

Academic Calibration Procedure

Section 1 - Preamble

(1) Charles Darwin University ('the University', 'CDU') seeks to provide high quality, meaningful, and current education to our students. Academic calibration, an external peer review process that is undertaken in collaboration with other universities, supports this objective and helps the University meet its regulatory obligations, specifically, that:

- a. review and improvement activities include regular external referencing of the success of student cohorts against comparable courses of study; and
- b. the assessment methods and grading demonstrates the standards of learning outcomes.

Section 2 - Purpose

(2) This procedure provides instructions to ensure the academic calibration process at the University is applied comprehensively and consistently across faculties.

(3) This procedure improves the quality of coursework curricula by providing mechanisms for a comparable review and constructive feedback for selected higher education units on:

- a. grades awarded;
- b. the relationship between assessment and learning outcomes;
- c. the relationship and appropriateness of a unit, within its designated course structures;
- d. the clarity and appropriateness of assessment design, learning outcomes, and supporting material for a unit; and
- e. assessment and supporting items in comparison to other institutions.

Section 3 - Scope

(4) This procedure applies to:

- a. all higher education coursework courses and units offered by the University; and
- b. all higher education teaching academics and other employees involved in academic calibration activities.

Section 4 - Procedure

Methods of academic calibration

(5) Academic calibration is a reciprocal process undertaken either:

- a. by a CDU discipline other than the discipline that delivers the unit; or
- b. by an external university.

(6) The process has two components:

- a. A partner discipline (within CDU or from an external university) reviews the assessment and learning outcomes of a unit; and
- b. The Unit Coordinator of the reviewed units conducts a reciprocal review of a unit provided by the partner discipline or university.

(7) The calibration of units must include a review of assessment tasks and learning outcomes.

(8) At times, a calibration may also include a review of the entire unit, at the request of the Unit Coordinator.

(9) Student samples of marked and graded work with feedback must be de-identified without obscuring the ability to evaluate.

Calibration of CDU units

Number of units selected

(10) A minimum of one (1) unit from every discipline will be calibrated each year.

(11) The number of units to be calibrated will be reviewed annually by the University's Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC).

(12) The Associate Dean Learning and Teaching (ADLT) is responsible for ensuring that each course has had at least one (1) unit calibrated during the course accreditation cycle of seven (7) years (or earlier if required for professional accreditation).

Unit eligibility and selection

(13) LTC reviews and makes determinations on any particular focus or distribution method for the upcoming academic calibration schedule.

(14) Units will be selected based on the following considerations:

- a. Course structure:
 - i. Capstone units, which will take preference in the selection process;
 - ii. Core units;
 - iii. Specialist electives; and
 - iv. Work Integrated Learning units.
- b. Review and monitoring processes, such as the Higher Education Faculty Assessment Review Panel or Annual Course Review.
- c. Reviews by professional bodies, including requirements relating to professional accreditation.

(15) The Chair of each Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee (FLTC) is responsible for:

- a. selecting units for the following year, in consultation with discipline staff; and
- b. providing selected units to Teaching and Learning Connect (TLC).

(16) The academic calibration reviewer's report will be provided to the Unit Coordinator of the owning faculty. The feedback is applicable to all courses that include the unit in the course structure. It is the responsibility of the owning faculty to share the report with all relevant Course Coordinators.

(17) The ADLT will inform Unit Coordinators whose units have been selected for academic calibration within two (2) weeks of LTC endorsement of the schedule.

Assessment selection

(18) The Unit Coordinator will select a single assessment task, or combination of smaller tasks, to review for each nominated unit.

- a. Priority is given to assessment tasks that cover a high number of unit learning outcomes and that have an assessment weighting of at least 30% of overall marks.

(19) An academic calibration is expected to be able to be completed within eight (8) hours.

(20) If the entire unit is considered for review, criteria should be determined in advance of the calibration.

