PL_AC_004: Assessment Policy for Higher Education Coursework and ELICOS

1. Context
Assessment is an integral part of the learning and teaching system and an important aspect of maintaining academic standards. It measures the achievement of learning outcomes and formally certifies student achievements for external audiences.

Assessment at THINK is linked to specific learning outcomes and based on clearly articulated criteria that help students understand the characteristics of high quality work. It supports student-centred approaches to learning. In keeping with THINK’s strongly applied focus to teaching and learning, each vertical endorses relevant diverse forms of assessment primarily drawing on real life practice.

THINK has an established set of principles that guide learning and teaching within the organisation.

2. Definitions
Assessment: the process of collecting evidence and making judgements on whether learning outcomes have been achieved, to confirm that an individual can perform to the standard or level of achievement required within a subject. This may include assessment that takes place in an internal/external Work Integrated Learning (WIL) environment.

Disability: has the same meaning as in section 4(1) of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth), and includes physical, psychological and psychiatric conditions and injuries, and ongoing medical conditions.

Learning Outcomes: are the expression of the set of knowledge, skills and the application of the knowledge or skills a student has acquired and is able to demonstrate as a result of learning.

Formative Assessment: helps students and staff to identify strengths, weaknesses and ways to improve and enhance student learning. It is intended to support student learning rather than determine a final grade or mark.

Summative Assessment: evaluates the quality of students’ learning, and involves assigning a grade or numerical result based on how effectively students have addressed learning outcomes.

Assessment Moderation: the process of establishing comparability of standards in student performance so that judgements made of student performance are consistent. The goal of assessment moderation is to assure assessment decisions are valid, reliable, consistent and fair.

Assessment Validation: the quality review of the assessment process. It involves checking that assessment tools produce valid, reliable, sufficient, current and authentic evidence to enable reasonable judgements to be made as to whether the learning outcomes or requirements of a course are met. It includes the review of a statistically valid sample of the assessments and making recommendations for future improvements to the assessment tool, process and/or outcomes and acting upon these recommendations.
3. **Scope**
This policy applies to all ELICOS and HE courses excluding higher degree research courses. All staff must comply with this policy whenever they are engaged in any aspect of the assessment process.

4. **Principles**
Assessments must:
- be undertaken with honesty and integrity by staff and students and allow fair judgements about student performance
- be assessed by appropriately qualified assessors, with grades applied consistently in accordance with the specified grading criteria
- be equitable, and cater for any disadvantages to a student that result from the student’s disability, special needs or unforeseen circumstances
- be aligned with subject learning outcomes, course specific graduate attributes and THINK Graduate Capabilities
- encourage and reinforce learning through the provision of meaningful and timely feedback
- be intellectually challenging to the appropriate AQF level, engaging and relevant
- measure achievement by referencing pre-determined and clearly articulated criteria.

In addition, this policy reflects the following principles:
- THINK provides students sufficient and timely information about assessments.
- assessment practices and processes are continuously monitored for quality assurance and improvement purposes.

5. **Assessment design**
Assessment is designed to develop student learning (formative), to make and communicate judgements about student learning relative to stated learning outcomes (summative) and to monitor student learning as a measure of teaching effectiveness. Assessments are to be relevant to the workplace where appropriate and consultation with industry should form part of this process.

5.1 **Assessment in HE Courses**
Following are the guidelines for assessment design at THINK:

Assessment in higher education will be designed on the principle of constructive alignment:
- All subjects will demonstrate alignment of the curriculum, intended learning outcomes, teaching methods and assessment tasks
- Students will construct their own meaning through participation in learning activities
- Assessments will provide opportunities for students to demonstrate achievement of the intended learning outcomes for the subject, and together for the course
- Additionally, assessments will demonstrate the acquisition of key graduate attributes.

Assessment will align with the appropriate Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) level:
- Qualities of performance will be used to describe the intended learning outcomes, providing detailed, explicit and transparent criteria against which students will be assessed
- A distinction will be made between grades awarded for the acquisition of declarative knowledge and the higher order skills required to demonstrate functioning knowledge
- Course management, including moderation, will ensure consistent assessment
• The academic standards intended to be achieved, and those standards actually achieved, will be benchmarked against similar accredited courses offered by other providers. Assessments will be mapped to ensure they engage students without overburdening them:
• The weighting of individual tasks will reflect the relative importance of the learning outcomes as well as the size, timing, and level of difficulty of the task
• Variety in types of assessment will allow a range of different learning outcomes to be assessed, and group assessment will be carefully planned, structured and managed.

Data on assessment performance will be maintained, monitored and acted on:
• Comparative data will be collected on student performance in a course by entry pathway, mode of study and place of study
• Data collected will include attrition, progression, course completion and grade distribution.

