

ADVANCING ASSESSMENT: A VISION FOCUSED ON LEARNING

PREAMBLE

Achieving the educational aspirations outlined in [Monash Impact 2030](#) requires a clear vision for contemporary higher education. Our approach will ensure that students, educators and external communities understand and recognise the value of our units and courses and, ultimately, have confidence in a University education. A strong and diversified assessment approach will enable our graduates to be excellent, employable, enterprising and resourceful, and able to design solutions that respond to the evolving challenges of our age.

The following articulates the aspirational values guiding education and assessment advancement at Monash. These values will shape our processes, policies and procedures, infrastructure and professional learning for educators. This will be an ongoing and iterative journey that will be challenging but liberating. This approach is the hallmark of an adaptable, resilient and responsive organisation which recognises the transformative power of education.

OUR EDUCATION MUST PUT THE STUDENT AT THE CENTRE

At Monash, we see education as a transformative force that gets stronger as it recognises and delivers on the critical capabilities that benefit students. Our aim is to foster lifelong learning and equip students to address complex, often unexpected, societal challenges. Education develops capacities to create, question, collaborate and contribute within a landscape of change. It involves students and educators navigating uncertain contexts, making meaning and generating new knowledge from emergent situations.

Students must be positioned not as passive recipients of wisdom, but as active designers of their learning and of their futures. They need opportunities to make judgements, decisions and mistakes throughout their educational journeys, appropriately scaffolded by educators. The educator's role transcends that of a knowledgeable expert who imparts wisdom; educators are stimulating facilitators, curators of knowledge and learning environments, leaders of inclusion, co-explorers in discovery, designers of learning opportunities that students can engage with according to their diverse perspectives and contexts.

At Monash, we aim to generate new knowledge, foster creativity, experiment and take appropriate and productive risks. We aspire toward educational practices that prioritise advancing student learning, over validating and quantifying their demonstrations of knowledge. This will require rethinking the way in which we assess learning.

AN ENRICHED VIEW OF ASSESSMENT TO ADVANCE STUDENT LEARNING

Central to our vision is the recognition that learning during assessment matters.

Assessment should not merely serve as a mechanism for sorting and ranking learners; it is an integral component in promoting learning that matters. Our assessment practices should actively contribute to the development of knowledge, skills and dispositions that serve our students as productive contributors to society.

Monash educators strive to design coordinated regimes of assessment for holistic sensemaking. This means that assessment regimes should consider the whole picture of student learning through their program of study, rather than merely the sum of successive independent parts.

Since education is a collaborative enterprise, we need to protect and promote trust relations through careful, thoughtful and credible assessment approaches that are equitable, inclusive, culturally-sensitive and oriented towards enabling students' success. This entails a shift away from objectivist approaches to assessment (where we assume that there is a true, measurable quality or level in relation to the application of knowledge that can be secured against interference) toward more subjectivist approaches (i.e. that assessing knowledge or capability requires informed judgement and interpretation that is based on the perspective of the assessor). A more collective approach to assessment addresses the subjective elements. While the validity of individual assessments is important, subjective approaches support a more collective view of capability and prepare students to navigate knowledge that comes from diverse perspectives and complex societal challenges rather than through standardised or controlled conditions.

FROM ASSESSMENT SECURITY TO DEMONSTRATING LEARNING

At the heart of our assessment approaches is the development of trust between students, educators and our institution. We acknowledge our responsibility to assure that students are learning what we say they are learning and to confirm this by carefully using our academic and professional expertise and judgement. We must be mindful that focusing our efforts on securing assessments, through invigilation or detection of transgressions, does promote undesirable adversarial or punitive approaches that reduce student agency and undermine trust. We want to focus on detecting learning, not detecting the use of artificial intelligence or misconduct. We also want to know about how our students are learning, without overwhelming them with alternative forms of assessment ("over-assessing"). We still have a crucial role in cultivating the development and application of foundational knowledge, but this is no longer sufficient. We must also design assessments that deliberately prepare students to navigate the complex and uncertain challenges they will encounter beyond university.

An important part of our approach is to reframe assessment security as generating clear evidence of learning. This shift recognises that educators are not police or security guards but facilitators, designers, orchestrators and collaborators, while still giving confidence that trustworthy judgements are made about the extent to which students have engaged in the hard work of learning.

