

Assessment Policy and Procedures Regulations – Coursework

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This policy document provides teaching staff with a framework to ensure that students are treated in an equitable, consistent and fair manner in relation to assessment, and to provide staff with a best practice framework. It should be read in conjunction with specific assessment tasks set by unit coordinators and lecturers.

1. The purposes of assessment and grading

The Cairnmillar Institute School acknowledges that assessment serves multiple purposes. The nature and requirements of assessment tasks helps to define the learning that is expected of students and significantly influence students' patterns of study. Assessment enables students to receive feedback on their progress, to measure student learning and to assess progress against established objectives.

The aim of student assessment is to employ approaches to assessment and grading that has a positive influence on students' study habits, provides students with helpful feedback where possible, and fairly measures grades and reports the extent of student learning.

To achieve the objectives of assessment and grading this policy is informed by the following principles:

1. Assessment tasks are designed to assess the knowledge and skills that a student has obtained up to the point at which the task is completed.
2. The marking of assessment task is designed to quantify the level of student learning against identified objectives for each task or component of a task.
3. Grading is designed to record and report whether or not students have demonstrated an overall level of performance that warrants successful completion of a subject and to allow excellent achievement to be recognised and rewarded.
4. Grading practices ensure that all students are treated equally and fairly.

2. What is assessed?

Each unit has a defined list of objectives, as detailed in the unit outline and program guide. Unit objectives include the development of specific knowledge and skills, as well as generic skills and graduate attributes. Guiding the development of these skills and knowledge and measuring progress against these objectives are the purposes of assessment in each unit.

3. Unit study level

Each unit at Cairnmillar has assessment and grading that reflects the expectations for students at Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma and at Masters level.

4. Responsibility for the conduct of assessment

The Head of School or course coordinator reviews all aspects of design, preparation and administration of all components of assessment, including additional assessment for all units. This role provides a link between the development and design of each unit and the assessment tasks required for assessment.

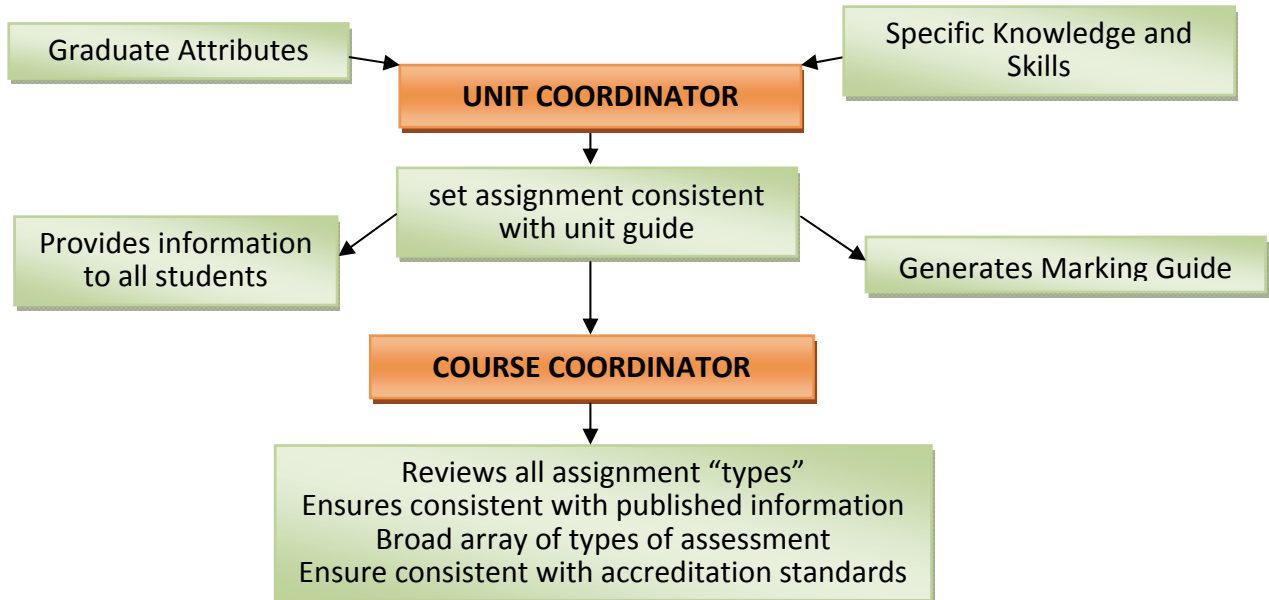
These include the following:

1. The forms of assessment to be used;
2. The prescribed size, length or extent of each component of assessment;
3. The approximate timing of assessment tasks;
4. The weighting of each component of assessment.

