INTRODUCTION

1. Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning (T&L). This paper sets out the policy on assessment in taught programmes at CUHK, and consists of the following parts:

- The principles of an assessment policy
- The recommended code of practice
- Monitoring of quality and impact
- Approval and future revisions

PRINCIPLES OF AN ASSESSMENT POLICY

Purpose of assessment

2. Assessment has an important role in T&L strategy, as it:

   (a) provides evidence of student attainment of the desired learning outcomes for particular courses and for the overall programme, such evidence being necessary for certification and employment;

   (b) ensures appropriate standards for all taught programmes; and

   (c) enables students to understand their own learning progress and set learning goals for themselves, in this sense being a learning activity in itself.

Types of assessment

3. The objectives (a) and (b) above are often said to be *summative*, while the objective (c) is often said to be *formative*. 
4. Summative assessment in turn can be conducted in two different ways.

(a) The assessment can be pegged to pre-determined standards or expected learning outcomes; the term criterion referencing is sometimes used.

(b) The assessment can be defined by relative performance; the term norm referencing is sometimes used, but shall be avoided here to avoid confusion with the narrower definition of a ‘normal’ distribution of marks or grades.

However, even without a ‘normal’ distribution, the latter type of assessment (or more precisely the latter manner of expressing assessment results) is typically associated with percentage guidelines (‘A and B grades should constitute not more than 40%’), and is sometimes called ‘grading on a curve’. The two ways of conceptualizing grading can work together to enhance standards, as explained in paragraphs 6–10 below.

Characteristics of a good assessment policy

5. The assessment policy is based on the principles underlying the University’s Integrated Framework for Curriculum Development and Review (Integrated Framework, IF): in an outcomes-based approach (OBA) to curriculum design and implementation, the stated desired learning outcomes guide the choice of content, the design of student learning activities and the assessment tasks. A number of characteristics flow from this point of view.

(a) An OBA requires clarity on the expected outcomes, and assessment should therefore have an element of criterion reference. However, as will be seen below, this does not contradict using guidelines on grade distributions to ensure that criteria are pitched at satisfactory levels.

(b) Assessment tasks should have an appropriate level of cognitive demand and, across a programme, students should have appropriately demanding assessment tasks.

(c) Appropriate assessment tasks should consider learning outcomes across different domains, e.g. knowledge, skills and values (KSV), with degrees of emphasis that depend on the subject. One important KSV composite is students’ capacity for lifelong learning.

(d) Assessment should cater for diversity in the student cohort, both in terms of ability and in terms of learning styles and interests.

(e) Students need to receive timely feedback on all assessment tasks.

(f) Assessment needs to be pragmatic so that the workload on both teachers and students is reasonable.

(g) Good assessment is transparent with clear processes known to teachers and students.

(h) Good assessment is fair with checks and balances at all stages of the system – from setting the assessment scheme to finalizing grades.
OBA and guidelines on grade distribution

6. An OBA should be guided primarily by internal consistency at programme level: desired learning outcomes defined by programmes cascade down into the design of individual courses, each with an internally coherent set of learning outcomes, learning activities and assessment tasks. Programme learning outcomes in turn must be internally synergistic with the overall strategic goals of the University, and externally benchmarked (see paragraph 14) in order to check on overall standards in each discipline.

7. An OBA should be accompanied by broad specification of criteria by which standards are defined for each grade. Examples of grade descriptors are given in Appendix 1; it is expected that programmes will develop their own descriptors (a) once and for all at the time a course is introduced and approved, and not at every offering of the course; and (b) in broadly the same way across courses with a similar design at the same level in the same discipline. Thus there may be only half a dozen different sets of descriptors for each programme, and these will have shelf lives of many years before revision is required. The adoption of grade descriptors as part of a recommended code of practice is explained in paragraph 13, and it is expected that programmes will gradually move along this direction in measured steps.

8. Nevertheless, the University also has guidelines on grade distribution, since robust relative information is also useful: to provide incentives for students to excel, for reference by employers and graduate schools, in a way that would not be achieved if large numbers of students are lumped together in the grades at the extremes (A or D). Distribution guidelines also help to prevent grade inflation, which if unchecked would in the long term harm all graduates of the University by debasing their credentials.

