SESSIONAL TEACHING SUPPORT

Design and Social Context Office
February, 2006
Welcome from the Pro Vice-Chancellor

Congratulations on your appointment to a sessional teaching position at RMIT University. Welcome back if you are continuing with us.

RMIT is an international university of technology. It is a university committed to creating and disseminating knowledge to solve the problems of industry and community. We foster in our students the skills and passion to contribute to and engage with the world. Your recruitment is recognition of your strengths and attributes in your area of expertise and your capacity to strengthen our traditions of excellence and relevance.

Design and Social Context has ten schools. Each delivers a diverse range of programs in the disciplines of architecture, building, planning, art, design, media, communication, education, community services, manufacturing, printing, environment and social science. We are excited that your school community will benefit from your knowledge and professional experience.

Enjoy your time at RMIT.

Professor Alan Cumming
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

Welcome from the Dean (Academic Development)

Welcome to RMIT for 2006. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the vital role sessional staff play in schools, programs and the academic life of RMIT students. You are an integral part of the student life cycle and we value the contributions you make.

In recent forums, sessional staff in Higher Education and TAFE highlighted the need for advice on good learning and teaching practice as well as for practical, administrative information. We have developed the Sessional Teachers Guide in response. It can be downloaded as a whole or consulted online.

The Guide has two sections. Section One outlines roles and responsibilities, and provides administrative information. Section Two offers valuable guiding principles for good learning and teaching, and provides links to detailed curriculum development support, and to advice on assessment and classroom management.

I truly hope this resource will provide you with useful information that will help make your time at RMIT productive and enjoyable. Your feedback on the Guide is welcomed.

Associate Professor Barbara de la Harpe
Dean (Academic Development)
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Section One - Administration

1.1 Roles and Responsibilities

Sessional Staff at RMIT

RMIT has a long established tradition of employing industry experts as sessional teaching staff. This is part of our mission in both Higher Education and TAFE: to ensure that our graduates are ‘work ready’ and in touch with industry practices.

In our program offerings and schools, links with industry have featured at RMIT since its inception in 1887 as the Working Men’s College.

Your role at RMIT is an essential one. You bring fresh ideas and approaches to the University. You provide a diversity of knowledge, approaches, and opinion that is valued by your students and your colleagues.

Diversity of roles and responsibilities

The diversity of sessional teaching staff at RMIT reflects the richness of RMIT’s academic and professional activity. Sessional teachers may be:

- industry experts who are invited to teach specialist areas of knowledge for short periods
- postgraduate students who are invited to tutor under the supervision of a senior colleague
- teaching staff who choose to work in sessional mode as it suits their capacity to maintain an external professional lifestyle
- teaching staff who prefer short-term time commitments
- teaching staff who are involved with other projects as part of their workload.

Sessional staff have differing roles and responsibilities. They may be:

- solely responsible for the course they are teaching, including designing and delivering the course
- teaching a course established by a colleague
- tutors working to a supervisor
- teaching in place of a fulltime staff member who is absent, ill, or seconded to another role.

Responsibilities of Staff

At RMIT the policy on the General Responsibilities of Staff includes Duty of Care. The policy can be found under ‘Managerial and Staff responsibility’ at:

http://mams.rmit.edu.au/ja26ctan0fti.doc

RMIT expects its staff to recognise and respect the concept of academic freedom as essential to the proper conduct of teaching research and scholarship.

Teaching staff have a Duty of Care to students which includes:

- protecting their privacy
- behaving ethically in all dealings with students
- maintaining and respecting student intellectual property and moral rights
- reporting any student breaches of safety or standards of behaviour
• not endangering student health or safety
• not engaging in personal relationships that may result in conflict of interest.

Academic Calendars

It is your responsibility to know where and when your classes will be held. Academic Calendars for both Higher Education and TAFE are available at:

http://www.rmit.edu.au/academic-policy/academic_calendars

Contact the timetabling co-ordinator in your school to find out where and when your particular classes will be held. (See online School Specific Information)

Understanding your program and course

Sessional staff work in a program and teach in a course, or a mix of courses. Sometimes you may teach across schools in different programs and to different groups of students. You may work with small numbers of students, larger classes, or with tutorial groups.

Importantly, it is your responsibility to understand how each of the courses in which you teach fits into the overall program design. Effective teaching requires:

• an understanding of the rationale that guides the design of a course
• an awareness of the course and program objectives
• a knowledge of the graduate capabilities your students are expected to develop and demonstrate.

Each program has a Program Leader or Program Co-ordinator responsible for the entire program. There may be year level Co-ordinators also who manage the courses in a particular year of the program. You are encouraged, at any time, to consult with your colleagues, including your Program Leader or year level Co-ordinator about any aspects of the program or your course.

Your supervisor

All RMIT staff have a supervisor or line manager. As a sessional teaching staff member you may report directly to your Program Leader, to a senior colleague, or to a year level Co-ordinator.

Engaging with your supervisor on a regular basis will ensure you are aware of all program developments.

You must talk to your supervisor concerning any students whom you consider are academically ‘at risk’. Concerns about these students are discussed at the Student Progress meetings which are convened by program staff each semester.

Your supervisor may ask you to participate in course level feedback which occurs once a year at the time of writing. Course level feedback is part of the program quality assurance process at RMIT. (For more information about course level feedback, read the ‘Evaluation of Teaching Section’ in Section Two of this Guide).

You should familiarise yourself with the RMIT website sections which deal with policies, procedures, learning and teaching, research, and staff development. Your supervisor is a primary source of information on where to find and how to interpret or implement RMIT’s policy and procedures.

Performance review

It is not compulsory for RMIT sessional teachers to participate in a performance review. It can be an informal practice however, and supervisors or line managers may ask you to discuss your performance
with them. You are encouraged at any time to request an opportunity to discuss your performance, to seek support, and to ask for feedback on your work.

A performance review is a two-way process. It provides you with an opportunity to raise queries and concerns.

**Induction in the University**

If you are new to the University, RMIT’s People and Culture offers an induction program called ‘Discovering RMIT for New Staff’.

Details of the induction program are available at: [http://www.rmit.edu.au/staffinduction](http://www.rmit.edu.au/staffinduction)

Induction activities include a Welcome Event, and a Campus Tour. A ‘New Starters Kit’, and a guide to navigating the RMIT website, are also available.

**Workload Issues**

RMIT will ensure that in achieving its goals, workloads for staff are realistic and reasonable, are distributed as equitably as possible, and that the process used in workload allocation is open and accountable.

For more information about workload distribution and management go to: [http://mams.rmit.edu.au/9rdiitmsphyzz.doc](http://mams.rmit.edu.au/9rdiitmsphyzz.doc)
1.2  How to get paid

There are some forms you need to complete as soon as you take up your position at RMIT.

Contract Forms

You need to complete three forms so that your personal details are entered onto the payroll system and you receive a staff number.

(Your staff number is particularly important because it forms the basis of your RMIT email address and gives you access to ‘login required’ areas of the website).

It is probably a good idea to visit the Casual Staff Appointment and Payment Information Kit located at:

http://www.rmit.edu.au/pc/casual

Complete the following forms (found on the Information Kit page) and give them to the person who offered you the job, whether that is your supervisor, Program Leader, or Head of School.

- **Instrument of Appointment form – Casual Staff Only:**
  This form details your estimated hours of work, your rate of pay, and a brief description of the details of the work you will perform. This form must be signed by your Head of School.

- **Employee Information Form:** [http://mams.rmit.edu.au/vnygnkuoq7dyz.doc](http://mams.rmit.edu.au/vnygnkuoq7dyz.doc)
  This form asks for personal information such as your home address and phone number, bank details for direct deposit of your pay, and your Tax File Number.

As a casual employee you need to complete a fortnightly Casual Time Sheet which must be signed by your supervisor before you can be paid.

