Communication with Students

Under the terms of the Student Charter Curtin undertakes to provide students with "accurate and accessible information about all relevant aspects of a course including unit learning outcomes, content, assessment and timetables in a timely manner before the start of each study period." Information about the assessment, including the assessment criteria, provided to students must be clearly and accurately stated and sufficiently detailed to make explicit what is required of students undertaking an assessment task. Jargon or abbreviations that students are unlikely to be familiar with should be avoided. Well communicated assessment requirements will help the student not only to target their effort and stay on task, but also minimise the number of enquiries requesting greater clarity made to the academic (Dunn, Morgan, O'Reilly & Parry, 2204).

Comprehensive information on each assessment task should be detailed in the unit outline. It is the responsibility of the unit coordinator to publish the unit outline at least one week prior to the teaching period. The unit outline should be prepared using Curtin's Unit Outline Builder (UOB), which automatically inputs the approved, authoritative assessment data from Student One into the unit outline. Assessment details imported includes the assessment tasks for the unit, corresponding mark allocation (percentage or pass/fail) and which unit learning outcomes the tasks articulate with. The due date for assessment submission and supplementary information is manually added by the unit coordinator.

Supplementary material provides the students with further information concerning the assessment tasks and may include details on:

- specific description of each task to make clear the requirements and format of the task, including word count and duration of a test/examination as appropriate;
- marking criteria, in the form of a marking guide or rubrics for each assessment;
- group marking processes;
- work integrated learning / fieldwork placement requirements;
- assignment submission and return processes, including expected return date;
- feedback processes, including the nature of feedback and how it will be provided;
- moderation process;
- plagiarism monitoring;
- penalties for late assessment (see Assessment and Student Progression Manual: Consolidated Policies and Procedures, p. 25);
- requests for assessment extension (see Assessment and Student Progression Manual: Consolidated Policies and Procedures, pp. 26-30), and
- scheduled dates for deferred assessments and supplementary assessments (see Assessment and Student Progression Manual: Consolidated Policies and Procedures, pp. 31-33.

Take the time to engage with students and discuss the above issue in tutorial time or through online forums.

Communication within the Teaching Team

Details of the assessment tasks must be made available to the teaching team and any external assessors or examiners. Feedback to external assessors is particularly important for fieldwork education where careful attention to moderation processes are needed to ensure consistency and reliability across placements (see Assessment and Student Progression Manual: Consolidated Policies and

Procedures, p. 21, and Fieldwork Education at Curtin). The unit coordinator is responsible for organising and maintaining channels of communication between the teaching team to address assessment and moderation processes and issues (refer to the role description of unit coordinators in the Unit Coordinator Handbook).

e*VALU*ate

At Curtin the opportunity for students to provide evaluation on the unit to teaching staff is provided through Curtin's eVALUate system. In particular, items 4 and 5 in the 'unit survey' and item 6 in the 'teaching survey' concern assessment and feedback.

Providing opportunities for informal communication forums, either face-to-face or online throughout the teaching period will supplement the information obtained through use of *e*VALUate. Many issues can arise during the semester, and prompt understanding and management on behalf of the teaching team can do much to mitigate problems connected to the unit assessment.

References

Dunn, L., Morgan, C., O'Reilly, M., & Parry, S. (2004). *The student assessment handbook.* London: Routledge.

Recommended readings
Rust, C., Price, M. & O'Donovan, B. (2003) Improving students' learning by developing their understanding of assessment criteria and processes, *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, *28*(2), 147-164.