



Faculty of Arts

COURSEWORK AND EXAMINATIONS – GUIDELINES

The Faculty has reviewed the Faculty of Arts Coursework and Examinations Guidelines (2007), and approved the following guidelines from Semester 2, 2011.

PRINCIPLES

The Faculty recognises that among the various disciplines in which its departments¹ teach a variety of teaching and assessment practices are appropriate and effective. At the same time, it acknowledges that it is appropriate and in students' best interest to seek, as far as that is possible, some consistency and comparability in workload expectations and assessment practices within disciplines at each stage and differentiation between stages. These guidelines have been formulated with a view to achieving that purpose.

1. The Faculty expects all teaching staff to actively consider and review their teaching practices as an on-going part of their professional development.
2. The Faculty encourages all departments to establish Undergraduate and Postgraduate Teaching and Learning Committees, where these do not already exist, which meet regularly to:
 - a. Discuss teaching and learning practices in the department.
 - b. Draw on 'best practice' examples of pedagogy from within the department, other parts of the Faculty, University and wider tertiary environment.
 - c. Review and evaluate the content and assessment practices of both existing and newly-introduced courses in the department.
3. The Faculty further expects, in accordance with the University's policy for the Assessment of Student Learning, 2004 (p.3), that as part of their annual planning and review procedures, departments will review the course offerings planned for the following academic year and approve the proposed course assessments for those courses, taking care to consider comparability in terms of course expectations and student workloads within and across stages and the pedagogic soundness of the proposed assessment.
4. In endorsing the following guidelines for coursework assessment and examination practices at undergraduate and postgraduate level, the Faculty notes that:
 - a. All assessment and examination practices must comply with University policies and regulations, for which see:
 - the policy on Assessment of Student Learning (2004), <https://policies.auckland.ac.nz/policies/Policies/policy-display-register/assessment-of-student-learning-policy.pdf>
 - Instructions for Examiners and Assessors (2011 and reissued annually), http://web.auckland.ac.nz/uoa/fms/secure/staff/admin_services/Student_admin/Examinations/docs/Examination_Preparation/2010-Examiners-and-Assessors%20for%20the%20web.pdf
 - Examination Regulations (available in the *University Calendar* and at <http://www.calendar.auckland.ac.nz/regulations/academic/examination.html>);
 - b. All teaching and learning should be informed by the University's Graduate Profiles: <https://www.staff.auckland.ac.nz/uoa/home/staff-intranet/teaching-and-students/teaching-and-learning-1/graduate-profiles>

¹ In this document, 'department' should be understood to include all teaching Departments, Schools and Centres.

- c. Proposals for assessment and examination for all courses to be taught by a department each semester are to be submitted for the Dean's approval (see 6 below). Departments may be asked to provide further information;
- d. Assessment requirements for each course should be made available to students at the beginning of the course, through course information sheets or booklets.

GUIDELINES

1. Overall assessment

The Faculty acknowledges that coursework and assessment practices often serve different purposes, both formative (learning-based) and evaluative (summative). It expects teaching staff and departments to consider the pedagogic implications of their teaching, learning and assessment practices, keeping in mind that the University requires that coursework include an evaluative element for grading purposes.

1.1 The Faculty recognises that assessment is based on the quality of a student's work and not its word length. But in order to achieve appropriate equivalence or comparability between courses of similar content, and appropriate differentiation between stages, the Faculty makes the following recommendations.

1.1.1 For largely discursive courses, Faculty recommends the following word-length maxima for total course assessment, including coursework and examinations, for 15 point courses:

- a. At Stage I and Stage II: 5,000 words
- b. At Stage III and beyond: 6,000 words

1.1.2 For the purposes of calculating word-lengths, an hour of discursive writing in exam or test conditions is considered to be the equivalent of 1,000 words.

1.1.3 For courses without a large discursive component (eg language acquisition courses), the word-length equivalence may not be appropriate. Departments teaching such courses are encouraged to work out how best to ensure the workloads for these courses are broadly equivalent with those for other courses at each stage.

1.2 It is University policy that all Stage I courses will have a final exam worth at least 50% of the final grade (before plussage). The Faculty expects that a 50% exam at Stage I will normally be 2 hours long.

1.3 For Stage I courses with a 2-hour exam, the maximum word-length for the rest of the assessment (coursework) is 3,000 words. For Stage I courses with a 3-hour exam (worth 60% or more), the maximum word-length for the rest of the assessment (coursework) is 2,000 words.

