



EXTERNAL REFERENCING: PEER REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT STANDARDS PROCEDURE

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Relevant Legislation & External Documents:	Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold) 2015		
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1 Introduction

1. The intent of the Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015 (HES Framework) is to ensure that higher education institutions inform their own operations, particularly teaching and learning, through external comparisons. External referencing is expected to inform improvements and to provide a backdrop to the monitoring of student success and the quality and validity of assessments.
2. The main focus of external referencing in the HES Framework is comparisons of courses or units of study and of student achievement. This does not preclude an institution from undertaking much broader comparative activities across any aspect of its operations, including through benchmarking.
3. To meet specific obligations in the HES Framework, the Teaching and Assessment: Assessment and Feedback Policy requires that course and subject review and improvement activities include evidence of regular external referencing against comparable courses of study, for selected units of study within courses.

2 Purpose

1. This procedure provides a method for external referencing of assessment standards, through an external peer review of assessment process, conducted with another institution.
2. External peer review of assessment provides evidence that assessment methods and student grading are appropriate, aligned to the unit and course learning outcomes and are broadly comparable with those occurring in similar courses offered by other institutions.

3 Scope

1. While external peer review of assessment is not required in all subjects in a course, at a minimum, this activity must be undertaken in subjects that assure the attainment of course learning outcomes, within a course.
2. External peer review of assessment may be undertaken in any subject in order to provide insights into the effectiveness of assessment practices towards the attainment of subject and course learning outcomes.
3. UOW, faculties and the academic units therein, may undertake other external referencing activities, such as benchmarking, and can refer to the Academic Quality Policy, UOW Benchmarking Policy and relevant guides for information on the approach and methodology.

4 Definitions

Word/Term	Definition
Assessment	Work that a student is required to complete to provide a basis for an official record of achievement or certification of competence in a subject. This may include summative and/or formative forms of assessment.
Benchmarking	Typically consists of focused improvement through relationships with a benchmarking partner or partners, but can also include comparisons against publicly-available information and market intelligence.



Course	A program of study consisting of a combination of subjects and other requirements, whether leading to a specific higher education award or not.
External Accreditation	A formal process of assessing a course against professional or industry standards.
External Peer Review of Assessment	An activity that involves two or more higher education providers participating in concurrent reviews of assessment practices, in selected subjects, within similar courses. Peer review of assessment includes judgements about grading standards and the appropriateness of the assessment towards attainment of learning outcomes at the level of the subject and the course.
External Referencing	A process through which a higher education provider compares an aspect of its operations with an external comparator(s) e.g. comparing the design of a course of study and/or student achievement of learning outcomes with that of a course from another provider.
HES Framework	Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015
Higher Education Providers	A Higher Education Provider is a provider that is registered under the TEQSA Act.
Institutions	Higher Education Providers
Learning Outcomes	Statements of the knowledge, skills and application of knowledge and skills students are expected to achieve as a result of engaging with the content of the course, major or subject.
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding – formal agreement between one or more institutions to undertake a specific activity.
Subject	A self-contained unit of study identified by a unique code.

5 Principles for Undertaking External Peer Review of Assessment Standards

Effective

1. Enables the external referencing of assessment methods, grading and students' attainment of learning outcomes across comparable courses of study. Supports both the quality enhancement and quality assurance of courses and units.

Efficient and sustainable

2. Provides a streamlined, efficient and sustainable process for external peer review of assessment that can be operationalised and used routinely by UOW and partner institutions.



Transparent

3. Engages multiple perspectives and facilitates critical discussion between teaching staff across comparable courses of study to support consensus building around standards of student learning outcomes.

Capacity building

4. Contributes to the professional development of participating staff and the formation of disciplinary and cross disciplinary communities of practice.

