

UIC-Senate/1213/11-03(rev)

Revised on 23 July 2013

*in accordance with Senate Resolutions
at its 11th Meeting (2012-13) held on 1 July 2013*



BNU-HKBU UNITED INTERNATIONAL COLLEGE (UIC)

Criterion–Referenced Assessment (CRA) Policy, Guidelines and Procedures

Applicable to All Courses with effect from AY 2013-14¹

1. General Assessment Policy

- 1.1 The policy was formulated with guiding principles (see Section 2) for providing a fair and transparent teaching and learning environment for UIC students.
- 1.2 The policy must be observed by all undergraduate programmes that are accredited by HKBU.
- 1.3 Every assessment task in a course should aim at checking its alignment with one or more of the course intended learning outcomes (CILOs), and this information must be made explicit to the students.
- 1.4 Although norm referencing grading is not compatible with CRA, grade distribution guidelines could be useable to guide standards setting and guard against grade inflation². Instead of using norm referencing to guide assignment of grades, teachers could use it to guide the setting of standards for each grade or performance level expected of the students (see Appendix I).
- 1.5 For a course with multiple sections which has a final examination, the current practice of requiring a common paper for the final examination should continue and, as far as possible, the marking scheme should be replaced by assessment rubrics³ which are more comprehensive. The common assessment rubrics should be sufficiently detailed so as to reduce the risk of disadvantaging some students because of inconsistency among different

¹ Adapted from the Assessment Policy Paper of HKBU Senate dated 23 April 2012.

² This proposal is significantly different from the Policy of HKBU, as HKBU has discontinued the use of grade distribution guidelines with the adoption of CRA. At its 11th meeting (2012-13), UIC Senate resolved to approve the revised grade distribution guidelines at Appendix II and to review its appropriateness in two years, i.e., towards the end of AY 2015-16.

³ Assessment rubrics are most useful in grading tasks on which students are being assessed not *only* on their knowledge of the subject matter, but *also* on their performance level ranging, say, from excellent to average. To ensure fair judgment, descriptors/criteria/standards for each performance level should be clearly stated in the rubrics.

markers.

- 1.6 For the purpose of facilitating internal and/or external moderation (e.g., checking by external examiners and educational authorities), the final examination scripts of the students should be kept by the Academic Registry for 5 years. Similar assessed materials should be kept by the divisions and other teaching units (CLC, ELC, GEO and WPEO) of the course teacher/coordinator for at least 12 months. These include end-of-course assessment tasks instead of written examination, e.g., end of term papers, and sample materials from continuous assessments as evidence of student learning.

2. ***Guiding Principles***

- 2.1 Assessment must encourage and reinforce learning. Therefore, assessment tasks should be set for formative as well as summative purposes. These tasks can be essays, coursework assignments, oral presentation, written test/examination, laboratory reports, projects, etc. Except for the task conducted at the end of the course, all the above can be both formative and summative. For formative assessment tasks, constructive feedback must be provided to the students in a timely manner.
- 2.2 Assessment must be aligned with the course intended learning outcomes (CILOs). With the adoption of outcomes-based teaching and learning (OBTL), every assessment task should aim at checking one or more of the CILOs and this information must be explicit to the students. See further detail on this point in Section 3.
- 2.3 In alignment with OBTL, criterion-referenced assessment (CRA) should be used in grading major assessment tasks.⁴ In CRA, the quality of a student's performance in a course is measured by reference to pre-determined criteria and standards linked to the CILOs, which are aligned to the Programme Intended Learning Outcomes (PILOs) that are in turn aligned to the Graduate Attributes (GAs). Therefore, the assessments in the course are helping students achieve the PILOs and GAs as well.
- 2.4 Assessment of student performance should be robust and assessment practices should be fair and equitable for all students. See Sections 3 and 4 on assessment procedures and implementation of assessment tasks on this point.
- 2.5 Assessment must uphold the desired academic standards of the programmes concerned through the moderation of assessment (see Section 5) and the College's existing policy on academic integrity.

3. ***Assessment Procedures***

- 3.1 Assessment guidelines should be set for every assessment task and assessment rubrics should be developed for assessment tasks, individually or in combination, which contribute to 40% of the course grade. The guidelines and/or assessment rubrics, which should be made available to the students, should spell out *inter alia*

⁴ This proposal is modified from the Policy of HKBU and HKBU has stipulated that "assessment guidelines and/or assessment rubrics should be developed for the major assessment tasks in a course". For academic courses in UIC, major assessment tasks are those that would, individually or in combination, contribute to 40% of the course grade.

