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Arab Open University
Saudi Arabia Branch

Supplementary material for
The academic staff in the Arab Open University
Customized for Saudi Arabia branch

Guidelines for Managing Student Assessment

Toward Meeting Local and OUVS Accreditation Requirements

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Read together, the following remarks are intended to serve as a full set of guidelines for monitoring and documenting the various components of the student assessment process.

Assessment Components

The main components of Assessment are:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| - Tutor Marked Assignments (TMAs) | 35% |
| - Midterm Assessments (MAs) | 15% |
| - Final Exam | 50% |

Note: In some courses, the Final Exam is made up of two parts, each carrying 25%. Acting on the Final Exam mark is based on the addition of the marks of the two parts, especially for purposes of determining the passing or failing of the course.

Managing the TMAs

Perhaps, in terms of Student Assessment, managing and monitoring the work of the TMAs is one of the most crucial aspects of Student Assessment.

1. TMAs are prepared under the direction and supervision of the concerned Dean.
2. TMAs, if properly utilized, can serve as an effective tool to enriching and enhancing the learning process.
3. Use of the PT3 form by the Tutors for the evaluation and assessment of each student TMA is mandatory.
4. On the PT3 form, the Tutor should provide enough feedback comments to the student. Provide as well some encouraging remarks.
5. Tutors should refrain from just citing very short comments. External Examiners do not find this very beneficial or fair.
6. The *language of use* in both, preparing the TMA by the student, and comments provided by the Tutor *should be in English*. No use of Arabic is allowed for this purpose.
7. Tutors should deal with cases of *plagiarism* very sternly. If convinced that plagiarism has been committed, then they can assign a grade of “zero” for that TMA. If the situation recurs often, report the student to the Staff Tutor who, in turn should meet with the student, and estimate what further action may be taken. But also, keep the Branch Director informed.

Note:

The Branch employs a special applications software package, called “**Turnitin**”, in order to combat the issue of plagiarism. It is hoped that this software will be become common use for TMA screening.

8. Students are generally expected to submit the TMA by the date indicated in the Course Calendar. However, in case of an excuse, approved by both the Tutor and the Staff Tutor, they may submit it at a later time of limited extension form due date.
9. Each course offered for presentation should have a designated Staff Tutor who acts the Branch (Local) Course Coordinator.
10. One of the main duties of the Staff Tutor is to monitor the marking of TMAs, and document findings thereof; perhaps made in a one page report, per TMA, covering all Tutors. In particular, he should review the marking of a set of about 3 TMAs, per Tutor. These review reports shall be made part of the “Branch Course Assessment File (CAF)”, intended for later use of the HQ/CAC (Course Assessment Committee).
11. The Staff Tutor shall, therefore, produce a number of documented reports equal to the number of TMAs.
12. The role played by the Staff Tutor in this regard is to ensure the upholding of “Quality Assurance Measures”.

Managing the MAs

1. Midterm Assessments (MAs), previously called quizzes, are mandatory as well.
2. MAs are developed locally at the Branch, by the respective Tutors.
3. The concerned Staff Tutor should review all MAs of the course for which he serves as the Branch Course Coordinator, and assure review by the concerned Dean.
4. As part of maintaining Quality Assurance Measures, the Staff Tutor should document his findings and recommendations, perhaps in a one-page report, covering each MA and all Tutors of the course.
5. The Staff Tutor shall therefore produce a number of documented reports equal to the number of MAs.

Managing the Final Exam

The Final Exam carries a good weight of the course mark. It should therefore be managed with great care.

1. Final Exam papers are prepared under the direction and supervision of the Dean.
2. Branch should follow the adopted “Group Marking Strategy” and the “General Marking Guidelines” ; Appendixes I.& II.
3. In dealing with the marking process, the concerned Staff Tutor should do the following:
 - Form a group of markers involving all Tutors, and issue a letter affirming the same.

- Hold a preparatory meeting in order to review the “Group marking” strategy, and establish an action plan for implementing the same, including a “mock marking” of perhaps 3-5 scripts.
 - Monitor the marking process actively to ensure fair marking; and, provide instantaneous feedback where necessary.
2. The Staff Tutor is responsible for preparing the course marks for presentation to the Branch Exam Committee (BEC).
 3. It is highly advisable that grades like 24/50 on a Final Exam be avoided as they create sticky borderline cases.
 4. The Staff tutor should document the marking process, his own evaluation of the distribution of course marks, and recommendations on the same.
 5. In marking the scripts of Final Exams, Tutors and Staff Tutors are asked to abide by adopted “General Marking Guidelines” as well as the “Group Marking Strategy”; thereby aiming to achieve a good level of standardization and fair marking.

Moderation of Course Marks at Branch Level

Moderation of grades at the branch level is an important process prior to transmitting course marks to the HQ for review by the concerned CAC committee.

1. The Branch Exam Committee (BEC) should review course grades as submitted for discussion by the concerned Staff Tutor (Local Course Coordinator).
2. In particular, the BEC should make specific recommendations on mitigating borderline cases at the Branch.
3. The BEC report, for each course, perhaps, a one-page report, should be documented as part of the HQ/ Course Assessment File.

Collection of Student Work Samples

Collecting samples of student work is important for review by the External Examiners.

