UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE
ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE

OFFICE OF THE SENIOR DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR (ACADEMIC)

Introduction to the Framework

The University of Newcastle Assessment Framework is a bold step to modernise our assessment in an era of AI. Developed collaboratively across Colleges and Learning Design and Teaching Innovation teams, the Framework ensures integrity, compliance, and trust in our awards while embracing authentic, future-focused learning.

Its two-lane approach balances secure assessment with open, AI-enabled learning, giving flexibility for disciplines and innovation. By 2026, all courses will implement secure strategies with deployment supported by resources, workshops, and consultations.

Please explore the Framework, engage with the resources, and take advantage of these opportunities as you plan assessment changes for 2026 and beyond.

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Education Innovation

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1. Introduction and context

Investing in Assessment: The rise of artificial intelligence has acted as a call to action to ensure assessment practices drive learning and assure the integrity of our awards.

Assessment is central to effective teaching and learning, shaping student experience and academic standards. This framework outlines key principles of quality assessment, including alignment with learning goals, fairness, scaffolding, collaboration, accessibility, and meaningful integration.

Our priority must be to invest time and resources in our assessment landscape establishing high-quality assessments to drive high-quality learning.

This framework establishes the principles/minimum standards required for implementation, while allowing disciplines the flexibility to exceed these benchmarks where appropriate.

Note: successful implementation of this framework is contingent on coordinated, University-level support. This includes the provision of robust technology platforms and improvement in existing system capabilities (e.g. activation of Course Loop flag to identify secure assessments) and enabling policy and governance structures. Without these foundational enablers, implementation cannot proceed effectively.

1.1 Assessment Principles

Eight core principles underpin robust assessment practices at the University of Newcastle:

1. **Validity:** assessments must accurately measure achievement of learning outcomes and align clearly with course and program objectives.

2. **Reliability:** assessment outcomes should be consistent across contexts and assessors, supported by clear marking criteria and moderation.

3. **Fairness and Equity:** assessment must provide all students, regardless of background or ability, an equal opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge.

4. **Transparency:** clear communication of assessment expectations, criteria, and standards helps students understand requirements and reduces ambiguity.

5. **Educational Impact:** assessment should support and enhance student learning through constructive feedback, fostering continuous improvement and engagement. Assessment of, for and as learning.

6. **Relevance:** assessment should not only be academically rigorous but also meaningfully aligned with the evolving needs of students, disciplines, and society.

7. **Future Proof:** leverage digital tools to enhance assessment efficiency, feedback quality, and learner experience while minimising unnecessary burden on staff and students.

8. **Promote Academic Integrity:** through purposeful assessment design, embedding integrity principles, and leveraging GenAI ethically and transparently.

1.2 Key Definitions

In the context of this framework, the following definitions apply:

- **Course-level assessment security:** assure secure learning in every course.

- **Programmatic (or Program-level) Assessment Security:** A defined series of secure assessments, delivered across a program of study, used to assure student attainment of program learning outcomes.

- **Secure Assessment:** Supervised assessment that facilitates observable attainment of program/course learning outcomes, verifying that students demonstrated the required knowledge and skills.

1.3 Regulatory Environment

Under the [Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021](#), higher education institutions are required to demonstrate that student achievement of the course and program learning outcomes is credibly assessed.

The methods of assessment used should be capable of confirming that all specified learning outcomes are achieved and that grades awarded reflect the level of student attainment.

The University of Newcastle Assessment Framework has been drafted with consideration of, and to support compliance with, the following threshold standards.

- **1.3.3** Methods of assessment or monitoring that determine progress within or between units of study or in research training validly assess progress and, in the case of formative assessment, provide students with timely feedback that assists in their achievement of learning outcomes.

- **1.4.3** Methods of assessment are consistent with the learning outcomes being assessed, are capable of confirming that all specified learning outcomes are achieved and that grades awarded reflect the level of student attainment.

- **1.4.4** On completion of a course (program) of study, students have demonstrated the learning outcomes specified for the course of study, whether assessed at unit level, course level, or in combination.