The Program Director (or delegate) will provide the appropriate support and instruction to learning facilitators (lecturers) regarding the design, implementation and marking of assessments.

5.2 ELICOS Assessments
Refer to PR_AC_006 ELICOS Assessments.

6. Assessment Validation and Assessment Moderation
Assessment validation and assessment moderation are undertaken as part of THINK’s quality assurance and continuous improvement of teaching and learning activities. Assessment validation and assessment moderation activities are undertaken collaboratively, and will involve all staff who deliver and assess the relevant subject. These activities will also be informed by the broader spectrum of external benchmarking activities.

6.1 Assessment validation
THINK systematically implements ongoing validation of assessment practices and judgements in each course to evaluate quality and drive continuous improvement. In HE courses, validation involves checking that assessment practices and judgements are in accordance with the principle of constructive alignment (refer to section 5.1).

6.2 Assessment moderation
Moderation is designed to ensure common interpretations of criteria and standards are established as these relate to student performance, contributing to valid and reliable judgements about the quality of students’ work. Regular moderation will ensure exemplary assessment practices within THINK which is a critical factor in ensuring the delivery of quality THINK courses.

7. Feedback to students
Timely and constructive feedback allows students to monitor their progress and determine where improvements can be made to enhance their learning. Feedback will be provided in a timely manner, usually within two weeks of assignment submission.

Final subject grades are provisional until results are ratified by the Examination Committee.

8. Overdue assessments
An assessment is ‘overdue’ when it is not submitted by the due date or by the agreed extension date (see section 9 for assessment modification arrangements available to students with unexpected or extenuating circumstances). For each calendar day (i.e. 24 hours) the assessment is late, a loss of 10% of the total possible marks will occur up to a total of five calendar days, after which a zero mark will be recorded.
9. Unexpected or extenuating circumstances (special consideration)
THINK acknowledges that students may be academically disadvantaged when unexpected or extenuating circumstances impact on their performance or their ability to complete their assessment tasks or attend WIL placement on or by the specified date. In such circumstances a student may be eligible for a modified arrangement, such as:
- an assessment deadline extension or examination deferral
- re-submission, re-assessment or resitting an examination
- adjustment to assessment results or provision of supplementary assessments
- a second opportunity to attend a WIL assessment or placement at a different time dependent on availability.

To be granted a modified arrangement, the student must submit a completed Application for Assessment Special Consideration form.

Unexpected or extenuating circumstances are those which were outside the control of the student and/or for which there was no opportunity to prepare in advance.

Unexpected or extenuating circumstances include:
- Medical circumstances: an unexpected illness, a recurrence of a chronic illness or an accident
  - A disability or illness for which a variation has already been made will not be accepted unless the disability has been compounded by an unexpected change, or an additional condition
  - Supporting documentation must take the form of an original certificate or letter on letterhead from a registered treating medical practitioner, registered health practitioner or approved specialist, depending on the nature of the condition
- Compassionate circumstances: hardship or trauma such as the death or serious illness of a close family member, severe disruption to domestic arrangements, being a victim of crime or an accident
  - Supporting documentation may take the form of a letter from a campus counsellor who has prior knowledge of the student and their circumstances; an original medical certificate or letter on letterhead from a registered treating medical practitioner, registered health practitioner or approved specialist, depending on the nature of the condition; a letter from a person qualified to assess and support the application (e.g. clergy providing grief counselling); or a certificate from a funeral director or death notice
  - Supporting documentation will not be accepted from a relative or personal friend of the student, or friend of the student’s family
- Special circumstances: religious observance or obligations, formal legal commitments, military service, service with a recognised emergency management service, representing THINK, a state or home nation at a significant sporting or cultural event or unforeseen and significant employment-related circumstances such as a move interstate at short notice
  - Supporting documentation can include: a certified call to Australian Defense Force service, a description of the emergency attended for State Emergency Service or Country/Rural Fire Service personnel, an original letter confirming changed employment circumstances, an original letter confirming commitments for athletes and performing artists, a copy of an accident report or a court summons
  - Supporting documentation will not be accepted from a relative or personal friend of the student, or friend of the student’s family.

Note: Reasonable adjustments to assessments that enable a student with a disability or ongoing medical condition to participate on the same basis as other students without a disability will be made according to the Disability Policy.
9.1 Assessment deadline extension
If a student has been affected by unexpected or extenuating circumstances and has yet to submit their assessment or attend a WIL placement or assessment, they may be eligible for an extension.
- The Learning Facilitator (Lecturer) decides on extension applications.
- Extensions will provide a reasonable time, given the nature of the circumstances, for the student to complete the task without giving the student an unfair advantage over other students. A reasonable time will not extend beyond 10 working days except in exceptional circumstances. Applications requiring more than 10 working days’ extension or involving a WIL placement or assessment will be referred to the Program Director for a decision.
- Extension applications must be submitted at least one (1) working day prior to the assessment or placement due date, unless the evidence of unexpected or extenuating circumstances provided indicates this would not have been possible.
- For all extensions, THINK’s Grading Criteria applies in full.

