

FACULTY OF ARTS GUIDELINES FOR THE POLICY ON ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

approved by the Faculty of Arts Council
May 21, 2024

Pertaining to the Policy on Assessment of Student Learning (PASL), which was approved by the Senate on May 11, 2022 and the Board of Governors on May 19, 2022.

These policies are developed according to Article 1 of PASL which states:

Faculties, Enrolment Services, and other University units have the authority to and should develop local guidelines and procedures that are consistent with this Policy and any other McGill University regulations.

For ease of use, this document reproduces each relevant article of the PASL along with its addendum indicating how it will be applied in the Faculty of Arts.

1. PREAMBLE

Assessment plays an integral role in teaching and learning. Sound assessment practices help to shape and enhance student learning by:

- *allowing for fair, meaningful, and effective assessment of a student's learning.*
- *creating a learning environment that is both healthy and rigorous.*
- *informing instructors and students as to the extent to which the planned learning outcomes are achieved.*

Sound assessment practices exert a profound impact on students' ability to develop the knowledge, skills, and values appropriate for a given academic level. Further, such assessment practices can have a profound positive impact on students' wellbeing. Instructors are recognised as being domain experts, best positioned to evaluate the learning and assessment needs of their students and to manage the evolution of their courses, modes of teaching and evaluation.

Faculties, Enrolment Services, and other University units have the authority to and should develop local guidelines and procedures that are consistent with this Policy and any other McGill University regulations.

2. SCOPE

Article 2.1. *The purpose of this Policy is to provide a set of common principles to guide assessment of student learning throughout McGill University, recognizing the different needs of Faculties and academic units. In doing so, the Policy promotes equity, consistency, effective learning experiences, a healthy learning environment, and academic integrity under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.*

Article 2.2. *This Policy shall apply to all undergraduate and graduate courses offered by McGill University for which credit is earned and students receive a final grade on an official McGill transcript. For courses which do not follow the standard course schedule identified in the Key academic dates approved by Senate annually, Faculties and academic units are expected to adapt the specified timelines to respect the Guiding Principles.*

Article 2.3. *This Policy shall not apply to credit activities with their own policies and regulations, for example, comprehensive examinations and internships.*

Article 2.4. *No provision in this policy should be understood as contradicting McGill's University Statement of Academic Freedom.*

3. DEFINITIONS

Article 3.1. “Assessment” means the process through which the progress and achievements of a student or students are measured or determined. Based on established criteria and standards, assessment provides ongoing feedback to the student about the quality and extent of their knowledge, understanding, and performance, and determines assigned grades.

Article 3.2. “Student” means any person registered in the University for a course, courses, or research activities, whether or not they are a candidate for a degree, diploma, or certificate.

Article 3.3. “Instructor” means the member of the academic staff responsible for instruction, the means of assessment, and the grades to be granted in a course.

4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Article 4.1 Assessment practices are aligned with and reflective of the commitment to healthy teaching and learning environments underpinning a McGill education. a) Assessment practices are conducted in a fair, reasonable, and equitable manner. b) Expectations are clearly communicated to students. c) Reasonable student concerns are heard and responded to in a prompt and thoughtful manner. d) Provisions are made for reasonable scheduling of completion of assessment tasks. e) Assessment tasks are sufficiently inclusive and diverse to permit reliable judgements of individual students’ knowledge, understanding, and performance. f) In setting assessment tasks for the course, students’ workloads, task due dates, and the credit value of the course are taken into account. g) Provisions are made for reasonable accommodation of student needs.

Article 4.2 Assessment practices uphold high academic standards and promote academic integrity.

a) Grades are determined based on high standards and are applied consistently.

b) The instructor is ultimately responsible for the assessment of all students’ work, even if they are assisted by teaching assistants, graders, or external subject matter experts.

c) Courses offered with multiple sections should have equivalent levels of workload and equivalent assessment tasks.

d) Instructors are provided with support to develop effective and meaningful assessment and feedback strategies.

Addendum to 4.2. In c, equivalent levels of workload and equivalent assessment tasks do not mean that the course sections are identical in nature. There may be differences in how different sections are taught and assessed.

Article 4.3 Assessment practices are pedagogically sound. a) Assessment tasks are aligned with planned learning outcomes. b) Assessment tasks may include individual and group work, with assessment criteria that explicitly address the basis for individual and group grades. c) Students have the opportunity to receive timely and ongoing feedback they can use to improve (formative assessment), and feedback used to judge students’ knowledge, understanding, and performance at

the end of a unit, course, or program to determine if they have achieved the learning outcomes (summative assessment).

