



## **Submission - Review of Assessment, Semester 1, 2020**

July 24, 2020

## **Semester 1 2020 Assessment Review – Casework Issues and Case Studies**

Semester 1, 2020, represents the first wholly online assessment period conducted in the University's history. To learn from the experiences of students and staff, Chancellery (Academic) and the Academic Board have commissioned a review of centrally timetabled, end of Semester 1 assessments. The purpose of the review is to make recommendations for:

- The improvement of online assessments for Semester 2, 2020, and
- The future role of online assessments in student learning.

UMSU welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to reflect critical issues identified by students. We also look forward to the changes that the University will make to improve its approach to assessment for Semester 2 and beyond.

### **Introduction**

The issues identified in this submission are predominantly matters arising through casework presenting to the UMSU Advocacy Service. While a high volume of matters broadly pertaining to Semester 1 assessment have been raised with UMSU, the concerns identified in this submission have been selected because they point to potentially systemic problems likely to have affected a number of students, or because students identified the issues in significant numbers.

Case studies have been generated to illustrate these issues and are drawn directly from students' correspondence with UMSU.

We note too that the majority of these issues were flagged as having a potential impact on students in correspondence with the University prior to the end of Semester 1. This included a meeting with senior University staff and in related email correspondence with those staff.

UMSU's recommendations contained in an email sent on May 5 were that the University should ensure:

- Assessment design that maintains academic integrity without attempting to replicate in person invigilated examinations – it is clear that many of the potential problems are caused by this failure of imagination in alternative assessment – and we note the University's Learning Environments Team shares this view and is able to assist faculties in this area.
- Clear and detailed information on the proposed methodology of end of semester assessment provided as soon as possible – but no later than May 22.
- Opportunities for students to undertake practice assessment on unfamiliar platforms and feedback issues prior to final assessment.
- Proper adherence to equity principles such as AEAs in the design and implementation of final assessment
- General flexibility, trust and latitude overall given the novel circumstances that impact on both assessment design and implementation and student performance.

Subsequently UMSU addressed matter relevant to these recommendations and issues arising from the University's communications with students in an additional email on May 26.

It is apparent that many of the recommendations in the body of this submission echo those made prior to end of semester assessment and remain relevant.

Notwithstanding these recommendations made prior to end of Semester 1 assessment, it would appear that the experience of students during the final assessment period is a reflection of gaps in

implementation of measures consistent with these recommendations. Accordingly, it is apparent that the University was aware of the potential issues associated with online assessment but failed to uniformly put in place sufficient actions to avoid the potential consequences identified by UMSU. While UMSU understands that there are a range of factors at play here, the impacts of the incomplete nature of the University's approach are being felt in a very real way by students – and these impacts will not simply be remedied by a more thorough approach to future online assessment.

UMSU's concerns have been borne out in the exponential increase in demand for support in relation to allegations of academic misconduct and disputes in relation to assessment. In 2019 UMSU was contacted by 108 students in relation to assessment disputes between January 1 – July 24. In 2020, for the same period, this figure has increased by 156% to 277 students. Details of increases in the number of students seeking support in relation to allegations of academic misconduct are provided in the relevant section of this submission.

Read together, and this in this context, it is clear that there have been significant issues for students arising from the conduct of online teaching and assessment in Semester 1.

The realisation of the previously identified risks raises three critical issues:

1. Why the University did not take sufficient action to address issues identified by UMSU prior to the end of semester assessment period in Semester 1, 2020;
2. Whether the University is prepared to take the necessary steps to address these issues comprehensively prior to any future online assessment periods; and,
3. What acknowledgement and amelioration of those impacts the University intends to make for affected students.

As the University began to prepare for end of Semester assessment, UMSU noted that we had experienced a large number of students contacting us expressing anxiety over their first experience of fully online examinations. At that time, we observed that the majority of students contacting us appeared to know next to no details of the planned online assessment methods. In many cases by mid-May those students knew enough to feel worried, but not enough to feel like they knew what to expect. The only certainty many students had was the relative weighting of their assessment tasks and hurdles. Knowing those details but nothing else only exacerbated students' anxiety in many cases.

We have set out the issues against the areas of focus for the review, as requested. However, notwithstanding the specific focus area identified for communication, we note that poor communication with students is a constant theme running across all of these areas. UMSU has raised the problem of poor student communication with the University on numerous occasions and this submission will be no exception.