- **3.1.3** Teaching and learning activities are arranged to foster progressive and coherent achievement of expected learning outcomes throughout each course (program) of study.

- **5.2.2** Preventative action is taken to mitigate foreseeable risks to academic and research integrity including misrepresentation, fabrication, cheating, plagiarism and misuse of intellectual property, and to prevent recurrences of breaches.

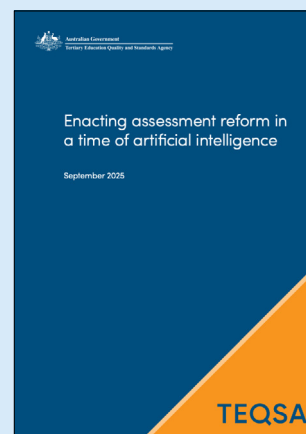**TEQSA Resources - refer to the TEQSA GenAI Knowledge Hub**
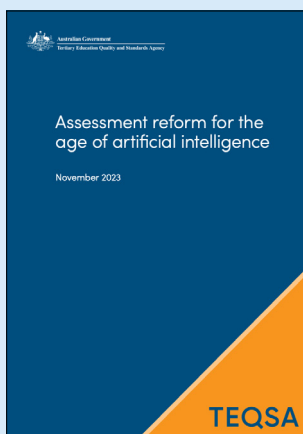
Assessment reform for the age of artificial intelligence

Gen AI strategies for Australian higher education: Emerging practice

Enacting assessment reform in a time of artificial intelligence

1.4 Types of Assessment

The University of Newcastle recognises the important role that high quality assessment plays in providing students with opportunities to demonstrate their learning.

- **Formative Assessment** (for and as learning) is used to enhance learning, with a focus on provision of feedback to support progression and development.

- **Summative Assessment** (of learning) measures the extent to which students have demonstrated the specified learning outcomes at the conclusion of a course or program.

To support trustworthy judgements about student learning, the university uses multiple, inclusive and contextualised approaches to assessment including (but not limited to):

- In term tests/quizzes.

- Written assignments, reports, and essays.

- Formal Examinations.

- Presentations.

- Journals, Logs and Workbooks.

- Projects.

- Tutorial, Laboratory Exercises and Practical Demonstrations.

Where appropriate, the authenticity of a student's assessment task may be confirmed by an Interview on Assessment Item. An interview provides students with an opportunity to explain their response to a relevant assessment item, provide evidence of authorship, and to confirm their competency and knowledge of the materials which have been assessed.

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2. Assessment Security Strategies

Safeguarding the integrity of our awards is non-negotiable. Students, employers, professional bodies, and regulators must be able to trust that each graduate has genuinely met the required learning outcomes. By protecting this credibility, we preserve the lifelong value of our awards and uphold the University's standing for excellence.

As GenAI platforms have become more sophisticated, so has the understanding across the sector of their impact on assessment security and the effectiveness of different responses. While academic integrity guidelines for students still have an important role to play, there is a growing appreciation that institutions must "*shift towards structural assessment redesign that builds validity into assessment architecture rather than attempting to impose it through unenforceable rules*" Corbin, T., Dawson, P., & Liu, D. (2025).

Data Governance and security

Education and awareness

Detection, Investigation and Response

Governance, Policy, Guidelines and plans

Assessment design (for security)