1.4 At all other stages, Faculty allows for greater flexibility in coursework and assessment, provided that there is consistency and comparability between assessment for courses at the same stage and with similar content within the department.

1.5 The Faculty expects that multiple-choice questions in the assessment of a course should not normally count for more than 50% of the final grade for the course. Proposals for higher proportions must be made to Faculty Academic Committee.

1.6 The Faculty recommends the following word-lengths for postgraduate theses, dissertations and courses, while recognizing there may be justifiable bases for exceptions.

120 point thesis	40,000 words
90 point thesis	30,000 words
60 point dissertation	20,000 words
45 point dissertation	15,000 words
30 point dissertation	max. 12,000 words
30 point course	max. 12,000 words
15 point course	max. 6,000 words

1.7 In setting coursework and assessment, teaching staff should keep in mind the student workload implications for the entire course. The University Curriculum Commission in 2002, in the report that led to the current structure of the degree, described a formula in which 'a normal semester course of 15 credits would... represent 150 hours of study, or ten hours a week for 15 weeks... 12 teaching weeks and three weeks of study break and examinations...[in which] the student workload in the teaching weeks would comprise 120 hours made up of lectures, tutorials, seminars... plus independent study...' (p.29).

1.8 At undergraduate level, with the exception of supervised research projects (which are subject to Faculty approval), a single piece of coursework assessment should not normally exceed 60% of the final grade.

1.9 University policy with respect to concurrently taught courses (ie courses at different stages which share the same lectures) is that the assessment requirements and standards for the two courses must be clearly differentiated. Tutorials or other support classes, where offered, should also be distinct.

1.10 In planning the amount and timing of coursework assessment, staff need to be aware of the University regulations which state that:

1.10.1 In courses with an exam and provided that students have met the deadlines for the submission of coursework: grades for coursework need to be returned to students before they sit the exam and no later than the last teaching week of the course. No coursework that counts for the final grade should be due after the end of the second-to-last teaching week.

1.10.2 Where two or more assessment tasks are similar in nature and count for the final grade, the later tasks should not be due until at least one week after feedback has been provided for the preceding task.

1.10.3 Students should receive grades and feedback back as soon as possible, and no later than three teaching weeks after the coursework was due or handed in (whichever is later).

1.10.4 In addition to a mark or grade, students should receive a clear indication of the strengths and weaknesses of their work, accompanied by guidance on how to perform the task, or similar task better.

1.10.5 In full-year courses, no coursework which counts towards the final grade should be scheduled between the second-to-last teaching week of the first semester and the start of the second semester.

(See: Examination regulation 2b (*University Calendar*) and the Assessment of Student Learning Policy, 2004, p. 5)

1.11 For courses assessed 100% by coursework, departments need to ensure adequate material is presented for assessment by the course assessor, in accordance with the Instructions to Examiners and Assessors, 2011, p.6, col. 1.

1.12 For the examination and assessment of courses and research work (other than doctoral theses), the University's Instructions to Examiners and Assessors state that:

1.12.1 For courses: each course is to be examined by more than one member of staff or examined by one member of staff and assessed by another. In the case of postgraduate courses, assessors should normally be external to the University.

1.12.2 For theses or research portfolios and research projects with a value of 90 points or more: two examiners and an assessor should be appointed, and either the assessor or one of the examiners must be external to the University.

1.12.3 For dissertations and research projects with a value of between 30 and 80 points: an examiner and an assessor should be appointed, one of whom should normally be external to the University.

1.12.4 Supervisors and Co-Supervisors cannot be appointed as assessors. The Faculty recommends, in the interests of maintaining objectivity, that, where possible, supervisors

are not appointed as examiners for Masters theses.

(See: Instructions to Examiners and Assessors (2011), pp. 5-7).

1.13 Departments may wish to create guidelines for course assessors at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

2. Examinations

The term 'examination' is used only for examinations held during the specified examination periods. Examination-like assessment (invigilated tests) held outside these periods should be referred to as 'tests'. While the University expects Stage I courses to include a final exam, the Faculty has no examination requirements at other stages, although it recognises that exams (and invigilated tests) may allow for the assessment of an individual student's competence in strictly controlled conditions and with greater confidence as to the authorship of work than is possible for material completed outside invigilated contexts.

