

ASSESSMENT POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Fire Rescue and First Response Ltd makes a commitment to the clear articulation of standards and expectations, and emphasises that learning is facilitated and rewarded by adopting appropriate assessment and or examination practices. The relevance and quality of Company awards are also enhanced by ensuring that assessment practices are a valid and reliable means of determining whether course and programme objectives have been met.

One of the Company's goals is to 'pursue excellence in courses, teaching and life-long learning to a standard benefiting the Company, the Client, and the Students, and to be taught in a manner that will challenge and develop the capabilities, potential and intellectual independence of our students.' In pursuance of this goal, the following principles and guidelines describe expectations in relation to the assessment and or examination of Students.

In articulating these principles and guidelines, Fire Rescue and First Response Ltd also acknowledges and accepts the diversity of its awards and, consequently, the diversity of assessment and examination practices within the Company related to the course expectations. As a result there may be instances where, for sound academic reasons, a particular guideline may not be appropriate.

It is also recognised that the theory and practice of assessment and or examination evolves over time, and staff will be encouraged to take advantage of advances in technology and changes in the field of assessment design. These guidelines should not be seen as a constraint or discouragement against the use of innovative assessment practices.

DEFINITIONS

ASSESSMENT – the process by which evidence is gathered to measure what clients know (knowledge) and are able to do (skills) in relation to identified learning outcomes at specific points during their course of study

VALIDITY – the extent to which assessment tasks fulfil their intended purposes, i.e. assessing fairly what the tasks are intended to assess, and the extent to which the asks guide and motivate student learning

RELIABILITY – relates to the consistency and dependability of the information from an assessment task. Reliable assessment information is that which is not influenced by extraneous factors, such as, a poorly designed assessment task, and variations and/or bias in marking

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MANAGEABILITY – the extent to which the assessment is practical and manageable for both staff and students in terms of workload and available resources

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT – is used to inform and improve client learning. It is carried during a course with the intention of guiding the student's subsequent learning and Trainers teaching, and encouraging deeper engagement with the course. Examples of formative assessment include work which receives written comments or feedback

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT – is used to measure learning which has already taken place. It is used to determine the student's final grade

STANDARDS-BASED OR CRITERION REFERENCED ASSESSMENT – assessment that interprets a student's achievement in relation to a set of standards

NORM REFERENCED ASSESSMENT – assessment in which a student's performance is interpreted in relation to the performance of other student's

LEARNING OUTCOME – a statement which clearly identifies the knowledge, skills and/or understanding that a student will be able to demonstrate as a result of successfully completing part of a course. Learning outcomes reflect the achievement of course objectives

A **MODERATOR** is a person of academic and/or professional standing who ensures that assessment tasks are valid, reliable, fair and manageable both within a course and between courses. A moderator assists in maintaining high quality standards by providing advice to the Trainer/Assessor, but may not change course grades. Moderators may be either internal or external to the Company

An **EXTERNAL EXAMINER** is a person appointed from outside the Company to examine student work. An external examiner may be required to recommend a grade, or contribute to the recommendation of a grade

POLICY STATEMENT

PRINCIPLES

In order to be valid, fair and reliable, Fire Rescue and First Response Ltd assessments are guided by the following principles. All staff will be cognisant of these principles when they plan, implement and review assessment tasks and assessment processes

- **VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY.** Individual assessment tasks should be chosen to maximise validity and reliability, and the learning (formative)

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purposes of assessment should be considered alongside the grading (summative) purposes

- **FAIRNESS AND MANAGIABILITY.** The workload associated with assessment requirements should be reasonable and manageable, and the assessment tasks should be described early in the course so that students have adequate opportunity to plan for them alongside their other commitments
- **RELEVANCE.** Assessment should centre on the knowledge, skills and competencies relating to the stated learning outcomes of the course
- **TRANSPARENCY.** Students, Clients, and Staff should be fully informed of Company policies, practices and procedures in relation to assessment
- **LIFE-LONG LEARNING.** Assessment in all courses should give explicit emphasis to skills for life-long learning, such as the development of written and oral communication skills, research skills and thinking skills