- 3.1.1 how the particular assessment task is aligned with the CILOs;
 - 3.1.2 the assessment criteria and standards, which must be based on the CILOs being assessed; and
 - 3.1.3 any submission procedures and deadlines, including penalty for late submission if applicable.
- 3.2 The following are some common assessment tasks for which sample rubrics⁵ can be found at HKBU's Centre for Holistic Teaching and Learning (CHTL) website (<http://chtl.hk.edu.hk/main/resource/rubrics/>):
- 3.2.1 Participation
 - 3.2.2 Case Study
 - 3.2.3 Role Play
 - 3.2.4 Oral Presentation
 - 3.2.5 Group Presentation
 - 3.2.6 Oral Exam
 - 3.2.7 Field Studies
 - 3.2.8 Research Paper
- Another good source for assessment rubrics is the Association of American Colleges and University, which recently released some very useful global learning value rubrics: http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/index_p.cfm?CFID=41013111&CFTOKEN=95224777

4. *Implementation of Assessment Tasks*

- 4.1 Information about the assessment tasks in a course should be given to students within the first two weeks of classes (general guidelines and/or generic assessment rubrics for all the assessment tasks should be sufficient at this stage).
- 4.2 For a major assessment task, definitive assessment rubrics specific to the task concerned, if any, should be given to students well before the task is to start.
- 4.3 Where applicable, the weighting of an assessment task should reflect the importance of those CILOs which are being assessed by that task.
- 4.4 Assessment tasks and their weightings should not be changed after teaching has begun and the students have been informed.

5. *Moderation of Assessment*

- 5.1 The work submitted by students for formative assessment tasks should be marked/graded and returned to the students with constructive feedback as soon as practicable and, in any case, preferably no later than three weeks after the deadline for submission.
- 5.2 Final grades and their distribution may be subject to internal moderation by the Examiners Panels of the Programmes and Teaching Units (CLC, ELC, GEO and WPEO). Moderation

⁵The divisions/teaching units/programmes can adapt these sample rubrics for use at the division/unit/programme/course level. Rubrics at the programme/course level should be approved by the division boards and units concerned, while generic/disciplinary rubrics adopted at the division/unit level should be sent to QAC, which should ensure that rubrics are being used to guarantee standardization of assessment criteria by the divisions and all teaching units.

- can take the form of double, cross or random marking, or seeking external advice.
- 5.3 As final examination can serve as a moderation mechanism, grades for courses with final examinations could be reviewed at the time of examination paper setting and before grade submission. Grades for courses with continuous assessment only should be reviewed at regular intervals before grade submission at the end of the semester so that timely action can be taken to address any deviations from the grade distribution guidelines, if appropriate.
- 5.4 Efforts should be made by the Examiners Panels to improve the rigour and safeguard the quality of the moderation process for every course. Although norm-referencing grading should not be used, deviations from the grade distribution guidelines (Appendix II) should be noted and, if justified, explained by the teacher(s) concerned.⁶ For instance, if many students receive either high or low grades, there might be a problem with the overall degree of difficulty of the assessment tasks involved.⁷ While many students can be expected to attain grades of *B* and *C*, an *A* grade should represent truly excellent standards of work that can be expected to be achieved by a small number of students only.
- 5.5 Final examination should be checked that:
- 5.5.1 it is in agreement with the assessment guidelines communicated to the students;
 - 5.5.2 the examination paper can provide a fair assessment of the student which is commensurate with the CILOs being assessed, in terms of the level of difficulty of the examination questions and the time allowed for completing the answers; and
 - 5.5.3 there are assessment rubrics with appropriate criteria and grade descriptors for the assessment tasks, individually or in combination, which contribute to 40% of the course grade, in the examination paper, if appropriate.
- 5.6 A summary grade report should be prepared by the Examiners Panels to be submitted to the Deans in terms of major courses and the GE/WPE Directors in terms of GE/WPE courses after the final examination every semester.
- 5.7 The Examiners Panels should have, *inter alia*, the authority to modify the examination questions papers and/or other assessment tasks set by the course instructors and adjust the grades they submit when there are justifications for doing so. See paragraph 5.4 above.
- 5.8 The final grades of the students in a course and the corresponding grade distribution should be reported to the relevant Division Board of Examiners (DBOE) and GE/WPE Board of Examiners (GEBOE/WPE BOE), all of which have a role in monitoring the final grade distribution of major and GE/WPE courses, respectively.
- 5.9 If and when there is deviation from the grade distribution guidelines that warrants attention and is unresolved by the Examiners Panels, the course instructor/coordinator should be invited to give an explanation to the DBOE/GEBOE/WPEBOE, making reference to *inter alia* the published assessment criteria and standards, the application of such, the examination paper, and the grading guidelines and/or assessment rubrics if applicable. The DBOE/GEBOE/WPEBOE will decide whether there is a need for any follow-up action

⁶ HKBU found there is not much difference in the grade distribution under the CRA method in Semester 1 of 2012-13.

