



**DRAFT**

# External peer review of assessment

▶ A professional learning resource supporting the external referencing of academic standards

For experienced reviewers and for people preparing to review for the first time

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University Leaders in Learning and Teaching

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# Project Team

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We also acknowledge the support of Dr Sara Booth, Director-Academic, Online Peer Solutions (Peer Review Portal)



# Defining external peer review of assessment

- ▶ “The practice of colleagues providing and receiving feedback on one another’s unit/subject outlines, assessment tasks and marking criteria to ensure that assessment is aligned to the unit learning outcomes. It includes a calibration process to ensure comparability of achievement standards and an opportunity for professional learning” (Booth et al, 2015).
- ▶ External peer review is a verification process that leads to enhanced alignment between learning outcomes, teaching and learning activities and assessment tasks.
- ▶ External peer review provides assurance that the marker(s) have made the right judgements about students’ work.





## Defining external peer review of assessment

- ▶ As the peer review cycle continues, the quality of courses and judgements about student attainment standards improve and become more comparable across institutions.
- ▶ Peer review of assessment allows colleagues collectively and collegially to work together to improve the student experience
- ▶ It also provides a professional learning opportunity for academic staff





What  
external  
peer review  
processes  
exist  
currently?



G08 - Quality Verification System



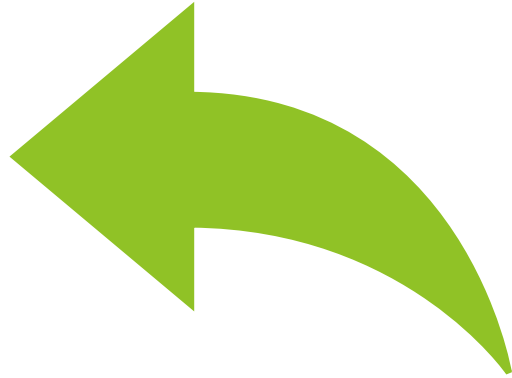
ERoS - External Review of Standards



IRU - Academic Calibration Process



Peer Review Portal



What is the  
purpose of this  
resource?

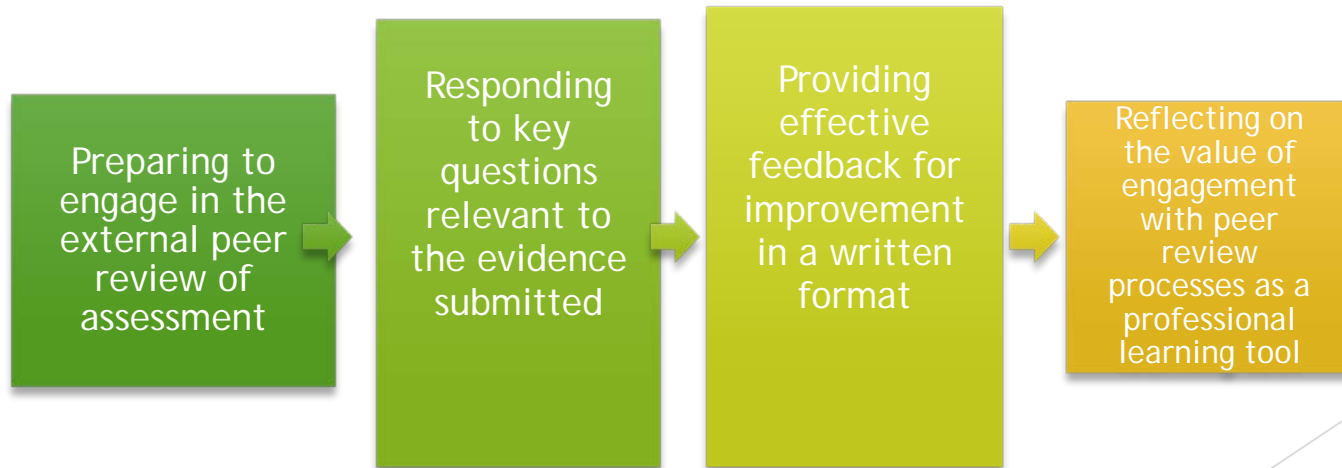


## This resource will help reviewers

- Assess assessment standards through written reviews sometimes supported with online/f2f discussion
- Provide effective feedback using a conversational approach to support unit and course/program improvement