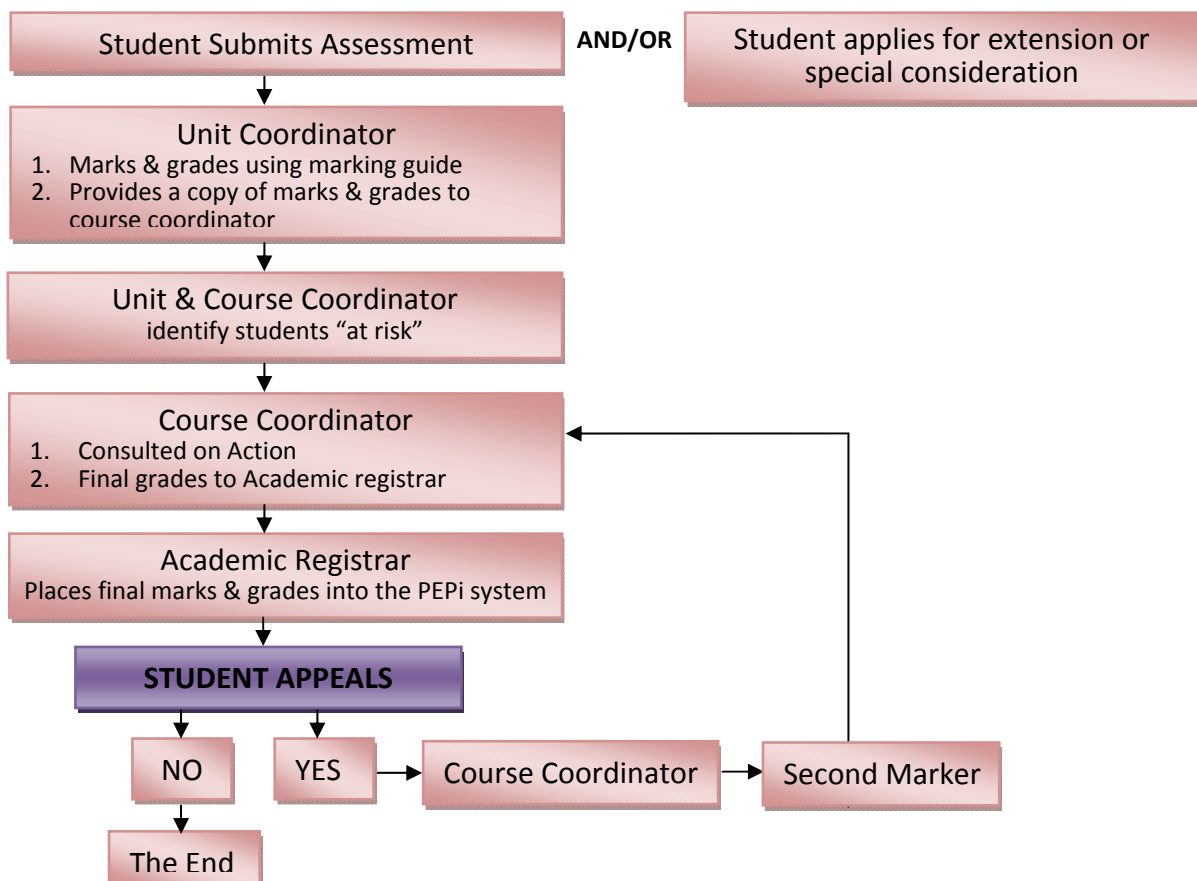
The Head of School will appoint AdHoc committees to ensure to the extent possible, that each unit co-ordinator applies the same standards, in reference to explicit criteria, against which each student's work is marked. The HOS will also put in place benchmarking activities with the higher education sector.

Figure 1: Flow chart of procedure for dealing with assessments

Quality Assurance & Assessment



Marking and Grading



5. Determining assessment requirements

The School determines and ensures that the following assessment requirements are published in the unit outline and student handbooks:

1. The criteria on which tasks will be graded and marks allocated;
2. The due date for submission or performance of each component of assessment;
3. Penalties for late submission of assignments;
4. Guidelines for breach of word limits on assignments and failure to follow prescribed formats;
5. The expected date for return of results for each component of assessment;
6. Where appropriate, guidelines for a resit of a test or examination;
7. Where appropriate, guidelines for being excused from an assessment task.