It’s worth looking up the policy on ‘Employment and Payment of Casual Staff’. It has useful information about your employment contract and payment, and it outlines the responsibilities of your Head of School and supervisor. It’s at: [http://mams.rmit.edu.au/o25crmv2k7kx1.doc](http://mams.rmit.edu.au/o25crmv2k7kx1.doc)

Payment

Your pay is deposited electronically into your nominated bank account on alternate Thursdays. The schedule for payment of sessional teaching staff is listed in the Casual Payment Schedule document:


Please see the ‘School Specific Information’ section for the name and contact details of the person in your School who can help with your pay queries.

Staff Essentials web page

The Staff Essentials web page is located at: [http://www.rmit.edu.au/staff](http://www.rmit.edu.au/staff)

Staff Essentials lists links to staff resources and supports. One of the links is to Employee Self Service (EES) where you can view your payslips, leave records and entitlements, and personal information.

Group Certificates

Your Group Certificate will be mailed directly from People Services to your home address soon after 30 June.
1.3 How to go Online

Setting up your email account

You need a Novell Directory Services (NDS) account to access GroupWise (RMIT’s email service).

As a sessional staff member your NDS user name commences with the letter ‘x’, followed by the five digits of your staff number. Once you have received your staff number, you can open your NDS account by completing the New Account Form which you will find at: http://www.rmit.edu.au/its/forms

Once completed, fax the form to Information Technology Services (ITS) on 9925 3177. (Make sure it is signed by your Head of School). ITS will then issue you with a login, an email address and an initial password. ITS will then need to notify you by phone that your e-mail account has been established. If you do not have an RMIT phone extension make sure you give ITS a contact number.

You will find tips about using GroupWise at: http://www.rmit.edu.au/its/staffemail

Remote access to your RMIT emails

As a sessional staff member it is often difficult to maintain a sense of connection to the university when there is no specific time available to you for collegial interaction. A good way to stay in touch with your colleagues, and to keep up to date with events and announcements in your School and the university is to use your RMIT email account. You can access your RMIT emails in two ways.

- **Option 1** – view your RMIT email in a browser window, on the RMIT Web EMS page
  Use any web browser (such as Internet Explorer or FireFox) to access your RMIT email account. Type https://webems.rmit.edu.au into the address bar and press enter. From there you will be prompted to enter your user name (the letter ‘x’ followed by your staff number) and your GroupWise password, then click on the login button. Once you have logged in you can send and receive mail, and access your GroupWise calendar. Alternatively, go to the Staff Essentials web page located at: http://www.rmit.edu.au/staff and follow the ‘Staff Email’ link.

- **Option 2** – redirect your mail so you can open it in your desktop email client at home
  If you prefer not to keep a track of two email accounts, it is possible to automatically direct your RMIT email messages to your preferred email address.

If you aren’t a technical wizard, you can contact the ITS helpdesk for assistance:

- Phone: 9925 8888
- e-mail: helpdesk@rmit.edu.au
- web address: http://www.rmit.edu.au/ithelp

Helpdesk hours are 8am-6pm, Monday to Friday.

If you are a technical wizard, the following instructions are good for any POP or IMAP compatible email client (such as Outlook, Thunderbird, mail.app, Eudora).

- ITS recommends you choose IMAP for the connection type
- when prompted for an incoming email server name enter: popems.rmit.edu.au
- when prompted for your username, enter your staff number in the form x12345
- the password is your GroupWise password
- the outgoing email server should be set to the settings that your Internet Service Provider suggests
1.4 School Specific Information

The website version of this Guide links to specific information about your School. The website can be found via a link from the Academic Services page at:

http://www.rmit.edu.au/dsc/as

or by going directly to this address:

http://www.rmit.edu.au/dsc/as/sessional

As the School specific information will be updated from time to time, it is not included here.

The information provided includes:

- contact details for the person to whom you can address any pay queries
- access to computers/printers and desks
- how to get the keys you need
- location of photocopiers
- who to see about getting an access card issued
- procedures for reimbursement of expenses
1.5 Facilities and Services

Library

Obtaining your Library borrowing card
As a sessional or contract member of staff, the Library will issue you with a Special Borrower’s Card for the period of your employment. To obtain your card you will require a signed letter of introduction from your department, school or training centre, which includes your name and dates of employment. Take the letter to the Loans Desk at your nearest Library site, and the card will be issued within 24 hours. For further information go to: http://www.rmit.edu.au/library/borrowing

Electronic Library resources
RMIT University Library gives you electronic access to an enormous range of resources. Go to the databases webpage: http://www.rmit.edu.au/library/searchit

Because of the range and variety of these electronic resources (over 300 databases, providing access to more than 17,000 full-text journals) it can be difficult initially to determine which ones will be most useful to you. Our librarians can provide you with an introduction to these wonderful resources and show you the ropes.

To use the Library’s electronic resources off-campus (and to access other online Library resources) you need an NDS login and password (see the ‘Getting Online’ section of this Guide).

Get to know your Liaison Librarian
Liaison Librarians are expert at finding information in a particular field. They provide information literacy training for staff and students. Their aim is to help you to become proficient at accessing the wealth of information available in the Library (both print and electronic). It would be most helpful if you would provide your Liaison Librarian with a list of resources you intend to use during your time at RMIT, particularly if they are from your private collection. This will help the Library build its collection of resources for future use and will ensure that resources are available for you at the right time. Contact details for your School’s Liaison Librarian are located at: http://www.rmit.edu.au/library/librarians/dsc

Submitting your booklist to the Library and recommending Library purchases
The Library needs your booklist as soon as possible in order to have recommended and required reading available in the Library when students need it. Please send your booklist to your Liaison Librarian. To make a Library purchase request online go to: http://www.rmit.edu.au/library/ir

Services you should know about
Information about placing material on Reserve, e-Reserve, Document Delivery and much more is at: http://www.rmit.edu.au/library/services

Keeping up with Library news
You can receive news about the Library by subscribing to the monthly email newsletter, libnews at: http://www.rmit.edu.au/library/publications

Also check the new titles and databases added to the Library’s collection. The ‘What’s New’ page is at http://www.rmit.edu.au/library/newitems

Computer Access
Check your online School Specific Information page for details about access to computers in your school. Once you have access to a computer the Information Technology Services page is very useful: http://www.rmit.edu.au/its/staff
If you need IT support, contact the IT HelpDesk (8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday) on 9925 8888. You can email enquiries to the HelpDesk at helpdesk@rmit.edu.au.

**Access to buildings in the evenings and at weekends**

You need to complete an After Hours Access Card Request form if:

- you teach classes on weekdays before 9am or after 6pm
- you teach at weekends
- you need after hours access to Technical Services (Level 7, Building 8) to return data projectors, laptops and other audiovisual equipment loans.
- you need to do other work such as preparation, marking, meeting with students (The extent of the after hours access you have for these activities is determined by your school).

You can obtain an After Hours Access Card Request form from Technical Services (located at Reception on Level 7, Building 8). Or download the form from: [http://tech.dsc.rmit.edu.au/forms/AH_acces.pdf](http://tech.dsc.rmit.edu.au/forms/AH_acces.pdf)

Once you have completed the form, you need to obtain School authorisation for access to nominated buildings. Your school will determine the time periods for which you will have access to specific areas. The card can be programmed for particular hours of access so make sure your access doesn't finish at the exact time your class finishes otherwise you won’t have access to the administration areas of your school if you need to return equipment after class.

Once you have School authorisation, return the form to Level 7, Building 8 Reception. Reception staff will submit your request form for processing. Three days after you have submitted your form, you can visit the Card Production Centre (level 3, Building 14, near Franklin St driveway) to have your photo taken because your access card uses photo ID. Note that the Centre is only available for photos during the following times: Monday, Wednesday, and Friday between 10am and midday, and between 1pm and 3pm. Two working days after your photo is taken your access card will be available for you to collect from Reception located on Level 7, Building 8.