GUIDELINES

The following section seeks to set in place Company assessment practices and procedure which are valid, reliable, fair, manageable, relevant and transparent

1. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- All staff should receive a copy of this assessment document before beginning any teaching and assessment duties
- The Company should ensure that all Trainers and Assessors receive appropriate guidance and training related to the marking of Client work before marking is undertaken
- Each year, the Company should provide opportunities for new and established Trainers and Assessors to discuss assessment practices and enhance their assessment skills and procedures in line with the provisions of this document

2. ASSESSMENT DESIGN

PROCEDURES FOR APPROVING AND REVIEWING ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

- The principles and guidelines outlined in this document must be considered as part of course approval or review process
- It is expected that proposals for new courses include information about learning outcomes, together with a rationale for the proposed assessment procedures in light of these outcomes

METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

- Fire Rescue and First Response Ltd supports an integrated method of assessment for evidence collection which can include a combination of methods of evidence gathering.

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- Methods of assessment should be selected which give a valid indication of clients' achievement in relation to all the learning outcomes of the course. The valid assessment of knowledge, skills and competencies may therefore require a variety of different assessment methods. These may include, but are not limited to, reports/worksheets, essays, projects, assignments, oral presentations, performance of practical work, portfolios, case studies, debates, pre-course paperwork, tests and examination in both theory and practical, recorded professional conversations, & post course assignments.
- Assessment tasks should vary to reflect the learning outcomes of a course, as well as course size, level and duration

RELATIVE WEIGHTINGS GIVEN TO DIFFERENT LEARNING OUTCOMES AND EACH ASSESSMENT TASK

- Assessment in all courses should give a substantial weighting to deep learning – that is, the development of conceptual understanding and skills in applying knowledge to new situations – while not neglecting to give credit for learning core factual material
- The weightings given to different assessment tasks should be decided by the examiner to best describe clients' capabilities and performance at the end of the course, and should be related to the amount of work involved in each task and the relative importance of each learning outcome

THE PROVISION OF RESOURCES REQUIRED BY ASSESSMENT TASKS

- Fire Rescue and First Response Ltd will provide all training resources for First Aid Training – the Company owns Manikins, Presentation materials, formats, computers and data projectors, presentation aids and other necessary equipment/materials required for First Aid Courses
- Equipment for Fire and other Specialist Unit Standards will be supplied by Fire Rescue and First Response Ltd, or
- The Company may require the Client provide the necessary equipment – all Company staff will be trained in the use and safety issues of any equipment before undertaking any training of clients with this equipment or resources

TIMING OF ASSESSMENT AND STUDENT WORKLOAD

- The number of assessment tasks counting towards a final course grade should not exceed Company guidelines. Assessment tasks should be related to the size and duration of the course
- Due dates for items of assessment worth 20% or more must be not less than two weeks apart
- There should be at least four weeks between the setting of any major assignment or essay topic and the due date

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- Trainers/Assessors should attempt to spread the assessment load for the Students and Client throughout the course, without undermining the validity of the assessment
- The Assessment Examinations Procedures policy provided further instructions on the timing of assessments for clients
- Students and Client should be given early information about the requirements of unit standard credited assessment tasks so that they can plan their course work alongside their other commitments
- In setting items of assessment, careful consideration should be given to the amount of time allowed for preparation, taking into account when the relevant material is to be covered in training and access to resources

ASSESSING STUDENT PERFORMANCE

GRADING STUDENT PERFORMANCE

- Final course grades should indicate demonstrated achievement at the end of the course, through an accumulation of appropriate evidence from course work and/or final examination
- Grades for individual pieces of assessment should be awarded only on the basis of demonstrated achievement in the task being assessed
- Student's achievement in a piece of an assessment should be judged on its own merits (standards-based) rather than judged normatively – i.e. by ranking clients' achievement
- The grading scale should be consistent within a programme and adhered to by all the examiners within that programme