6. Determining marks and grades

The unit coordinator and course coordinator assess whether:

1. The grade and mark to be awarded to each student is appropriate or, where this cannot be determined, the offer of appropriate additional assessment;
2. An appropriate response to each application for Special Consideration made during teaching;

7. Explaining assessment criteria to students

Marking criteria with the details of each assessment task is made available to all students of the School in the first class of each semester. This includes providing an explanation or example of the quality of work required to achieve particular grades, including the standard required to achieve the higher, honours grades.

The explanations for assessment criteria presented to students by the lecturers in the school are as follows:

1. Specific to each task;
2. Clearly worded in plain English;
3. Sufficiently detailed so as to provide guidance to students undertaking assessment tasks;
4. Linked to the learning objectives of the subject;
5. Except for pass/fail subjects, structured to enable differentiation between levels of performance;
6. Appropriate to assessment weightings;
7. Supported by a verbal or written statement about what constitutes the various levels of performance and examples where practical.

8. Marking guidelines

The course coordinator through the unit coordinator is required to ensure that each assessor applies the same standard in marking. The use of assessment marking criteria demonstrates equity of marking.

9. Forms of assessment

Assessment can take a variety of forms including but not restricted to those listed below.

1. Take-home examinations – assignment
2. Written tests, or in-class task
3. Essays, dissertations, minor theses or other written assignments
4. Oral examinations or tests - examination or in-class task
5. Seminar presentations - in-class task
6. Practical work, including reports and problem solving exercises - in-class task
7. Performances - examination or in-class task
8. Oral tests
9. Placement practice
10. Clinical or practice work
11. Class participation.

The course coordinators encourage unit coordinators to employ a variety of assessment tasks to ensure rigorous assessment, and to provide opportunities for all students to develop the desirable knowledge and skills and to demonstrate their capabilities.

10. Weighting of assessment components

The unit co-ordinator is required to employ more than one form of assessment in a single subject, to enable students to demonstrate their capacity to understand the material they are studying.

Each component of assessment will be assigned a weighting, expressed in terms of the maximum percentage of the total mark.

The weighting indicates to the student how much time should be allocated to one assessment task compared with another, and guides the depth of engagement with course content, as follows:

1. One subject may require a student to complete a written assignment worth 40% of the total mark, and a formally supervised written exam worth 60% of the total mark.
2. Class participation will not be assigned more than 10% of the total mark for a subject.
3. Participation means more than attendance, and marks should not be awarded simply for students attending scheduled classes.

11. Prescribed (hurdle) requirements

Some units may require the successful completion of specific assessment tasks in order to demonstrate a basic level of knowledge or acquisition of certain skills. A unit in which practical as well as theoretical knowledge is required, a student who has not satisfactorily completed both practical and theoretical elements may be deemed unsuited to further study in the discipline, or deemed not to have satisfied the objectives of the subject.

Students who do not satisfy the prescribed hurdle requirements in any unit will fail that unit, even if they have obtained more than 50% of the marks available by the completion of other components of assessment.

The nature of these requirements and the consequences for failing to meet them must be communicated to students with the details of assessment.

Examples of Prescribed (Hurdle) requirements include:

1. Class attendance requirements (where class participation constitutes core learning):
Lecturers must keep a log of attendance where class attendance is required, and must specify which classes are required;
2. Successful completion of all components of assessment required to achieve an overall pass in the subject (where performance against critical subject objectives are demonstrated in different assessment tasks);
3. Successful completion of particular components of assessment required to achieve an overall pass in the subject (for example the keeping of log books on counselling placements);
4. Successful completion of both practical and theoretical elements of the subject required to achieve an overall pass in the subject.

12.Parameters of assessment requirements

Each assessment component required for completion of a unit will be defined by particular parameters that describe the extent of that component. For example, a formally supervised written examination will be of a prescribed length of time, and a written assignment will have a prescribed word limit.

Word limits are established to define an assessment task and to encourage students to produce concise work that reflects the scope of the tasks set for them. Assignments are structured to ensure workloads for students and academic staff, are reasonable and properly communicated.

To ensure equity and consistency, students should be penalised for submitting assignments that are substantially different from the prescribed size. Penalties are applied at the discretion of the School, but must be applied equally to all students enrolled in the relevant subject.

The penalty for lack of compliance must be communicated to students with the details of assessment and should be sufficiently detailed i.e. specifying the word limit, any leeway, the marking penalty itself.

