Good Practice in Assessment Case Study – A programmatic review of curriculum alignment, assessment strategies and graduate attributes
Lynda Davies¹, Calvin Smith¹, Anne Tiernan², Dennis Grube²
¹ The Griffith Institute for Higher Education
² Department of Politics and Public Policy

This case study demonstrates the benefits of engaging content and pedagogical specialists in collaborative efforts to critically evaluate and improve postgraduate coursework offerings. Through this collaboration, it was possible to take a whole-of-program approach to validating assessment by using mapping as a guide to focus critical questions about:

- the curriculum’s coherence (alignment of course-level goals/learning objectives with program-level goals/learning objectives);
- constructive alignment (of course-level learning objectives, learning activities and assessments);
- the validity of the assessment tasks for measuring the learning they purport to measure;
- the use of assessment to both develop and attest to the development of increasingly advanced levels of attainment in key learning areas across the courses of the program as they are experienced sequentially by students; and
- the assessment of graduate attribute development.

Context
The Graduate Certificate in Policy Analysis (GCPA) was launched as a pilot program in 2007. The GCPA grew out of ARC-funded research into perceptions that the policy skills and capacities of the public service had declined, and demand from industry stakeholders who pressed Griffith to develop a program that would meet the needs of working policy officers and their employers who value flexible, intensive delivery methods and a contemporary, practical curriculum.

The GCPA has matured into the only designated ‘flagship’ program within the Griffith Business School. This demonstrates the program’s capacity to enhance Griffith’s reputation, support enrolment growth, and promote multiple educational pathways. Students are sponsored by their employers to participate in the GCPA program. The program’s aim has been to foster a cohort of policy professionals who would become the feeder group for the Senior Executive Service (SES).

In 2009, GCPA Program Director Dr Tiernan commissioned Dr Duncan Nulty and Jo-Anne Clarke at the Griffith Institute for Higher Education (GIHE) to conduct an independent evaluation of the GCPA. The aim of the evaluation was to determine whether the GCPA was meeting the objectives and learning outcomes established in the original program design from the viewpoints of students, sponsors and academics.
Dr Tiernan was also keen to put the program on a stronger administrative footing since it had moved through the 2007 pilot, and the first full intake of 38 students in 2008.

The evaluation was also an opportunity to gather data on graduates' experiences since completing the GCPA program – whether and how the program had impacted on their careers; and whether sponsors/employers had detected discernible changes in the performance of GCPA graduates in the workplace.

In consultation with the GIHE team, the parameters for the review were set around:

- Examining the overall quality of the GCPA program and its teaching;
- student satisfaction;
- whether the supporting administrative processes were sufficient;
- strengths and weaknesses of the program; and
- issues around expanding the program for a larger student cohort (since increasing domestic postgraduate enrolments is a key objective of the University’s Postgraduate Coursework Strategy).

The evaluation report outlined 15 recommendations, clustered around six main issue areas:

A. The need to improve program documentation, including:
   - clearer articulation of learning objectives and student learning outcomes;
   - Improving the balance between theory and practice in curriculum design;
   - Putting in place clearer procedures for handling assessment with a professional student group.

B. Enhancements to the student experience through improvements to administrative processes and the Learning@Griffith site.

C. Developing a sustainable administrative model for the GCPA program, including a longer-term commitment from public sector agencies.

D. Improving marketing and promotion of the program, with an emphasis on the potential to involve GCPA graduates in these activities. However the recommendations in respect of the optimum size and delivery mode for the GCPA raise questions about the potential to expand the program to a national market through options such as blended delivery.

E. How best to respond to the expressed desire of GCPA graduates to remain part of a professional community after they have completed their program.

F. What constitutes an appropriate role for the Advisory Board now that the GCPA has moved beyond its establishment phase?

The opportunity to participate in the Promoting Good Practices in Assessment Project grew out of discussions about how the GIHE could assist in implementing the evaluation recommendations, especially those around strengthening program documentation and
dealing with assessment issues raised in the evaluation report. The project team (Lynda Davies, Dennis Grube, Calvin Smith, and Anne Tiernan) consequently agreed on the following priorities to guide the implementation work.