FEEDBACK ON COURSE WORK

- If Students are to gain maximum benefit from assessment they need feedback which is timely, sufficiently detailed and constructive
- Assessed work (other than final tests or final reports) must be returned to students, normally within four weeks of the date of the test, or within four weeks of the date on which it was submitted. The work will be accompanied by sufficient oral or written feedback to allow the students to form an accurate appraisal of their performance. If possible, all assessed work should be returned to students before the final examination or test so that feedback may be utilised in revision for the final exam or test
- Where two or more assessment tasks in a course are similar in nature and intended to count towards the final course grade, sufficient time should be allowed between due dates for feedback from the earlier task to be incorporated into the later task
- In addition to receiving a mark or grade, clients should, where appropriate, receive an indication of the strengths and weaknesses of their work, normally accompanied by guidance on how to perform the task or a similar task better – this could be in the form of client specific

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comments, a model answer and/or a general commentary on common errors demonstrated by the group

- Students should be provided with an indication of the distribution of results for the group when each assessed item is returned
- Return of Students' assessed work must comply with Company policy on the Privacy Act

ASSESSMENT OF GROUP WORK

- Performance in group tasks is an acceptable component of student course grades. The percentage contribution from group tasks should be related to the learning outcomes of the course
- Before individual grades are finalised, the Trainer/Assessor should seek and take account of additional information about the contributions of individuals to team efforts, particularly if group tasks contribute significantly towards the final course grade
- When using group work for assessment, Trainers/Assessors should ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to support clients working in groups

ASSESSMENT OF ORAL AND PERFORMANCE ACHIEVEMENT

- In the case of a formal test or examination based on oral or performance presentation
- **Literacy difficulties** – student has poor literacy ability, dyslexia or similar difficulties.

At the beginning of the course, the learners are informed that if any have any literary difficulties the option for Oral examination is available.

The learners are informed that a 'discrete' approach to the Trainer/Assessor is welcome if the Student wishes for privacy with this issue.

The Trainer/Assessor facilitates the Oral Assessment with the same assessment questions, as the other students.

The Trainer/Assessor reads the appropriate questions to the student, and writes the answers 'verbatim', as the student gives the answers.

The Trainer/Assessor does not prompt, give hints, or assist the student in any way with the answers any more than he/she would assist the other students

For any qualification where the requirement is literacy ability – i.e. report writing, the Trainer/Assessor will assess the ability of the student, if the

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Trainer/Assessor assess that the student does not have the ability to fulfil the criteria, the student will be given a Not Yet Competent result, and the Trainer/Assessor will discuss with the student why this result was given.

Performance Based Criteria – Practical examination of skill

At the beginning of the course, the group is informed of any Physical assessment or Practical Scenario and the requirements of both

Consideration is given to any client who feels intimidated by this type of assessment, and full encouragement is given, the client is informed that this is a NECESSARY part of the assessment and a considerate approach will be adopted by the Trainer/Assessor.

However, while consideration is given for a student being 'shy' or 'whakama', at no point should this impact on their need to complete the assessment, the student should be encouraged to complete the assessment as required, also the student should be fully informed that failure to complete this part of the assessment may result in failure to achieve the standard/course requirement.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

- It is of critical importance that Trainers/Assessors are assured that the work being assessed is the work of the student to whom credits will be given. To this end, staff must provide students with clear guidelines as to what constitutes academic dishonesty, particularly in relation to plagiarism, and what actions are taken in the event of academic dishonesty being suspected – see Discipline Regulations
- It is the responsibility of staff to ensure that the consequences and implications of academic dishonesty are explained to students.