The School requires all students to comply with APA Referencing Style. Students must be advised of style and formatting expectations, and provided with the standard School formatting example.

13.Late submission of work

Assignments must be completed within specified time limits. Assignments that are not submitted on time may attract a marking penalty. The nature of the penalty should be considered in light of the nature and the timing of the task.

Penalties are applied at the discretion of the unit coordinator, but must be applied equally to all students enrolled in the relevant unit.

14. Penalties

Word Limit

Assignments that exceed the word limit by 25% or more may attract a penalty. For example, an assignment with a limit of 2000 words could be marked down by 10% if there are more than 2500 words or more.

Discretion

A student may be permitted to exceed the word limit if the work is genuinely outstanding and original, and permitting a student to do so does not disadvantage other students who were required to conform to the word-limit. A student must seek advice before submitting an assignment that is well over the limit.

Failure to Submit

Unless an extension has been granted, assignments submitted later than 5 working days (or 1 week if due on a weekend) after the due date may not be marked, and may receive no marks.

Late submission of in-class tasks

Tasks that are required to be completed and/or submitted in-class, such as class presentations must be submitted on the due date unless a student had been awarded an extension. The penalty for late submission of in-class tasks could be up to 100% of the mark.

In-class tasks will not be marked if submitted more than one week following the due date (i.e. after the return of work to students).

15. Conduct of assessment

In order for a student to be deemed to have failed a subject, with limited exceptions, each failed component of assessment for that student must be marked by two independent (meaning not acting in concert) assessors, at least one of whom is a member of the School.

To ensure that assessment is perceived to be unbiased, staff must be aware of any potential conflict of interest. For example as a result of a familial or other relationship with a student, and ensure that marking practices (for example ensuring blind marking, or seeking double marking of assignments where appropriate) are exercised to eliminate any perception of unfairness.

16. Special Consideration

Additional assessment provides a student with an opportunity to convert an initial fail mark into a pass. In addition, a student may be given a further opportunity to improve upon a pass mark as a result of a successful Special Consideration application.

At the discretion of the unit or course coordinator, additional assessment may only be offered to a student in the following circumstances. Additional assessment is not awarded on any other basis.

If lecturers are unable to determine whether a student has satisfied the requirements of a particular piece of assessment, or what mark and grade to award a student, they may, before the award of a final result for that piece of assessment or subject, administer a component of further assessment to the student.

Such assessment may take any form or be subject to any conditions specified by the unit or course coordinator and would usually be completed prior to the return of a final result for the relevant piece of assessment or subject.

The award of Special Assessment is based on an application for Special Consideration and is at the discretion of the unit coordinator. Such assessment will normally take the form of a formally supervised written examination, but this may be varied at the discretion of the unit or course coordinator to take account of the circumstances of the student. Special assessment is to be assigned the same weighting as the component(s) of assessment it replaces, and should be marked to the full range of honours grades.

The following may be awarded to students after consideration of a student's circumstances and will be conducted immediately after the return of results each study period and before publication of final results to students.

A student may only be offered a second attempt at passing a subject if a borderline failure in a single subject (other than a research project or thesis) has a significant impact on the student's progression through the course.

The following may constitute a significant effect:

1. The course is a fixed, full-time course and failure in one unit would result in the student's progress to the next level of the course being delayed a year;
2. The subject is a compulsory unit, offered only once a year, and a key prerequisite for the 'next' year of study in the student's course;
3. The subject is a year-long subject.

Final Subject Assessment:

In the final year of their enrolment students who fail a single unit (worth up to 25 points) with a final result of 40 - 45% or more will be eligible to undertake final unit assessment. This will normally be by way of a formally supervised written examination or equivalent written assignment. Such additional assessment is to constitute 100% of assessment in that unit and may only be awarded a maximum of 50% (P).

The unit coordinator should accept a recommendation from the course coordinator or the Head of School for additional assessment. Example of an impractical circumstance: where practical work is an essential part of the unit, and it is not possible for additional assessment that enables the student to demonstrate their competence in practical work to be implemented in a timely way (before the commencement of the next study period).

With the exception of special assessment, which can only be awarded because of an approved application for Special Consideration, students do not need to apply for additional assessment. Students awarded additional assessment, but who do not receive notice prior to the release of final results, will be informed of their offer of additional assessment when the results for the relevant unit(s) are released.

Students may be required to perform additional assessment at any time prior to the release of final results, during an additional assessment period immediately following the release of final results, or during a defined supplementary examination period. It is therefore imperative that students make themselves available at short notice until the end of the additional assessment period.