Level One Priority
(From Recommendation 9): Check the assessment items in all courses for alignment with achievement of desired program learning outcomes and clarity of purpose, as well as the clarity of assessment requirements and marking criteria. If adjustments are required, these should be made.

To maximise benefits from implementing this recommendation, the following two recommendations should also be addressed because the effectiveness of this activity relies on the development of clearly stated program outcomes and (integrated) course aims and objectives. The assessment of learning occurs at course level and hence its appropriate testing of program aims is predicated upon tight course alignment.

Level Two Priority
(From Recommendation 1): Strengthen the program documentation by developing a statement that provides a single, more comprehensive program rationale along the lines presented in this report;
(From Recommendation 2): Improve the articulation of the desired learning objectives of the program to reflect both the program’s developmental narrative, and the desired student learning outcomes (rather than learning approaches).

About the implementation strategy: Aligning program learning outcomes, course learning outcomes, assessment tasks, and graduate attributes

To implement the recommendations from the evaluation that focussed on assessment and to work with the priorities set out in the project proposal, a four-phase strategy was developed by the project team.

1) Check clarity of stated program outcomes and adjust where necessary.
2) Map course outcomes/aims with teaching, learning and assessment strategies and, concurrently
3) Map course aims and objectives and assessment to program learning outcomes (including selected graduate attributes). If necessary adjust course aims, objectives and assessment for Semester 2, 2010 courses.
4) Audit assessment tasks through a programmatic lens to ensure changes made (to Program Learning Outcomes, Course Learning Outcomes and alignment of assessment tasks to course requirements) result in tasks that advance student learning as they progress through the program. This audit was conducted within the context of the University’s Statements and Quality Indicators of Good Practice in Assessment.
The Graduate Certificate in Policy Analysis is a relatively new program, one in which feedback from students, employers and sector leaders is particularly important to integrate. Significant changes can also occur to the professional context of the program and as such the project team re-worked the existing program learning outcomes to better reflect the needs of the profession and the political background in which it operates. Four Program Learning Outcomes were developed to which the individual courses would be mapped.

On a course-by-course basis, the team reviewed the existing course learning outcomes and reviewed them with two priorities in mind: (a) did they make sense in light of changes to the political and public service sectors, and how did the students and teachers experienced the course in the last iteration; and (b) did they align with the revised program learning outcomes? Changes were made accordingly and ranged from retaining some as-is, re-writing some, deleting others, and adding some. These updated course learning outcomes were mapped to the program learning outcomes, a process which ‘tested’ the conceptual and practical nature of the outcomes at both program- and course-level.

Mapping in this phase consisted of creating a grid with program level outcomes at the heads of columns and course level outcomes at the heads of rows, then working cell-by-cell interrogate the relationship between each course level outcome and the program level outcome (See Appendix A).

Assessment tasks were then reviewed in light of the program and course learning outcomes, requiring deep consideration of the purpose and character of each of the existing assessment tasks. We explored explicitly whether each could validly test the associated learning outcomes, and whether the student responses to the tasks would provide sufficient evidence of academic achievement so teachers could judge the work accordingly. With some changes to the assessment plans and task specifications occurring, the team mapped each assessment task into the matrix depicting the alignment between program learning outcomes and course learning outcomes to determine whether those learning outcomes were being tested appropriately.

The final aspect of this phase was to map to each course level outcome and each assessment task the relevant Griffith Graduate Attributes. The visual display showed the intersections between all four components and assisted the project team review the components individually (per course and task) and holistically (at program level); and make decisions about changes. (See Appendix A for example matrix.) This marks a significant watershed in the approach routinely taken to graduate attribute development and assessment in Australian universities (Barrie, Hughes, Smith 2008), in that, by focusing attention explicitly on the existing assessment tasks, and asking whether (and which) graduate attributes would be assessed by them, the program team is now able to make a strongly validated and documented statement about not just development opportunities (e.g. through the teaching and learning activities) but the assessment of graduate attributes. The approach generated a program-level overview of graduate attribute development that worked in tandem with a course-level overview of the development and assessment of the graduate attributes.
Discussions about the learning outcomes and assessment tasks appropriately involved review of the teaching activities for each course: what had worked well; what had not worked as well as had been hoped; how they connected with the fluid nature of the profession; and where changes could occur in line with the updated program-focussed learning outcomes and assessment strategies.