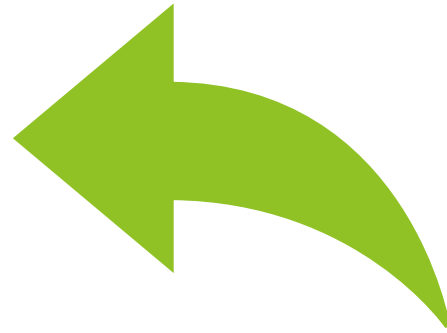
# Resource - 4 key areas







Start Here





# Each section of this resource addresses a topic that you should think about

- ▶ **WHY?** What is the purpose of the review?
- ▶ **WHAT?** What will you be focusing on?
- ▶ **WHO?** Who will you be working with?
- ▶ **HOW?** What is the process that you will be following?
- ▶ **REVIEW QUESTIONS:** How can these 7 questions guide the focus of the review?
- ▶ **PROVIDING FEEEDBACK:** How can you provide feedback that is constructive, collegial and takes a conversational tone in a written/online environment?
- ▶ **FOLLOW-UP:** How can you reflect on the peer review process that you have just undertaken?
- ▶ **GLOSSARY OF TERMS:** Some definitions commonly associated with the peer review of assessment
- ▶ **REFERENCES:** Some key projects in the area of assessment standards, quality and peer review





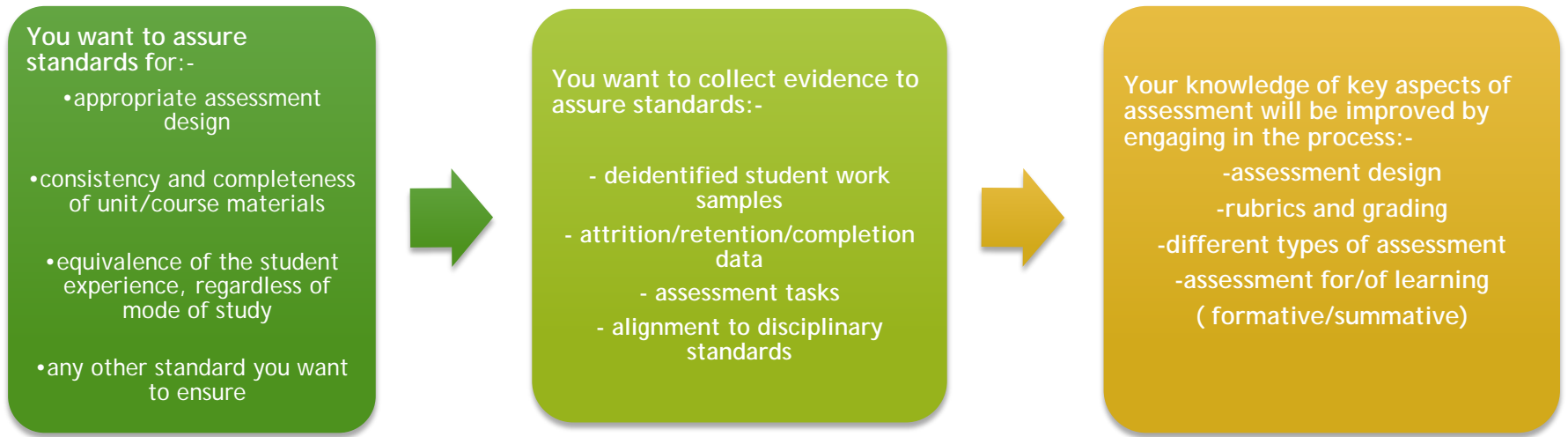
WHY?





# TEQSA Higher Education Standards Framework (2015)

- ▶ 1.4.1 Learning outcomes are informed by national and international comparators.
- ▶ 5.3.1 All accredited courses include external referencing or other benchmarking activity
- ▶ 5.3.2 Comprehensive course reviews including learning outcomes, methods of assessment and achievement of learning outcomes
- ▶ 5.3.4 Review and improvement activities include regular external referencing, including progression, attrition and completion rates...assessment and grading of students' achievement of learning outcomes.



What is the purpose of external peer review?



WHAT?



What aspects of assessment can be peer reviewed?

The more information provided to you as part of the review, the better

What evidence and data can be submitted as part of the peer review process?