Lecturers awarding additional assessment outside the defined supplementary examination period are required to provide formal notification and instructions to the student at least 48 hours before the assessment is scheduled to be held.

17. Consideration for special circumstances

Students who have experienced severe disruption in completing a component of assessment because of extraordinary or unusual circumstances may seek consideration. Applications are submitted to the course coordinator who will appoint an independent academic to undertake an initial review. Applications are subsequently determined by the course coordinator, based upon the recommendation of the independent assessor.

In all but exceptional circumstances, a student is not entitled to seek 'Special Consideration' for the completion of additional assessment, or to seek further variations to assessment conditions.

When acute incidents impact on a person's ability to complete additional assessment occur, reasonable attempts should be made to accommodate the student; for example, delaying a special examination by a short period.

If a student is unable to complete additional assessment because of a continuation of the original circumstance, a student adviser will assist the student to reconstruct appropriately their course plan, rather than offer to alter the original offer of additional assessment, or varied assessment conditions.

18. Grading structure and policy

The grades and grade codes that are to be used under this policy are to be provided in the unit outline and made available in the first week of class.

Grade Distributions

Students are advised that their work will be marked on its academic merit, in relation to the following grade descriptions and taking into account the type of assessment used. Grades and marks for *individual* pieces of assessment are indicative only. Lecturers will provide specific advice to students on how final marks and grades are to be determined in each subject.

- **N 0%-49% Fail - *not satisfactory***
 - Work that fails to meet the basic assessment criteria;
 - Work that contravenes the policies and regulations set out for the assessment exercise.

Where a student fails a subject, all failed components of assessment are double marked.

- **P 50%-59% Pass - *satisfactory***

Completion of key tasks at an adequate level of performance in argumentation, documentation and expression.

- Work that meets a limited number of the key assessment criteria;
- Work that shows substantial room for improvement in many areas.

- **H2B 60%-69% Second-class honours level B - good**

Good work that is solidly researched, shows a good understanding of key ideas, demonstrates some use of critical analysis along with good presentation and documentation.

- Work that meets most of the key assessment criteria and performs well in some;
- Work that shows some room for improvement.

- **H2A 70%-79% Second-class honours level A - very good**

Very good work that is very well researched, shows critical analytical skills, is well argued, with scholarly presentation and documentation.

- Work that meets all the key assessment criteria and exceeds in some;
- Work that shows limited room for improvement.

- **H1 80%-100% First-class honours - excellent**

Excellent analysis, comprehensive research, sophisticated theoretical or methodological understanding, impeccable presentation.

- Work that meets all the key assessment criteria and excels in most.
- Work that meets these criteria and is also in some way original, exciting or challenging could be awarded marks in the high 80s or above.

Marks of 90% and above may be awarded to the best student's work in the H1 range.

- **RPL** Recognition of prior learning
- **RPC** Research Project Continuing

19. Distribution of grades

The grading of student work is 'criteria-based' (ie. students are assessed according to their performance against the assessment criteria)

20. Format and submission of assignments

All submitted work must have a coversheet provided by the School. Each coversheet includes a unique identifier that assists with document tracking, and includes a plagiarism declaration that the student signs. The cover sheet must also accompany shorter assignments that are either submitted in person or in class.

The unit co-ordinator must specify that all, written assignments will be:

1. Typed;
2. Identifiable only by the inclusion of the relevant student number on each page. Students' names (with the exception of shorter assignments submitted in person, in class) should not be included in assignments;
3. Double-spaced;
4. Presented with margins of at least 2cm (right margin) and 4cm (left margin);
5. Page-numbered; and;
6. If submitted in hard copy, either stapled together or appropriately bound.

All referenced material must be acknowledged using an appropriate, consistent system within the document. Assignments with references should include a reference list using the APA style guide.

21. Assignment submission and collection

Except for assignments submitted in-class, or where otherwise specified, the deadline for submission of an assignment on the due date is 5:00pm. Assignments submitted after 5:00pm on the due date are considered to be one working day late.

Assignments submitted in class or to the School Office must contain a school assignment coversheet. Where appropriate, students who would like their assignment to be returned to them by post should also submit a stamped, self-addressed envelope big enough to contain the assignment. Some units may require students to submit electronic copies of their assignment as this enables teaching staff to check more easily for plagiarism.

Mailed assignments must be sent, together with a coversheet, by registered mail or express post. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that assignments posted to the School reach the relevant office by the relevant due date. The School takes no responsibility for material lost or damaged in the post.