6 Peer Review of Assessment Standards – Preparation and Matching

Initiating a Peer Review of Assessment Project

1. In consultation with the Associate Dean Education the Academic Program Director (or other named course leadership role) identifies subjects in which external peer review of assessment will be undertaken and institutions with comparable courses.
2. An academic unit of UOW initiates or is invited by another institution to participate in an external peer review of assessment project. Contact with partnering institutions can be made directly with academic units or via the institution's office for academic quality assurance or similar.
3. Projects can be between one or more institutions, however no more than three institutions in a project is recommended.
4. The matching process typically involves the sharing of subject outlines and course structures to confirm the suitability of the match and establish the size of the project.
5. Projects may contain more than one subject, such as subjects within a major or other combination, but ideally not more than five subjects within a single project.
6. Academic staff to be involved in the project should be consulted to discuss the timeline and availability of staff. An indicative time for a complete peer review of assessment project is typically 2 - 4 weeks once a project match has been confirmed and participant agreements exchanged.
7. All external peer review of assessment projects must be logged with the Academic Quality and Standards Unit via quality@uow.edu.au to ensure institutional records of external referencing of standards are maintained.

Project Administration and Review Methodology

8. The project partners agree to an appropriate system to support the external peer review of assessment project. This may be an online system, such as the National Peer Review Portal, or by manual project administration (i.e. email and document sharing software) and record keeping.
9. The University of Wollongong supports an external peer review of assessment methodology derived from the External Referencing of Standards (ERoS) Project 2016 and provides forms and templates for conducting reviews. The EROS methodology review template is available in the National Peer Review Portal.



7 Peer Review of Assessment Standards - The Review Process

Project administration

1. The Subject Coordinator is responsible for undertaking all activities relating to the review including communication with peer review partners, identifying assessment tasks for review, sharing documents and completing a concurrent review. [Appendix 1: Flowcharts]
2. The Subject Coordinator will select and de-identify student work samples, however samples should still include any comments, feedback and other notations used in grading the work. [Appendix 2: Guide to the Selection of Student Work Samples]

Course and subject documentation

3. The Subject coordinator exchanges student work samples, and all supporting documentation (including subject outlines, grading scheme, assessment rubrics, course learning outcomes and, where relevant, national disciplinary standards, external reference points etc. [Appendix 3 - Review Materials]

Initial meeting

4. An initial meeting, either online or face-to-face, is arranged to go through the project documentation and confirm the assessment selection. Additional documentation may also be requested. A timeline for completion is discussed and confirmed at this meeting. [Appendix 4: Meeting Agendas].

Assess achievement standards

5. Review of student achievement standards to be conducted using an appropriate peer review of assessment review methodology and templates. UOW templates are available from the Academic Quality and Standards Unit.
6. The Subject Coordinator judges the appropriateness of assessment practices and the intended outcomes as evidenced by the grade attained and provides feedback and any recommendations for improvements.

Discussion of draft report and final report

7. The Subject coordinator completes a draft version of the External Peer Review Report and circulate to the other institution prior to the final online meeting.
8. The Subject Coordinator organises a meeting according to the agreed timeline to discuss draft and clarify any judgements [Appendix 4: Meeting Agendas].
9. At the agreed time (typically one week following the draft report meeting) final reports, which include feedback and any recommendations for improvements, are completed and exchanged.

Action on report findings

10. The Subject Coordinator provides the review report with recommendations to the Academic Program Director, and Head of Academic Unit as appropriate.
11. The Subject Coordinator shares report with the course or subject team (where applicable) and identifies improvement or enhancement actions for consideration alongside other performance, monitoring and feedback information.



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12. The final report must be maintained by the Faculty as evidence of interim monitoring of assessment standards and attainment of learning outcomes, to be included in subsequent course review and improvement activities.

8 Roles & Responsibilities

Faculty

The Faculty is responsible for:

1. Ensuring that all courses engage in external peer review of assessment, or meet the requirements of external referencing through other activities such as professional accreditation or other benchmarking of assessment standards and student achievement;
2. Ensuring that all courses of study provide evidence of external peer review of assessment in the five yearly course review cycle, as required in the Course Review Procedure, Subject and Course Evaluation Criteria; and
3. Notifying AQS of all external referencing projects undertaken in the faculty to ensure appropriate institutional records are maintained.