9. A possible way of reconciling absolute criteria and relative distribution guidelines is suggested in Appendix 2, but in practice it suffices to note that the descriptors and the distribution guidelines will be sufficiently broad to enable the two to be harmonized.

10. The adoption of agreed criteria has important educational implications.

(a) In the actual grading stage, the marker should look primarily to prescribed standards and not the distribution.

(b) If the resultant distribution is inconsistent with University guidelines, then the solution is not an administrative shifting of grade boundaries, but a collective re-examination of the suitability of the standards defined and the way they are applied in practice – an educational reflection, using external reference points as appropriate.

11. These considerations underpin the recommended procedural code of practice described below.
RECOMMENDED CODE OF PRACTICE

12. In the light of these principles, the University will establish a recommended code of practice on assessments, for reference by both for departments/programmes and for individual teachers/markers.

Programme assessment scheme

13. It is recommended that each programme should, at initial approval, for Programme Review and at programme revision, produce a programme assessment scheme, made known to students, e.g. by posting on the web, with the following components.

(a) A statement of the programme learning outcomes that cover appropriate areas of knowledge, skills and values.

(b) A course X learning outcomes grid showing how each required course in the programme contributes to achieving these programme learning outcomes. Additional comments about how elective courses map to programme learning outcomes would be useful. Examples are on the course planning website¹.

(c) A set of course outlines (developed using the approved course template²), in which the rationale for the choice of all assessment tasks are mapped against the course learning outcomes. The course assessment scheme would state why and how marks will be assigned to each assessment task. Example assessment rationales for course outlines are on the assessment website³. As the University gradually moves towards an OBA, it is expected that there will be a process of developing grade descriptors for criterion referencing (see paragraph 9). Some guiding questions that can be used in developing a good course assessment scheme are in Appendix 3.

(d) An overall programme assessment scheme which summarizes the proportion of each type of assessment strategy (e.g. formal examinations, short tests or homework, essays, individual project reports, group project presentations and reports, class participation) and explains how this assessment scheme will support students in attaining the desired programme learning outcomes. Examples are available on the assessment website⁴.

- There is no prescribed minimum percentage of marks that must be allocated to formal examinations. The spread of assessment tasks should be guided chiefly by the desired learning outcomes. Minor pragmatic adjustments to the percentages of assessment components should not unduly alter the final balance.

³ For example, see section 8 on Assessment scheme in the Guidelines referred to in footnote 1 above.
⁴ http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/assessment
- Courses may specify that students must pass in some or all of the components of assessment, e.g. students must pass both the group project and the final examination. Such requirements must be clearly specified.

- The overall programme assessment scheme needs to explicitly address any previous comments by External/ Visiting Examiner(s) or Programme Review panels about the assessment scheme in general.

**Benchmarking**

14. There should be an effort to benchmark standards externally, for example through external examiners, Visiting Committees, or less formally by inviting peers from comparable institutions to provide written comments on samples of examination/ test scripts and/or other student work that contribute significantly to assessment. Programmes should comment on benchmarking on assessment matters in the annual report they make to the University on their programme action plan.

**Assessment panel**

15. Each programme (or department or graduate division) should establish an assessment panel, or have the entire programme board (or department board or graduate division) operate as the assessment panel, with responsibility and authority over all aspects of grading, and for ensuring that the guidelines herein are observed, and any exceptions documented and approved. The composition and procedures for assessment panels will be guided by the relevant faculty or the Graduate School. A sample list of responsibilities is in Appendix 4.

**Marking**

16. The following procedures will ensure that marking is fair and that the assessment scheme in each programme is transparent.

17. The teacher or course coordinator (who is listed in the time-table) has ultimate responsibility for the marking scheme for each assessment task, even where the initial draft may be delegated to teaching assistants (TAs). More importantly, there is the need to ensure uniformity: for courses offered in multiple sections and/or where scripts are marked by more than one individual, the same detailed marking schemes should be used by all markers, including TAs and part-time teachers. There should not be separate individual marking schemes. Where scripts are marked by a single individual, a skeleton marking scheme would suffice, simply to provide a record in the event of future scrutiny.

