



The new Assessment Policy aims to support students who are engaged with their studies yet narrowly miss the requirements to pass the unit. This may include an additional opportunity to demonstrate unit learning outcomes (ULO) without the need to repeat the entire unit. The changes include:

- Making all assessment tasks non-mandatory by default.
- Creating the entitlement to a supplementary assessment for students who have narrowly missed passing the unit. Students who score over 45% may be eligible for a supplementary assessment if the summation of the failed assessment tasks represent less than 50% of the total marks. It should be noted that in some circumstances, assessment tasks can be granted an exception from this clause provided prior approval has occurred and clear communication in the unit's Learning Guide.

1. Definition:

A mandatory assessment task must at least be attempted to pass a unit. A blank or minimal response does not constitute an acceptable attempt with the student receiving a Fail Non-Submit (FNS) grade. Mandatory assessment tasks are to be indicated in the Learning Guide.” (Clause 4 item o, Assessment Policy)

Note:

- A **mandatory assessment** task is a hurdle that a ‘student must attempt’ otherwise, they will receive an FNS grade.
- The determination of a **“minimal response”** should represent a serious attempt to meet the requirements of the task. This requires **academic judgement** by the unit co-ordinator in consultation with the teaching team and course leaders.
- **Mandatory requirements** that are not associated with marks/results (e.g., attendance requirements) are regarded as assessment tasks for the purposes of the policy.
- A threshold assessment task is a type of mandatory assessment.

Thus the student must:

1. attempt the assessment task *and*
2. be awarded a mark equal to or over the threshold mark for the task as specified in the Learning Guide and approved by appropriate governance processes.

If this is not achieved *“this results in a unit fail irrespective of the value of the assessment item or the marks attained.”*

(Clause 4 item v, Assessment Policy).

MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

2. Conditions for mandatory assessment tasks:

“Mandatory and threshold assessment tasks should only be assigned if required for accreditation and/or an academic rationale is provided which is approved through the Courses and Units Approval process. These assessment tasks should be clearly indicated in the Learning Guide. Schools should progressively review the requirements for each unit through the scheduled review process for courses and units” (Clause 22, Assessment Policy).

This means that mandatory requirements:

1. must be determined on pedagogical grounds
2. should be used only where it is appropriate to ensure fulfilment of unit and course learning outcomes
3. may be used to demonstrate ‘fitness to practice’ for courses/programs related to professional practice
4. must be approved through the Curriculum Design and Approval policy
5. should be clearly indicated in the Learning Guide

Note: Accreditation requirements fall under (2) and (3).

3. Scenarios/Case Studies

3.1. Mandatory assessment items justified on the basis of accreditation requirements with detailed information to support the claim

Assessment Item	Type of Assessment	Length/Duration	Group/Individual	Unit Learning Outcomes	%	Threshold Y/N
Professional Placement Performance	Submission of timesheet as evidence of satisfactory completion of the 30 days of professional experience placement.	30 days	I	1-6	S/U	Y
Professional Placement Performance	Professional Experience Report demonstrating a Satisfactory standard on all learning outcomes – assessed by Supervising Teacher					

Comment in D.2.5d: *Students must attend the 30 days’ professional placement experience. These mandatory assessment items are part of the 60 days of professional experience required for professional accreditation with the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA). The 60-day requirement is divided into two 30-day experiences.*

Reviewer’s Comment: There is demonstrated alignment of the assessment task with details of the accreditation requirements. It is clear that the two assessment items should be mandatory. The School has also included the threshold requirement for these two assessment items (a Satisfactory result for each item to pass the unit).

3.2. Mandatory assessment items justified on the basis of accreditation but lacking detailed rationale or information

Comment in D.2.5d: *“All assessment items are mandatory, as per X accreditation requirements.”*

Reviewer’s Comment: The form needs to provide more details on the alignment of the assessment outcomes to *the accreditation requirements* before a decision can be determined.

MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

3.3. Scaffolded assessment design

Assessment Item	Type of Assessment	Length/ Duration	Group (G) / Individual (I)	Unit Learning Outcomes	%	Threshold Y/N
1 Reflection	Reflection	1000 words	I	1-3	20	N
2 Oral Presentation	Presentation	10 minutes	I	1-3	30	N
3 Research Essay	Essay	2000 words	I	1-3	50	N

Comment in D2.5.d. *All the assessment items are mandatory and must be attempted to pass the unit as they are scaffolded to support student learning.*

Reviewer's Comment: If ULOs are being assured in final assessments task(s) and students complete this satisfactorily, why can they not pass the unit without completing all tasks? This questions the mapping of where assurance of the ULOs actually occurs. A review of the requirement of tasks to be mandatory needs to be undertaken.