**Security**

RMIT Security’s responsibilities include:

- identification and minimisation of risks
- access control
- regular security patrols
- response to crime
- response to emergency situations
- traffic management

- The Security webpage has links to information about matters such as fire safety, evacuations, traffic and parking, personal safety on campus, and theft prevention. Please visit: [http://www.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=xzxtx16yo70t](http://www.rmit.edu.au/browse;ID=xzxtx16yo70t)

**Security contact numbers**

- emergency number: 9925 3333
- enquiries: 9925 2051
- after hours: 9925 3895.
Security locations

- City
  Security Control Centre
  Building 14, Level 3
  Corner of Franklin and Bowen Street

- Bundoora West
  Control Point
  Building 216
  Clements Drive

What to do in an emergency

When an emergency occurs:

- always remove persons from danger (if it is safe to do so)
- raise the alarm
- render assistance to those in need.

Off-campus excursions

Whether you take students off-campus for an hour, a day, a week, or a month, you must fill in an Excursion Form. This form lets the University know where staff are and lets emergency crews and parents know who is involved in the case of accidents or other emergencies.

In the case of accident, completing and lodging this form also ensures that if staff or students are injured they are covered under the University’s Insurance Policy (Public Liability and Personal Accident Plan).

Ask your Program Administration Officer where these forms are kept in your School, and where to lodge the completed form.

Counselling services

Staff often contact the RMIT Counselling Service for advice and information about the range of mental health issues that students experience.

There is an explanation of the services offered, and a list of helpful websites, at: http://www.rmit.edu.au/counselling/servicesforstaff

Campus Nurse Service for staff and students

The RMIT Campus Nurse Service is committed to providing students and staff with a relevant and professional clinical and community health service. Visit the Service’s webpage at: http://www.rmit.edu.au/campusnurseservice

People and Culture

RMIT’s People and Culture group contribute to the achievement of the University’s goals by promoting best practice in people management, and by providing high quality, customer focussed human resources services, advice and information.

People and Culture’s webpage has links to a wide range of matters of interest to staff, including induction for new staff, staff development and salary schedules. See: http://www.rmit.edu.au/pc
Staff essentials webpage

Visit the Staff Essentials webpage for a detailed list of services, supports and information for RMIT staff: [http://wwwt.rmit.edu.au/staff](http://wwwt.rmit.edu.au/staff)
Useful Acronyms

AAB  Apprenticeship Administration Branch
ACACA  Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Certification Authorities
ACE  Adult and Community Education
ACESS  Alternative Category Entry Selection Scheme
AMS  Academic Management System
ANTA  Australian National Training Authority
AQF  Australian Qualifications Framework
ATTP  Apprenticeship Traineeship Training Program
AUQU  Australian Universities Quality Agency
AVCC  Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee
BOTS  Board of Technical Studies
CEQ  Course Experience Questionnaire
CES  Course Experience Survey
COG  Commonwealth Operating Grant
CRICOS  Commonwealth Register of Institutions & Courses for Overseas Students
CSP  Commonwealth Supported Places
DEST  Department of Education, Science and Training
DEWR  Department of Employment and Workplace Training
DFAT  Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DIMIA  Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs
DLS  Distributed Learning System
eCoE  Electronic Confirmation of Enrolment
EFTSL  Equivalent Full Time Study Load
EFTSU  Equivalent Full Time Student Unit
ELICOS  English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students
ENTER  Equivalent National Tertiary Entrance Rank
ESOS  Education Service for Overseas Students
GDS  Graduate Destination Survey
ITAB  Industry Training Advisory Board
HE  Higher Education
HECS  Higher Education Contribution Scheme
HEW  Higher Education Worker
IELTS  International English Testing System
NAC  New Apprenticeships Centre
NEAS  National ELT (English Language Training) Accreditation Scheme
NOOSA  National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition
NTF  National Training Framework
NTQC  National Training Quality Council
OSHC  Overseas Student Health Cover
OTTE  Office of Training and Tertiary Education
PRISMS  Provider Registration & International Students Management System
PVA  Pre Visa Approval
RPL  Recognition of Prior Learning
RTO  Registered Training Organisations
SEAS  Special Entry Access Schemes
SES  Student Experience Survey
SNAP  Schools Network Access Program
SOG  State Operating Grant
<table>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>SOS</td>
<td>Student Outcomes Survey</td>
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<td>TAFE</td>
<td>Technical and Further Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOEFL</td>
<td>Test of English as a Foreign Language</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOEIC</td>
<td>Test of English for International Communication</td>
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<td>VCAA</td>
<td>Victorian Curriculum &amp; Assessment Authority</td>
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<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training</td>
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<td>VICTER</td>
<td>Victorian Tertiary Entrance Requirements</td>
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<td>VQA</td>
<td>Victorian Qualifications Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>VTAC</td>
<td>Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre</td>
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Section Two - Learning and Teaching

2.1 The Students

How many are there?

In 2005 there were over 58,000 full and part time students at RMIT, both on and offshore. There were 35,203 Higher Education (HE) students, and 22,875 Technical and Further Education (TAFE) students.

Where are they from?

Our students are local and international.

Domestic students come from across Australia, including regional and rural communities.

International students primarily come from Asia, in particular from Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, China, Korea, India and Vietnam. We have smaller numbers of international students from Europe, Africa, the Americas, the Middle East and Oceania.

Full and part-time students

The trend in enrolment status at RMIT is towards almost equal numbers of full and part time students, with more students working part-time, and with more mature age and postgraduate students enrolling at RMIT in the past five years.

In 2005, about 3,500 students were enrolled in fully online and distance education programs.

Types of classes and student diversity

Classes may take many forms: lectures, tutorials, studio workshops, group sessions, online discussions, classes taken by guest lecturers, and elective classes that may be taught by teaching staff outside the program.

You may find in your program and your individual classes that there is a great diversity of students in terms of age, life experience and nationality. Core courses may include students from other programs. This diversity means you need to identify any special needs your students may have and ensure that your supervisor is aware of these needs.

Student attendance at RMIT

At RMIT there is no compulsory attendance for Australian students in either the Higher Education or TAFE sectors.

International students who are in Australia on education visas are required to attend classes 80% of the scheduled time, to maintain full time enrolment, and to maintain satisfactory academic progress. This is a requirement of the Education Services for Overseas Students Act (ESOS – see next section).

You need to be aware that some students will be permanent residents or Australian residents, whatever their names, dress or accents.

Non-compulsory attendance may impact on your class numbers. Your design of learning and teaching activities will need careful thought in order to encourage student attendance.
Education Services for Overseas Students Act (ESOS) Act – your obligations

The Commonwealth Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) administers the Education Services for Overseas Students Act (ESOS), 2000. The Act applies to all international students studying in Australia, including HE and TAFE students.

Monitoring the academic progress and attendance of international students is critical.

Any international student whose academic progress you are concerned about should be reported to your supervisor or Program Leader so that appropriate follow-up and support can be administered. It is the responsibility of the teaching staff to ensure that international students are completing their assessment work and are attending classes.

You may not discuss the academic progress of international students with anyone external to RMIT, including parents, friends or government officers. If you are contacted in this regard by anyone external to RMIT you must refer them immediately to your Program Leader.

Potential career outcomes – advising your students

Every RMIT program has identified potential career outcomes for students. Students may ask you about career options at any time. Which career a student eventually pursues will be determined by the program they study or any change they make to their program.

Students are sometimes concerned that the direction or program they have chosen may not be the ‘right’ one.