18. It is recommended that the design of the marking scheme for each assessment task should make reference to the expected learning outcomes. An example of an internationally accepted marking framework is posted on the assessment website. It should be noted that A grades should be reserved for truly excellent work that exceeds the level expected for the majority of students.

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5 These may have been called Examinations Panels in the past, but the nomenclature of ‘assessment panel’ is recommended, since examination is only one possible mode of assessment.
19. When courses undergo periodic course reviews, prescribed by the IF, a sample of marking schemes for a variety of assessment types should be made available for peer scrutiny.

**Student anonymity**

20. Each programme should develop, discuss with students and post on its website its own policy as to whether there is the need in some courses or tasks for student work to be graded without the teacher(s) knowing the student identity; student anonymity may be considered for the more controversial and open-ended topics in the course. Any changes of policy over time should be noted in the annual report made to the University on the programme action plan.

**Moderation of marks**

21. Each programme should develop its own policy about the need for *moderation of marks*, especially for more open-ended and less structured assessment tasks.

   (a) Strategies for *internal moderation* include sample double marking in some cases (e.g. where the grade distribution deviates significantly from guidelines, or in the case of projects supervised by only one teacher), moderation of the marking of new teachers, and occasional checking of the marking of TAs and part-time teachers.

   (b) Programmes that retain External/ Visiting Examiners have *external moderation*; other programmes may decide to periodically engage an external peer to check on standards in general and marking in particular. The Visiting Committee could also contribute to this role.

   (c) The programme policy on moderation should be posted on the programme website; any changes over time should be noted in the annual report made to the University on the programme action plan.

**Group projects and peer assessment**

22. The use of *group projects*, and especially any *peer assessment* therein, needs special mention. Group work as an important learning experience can help students attain important learning outcomes in certain courses. Similarly, peer assessment within a group work assignment may provide students with opportunities to learn more about teamwork and responsibility for shared learning. Nevertheless, clear processes are needed to promote genuine reflection on the experience and prevent ‘freeloading’. Examples of how group work and peer assessment are conducted at CUHK can be found on the assessment website.

**Academic honesty**

23. The University has a zero-tolerance policy for *plagiarism*. Details of this policy are given in ‘Honesty in academic work: A guide for students and teachers’⁶. For the avoidance of doubt, the policy applies to open-book examinations as well.

24. Departments/programmes should ensure that reasonable effort is taken to require that relevant written work (other than closed-book examinations and tests) is submitted through the University’s proprietary plagiarism detection tool, VeriGuide, and that any possible cases flagged are given attention.

25. To ensure objectivity and fairness, course examinations should be scheduled, invigilated and monitored by panels of examiners set up by the departments, or centrally. Guidelines on examination and invigilation procedures can be found on the assessment website.

26. The University adopts a policy of zero tolerance on dishonesty in examinations. Any such offence will be referred to the Disciplinary Committee concerned. More serious cases will be referred to the Senate Committee on Student Discipline for possible disciplinary actions in accordance with the appropriate regulations. The penalties include deduction of marks, demerits and termination of studies.

**Combining marks**

27. When marks from different assessment tasks are combined to obtain the total marks, the *spread of the scores* for each component should be taken into consideration. In the spirit of an OBA, very narrow spreads in any tasks should prompt a reconsideration of the expected outcomes to accommodate a broader range of levels of challenges and attainments\(^7\). Statistical normalization of the marks may be appropriate for some assessment components.

**Guidelines on distribution of grades**

28. The University has established very broad guidelines for the distribution of letter grades for undergraduates (*Appendix 5*), and one way to understand them together with the use of absolute criteria is described in *Appendix 2*. Assessment panels need to exercise caution: the ceiling percentages are the ceilings, not the norms.

29. The Graduate School has developed a corresponding set of similar University guidelines in respect of courses at postgraduate level (*Appendix 6*), recognizing that greater flexibility may be necessary for the more varied circumstances. The Graduate School has also developed principles for permitting exceptions to such guidelines, and processes for monitoring such exceptions.