Academic Program Director

The Academic Program Director (or similar named course leadership role) is responsible for:

4. Ensuring that subjects which assure the course learning outcomes within their course (major or stream as relevant), engage in external peer review of assessment. In collaboration with discipline teams, communicating with institutions to identify relevant courses and discipline staff with which to partner;
5. Assisting the Subject Coordinator as required, in confirming matches with review partners; and
6. Reading the final review reports and, in collaboration with the Subject Coordinator, responding to the report recommendations and identifying and implementing modifications and changes as appropriate.

Subject Coordinator

The Subject Coordinator is responsible for:

7. Undertaking review preparation and conducting the review process as outlined in sections 6 and 7 of this procedure.
8. With the Academic Program Director and the teaching team (where applicable), responding to review feedback and identifying and implementing assessment modifications and changes as appropriate.

Academic Quality and Standards

The Academic Quality and Standards Unit is responsible for:

9. Monitoring, review and improvement of the External Referencing: Peer Review of Assessment Procedure, the development of templates and guides, and support for the review process.
10. Monitoring, review and improvement of the UOW Course Review Procedures and the development of forms and guides, and support for the review process.



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11. Management of an enquiry register for institutions approaching UOW for engagement in external peer review projects.
12. Management of MOUs as required.
13. Management of an institutional register of completed peer review projects.
14. Providing advice and guidance on project management including:
 - 14.1. Planning and scheduling reviews;
 - 14.2. Accessing the National Peer Review Portal;
 - 14.3. Establishing a review timeline and setting up meetings;
 - 14.4. De-identifying student work samples; and
 - 14.5. The exchange of supporting documentation (subject outlines, rubrics, course learning outcomes, national disciplinary standards, external reference points etc.)
15. Reporting including:
 - 15.1. Reporting on use and effectiveness of external peer review of assessment in course reviews with reference to:
 - a. course quality issues commonly arising; and
 - b. recommended improvements to the external peer review of assessment process and the course review processes.

Learning Teaching and Curriculum

The Learning, Teaching and Curriculum Unit is responsible for:

16. Developing and delivering resources to support staff in their capacity to undertake peer review of assessment.
17. Providing guidance and advice on academic matters to staff undertaking the peer review of assessment process. Providing guidance and advice on implementing modifications and changes to assessment methods, grading and the constructive alignment of assessment design to achieve Course Learning Outcomes.

9 References and Resources

Bedford, Simon; Czech, Peter; Sefcik, Lesley; Smith, Judith; and Yorke, John, (2016), External Referencing of Standards (ERoS) - An example of a collaborative end-to-end peer review process for external referencing, Curtin University, Queensland University of Technology, University of Wollongong and RMIT University, 2016, 61p. <http://ro.uow.edu.au/uowbooks/13/>

