EXTERNAL REFERENCING: PEER REVIEW OF ASSESSMENT STANDARDS PROCEDURE

Date first approved:	Date of effect:	Date last amended:	Date of Next Review:
15 December 2017	15 December 2017	(refer to Version Control Table) 28 March 2023	March 2026

First Approved by:	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Student Life)
Custodian title & e-mail address:	Director, Academic Quality Standards quality@uow.edu.au
Author:	Quality and Policy Specialist, Academic Quality and Standards Division
Responsible Division & Unit:	Academic Quality and Standards Division Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Student Life)
Supporting documents, procedures & forms:	Course Review Procedures Teaching and Assessment: Code of Practice - Teaching Teaching and Assessment: Subject Delivery Policy Teaching and Assessment: Assessment and Feedback Policy
Relevant Legislation & External Documents:	Higher Educations Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021
Audience:	Public

Submit your feedback on this policy document using the Policy Feedback Facility.

Contents

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 performance, student success and the quality and validity of assessments and marking.

2. The 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 higher education provider.

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 higher education providers.

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 regularly (that is, at least once between formal course reviews) in one or more subjects in a course that assure the attainment of course learning outcomes, within a course or a course cluster (in the event that that subject assures course learning outcomes for more than one course).

2. External peer review of assessment may be undertaken in any subject to provide insights into the effectiveness of assessment practices towards the attainment of subject and where applicable, 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, 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 other 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. A peer review of assessment project will typically be initiated by way of a recommendation from a Course Review to support the interim monitoring of course quality within the course review cycle.

2. AQS will establish and maintain a Peer Review of Assessment Schedule to assist in scheduling of projects.

3. Recommendations for external referencing of assessment that arise from Course Reviews will inform the Peer Review of Assessment Schedule, however the Faculty may engage the Academic Quality and Standards Unit to initiate a project at any time.

4. In consultation with the Associate Dean Education, the Academic Program Director (or other named course leadership role) identifies the subject/s for which external peer review of assessment will be undertaken. Several factors may influence subject selection, including the course structure, recent changes to a subject, course or assessment, and resourcing.

5. Accreditation processes for professionally accredited courses that include the review of and commentary on assessment may meet the requirement for peer review of assessment if they:

    a. are aligned with provision 2.2 of these Procedures, and

    b. involve the review and assessment of student work samples.

6. The Academic Program Director and Subject Coordinator will identify an appropriate provider to partner with or contact the Academic Quality and Standards Unit to find a suitable provider via the National Peer Review Portal or through other providers working on external referencing with UOW.

7. The project will typically be reciprocal whereby the UOW Subject Coordinator will have their subject's assessment peer reviewed and will provide a peer review for the partner institution.

8. Projects can be with one or more providers, however a project should not involve more than two other partner institutions.

9. The matching process typically involves the sharing of subject outlines and course structures to confirm the suitability of the match and decide on the assessment task to be externally referenced. Where a close match is not possible, projects may alternatively involve the external referencing of

subjects in the same discipline.

10. An indicative time for a complete peer review of assessment project is typically 2 - 4 weeks once the project has been confirmed and participant agreements exchanged.

Project Administration and Review Methodology

11. The external peer review of assessment projects and schedule will be coordinated, and records maintained by the Academic Quality and Standards Unit.

12. Projects will be administered via the National Peer Review Portal, or by manual administration (i.e. email and document sharing software) and record keeping.

13. UOW 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

1. In consultation with the Faculty the Academic Quality and Standards Unit will instigate projects as per the Peer Review of Assessment Schedule or at the request of the Faculty.

2. The Academic Quality and Standards Unit will coordinate the gathering, preparation and distribution of documents for the project.

3. The Subject Coordinator is responsible for identifying the assessment task/s for review, and providing student work samples and supporting documentation (including subject outlines, grading scheme, assessment rubrics, course learning outcomes and, where relevant, national disciplinary standards, external reference points etc.)

4. The Subject Coordinator may choose to include criteria or questions in addition to those set out in the standard report template. Any additions should take into consideration the potential increased workload for a reviewer involved in the project.

5. The Subject Coordinator (or equivalent) at the partner institution will conduct a review of student achievement standards using peer review of assessment templates provided by the Academic Quality and Standards Unit.

6. If the project is a reciprocal project, the UOW Subject Coordinator will conduct a review of student achievement standards using peer review of assessment templates provided by the Academic Quality and Standards Unit.

7. The Subject Coordinator/s judge the appropriateness of assessment practices and the intended outcomes as evidenced by the grade attained and provides feedback and any recommendations for improvements in an External Peer Review Report.

8. The Subject Coordinator/s will make themselves available to provide clarification and answer questions that may arise from the partner reviewer.

9. The Academic Quality and Standards Unit will provide the External Peer Review Report with recommendations to the Subject Coordinator/s.

10. The UOW Subject Coordinator shares report with the Academic Program Director and identifies any improvement actions for consideration alongside other performance, monitoring and feedback information in an addendum to the report.

11. The final report will be submitted to the Academic Quality and Standards Unit and maintained by the Faculty as evidence of interim monitoring of assessment standards and attainment of learning outcomes, to be included in subsequent course review an 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 providers 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.
11. Management of an enquiry register for providers 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. Project management including:
    a. Maintaining the Peer Review of Assessment Schedule with reference to the Course Review Schedule;
    b. Accessing the National Peer Review Portal;
    c. De-identifying student work samples; and
    d. The exchange of supporting documentation (subject outlines, rubrics, course learning outcomes, national disciplinary standards, external reference points etc.)
15. Reporting including 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

16. The Learning, Teaching and Curriculum Unit is responsible for providing guidance when sought by academic staff undertaking external peer review of assessment. Advice can include implementing improvements to assessment methods, grading and the constructive alignment of assessment design to 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.
2	28 March 2023	Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic and Student Life)	Policy review conducted in 2022 and finalised in 2023.