Culture and values
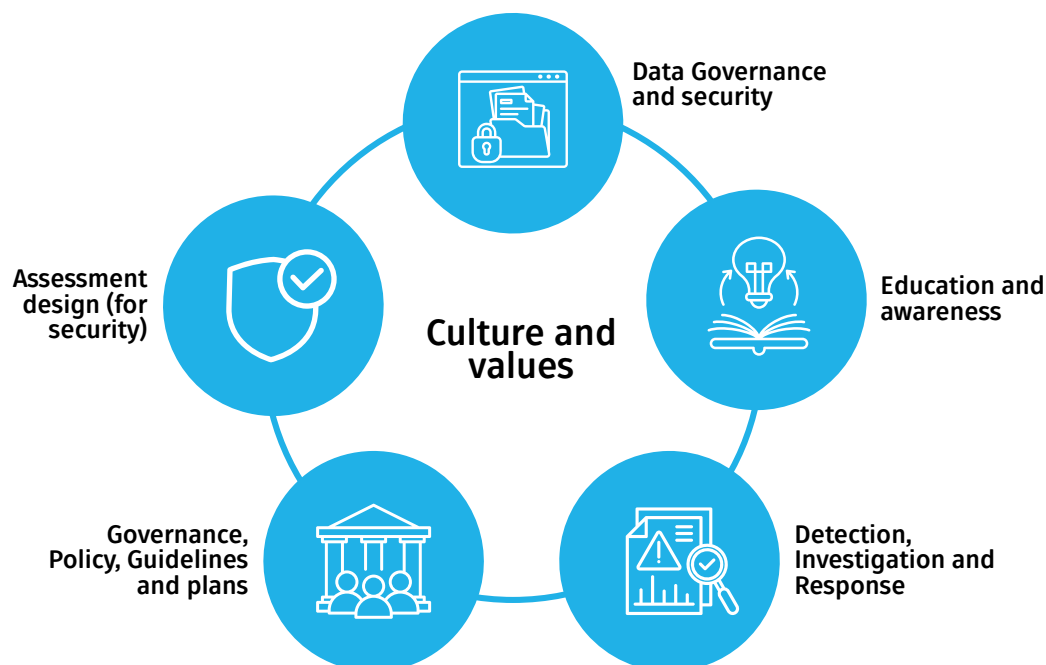
Assessment Design is only one element of the institution academic integrity ecosystem

2.1 Secure Assessment Tasks

Secure tasks are supervised assessments that facilitate the observable attainment of program/course learning outcomes and verify that students have demonstrated the required knowledge and skills.

Secure Assessment

Type	Description
Formal exam (limited use, refer to implementation section)	In person invigilated exam delivered by central exams team in formal examination period*
In term supervised task	Activities conducted in-term under supervised conditions may take multiple forms. These may include practical demonstrations, lab activities, completion of creative works, or tests/quizzes.
Live interactive performance	A presentation (e.g. debate, presentation, discussion, submission of artifact, etc) that includes live (in person or online) question and answer.
Placement, internship, or supervision	Observed performance in WIL activity. Authentic assessments are undertaken during placements, internships or other supervised workplace contexts, with real-time oversight embedded in the wider work-integrated learning (WIL) activities.
Competency based grading (supervised assessment of competency)	Competency models, focused on mastery rather than numerical grades and ranking, can reduce competitive pressures and decrease student motivation to engage in unethical behaviours.

* Noting that the university does not currently have the capability to run proctored online examinations.

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2.2 Supporting Strategies

In addition to secure tasks described above, there are indirect or complementary strategies that can be explored to support verifiable demonstration of learning outcomes. Examples include:

Type	Description
Revision of learning outcomes to incorporate use of GenAI	Revising learning outcomes to explicitly include legitimate GenAI use clarifies expectations, reduced the ambiguity that often leads to academic-integrity breaches, while at the same time promoting engagement with GenAI in ways that reflect industry expectations.
Portfolio assessment	Creation and collation of work overtime to demonstrate student learning progression, skills, and achievements, providing a holistic view of their development.
Semester long projects	Extended assignments that span an entire academic term, enabling students to engage in in-depth research, creative work, or practical application of course content while offering multiple opportunities for both secure assessment and feedback.
Conditional Grading	Student marks in open assessment tasks are dependent on evidence of learning in related secure assessments.
Highly contextualised questions	Tasks based on very specific course material, or that involve authentic application to novel real-world situations, may be more difficult to complete using GenAI.
Use of Cadmus platform	Cadmus is a useful tool for scaffolding and understanding how student work is constructed (when they work in the platform), and can support assurance by providing visibility of the process the student has completed to construct their assessment.