Article 4.4 *Assessment practices allow for valid and reliable judgments about individual student learning.*

a) The grading system is criterion-referenced: it is designed to indicate an individual student's achievement of clearly stated learning outcomes.

b) Ranking students is not the primary goal of assessment.

c) The average grade and/or distribution of grades for any course, examination, or other academic assessment task is not predetermined.

d) Normally, each course should have more than one graded assessment task, with the exception of single-project courses such as undergraduate/graduate thesis courses, internships, and individual reading courses.

5. RIGHT TO FAIR ASSESSMENT

Article 5.1. *It is the responsibility of instructors and students to exercise due diligence in familiarizing themselves with the provisions of this Policy and other relevant or applicable University and Faculty-level policies.*

Article 5.2. *Regardless of mode of delivery, all forms of assessment shall be conducted in such a manner as to promote academic integrity, using strategies such as changing question content, or reordering questions or answers in different versions of the same assessment task.*

Addendum to 5.2. **While instructors are encouraged to follow best practices to promote academic integrity, students are responsible for ensuring that their behaviour in courses and assessments does not contravene the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary procedures.**

Article 5.3. *Students must have the opportunity to receive some formative feedback before the University's official course withdrawal (without refund) deadline.*

Addenda to 5.3.

- a. The goal of formative feedback is to help students improve their learning. Formative assessments can help students identify their strengths and weaknesses and target areas that need work. Under no circumstances does formative feedback imply a guarantee to the student that they will receive a specific grade or range of grades for the course.**
- b. Having the opportunity to receive feedback does not mean that feedback must be provided to all students, but rather that students may direct inquiries to instructors about their performance in the course, and that upon such request, instructors are to provide formative feedback.**
- c. The standard of feedback to be provided will vary depending on the type and size of the course in question.**

Article 5.4. Students registering for courses during the add/drop period shall be provided alternative arrangements for missed assessment tasks (including attendance-based assessment tasks) that were due during the add/drop period.

Addenda to 5.4.

a. Instructors can schedule assessments before the end of the add/drop period, but students entering class at any point during that period must be provided with alternative arrangements for assessments scheduled before they entered the course. Alternate arrangements may include granting an extension so the student can complete the assessment, assigning a make-up assessment, or waiving the assessment and reweighting the remaining course assessments. If assessments are given during the add-drop period, the course outline must indicate the necessary course of action for making alternative arrangements and, where appropriate, their nature.

b. The alternative arrangements must be the same for all students joining the course during the add/drop period. The responsibility for and decision about the nature of the arrangements lie with the instructor. Students do not have the power to veto these arrangements.

c. Students joining the course at any point during the add/drop period are themselves responsible for reviewing all content covered in the course from the start of the term.

Article 5.5. Instructors must include in the course outline expectations for all assessment tasks, including for participation, detailing explicitly the variety of ways in which grades can be earned. Details include explicit criteria to describe the key elements of students' learning. Instructors are to provide in writing concrete descriptors for each level of performance when the assessment task is formally assigned to students.

Addenda to 5.5.

a. Instructors must provide students with basic descriptions of all assessment tasks and grading schemes. Additional details can be issued via MyCourses.

b. The need to include *explicit criteria to describe the key elements of students' learning* implies that instructors should provide a description of what aspects of student learning will be evaluated in the specific assessment.

c. The *concrete descriptors for each level of performance* are not necessary or appropriate in certain assessments. For other assessments, the concrete descriptors for the basis of evaluation may be provided in the format that the instructor sees fit.

Article 5.6. Graded assessment tasks, including third party rereads, must be available to the student at no financial cost. Access to assessment tasks must not require the payment of fees other than approved course fees.

Addendum to 5.6. Instructors can require students to purchase books, including textbooks, but where assessments for the course are taken directly from a textbook, these should be provided without extra cost to the student. One possible way to do this is to make the assessments available through the McGill Library.

Article 5.7. Students may view and consult any written assessment, oral assessment (if recorded), or other artifact they created for which a grade has been assigned, along with an explanation of the grade. This right is available until the end of the following term.

Addendum to 5.7. An *explanation of the grade* means that instructors must provide some indication of how the grade was achieved. The explanation is not to be interpreted as detailed comments on every portion of the assessment; particularly in the case of final exams, written feedback is expected to be minimal.

Article 5.8. Successful completion of a specific assessment task may be required to pass a course. In such cases, the requirement and a pedagogical justification must be stipulated in the course outline and the assessment task must be worth at least 20% of the final course grade.

Addendum to 5.8. The pedagogical justification should explain, where further elaboration is warranted or clarifying, *why* the assessment is deemed essential to the goals and learning outcomes of the course in cases where this is not obvious or addressed in other sections of the course outline.

6. COMMUNICATION OF COURSE ASSESSMENT TASKS

Article 6.1. During the first week of a course, students shall be provided with a course outline that includes a description of the means of assessment for the course, including assessment tasks taking place outside scheduled class time (such as during tutorials, conferences, and labs). This description shall include the due date, weight, structure, penalties for assessment tasks submitted after a specified due date, and mode of delivery of each assessment task contributing to the final grade. Students can be offered a choice of alternative assessment tasks, but these should be explicit and available to all students.

