

# Protecting Grade Integrity Guideline

## Section 1 - Purpose and Scope

(1) This Guideline outlines approaches to help reduce the risk of unauthorised grade manipulation, to ensure grades are protected, and to maintain grade integrity. The Guideline supplements the [Assessment Procedure](#). The Guideline applies to academic and professional staff involved in the recording, storage and maintenance of assessment marks and grades awarded to students.

## Section 2 - Process and Key Controls

(2) Ensuring the accuracy of final grades is critical as final grades have a significant impact on, and value to, our students, employers and reputation.

(3) Unauthorised manipulation of grades at the University is rare but does happen. While we cannot remove every chance of unauthorised changes to University grades, we can reduce the risk.

(4) Students engage in a range of assessment practices across the diverse disciplines and activities at the University. This diversity is reflected in the breadth of systems to manage student submissions, record students' outcomes and support the determination of course grades. These systems range from Excel files to iMark and learn.UQ (Blackboard) grade centre. As a result, course staff have more responsibility to understand any risks of grade manipulation and use appropriate procedures to maintain grade integrity.

## Section 3 - Key Requirements

### Staff Responsibility

(5) Staff members have responsibilities to:

- a. Ensure marks and grades are secure, ideally:
  - i. Assessment, marks and grades are password protected (or physical artefacts are locked securely).
  - ii. Changes to marks and grades are recorded with details as to who made the change and when.
  - iii. Verifiable with links to the assessment documents (student submissions and marking).
  - iv. Reviewed to identify potential manipulation and errors.
- b. Manage records of assessment tasks, items, moderation and grading that are accessible by other staff and address the University's record keeping policy (see [Information Management Policy](#)) and responsibilities (see [Queensland State Archives - University Sector Retention and Disposal Schedule](#)).
  - i. Keep assessment submissions completed by students until at least the end of the appeal period.
  - ii. Store records of the grade/mark of individual assessment and review, moderation and confirmation of results for two years.
  - iii. Retain assessment instructions (master set of examination papers, assignment outlines or other assessment instructions) for 15 years.

c. Keep assessment systems secure:

- i. Use strong passwords (see [UQ password guide](#)) that you do not reuse and that are changed regularly (consider a password manager).
- ii. Secure your computer and workspace when you are away.
- iii. Take care when logging into institutional systems on free WiFi and on public or untrusted computers.
- iv. Consider a secure repository for sharing draft and final assessment documents to minimise the potential for security breaches.
- v. Consider using encrypting data (you can do this by adding a password to your word and excel documents) (see [Microsoft Support – Protect a document with a password](#)).
- vi. Ensure computer software is up to date.
- vii. Only install software from trusted sources (see [UQ ITS Services – Software and web apps](#)).
- viii. Use anti-virus protection on your computer (see [UQ ITS Services – Antivirus software](#)).
- ix. Be aware of phishing attacks (see [Email Scams](#)).
- x. Keep data backed up on University systems.
- xi. If you feel something may be suspicious in a system, contact ITS - email [help@its.uq.edu.au](mailto:help@its.uq.edu.au), phone +61 7 336 5600.

## Examples of Good Practice

(6) Provided below are three examples of possible good practice at the University – however there are many other ways grades can be appropriately managed.

### Manage Marking and Grading in Learn.UQ (Blackboard) Grade Centre

(7) Advantages:

- a. All records are protected by University passwords and backed up.
- b. Student feedback, grade calculations, moderation and confirmation all handled in one system.
- c. Original copies of all assignments submitted online, and marking are linked to grades.
- d. ITS provide logging and monitoring of grade centre data.
- e. Records are stored and managed centrally.

(8) Challenges:

- a. Some assessment types cannot be submitted in these systems (e.g. central examinations and models); however, the marks, artefacts (video recordings, photos, etc.) and even the marking and feedback may be handled in these systems (see eLearning > A-Z Guides > Turnitin > Create a Turnitin assignment (no file submission)).
- b. The rubric and scoring systems available in Turnitin and Blackboard do not support all assessment practices used at UQ.

### Manage Marking and Grading in Excel

(9) Advantages:

- a. All types of marking and grading are supported.
- b. Encryption can be used.
- c. Track changes can record document history.
- d. Custom formulas, mail merge and other functionality are available.

(10) Challenges:

- a. Can be difficult to link to original assessment documents to confirm grade integrity.
- b. Manual entry of results and copying between files increases the risk of grade errors.
- c. No institutional back-up if the excel file or password is lost.
- d. Burden on course staff to manage assessment records, ensure appropriate access and check for errors and manipulation.

### **Manage Marking with Excel and in Learn.UQ (Blackboard) Grade Centre**

(11) Advantages:

- a. All types of marking and grading enabled.
- b. Custom formulas, mail merge and other functionality are available.
- c. Online records are protected by University passwords and backed up.
- d. ITS provide logging and monitoring of grade centre data.
- e. Marks and grades recorded are managed centrally.

(12) Challenges:

- a. Can be difficult to link to original assessment documents to confirm grade integrity.
- b. Higher administrative overload than using just the grade centre including security of local files.
- c. Manual entry of results and copying between files increases the risk of errors.

## **Section 4 - Roles, Responsibilities and Accountabilities**

(13) Academic and professional staff are responsible for:

- a. Ensuring assessment follows the principles in [Assessment Policy](#).
- b. Ensuring the protection and security of assessment documents and student marks and grades.
- c. Ensuring assessment records are stored and retained in accordance with University policy and Retention and Disposal Schedules.

(14) ITS is responsible for UQ system back-ups.

## **Section 5 - Monitoring, Review and Assurance**

(15) As set out in the [Assessment Procedure](#).

## **Section 6 - Definitions, Terms, Acronyms**

Term	Definition
Blackboard Grade Centre	Provides an area within the Blackboard course to store student marks.
iMark	Online grade book and extensive performance and comparative statistics.
Learn.UQ	The Learning Management System for most University courses.

Term	Definition
Phishing	Describes the use of email and fraudulent web sites to perform a confidence scam so as to steal usernames and passwords, and other valuable information.
Retention and Disposal Schedules	<p>Defines the status, minimum retention periods and consequent disposal actions authorised for specific classes of records. The University is subject to two mandatory retention and disposal schedules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Queensland State Archives - University Sector Retention and Disposal Schedule</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Queensland State Archives - General Retention and Disposal Schedule (GRDS)</a> for Administrative Records</li> </ul>
Turnitin	A software tool that has functions for online assignment submission, text matching, online marking and peer marking.

## Status and Details

<b>Status</b>	Current
<b>Effective Date</b>	20th January 2020
<b>Review Date</b>	20th January 2023
<b>Approval Authority</b>	Director, Academic Services Division and Academic Registrar
<b>Approval Date</b>	20th January 2020
<b>Expiry Date</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Policy Owner</b>	Kathryn Blyth Director, Academic Services Division and Academic Registrar
<b>Enquiries Contact</b>	Academic Services Division