The final phase of the implementation strategy involved an audit of each assessment task in each course across the whole program. Through a programmatic lens, the assessment tasks were re-considered after a short break from the preceding work. This was an important element of the process because it allowed team members to look at the tasks with fresh perspectives and some cognitive distance.

The team applied the University’s *Statements and Quality Indicators of Good Practice in Assessment (SQIs)* as the primary investigative tool, and identified for each course assessment plan and associated tasks which elements performed well in relation to the SQIs, and which ones required further work. *Statement of Good Practice # 1:* “Assessment tasks are designed to advance student learning” was used consistently throughout this exercise.

In terms of the project as a whole, however, the characteristics of *Statement of Good Practice # 4:* “Assessment policies and practices are planned, implemented, reviewed and improved” was clearly enacted. (See Appendix B for assessment task audit map.)

A work-in-progress document “GCPA: Implementing the recommendations” was a useful tool to track the project’s progress, note action points, record all changes to program learning outcomes, course learning outcomes, assessment plans, assessment task specifications, and assessment criteria. The document has formed the basis upon which student communications (course profiles; program handbooks; assessment guides etc) will be updated.

As a consequence, the project will have implemented all three relevant (and identified) Program Review Recommendations (numbers 1, 2 and 9). Having completed work across the whole program (four courses), the project has exceeded the original target of reviewing two courses.

**Lessons learned and guidelines for future practice**

As each course was reviewed, the emphasis varied between what element of the course learning outcomes, assessment tasks, graduate attribute mapping or program learning outcome refinement required the most attention. Regardless of where the main focus occurred, the process worked as a whole and indicated that there was sufficient flexibility and robustness in the activity design to allow such variation.

As the assessment tasks were reviewed, it became apparent to the project team that the opportunities for students to undertake formative assessment tasks were embedded in the teaching and learning activities of the coursework throughout the semester. These included modeling case-study production; designing and integrating collaborative team activities into the preparation of policy advice; or writing and discussing reflective responses to guest/expert presentations that would later form part of assessment task responses that would be marked. It was noted by the project team that these formative activities were not listed in the assessment plans, but were nonetheless part of the
assessment strategy. While the teaching team did discuss the activities with students as the course was running, it was decided that in future offerings it would be communicated more clearly to students why these sorts of activities are part of the coursework: the formative activities articulate into the summative tasks later on and can be used as early opportunities to experiment with ideas, practice responses and obtain feedback, all of which provides a foundation upon which future work can be built.

**Demonstration of Benefits**

Both Dr Anne Tiernan as Program Director, and Dr Dennis Grube as Course Convenor of 7023PPP (the first of the GCPA coursework units), have strongly expressed the view that the opportunity to participate in this assessment project was beneficial on a range of grounds.

Both from an administrative and a teaching perspective, the explicit mapping of graduate attributes to teaching and assessment processes has resulted in a stronger and more coherent base for the course. During the course of the project, all assessment items were reviewed. Some items, like marks for student participation were removed altogether to make way for assessment pieces that could be more clearly related to specific course and program level teaching objectives.

Through an iterative process of discussion and debate, this project explicitly tested pedagogy against content and learning objectives, demonstrating the benefits that can flow more widely to continuously improve and quality assure postgraduate coursework offerings.

The changes have led to the development of a more robust and coherent assessment framework for all four courses that make up the GCPA program.

**Principles of Good Practice illustrated in this activity**

*Program perspective and curriculum coherence*

Even though academics and universities strive to create well-integrated programs that will achieve particular outcomes as a result of that integration and coherence, students experience their study and learning at course level. This means students are not necessarily aware of how their courses fit together, nor the plan behind their design as part of a whole. It is becoming increasingly apparent that there is a need to improve: (a) the ways in which the program design can (or should) lead students along their learning path; and (b) communicate this design to students more effectively so they can take better advantage of the learning steps built into their program through the courses they take. (Note: for some disciplines such as engineering, education, medicine etc., there are industry requirements to explicitly set out this type of design to ensure specific disciplinary knowledge is built for students and related to the professional practices they will engage in when entering the workplace.)