- ▶ unit outline
- ▶ context statement or a curriculum map
- ▶ assessment tasks
- ▶ alignment of assessment tasks to course learning outcomes, unit learning outcomes and assessment standards
- ▶ rubric or marking guide, and stated assessment standards
- ▶ student work samples
- ▶ quality of feedback given to students
- ▶ student data (attrition, retention, completion)





## WHO

This section assumes you have been contacted to do a review for another university or higher education provider





# Who can be a reviewer?

- ▶ Some processes for peer review of assessment limit reviewers to a particular level of appointment.
- ▶ Don't assume that someone more senior or junior cannot be a 'peer'.
- ▶ In the peer review portal, review applicants can broadcast their reviews and staff can apply to become a reviewer
- ▶ An outside person will bring fresh ideas, and you may learn new things from a new disciplinary perspective.
- ▶ If someone has approached you to do a peer review, this may be a workload issue as some universities may consider this to be part of your workload
- ▶ You may be offered payment or the idea of reciprocal peer review may frame the relationship, whereby you can ask the review applicant to undertake peer review of assessment for you



# QUESTIONS

- ▶ How many of us here today participate in the external peer review of assessment? How easy or difficult a process is this?
- ▶ How do you develop peer reviewers in your institution?



HOW





## Review the material you have been given access to

- ▶ Ensure everything is available that you need.
- ▶ Go back to the review applicant asking for clarification if needed.
- ▶ Check the amount of time you have been given to do the review.
- ▶ Respond to each of the seven questions asked in the review.

Advice about using a conversational approach to the giving of written feedback is provided in this resource.




# REVIEW QUESTIONS





# 7 REVIEW QUESTIONS

Questions 1-2 ask the reviewer to focus broadly on the assessment as it fits the unit and the course.

- 
1. Are the unit learning outcomes aligned with the relevant course learning outcomes?
  2. Are the unit learning outcomes appropriate to the AQF level of the unit?

Questions 3-7 ask the reviewer to look closely at the assessment design in relation to learning activities, guidance and support.

3. Does the assessment task enable all students to demonstrate attainment of the unit learning outcomes and the course learning outcomes?

4. Is the description of the performance standards appropriate to the specific unit learning outcomes and course learning outcomes?

5. Is the method of assessment capable of confirming that all relevant specified course learning outcomes and unit learning outcomes are achieved?

6. Do the grades awarded reflect the level of student attainment?

7. What can be done to improve the assessment of the unit?

# Not easy to judge - LO

Are the unit learning outcomes appropriate to the AQF level of the unit?

Which of the following statements best describe learning outcomes?

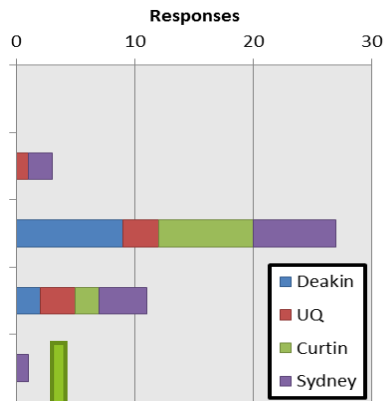
Learning outcomes are usually expressed as knowledge, skills, or attitudes

Learning outcomes are statements which describe a desired condition

Learning outcomes are statements that specify what learners will know or be able to do as a result of a learning activity

Learning outcomes must be observable, measurable and demonstrated by the learner

Learning outcomes should be assessable to determine the gap between an existing and desired condition



CLO1: Communicate in a variety of modes to diverse audiences and for a range of purposes.



All of the LO to graduate level



Part of the LO to graduate level



All of the LO but not to graduate level



Part of the LO but not to graduate level



None of the LO

Highlights difference between what a learning outcome is usually envisioned as, as opposed to what it **MUST** be in order to be workable and actually able to be assessed

Addressed?	A "yes" should be given if students are <b>exposed to any parts of the TLO in any way</b> , either implicitly or explicitly, to any level of achievement through completion of the task as instructed.
Demonstrated?	A "yes" should be given if students <b>are directly instructed to demonstrate or evidence their attainment</b> of any parts of the TLO, to any level of achievement, through completion of the task as instructed.
Awarded credit?	A "yes" should be given if " <b>marks</b> ", " <b>grades</b> ", " <b>compulsory hurdles</b> " or <b>other affirmations of attainment</b> are dependent on students providing <b>clear evidence of achievement</b> with respect to the TLO, within their submitted work.