### **Technical operations**

UMSU approaches this issue from the standpoint that assessment is intended to measure a student's understanding of the content of the subject in which the assessment takes place. The corollary of this is that assessment is not a measure of the student's capacity to navigate technical requirements that have no inherent relationship to that subject matter, or where circumstances outside of a student's control impact the University's ability to measure a student's understanding of course material. At its heart this is an issue of academic integrity, as a measure of a student's mastery of the subject, not their ability to interact with information technology

We would like to address not just the platforms themselves but the approach to accommodating technical and user issues with the platforms. There needs to be consideration of user error as a form of technical issue because students studying in the normal in person teaching and learning environment are not required to have technical proficiency in many of the areas these assessments assumed or required. Consequently, a range of situations have arisen where the student was excluded from flexibility or technical consideration on the basis that they had made the error, or even that it was not possible to determine where the error occurred – user or platform (or staff member).

Broadly the issues students reported include problematic or restrictive design of assessment tasks, file upload/submission difficulties, platform freezes, internet dropouts and low speeds, scanning issues and the use of intrusive proctoring software. All of these issues were raised with the University in May, and our recommendations below align with our pre-emptive recommendations at that time.

#### *Problematic or restrictive design of assessment tasks*

This issue was identified during mid semester tests and was exemplified by assessment that did not allow students to return to questions after they had tried to answer them. This is not the way in person assessment is designed and, consequently, many students experienced this as a major shock that resulted in academic disadvantage. Students advised that their usual practice was to attempt those questions they knew the answer for first and to later go back to those they were less sure about, or that they normally reviewed all answers at the end of an exam prior to finalising them. We note that in the end of semester assessment period this was less common, but some academic divisions persisted with this assessment design.

#### *File upload/submission difficulties*

There were a number of students reporting that they had only discovered there had been an issue with their assessment submission in GradeScope and on Canvas when they received their results and had failed the assessment. In some cases, it appears that the student had uploaded the work as required but there had been a corruption in the process. In other cases, there may have been some user error as a result of unfamiliarity with the process.

This suggests a significant gap in quality assurance with manifest implications for students.

#### *Platform freezes*

Numerous students experienced “freezes” of Canvas, particularly while completing multiple-choice question components of assessment. The freezes could be due to the platform instability or internet connectivity – but either way, it exposes risks with reliance on this platform for strictly timed assessment tasks. Students experiencing the freeze ran out of time or were unable to submit at all.

#### *Use of Intrusive Proctoring Software*

Students generally expressed a sense of invasion of privacy with any invigilated examinations; however, the use of Proctoring software was experienced as the most invasive and off-putting for those students subjected to it.

We note the University position was that such software is not used, and while we acknowledge the requirement for autonomy for academic divisions to make determination in matters of pure academic judgement, this raises a key issue around the implementation of central University “policy” or positions on the use of certain platforms, such as proctoring software ProctorU which was still used in at

least one faculty. If the University felt it was appropriate to make a policy position on this issue, then we question the notion that it should still be a matter for a faculty to determine under the rubric of “academic judgement”.

### *Responsibility and Communication*

A number of students contacted UMSU advising that they had experienced some form of technical issue in relation to some form of technical difficulty, and that they only became aware of this issue when they received their results in relevant subjects. Examples include corrupted file submission and instances where exams were submitted in languages other than English and where the student disputes that they were responsible for this.

Without commenting on the specifics of these individual cases this approach reflects that the University’s position is to assume that students intended to act in ways that are manifestly against their own interests. For example, to accept a corrupted file as a student’s exam submission without contacting the student to address that submission is absurd; it suggests that, in order to achieve a fail, a student would sit an exam and have the technical knowledge required to submit a corrupted file, when the same result could be achieved by simply not sitting the exam.

This approach to student motivation creates an interesting juxtaposition with students’ experience of the University’s approach to Special Consideration. One of the central concerns identified by University staff in response to requests for greater transparency about how determinations are made for application is that students would use this information to “game the system.” Rather than designing processes in response unverified opinions about student motivations the University should engage with students on the assumption that students are acting in good faith.

When the Vice-Chancellor says that students are at the heart of everything the University does, is that what he meant?

Where the University has established systems to support online exams it is also responsible for identifying unusual or irregular events or behaviour in order to ensure that students are not disadvantaged as a result of using University systems in good faith.

### **Case Studies**

The following are students’ reports of the problems they faced, illustrating some of the issues identified.