Phases 2 and 3 of the GCPA project involved an activity that operated on multiple levels. The team mapped the course outcomes/aims with teaching, learning and assessment strategies and concurrently considered their relationships with the program learning outcomes. Some of the course learning outcomes and assessment tasks were re-conceptualised and rewritten to tighten those relationships. The result is a more
coherent curriculum at the program level. In an incremental fashion each of the courses now more clearly articulate the program learning outcomes. The courses are designed to advance students' level of understanding and require a parallel advance in the quality of their responses to assessment tasks as they progress through the program.

In exploring the development of the curriculum the team found useful the notion of ‘curriculum narrative’ as a way of speaking about and conceptualising the incremental educational developments built into courses, and designed deliberately from a programmatic curriculum perspective. This notion is similar to, but less constraining than, the idea of the ‘vertical curriculum’ and it lies at the heart of the good practice “advancing student learning” that will be discussed later.

**Constructive Alignment at course level**

Biggs' (1996) notion of constructive alignment proposes that effective course design is dependent on the degree to which there is congruence between the objectives of the course, the activities students engage in, and the assessment tasks set for them. The project revised and clarified the program learning outcomes, linked the course learning outcomes to them (updating and changing them as necessary); aligned assessment tasks to both, and mapped teaching and assessing of Griffith’s graduate attributes. The teaching team noted that it will more actively highlight to students where their teaching activities, the purposes of assessment and the attainment of graduate attributes intersect.

**Assessment advancing student learning**

In one of the courses reviewed early in the process the project team observed that the new course learning outcomes (and their attendant teaching and learning activities and assessment tasks) fell into two broad categories: foundational knowledge and its application. Given the importance of enhancing student engagement through the foregrounding of the relevance of course content to practice and students' future work, this was a welcome outcome. The observation was somewhat serendipitous, but served us well once it was recognised and it subsequently underpinned the design of activities and analyses of the remaining courses (particularly in relation to the assessment strategies which will be discussed later).

The assessment tasks in each of the courses were examined on at least two occasions with different foci each time. During phases 2 and 3 of the project, the tasks were considered in light of their relationships to the program and course learning outcomes to check how well they aligned with the teaching and learning activities and whether they were testing the ‘right’ elements of the courses using the question: “will this task require responses from students that demonstrate they have learned the ‘things’ we needed them to learn by the end of their program?”

In phase 4, the tasks were reviewed from a different perspective – one that looked closely at what types of learning the tasks were testing and what quality of responses they would elicit. We found Bloom’s Revised Taxonomy a useful guide to this review. Bloom and his team originally categorised the types of learning they observed in school settings and the ways they were tested in the USA during the late 1950s. In 2002, members of his team revised the taxonomy that had been produced from that earlier
work and the new version illustrates the increasingly complex modes of demonstrating what has been learned. A visual depiction of these modes has been created, setting them into a pyramid-hierarchy that quickly and succinctly illustrates the developmental progression.

Diagram 1. “The graphic is a representation of the new verbage associated with the long familiar Bloom's Taxonomy. [There is] a change from nouns to verbs to describe the different levels of the taxonomy.” (Overbaugh R.C. & Schultz, L., Web)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Version</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Remembering</strong>: can the student recall or remember the information?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understanding</strong>: can the student explain ideas or concepts?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Applying</strong>: can the student use the information in a new way?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Analyzing</strong>: can the student distinguish between the different parts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluating</strong>: can the student justify a stand or decision?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creating</strong>: can the student create new product or point of view?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

When we looked at the tasks set out in each course in relation to Bloom’s ideas, we were able to determine what kind of activity the tasks were demanding (of the students) and whether the tasks was an appropriate test of knowledge and learning at that stage of the program.

For example, was the task requiring the student to ‘remember’ data, and if so, did the student just have to recall and list the information, or were they then asked to ‘do’ something with it? As indicated by the pyramid diagram, ‘remembering’ and ‘recalling’ are considered simple tasks. But analysing and applying that knowledge to something new and evaluating the outcome is a higher-order task, one that could be expected of students later in the semester or program. When one of the tasks in the GCPA program
needed to be rewritten, the teaching team decided to construct an item that required students to demonstrate both ‘orders’ of learning in a two-part structure, i.e., remembering then analysing. Such a design illustrates how tasks can be constructed to incrementally test students’ development.