Peer Review Portal - <https://peerreviewportal.com/>



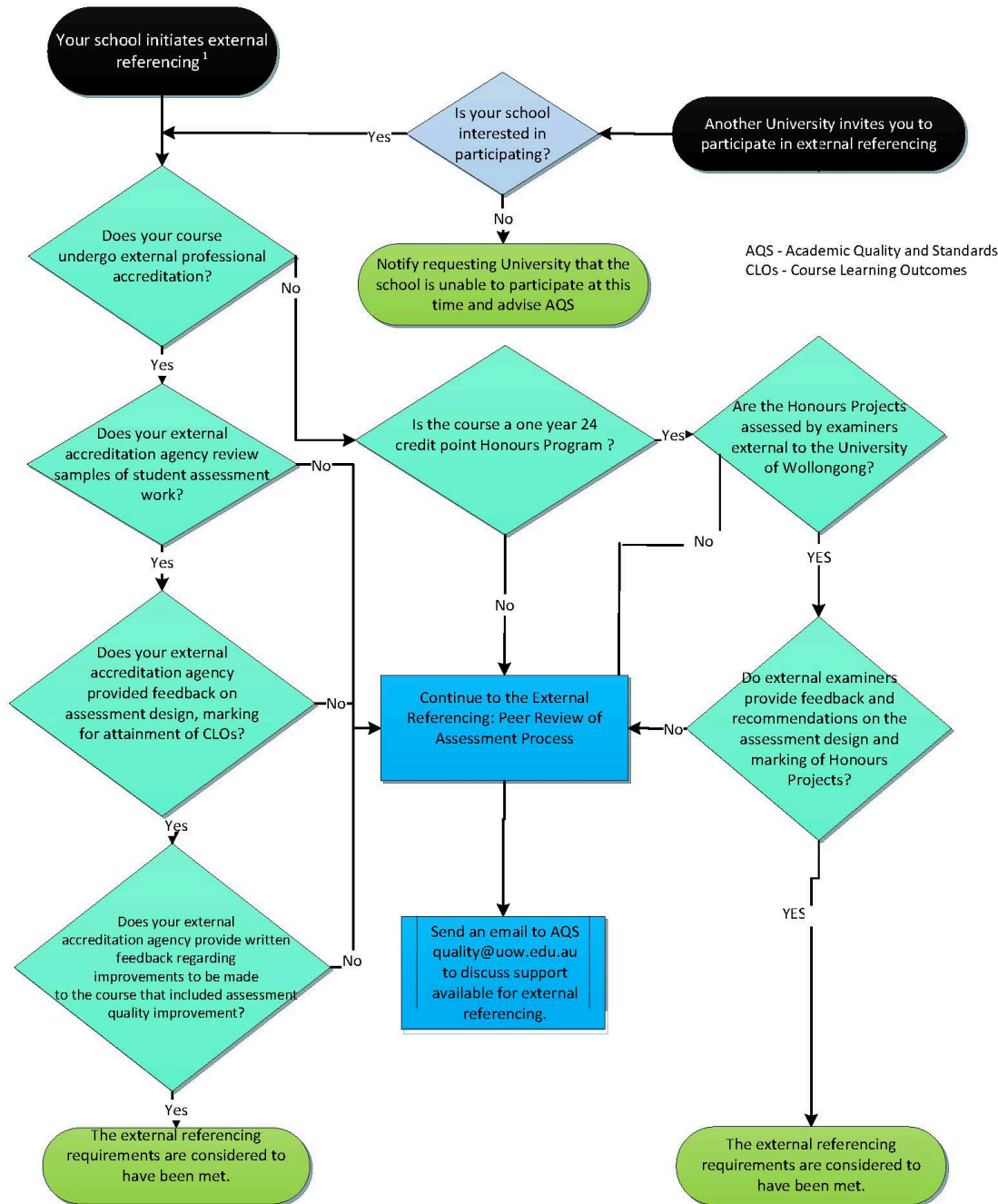
10 Version Control and Change History

Version Control	Date Effective	Approved By	Amendment
1	15 December 2017	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)	First version.