This is a serious matter. It is important that you feel confident in the general advice you give to your students about it. If you are unsure about what general advice to offer your students, or you are unaware of the various career outcomes from your program, it is essential that you discuss career outcomes with your program colleagues and Program Leader.

Cultural issues

At RMIT we are committed to ensuring a fair and equitable education for all students. We are proud of the cultural diversity of our students. Sometimes cultural issues may arise in your classroom that you may feel uncertain about managing. It is important that you discuss these issues with your colleagues, all of whom deal with similar issues and often with the same students. It is worthwhile setting aside some time to discuss how the differing educational and cultural and social backgrounds of your students may impact on their ability to learn successfully.


Contact ISIS on extension 53454. Contact the RMIT Counselling Service on extension 54365.

RMIT’s Cultural Diversity and Anti-Racism policy will provide you with a good understanding of the underlying principles that support acceptance of diversity at RMIT. And the policy will get you thinking about approaches to teaching that support diversity. You can access the policy on the RMIT website at: [http://mams.rmit.edu.au/f9t6df9tv1fj.doc](http://mams.rmit.edu.au/f9t6df9tv1fj.doc)

Learning Skills Unit (LSU)

You are encouraged to visit the Learning Skills Unit (LSU) web pages so that you are familiar with the range of learning supports and resources available to your students. Visit: [http://www.rmit.edu.au/lsu](http://www.rmit.edu.au/lsu)

The LSU offers free learning support services to students who need assistance to improve their learning skills. LSU staff are qualified teachers who specialise in assisting students with study skills and academic writing, and in providing maths and English support.
LSU staff develop learning resources such as the online ‘Referencing’ module that staff can use to support students when they are completing essays. LSU’s online tutorials can be accessed at: http://aps.eu.rmit.edu.au/lsu/resources/projects/index.html

LSU staff do not assist students to write essays. They work in individual and group teaching/support modes to develop students’ understanding of how to write essays.

You can refer students experiencing learning difficulties to your Program Leader, or directly to the LSU.

Learning skills workshops are also available to your students, in your classroom setting, on specific topics. Contact the LSU for details.

**Student Complaints**

Students at RMIT can complain both officially and unofficially if they perceive:

- they are not being treated appropriately
- they are being discriminated against
- they are being harassed
- they feel that the teaching staff are not following the learning activities, assessment tasks, and learning outcomes that are specified in the Course Guides.

A detailed explanation of policy, procedures and guidelines is available at: http://www.rmit.edu.au/academic-registrar/studentcomplaints

The most common complaint that students have is that their assessment is incorrect or unfair.

RMIT takes student complaints seriously. Students may complain to you, to other staff, to their Program Leaders, to Counsellors, to Student Rights Officers, or to their peers. There are formal procedures for addressing student complaints that you must adhere to.

A useful pdf document for staff, called ‘Guidelines for staff to resolving student complaints’ http://mams.rmit.edu.au/kojnywyruqoz.pdf, under category B: Students, is accessible at: http://www.rmit.edu.au/corporate-governance/rmitpolicies Note that you will need to be logged in to the RMIT website to access the pdf.

**Special Consideration**

Students have a right to seek Special Consideration in cases of hardship affecting their academic progress. If one of your students believes his/her performance was affected by illness or other serious cause, and as a result has:

a) been prevented from meeting an assessment deadline; or

b) performed below standard during the assessment,

they may apply in writing for special consideration in the assessment of their performance.

Students may request Special Consideration if they are suffering physical, emotional, financial, or cultural difficulties that prevent them from progressing academically. These can include:

- illness
- injury
- hospitalisation
- severe anxiety or depression
- death of a family member
- death of a close family friend
• family relationship breakdowns
• victims of crime
• road accident
• sudden loss of employment
• severe disruption to domestic arrangements

Let your students know that requests for special consideration must be made in writing no later than 48 hours after the due date for the assessment. In exceptional circumstances, this procedure may be modified by the Head of School. Special consideration can take the following forms:

a) Deferred assessment – where the student has been prevented from meeting an assessment deadline the student can complete a similar and submit it by an agreed date;

b) Grading consideration – where a student has met an assessment deadline, but has performed poorly as a consequence of adverse circumstances.

Applications are considered by the Program Leader, Head of School or the school’s Student Progress Committee, depending on the scope of the application. The person or committee that considers the application in consultation with the lecturer(s) and student will determine the time frame for a deferred assessment.

It’s important to note that Students with a disability may request special assessment arrangements.

If you would like to view the policy go to: http://www.rmit.edu.au/corporate-governance/rmitpolicies#section2

The Application form for Special Consideration:
2.2  Teaching and Learning at RMIT

Support for Teaching

There is a range of teaching support available to you at RMIT. The Design and Social Context (DSC) learning team and teaching can provide expertise and support on developing sustainable curriculum designs, understanding learner centred teaching, interpreting student feedback data and providing professional development opportunities. If you would like to discuss one or all of these issues or if you would just like to talk generally about good learning and teaching contact the DSC liaison person http://www.rmit.edu.au/dsc/askc in your school. Alternatively you can contact the T&L co-ordinator in your school.

Teaching and Learning Strategy

RMIT’s Teaching and Learning Strategy – 2003-2006 is a key document which you should take the time to read closely. It can be found at: http://www.rmit.edu.au/teachingandlearning/strategydetails

RMIT’s mission, as the strategy states, is to provide professional and vocational education and training to individuals and enterprises on a local, regional and international basis. The aim of the strategy is to provide a framework for staff so they can optimise graduate employment, ensure graduate capability and improve the quality of teaching at RMIT.

The Teaching and Learning Strategy describes the role of teachers as designing, monitoring and assessing learning experiences, and facilitating learning by responding to the needs of individual students while acknowledging the different learning needs of a diverse student group.

The emphasis is on facilitating learning. As a facilitator of learning, the current Teaching and Learning Strategy lists a number of principles and approaches it expects you will incorporate into your teaching practice. They are:

- listen to students and learn from them
- have a commitment and desire to share your field of expertise and its relevance to professional practice
- use a variety of teaching strategies carefully chosen to facilitate intended learning outcomes
- examine, evaluate, and select emerging technologies where this will assist learning
- seek to increase student access to new technologies where this will assist learning
- actively involve students in learning through methods such as case studies, discussion, group projects and problem solving
- continually improve professional practice through reflection, discussion and innovation
- actively seek new ways to help students to learn
- seek opportunities to share ideas with other teachers.

In December 2005 the University Council approved RMIT’s new Strategic Plan, RMIT 2010: Designing the Future. The final draft will available online in the near future. The Teaching and Learning Strategy will be reviewed during 2006 to align it closely with the new Strategic Plan and you will receive information about the review process and its progress at various times during the year.

What are the Boyer Scholarships?

RMIT has adopted the Boyer Scholarship Model as a guide to integrating teaching, learning and research. The Boyer Scholarship Model is based on Ernest Boyer’s book, Scholarship Reconsidered (which you can borrow from the RMIT Library).
The two arms of RMIT’s core business – Learning and teaching and research and innovation – are underpinned by an integrated approach to scholarship. Boyer identified four scholarships. They are:

- **Teaching** promotes learning and understanding
- **Integration** makes connections across disciplines and contexts
- **Application** unites theory and practice
- **Discovery** is the creation of new knowledge.

Boyer’s Scholarship Model provides a means for supporting the links between teaching and research and for integrating elements of both within the learning and teaching experiences of staff and students. Taking this approach to your teaching means that you can situate your own practice in a scholarly (or research oriented) context and your students have opportunities to put theory into practice.

**What is learner centred teaching?**

Your teaching is learner centred when you want your students to enjoy their learning at RMIT, to experience learning as a transformative experience, and to develop a love of learning that sustains them throughout their careers.

Learner centred teachers focus on facilitating authentic and challenging contexts and knowledge that will assist students to acquire new knowledge and provide a satisfying experience for them.

