
Academic Calibration Procedures

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1. Governing Policy

[Award Courses Policy, s.3.14.1](#)

2. Purpose

- a. Academic Calibration is a quality assurance measure which serves the following purposes:
 - i. assisting with the ongoing development and improvement of topics, associated assessment methods and teaching approaches
 - ii. feeding into relevant course reviews and accreditation processes
 - iii. supporting Flinders University's [Award Courses](#) and [Assessment](#) policies
 - iv. endorsing effective practice and, where highlighted, sharing exemplars of outstanding topic and assessment design, and
 - v. raising questions and generating national discussion about teaching standards by discipline.
- b. These procedures specify how the design and assessment of topics are benchmarked through the *Academic Calibration Project*, an Innovative Research Universities (IRU) initiative which began in 2013-14.

3. Introduction

- a. The academic calibration process at Flinders University is coordinated by the Flinders Academic Calibration Coordinator in the Office of Academic Quality and Enhancement.
- b. The calibration process involves a Topic Coordinator at one university selecting a sample of 12 marked assignments or exam scripts in a **capstone topic** or **core topic**. The assessments and associated topic materials are sent to an academic staff member in a corresponding discipline at another university for review.
- c. The staff member at the second university (the calibrator) completes a report that indicates whether the original grades given for those assignments appear too high or too low and whether the assessment requirements appear appropriate.

- d. The students are not identified and their grades are not changed — the intention of the report is to provide advice to the Topic Coordinator on the design and assessment of the topic, which in turn should reflect the design of the course.
- e. **Exemptions:** Where external course accreditation involves a topic-level benchmarking process that is comparable in depth to calibration, the courses concerned may be exempted from the calibration process by the relevant College Dean (Education).

4. Selection of topics for calibration

College Dean (Education)

- a. Prompted by the Academic Calibration Coordinator, issue a call in April and July for Topic Coordinators to nominate a topic for calibration, taking into account the following requirements:
 - i. There must be sufficient course and discipline rotation to ensure that all teaching programs are included over a five-year period.
 - ii. The focus of calibration is on:
 - core or capstone topics offered in the final year of an undergraduate degree
 - core topics in a postgraduate coursework degree, and
 - core third year topics in a major in a generalist degree (BA, BSc), the calibration of which would reflect on the performance of the discipline concerned.
- b. Each nominated topic must use an assessment process that yields a substantial piece of written work (in the form of an essay, portfolio or exam script, and ideally the main piece of assessment for the topic) that can be sent to an external reviewer, not practical work that must be assessed in person.
- c. Select 3 to 5 topics per College, and notify the Academic Calibration Coordinator of the topics to be calibrated.

5. Information to be provided for calibration

Topic Coordinator whose topic is being calibrated

- a. Provide the Academic Calibration Coordinator with:
 - i. 12 marked student assignments or exam scripts, across the grade spectrum, including any comments made about the evaluation of the assessment item, or an attached summary assessment sheet
 - ii. information about the course structure(s) of which the topic is a part
 - iii. course level learning outcomes
 - iv. topic outline provided to students
 - v. topic learning outcomes, and how they relate to course level learning outcomes
 - vi. grade distribution for the particular semester being evaluated
 - vii. details of assessment task
 - viii. grading criteria/marking rubric for the assessment task
 - ix. a context statement: a brief explanatory note of how the topic sits in the course and what the assessment piece represents,

plus any additional information the Topic Coordinator believes is relevant for the calibrator.

6. Implementing a calibration

Academic Calibration Coordinator

- a. Coordinate and oversee the calibration process to ensure all responsibilities are carried out in a timely manner.
- b. On receipt of calibration reports on Flinders University topics from a calibrator, submit them to:
 - i. the Topic Coordinator
 - ii. the Dean (Education) and/or Teaching Program Director, and
 - iii. the Office of Academic Quality and Enhancement for inclusion in relevant course review documentation.
- c. Facilitate quality improvement activities arising from calibration reports.

7. Calibration review

Evaluations of the calibration process are provided to the Innovative Research Universities' (IRU) calibration team to help them develop and improve the *Academic Calibration Project*.

Topic Coordinator and Topic Calibrator

Complete an online evaluation on the calibration process, the time commitment required and the overall effectiveness of the activity.

8. Undertaking academic calibration for another IRU university

- a. The Office of Academic Quality and Enhancement will call for Expressions of Interest from suitably qualified academic staff (usually Level C or above) approved by the College Dean (Education):
 - i. annually, and
 - ii. as IRU topics are nominated for calibration.
- b. Arrangements for calibration for another IRU university will be coordinated through the Flinders Academic Calibration Coordinator.

Approval Authority	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Students)
Responsible Officer	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Quality and Enhancement)
Contact Officer	Project Officer (Learning and Teaching), Office of Academic Quality and Enhancement, who performs the role of Flinders Academic Calibration Coordinator
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* Unless otherwise indicated, this procedure will still apply beyond the review date.

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