**Awarding grades**

30. The final grades awarded to students in a course should reflect their individual achievements pegged or *criterion-referenced* to the course learning outcomes, in the spirit of OBA. Therefore the course outline needs to specify the criteria for the various grades (see paragraph 7).

31. The use of *pass/fail* grade is permitted, but only if it is part of the course design approved at the time of course introduction, in the overall context of the whole

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\(^7\) For example, if one component is a multiple-choice (MC) test and scores are tightly bunched at the top end, then this may indicate that only relatively low-level tasks such as recall are tested, whereas synthesis and innovation may also be possible in an MC mode.
programme (including any impact on the calculation of Major GPA, for example). Such pass/fail grading should not be adopted on an ad hoc basis with particular offerings of the course; nor should it be applied to a subgroup of students taking the course.

32. However, 
safeguards against grade inflation need to be firmly in place. The following guidelines ensure that an OBA-driven and criterion-referenced grading process does not compromise excellence.

(a) The criteria or standards for each grade should be explicitly distinguished from each other, so that A grades are, for example, reserved for truly excellent work that exceeds the level expected for the majority of students – by definition a small percentage. Reference can be made to sample grade descriptors (Appendix 1).

(b) The University’s (very broad) guidelines on grade distribution should be followed in framing these standards. There is no contradiction with criterion referencing; see paragraphs 6–10 and Appendix 2.

(c) The assessment panel needs to scrutinize the grade distribution for each course; where there is deviation from University guidelines, the defined criteria, the marking schemes, and a sample of students’ assessment work should be reviewed by a peer panel designated by the assessment panel. The grade distribution statistics for each course will be provided to the assessment panel and Faculty concerned by CUSIS.

Grade point average

33. The Grade Point Average (GPA) is just the grade (on a scale of $A = 4$, $B = 3$, $C = 2$, $D = 1$, $F = 0$) averaged over all courses taken and weighted by the number of units. Sometimes a separate Major GPA is also calculated by including only courses specified by the Major programme, possibly with enhanced weights for certain required or capstone courses. Any non-standard weights adopted in the study scheme of a particular programme must be academically justified as part of the programme approval and revision processes, and clearly spelt out in advance in programme documentation. The Registry computes and records the GPA(s) for each student.

Honours classification

34. The honours classification for undergraduates is determined at the time of graduation. It is recommended by the Major programme concerned for endorsement at Faculty level, subject to certain conditions on percentage distribution, Major GPA and overall GPA, for decision by the Undergraduate Examinations Board (UEB). The procedures for calculating these measures and the processes for ratification are on the assessment website.
Feedback to students

35. For assignments during term time, each programme needs to determine and announce a ‘turn-around’ policy; any changes over time should be noted in the annual report made to the University on the programme action plan.

36. It can be a valuable experience for students to review their examination scripts. Programmes can arrange a defined period of time (say two weeks) when students can look at (but not take away) their scripts and consider their own performance. This scrutiny can be linked to some general feedback provided by a teacher or a panel of teachers, either face-to-face or online. Each programme needs to determine and announce a policy about students having access to examination scripts; any changes over time should be noted in the annual report made to the University on the programme action plan. It will be useful if the policy would highlight the educational benefits rather than the opportunity to appeal.

37. Departments and programmes should archive a sample of examination scripts and other student work that substantially contributes to final grades for possible future scrutiny by Programmes Review panels or Visiting Committees. Assignments should be returned to students with timely feedback but copies should be kept of an appropriate sample. The original sample examination scripts and copies of student work should be kept at the department/ programme office for onsite review by Visiting Committees/ Examiners, and should only be disposed of or returned to students after visits have been conducted. General guidelines on sampling of students’ work for external review are on the assessment website.

Appeals

38. Students who have a query on the grade given for any courses should consult the teacher(s) concerned within two weeks of the release of academic results for the relevant term by the Registry.

39. In the event that a student, after consulting the teacher(s) concerned within the specified period, has reasonable grounds to believe that there is procedural impropriety in determining grades or other academic issues resulting in her/his having been directly affected, s/he can lodge a complaint with the University, in accordance with the Procedures for Handling Student Complaints, for an independent investigation into the matter. A student may also lodge a formal complaint at the outset without consulting the teacher(s) concerned.