As a sessional teacher you are an important member of a group of discipline experts who are providing our students with valid learning experiences that will fulfil their needs as learners. As teachers we need to design and implement teaching strategies that take into account student choice, appropriate assessment tasks, attendance modes, credit transfer, recognition of prior learning, time and location issues, and appropriate use of technologies.

**What is a capability driven curriculum? (HE)**

At RMIT we are designing our Higher Education programs and courses to maximise the capabilities that a student will develop over the timeframe of their degree.

Capabilities can be generic (such as a focus on excellent communication skills) and specific to your discipline (such as a particular technical skill for graphic designers or architects).

Capabilities are driven by the program context, meaning you and your program colleagues are required to identify and reflect on both generic and specific capabilities, and then to plan for preparing your students for professional practice. At RMIT this identification and reflection is informed by involving all stakeholders, particularly industry partners, in program design and renewal processes to ensure that what we teach to our students corresponds with what industry needs from our graduates.

Building a precise profile of capability requirements prompts teachers to revisit frequently questions such as these:

- Are our program structures contemporary, providing stimulating learning ‘room’ for students to practice and demonstrate their abilities?
- How can we provide curriculum that enables student to be become critically aware of their developing capabilities?
- How can we design or improve assessment tasks so that out students can provide evidence of the progressive development of their abilities?

When we write our course guides, our focus is on integrating the development of the capabilities we expect our students to achieve with course content and with the assessment tasks we set. This way we can evaluate over time whether a student has achieved a capability.

In addition to the capability profile for your program, RMIT has endorsed the development of the following capabilities for each graduate in every program:
• an awareness of indigenous issues
• an awareness of global sustainability
• an orientation to lifelong learning.

Graduate capabilities comprise those attributes that will enable our students to deal competently, professionally and personally, with unknown futures. RMIT graduates leave us with the capacity to apply their experience, knowledge and skills base to the analysis and effective management of real-world problems. Graduate capabilities are the end result of what our students have experienced and developed to deal with an unknown future using current knowledge and the capacity to discern relevant aspects in real life multifaceted situations.

What are Units of Competency (TAFE)?

TAFE provides competency-based training and each TAFE qualification is made up of Units of Competency (often referred to just as competencies). Each Unit of Competency (UoC) is described in some detail in the endorsed Training Package from which it is drawn. There are four dimensions to a competency: task skills, task management skills, risk management, and job/role environment skills.

A UoC describes the skills and knowledge that industry has indicated are required to perform effectively in the workplace. But the description of a UoC in a Training Package does not specify how a UoC should be delivered or assessed. It is up the professionalism of RMIT’s TAFE teachers to determine the best means of delivery and assessment, drawing on their own experience, frequent input from industry, and the outcomes of regular validation and moderation of their assessment practices.

Training Package qualifications are awarded when a student is assessed as competent in each of the UoC that make up a qualification – the emphasis is on what a student can do;

Training Package qualifications are flexible. They can be customised to suit the needs of a particular enterprise and the pace at which they can be completed is a matter for negotiation between teachers and students – the negotiation frequently involves a student’s employer;

Because Training Packages are nationally endorsed, a Unit of Competence completed with one TAFE provider (public or private) is recognised by other TAFE providers – competence is recognised by all employers, irrespective of which TAFE provider completed the assessment;

If a student can already do what a Unit of Competence requires they have a right to receive Recognition of Prior Learning – there is no need to learn again what you already know how to do.

UoCs can be delivered and assessed on the job, in simulated work environments, through block release for training, in classroom settings – increasingly they are delivered through a mix of these strategies, and on the job training is now a common emphasis.

Students are assessed on their performance against the competency standards. For the student, the outcome of a competency assessment is that performance is evaluated as either Competent, or Not Yet Competent.

What is Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)?

You may have students in your class, who have other qualifications, or who have extensive work experience. These students may ask if they can apply for RPL. This is commonplace at RMIT. There are established procedures for RPL and you should refer the student to the Program Leader. Students require evidence of previous awards, and work experience before they can apply so you could ask them to gather this evidence before they approach the Program Leader.

The intention of the RPL policy at RMIT is to recognise and provide credit in RMIT programs for skill and knowledge acquired through study towards formally recognised qualifications; courses provided by professional bodies; work, and other forms of practical and life experience.
Policy and other information regarding RPL can be found at: http://www.rmit.edu.au/corporate-governance/policy/students/rpl

Copyright

The Copyright Act allows members of an educational institution to reproduce, and communicate, a reasonable portion of print and graphical works for the educational purposes of the institution.

Education purposes are defined as:

- The copy is made and used for teaching purposes
- The copy is made and used as part of a course of study
- The copy is made and retained in the library for use as a teaching resource.

There are limits on how much you can copy from a book, for example. More information on copying limits and regulations can be found at: http://www.rmit.edu.au/browse?SIMID=x59666spw21s

A comprehensive list of copyright questions and answers is provided on the Copyright Management Service Website: http://www.rmit.edu.au/copyright

If your question is not answered, please call or email Anne Lennox, anne.lennox@rmit.edu.au
Telephone: 9925 5708.
2.3 Supporting Student Learning

What is a critique?

The critique is a method of learning based on a system of peer review. It is used extensively in design studio environments within DSC art and design programs. Peers participating in the process are drawn from program staff, practitioners in the field and most importantly, students. The critique is a place for discourse and debate about design. It is an opportunity for interaction and the exchange of knowledge between students and staff.

The process of discussing a student’s work through critique occurs twice a week in a regular design studio environment. Major critique sessions of a more formal nature occur at mid-semester and at the end of the semester. The issues of representation, design process and the overall design outcome of students’ projects are considered through the critique learning method.

In order to successfully participate in critiques, students need to develop a range of capabilities, such as critical reflection, articulate expression of their thoughts and practice (both in verbal and written formats), and the ability to learn independently. Teachers need to provide learning environments that support their students to confidently develop these capabilities.

To find out more about critiques, refer to the Teaching and Learning website.

Teaching in tutorials

‘Tutorial’ is a term that usually refers to a type of learning characterised by a relatively small class (5-30 students) that is a forum for discussion and exchange of ideas. The tutorial is often connected to a preceding class, such as a lecture. However, tutorials can also be ‘stand-alone’ learning environments, providing a way to link students together so they can reflect on current learning projects and challenges.

Tutorials provide ideal setting for students to develop the capabilities of independent and critical thought, verbal and written articulation, and the ability to build constructively upon the viewpoints of others. As a tutorial teacher, you need to provide opportunities that develop these skills.

Large classes

The University of Queensland has an excellent webpage on Teaching Large Classes: http://www.tedi.uq.edu.au/largeclasses

The Large Class Teaching Guidelines on this website are especially useful. They are divided into four areas:

- planning and teaching
- planning and conducting assessment
- administration and management
- tutoring and demonstrating.

They were developed by a working party from the Teaching Large Classes project team – a project established by the former Australian Universities Teaching Committee.

This site is worth a visit.

Engaging a class

Engaging a class is not necessarily about you becoming a star entertainer and performer. Having a charismatic ‘stage presence’ might be exciting for students, but there are more sustained ways of engaging a class that focus on the students rather than you as their teacher. These strategies include
using questioning, activities and assessment to create a learning environment where students are stimulated and involved with their learning.

To learn more about these ways of engaging classes, visit the RMIT Teaching and Learning website. There are many ideas in the sections on Supporting Learning and Sharing Experiences: http://www.rmit.edu.au/teachingandlearning

**Student Expectations**

Expectations are powerful. We often judge what happens based on what we thought was going to happen, or what we think should have happened.

Students have expectations about a course they have enrolled in even before the semester begins. You have expectations of your students before you meet them.

