only on a "need to know" and "permission to know" basis.

Electronic information on student achievement is backed up and backup copies kept off-site. This system complies with the Privacy Act 1993 and the Official Information Act 1982.

Student Reviews of Course Assessments

Each Department will provide a formal opportunity for student review and feedback of their course assessment procedures.

Departments will inform the student body of how student feedback has been taken into account when considering ongoing evaluation and development of the departmental programme.

MODERATION

Purpose of Moderation of Assessment

Moderation of assessment is a quality assurance tool.

The aim of moderation of assessment is to ensure that assessment is fair, valid and reliable, requiring appropriate assessment activities and accurate assessment decisions.

There are two main reasons for moderation: accountability and improvement. A rigorous process of assessment moderation may be categorised as a good practice that lies between risk avoidance and quality enhancement. Learning and teaching activities may be continuously enhanced through quality monitoring such as internal moderation of student assessments. The underlying principle of quality monitoring should be the encouragement and facilitation of continuous improvement.

Moderation can be applied in three phases;

1. Assessment design and development (Pre-moderation)
2. Implementation, marking and grading (Internal moderation)
3. Review and evaluation (External Moderation). External Moderation has a two-fold goal
   a) To evaluate the standard of work produced by students with respect to what is appropriate to the particular course level study within New Zealand and equivalent educational institutions overseas; benchmarking, and
   b) To make recommendations and provide critical comments aimed at facilitating improvements to teaching and learning within the School.

PROCEDURES

Pre-moderation of assessment tasks

All departments must follow a reasonable process for intended assessment tasks to be reviewed by an appropriate peer. This should include checking for clarity, reasonableness of time/length, coherence within the assessable task and the overall programme objectives and consistency with the assessment principles as outlined above.

Moderation of marking

Each department must have processes in place to ensure that once marking is complete final and appropriate moderation of results is undertaken before marks for an assessment task are released to students.

Responsibility for moderation of course grades is allocated by the Head of Department or Supervising Tutor.

Normally moderation is carried out by teaching staff with appropriate knowledge of the students assessed, the assessment task and the overall course objectives.

In moderating, the moderator should review the preliminary distribution of course grades and where applicable compare these with the most recent assessments of the same or similar task.

Moderation should involve careful consideration of the pass/fail boundary, and of the effect of any penalties that have been applied.

Each student who has marginally failed the course should have their grade reviewed, taking into account their performance in the course as a whole, in order to decide whether a pass would be justified.

In addition, boundaries between grades, especially the A/A+ boundary, but also those between A/B and B/C grades should be examined to ensure that the boundaries are set appropriately.

At the completion of moderation a signed and dated Moderator's Report should be written outlining an explanation of the moderation that has taken place and consequent changes to any grades with any recommendations for the subsequent delivery of that task, and submitted to the Head of Department or designated departmental representative.

External Moderation

Each department must develop a yearly plan for external moderation with the aim of externally moderating at least one assessment task or assessable component of the course for each year of study and each programme delivered by the department.

External Moderators should be chosen for their relevance and standing in the field of the subject of the assessment task chosen to moderate. They should not be permanent employees of the School.

The following information relating to each assessment task or component moderated should be made available to the moderator:

- A copy of the department handbook, including unit outline and graduate profile.
- The brief on which the assessment task is based.
- The relevant assessment/marking sheet

- A copy of the student feedback and raw results for the assessment. In the case of large student numbers a selection may be sufficient but should include feedback for all students who have failed and the highest and lowest scoring student and a midway example and any feedback that is in dispute.
- A copy of the marker's and internal moderator's reports.
- Access to the work (performance, written, electronic, visual, realised costume etc) which has been assessed.

The External Moderator should be asked to:
- Form an opinion on the appropriateness of assessment questions to the relevant unit outline and graduate profile
- Form an opinion on the work of the students
- Form an opinion on the standard, fairness and consistency of marking
- Prepare, a report for the Head of Department or Supervising Tutor covering:
    o Critical comments on and recommendations for improvements to any aspect of the School's assessment processes;
    o Comments on and recommendations for improvements to the outcomes achieved by students;
    o Comments on the standard, fairness and consistency of marking with respect to that expected in similar educational institutions in Australasia;
    o Any other matter considered relevant to the School's undergraduate courses.

Reports by External Moderators should be presented to the Curriculum Committee with comments and responses from the Head of Department or Supervising Tutor with recommendations for improvements arising from the report.

EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES & ASSESSMENT REVIEW

ALTERNATIVE PROVISIONS FOR ASSESSMENT BASED ON EXCEPTIONAL PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Principles

Exceptional personal circumstances such as the following may mean the normal assessment process is unfairly onerous for individual students:

- a learning impairment assessed by a suitably qualified professional
- temporary illness
- bereavement
- the health or wellbeing of a relative or close friend
- compulsory attendance at court
- national or international representative commitments
- significant cultural commitments
- activities in which the student is representing the School.

In accommodating exceptional personal circumstances, the magnitude of the variation to the course assessment scheme needs to be balanced against the nature of the circumstances and the extent to which the student could have been expected to plan accordingly. Such variations should not compromise academic standards, the essential nature of the course, or what are deemed to be essential skills or knowledge.

Care should be taken to ensure that the student involved is not unfairly advantaged over other students in the course.

Extensions and other support should be used where feasible to allow a student affected by such circumstances to complete the assessments.

Where this approach is not appropriate or deemed insufficient, variations to the course assessment may be considered.

PROCEDURES

Supporting documentation

Any student wanting to be considered for a variation to the course assessment under these provisions must supply appropriate documentation supporting their claim of exceptional circumstances.

Offering alternative assessment items

The Head of Department or Supervising Tutor, in consultation with the Director of the School, may give approval for an alternative item of assessment to be developed for an individual student when:

- the particular format of an assessment item is unfairly demanding for a student with an impairment or adverse personal circumstances;
- the student's performance in the assessment item has been impaired; or
- the student has missed an assessment under test conditions for unavoidable personal reasons that they have communicated to staff.

Every effort should be made to ensure the assessment criteria and standards are consistent with those applied to other students.

Resubmissions for students who have failed an assessment item

In exceptional cases, the Head of Department or Supervising Tutor may permit an individual student to resubmit an assessment item.

Normally, such a resubmitted item should be graded at no more than 50% or a bare 'C-' pass.

Aegrotat pass

An aegrotat pass may be awarded when a student is prevented from satisfactorily completing the course due to exceptional circumstances outside their control.

An aegrotat pass will be considered only where it has not been possible for the student to achieve a passing grade with appropriate support through extensions or any of the provisions as stated above.

The decision to grant an aegrotat pass is made by the Academic Board on the recommendation of the Head of Department or Supervising Tutor, and is based on information provided by the student, the relevant tutor and health or other professionals.

An aegrotat pass is not awarded on compassionate grounds alone; the applicant must also have completed sufficient work to such a standard that the Head of Department or Supervising Tutor can state that the student is clearly worthy of a pass.

An aegrotat pass counts as a pass in all respects.

Criteria for an aegrotat pass

An aegrotat pass may be considered in relation to assessment tasks that are due during the last three teaching weeks of an assessable project or later, for which extensions were not feasible, and where the applicant has completed sufficient work to make a partial assessment relative to the objectives of a course, if:

- their preparation time has been seriously impaired in the three weeks leading up to the due date for the assessment task;
- their performance in the assessment task has been seriously impaired; or
- they were prevented from attending or completing assessment tasks for reasons beyond their control.

Impairment must fall into one of the following categories:

- serious illness or injury;
- personal bereavement;
- exceptional personal circumstance involving the health or wellbeing of a relative or close friend;
- some other exceptional circumstance beyond the applicant's control.

Processing aegrotat applications

A student affected by exceptional personal circumstances and wishing to apply for consideration of an aegrotat pass must do so to the Head of Department or Supervising Tutor at the earliest possible opportunity.

The student should then be advised whether it is appropriate to apply for an aegrotat pass.

Applications must be accompanied by documentation from a relevant professional and must be based on a consultation within reasonable time of failure to complete an assessment task, preferably before the completion date of the task. This period can be extended if it can be shown that this failure to provide the required documentation was beyond the student's control.

Any information provided by a health professional in relation to an aegrotat application is confidential and may only be disclosed to the relevant School staff for the purposes of processing or considering the application.

An application with inadequate documentation will be referred back to the student.

The Head of Department or Supervising Tutor should make a written recommendation concerning the grading of a pass, to the Academic Board, and include the following:

- a statement on whether extensions or other variations have been applied to support completion of the relevant assessment tasks
- details of the student's prior progress in the course
- grade spreadsheet information for a cohort of comparable students enrolled in the course
- comments to assist interpretation, such as identifying any assessment tasks that are particularly helpful, as an indicator of the students' understanding of the course material.

The final decision is made by the Academic Board after consideration of the relevant documentation.

Monitoring by the Academic Board

Alternative arrangements for assessment based on processes contained in this policy will be monitored by the School's Academic Board.

ASSESSMENT REVIEW

Principles

It is important that students have the opportunity to query any assessment result that they believe to be unfair.

A dated record of all discussions and outcomes will be kept, with a copy held by each party, as well as on the student's file.