Appendix 1 - 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:

a. 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.)

b. 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.

c. 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.

Appendix 2 - Peer Review Materials Checklist

The partner institution will provide the following information:

General information

☐ 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 1 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.

Appendix 3 - Participant Agreement

External Peer Review of Assessment Standards

Participant Agreement

1. I understand the *external peer review of assessment process* and have read the relevant procedures and guidelines provided.

   I agree to participate in the *external peer review of assessment process* as a means of providing feedback on assessment standards.

2. I will be available to speak with staff of the other institutions to develop the relationship necessary for the *external peer review of assessment process*, and to provide clarification and advice as required.

3. I understand my role in the *external peer review of assessment process* is to provide collaborating institutions with the required unit (subject) information for which I am unit leader (subject coordinator) and I agree to review the agreed upon unit or units of other institutions involved in the process.

4. I understand that my participation in the *external peer review of assessment process* will give me access to confidential information, including samples of student assessment tasks that may contain identifiable information. I will use all assessment task materials, supporting documents and other information provided to me by collaborating institutions only for the purpose of participating in the *external peer review of assessment process*, including reporting review outcomes and making recommendations. I will not share this information with any third parties and at the conclusion of the review process I will delete records containing the student assessment tasks.

   I understand that if I have questions about the referencing process I can contact the institution contact.

   I will respect the views and opinions of others during the *external peer review of assessment process*.

Name:

_____
Signature
Date:

Appendix 4 - Peer Review of Assessment Report Template

External Peer Review of Assessment Standards Report

Details of Institution undertaking the external referencing

Contact Name and details	
Faculty / School	
Discipline area	
Area of expertise	

Details of Institution requesting the external referencing report and subject details

<Insert Faculty Name> <Insert School Name>		
<Insert Course Cluster Name>		
<Insert Contact Name and details>		
Course (Code)	**Core/ Capstone**	**Subject Name and Code**

STATEMENT OF POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

To be completed by the reviewer.

Add comments here: For example, being involved in collaborative teaching, research or consultancy work with colleagues teaching in the units being reviewed.

Notes for reviewers
Preparing reports
You are requested to aim to complete the Section A of the report within 3 weeks of receiving the relevant information and materials.

Language of the report
Note this report may be discussed widely across the University, and in forums that have a range of participants. The language used in the report should reflect:
- sensitivity to the peer review nature of the process
- cognisance of a potentially wide audience for the report

General points
1. The university being reviewed will own the copyright of all the materials produced in relation to the review.
2. You will assign all present and future rights relating to the reports and any other materials created in relation to your appointment as an External Reviewer to the university being reviewed. You will also waive any rights including moral rights in connection with those materials.
3. The university being reviewed will make reasonable endeavours 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.
4. 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 brochures.

Notes for requesting University
Ensure you have read and understand the University's External Referencing: Peer Review of Assessment Standards Procedure

Note this Report should be provided as evidence in the next course review report prepared for the course cluster, and can be used to inform recommendations on the course cluster reviewed.

Checklist for the university requesting the external referencing
The requesting university will provide the reviewer with the following information:
- Course structure for the course being reviewed (Course Handbook page)
- List of Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) (Course Handbook page)
- Specific CLOs relevant to the Unit being reviewed (Curriculum Map)
- Subject outline
- Subject Learning Outcomes (SLOs)
- Other subject learning guides that may be provided to students.
- The Assessment task
- Information provided to students setting out the assessment task and questions specific to the samples of student work
- Weighting of the assessment
- Assessment Guide
- Grading scheme of the university as it applies to the samples of student work and explanations of nomenclature.
- Samples of de-identified student work provided.

Part A: For reviewers to complete

Section 1: Course (CLOs) and Subject (SLOs) Learning Outcomes
Section 2: Assessment
Section 3: Student Achievement Standards
Section 4: Other matters you wish to raise

Section 1: CLOs and SLOs

1. Are the SLOs aligned with the relevant CLOs?

☐ Yes	☐ Yes but	☐ No	☐ No but
Comments / suggested changes			

2. Are the SLOs appropriate for a final stage unit at this AQF qualifications level?

☐ Yes	☐ Yes but	☐ No	☐ No but
Comments / suggested changes			

Section 2: Assessment

3. Does the assessment task enable student to demonstrate attainment of relevant SLOs and CLOs?

☐ Yes	☐ Yes but	☐ No	☐ No but
Comments / suggested changes			

4. Is the description of the performance standards (eg. the marking guide/marking criteria/assessment rubric/annotated work samples) appropriate to the specified SLOs and CLOs?

☐ Yes	☐ Yes but	☐ No	☐ No but
Comments / suggested changes			

Section 3: Student Achievement Standards

5. Do you agree that the grades awarded reflect the level of student's attainment?

☐ Yes	☐ Yes but	☐ No	☐ No but
Sample A: Sample B: Sample C:			

6. Based on your review, do you consider the methods of assessment are capable of confirming that all relevant specified SLOs and CLOs are achieved?

☐ Yes	☐ No
Comments / suggested changes 	

Section 4: Other matters you wish to raise

7. Are there other matters not covered in Parts 1, 2 and 3 above that you wish to draw to the attention of the program team?

☐ Yes	☐ No
Comments / suggested changes	

Part B

17. Write a short reflective statement in response to the feedback and identify any actions you plan to take:

Seq. No	Actions	What are the anticipated enhancements to the quality of the program and learning experience of students?	Date for completion
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			
8.			
9.			
10.			