A strength of your Course Guide is that it can help to shape students’ expectations. It’s a good idea to ask your students early in the semester what expectations they have about the course and to refer to the Course Guide in your conversation.

Part of your role is to articulate your expectations of your students right from the start and to keep checking in on them. Student dissatisfaction is sometimes the outcome of misinformed expectations that were never discussed or challenged. Student satisfaction often comes from your expectations of high performance, which students rise to meet.

It does sound like feedback, but the difference is important. Feedback is about what has already happened, whether it is students responding to a survey on teaching quality, or your verbal comments on a class presentation by a group of students. Expectations, on the other hand, are about what will happen later in this class, with this assessment task, later this semester.
2.4 Technology and Teaching

What is Online@RMIT?

Online@RMIT is the University’s central access point to all its online programs and courses. Its maintenance and ongoing development is managed by RMIT’s Distributed Learning Systems (DLS) team. The terms Online@RMIT, the Learning Hub and the DLS all refer to the same thing!

Accessing Online@RMIT

You can access Online@RMIT from the RMIT homepage. Click the ‘Staff’ link, then select the link to ‘Online Learning Hub (Online@RMIT)’ found under the heading ‘Online services for staff’. Alternatively, go directly to Online@RMIT – type http://www.rmit.edu.au/online into your browser.

Logging in to Online@RMIT

Log in using your RMIT staff number and password. When you have logged in you may see a list of courses you have access to, with tools attached. The tools include Blackboard, WebBoard, and eJournal.

If you do not see any courses or programs listed, check with your Course Coordinator to find out if the course you are teaching has an online presence. You might not yet have access to the course but your students might be using this resource. You can arrange access through your Course Coordinator.

Using Online@RMIT

If your course doesn’t have an online presence but you would like to create one, contact the Design and Social Context Online Learning and Teaching Group: http://www.rmit.edu.au/dsc/online

This group can offer you the following support:

- educational design advice for online and flexible learning environments
- assistance with course shell administration
- multimedia development to enhance your course
- professional development in using the various tools
- copyright advice

If you would like to see how other people in the portfolio are using Online@RMIT, the Online Learning and Teaching Group will be happy to arrange this for you. Contact the DSC Online Group at dsc-online-group@rmit.edu.au or:

- John Benwell – 03 9925 2817
- Thembi Mason – 03 9925 1952
- Sara Eagle– 03 9925 3810
- Meredith Kidby – 03 9925 2800

Have fun!

Links

Edith Cowan University has designed a suite of tools to support online teaching and learning. They are available for use in educational institutions: http://elrond.scam.ecu.edu.au/ronline/index.htm
This web site has been designed for teachers and instructors in higher education to access a rich set of resources that support the development of flexibly delivered high quality learning experiences for students. http://learningdesigns.uow.edu.au
2.5 Course Guides

Definition of ‘program’ and ‘course’

At RMIT, the term ‘program’ refers to the entire qualification in which a student is enrolled (for example, degree, diploma, certificate). Programs are referred to as ‘courses’ in most other Australian universities.

The term ‘course’ refers to the individual components of study that comprise a qualification. Courses may be referred to as ‘subjects’ or ‘units’ in other Australian universities.

Why use Course Guides?

A Course Guide describes to students the learning objectives, learning activities and assessment tasks in the course you are teaching. It is a way of formally documenting and clearly communicating to students your experience in, knowledge about, approach to and intentions for teaching the course.

Each Course Guide includes summary explanations of relevant RMIT policies and procedures, such as those about plagiarism, student feedback, student progress, and Special Consideration.

Students should receive a copy of the Course Guide no later than the first class of the semester in which the course is offered.

- A Course Guide also assists in ensuring that:
  - students have an overview of the course so they can appreciate how learning activities and assessment tasks form a coherent learning experience that helps them achieve the learning outcomes of the course
  - students understand the expectations you have of them
  - students can plan their work and organise their workload over the duration of the course
  - you design, develop and deliver the course in a way that gives it the best chance of delivering the outcomes you intend for your students.

Sticking to what’s published in the Course Guide

A Course Guide is a formal brief or specification of the whole course representing RMIT’s and your course team’s undertaking to your students.

Unclear or ambiguous expression in a Course Guide, and changes to content or assessment, should not be taken lightly as these represent a change in certainty of process and expectations for students who are studying the course. In the past, students have lodged complaints with the University – which have been upheld – around incidents and negative learning experiences related to these issues.

Writing a Course Guide

A guiding principle in writing a Course Guide is to ensure that the learning activities and assessments are designed and implemented to provide your students with every chance of developing the capabilities and achieving the learning outcomes specified for the course.

A second guiding principle is to write the Course Guide directly to your students. For example, use the second person – ‘Your first assessment task is …’

Aim to be clear and concise, including important details for your students. Try not to make the Course Guide too long.

Changing assessment tasks in a Course Guide

Changes should not be made to the form or forms of assessment prescribed in any Course Guide during the conduct of the course unless:

- students enrolled in the course have received notice in writing of the proposed change
- not less than 70 percent of students enrolled in the course approve of the change
- the change is approved by the Head of School.
2.6 Assessment

Student and staff responsibilities in assessment

Assessment of student learning is guided by the RMIT Principles of Assessment.

The purpose of Assessment is to:

- provide a meaningful learning experience
- measure and report students’ achievement of capability
- determine students’ capabilities against learning outcomes
- identify learning needs
- provide students with feedback on their learning
- increase students’ ability to assess and reflect on their own learning
- report on students’ progress and achievements
- assist in the evaluation of the learning experience, including the assessment design.

Assessment engages students in activities that:

- encourage student learning and participation
- provide feedback
- are flexible
- are manageable
- are fair and considerate of diverse needs
- are reliable
- are valid and meaningful
- encourage integration of learning.

The RMIT Assessment Charter

This document describes student and staff responsibilities for assessment.

The basic expectations of students are:

- to adhere to assessment principles and policies
- use assessment to support learning
- comply with requirements of assessment processes
- be accountable for the originality and validity of assessment submissions
- follow staff instruction regarding collection of assessment items
- keeping a copy of all assessment submissions (including developmental work) in a safe place so that others may not access them
- participating in group assessment activities as required.

Teaching staff with assessment responsibilities are expected to:

- adhere to RMIT’s assessment principles, policies and procedures
- incorporate assessment which supports student learning by ensuring:
  - appropriate contexts, times, locations,
  - use of reflective integrative tasks,
• recognising the contractual nature of the assessment process and fulfilling its requirements including:
  - providing written outlines of assessment tasks
  - designing assessment to minimise plagiarism
  - using open and consistent processes
  - providing written information about negotiated changes to assessment
  - timely notification of assessment
  - ensuring equipment needed is available
  - providing for positive group assessment activity
  - providing a secure environment for student work during your assessing process.

Your role in assessment

As a sessional staff member you may find that the assessment tasks for a particular course were
determined before you were employed to teach the course. Alternatively, you may find that you are
expected to write the Course Guide for your course which includes designing the assessment activities.

It is important to check with your colleagues in the program about the assessment workload across an
entire program. Students can have too many assessment tasks to complete – this can impact on their
ability to complete all requirements in your course and inappropriately influence the learning strategies
they adopt.

Using the approved principles above will assist you to think about assessment design. If you wish to
suggest changes to assessment workloads, or introduce innovative approaches to assessment tasks, feel
welcome to discuss your ideas with your colleagues, and supervisor or Program Leader.

Standards

Where you are required to either design assessment tasks or mark assessment items, you need to work
closely with your colleagues to understand the moderation and validation procedures in your program to
ensure consistency in grading.

To maintain an equitable standard when assessing students, it is critical that all teaching staff discuss
the standards for each level of grading and share examples of assessed work. This moderation provides
a framework for all teaching staff to work to, and lessens the number of student assessment appeals. It
also maximises consistency, fairness, flexibility, and reliability in assessment.