Students must keep an electronic copy and a hard copy of each assignment they submit, at least until they have been awarded a final result in the relevant subject(s).

The School staff will normally return marked assignments to students in class. Alternatively, unless otherwise advised, assignments, together with marks and feedback, will be available for collection from the School Office. Where students have provided a stamped, self-addressed envelope, work will be put in the mail on the expected return date.

Uncollected assignments will be retained in the School Office for two months following release of final results. Following this period, these assignments will be disposed of as confidential waste.

22. Extension of time to complete assignments

Where a student's capacity to prepare a piece of assessment has been affected by factors beyond their control, such as illness or some other unexpected occurrence, students may apply for an extension.

If the impact is so severe that the assignment would not be submitted for an extended period, a student may be required to make an alternative application for Special Consideration. A student should be directed to make a Special Consideration application for an extension.

Written extension applications must be responded to by the unit co-ordinator within three working days of receipt.

23. Feedback to Students

Students must not communicate with lecturers about the result of a component of assessment before the publication of results of that component, and feedback should only be initiated once results are known.

Students must receive feedback about their performance. Comments should indicate to students how they have performed against assessment criteria.

If a student seeks, or has provided written feedback on an assignment returned to them, wherever possible comment should further indicate how a student can improve their performance, and ideally indicate what should be done specifically to achieve outstanding results.

Appointment times are made available to students to discuss poor performance.

24. Return of work

The expected return date for each piece of assessment should normally be within three weeks of submission of that piece or may be sooner.

25. Review of assessment details

To ensure continuous improvement, details of all units, including assessment details and approximate due dates, are reviewed by the School's Curriculum Standards and Development Committee.

26. Responsibilities of students

Students have a responsibility to contribute to their own learning by:

1. Being aware of the learning objectives of each unit and how assessment is structured to demonstrate the achievement of the objectives;
2. Being aware of the requirements and due dates for each piece of assessment including examination times;
3. Being available for additional assessment during specified periods;
4. Taking into account recommendations about the total time commitment required for successful completion of each unit (not only the teaching contact hours);
5. Attending all classes regardless of any minimum attendance requirement; and,
6. Seeking assistance if they experience difficulties with any aspect of their study.

Following the performance or submission of a piece of assessment, students are not permitted to discuss any matter pertaining to that piece of assessment with lecturers or other staff of the School until after the return of a provisional or final result for the assessment concerned.

Students should ensure that they are familiar with policies and procedures relating to assessment, Special Consideration, examinations and academic misconduct as failure to comply with such instructions may result in penalties being applied.

27. Plagiarism, Collusion and Recycling

"Plagiarism" occurs when a student presents as their own work the thoughts, ideas, findings or work of another person or persons, without due acknowledgement of the source.

"Collusion" occurs where a student works with others, without permission, to produce work which is then presented by individual students as their separate assignments and/or where the work is almost identical or mostly the work of one of them. Collusion is a form of plagiarism.

"Recycling" means the submission for assessment of one's own work, or of work which is substantially the same, where:

- a) the work has previously been counted towards the satisfactory completion of another unit of study credited towards another qualification; and
- b) the Lecturer-in-Charge has not granted prior written consent for the student to reuse the work.

Any allegation of plagiarism, collusion or recycling must be reported by the lecturer to the Head of School. Any allegation of plagiarism will be referred by the Head of School to the HRDC who will investigate the matter.

The following penalties apply:

- Dismissing the case with no further action other than counselling the student;
- Issuing a written warning;
- Requiring the student to undertake another form of assessment in lieu of the assessment in question, such as an unseen examination;
- Failing the assessment;

- Applying a fail grade overall in the subject;
- Expulsion or suspension from the degree.

28. Students with Special Needs, Medical Conditions and Disabilities

Students are required to advise Cairnmillar Institute at the time of enrolment if they have a disability or medical condition that might adversely affect their academic performance. Students are expected to provide external medical certificates or reports at their own expense that set out their treating doctor/s views as to whether the student is fit to undertake the particular study with regard to the medical condition or disability and any particular adjustments that may be required in order for the student to participate in the course, and the nature of those adjustments. Cairnmillar Institute also reserves the right to require the student to attend a second medical examination in order to determine whether the student is fit for study, the cost of which will be met by the Cairnmillar Institute.

References

(2011) Monash University Thesis Examination Manual.

(2011) University of Melbourne assessment policy and procedures.

(2011) University of Wollongong 'Good Practice' Assessment Guide.