Ensure a focus on Constructive alignment	Ensuring the assessment type and design align to the specific learning outcomes is a key strategy in ensuring assurance of learning. Additionally, when course content clearly prepares students for assessments, they are more likely to engage appropriately and feel less pressure to misuse generative AI.
	See more at Creating Learning Outcomes

2.3 The Role of Invigilated Exams

Centrally and School supported, formal and in-term invigilated exams can form part of the overall approach to assessment security. However, the use of a high-stakes centrally supported formal exam should be minimised wherever possible. Academic staff are encouraged to consider alternative assessment types that are more appropriate for the intended learning outcomes of their course.

The use of invigilated exams solely as a security measure — without careful alignment to the learning outcomes — can compromise assessment validity. As Dawson et al. (2024) note, *"Attempts to improve validity by addressing cheating can sometimes make validity worse."*

2.4 GenAI use in Secure Assessments

A secure assessment verifies that students have demonstrated the required knowledge and skills and facilitates the observable attainment of programme/course learning outcomes. Depending on the learning outcomes, it may be entirely appropriate for students to engage with GenAI.

If the learning outcomes permit, secure assessments may involve students engaging with GenAI in specific ways, ranging from AI-assisted idea generation to the full utilisation of GenAI for task completion (see Perkins, M., Furze, L., Roe, J., & MacVaugh., 2024). Where GenAI is permitted in a secure assessment, educators must clearly communicate how it can be used and ensure that the assessment is conducted in a way that allows adherence to these specifics to be validated.

2.5 The Role of Open Assessment

With the rapid advancement of GenAI technologies "*unsupervised assessments are no longer able to assure attainment of learning outcomes*" (Liu & Bates, 2025). In unobserved (i.e. "take home") assessment, attempts to enforce limits on GenAI use are unfeasible, and may contribute to increases in academic workload while also being detrimental to the emotional wellbeing of both teachers and students (Corbin, T., Dawson, P., Nicola-Richmond, K., & Partridge, H. (2025)).
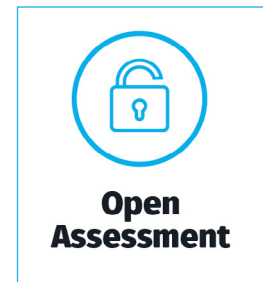
Open Assessment

Therefore, any assessment task that is not delivered in a secure, supervised fashion should be considered "open" and be delivered with the assumption that students may engage with GenAI to compete the task.

Such open, formative assessments can allow educators to focus attention on the process of learning and on process-based assessment strategies that uncover *"evidence as to whether or not the work of learning has occurred"* (Ellis & Lodge, 2024). Open assessment for learning can help develop students' discipline-specific knowledge, skills and mindsets. Carefully crafted tasks, which clearly scaffold and guide the appropriate use of every relevant resource, can assisting in equipping *"students to participate ethically and actively in a society where AI is ubiquitous"* (Lodge, J. M., Howard, S., Bearman, M., Dawson, P, & Associates, 2023).

Through well-designed open assessments, students can be provided with opportunities to work appropriately with each other and AI in ways which are aligned with discipline norms and industry expectations.

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3. Implementing Assessment Security – course and Program Options

Assessment security strategies can be effectively applied at either the course or program level. To ensure the validity of our awards, all programs must have strategies applied at either the course level (Option 1) or program level (Option 2) by commencing January 2026 in line with the timeline outlined in 4.1.

3.1 Option 1: Course Level Implementation

To support assurance that students have demonstrated the learning outcomes, assessment security strategies described above can be applied at a course level by ensuring:

- **3.1.1** All courses must include either:

- **3.1.1(a)** at least one secure assessment task with a minimum weighting of 30% that is a compulsory component (hurdle)

  OR

- **3.1.1(b)** secure assessment tasks within a course that have a total minimum weighting of 50% (comprised of one or more assessments).

3.2 Option 2: Program Level Implementation

Assessment across a program of study must be arranged to foster progressive and coherent achievement of expected program learning outcomes.

Assessment security strategies described above can be applied at a program level by:

- **3.2.1** A series of secure assessments and supporting strategies (if appropriate) providing multiple opportunities for observations of performance that, when viewed holistically, provide assurance that learning outcomes have been satisfied.

- **3.2.2** Programmatic / Program level Assessment security strategies must be approved by the relevant College Board.