Similarly Biggs and Collis’s SOLO Taxonomy was useful for anticipating the range of students’ likely responses to tasks and therefore it helped the team review (and re-design) the criteria and achievement standards. By structuring the achievement standards across the program in a developmental fashion, we also noted the possibility created for students to become self-monitoring and self-regulating learners who can check their own progression from neophyte (in the early courses) to more sophisticated, higher-order learners in later courses.

After the course-level assessment plans were revised the phase 4 audit of tasks was conducted in the same sequence that students would encounter as they moved through the program. We did this to check that as the students progressed, the assessment tasks appropriately tested increasingly sophisticated learning. One of the critical aspects of students being able to become self-regulated learners is the opportunity for them to see how their assessment tasks fit into a learning cycle that is planned, has a purpose and progresses in sophistication. With this in mind, the teaching team has decided to use some form of the curriculum map we have developed as part of their communication strategy with students.

The phase 4 audit was conducted in the context of the University’s Statements and Quality Indicators of Good Practices in Assessment. It was decided to use Statements # 1 and # 3 as they helped to focus the review on ensuring the tasks advanced student learning and that the marks and grades awarded would reflect student academic achievement. (See Appendix B for a summary of the characteristics of the Statements evident in each course’s assessment plan. Appendix C sets out the full Statements and Quality Indicators of Good Practices in Assessment)

Assessment as means of certifying student achievement

Statement of Good Practice # 3: Assessment practices are fair, produce marks and grades that are reliable and valid, and certify students’ achievements draws on Sadler’s work about assuring achievement standards (and only rewarding achievement) as a way of protecting grade integrity. Briefly, summative assessment must only give credit for true achievements, not non-achievements. There are various contaminating non-achievement components of a grade that are commonly used to leverage student behaviour such as marks for attendance or effort. The trueness (of the achievement) is termed ‘fidelity’ and is a precondition for maintaining grade integrity. For fidelity in grading to be maintained, contaminants such as marks for attendance cannot be considered. Other ways have to be sought to shape student behaviour without adversely affecting the integrity of the grade. (Sadler, Davies, Moni, Stewart, Brown, 2010; Sadler ‘Grade Integrity’ 2009; Sadler ‘Fidelity’ 2010.)

The Program Director of the GCPA was keen to eliminate any such contaminants to the grading process, and consequently marks for ‘passive’ non-achieving participation were
removed from the assessment plans and tasks were written to replace those contaminants. All tasks in the GCPA now test academic achievement and stakeholders can be assured that the marks and grades awarded to student work reflect the quality of students’ academic achievement.

**Quality assurance – reviewing program and course structures and assessment tasks**

The success of the work conducted with the GCPA team occurred due to the strength of the team’s commitment to open and collegial peer review of whole program. As the project progressed, it was clear that the quality assurance cycle was embedded throughout. The review activities fell within the following areas.

**Statement of Good Practice #4: Assessment policies and practices are planned, implemented reviewed and improved**

4.1. assessment practices are given consideration in cyclical reviews of teaching, Programs, Courses and academic units;

4.2. staff use feedback from peers and students to improve subsequent assessment practices;

4.3. Professional development opportunities are provided to staff to assist them in improving assessment practices; and

4.4. staff participate in professional development activities relevant to assessment (e.g. workshops, conferences, relevant literature etc..).

**Future directions**

The GCPA is now reaching a level of maturity that has led to the involvement of a wider range of teaching staff, making it important to ensure a coherent program identity independent of the key individuals involved in its establishment. Both Dr Tiernan and Dr Grube are confident that the new level of course documentation and assessment now provide a much more accurate reflection of the course, which will allow for quality teaching by any staff who may be involved in the future.

The Department of Politics and Public Policy (PPP) has just undergone an external review, which has led to a number of recommendations. One is around the structure and content of the postgraduate offerings across the Department, and the learnings from this assessment project will be directly applicable to further reform of other postgraduate offerings.