⁷ James, R., McInnes, C., and Devlin, M. (2002) Assessing Learning in Australian Universities, Ideas, strategies and resources for quality in student assessment: www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/assessinglearning.

which may lead to the adjustment of some of the grades.

- 5.10 The DBOE/GEBOE/WPEBOE should submit a summary report outlining any grading issues for the attention of the College Board of Examiners (BOE) at the end of the semester.

6. *Flow Chart*

- 6.1 A flow chart for the Assessment Procedures (Section 3), Implementation of Assessment Tasks (Section 4), and the Moderation of Assessment (Section 5) can be found at Appendix III.

7. *Honour Classifications*

- 7.1 For decisions on scholarship/honour classification, the College will look at the GPA of the students concerned to the second decimal place. To be fair to the students and to reflect this at course level, the grade points are now presented in 2 decimal places (i.e. B+ =3.33, B =3.00, and B- = 2.67). These changes will only apply to new students who begin a new level of study from September 2013 onwards.
- 7.2 Individual Divisions may develop additional or alternative indicators for the award classifications in their programmes.

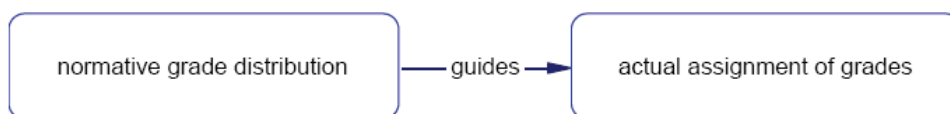
Appendix I

Consistency between absolute criteria and percentage distribution guidelines

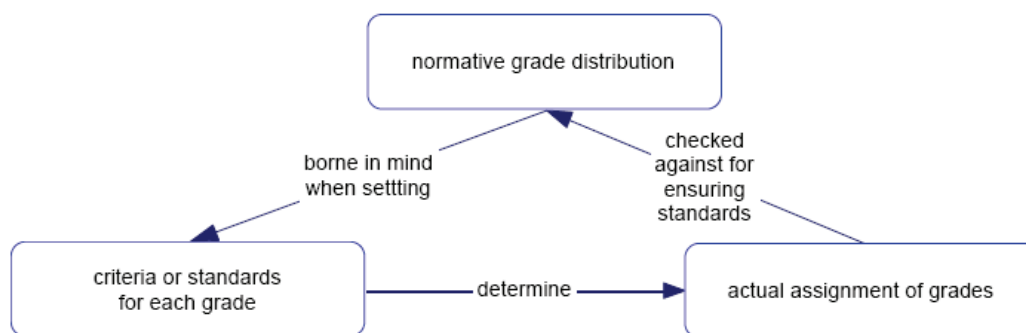
There may appear to be a contradiction between objective standards and percentage guidelines. The false dichotomy can be avoided by regarding the grade distribution guidelines not as a constraint on marking (say end of term), but as a constraint that should have operated much earlier: ideally, standards 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



but rather



Source: *The Chinese University of Hong Kong. Senate Committee on Teaching and Learning. Assessment of Student Learning in Taught Programmes. May 2010. Approved by the Senate at its Fourth Meeting (2009-10) held on 9 June 2010.* <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/assessment/> (accessed 15.6.13)

Appendix II

Grade Distribution Guidelines

(For Internal Reference)

1. Letter grades are used to indicate the results of assessment (i.e. A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D, F).
2. Grade Distribution Guidelines:

Grades	Cumulative % students could get the grade(s)
A	up to 5%
A- and above	up to 15% ⁸
B- and above	up to 75%
C- and above	up to 100%
D and above	up to 100%
F	to be decided by each Examiner

Note

Rather than using the above guidelines to guide actual assignment of grades, these guidelines should be borne in mind when setting criteria or standards for each grade in order to guard against inflation.⁹ Deviations from the above guidelines should be presented for approval of the Examiners Panels, which have the authority to modify examination questions papers and/or other assessment tasks and adjust the grades submitted when there are justifications for doing so. See paragraphs 5.4 and 5.7 of the CRA Policy, Guidelines and Procedures on the moderation of assessment. For instance, if many students receive either high or low grades, there might be a problem with the overall degree of difficulty of the assessment tasks involved.¹⁰ While many students can be expected to attain grades of *B* and *C*, an *A* grade should represent truly excellent standards of work that can be expected to be achieved by a small number of students only.