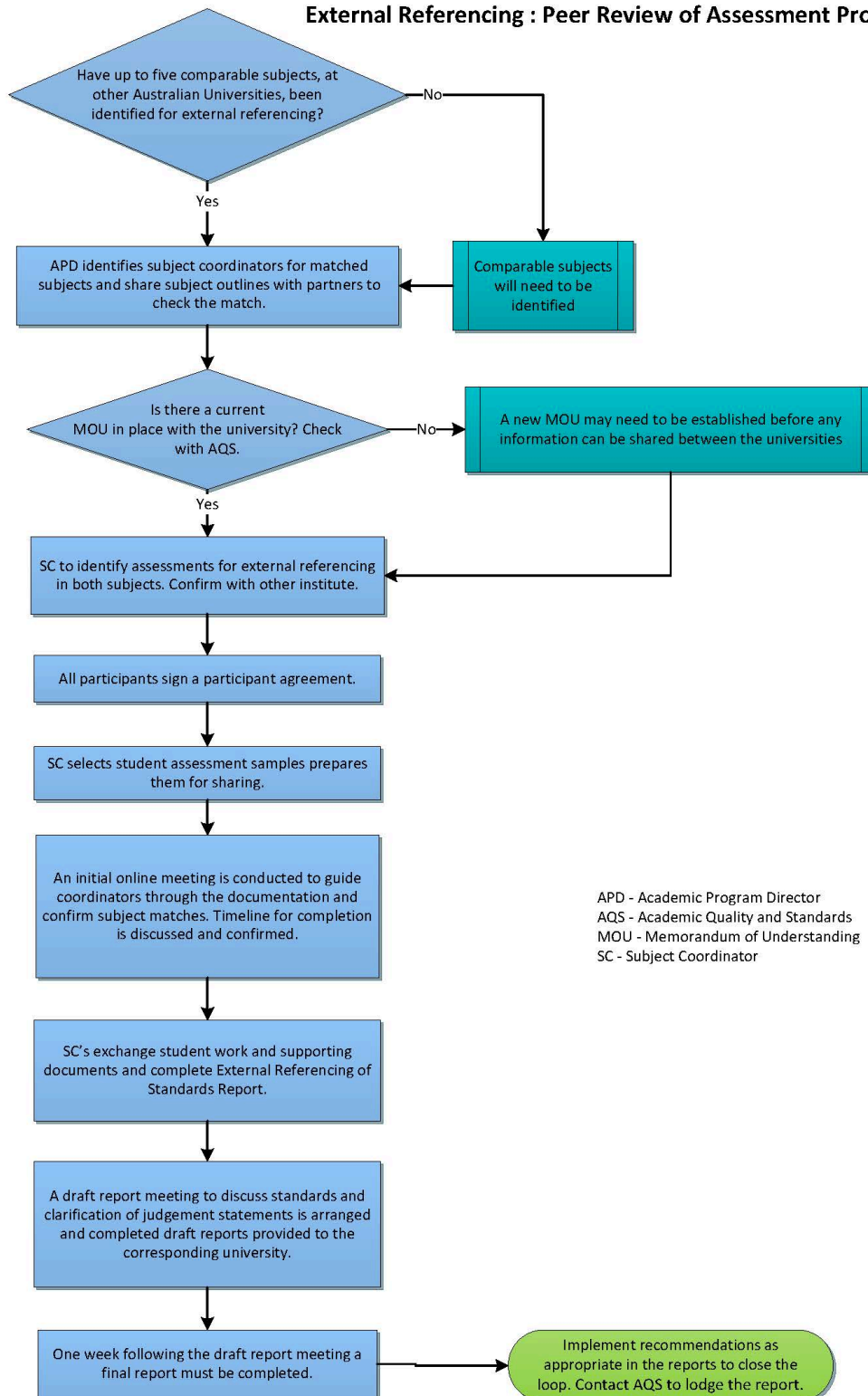
11 Appendix 1 - Flowcharts

Meeting the External Referencing: Peer Review of Assessment Requirements





External Referencing : Peer Review of Assessment Process



12 Appendix 2 - Guide to the selection of student work samples

Student work selected for external referencing should be able to demonstrate particular course learning outcomes (CLOs), i.e. those that characterise the knowledge and capabilities students should have achieved by the completion of their course. (It is recognised that samples will not be able to cover the full range of possible outcomes.) Avoid selecting samples that might have intellectual property implications (e.g. commercial-in-confidence).

Samples should be selected from defined grade ranges, based on the final mark achieved as described below. Student work must be de-identified prior to the review process, but otherwise the work is left intact, complete with any annotations made by the original assessor. (If assessor comments/marks are on a separate document, such as a rubric, this should be included alongside the student work).

Stratified Sampling

To enable a focus on threshold standards, and to provide a consistent format for the comparison of student work across institutions that may use different grade band boundaries, samples for external referencing should represent a selection of assessed work to include the mark ranges as follows:

1. A minimal pass (selecting a sample of student work that achieved the minimum pass mark up to no more than 5% above this. If there is no student work that falls into this category, the work with the lowest passing mark should be submitted for review.)
2. A fail (selecting a sample of student work that did not meet the pass mark, but did not fail by more than 10% below the minimum pass mark. If there is no student work that falls into this category, then the work with the highest failing mark should be submitted.) If there are no failing students then a second sample from the 'minimal pass' category above should be added.
3. A grade greater than a pass (selecting a sample of student work that achieved a mark that is higher than that which falls within the grade range associated with a 'Pass'. [e.g. Credit, Distinction, High Distinction] If there are no students achieving a strong pass then do not submit work in this category.)