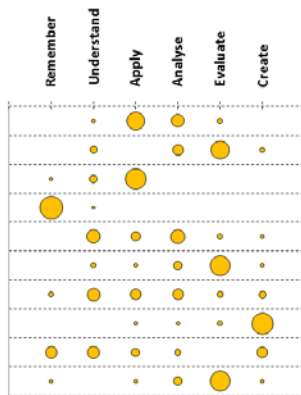


# Not easy to judge - Level

Are the unit learning outcomes appropriate to the AQF level of the unit?

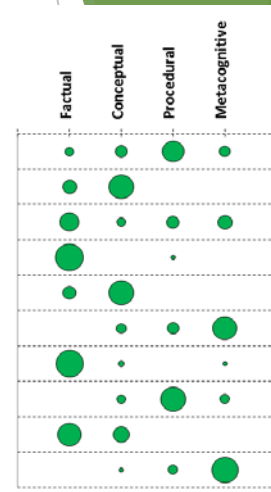
Classify the following cognitive tasks and knowledge types:

- Determine a rate law based on a series of experiments
- Determine whether or not conclusions in a lab report follow from the results
- Given the density, calculate the volume of a specified mass
- Know the single letter codes of the essential amino acids
- Identify the key bond-making or breaking steps in an organic transformation
- Comment on the reasonableness of a hypothesis
- Explain how differences in atmospheric temperature affect the formation of lightning
- Design a study to test a specific hypothesis
- Draw a series of diagrams that illustrate the process of photosynthesis
- Comment on the contextual appropriateness of a statistical test



Huge variation in classifications. Thus Bloom is a guide, not a deterministic tool as the classification often depends on context. E.g. list what happens at the event horizon of a black hole?

- Knowledge of research methods relevant to the sciences
- Knowledge of genetic models (e.g. DNA)
- Knowledge of various mnemonics to aid memory
- Knowledge of the first 20 chemical elements
- Knowledge of the fundamental laws of physics
- Knowledge that a 'primary source' may be more difficult to understand than a general textbook
- Knowledge of chemical constants (e.g. Planck's constant, Avogadro's number etc.)
- Knowledge of the criteria for determining which statistical procedure to use with data for an experiment
- Knowledge of the different periods of geologic time
- Knowledge of one's capabilities to perform a particular task that is accurate

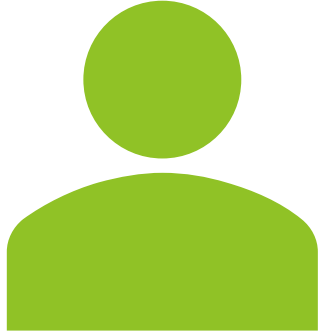


		KNOWLEDGE TYPES			
		Factual	Conceptual	Procedural	Metacognitive
COGNITIVE PROCESSES	Remember	Introduce			
	Understand	Introduce			
	Apply	Develop			
	Analyse	Develop			
	Evaluate	Assure			
	Create	Assure			





# Level of Assessment - Examples



## Health Sciences First Year Team Task

A Health Sciences Psychology unit was developed using an enquiry-based approach with team tasks for students.

- ▶ ULOs were:
  - ▶ Analyse how person-related factors impact on how individuals present in health and human service settings
  - ▶ Analyse how person-related factors impact on individuals progressing in health and human service settings
  - ▶ Analyse how person-related factors impact on individuals working in health and human service settings
- ▶ Too high on the Bloom scale for first year?



# Level of Assessment - Examples



## Health Sciences First Year Team Task

The learning activities and assessments were considered appropriate for first year students as:

- ▶ The source material was primarily a first-year text book looking at cognitive theory and memory
- ▶ Students worked on complex analytical and interpretive tasks in teams, allowing them to discuss complex issues with team members
- ▶ There was a structured problem-solving process set up to guide tutorial activities and team work on the scenario
- ▶ Assessment rubrics related to the ULOs for the unit
- ▶ Guidance was provided to tutors



# Indicators Relating to Level of Assessment

- ▶ Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)
- ▶ Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs)
- ▶ Unit Learning Outcomes (ULOs)
- ▶ Blooms Taxonomy Level
- ▶ Assessment Task Specification
- ▶ Specify performance for degree program
- ▶ Should align with AQF levels
- ▶ Specify the intended performance from the unit - should relate to CLOs
- ▶ Indicates tasks at a range of cognitive levels
- ▶ Indicates learning and performance from the task (e.g. rubric)



# Providing Written Feedback Using a Conversational Approach



# Conversational Approach



What is a conversational approach to giving feedback?