2.1 Assessment information in course outlines should make explicit to students that University regulations require that whenever an examination is set, students must sit this and satisfy the examiners, no matter what its weighting in the overall marks for the course. (Note: students will fail - DNS - if they do not sit an examination, even if they have more than 50% of the final marks through their coursework.)

2.2 Procedures for aegrotat (illness) and compassionate consideration are explained in the Instructions to Examiners and Assessors, the Examination regulations, and in the information available to students on the University website. Staff should ensure they are familiar with these before giving any advice to students.

2.3 Students who miss an examination (eg through misreading their timetable) should be sent immediately to the Examinations office. They may be eligible for consideration for a Special Pass.

3. Plussage

This term describes an assessment scheme in which the proportion of the final mark allocated to the coursework (and correspondingly the weight of the exam) may be changed in a fixed way if this benefits the student. For example, in a given course, coursework is specified to count 40% and the exam 60%, but under plussage coursework may count for 0 and the exam for 100% for eligible students, where this yields a better overall result for the student.

3.1 The Faculty may approve plussage arrangements for undergraduate courses, in which case:

3.1.1 Eligibility for plussage may depend on the student meeting some performance conditions.

3.1.2 Departments must have a clear policy about plussage that ensures consistency and fairness across courses.

3.1.3 Plussage arrangements and any conditions must be advised to students with the assessment arrangements at the beginning of the course.

3.2 Plussage is not acceptable for postgraduate courses.

4. Class participation, group-work and peer-review

4.1 The Faculty will not approve allocation of marks solely for attendance at classes.

4.2 Where marks are assigned to 'class contribution', presentations or performances in class, the task to be assessed and the criteria on which marks are to be awarded should be clearly stated to students in the course information. The requirements and the assessment should be such that these can be easily understood, are related to appropriate learning tasks and skills, and are not a matter of subjective personal response on the part of the assessor. The University expects that such assessments will be recorded immediately they are made (not from memory at the end of the course) and will be made available to the student on request.

4.3 Marks for class participation should not exceed 10% of the final grade, unless the participation or class contribution consists of significant presentations (eg a seminar) or performances (which are separately identified).

4.4 Assessment requirements for group work should be consistent with University policy:

4.4.1 The group work assessment component should not normally exceed 20% of the final grade. Exceptions require Faculty approval.

4.4.2 Assessment of group work should consist on a combination of a group mark and an individual mark (for contribution to the process). The individual mark may come from peer assessment or peer-moderated self-assessment.

4.4.3 Assessment criteria should be established and cover both the output of the group project and the process by which it is produced, including the contribution of individuals.

4.4.4 Each group working on a project should be of a limited size and not normally exceed a membership of four.

(See: *Instructions to Examiners and Assessors* (2011) pp. 2 -3).

4.5 Where peer or self-assessment practices are used to assess students' coursework or in-class participation, these must be covered by a set of guidelines clearly stated to students in the course information. Self and peer assessment should not count for more than 10% of the final grade for the course and should be moderated by the teaching staff of the course.

5. Grading

5.1 The University officially marks in Grades as follows:

Pass grades	
A+	high first
A	clear first
A-	bare first
B+	high second
B	clear second
B-	bare second
C+	sound pass
C	pass
C-	marginal pass

Fail grades	
D+	marginal fail
D	clear fail
D-	poor fail
DNS	did not sit examination*
DNC	did not complete required coursework

5.2 For the purpose of arithmetical calculations combining different results, a 9 point numerical scale (Grade Points) corresponding to pass grades is used:

A+	9
A	8
A-	7

B+	6
B	5
B-	4
C+	3
C	2
C-	1
Fail grades	0

5.3 For computing results within a course involving different combinations of assessment items, the Faculty of Arts has adopted a uniform grade : mark scheme:

Pass grades	
A+	90 – 100
A	85 – 89
A-	80 – 84
B+	75 – 79
B	70 – 74
B-	65 – 69
C+	60 – 64
C	55 – 59
C-	50 - 54

Fail grades	
D+	45 – 49
D	40 – 44
D-	0 - 39

5.4 Use or any different grading scale for any course will require the prior approval of the Faculty Academic Committee, and must be clearly explained to students in the course information.

5.5 University examination grading and assessment policies, including GPA calculations, and definitions of DNC and DNS are detailed in the *Instructions to Examiners and Assessors* (2011). All staff should make themselves familiar with these policies.