This applies in particular to the Master of Public Administration (MPA) program.

Demand for traditional MPAs had waned across Australia in recent years, including at Griffith. This was a response to increasing work intensity among the student population – most of whom balance study with full-time work, and also the emergence of new programs such as the Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG) Executive Masters in Public Administration (EMPA). The drop in demand constrained PPP’s capacity to invest in curriculum development for the MPA until recently, but we now have a pool of approximately 90 GCPA graduates who are eligible and interested in articulating into the MPA. As a consequence, the Department has begun to broaden
the course offerings available to its MPA and ANZSOG EMPA students, with three new courses made available in 2010 for the first time.

The opportunity, as a result of this excellence in assessment project, to now test the rigour and applicability of assessment across the MPA will ensure that the entire suite of masters courses reflect best teaching and assessment practice.

References


Appendix A

Table 1. Mapping Course Learning Outcomes (CLO) to Program Learning Outcomes (PLO) to course assessment tasks (coding uses numbered course learning outcomes 1-6. T1 = Assessment Task 1; T2 = Assessment Task 2; for Graduate Attributes coding see Table 2)

7027PPP – PLO and CLO assessed by task

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>PLO 1: Understanding key issues for policy makers</th>
<th>PLO 2: Policy Skills and Analysis</th>
<th>PLO 3: Social &amp; Behavioural dimension of policy-making</th>
<th>PLO 4: Research Skills</th>
<th>Tasks mapped to Graduate Attributes</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Skills</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>T2: ✔</td>
<td>T2: ✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>T1: ✔</td>
<td></td>
<td>T1: ✔</td>
<td>T2: C3 T3: A1, C2, C3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>T2: ✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
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<td>T1: D2</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>T2: C3 T3: C3, D2</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>

A programmatic review of curriculum alignment and assessment strategies
Table 2. Griffith Graduate Attributes coded for use during curriculum mapping

A. Knowledgeable and Skilled in their Disciplines
   A.1. Comprehensive knowledge and skills relating to their disciplines
   A.2. An interdisciplinary perspective
   A.3. Capacity to find, evaluate and use information
   A.4. Ability to apply discipline/professional skills and knowledge in the workplace

B. Effective Communicators and Team Members
   B.1. Capacity to communicate effectively with others orally
   B.2. Capacity to communicate effectively with others in writing
   B.3. Capacity to communicate effectively with others using ICTs, multimedia, visual, musical and other forms appropriate to their disciplines
   B.4. Capacity to interact and collaborate with others effectively, including in teams, in the workplace, and in culturally or linguistically diverse contexts.

C. Innovative and Creative with Critical Judgement
   C.1. Ability to use knowledge and skills to devise solutions to unfamiliar problems
   C.2. Ability to analyse and critically evaluate arguments and evidence appropriate to their disciplines (e.g. collect, analyse and interpret data and information, generate and test hypotheses, synthesise and organise information)
   C.3. Knowledge of research methodologies in their disciplines and capacity to interpret findings
   C.4. Ability to generate ideas/products/art works/methods/approaches/perspectives as appropriate to the discipline.

D. Socially Responsible and Engaged in Their Communities
   D.1. Ethical awareness (professional and personal) and academic integrity
   D.2. Capacity to apply disciplinary knowledge to solving real life problems in relevant communities
   D.3. Understanding of social and civic responsibilities, human rights and sustainability
   D.4. Understanding the value of further learning and professional development

E. Competent in Culturally Diverse and International Environments
   E.1. Awareness of and respect for the values and knowledges of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Peoples
   E.2. Respect, awareness, knowledge and skills to interact effectively in culturally or linguistically diverse contexts
   E.3. A global and international perspective on their disciplines.
Appendix B

Evidence of characteristics of the Statements of Good Practice in Assessment in each course belonging to the GCPA. Note that not every course has to show every characteristic. In this case, a programmatic review will have picked up on the characteristics across the program.

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<th></th>
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<tr>
<td>#1: Assessment tasks are designed to advance student learning</td>
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<td>1.8</td>
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Program-wide, the GCPA showed evidence of the following characteristics of Statement of Good Practice #3: Assessment Practices are fair, produce marks and grades that are reliable and valid and certify students’ achievements.