List of issues

40. Appendix 7 can serve as a useful reminder of the issues that should be considered.

MONITORING OF QUALITY AND IMPACT

41. The actual practice on assessment should be reviewed in the first instance by each department or programme board, with overall supervision by the Dean of the Faculty, and in the case of TPg programmes/ courses, also by the Dean of the Graduate School.
42. Assessment practice will also be monitored in the regular Programme Reviews (including scrutiny of annual reports); the first such review in respect of this policy will be the ‘light’ reviews for the design of the new four-year normative curriculum, to be implemented before 2012. The monitoring will include, inter alia:

(a) the existence and appropriateness of a programme assessment scheme;

(b) especially the adoption of clearly stated standards for different grades;

(c) evidence of external benchmarking;

(d) good practice in marking;

(e) appropriate effort to ensure academic honesty;

(f) compliance with University guidelines on grade distribution, and serious efforts to deal with deviations through scrutiny of adopted standards and the actual application of those standards; and

(g) the appropriateness of the policy and practice in feedback and appeals.

43. Assessment practice should also receive attention from Visiting Committees.

APPRAOVAL AND FUTURE REVISIONS

44. This policy, when adopted by the Senate, shall become prevailing University policy on good practice. It is expected that there will be minor revisions from time to time in the light of experience in different contexts. Such minor revisions will be made by SCTL and periodically reported to the Senate.

May 2010

Approved by the Senate at its Fourth Meeting (2009-10) held on 9 June 2010
Appendix 1

Sample grade descriptors

It is expected that grade descriptors are formulated not every year, but only at programme/course introduction, approval and major revision (i.e. once every few years). Moreover, broadly the same set of descriptors can apply to many similar courses in each programme, so that it is possible that for the whole programme only a few sets of descriptors have to be formulated/ revised every few years.

It is also recognized that there will be considerable diversity across programmes, depending on their nature and the stage of development of criterion referencing. For this reason, a range of different examples are presented for illustration purposes, without suggesting that any particular version is either exemplary or appropriate for any particular discipline, and no particular framework is mandatory. What is needed is a logical and coherent set of descriptors that provides students with clearly stated standards for different grade levels.