9.2 Deferral of an examination
If a student has been affected by unexpected or extenuating circumstances and has yet to sit an exam or attend a WIL placement or assessment, they may be eligible for an examination or placement deferral.
- The Learning Facilitator (Lecturer) decides on deferral of examination applications.
- Deferral of examinations will provide a reasonable time, given the nature of the circumstances, for the student to prepare without giving them an unfair advantage over other students. A reasonable time will not extend beyond 10 working days except in exceptional circumstances. Applications requiring more than 10 working days’ deferral or involving a WIL placement or assessment will be referred to the Program Director for a decision.
- Deferral of examination applications must be submitted at least one (1) working day prior to the examination date, unless the evidence of unexpected or extenuating circumstances provided indicates this would not have been possible.
- For all examination deferrals, THINK’s Grading Criteria applies in full.

9.3 Re-submission or resitting an examination
If a student has been affected by unexpected or extenuating circumstances and has already submitted or attempted their assessment, they may be eligible for re-submission or a resit.
- The Learning Facilitator (Lecturer) decides on re-submission or resit applications.
- A resit or re-submission allows the student to keep preparing or working on a piece of assessment for a reasonable time, given the nature of the circumstances, without giving the student an unfair advantage over other students. A reasonable time will not extend beyond 10 working days from the date student was advised in writing of approval to re-submit or resit, except in exceptional circumstances.
- For all resubmissions or resits, THINK’s Grading Criteria applies in full.

9.4 Adjustments to assessment results or supplementary assessment
If a student has been affected by unexpected or extenuating circumstances and has already submitted or sat their final assessment despite facing these circumstances, the Examination Committee may decide to do one of the following:
- Adjust the mark for the piece of work in question, taking into account the circumstances that affected the student and having regard to the student’s overall performance within the course
- Permit the student to sit a supplementary assessment (see section 10) even if the student’s final mark is below 45% or award a Conceded Pass if the subject precludes a supplementary assessment
- Make no adjustment, taking into account the circumstances that affected the student and having regard to the student’s overall performance within the course. This option is not available for formative assessments.
9.5 Other modified arrangements
Other alternative assessment arrangements may be approved by the Program Director (or delegate) in
exceptional circumstances.

10. Supplementary Assessment
If a student has attempted all the assessment items for a subject, and records a final mark from 45% to 49%,
or if the student has been granted special consideration (see section 9.4), the student may be allowed to
attempt a supplementary assessment, unless the subject specifically precludes supplementary assessments.
• The supplementary assessment will be designed to assess the required subject learning outcomes that
  the student has yet to demonstrate adequately. Usually this will be part or the entire failed assessment
  item.
• A student who successfully completes a supplementary assessment will be awarded a Supplementary
  Pass for the subject.
• A supplementary assessment must be completed within five working days of the approval being made
  except with the agreement of the Examination Committee.

In cases where a subject specifically precludes a supplementary assessment, the student may be eligible for a
conceded pass or terminating pass.

11. Requesting a re-mark
A student who considers that an assessment task has been unfairly or inappropriately marked may request a
re-mark. Re-marking involves the assessment task being marked again by a second assessor, without any
further work by the student.
• A re-mark must be requested to the Senior Learning Facilitator/Senior Lecturer (or delegate) in writing
  within five working days of the original mark being released. The request needs to include the details of
  reasons the student has deemed the assessment result as unfair or inappropriate in regards to
  published assessment criteria.
• If the Senior Learning Facilitator/Senior Lecturer (or delegate) approves the request for a re-mark, a
  second assessor will review the same assessment with the following conditions:
  o The second assessor is not provided with details of the student’s original mark
  o The original assessor will be asked to comment on the re-marked assessment
  o The full range of marks which were used on the original assessment task must be available for re-
    marking.
  o The original mark and the second mark will be referred to the Program Director (or delegate) for
    final determination of the mark to stand, which may be higher or lower than the original mark.
  o No further re-marking is permitted.
• If the Senior Learning Facilitator/Senior Lecturer (or delegate) does not approve the request for a re-
  mark, the student is provided with a written response outlining why the request was rejected.