5.6 Honours grades

Where honours are awarded, the grade equivalences are as follows:

H1	GPA 7.0 or above	A- or above
H2(1)	GPA 5.5 – 6.9	mid B and B+
H2(2)	GPA 4.0 – 5.4	B- or low B

Note: Marks below B- do not qualify for honours. Students enrolled for BA(Hons) who do not achieve honours cannot be awarded the degree (but may be eligible to reassign courses passed to a Postgraduate Diploma). Students enrolled for MA may receive the degree without honours.

5.7 Merit and Distinction

In some cases postgraduate diplomas may be awarded with Distinction or Merit (see individual diploma regulations).

- a. Distinction should be awarded, where available, where the overall grade corresponds to first class honours. (GPA 7.0 or higher)
- b. Merit should be awarded, where available, where the overall grade corresponds to second class honours division 1. (GPA 5.5 - 6.9)

5.8 The University's policy for Assessment of Student Learning requires that students be enabled to understand the standards of work expected of them, and that information be available about the standards needed to obtain specific grades (2004, p.3) through 'Grade descriptors'. An example is provided in the Appendix (p. 9). Departments are expected to consider and provide appropriately modified versions of Grade Descriptors for their own discipline and courses.

6. Information for Dean's approval of Coursework and Examination details.

6.1 When providing details of coursework and examination proposals for courses on the SA64 form (for courses to be offered the following semester), departments should specify:

- a. The kinds of coursework and percentage of overall marks for each,
- b. The word length for assessments (where appropriate, for example 1 x 2000 word essay @ 40%),
- c. The time length for tests (for example, 2 x 1 hour test @ 20% each),
- d. The time length of the examination,
- e. Nature of examination and test content eg essay, short answer, multiple choice,
- f. Concurrently taught courses.

7. Information for students for each course.

7.1 Full details of the assessment requirements for each course should be included in a course outline given to students at the beginning of the course. These should include:

- a. The kind and timing for all coursework items, together with the marks assigned to each,
- b. What pieces of assessment are compulsory (including the exam, if there is one; see 2.1 above),
- c. Whether plussage is applied and how,
- d. Whether the course is concurrently taught and how it differs from its concurrently taught alternate.

7.2 It is recommended that some indication is given for each assessment item of the kind of knowledge or skills which it is intended to assess, the marking criteria used to assess it, as well as the Department or School grade descriptors.

Faculty guidelines for course information can be found on the Staff Intranet under Policies..., Teaching and Learning.

<http://www.artsstaff.auckland.ac.nz/teachingandlearning>

APPENDIX 1

Assesment of Student Learning

Example of a Grading System and descriptors relating to student attainment

GRADE	% VALUE	DESCRIPTION
A +	90 – 100	Work of high to exceptionally high quality showing excellent knowledge and understanding of subject matter and appreciation of issues; well formulated arguments based on strong and sustained evidence; maps and diagrams, graphs and tables, etc included where appropriate; relevant literature referenced; high level of creative ability, originality and critical thinking; excellent communication and presentation skills.
A	85 – 89	
A -	80 - 84	
B +	75 – 79	Work showing good to strong grasp of subject matter and understanding of major issues though not necessarily of the finer points; arguments clearly developed and based on convincing evidence; relevant literature referenced; evidence of creative ability, originality and critical thinking; good communication and presentation skills.
B	70 – 74	
B -	65 - 69	
C +	60 – 64	Work showing a knowledge of subject matter and appreciation of main issues though possibly with some lapses and inadequacies; arguments developed and supported by some evidence and references; creative ability, originality and critical thinking present but limited; adequate communication and presentation skills.
C	55 – 59	
C -	50 - 54	
D +	45 – 49	Work lacking breadth and depth. Work generally has gaps. Frequently work of this grade takes a simple factual approach and understanding and coverage of material is inadequate; does not attempt to interpret the material; at the lower end, indicates a need for considerable effort to achieve improvement; communication and presentation skills are poor.
D	40 - 44	
D-	0 - 39	Highly unsatisfactory. Work shows a lack of knowledge about and understanding of the topic. Inadequate in degree of relevance, sometimes completeness, sometimes both. Communication and presentation skills are weak.

Please note that the attainment descriptors must be adapted to different levels of learning or degree study.