Additional examples of descriptors for different forms of assessment (essays, projects, presentations, quantitative problems, laboratory/ field work, tests/ examinations, etc.) are provided on the assessment website.
**Example 1: A hypothetical set of very simple descriptors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Overall course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Outstanding performance on all learning outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>Generally outstanding performance on all (or almost all) learning outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Substantial performance on all learning outcomes, OR high performance on some learning outcomes which compensates for less satisfactory performance on others, resulting in overall substantial performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Satisfactory performance on the majority of learning outcomes, possibly with a few weaknesses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Barely satisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example 2: A hypothetical set possibly applicable to science subjects**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Overall course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Demonstrates the ability to synthesize and apply the principles or subject matter learnt in the course, to novel situations and/or in novel ways, in a manner that would surpass the normal expectation at this level, and typical of standards that may be common at higher levels of study or research. Has the ability to express the synthesis of ideas or application in a clear and cogent manner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>Demonstrates the ability to state and apply the principles or subject matter learnt in the course to familiar and standard situations in a manner that is logical and comprehensive. Has the ability to express the knowledge or application with clarity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Demonstrates the ability to state and partially apply the principles or subject matter learnt in the course to most (but not all) familiar and standard situations in a manner that is usually logically persuasive. Has the ability to express the knowledge or application in a satisfactory and unambiguous way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Demonstrates the ability to state and apply the principles or subject matter learnt in the course to most (but not all) familiar and standard situations in a manner that is not incorrect but is somewhat fragmented. Has the ability to express the separate pieces of knowledge in an unambiguous way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Demonstrates the ability to state and sometimes apply the principles or subject matter learnt in the course to some simple and familiar situations in a manner that is broadly correct in its essentials Has the ability to state the knowledge or application in simple terms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Unsatisfactory performance on a number of learning outcomes, OR failure to meet specified assessment requirements.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Example 3: Actual descriptors used for essays in Nursing courses (slightly simplified)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Use of Material</th>
<th>Knowledge and Understanding</th>
<th>Presentation and References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A/A-</td>
<td>Well-structured essay with clear introduction and conclusion. Issues clearly identified, clear framework for organizing discussion, appropriate material selected.</td>
<td>Logical flow of content, clear expression of ideas and arguments and differing views with evidence of new ideas based on knowledge gained. Knowledge well integrated and supported by evidence from the literature. Uses abstract principles and concepts, with applications to nursing when appropriate. Evidence of critical analysis of material and conclusions drawn.</td>
<td>Grammatically correct, full and accurate references in text and list.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Well-structured essay with a clear introduction and conclusion. Some issues identified, framework attempted for organizing discussion but not well developed, some material selected but not all appropriate.</td>
<td>Content has logical flow, with ideas clearly expressed, some structure to the argument with differing views in parts and some new ideas based on knowledge gained. Some integration of material with support from the literature. Uses some abstract principles and concepts with limited applications to nursing when appropriate. Some evidence of critical analysis with conclusions drawn.</td>
<td>Some grammatical errors but does not affect understanding. References in text, well selected and used, generally well presented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Fairly well structured with introduction and conclusion attempted. Some issues identified, little attempt at a framework for organizing discussion, material selected but not all appropriate.</td>
<td>Logical presentation attempted but not always successful. Some structure to the argument but only limited number of differing views and no new ideas. Limited integration of material with some support from the literature. Uses concrete ideas with limited use of abstract principle and concepts. Little critical analysis, with ideas expressed at a descriptive level and little use of appropriate practice examples to demonstrate understanding.</td>
<td>Some grammatical errors which affect clarity and understanding. Limited references in text with some not completed or missing from the list.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Poorly structured essay with a weak introduction and conclusion. Little relevant materials selected.</td>
<td>Some confusion in the presentation, difficult to follow the logic. Some structure to the arguments but some confusion to the discussion and few differing ideas with no new ideas based on knowledge gained. Poor integration of materials with little support from the literature. Uses concrete ideas but no discussion or appropriate use of abstract principles and concepts. No critical analysis, descriptive thinking with only few appropriate practice examples poorly related to the question.</td>
<td>Grammatical errors which substantially affect clarity and understanding. Limited and incomplete referencing with discrepancies between text and reference list.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Poorly structured essay with a very weak/ no introduction and conclusion. Inappropriate or few issues identified. No framework for discussion and little relevant material selected.</td>
<td>Confused and muddled presentation, lacks logical presentation. Unstructured and unsupported arguments with no discussion of differing views and no new ideas. Poor integration of material with little relevant support from the literature. Descriptive essay with no analysis and minimum interpretation. Irrelevant detail and some misinterpretation of the question. Very little/ no logical relationship to the topic and poor use of practice examples.</td>
<td>Grammatical errors distort the understanding of the essay. Inappropriate referencing in text and list.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Example 4: Actual descriptors developed for Fine Arts studio arts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| A Unanticipated extension | **Conceptual design** – The work shows clear evidence of high level of independent thinking, insightful observation; bold and creative exploration of artistic ideas. Original interpretation of the theme of the piece; generation of new expressions, perspectives and extension of ideas on visual arrangement.  
**Technique** – Excellent quality craftsmanship; meticulous application of skills showing perceptive understanding and sensitivity to the nature of and relationship between application of technique, the treatment of material and the theme of the piece. Inventive ways of utilizing material combined with attentive workmanship that leads to extensions of artistic concepts and visual vocabulary.  
**Overall presentation** – Vivid and effective presentation that reflects excellent understanding of the interrelationship between conceptual content and form; perceptive arrangement of visual elements such as color, dimension, line, mass and space; creating strong sensational impact such as balance, coherence, harmony, tension, richness and variety. |
| B Well-rounded presentation | **Conceptual design** – The work shows evidence of good observation, independent thinking; creative exploration of artistic concepts and ideas that makes interesting interpretation of the theme of the piece.  
**Technique** – Good quality craftsmanship; good evidence of thoughtful and attentive application of skills; careful consideration of the connection between technique, the treatment of material and the theme of the piece achieving and well-balanced and coherent presentation.  
**Overall presentation** – Attractive presentation, good understanding of the interrelationship between content and form, well-balanced treatment of visual elements such as color, dimension, line, mass and space, reflecting effort in creating aesthetic sensation such as balance, coherence, harmony, tension, richness and variety. |
| C Inconsistent quality | **Conceptual design** – Some evidence of reference to observations, artistic concepts and ideas which are relevant to the theme of the piece. Little evidence of personal or original approach to interpretation of theme of the piece. Limited effort in exploring ideas and artistic expressions seem dull and uninspired.  
**Technique** – Average quality craftsmanship, some evidence of care in application of skills. Limited connection in the use of technique, choice of material and the theme of the piece.  
**Overall presentation** – Presentation reflects limited concern for the interrelationship between form and content, Limited success in effective treatment of visual elements such as color, dimension, line, mass and space to achieve aesthetic objectives. |
| D Undeveloped work | **Conceptual design** – The piece of work shows little evidence of effort in developing ideas on the theme or making of reference to artistic concepts.  
**Technique** – Little evidence of effort in applying required skills, the quality of craftsmanship is low; limited degree of care shown in treatment of material; little consideration to the general theme of the piece.  
**Overall presentation** – Poor overall presentation; poor quality treatment of visual elements and very little evidence of consideration to aesthetic objectives. |
| F Misses the point | **Conceptual design** – Work showing no consideration of artistic ideas and concepts. Design of work is irrelevant to the theme.  
**Technique** – Slack workmanship; failure to display skills or care in treatment of material.  
**Overall presentation** – No evidence of care or consideration in visual presentation. Poor use of material and lack of aesthetic sensitivity. |
Appendix 2