*“As for Chemistry 1, I had a technical issue as well as miscommunication from the subject coordinator. The exam is split into two sections as well, an online Multiple Choice test, as well as a written section. During the exam, the multiple choice page became unresponsive, and wasn't loading images correctly, I carried on with my exam, and wrote what I could on a piece of paper, to submit later. I decided to focus on the written part to avoid wasting time, and I thought I'd come back in the end to try again, only to find that the exam was submitted for me at 6:15. Not only was the page unresponsive, but the subject coordinator Sonia said that it will be open until 6:45 in one of her zoom lectures - which I have downloaded. I submitted a technical consideration report and they have declined.”*

...

*“I submitted my assignment as required in a PDF. I had checked that the PDF was fine twice before uploading. The PDF remains on my computer and is still fine and able to be opened. However after*

*my results came out, I had failed the subject which was shocking because I had a near perfect score in my mid semester assessment and was looking at an H1. When I wrote to the subject coordinator they said the exam was not marked at all because the PDF I submitted was corrupted. They had tried to recover it but were unable to read it. According to departmental policy, they refused to accept my PDF because I might have worked on it since. Now I have to resit the whole exam. I am so disappointed.”*

...

*“In summary, my alternative method of submitting an assignment, that I spent countless hours working on and stressing about, was labelled 'Did not submit' by the senior tutor and automatically given a zero. Despite previous written advice from my tutor to use 'WeTransfer' to submit an assignment, he never acknowledged or downloaded the assignment to mark it after I sent it via WeTransfer. I have explained this situation to the senior tutor, my tutor and the subject co-coordinator with no response from any of them. I have felt so powerless, even though the outcome of this assignment and subject are so crucial to my academic endeavours, and the complete lack of communication has made me feel like I don't have a voice in a matter that directly concerns me.”*

### **Recommendations**

We acknowledge that technical glitches are inevitable and unavoidable. User error in this first experience of online assessment was also inevitable. However, in future online assessment we make three strong recommendations to mitigate these issues:

1. In respect of both technical errors, internet or platform related and user error – there should be maximum flexibility in accepting late submissions and a presumption that work submitted later due to reported technical difficulties should be marked.
2. User error will be improved if students are given more frequent opportunities for practice exams under the same conditions, as recommended in May.
3. All files uploaded by students are automatically checked to ensure that they are not corrupted or unreadable. Students whose files are identified as corrupted or unreadable should be provided an immediate opportunity to resubmit that file.

### **Procedures**

With respect to the processes and actions pre-, during and post-assessment, the key issues identified through casework have been that:

- In many cases practice exams were not rolled out as promised to students.
- There were also a number of late changes to assessment, including to weighting and hurdles, some of these were addressed and rectified through the intervention of the Academic Registrar, while other similar issues only presented after the examinations had taken place. This could also be classified as a communication issue.
- Post examinations, students from several cohorts were disappointed to find that the standardisation of their results had pushed their marks down significantly from their raw marks. While it is acknowledged that standardisation is permitted under certain circumstances, it

should be based on a benchmark relevant to the examination practice, so scaling marks on the basis of a single examination (and using in person assessment as the comparator) does not seem fair or equitable.

Additionally, we were contacted by a number of students during mid-semester assessment and during end of semester assessment, who advised that Faculties were not implementing alternative exam arrangements (AEAs) that had been recommended by SEDS as part of their Academic Adjustment Plan. This was despite those same AEAs having previously been implemented prior to online assessment. We raised this issue with the University in advance of end-of-semester assessment; however, this did not prevent some faculties flouting the AEAs for final exams.

SEDS had previously advised that Faculty decisions not to implement AEAs were made on the basis of limitations inherent in online platforms rather than on an *academic* basis. That is – where students who had AEAs such as rest breaks recommended (and previously implemented) some faculties were now advising that they would not be permitted because the online platform could not support the function of ensuring that rest breaks were used as rest breaks, as opposed to offering more time to complete a timed assessment.

That resulted in an undesirable situation where students were forced to apply for special consideration to try to ameliorate the equity issues. However special consideration, with its strict criteria and very limited outcomes is not an equitable method to accommodate these adjustments.

This stands in stark contrast with the experience of those students who completed assessment but were academically disadvantaged as a result of technical issues of limitations.

An additional issue raised by UMSU prior to end-of-semester assessment related to health and safety considerations associated with online assessment. Many students reported exacerbations or development of health problems due to online study and examination experience. Eye strain, migraines, neck and back problems were all reported. These have health and safety implications for the University – and need to be addressed in assessment design and approach to appropriate adjustments for students.