Addenda to 6.1.

- a. There is no mandate to provide a *choice of alternative assessment tasks*; one may be given at the discretion of the instructor. When alternative assessments are offered, the instructor must state clearly in the course outline the deadline by which students are to make their choice.**
- b. Instructors must provide a course outline to their Unit in advance of the start of the term.**
- c. Any information on the course policy regarding the use of Artificial Intelligence tools (such as ChatGPT or others that are or may become available) must be included in the course outline.**

Article 6.2. It is the responsibility of students to exercise due diligence in familiarizing themselves with the requirements and due dates for the assessment tasks for a course, as well as the circumstances that would permit academic accommodation.

Article 6.3. In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the control of McGill University, assessment tasks in a course are subject to change, provided students are sent adequate and timely communications regarding the change.

Addendum to 6.3. The determination of what constitutes extraordinary circumstances is not at the discretion of the instructor but made by the University and/or the Faculty of Arts.

Article 6.4. If a means of assessment is modified after the add/drop period, students must be given the option to decide, by a specified date, whether the original or modified means of assessment should apply towards their individual final grade.

Article 6.5. Students shall be permitted to use either English or French in completing any assessment task, except for courses in which acquiring proficiency in a particular language is one of the learning outcomes, and in-class oral presentations.

Addenda to 6.5.

- a. Point of clarification: there is no obligation to allow students to choose between English or French for *in-class oral presentations*. Instructors can require *in-class oral presentations* to be carried out in English or French only.**
- b. Point of clarification: *in-class oral presentations* include all *in-class oral assessments*, including participation.**

Article 6.6. All assessment tasks must have a due date before the last day of Exams as specified in the University Calendar.

Article 6.7. In-term assessment tasks must not have due dates scheduled in the last 10 working days of classes as specified in the University Calendar, except in these cases:

- *Oral examinations in language courses*
- *Take-home assessment tasks (such as essays, papers, examinations, problem sets, and lab reports) if the questions, topics, and/or instructions are given to students in advance (at least 15 working days before the end of classes)*
- *Assessment tasks worth 10% or less of the final course grade*

Addenda to 6.7.

- a. In-class presentations delivered by students may be scheduled within the last 10 working days before classes end provided that all information regarding the presentation, including the topic, criteria, and presentation date are provided at least 15 working days in advance.**
- b. Point of clarification: *Oral examinations in language courses* include examinations that have both oral and written components.**

Article 6.8. No assessment tasks shall be due during the University's official fall and winter reading breaks. All course content must be covered between the first and last day of classes, inclusive, as specified in the University Calendar.

Article 6.9. Corrections or clarifications to instructions or content of any assessment task must be documented in a timely manner through University email or the learning management system.

7. REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS

Article 7.1. Students requiring disability-related academic accommodations have the right to request reasonable accommodation in fulfilling an assessment task in a course in accordance with the Policy Concerning the Rights of Students with Disabilities. Students who because of religious commitment cannot undertake or submit an assessment task in a course have the right to request reasonable accommodation in fulfilling the assessment task in accordance with the Policy for the Accommodation of Religious Holy Days. Pregnant students and students caring for dependants have the right to request reasonable accommodation in fulfilling an assessment task in a course in accordance with the Guidelines for the Academic Accommodation of Pregnant Students and Students Caring for Dependants.

Article 7.2. Students who for valid documented reasons (such as extenuating illness or serious personal circumstances) cannot undertake or submit an assessment task in a course may request academic accommodations within a timeframe that is in accordance with local guidelines and procedures, and instructor approval. Processes around academic accommodation vary by Faculty, and students should consult their academic advisor for the appropriate request pathway.

Article 7.3. Students who wish to request an academic accommodation must do so before the assessment task is submitted.

Addendum to 7.3. Students who wish to request an academic accommodation must do so before the assessment task is submitted, and no more than 7 working days after the original due date in exceptional circumstances (see 7.4 below).

Article 7.4. Exceptionally, if additional information becomes available after an assessment task has been submitted, a request for reasonable accommodation may be submitted within 7 working days.

Addendum to 7.4. In almost all cases, no requests for accommodation will be accepted after an assessment is submitted. This article applies only to such exceptional and extreme cases where a student cannot be held responsible for having made the decision to submit the assessment.

Article 7.5. Students who without a valid documented reason fail to submit an assessment task shall receive a grade of 0 or F for that task (or J in the case of a final assessment).

8. THIRD PARTY REREADS

Article 8.1. Students may request an impartial and competent reread by a third party designated by McGill University for any assessment task, including oral assessment tasks that are recorded.