At any time a student has the right to select an accompanying support person or student representative to attend meetings.

PROCEDURES

A student who considers that the mark or grade awarded for any particular item of assessed work is unfair should initially consult the tutor supervising that unit of work, within seven days of the mark becoming available to the student, and should articulate the basis for their concern in relation to the assessment criteria and the feedback provided on their work.

The tutor should provide a written response to any points raised with reference to the marking scheme used for that item, but is not required to re-mark the work.

If the student does not feel able to discuss the matter directly with the Supervising Tutor, they should contact the relevant Head of Department or another member of the department (or the Director of the School if the Head of Department is the coordinating tutor) who will attempt to resolve the matter with the Supervising Tutor.

If the discussion indicates that the assessment was unfair, the Supervising Tutor will amend the mark or grade for that item of assessment as appropriate.

Even if it is concluded after reconsideration that a lower grade should have been awarded, the first grade determined for the student must stand.

Appeals

A student not satisfied with the outcome of a reconsideration application or other assessment decisions by a Supervising Tutor or Head of Department may appeal, by making a formal written Request for Assessment Review, using the appropriate form (Appendix One) to the appropriate Head of Department, nominated department representative or Director of the School.

The Head of Department or nominated representative will review and moderate the assessment (this may require internal and/ or external moderation as appropriate), and provide the student with a reviewed assessment outcome, supported by a written explanation, not more than 10 days following the receipt of a Request for Assessment Review.

If the student is not satisfied with the moderated assessment they may approach the Director of the School. All documentation will be reviewed by the Director. A meeting will be convened by the Director with all parties concerned to arrive at a mutually agreed outcome.

Where issues cannot be resolved through meetings of student, staff and Director, the Curriculum Committee will be required to review and moderate the assessment, and make a recommendation to the Academic Board. This recommendation will be provided in writing to the student.

If the student is still not satisfied with the assessment review they may address their complaint – in writing – through their Academic Board Student Representative - to the Academic Board.

If the Academic Board's review and recommendations do not resolve the complaint, the parties shall refer the complaint to a single external moderator, if they can agree on one. The cost of mediation will be met by the School.

If a student remains unsatisfied with the Academic Board's resolution, they have the right to contact The New Zealand Qualifications Authority as a party of last resort (PO Box 160, Wellington. Phone 04-802 3000). NZQA processes will then be followed.

Additional Complaints Procedure - International Students only

If an international student has a complaint about Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School breaching the Education (Pastoral Care of International Students) Code of Practice 2016, follow Toi Whakaari: NZ Drama School's formal complaint process first.

If this does not resolve the complaint, an international student can contact the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) by phone on 0800 697 296 or email qadrisk@nzqa.govt.nz.

Or, if it is a financial or contractual dispute, international students can contact iStudent Complaints by phone on 0800 00 66 75. More information is available on the iStudent Complaints website: http://www.istudent.org.nz/istudent-complaints.

At the School's cost a student advocate, wherever possible conversant in the student's first language, will be available to assist the student in resolving the issue.

Students will be given information as to how to access iStudent Complaints in writing if concerns cannot be resolved through the School's internal processes.

This information will be available to the student as part of their orientation process.

The School will provide all relevant material and unless lodging an appeal, will abide by the decisions of the iStudent Complaints authority, implementing recommendations to remedy the problem within the timeframe specified by the authority.

The School may appeal against any decisions of iStudent Complaints.

Monitoring and Review of Academic Policy

Academic Policy is reviewed at least triennially by Heads of Departments or nominated members of a department, the Curriculum Committee, and the Academic Board.

This Policy was approved by the Toi Whakaari Academic Board on 20 November 2020

To be reviewed by November 2023

TOI WHAKAARI: NZ DRAMA SCHOOL REQUEST FOR ASSESSMENT
REVIEW APPLICATION FORM

Name of Student: ....

Current Home Address: ....

....

Mobile phone number: ....

Course: .... Coordinating Tutor: ....

Relevant Unit of Work (for which assessment is contested or queried):

....

....

Assessment/grading being contested/queried: ....

The grounds on which this Application is made: ....

....

....

....

Please provide full details. If insufficient space is provided below please attach additional information on an A4 page(s) including any other relevant supporting documentation.

I hereby apply for a review of the Assessment provide to me on Date: ....
I agree to follow the procedure laid out in the Assessment Review Policy and I understand that my assessment will be fully reviewed and moderated by the Head of Department or Director within ten days.

Student Signature: ....   Date: ....

Received by:

HOD/Director signature: ....   Date: ....

Action taken: Meeting held on: ....

Re-assessment result to student on: ....