### **Case Studies**

*“For Calculus 2, the student handbook outlines that there are two assessments which are; weekly assignments and an end of year exam worth 80%. This exam is a hurdle and includes a multiple choice and written component. This semester however, due to COVID-19, the exam was split into two separate sections, a multiple choice, and written section, both of which became a hurdle requirement. From what I understand, I passed the subject overall, and cleared the hurdle for the Multiple choice, however I failed to pass the hurdle for the written section. According to the subject booklet, the written component should not be a hurdle on its own, and the multiple choice should be taken into account as well, are they allowed to add two hurdles, when previously there was only one?”*

...

*“For FNCE30011 the lecturer said that we had performed well and the average grade was 76, with 39% of people achieving a H1. And because this was a better performance than the past, he needed to scale us down by 9 marks for our final exam. He revealed this to us as many students had contacted him as they had a much lower grade than they expected. However, this subject is new and was only introduced last year for one semester, 2019 Semester 2 (<https://handbook.unimelb.edu.au/2019/subjects/fnce30011>) so I do not think that one semester of results is a big enough sample size for the lecturer to state that we performed much better than*

*the last cohort. And I personally believe that if scaling us down is appropriate, that he should not scale us down by so much."*

### **Recommendations**

4. Faculties should not have a right of veto over previously approved AEAS on the basis of technological limitations. Implementation of AEAs is an academic judgement made in respect of the student's need for accommodation and should not be removed.
5. Details of examinations, including hurdles and weighting must be communicated in conformity with policy and late changes should only be permitted where there is timely communication. Students use these details in order to plan their study effectively, and changes announced during or post SWOTVAC should not be allowed.
6. Standardisation of subject grades should be done having regard to a reasonable sample and benchmarked against online assessment.

### **Communications**

Issues related to the University's communication to students, as well as to and between staff is a recurrent theme throughout all assessment related matters.

There were a number of specific problems identified by students in terms of communication from and to University staff. It ranged from too much communication during exams, to no communication during semester or in feedback post assessment.

In other cases, students had understood that they were not allowed to access emails during an exam, and then important clarifications or changes to the duration of the exam, the submission time or other significant details, were announced via email and students who complied with the requirement not to access email were unaware revised information, and were disadvantaged as a result.

Finally, during Semester 1 UMSU had raised the problem of students living in circumstances inappropriate to sitting examinations at home, and in response, alternative arrangements were made available. Despite the fact the University had made appropriate arrangements for students unable to effectively complete assessment at home, we were contacted post assessment by a number of students who were unaware of this possibility and, consequently, had attempted examinations in inappropriate conditions to their academic detriment. This would suggest that there may be an issue relating to the cut through on the University's communications regarding these possible alternative arrangements.

### **Case Studies**

*"I felt like an exam was poorly run and hence, I failed the subject due to failing the exam. The subject coordinator sent over 5 emails during the exam which took up my time and lost my train of thought when answering questions. I also felt like the exam conditions were not explained very well and that the whole cohort should have been compensated or at least contacted after the exam with an apology over what had happened."*

...

*"It has now been 11 days since I emailed the senior tutor, my tutor and the subject co-coordinator and I am yet to receive a response from any of them. I also emailed my tutor again three days ago"*

*and have not received a reply from him, which is unusual as both he and the senior tutor of the subject are extremely responsive during other busy periods.*

*This complete lack of communication for almost two weeks now has left me feeling extremely anxious every day about the fate of my course progression (as this subject is a core subject for my Architecture major) and quite powerless. I feel as though the valid explanation I provided both my tutor and the senior tutor with, has been ignored and no communication or support was offered after the email telling me my assignment was marked a zero was sent. It has been extremely difficult trying to plan for every possible outcome of this situation and the implications of each of these scenarios for my future subjects with no communication at all from anyone teaching the subject.”*

...

*“I feel it would be the student body’s best interest for the university to fully take out the hurdle requirement around exams as people may be undergoing circumstances that invoke an impossible environment to perform during a 3-4 hour exam such as venue or ability to concentrate. During my exam, I took my exams at home and it was not a conducive venue at all to take a 3-4 hour exam as I also live with 7 other people, and so this affected my ability to concentrate.”*