Validation of assessment, either internally or externally reviewed, should be done as part of the design
and regular review of programs and courses. Internal consistency is where assessment is aligned with
course capabilities and external consistency is where assessment is aligned with industry and
professional requirements.

(continued on next page)
Assessment grades

At RMIT we use the following gradings, approved by Academic Board.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HD</td>
<td>High Distinction</td>
<td>80-100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Distinction</td>
<td>70-80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR</td>
<td>Credit</td>
<td>60-70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>50-60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fail</td>
<td>0-49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNS</td>
<td>Did Not Sit</td>
<td>No work submitted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a guide only these marks may be interpreted as follows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HD</td>
<td>Indicative of outstanding work, distinguished by original thought, independent research, and an intelligent critical engagement with the set material.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Excellent work, containing original thought and research, well structured and a comprehensive grasp of the set material, but marred by one or two minor problems or deficiencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR</td>
<td>Good to very good work, displaying some original thought and research, but undermined by gaps such as insufficient critical engagement with the set material, or weaknesses in overall structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td>Average work, displaying a basic grasp of the set material, but with a range of more or less serious flaws, such as a lack of evidence of independent reading, or research or lack of engagement with the key areas explored in the task.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Fail grade is given to inadequate work. Some reasons may be a lack of any evidence of attempts to cover basic readings, engaging the topic ideas, lack of research, non contribution to seminars, incorrect number of assessment items submitted. Plagiarism can also be grounds for failure provided it is proved.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Marking Issues

There are a number of issues that can arise when marking assessment items. It is important to be able to justify the marks given to an item. This means there must be:

- a clear relationship between expected learning outcomes and assessment tasks
- consistency between marks given and feedback provided
- clear written instructions to students that explain the task, and the assessment criteria
- a description of the relative weighting of tasks in each assessment

When these conditions are met your students can understand fully what their marks mean.
At the commencement of each course it is vital that teachers explicitly refer to the Course Guide to explain what students can expect throughout the semester. Course Guides convey important information about assessment.

Students who do not agree with their assessment marks can appeal the results formally. It is important to talk to students individually if they are concerned with their marks: often issues are resolved best in this way. If discussion does not resolve the issue, there is an agreed procedure for appealing a result. A student needs to register their concerns with the Program Leader who is responsible for activating the appeal process. You can find the ‘Appeal against assessment results – Academic policy and procedure’, at:  

It is apparent from previous appeals that the majority of concerns are focussed on potential incorrect or inequitable marks, failure to adhere to the agreed assessment processes, or non-negotiated deviation from assessment criteria stated in the Course Guide.

The provisions of the Information Privacy Act, 2000, mean that it is not permissible to post student results on public noticeboards, in student common rooms, or in mailboxes. Results are delivered to students individually, either to their email addresses or in face-to-face consultation.

**Feedback on assessment tasks**

Delivering feedback to students is part of established teaching practice at RMIT. We take very seriously the provision to students of feedback, and the feedback we give is essential to the development of student capabilities in their chosen fields.

Feedback may be formative, arising, for example, in the context of discussion which centres on the development of concepts and approaches to assessment items before they are submitted.

Effective feedback:

- is unambiguous
- is focussed on the topic
- is critically constructive, identifying specific areas in which the submitted work could be improved (and hence, where future effort can be usefully directed)
- allows a student the scope to explore with you alternative ways of achieving improved outcomes
- is not personalised
- is a trusted source of information than answers an age old student question – how am I going here?
- invites conversations and promotes both flexibility in exploring ideas, and innovative approaches to the assessment tasks by both teacher and student
- perhaps most importantly, effective feedback runs both ways – from teacher to student and from student to teacher.

Feedback is delivered in many ways, both informal and formal.

Formal feedback can be written, can occur in verbal critique sessions, or during one-on-one consultations with students. Formal feedback is usually recorded and can be referred to again when it comes time to enter the final marks for a semester.

It is normal practice to give students written feedback on each of the assessment items submitted over the semester. Progressive feedback allows a student to gauge how they are progressing.

Informal feedback can be delivered during classroom conversations or brainstorming sessions involving peers and teachers, or through face-to-face consultations with students.

Check with your program colleagues on the feedback protocols in your program.
Authentic assessment

Assessment must support and demonstrate learning. Authentic assessment is designed to do just that. The Authentic Task Design website, maintained by the University of Wollongong, offers a set of framework principles to consider when designing assessment tasks. The website reports the outcomes of an Australian Research Council project that explored the potential of the World Wide Web as an authentic assessment tool. The website can be found at: http://www.authentictasks.uow.edu.au

The Centre for the Study of Higher Education undertook a project funded by the Australian Universities Teaching Committee that developed assessment resources for higher education practitioners. Titled ‘Ideas, strategies and resources for quality in student assessment’, the website address is: http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/assessinglearning

There are a multitude of assessment resources available to TAFE teachers. Your Program Leader will be able to direct you, for example, to toolboxes prepared for particular Training Packages. Curriculum Maintenance Managers (CMMs) for your area are also valuable sources of advice on resources that are available. CMMs also maintain teacher networks in their curriculum areas. It may not be possible for you to attend network meetings but it is a good idea to keep in touch with network activities which often deal with assessment. Your Program Leader will be able to provide you with more information about the responsibilities of the CMM and the activities they undertake. A list of CMMs in Victoria is available at: http://www.otte.vic.gov.au/training/cmm/cmm.htm
2.7 Plagiarism

Definition of Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the presentation of the work, idea or creation of another person as though it is your own. It is a form of cheating and is a very serious academic offence that may lead to expulsion from the University. Plagiariised material can be drawn from, and presented in, written, graphic and visual form, including electronic data, and oral presentations. Plagiarism occurs when the origin of the material used is not appropriately cited.

Examples of plagiarism include:

- copying sentences or paragraphs word for word from one or more sources, whether published or unpublished, which could include but is not limited to books, journals, reports, theses, websites, conference papers, course notes, etc without proper citation
- closely paraphrasing sentences, paragraphs, ideas or themes without proper citation
- piecing together text from one or more sources and adding only linking sentences
- copying or submitting whole or parts of computer files without acknowledging their source
- copying designs or works of art and submitting them as your original work
- copying a whole or any part of another student’s work
- submitting work as your own that someone else has done for you.

You should refer to the RMIT Plagiarism Policy at:
http://mams.rmit.edu.au/1oavdg0bdd1.pdf

Strategies to minimise opportunities for plagiarism

It is advisable to read three very useful documents:

- Plagiarism: Guidelines for Teaching Staff
- Plagiarism: Resources for Staff
- Plagiarism: Resources for Students.

These documents can be found under the Plagiarism heading at:

The following steps may be of initial assistance to you:

- at the beginning of every course you take, engage students in a discussion of the implications of plagiarism and emphasise strategies that will encourage them to present their own work – refer them to Plagiarism: Resources for Students
- be clear about your expectations in assessment tasks, especially regarding the kind of research required, and explain the benefits of submitting original work
- refer students to the Academic Integrity section of your Course Guide – this is a standard entry in every RMIT Course Guide
- let students know that all submitted work must be accompanied by a completed Statement of Authorship which is a signed declaration that the work they have submitted is their own – the Statement of Authorship is part of the cover sheet that must be attached to all work submitted for assessment.
- complement written work with oral work.
What to do if you suspect plagiarism

If you suspect plagiarism in a student’s work you need to document the reasons and evidence for your suspicion. The Plagiarism Policy procedure states that is the responsibility of the Head of School to assess and determine what action is to be taken. Speak to your Program Leader about the exact procedure in your school.
2.8 Evaluation of Teaching

Why is student feedback sought?
Student feedback, or student evaluation, is sought at RMIT University to monitor and improve students’ experiences in the university’s learning and teaching environments.