Note: Students would only be eligible for supplementary assessments for items 1 and 2 which also questions the assessment design. A review the ULOs and their alignment to assessment maybe appropriate.

3.4. Mandatory Assessment items 'to achieve the ULOs'

Comment in D.2.5:

All assessment items are required so that students can achieve the unit learning outcomes

or

All assessment items are mandatory to ensure that all elements of the unit learning outcomes are achieved in this unit

or

All the assessment items are mandatory and must be attempted to pass the unit.

Reviewer's Comment: This would be insufficient information to justify making the assessment items mandatory. The justifications/statements are a repetition of either (part of) the definition or condition of mandatory assessment (e.g., *All the assessment items are mandatory and must be attempted to pass the unit*). As "all assessment should be designed to assess attainment of ULOs", this is a circular argument.

The constructive alignment of learning and assessment to the intended ULOs requires mapping. The example above assures that the student attempts assessment of all ULOs. The definition of 'mandatory assessment' in the policy/document means that the justification does not need to ensure all students achieve all ULOs, only that they have attempted them. There is no justification to why an **attempt is mandatory**. Whether students can achieve all ULOs depends on the assessment design and student performance.

MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

3.5. A specific ULO is mapped against a specific assessment item.

ULOs:

1. Examine the foundational framework of
2. Analyse key contemporary issues arising in
3. Communicate ethical arguments and perspectives that

Assessment Item	Type of Assessment	Length/ Duration	Group (G) / Individual (I)	Unit Learning Outcomes	%	Threshold Y/N
1 Reflection	Reflection	1000 words	I	1	20	N
2 Oral Presentation	Presentation	10 minutes	I	2	30	N
3 Research Essay	Essay	2000 words	I	3	50	N

Comment D2.5.d. All assessment items are mandatory to ensure that all elements of the unit learning outcomes are achieved.

Reviewer's Comment: All assessment items could be non-mandatory as they are not justified via accreditation requirements or a pedagogical argument. This would not be enough information to justify making the assessment mandatory.

A single assessment item addressing only one ULO could be appropriate if all the ULOs and assessment tasks are written and mapped properly. This type of mapping reduces scaffolding to support student learning where sequenced assessment can build capability progressively and realistically. In addition, as assessment item 1 may be early in the unit, is it able to assure ULO 1 at the appropriate level and does that mean that a student could fail the unit early in the semester?

3.6. (extended version of Scenario 5)

ULOs:

1. Evaluate the principles and processes of evidence-based practice and its implication to
2. Examine barriers and facilitators to implementing
3. Formulate a clinical research question and conduct a relevant comprehensive literature search on....
4. Apply critical appraisal techniques to a range of research methodologies
5. Critically appraise research for its application to practice.....

Assessment Item	Type of Assessment	Length/ Duration	Group (G) / Individual (I)	Unit Learning Outcomes	%	Threshold Y/N
1 Part A) Essay Part B) Literature Search	Essay	2000 words	I	1-3	50	N
2 Critical appraisal of a research paper	Critical Review	2000 words	I	4, 5	50	N

MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

Comment D2.5.d. *All assessment items are mandatory to ensure that all elements of the unit learning outcomes are achieved.*

Reviewer's Comment: All assessment items could be non-mandatory as they are not part of accreditation requirements and/or they are not justified based on pedagogical grounds. The mapping of ULOs to assessment is to show all the ULOs are assessed in the unit. The justification making all assessment items mandatory, does not mean students will achieve all ULOs. It means students must attempt all ULOs, but this may not be at a satisfactory level. For example, a student who scores 20% for assessment 2 and 30% for assessment 1, will get 50% for the unit; but may not achieve ULOs 4 & 5 at a satisfactory level. Assessment regime might need to be reviewed to support student learning.

Conclusion

The above scenarios are illustrative of the rationale that is needed to justify mandatory/threshold assessments in accordance with Assessment Policy.

Further Support

If you have any queries or need support, contact your Educational Advisor in Learning Futures.

Further resources and readings can be found at the following links:

- <https://ctl.byu.edu/aligning-assessments-learning-outcomes>
- <https://teaching.unsw.edu.au/aligning-assessment-learning-outcomes>