Consistency between absolute criteria and percentage distribution guidelines

There may appear to be a contradiction between objective standards and percentage guidelines. The false dichotomy can be avoided by regarding the grade distribution guidelines not as a constraint on marking (say end of term), but as a constraint that should have operated much earlier: ideally, standards are broadly defined for each grade (A, B, C, D) at the time of course design, documented in the course outline as required by the standard course template (paragraph 13(c)), and conveyed to students at the beginning of term.

An A grade should correspond to standards of work that are truly excellent and are expected to be achieved only by a small minority, whereas grades of B and C would correspond to standards more commonly attainable, with D for the lowest end that barely meets passing benchmarks. Descriptors such as ‘minority’, ‘commonly’ are normative, and will ensure consistency with broad distribution guidelines.

In other words, the logical link from normative grade distribution to actual grading is not

![Diagram](normative-grade-flow)

but rather

![Diagram](normative-grade-flow2)
Appendix 3

Guiding questions in developing a good course assessment scheme

1. Is this assessment task mainly formative (i.e. designed mostly as a learning activity) or is it summative (i.e. designed to grade students on final attainment)? If it is formative, what proportion of marks should be allocated?

2. Are the assessment tasks pitched at appropriate levels of difficulty? Where students from differing year levels and from different programmes are attending the same course, this question is particularly pertinent. In extreme cases with wide diversity and consciously different expected outcomes, it may be wise to design more than one course with shared learning activities across courses, as detailed in the paper ‘Courses which share learning activities with other courses’ noted by the SCTL at its 3rd Meeting (2008–09) in May 2009.

3. What flexibility is there in the design of the assessment tasks? Do students with particular interests and/or learning styles have opportunities to maximize their learning opportunities? For example, are there choices in assignment topics or formats? Is there any opportunity for students to suggest alternative assessments? Any flexibility that is built into the assessment design must not undermine the overall rigour and standards of assessment.

4. Are there some important assessment tasks that would be very hard to grade? If so, the use of a pass/fail basis could be useful. In essence the task becomes required but does not contribute to the overall course grade.

5. Is the number of assessment tasks consistent with an appropriate workload for students? Is the marking load appropriate for the teaching staff?