Reviewer report criteria

(21) Criteria for unit review can include, but are not limited to:

- a. overall summary judgement of the unit;
- b. unit design to support students to meet learning outcomes;
- c. alignment and coherence of unit learning outcomes, unit content and assessment;
- d. appropriateness of unit content and learning outcomes for unit and AQF level;
- e. unit content compared against relevant discipline best practice, currency, and relevance;
- f. comparison of learning outcomes and assessment with those of similar units at other institutions;
- g. design of Learning Management System (LMS) for ease of use and organisation of information for student access;
- h. evidence of student support;
- i. evidence of feedback on assessment;
- j. review of assessment task appropriateness;
- k. clarity of assessment requirements and marking criteria;
- l. consideration of academic integrity and the use of generative artificial intelligence (gen AI) in assessment design; and
- m. appropriateness of assessment grades awarded.

(22) Teaching and Learning Connect will arrange guest access to all unit materials on the LMS for whole-of-unit reviews.

Identifying external reviewers

(23) TLC will:

- a. facilitate the signing and approval of data sharing agreements with partner universities;
- b. coordinate the calibrations, liaising with CDU and university partners;
- c. curate information provided by the relevant Unit Coordinator; and
- d. send information to universities to seek suitable external reviewers. This information will include the following:
 - i. unit code;
 - ii. unit name;
 - iii. name of the faculty;
 - iv. unit catalogue web link;

- v. assessment task selected;
- vi. assessment task information, as a link to the unit catalogue or summary statement: and
- vii. the date that marked student samples will be available for review (if not available from the previous semester).

(24) TLC will reach out to partner universities on behalf of the nominating CDU discipline to request nominations of reviewers.

(25) Multiple institutions may nominate reviewers. TLC will send all relevant nominations to the relevant Unit Coordinator and the ADLT.

(26) The final selection of reviewer is the decision of the ADLT, but they must consult the Unit Coordinator and discipline head.

(27) Reviewers are not expected to be teaching or to have taught a similar unit. It is sufficient that the nominated reviewer is experienced in the discipline and possesses a well-developed sense of academic standards.

Materials for review

(28) Unit Coordinators, in consultation with TLC, will collate the materials for the external review, which may include:

- a. information about the course structure/s of which the unit is a part;
- b. course-level learning outcomes, and their relationship to the unit-level learning outcomes;
- c. the unit outline provided to students;
- d. unit learning outcomes;
- e. grade distribution of the selected assessment task;
- f. grade distribution of the unit for the calibrating semester (optional);
- g. selected assessment task detail;
- h. the marking rubric for the selected assessment task;
- i. a Context Statement that describes important features of the unit, or the context of the specific teaching period in which the unit was offered that may not be immediately obvious through standard documentation; and
- j. marked student samples with feedback in each of the following grade ranges, or as close as possible:
 - i. Pass – low, medium, high;
 - ii. Credit – low, medium, high;
 - iii. Distinction – low, medium, high;
 - iv. High distinction – low, medium, high; and
 - v. samples that are close to the next grade level (or cusp).

(29) TLC is responsible for the overall curation of the materials for review and for arranging guest access to Learnline where appropriate.

(30) TLC will ensure student samples are de-identified prior to submission to the external reviewer.

- a. If de-identification is not possible, the ADLT will decide whether the calibration will proceed.

(31) If the Unit Coordinator wanted to include additional information to support the calibration of a unit, they can raise this with TLC, who will negotiate with the corresponding university. Where the reviewer requires more information, TLC will liaise with the CDU discipline.

Calibration timeframes

(32) Once the reviewer receives the materials for review, they must evaluate all items provided and complete the reviewer's report within six (6) weeks. Timelines can be negotiated with the partner university and reviewer through TLC.

(33) If the review package is not made available to the reviewer within the agreed timeframe, the agreed date for the return of the reviewer's report will be re-negotiated by TLC, in consultation with the Unit Coordinator.

Return and review of reviewer's reports (CDU units)

(34) External reviewers will return the completed reviewer's report to TLC.

(35) TLC will:

- a. review the report and clarify any information with the partner university, if required; and
- b. forward completed reviewer's reports to the relevant Unit Coordinator and the ADLT for review.

(36) The Unit Coordinator must review the report and provide a response seeking feedback or clarification of the report to Teaching and Learning Connect within ten (10) working days. TLC will liaise with the partner university.

(37) If no response is received within two (2) weeks, it is assumed the report is accepted.

Reviewer's report recommendations

(38) A reviewer's report may identify risks to the future quality of the unit and will be used as evidence to inform further evaluation and review of a unit.