In assessment, we often structure what students can do or can use, in an attempt to emphasise the demonstration of particular forms of knowledge or skills (e.g. those defined in learning outcomes). Part of this structuring includes restricting certain aspects of how students go about the work of assessment. Such restrictions need to be accompanied by conditions that help enforce them or reduce the possibility of transgression. Just as importantly, they should be accompanied by clear rationales explaining their relevance and importance. Restrictions without clear explanations or means of enforcement invoke power, without reason, and undermine trust relationships.

Assessment conditions encompass a broad range of considerations affecting students' ability to demonstrate learning outcomes. Conditions can be about isolating students from resources, technologies and other people, and they can also be about creating environments that support targeted demonstrations of learning. For example, consider an assessment where students must cycle from point A to B. We might restrict their use of sat-nav (constraining condition) but provide an e-bike (enabling condition) to emphasise navigation skills over fitness. All assessment involves both constraining and enabling conditions, and both are important in making valued forms of learning visible.

Making evidence of learning visible requires thoughtful assessment design that structures conditions, processes and environments. To do this, educators must foster trust by being clear about what learning outcomes assessment tasks are targeting and what evidence will provide assurance that learning has occurred.

A range of strategies might facilitate this visibility:

- Direct observation of work in progress
- Indirect observation through documentation and reflection
- Peer-to-peer activities to support learning
- Educator involvement in students' assessment work through collaboration

Over time, these strategies offer a richer and more defensible approach to assessment compared with relying on single, final products, where process is invisible, or one-off exam performances in controlled settings. They shift the focus from securing against transgressions, to facilitating the visibility of learning. At the same time, our goal is to design balanced assessment regimes. These should generate meaningful evidence of learning, support coherent and holistic evaluation, and remain manageable for both students and staff. This means avoiding excessive workload, unnecessary fragmentation into too many small tasks, and complex processes that distract from core learning. Achieving this requires a strategic, whole of program view that enables assessment designers to preserve a selective focus on what learning is most important for students to demonstrate.

EVIDENCE OF LEARNING

At Monash, we view the assurance of learning, not as a matter of regulatory compliance, but as a commitment to systematically building an evidence-informed case that each student has achieved the transformative capabilities promised by our courses. Rather than relying on isolated, high-stakes assessments, our approach focuses on intentionally designed assessment encounters. Through these, educators observe a combination of products, processes, performances, and practices as students work on various tasks across different conditions. This allows for the sampling of student contributions over time, tasks, situations and conditions. Consequently, educators can build a rich, longitudinal picture of capability that remains valid whether a student is working independently or collaborating with peers or agentic technologies. Through this approach, we align our assessment regimes with the complexity graduates will face in the world beyond university, and their need for independent, critical thinking, collaboration, and adaptive engagement with technology.

We believe that when teaching and assessment are inclusive, motivating, carefully scaffolded, and coherent, the resulting educational experiences contribute to the assurance of student achievement. This increases our confidence that students are learning the things that matter. The aim is to rigorously bolster confidence in the developing capabilities of our students while enabling educators to offer timely support for that development. Therefore, educators go beyond observing student work to interacting and collaborating with them as they perform it. This not only guides student learning towards essential capabilities but also generates a richer picture of what they can do over longer periods.

PROGRAMMATIC APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT

Programmatic approaches enable educators to purposefully select diverse forms of knowledge and skills across a coordinated program of study (major, specialisation, course, etc.). Shifting to programmatic approaches allows a strategic, longitudinal perspective on developing students' capabilities across their entire program or course.

In contrast to reliance on standardised testing or single points of assessment, a focus on making evidence of learning visible across a coordinated program involves gathering evidence from multiple sources by sampling demonstrations of student capabilities across varied assessment types, contexts, and timeframes. Programmatic approaches facilitate the gathering of multiple perspectives over time, carefully selected so as not to overwhelm learners and assessors with assessment data.

Our advanced assessments will involve educators structuring learning journeys and travelling alongside students, witnessing and participating in the learning process itself. Through carefully designed assessment, with appropriate constraining and enabling conditions, educators can confidently determine what a student has learned, focusing on learning achievement. Allowing students agency in their assessment helps us to see the graduates they will become and the capabilities they develop along the way.

NAVIGATING A WORLD WITH UBIQUITOUS ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

At Monash, we aim to equip students to engage with emerging technologies, including Artificial Intelligence, effectively, critically, and ethically. The increasing ubiquity of AI technologies requires forward-thinking approaches as we navigate waves of technological change and their implications. We reject both uncritical adoption and wholesale rejection of AI. Instead, we recognise its multiple and often conflicting impacts, including on the environment, on learning, and on how we work and live. AI can enable efficiency, access, and innovation, but it can also increase resource consumption and inequity, reduce cognitive engagement, and encourage overreliance. Responsible integration therefore requires informed, context-sensitive judgement. Our approach to AI is, therefore, grounded in educational values of critical inquiry, ethical reasoning, and transformative knowledge generation.