ACADEMIC GRIEVANCES AND DISPUTES ABOUT ASSESSMENT

- Students and Clients with concerns about assessment processes should be advised to speak with their Trainer/Assessor at the commencement of the course. If the matter cannot be resolved, then the client should discuss the matter with the Company Director – see Academic Appeals Procedures

MODERATION

INTERNAL MODERATION

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- Staff should discuss with the Company Directors all assessment tasks (including examination questions) and when similar discussions should take place when deciding how to grade student responses to assessment tasks
- Where two or more staff share the marking of an assignment or examination question, these activities must be moderated for consistency of marking standards and quality of feedback provided
- Where students are offered a choice of examination questions, the marks awarded for the different options should be compared and adjustments made if necessary to allow for variations in question difficulty

EXTERNAL MODERATION

- Certain courses may be subject to accreditation and moderation of assessment by external bodies. In such cases assessment must also comply with any requirements of these bodies

PRE ASSESSMENT MODERATION OF TRAINING MATERIALS

- Courses are all internally moderated at the Company Directors weekly meetings, this is in line with the feedback received by students, and any issues raised by our Standard Setting Bodies, the focus of this is to maintain currency with Unit Standards and requirements of the relevant Standard Setting Body.
- In the design process discussion takes place to ensure that the course is relevant, current, and in line with the Unit Standard requirements, once this is done, the course is then sent to the relevant Standard Setting Body for moderation
- Courses will be designed to include – Power point presentation, lesson plans, training resources, and will be sent for moderation
- Once moderation has been completed and the course has been approved, the course is ready for presentation to students

7. NOTIFYING CLIENTS OF ASSESSMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- In each course, students must receive specific, clear and early information about course assessment requirements, e.g. due date, weighting, length, presentation. If it is not appropriate to provide this information in the Course Outline, it should be provided in a separate assignment handout. An exception may also occur when the lecturer believes it is appropriate to negotiate some aspects of the assessment programme with students
- The type, dates, times and weighting of assessment must be given to clients at the beginning of the course
- If minimum levels of attendance or completion of practical or other specified work are required before a final examination can be sat, or a

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course grade awarded, these requirements should be detailed in course information. There should be a clear rationale for such requirements and they should be communicated clearly to all clients to whom they apply

- Students and Clients should be notified of Company assessment policies, practices and procedures. To this end Fire Rescue and First Response Ltd will provide the following information in a timely matter to clients and staff through notification in handbooks, course outlines or any other appropriate means e.g. handouts

Grading practices including the grading scale, explanation of grading criteria, scaling of marks and grades, and moderation

Policy on the granting of extensions of time for submitting assessed work

Penalties imposed for the late submission of work

Provisions and procedures for reconsideration of grades
Appeal provisions and procedures

Provisions for students with disabilities, particularly in relation to the sitting of tests or examinations

Expectations regarding academic integrity, especially in relation to plagiarism and including procedures in the event that dishonest academic practice is suspected

- Once a course has started, any change to the conditions of assessment may be determined only after agreement is reached with all the group members. All Students in the group must be informed. If there is no objection from any member of the group by a specified date the assessment may be changed. If any object, the conditions of assessment will not be altered

ASSESSMENT AGAINST UNITS STANDARDS REGISTERED ON NQF

Students will only be assessed against the Unit Standards or Qualifications registered on the National Qualifications Framework for which Fire Rescue and First Response Ltd are accredited.

To ensure this, students who are long term courses will be given a full outline of the Unit Standards and Qualifications available with Fire Rescue and First Response Ltd in their Student Handbook. Students who are on one or two day courses will not receive this student handbook. When students approach Fire Rescue and First Response Ltd, they will be informed of the Units that Fire Rescue and First Response Ltd can deliver.

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Fire Rescue and First Response Ltd will not deliver any Unit Standards outside their NQF accreditation. Should Fire Rescue and First Response Ltd wish to be able to deliver new Unit Standards we will approach the relevant ITO for accreditation, and once this has been approved, will then register this with NZQA.

MODERATION AND ASSESSMENT BY STANDARD SETTING BODIES

All programmes and courses designed by Fire Rescue and First Response Ltd, will be sent to the relevant Standard Setting Body for pre moderation, once moderation has been passed the course will be ready for teaching.

All course documents will be held for the duration set by the Standard Setting Body for moderation and assessment. This way if a Standard Setting Body requests course paperwork, these will be readily available for moderation or assessment.