The selection process is designed to produce at least two and normally three samples of work for review. Work should be selected from the full cohort until the three sample criteria are met.

Example 1

Institution X has five grade bands within their institution, as follows:	
High Distinction	80-100
Distinction	70-79
Credit	60-69
Pass	50-59
Fail	0-49

Example 2

Institution Y also has five grade bands, but with different boundaries compared with University X:	
High Distinction	85-100
Distinction	75-84
Credit	65-74
Pass	50-64
Fail	0-49

Subject X1 has the following distribution of marks for the final assessments:

Student	Mark	Grade Band
1	14	Fail
2	23	Fail
3	40	Fail
4	43	Fail
5	45	Fail
6	50	Pass
7	52	Pass
8	55	Pass
9	58	Pass
10	59	Pass
11	60	Credit
12	63	Credit
13	67	Credit
14	65	Credit

Subject Y1 has the following distribution of marks for the final assessments:

Student	Percent	Grade Band
1	29	Fail
2	32	Fail
3	36	Fail
4	50	Pass
5	53	Pass
6	55	Pass
7	58	Pass
8	59	Pass
9	60	Pass
10	63	Pass
11	67	Credit
12	65	Credit
13	66	Credit
14	70	Credit

15	66	Credit
16	69	Credit
17	70	Distinction
18	71	Distinction
19	76	Distinction
20	80	High Distinction
21	86	High Distinction

One sample of assessed work for external referencing should be selected from within the:

1. green strata (representing a minimal pass)
2. red strata (representing a fail)
3. blue strata (representing a strong pass)

If there had been no failing students, then two samples would have been drawn from the green strata.

15	71	Credit
16	76	Distinction
17	80	Distinction
18	86	High Distinction

One sample of assessed work for external referencing should be selected from within the:

1. green strata (representing a minimal pass)
2. red strata (representing a fail – but in this case there are no students with a score between 40-50%, so the highest failing mark [36%] is selected instead without sampling.)
3. blue strata (representing a strong pass)

If there had been no students scoring 65% or more, then only samples 1) and 2) would be selected and put forward for review.

13 Appendix 3 – Peer Review Materials Checklist

The requesting institution will provide the reviewer with the following information:

General information

- List of Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)
- Specific CLOs relevant to the Subject being reviewed
- An overall course or study plan structure which positions the subject being reviewed. (A course or curriculum map, showing the way the SLOs are mapped to the CLOs, is helpful if available)

For the selected subject

- Subject Outline
- Subject Learning Outcomes (SLOs)
- If not clearly articulated in the Subject Outline, a schedule of learning for the subject showing key learning and assessment over the teaching period

For the selected assessment task

- Information provided to students setting out the assessment task requirements and/or questions
- Weighting of the assessment
- Assessment Rubrics, marking guides, or criteria sheet

Grading

- Explanation of the grading scheme, e.g. UOW Grade Descriptors, as it applies to the samples of student work together with explanations of nomenclature

Samples of student work

Please read Appendix 2 for information on how to select samples of student work

- Samples of de-identified student work which may include comments, feedback and other notations used in grading the work.

14 Appendix 4 - Sample meeting agendas

Opening Meeting (teleconference, online or face-to-face)

1. Introductions - project Subject Coordinator / project administrator / academic advisor
2. Overview of subject/s and alignment with Course Learning Outcomes
3. Chosen assessment item/s for review - explanation of its context
4. Confirmation of student work samples
5. Confirm method of work exchange
6. Timeline and next steps

Final Meeting (teleconference, online or face-to-face)

1. Overview of draft reports:
 - 1.1. Feedback on the appropriateness of judgements
 - 1.2. Areas of good practice and areas that may benefit from further attention
 - 1.3. Any questions or issues
2. Summarise main points and confirm date for final reports
3. Feedback on the external referencing process
4. Any further comments or questions