Rather than applying blanket rules, we advocate for careful, context-sensitive judgements that consider the pedagogical setting, the learners and educators involved, the intended learning outcomes, and the broader ethical implications. In assessment, this means designing diverse, connected approaches that: support and evidence different kinds of learning; integrate products, processes, performances, and practices; unfold over time; and foster meaningful engagement and trust between students and educators. In teaching and policy, our aim is to guide students in forming considered positions and practices around AI use (including when not to use it). This involves helping them situate AI in relation to their identities as learners, their study practices, their critical capacities, and their future professional contexts. Educators, in turn, have a responsibility to engage actively with students' learning, whether students are working independently or in collaboration with AI, peers, or others. Central to this is the creation of dialogic spaces where challenges and questions around technologies, and their wider disciplinary and educational implications, can be openly explored, critically examined, and thoughtfully negotiated.

The considered positioning of AI within programs of study can take many forms, from activities that deliberately exclude AI, to building foundational knowledge before integrating AI, to critically examining its implications, through to learning with AI as a tool for inquiry and practice. Across these approaches, students should develop a strong foundation of AI literacy, which means not only technical understanding, but also the capacity to situate AI within ethical, environmental, cultural, political, economic, and educational contexts. Programmatic approaches enable this capability to be intentionally scaffolded within and across curricula. By thinking carefully about where and how students develop this capability, we can ensure they progressively build the knowledge, skills, and judgement needed to navigate a rapidly changing world.

DEVELOPING OUR EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY

We are all learning as we work towards embedding these values in practice. Our educators are the cornerstone of this vision, and we are committed to sustained investment in their professional learning. This includes:

- Supporting educators to rethink the purpose of assessment and move beyond objectivist approaches, developing the sophisticated judgement needed to weave varied and, sometimes, unfamiliar threads of evidence into meaningful narratives about learner development.
- Enabling a shift from subject expert to facilitators and collaborators, working with students as partners.
- Developing the knowledge and collaborative practices needed to integrate principles of programmatic assessment into assessment design across courses and teams, recognising that expertise is distributed rather than held by individuals in isolation.
- Supporting educators to grapple with the critical integration of emerging technologies and designing assessments that help prepare students for a world of ubiquitous AI.

We are committed to actively supporting educators in this ongoing process of professional and lifelong learning, and to fostering a community that learns, adapts, and grows together.

ADVANCING AND ALWAYS EVOLVING

We embrace practices that value the complexity of learning and position assessment as integral to an ongoing learning journey. Over the next five years, we will strengthen our university's reputation for educational quality while transforming the learning experiences of thousands of students.

The Programmatic Assessment and Artificial Intelligence Review (PAAIR) project is a catalyst for this transformation. It challenges every course and unit to embed principles of programmatic assessment, while driving a broader renewal of assessment practices. Educators will work collaboratively to develop a shared understanding of how each assessment is purposefully positioned within a program of study. Through PAAIR, educators are developing new ways of thinking about assessment, navigating the tension between established conventions and emerging possibilities for making evidence of learning visible. This work is both conceptual and practical, as educators engage in professional learning and apply these insights directly within their practice.

PAAIR will be accompanied by a suite of other activities, including policy and procedure alignment, a framework for designing for evidence of learning, advances in education technology, and systematic monitoring of outcomes and impact. Together, these efforts create the conditions for sustained, institution-wide change.

Our vision for advancing assessment positions assessment as contributing meaningfully to learning, with students at the centre. Rather than focus on assessment security, our priority is to generate credible evidence of learning, support meaningful educational relationships, and support educators and students to navigate a world with ubiquitous AI. Through a programmatic approach, we will design assessment carefully, strategically and longitudinally, enabling a coherent picture of students' developing capabilities across their entire program.

Developments in recent years have taught us that we need to prepare for whatever is coming next. We will do this by focusing on principles rather than solutions, and by continuing to make space for collaboration, dialogue and negotiation as we move forward collectively. We will know we are succeeding when students describe their learning at Monash as genuinely transformative and enabling, while recognising that this work is never complete, and must continue to evolve.

This vision was supported by key literature as follows:

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