Requests for rereads must be made within 10 working days of the date of the return of the graded materials to the student, and reassessments should normally be completed within 20 working days of the request, subject to reasonable administrative arrangements.

Article 8.2. Before requesting a third party reread, the student must make a request to the course instructor for an explanation of the grade. This request must be in writing and include a rationale for any requested change of the grade. No penalty may be assessed for this request or for a formal reread request. If a third party reviewer deems the original grade to be inappropriate, it will be revised up or down accordingly. The reviewer's grade overrides the original grade.

Addenda to 8.1 and 8.2. The request to the instructor for an explanation of the grade must be made in writing within 10 working days of the date of the return of the graded materials to the student. If the student subsequently requests a reread, the third party will be selected by the head of the unit that delivers the course and may include any lecturer or tenure-track faculty at McGill University, except for the instructor who gave the original grade. In a course with multiple instructors, the third party may be one of the other course instructors. When possible, the third party will receive a copy of the student's assessment, the grading criteria. The reviewer's grade is final and no further requests for regrades will be accepted. The re-read policies of individual academic units must align with these addenda.

9. EXAMINATIONS AND FINAL ASSESSMENT TASKS

Article 9.1. In the interest of academic integrity, instructors should modify assessment tasks each time the course is offered to minimize the possibility of students obtaining answers from previous terms.

Article 9.2. All examination questions are confidential and shall not be shared or reproduced unless otherwise permitted by the instructor, Department, and/or Faculty.

Article 9.3. Instructors are responsible for creating at least two versions of each multiple-choice examination by scrambling the questions and/or responses or using question pools.

Article 9.4. Students must be provided with a high-level description of the format and content of examinations reasonably in advance of the scheduled date.

Article 9.5. Regardless of where examinations take place, all students in the same course must be provided with the same access to examination instructions.

Article 9.6. If instructors choose to hold an examination after the last day of classes as specified in the University Calendar, it shall be called a "final assessment" and be worth at least 25% and no more than 75% of the final grade.

Addenda to 9.6.

- a. If a final assessment is held, students must be offered a grading scheme in which the final assessment is worth no more than 75% of the final grade. Under exceptional**

circumstances, academic accommodations may also involve final assessments reweighted to be worth more than 75% of the final grade.

- b. Final assessments that are in person or timed online assessments (as defined in Exams Regulations) must be centrally scheduled by Enrolment Services.
- c. Take home final assessments are those which are submitted after the last day of classes and are to be completed within a window of no fewer than 72 hours. They are to be scheduled and managed by instructors, preferably through MyCourses.

Article 9.7. Faculties are responsible for procedures for deferred, supplemental, and special examinations.

Addenda to 9.7.

- a. Extensions requested for all in person or timed online final assessments must be done through Deferred Exams, which is managed by Service Point.
- b. In the Faculty of Arts, it is not mandatory for instructors to offer supplemental exams. If instructors choose to offer a supplemental exam, they must state this in the method of evaluation form and include information in the course outline regarding the availability, format, and weight of supplemental exams. In the absence of such information in the method of evaluation form and course outline, no supplemental exam will be available for the course. The scheduling of supplemental exams is done via the Exams Office in Enrollment Services, and supplementals must take place during the following deferred exam period following the term in which the student was enrolled for the course. Supplemental exams cannot be deferred.
- c. Special examinations – taking a final exam, a deferred exam, or a supplemental exam at a different point in time than the centrally organized one – are not offered by the Faculty of Arts regardless of the circumstances or format of the final exam.

Additional Article 9.8. In the Faculty of Arts, attendance is not considered an assessment and may not be graded or constitute a fixed percentage of the final course grade. However, attendance may be considered a mandatory course activity; an instructor may take attendance and may penalize absences after the end of add/drop period. Penalties may include reduction of the final average/grade, or automatic failure in the course. A penalty of automatic failure may be imposed only for absences from more than 40% of the scheduled course meetings. Any attendance policy and associated penalties must be provided in the course outline.

10. PROCESS FOR CONTESTING ASSESSMENT

Article 10.1. In cases where a student believes this Policy is not being respected, they are advised to make their concern known by contacting the instructor and/or Program Director/Chair of the Department in writing. A response shall be provided to the student within 7 working days. If the matter is not resolved satisfactorily, any party may refer it to the Office of the Dean of Students or an Associate Dean of the Faculty where the course resides. A response outlining the process and

indicating an expected resolution date will be provided within 7 working days. All parties should exercise discretion around the student's identity to maintain the integrity of the process.

Article 10.2. *Matters unresolved through these channels may be grieved through the Code of Student Grievance Procedures under the Charter of Students' Rights and students may avail themselves of an advisor as described in the procedures therein. The Office of the Ombudsperson for Students offers confidential, informal, independent, and impartial dispute resolution services.*