3.1 the mark allocated for an assessment task reflects the standard of the students’ work regardless of how other students perform

3.2 mark allocation, and the system of marking, properly represents the overall judgement of the standard achieved by the students’ performance
Appendix C

Griffith University’s Teaching Quality Indicators Project has been guided by research into the theoretical literature on good principles and practices of assessment in higher education; assessment practice at Griffith University; and assessment policies used across Australia and overseas.

This work has shown that assessment inevitably shapes how students approach learning, including what they focus on and how they go about learning it, and is used for a variety of purposes. Necessarily, assessment underpins the core values and principles of the University’s learning and teaching strategic plans and a clear enunciation of what drives assessment at the University is important for students, staff, and the broader community.

It is accepted, therefore, that the primary purpose of assessment is to:

- promote student learning; and
- provide information upon which judgements are made about students’ work and the standards their performances exhibit.

In doing this, the University has a commitment to processes that are transparent, fair, reliable and valid. To articulate the purpose of assessment, Griffith adopts the following Statements of Good Practice.

**Statement of Good Practice #1: Assessment tasks are designed to advance student learning**

This occurs when:

1.1. there is consistency between what is assessed, course aims and objectives, graduate attributes, and the way things are taught;

1.2. tasks test how well students have learned what the program and course set out to teach including the appropriate graduate attributes;

1.3. tasks test appropriately the increasing complexity of intellectual activity, and require students to demonstrate their growth in understanding and development of skills;

1.4. the sophistication of learning that is expected to be demonstrated through assessment matches the students’ year-level of candidature;

1.5. there is an appropriate combination of formative and summative tasks to maximise learning opportunities;

1.6. a variety of forms of assessment appropriate to the mode of teaching and type of material being taught are used;

1.7. without compromising the essential requirements of the assessment task reasonable adjustments are negotiated, in line with legislative obligations, for students with specific requirements; and

1.8. the amount of assessment in the course is commensurate with its credit-point value, and the spread of assessment across the semester is co-ordinated at Course and Program level to balance workloads for staff and students.

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Statement of Good Practice #2: **Assessment processes and practices are clearly communicated to students to facilitate their learning**

This occurs when:

2.1. types of assessment tasks and their weightings are described in the course outline;
2.2. students are informed about the purpose and aims of assessment tasks;
2.3. the way in which the quality of assessment performances will be judged is explained to students;
2.4. examples of assessment performances demonstrating different academic achievement standards are worked through with students so they can learn to monitor the quality of their own work-in-progress;
2.5. the processes of marking, and how the individual marks will be combined to form the final grade, are explained to students;
2.6. constructive and respectful feedback is provided in a timely fashion to facilitate ongoing learning;
2.7. students are provided with the opportunity to learn the skills that enable them to comply with University academic integrity rules; and
2.8. information about the University’s expectations of, and processes for, academic integrity is provided to students.

Statement of Good Practice #3: **Assessment practices are fair, produce marks and grades that are reliable and valid, and certify students’ achievements.**

This occurs when:

3.1. the mark allocated for an assessment task reflects the standard of the students’ work regardless of how other students perform;
3.2. mark allocation, and the system of marking, properly represents the overall judgement of the standard achieved by the students’ performance;
3.3. benchmarking occurs at School, Faculty or Group level to calibrate academics’ understanding of the academic achievement standards used when judging the quality of students’ work;
3.4. moderation of assessment tasks occurs between members of teaching teams or relevant School colleagues; and
3.5. the appropriate criterion areas and academic achievement standards used during marking and grading is communicated to relevant School and Faculty Boards;

Statement of Good Practice #4: **Assessment policies and practices are planned, implemented, reviewed and improved**

This occurs when:

4.5. assessment practices are given consideration in cyclical reviews of teaching, Programs, Courses and academic units;
4.6. staff use feedback from peers and students to improve subsequent assessment practices;
4.7. Professional development opportunities are provided to staff to assist them in improving assessment practices;
4.8. staff participate in professional development activities relevant to assessment (e.g. workshops, conferences, relevant literature etc.)