Student feedback is used to improve the quality of programs and courses, support the scholarship of teaching, inform professional development, enhance program design and improve the provision of learning resources and facilities. Opportunities for giving feedback enable students to actively participate in the continuous improvement cycle.

Individual staff can also use student feedback results for supporting applications for promotion, teaching awards and professional development.

Types of feedback – informal and formal
Students can provide feedback through a variety of formal and informal methods at course, program and university levels. Formal feedback methods used include surveys, focus groups and Student-Staff Consultative Committees.

As well as obtaining views from current students, feedback about course, program and university issues is also sought from graduates, industry partners, professions, academic peers and through analysis of student assessment.

In your role as a sessional teacher, it is likely you will be most involved with course level student feedback. The ways in which this involvement occurs are through the Course Experience Survey (CES) and through the informal comments you may receive either directly from your students or via your program leader or course coordinator.

How is the Course Experience Survey done?
The CES is the standardised university survey designed to evaluate students’ experiences of their courses. The CES can be administered at any time during the semester that you are teaching your course. The Survey Services Centre (SSC) processes the completed surveys and produces a course report for individual teachers and relevant staff with responsibility for improving the experience of students in a course.

You can order hard copies or online versions of the survey from the SSC at:
http://www2.rmit.edu.au/departments/planning/surveycentre

If you choose to ask students to complete the survey in hard copy, the survey must be administered to students by someone who doesn’t teach your course. This person can, for example, be a student or other RMIT staff member.

How to access feedback relevant to your course
As well as the feedback students provide about your course through the CES or their informal comments to you, you can also access student feedback about program issues. This feedback is available from a range of sources. These include:

- RMIT’s internal Student Experience Survey (SES) in which current students provide feedback about program and university level issues
- the national Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) in which HE graduates provide feedback about program level issues
- the Student Outcomes Survey (SOS) in which TAFE graduates provide program level feedback. These surveys provide both quantitative and qualitative data.
You can access outcomes from previous Student Experience Surveys conducted for your program. See: http://www2.rmit.edu.au/departments/planning/surveycentre/ses.php

Details on accessing CEQ (quantitative and qualitative) and SOS data can be found at: http://www2.rmit.edu.au/departments/planning/ircu/outcomes/outcomes.php

**Reporting back to your students**

Your program leader will provide you with details about your program’s approach to reporting back to your students on the evaluations they have provided. This approach will align with the university’s expectation that:

- program teams will use course and program feedback for improvement planning
- students will receive timely feedback from Program Leaders and Course Coordinators about student feedback results and any action to be taken as a result of student evaluations.

**Peer feedback**

Along with student feedback which provides evidence about how students perceive you are performing as a teacher, you can also obtain peer feedback about your teaching. To contact the Design and Social Context, Learning and Teaching Team for further information about how to arrange and use this type of feedback, please go to the RMIT website at this location: http://www.rmit.edu.au/dsc/askc. Your Program Leader or Head of School can also guide you about program and school level processes for obtaining peer feedback.

**Program Annual Review**

Student feedback obtained at course and program levels is used by program teams in the Program Annual Review (PAR) process. In this process teams reflect upon their program’s performance from a number of perspectives (for example, relevance, viability and teaching quality). These reflections then inform the action plan for future improvements to the program.

**Program Advisory Committees**

Program Advisory Committees are forums for graduates, industry partners, members of relevant professions and others to provide external feedback about programs. This information is used to improve the quality of programs and courses and enhance program design.
2.9 Frequently Asked Questions

Common sense is important in effectively dealing with unexpected issues as they arise.

What if a student is ill in class?

If a student becomes ill during a class:

- ensure that the student is in no immediate danger
- if there is an immediate danger, either remove the source of danger or move the student
- call the RMIT Campus Nurse Service, RMIT Counselling Service, or an ambulance, or request a colleague to do so.
- if you are alone in the area ring the Security Service to request help: 9925 3333, or after hours on 9925 3895
- do not leave the student alone if at all possible.

What if a student is distressed in class?

If a student exhibits signs of distress, excuse yourself and the student from the class and try to determine the cause of the distress. When you have done this you may be able to direct the student to an appropriate support service such as counselling. Please remember that going to counselling is voluntary and you cannot demand a student goes. If you are unable to determine what the distress is about, ensure that the student goes home with a fellow student at the very least. If this distress occurs during daylight hours you can suggest they go to the RMIT Counselling Service.

What if a student is hostile?

In the very rare event that a student is, in your opinion, hostile and behaves dangerously in a classroom:

- Try to remain calm
- Dismiss the class
- Move yourself to somewhere safe
- Call Security (9925 3333)

If this possibility concerns you, the RMIT Counselling website has a link to a brief paper from UCLA Berkeley on how to speak to a violent or aggressive student. You may wish to read it. The website link is http://www.rmit.edu.au/ssg (under Student Services Group).

It’s important to emphasise that this kind of behaviour is very rare.

What do I do when the timetable or the room changes?

If you have to change rooms or class times, you are required to inform the Program Leader and the students. Put a sign on the door of the room that you were to use which re-directs students to another location. If you are given advance warning of a change, notify the students by student email and written or verbal communication where possible.
What happens if I'm sick?

Ring the Program Leader if you are sick and unable to take a class. If you become ill while taking a class, inform the Program Leader and make your way home or to your doctor. (See School Specific Information)

How do I communicate with students outside of class?

All students are given an email address when they enrol at RMIT. You can communicate with them through this email channel concerning their academic work. If students have problems with their email account, then communicate with them via local arrangements, such as pigeonholes or bulletin boards or the School Office noticeboards. It is not appropriate for staff to communicate with students outside class for personal reasons.

Where do students hand in their assessment tasks?

Assignments are:

- collected in class from the students
- posted in a locked assignment box
- submitted via the DLS on or before the due date.

Check the specific procedure in your school with your Program Leader.

Note that administrative staff cannot collect assignments on your behalf.

When returning student assessment tasks, please make sure that you hand it directly to them. Don’t leave assessment items lying around in classrooms: assessable work whilst in your care is your responsibility.

What if a student wants to change their enrolment?

If a student approaches you to about changing their enrolment, refer them to the Program Leader. Enrolment changes can be arranged, but the Program Leader needs to track such changes to ensure that:

- the correct number of courses are being undertaken
- the student does not have an academic problem that requires attention
- the student is eligible to change enrolment status, especially from full-time to part-time.

What if a student wants to cancel their enrolment?

You may encounter a student who wishes to cancel their enrolment. A number of students do this each year, usually because of financial difficulties, ill health or family issues. Students must see the Program Leader and complete a Cancellation of Enrolment Form.

Failure to cancel enrolment by the census date means a student remains liable for fees. Census dates for both HE and TAFE are usually 31 March for Semester 1, and 31 August for Semester 2.

If an international student cancels their enrolment, this also means that their student visa will be cancelled.

Should I be advising students on their academic progress?

You may be asked to advise students on their academic progress. This is very dependent on your local program procedures. Students may need advice on which elective courses or major or minor streams they need to pursue in their degree. This may or may not be part of your job role. Ask your Program
Leader or Supervisor. You may also be responsible for providing written and verbal feedback to students in class.
Contacts and Contributors

A link to the website for this guide can be found on the DSC Academic Services web page at:
http://www.rmit.edu.au/dsc/as

The direct address of the Sessional Teaching Support website is:
http://www.rmit.edu.au/dsc/as/sessional

Your feedback is very welcome. It will assist us to improve the website and the Guide and make sure that they as both as useful as possible for DSC Sessional Teaching Staff. To send us your comments, please email DSC Sessional Support at: dsc-sessional-support@rmit.edu.au

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