1. One set of sample work is defined as a set containing 3 samples of each: TMA, MA, and Final Exam Scripts, representing outstanding, average, and poor achievements (marks).
2. Collect one sample set per Tutor, regardless of the number of sections taught by the same Tutor.
3. Each sample should identify the following: Section number; name of Tutor; Semester/Year of course presentation.
4. Samples of the Final Exam should contain samples of the two parts of the exam, where applicable.
5. Samples should be sent to the HQ-Dean’s office upon completion of course presentation and assessment.

Course Assessment File

It is highly recommended, for purposes of proper documentation, that the Branch create a “Course Assessment File (CAF)”, intended for submission to the HQ/CAC, and for later review by Local and OUVS Accreditation teams.

The CAF should contain the following items, in particular:

1. The Staff Tutor reports on the individual TMAs.
2. The Staff Tutor reports on the MAs.
3. The Staff Tutor report on the Final Exam
4. The BEC report on its deliberations over the course marks, and its recommendations on the same to the HQ/CAC.

Student Appeal

It is also highly significant the Branch document “Student Appeal” cases.

1. Students can appeal the mark of any one TMA or MA within one week of announcing said mark; after which the mark is considered final. Appeals must go through the system: made to the Tutor, and validated by the Staff Tutor.
2. For each program, create a Student Appeal File (SAF), to be kept at the Branch.
3. Branch should document all such appeal cases, and deposit them in the SAF.
4. After the Final Grades are announced, students can also appeal their grades. Appeals in this case must clear the hierarchy of the system:
 - Appeals must be submitted to the Branch within two weeks from date of announcement of the final grades. No appeal shall be accepted after that.
 - At the Branch level, make sure all marks are tallied appropriately, including complete marking of all questions on scripts of the Final Exam; but no re-marking is allowed.
 - Branch should report findings to the Dean (Faculty Exam Committee) in charge of the course.
 - Dean reports findings to the Central Exam Committee (CEC).
 - Branch cannot make local changes to marks in such situations, but may recommend the same to the appropriate Dean who forwards the case to the Central Exam Committee (CEC).
 - The CEC is the only university body authorized to introduce grade change.
 - Branch should though document student appeals in the SAF; and update documentation per decision of the CEC on the case.

Managing the Tutorial Sessions

It is important that Tutorial Sessions are managed appropriately in harmony with the philosophy of open education. In particular, it is recommended that the following guidelines be applied:

1. Promote the session more as a platform of discussion than traditional lecturing.
2. Cover topics from an innovative guided tour view toward helping the students carry out assigned readings utilizing independent study skills.
3. Seating in class should promote the spirit of proactive and interactive learning by the students.

Added-Value Online Learning Resources

1. Video Streaming of Tutorial Presentations:

The Branch has pioneered the idea of utilizing video streaming for “net-broadcasting”, in certain courses, of prototype presentations of tutorials. This is seen as a useful online tool for supporting the learning process, especially at the remote Learning Centers. The Branch intends to widen the scope of breadth of coverage to involve all programs and all courses.

2. Learning Management System:

The Branch adopts a particular learning management system (LMS) based essentially on the Moodle platform, and devised as an Arab Campus platform. In turn, it is hoped that it will be widely used by the Tutors and the students in order to facilitate various aspects of managing the learning and assessment processes.

3. Online Course Help Notes:

Innovative course help notes published by Tutors and Staff Tutors shall be encouraged, and made available online to students of the course in all locations. In order to manage this aspect properly, it is expected that the Branch Course Coordinator take the lead of initiative in this direction.

4. Online Student-Tutor Communication:

It is a standing policy of the Branch to encourage and promote various ways and means of communication between students and their Tutors on one hand, and amongst student groups, on the other. In turn, the Branch attempts to make available different IT and net-based resources that help achieve this mission.

Amongst the envisaged means of communication are the following resources:

- *Email contact:* Viewed as a passive way of communicating, email is still considered an efficient methodology of student-Tutor contact. For this purpose, all Tutors and students are supplied with email accounts via the Branch server facilities.

- *Chat*: Via a special e-Learning Management platform, students are also able to chat amongst themselves and with their Tutors.
- *Live Video Web-cast Teleconferencing*: This is a newly-proposed venture. But as technology is advancing, thereby, paving the way for inexpensive means of net communications by voice and video, it is expected that video-based net-teleconferencing will pick up on a wider scale. The Branch is committed to developing and making use of such facilities in due time.

Appendix: General Marking Guidelines

Before the actual marking begins

1. Branch course coordinator (Staff Tutor) meets with tutors of the course concerned, and they mark a random sample of students' exam scripts to ensure marking consistency.
2. In the meeting, branch course coordinator also reads and distributes the marking instructions/answer keys, and adopted General Marking guidelines.

General Marking Instructions

3. It is recommended to use a colored ballpoint pen.
4. Marks should be written in the right-hand margin at the end of the student's answer and they should be ringed (circled).
5. Ticking is needed to ascertain what the marker had accepted as correct answers. Markers are also required to write notes/comments to justify the mark given for each answer. No page should be left without some marking proof.
6. If a student answers more questions than required, mark only the first set of questions that suffice to count as the minimum required.
7. An answer crossed through by a student should not be given any mark.
8. Marks of individual answers should then be transferred to the cover page of the exam script, and should be added up, double-checked, and signed alongside by the marker.
9. When the exam's final mark is transferred to the student's final assessment form, double check all marks (continuous assessment, final exam, and final mark). The final mark should be rounded to a whole number (integer).
10. All matters related to the marking of exams should be treated with strict confidentiality.
11. Before marks are entered, markers should be invited to a meeting by the branch course coordinator (Staff Tutor) to discuss marking issues and final results.