If the request for re-marking is not approved, the original mark will stand. Students who are not satisfied
with the result of their request for a re-mark may request a review of their final grade in accordance with
section 13 below.
12. Grading matrix

12.1 Final notations
Subjects may only have one grading matrix applied and this must be applied to all students in the subject. Courses that require competencies to be achieved to minimum specified levels, such as industry placement courses, may use the Non-Graded Pass/Fail scheme rather than THINK’s numeric-based grading scheme. THINK awards grades according to the following criteria and grading scales:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Distinction</td>
<td>HD</td>
<td>85-100</td>
<td>High Distinction is awarded for work of outstanding quality in achieving all learning outcomes together with outstanding integration and understanding of theory and application of skills. Evidence of in-depth relevant research, reading, analysis, original and creative thought is demonstrated. The recommended academic referencing system is used consistently and accurately at all times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distinction</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>75-84</td>
<td>Distinction is awarded for work of superior quality in achieving all learning outcomes and a superior integration and understanding of theory and application of skills. Evidence of in-depth relevant research, reading, analysis and evaluation is demonstrated. The recommended academic referencing system is used consistently and accurately with minimal errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>65-74</td>
<td>Credit is awarded for work showing a more than satisfactory achievement of all learning outcomes and a more than adequate understanding of theory and application of skills. Competent use of the recommended academic referencing system is evident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>50-64</td>
<td>Pass is awarded for work showing a satisfactory achievement of all learning outcomes and an adequate understanding of theory and application of skills. Use of the recommended academic referencing system is evident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>49 and below *</td>
<td>A Fail grade will be awarded if a student is unable to demonstrate satisfactory academic performance in the subject. Use of the recommended academic referencing system is not evident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-graded Pass</td>
<td>NGP</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Non-graded Pass is awarded for work showing achievement of all learning outcomes specified for that subject to the required standard, where the subject specifies use of a non-graded pass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplementary Pass</td>
<td>SP</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Supplementary Pass is awarded for work showing achievement of all learning outcomes specified for the subject to the required standard following a supplementary assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceded Pass</td>
<td>CP</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>A conceded pass may be awarded to a student who attempted all the assessment items for a subject and records...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A fail may also be awarded if a student has failed to successfully complete mandatory assessment item(s), regardless of the cumulative mark.

### 12.1.1 Other final notations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notation</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawn Deleted</td>
<td>WD</td>
<td>The student has withdrawn from the subject without financial or academic penalty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawn Not Fail</td>
<td>WNF</td>
<td>The student has withdrawn from the subject without academic penalty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawn Fail</td>
<td>WF</td>
<td>The student has withdrawn from the subject after the academic withdrawal date but on or before the withdrawal deadline. The student withdrew from the subject with academic and financial penalties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit Transfer</td>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
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<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit Transfer</td>
<td>CT</td>
<td>The student has achieved all of the learning outcomes specified for the subject to the required standard through prior formal learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of Prior Learning</td>
<td>RPL</td>
<td>The student has achieved all of the learning outcomes specified for that subject to the required standard through prior learning that includes informal and/or non-formal learning, and may also include formal learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition of Prior Learning – Not Granted</td>
<td>RNG</td>
<td>The student has not achieved all of the learning outcomes specified for that subject to the required standard through prior learning that includes informal and/or non-formal learning, and may also include formal learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemption</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>The student has been granted exemption from completing the requirements of the subject under a block credit agreement. Note: exemptions cannot be transferred elsewhere as credit towards a subject.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elective Exemption</td>
<td>UX</td>
<td>The student has been granted unspecified credit and is therefore exempt from the requirements of an elective subject. Note: exemptions cannot be transferred elsewhere as credit towards a subject.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 12.2 Interim notations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notation</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete</td>
<td>IN</td>
<td>The student has been granted additional time in which to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes specified for the subject to the required standard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplementary</td>
<td>SUP</td>
<td>The student has been granted a supplementary assessment through which to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcomes specified for the subject to the required standard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditional Credit Transfer</td>
<td>CCT</td>
<td>The student will have achieved all of the learning outcomes specified for the subject conditional on completion of current formal learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conditional Exemption</td>
<td>CX</td>
<td>The student will be granted exemption from completing the requirements of the subject under a block credit agreement. This is conditional upon successful completion of the current enrolment. Note: exemptions cannot be transferred elsewhere as credit towards a subject.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. Requesting a review of the final grade
A student who considers that their final subject grade is inappropriate or unfair may request a review of their final grade.

A review must be requested from the Program Director (or delegate) in accordance with the provisions of the Student Complaints Policy.

The review may result in:
- Adjustment of the student’s mark, or
- No change to the original grade.

The student may choose to appeal the decision under the Student Complaints Policy.

14. References
Disability Discrimination Act (Cth) 1992
Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015 – Part A, Standards 1.3.3, 1.4.3, 1.4.4 and 5.3.2