How do we engage in learning conversations in a context in which we are not engaging with the review materials and the questions in a f2f situation?

▶ How do we have a learning conversation in writing?

▶ It is more difficult to activate the common elements of a learning conversation in writing, but not impossible. Often with external peer review it is the only way feedback is given initially.

▶ Let's explore how this can be done using an approach adapted from the research of Earl and Timperley(2009) published in their text *Professional learning conversation: Challenges in using evidence for improvement* (pp. 1-12). New York: Springer.



# Conversational approach to giving feedback



Relationships of  
respect and  
challenge



Inquiry habit  
of mind



Use of data  
and evidence

Professional Learning Conversations

# Establish a relationship of respect and challenge



- ▶ establish a relationship with the review applicant who provides information on the focus of the review
- ▶ promote thoughtfulness by building in reflection opportunities by way of asking questions as part of your review commentary
- ▶ respectfully challenge ideas behind the rationale for a particular task, the way a task has been structured or presented, etc.
- ▶ introduce alternative viewpoint/s
- ▶ tackle troubling concepts
- ▶ change positions if the data and evidence suggests it

# Adopt an inquiry habit of mind



- ▶ Recognise the challenges in developing a recursive, collaborative conversation in a written format
- ▶ Accept that not all variables will be known by you as the reviewer
- ▶ Consider a range of possible reasons for decisions about standards that have been made
- ▶ Be open to difference
- ▶ Seek deep understanding
- ▶ Respect disciplinary context
- ▶ Be mindful of the institutional focus
- ▶ Provide feedback focused on improvement



# Make use of data and evidence provided by the review applicant



- ▶ Artefacts and evidence are selected by the review applicant
- ▶ The questions asked of the reviewer set the parameters of the review and areas of feedback
- ▶ What data exists?
- ▶ Is data comparable and relevant to the review?
- ▶ Be mindful of student confidentiality in relation to the information provided
- ▶ Recognise sound and unsound evidence
- ▶ Make interpretation paramount
- ▶ Where are the gaps?



## ACTIVITY - Sample Assessment Task from a unit Women and Work, part of a Migrant Studies course

In groups of 2-3:

1. Read through the assessment brief together
2. Read through the 7 questions - but focus on questions 1 and 2
3. Write your review - then compare this in a conversational approach with another group.
4. Was your feedback improved post conversation?
5. What did you learn as a reviewer [and as a potential reviewee]

¶

Women-and-Work-MSWW371--HD-Sample-410-words¶

¶

A Government web site (2007) that provides information to migrants about becoming an Australian citizen outlines those values that define national identity. These values include "equality of men and women", "equality of opportunity", "tolerance and mutual respect". Future citizens are also told that these values are central to the security and ongoing prosperity of the nation. This mini-essay examines these values in relation to the experiences of migrant women from non-English speaking backgrounds. Many of these women are subjected to exploitation in the workplace. They often remain invisible to unions and other organisations interested in workplace equity. Often, they will also experience social isolation. Their difficulties in finding a way to live in 'this place' are reinforced by gender and the language barrier. It will be argued that the experiences of many migrant women from non-English speaking backgrounds fall short of the ideals of equality, tolerance and mutual respect. ¶

# Follow-Up





# After the review - what happens?

Discussion about review can take place online, face-to-face

Review applicant/ institution evaluates and reports the review results

How is feedback used from the review to improve the unit/s and course?

As a reviewer was the process worthwhile?

Has your experience as a reviewer changed anything in your approach to assessment? Has it enhanced your assessment literacy?

What have you learned about giving feedback to others?

Is there specific professional learning that you require to enhance your understanding of peer review?



# Glossary of terms

- ▶ Assessment
- ▶ Assessment tasks
- ▶ Academic standards
- ▶ Australian Qualifications Framework
- ▶ Assessment rubric or guide
- ▶ Constructive alignment
- ▶ Course learning outcomes
- ▶ External peer review of assessment
- ▶ External referencing
- ▶ Feedback
- ▶ Learning conversation
- ▶ Performance standard
- ▶ Unit learning outcomes



# References