⁸ As per the resolution of the 11th Meeting (2012-13) of UIC Senate which was held on 1 July 2013

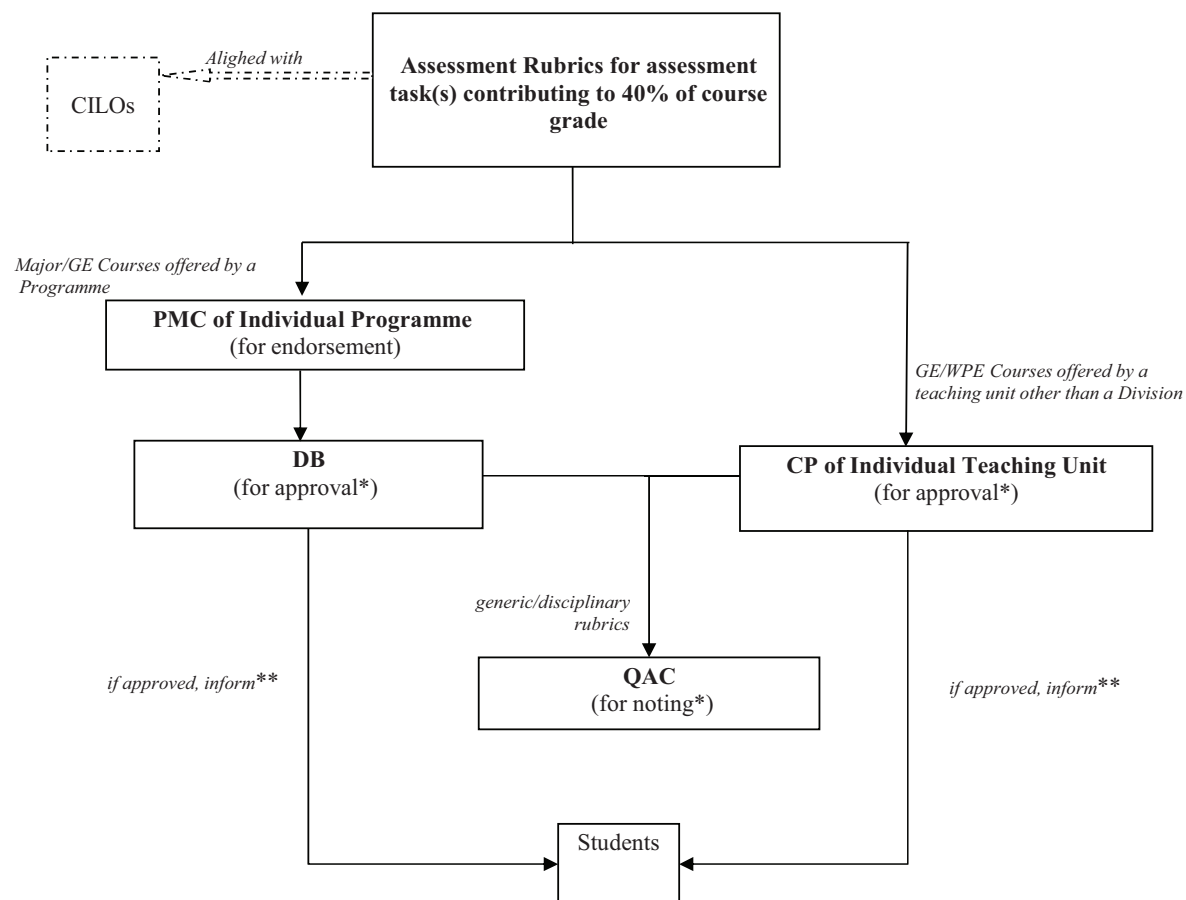
⁹ <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/assessment> (accessed 15.6.13).

¹⁰ James, R., McInnes, C., and Devlin, M. (2002) Assessing Learning in Australian Universities, Ideas, strategies and resources for quality in student assessment, www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/assessinglearning.

Appendix III

Flow Chart for Assessment Procedures, Implementation of Assessment Tasks and the Moderation of Assessment

Assessment Procedures & Implementation of Assessment Tasks



Notes:

PMC=Programme Management Committee

DB = Division Board

CP = Course Panel

QAC = Quality Assurance Committee

*Rubrics at the programme/course level should be approved by the division boards and units concerned, while generic/disciplinary rubrics adopted at the division/unit level should be sent to QAC, which should ensure that rubrics are being used to guarantee standardization of assessment criteria by the divisions and all teaching units.

**Information about the assessment tasks in a course should be given to students within the first two weeks of classes; Definitive assessment rubrics specific to the task concerned, if any, should be given to students well before the task is to start.

Moderation of Assessment

Notes:

EP = Examiners Panel

DBOE = Division Board of Examiners

GE BOE = General Education Board of Examiners

WPE BOE = Whole Person Education Board of Examiners

* For any deviations from the grade distribution guidelines that warrants attention and is unresolved by the EPs, Instructor/Coordinator should be invited to give an explanation to DBOE/GEBOE/WPEBOE.