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4.9. the content of policies and documentation regarding assessment is reviewed to ensure that it is aligned with current theories, empirical evidence, and international good practice;

4.10. students are informed of their responsibility for understanding assessment requirements, the academic achievement standards expected of them, and the need to make use of feedback.

Sources of information and evidence: How do we know we’re following good practices and doing them well?

The identification of Good Practices in Assessment stated above is intended to assist academic staff and students to look at the assessment occurring in their course and to evaluate its quality. Sources exist to which staff can turn for information. To assist staff identify those sources and the types of information available, examples relevant to “Convening and Teaching” have been prepared. See below.

In addition to the good practice at Program, Course and Teacher level, there is a range of good practice at institutional level that deals with policy, procedure and quality assurance. To assist staff identify those sources and the types of information available, more examples relevant to “Institution and Administration” have also been prepared. See below.

Both sets of examples are set out in relation to the Statements of Good Practice, the sources of information you might seek, and the type of evidence that is available from those sources. The examples listed are a sample only of all of those available.

Sources of information and evidence available for Convening and Teaching

Good Practice Statement #1: Assessment tasks are designed to advance student learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source:</th>
<th>results from peer review of assessment tasks and their design at course level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What to look for:</td>
<td>tasks are considered to test appropriately the increasing complexity of intellectual activity, and it is agreed that they require students to demonstrate their growth in understanding and development of skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>it is agreed that the variety of forms of assessment offered in the course is appropriate to the mode of teaching and the type of material being taught</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Good Practice Statement #2: Assessment processes and practices are clearly communicated to students to facilitate their learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source:</th>
<th>Course Outlines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What to look for:</td>
<td>Requirements for assessment tasks are set out for students, and directions for completing them are provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>what feedback is, how it will be offered, how it supports the learning aims and objectives of the course, and the benefits from taking it on board is communicated to students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Good Practice Statement # 3: Assessment practices are fair, produce marks and grades that are reliable and valid, and certify students’ achievement**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source:</th>
<th>outcomes of meetings between members of teaching teams or relevant colleagues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What to look for:</strong></td>
<td>evidence that moderation of assessment tasks occurs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>calibration of academics’ understanding of the academic achievement standards they use when judging the quality of students’ work occurs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Good Practice Statement # 4: Assessment policies and practices are planned, implemented, reviewed and improved**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source:</th>
<th>results from peer review of assessment tasks and their design at course level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What to look for:</strong></td>
<td>evidence of consideration and appropriate action taken based on student and peer evaluations of course assessment programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use of professional development resources on assessment or attendance at workshops</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source:</th>
<th>Student Evaluations of Teaching (SET), Student Evaluation of Courses (SEC), AUSSE, Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ), other surveys, focus groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What to look for:</strong></td>
<td>satisfaction ratings and feedback comments from student evaluations relevant to assessment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Sources of information and evidence available for the Institution and Administration

**Good Practice Statement #1: Assessment tasks are designed to advance student learning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source:</th>
<th>Institutional assessment policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What to look for:</td>
<td>analysis shows that the policy clearly articulates its underpinning philosophy, theoretical and evidence-based models</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Good Practice Statement #2: Assessment processes and practices are clearly communicated to students to facilitate their learning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source:</th>
<th>Institutional assessment policy and Framework for Academic Integrity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What to look for:</td>
<td>policies spell out the requirements for academic integrity and the consequences for plagiarism and other breaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>academic integrity data shows instances and nature of plagiarism and other breaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>data on instances and nature of academic appeals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Good Practice Statement # 4: Assessment policies and practices are planned, implemented, reviewed and improved**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source:</th>
<th>Institutional assessment policy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What to look for:</td>
<td>analysis shows that the policy specifies the good practices it has identified and the expectation that they will be implemented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the policy outlines its quality assurance and enhancement processes for assessment at University, Group/Faculty, Program and Course levels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source:</th>
<th>GIHE reports to Pro Vice Chancellors and Heads of School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What to look for:</td>
<td>rates of staff participation in professional development events on assessment within central, Group, Faculty or School/Department contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>usage data for online professional development resources on assessment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>