(39) The Unit Coordinator, Course Coordinator, and ADLT are responsible for proposing any actions based on recommendations of the reviewer's report.

(40) Actions that involve unit changes must comply with [Higher Education Course and Unit Accreditation Procedure](#).

Report implementation: course accreditation and professional accreditation

(41) Reviewer's reports serve as an evidence source for the regular review and accreditation of all coursework awards and associated units.

(42) The ADLT is responsible for determining whether these reports are submitted as part of the external professional accreditation requirements for a specific course.

Reporting

(43) TLC will provide an annual report to LTC to provide a comparative review of the quality of assessments and learning outcomes.

(44) The report will include any actions taken to change unit details following a calibration.

Calibration of external units (by CDU academics)

Recruitment and approval of reviewers

(45) TLC will speak with Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee to promote registration opportunities and explain that they are recognised as relevant to their professional development plans and scholarship.

(46) TLC will contact the ADLT or appropriate academic staff in the discipline to consider nominating to calibrate a unit

posted for calibration by another institution that reflects their area of expertise.

(47) Academic staff members who nominate as reviewers will be required to provide an up-to-date online academic staff profile on the University's website and a curriculum vitae.

Eligibility and selection of reviewers

(48) Academic staff members must have experience in the selected discipline of the unit seeking reviewers, as well as demonstrated teaching experience, including the grading of student assessment work.

(49) The reviewer will be selected from all nominated academic staff by the university requesting the review.

Requirements and expectations of reviewers

(50) Reviewers must sign an Academic Calibration Declaration Form, which acknowledges academic experience requirements and the acceptance that once the reviewer's report is returned to the external institution, the reviewer retains no rights, including copyright and moral rights, in connection with the materials produced for the review.

(51) Reviewers must:

- a. be fair and timely;
- b. provide feedback that is comprehensive and constructive;
- c. act in confidence and not disclose the content or outcome of the calibration;
- d. be informed about, and comply with, the criteria being applied;
- e. declare all conflicts of interest, including professional views or values, which may influence the calibration process;
- f. consider teaching and assessment that challenges or changes accepted ways of thinking; and
- g. not participate in calibrations of units outside their area or level of expertise, or where this occurs, without declaring the limitations.

(52) Calibration is considered a core quality function of academic roles and does not normally include an honorarium.

Records

(53) Reports will be retained and stored in the relevant records management system in accordance with the University's [Records and Information Management Policy and Procedure](#).

Section 5 - Non-Compliance

(54) Non-compliance with governance documents is considered a breach of the [Code of Conduct - Employees](#) or the [Code of Conduct - Students](#), as applicable, and is treated seriously by the University. Reports of concerns about non-compliance will be managed in accordance with the applicable disciplinary procedures outlined in the [Charles Darwin University and Union Enterprise Agreement 2025](#) and the [Code of Conduct - Students](#).

(55) Complaints may be raised in accordance with the [Complaints and Grievance Policy and Procedure - Employees](#) and [Complaints Policy - Students](#).

(56) All staff members have an individual responsibility to raise any suspicion, allegation or report of fraud or corruption in accordance with the [Fraud and Corruption Control Policy](#) and [Whistleblower Reporting \(Improper Conduct\) Procedure](#).

Status and Details

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Responsible Executive	Lisa Papatraianou Deputy Provost
Implementation Officer	Laura Fairbrother Associate Director Curriculum Assessment and Teaching Development
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Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Course Coordinator" - An academic staff member who is responsible for the academic management of a course.

"Faculty" - An organisational and academic unit in the University that delivers courses and conducts research.

"University" - Charles Darwin University, a body corporate established under section 4 of the Charles Darwin University Act 2003. The University is comprised of the various faculties, CDU TAFE, organisational units, and formal committees, including the governing University Council and Academic Board.

"Governance document" - means policy or procedure published in the Governance Document Library. Policies and procedures are collectively called 'governance documents' and are often referred to as 'policy' or 'University policy'.

"Higher education coursework course" - Higher education coursework courses include award courses, which lead to a qualification recognised by the AQF, and accredited non-award courses, including enabling, foundation, preparatory, bridging, study abroad, international exchange, and other types of accredited non-award courses.