- **3.2.3** Program level assessment may include Colleges electing to implement minimum secure assessment thresholds, including differentiated minimums across different year levels.

3.3 Ongoing Assessment Reform

These initial requirements are focused on the immediate safeguarding of the integrity of our awards. As the understanding and impact of emerging technologies continues to evolve, the University will continue to explore and implement assessment reform beyond the minimum expectations outlined above. This will include a focus on modern assessment strategies which aim to uncover *"evidence as to whether or not the work of learning has occurred"* (Ellis & Lodge, 2024).

ⓘ **How to stay up to date with information about GenAI and Assessment**

The Academic Integrity, Artificial Intelligence, and Standards Working Group (AASWG) shares monthly all staff updates via The Loop. Previous updates are available here. The group also provides an update to each meeting of the University Teaching and Learning Committee.

The AI Community of Practice is a platform for open discussion, available to all staff. LDTI contributes a weekly "wrap up" post each Friday morning, and this is a great way to get a snapshot of latest updates and news.

The GenAI: Frequently Asked Questions page and Library Generative AI Tools guide provide a launch pad to access the wealth of information available.

Additional information and resources are available via:

- Academic Integrity, Artificial Intelligence, and Standards Working Group Sharepoint site
- Regular updates to University and College Teaching and Learning Committees
- LDTI Upcoming Workshops
- LDTI Teaching Resources
- Regular all staff updates via the Loop

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4. Implementation Workplan

4.1 Timeline

The following timelines apply to the implementation of assessment security strategies in all coursework programs offered by the University:

- **January 2026:** All Trimester and Semester 1 2026 courses must comply with the minimum assessment security provisions described above.

- **April 2026:** All Midyear session and Trimester 2 courses must comply with the minimum assessment security provisions described above.

- **July 2026:** All Trimester 3 and Semester 2 2026 courses must comply with the minimum assessment security provisions described above.

4.2 Exemption

Where a College Board has, before November 2025, endorsed Assessment Security Action Plans based on 3.2 Program Implementation, implementation of these plans should continue with the College ensuring that security measures are in place for the relevant term by deadlines outlined in 4.1.

- **4.2.1** Securing Online Assessment

  Technology to support securing online courses and programs will be identified.

  To support implementation of secure assessment in online courses, the University is pursuing a suite of additional initiatives for use in 2026. The aim is not to impose a single solution, but to provide a clear suite of evidence-based options that the University and Colleges can adopt according to assessment risk, disciplinary context, curriculum design, and operational capacity.

4.3 Support Required

Support will be provided to Colleges/Schools/Disciplines by Learning Design and Teaching Innovation (LDTI). LDTI will support discipline groups in their development of actions plans for endorsement by College Boards, and in (re)designing the specific assessment tasks outlined in those plans. LDTI will also provide additional resources (e.g. exemplars, professional development sessions, case studies) to support the implementation of secure (and open) assessment strategies.

Technology to support securing online courses and programs will be required to be identified to ensure security of these offerings.

The University will adopt a systematic approach to implement and monitor plans. The use of Mapper has been identified as the system solution to capture and monitor action plans (available in 2026) in addition to policy changes that flag secure assessment and integrate with governance processes to ensure the continued compliance of programs.

Access support options via the University of Newcastle [Assessment Framework website](#).

5. Integrity of Awards – Ongoing Safeguards

To ensure the ongoing integrity of our awards, all proposals for new and revised programs submitted to the Program and Course Approval Committee (PCAC) must be accompanied by details of the approach (course or program) to be applied to the program, including details of specific secure tasks and supporting strategies.

For changes in existing programs that do not require PCAC approval, Colleges will retain oversight and management.

6. Application of the Framework and Exemptions

This framework applies to all coursework programs available for enrolment from Semester 1 2026 onwards.

Colleges may seek exemption, for programs in teach out, to the application of the framework from the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

Exemptions must be supported by evidence of teach out plans confirming all remaining students will have completed, or otherwise exited, the program by the end of 2027.

References

Corbin, T., Dawson, P., & Liu, D. (2025). *Talk is cheap: why structural assessment changes are needed for a time of GenAI*. Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2025.2503964

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