6. Has the course assessment scheme undergone any peer review within the programme? An example of how an assessment review process might be conducted is on the assessment website at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/assessment (or similar). Periodic feedback from former students and alumni can also enrich an assessment review process.
Appendix 4

Sample list of responsibilities for assessment panels

1. To propose policies on the matters contained in this paper (e.g. student anonymity, peer assessment) for approval by the Department/ Programme Board.

2. To monitor and ensure fairness and honesty in all assessment work.

3. To review comments provided by external examiners.

4. To review grade distribution reports.

5. To endorse course assessment schemes.

6. Be responsible for the quality of examination/ test papers. For example, for each course, a colleague within the department/ programme could be appointed as an internal reviewer to independently check the paper and model answer/ marking scheme.

7. To approve grade boundaries and the assignment of grades recommended by teachers.

8. To arrange make-up examination/assessment for students who have been given approval to be absent from examination/assessment.

9. To endorse requests submitted by teachers for change of marks or grades upon appeal by students, and to help resolve any informal complaints thereon.

10. To ensure that reasonable effort is undertaken to monitor and uphold academic honesty in all assessments.
Appendix 5

Guidelines approved by the Undergraduate Examinations Board on grade distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Cumulative Average %</th>
<th>Cumulative % Range of Students*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0% – 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A- and above</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20% – 30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B- and above</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>60% – 90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C- and above</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>90% – 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D and above</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* excluding failure cases

Note

For courses with a reasonably large enrolment, say, 20 students or more, the percentage distribution of grades should be observed by teachers concerned as far as practicable. However, as students’ standard and quality vary from year to year, teachers may, with the approval of the assessment panel concerned, make prudent and appropriate variations, in which case raw marks must be supplied. For courses with a small enrolment, say, fewer than 20, teachers should exercise their own judgement with due regard to past experience rather than adhering rigidly to the percentage distribution guideline.
Appendix 6

Guidelines approved by the Graduate Council on grade distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>Cumulative Average %</th>
<th>Cumulative % Range of Students*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0% – 15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A- and above</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>10% – 40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B- and above</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>40% – 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C- and above</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>90% – 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D and above</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* excluding failure cases

Note

For courses with a reasonably large enrolment, say, 20 students or more, the percentage distribution of grades should be observed by teachers concerned as far as practicable. However, as students’ standard and quality vary from year to year, teachers may, with the approval of the Examination Panel concerned, make prudent and appropriate variations, in which case raw marks must be supplied. For courses with a small enrolment, say, fewer than 20, teachers should exercise their own judgement with due regard to past experience rather than adhering rigidly to the percentage distribution guideline. Besides, such distribution does not apply to courses graded by P/U (e.g. Thesis monitoring courses).
## Appendix 7

**Checklist of issues to consider in developing an assessment policy and procedures in each programme**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Ref Para</th>
<th>Check</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Is there a programme assessment scheme and is it posted on the web?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Have efforts been made to benchmark assessment methods and standards?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Is there an assessment panel? What is its written list of responsibilities?</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 For courses involving multiple teachers/markers, are marking schemes given to all markers including TAs?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Is there the need for students to be marked anonymously in some courses/assessment activities? If so, how is this policy enforced?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Is there the need for moderation of marks? What is the policy?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Are there group projects and is there a policy on their assessment?</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 If there is peer assessment in group projects, what is the policy?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 How does the programme ensure there is no plagiarism? What types of student work are/are not submitted to VeriGuide? How does the programme know that cases flagged are attended to?</td>
<td></td>
<td>23–24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 What are the procedures for invigilation in examinations other than those that are centrally scheduled?</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Have there been cases of academic dishonesty among students and how have these been dealt with?</td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Does the programme have a policy on normalization of marks before combining to total marks? What is the rationale for doing so, or not doing so, in particular courses?</td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Are criteria clearly defined for every grade?</td>
<td></td>
<td>28–29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 What measures are taken to prevent grade inflation? What is the distribution of different grades in all courses in the programme?</td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 What ‘turn-around’ time is specified for assignments during term time?</td>
<td></td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 What is the policy on student access to examination scripts?</td>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>