### **Recommendations**

7. The University should review its communications with students to reflect the Vice-Chancellor’s position: that students are at the heart of everything the University does. The interests of students should be central to the University’s approach to its communications with students. These communications should be proactive, consistent, empathetic, regular, defensible and reliable; students receiving communications from the University should be able to clearly understand the nature of a decision that is being communicated, how it will affect them, why the decision was made and that they will be able to rely upon the information that is communicated to them.
8. The University’s communications with students need to reflect students’ experiences of the pandemic and the associated shift to remote learning – and the underlying stress and anxiety that this causes.
9. The University should develop and implement clear protocols for staff communication with students that includes:
  - a. Guidelines for communications with students about changes to assessment
  - b. Timelines for responses to students
  - c. Support for University staff to ensure students are provided with accurate information fit for their circumstances

### **Training and support**

There is a clear requirement for a major focus on both the development of staff capability for online assessment design and delivery, and support for staff and students before and during the assessment period. Many students reported assessment design which was haphazard or did not align well with the teaching and learning during semester.

There is also clearly a link between the effectiveness of the transition to online subject delivery and how adequately students were prepared students for assessment. UMSU notes that many students have had positive experiences of online course delivery and assessment; however, we have seen a significant rise in students presenting with assessment disputes claiming the teaching online during

semester, recycling of previous year's recorded lectures and few chances at interaction with staff meant that they were ill-prepared for the final exam. In cases where almost the entire cohort reports this, we believe that is credible evidence of poor fit between teaching and assessment.

The requirement to shift to online assessment necessarily involved a lack of familiarity with technology, limitations of platforms and general inexperience for both examiners and students which have impacted students' experience of this assessment.

UMSU is concerned, however, that the impact of this lack of experience is not felt equally. We note that when students make errors due to unfamiliarity or technical competence, they generally suffer the consequences, whereas the inexperience of staff in these areas also tends to manifest in a disadvantageous outcome for students.

This is analogous to the issues of system failures and corrupted files – students bear the brunt of the impact of deficiencies in the implementation of activities that are the University's responsibility.

### ***Recommendations***

10. That the University ensure that academic staff responsible for the design of assessment are provided with sufficient training and support to ensure that assessment tasks are aligned with curriculum, noting the impact of online delivery on teaching and learning.

11. That the University ensure that the burden of failure of systems outside of students' control is not disproportionately borne by students.

### **Academic integrity**

The most notable aspect of academic integrity as an issue this semester is manifest in the unprecedented number of allegations being raised against students. In some subjects it appears that almost the entire cohort had been issued an allegation or caution. As of July 17, the Advocacy Service had seen 70 cases plagiarism (almost doubled compared with 40 cases in same period 2019) 36 of collusion (20 cases in 2019) 30 exam misconduct matters (twice the number with 15 in 2019).

Overall, this is an increase in presentations of 81% (136 in 2020 compared with 75 in 2019) over the same period last year. It is reasonable to assume that there is a link between the shift to online assessment and the almost doubling of rates of alleged academic misconduct.

In the period July 18 – July 24 an additional 72 students have contacted UMSU seeking support in relation to allegations of academic misconduct. This suggests that the increase in academic misconduct allegations is exponential.

A large proportion of academic integrity breaches involved quizzes, where students were able to chat (collusion cases) and open book examinations where students were unaware that copying and pasting from open book sources could lead to an allegation of plagiarism.

While UMSU understands the need for robust measures to ensure academic integrity, it is important to view academic integrity in a holistic manner and not just through the lens of student behaviour – this behaviour is also a reflection of the actions the University has taken, or not taken, prior to assessment tasks being completed.

In addressing increased rates of academic misconduct, the University should give due regard to:

- The impact of the pandemic on students and the link between this and increased rates of potential academic misconduct. Students are reporting higher levels of stress and anxiety, associated with the pandemic and the experience of remote learning.
- Students report a level of stress and anxiety associated with complying with the technical requirements of online assessment.
- Students report varied of experience of the University's communications with them about and during assessment tasks.

The cumulative effect of increased levels of stress and anxiety directly related to assessment outcomes is likely to be a significant component of increased rates of alleged academic misconduct.

Lack of familiarity with the conventions expected in online assessment, such as use of chat rooms, as well as unfamiliarity with open book examination requirements must also be taken into consideration in respect of the increase in allegations of misconduct.

Additionally, UMSU notes that the University's procedures for addressing instances of academic misconduct were not drafted with wholly online assessment in mind. In this context and in where there is an apparent link between the increase in the number of academic misconduct allegations and the fact that assessment has been conducted online, the application of these procedures needs to be managed in a way that acknowledges this unanticipated reality.

Other parts of this submission have clearly identified actions the University should take that would have the effect of creating conditions that are less conducive to students engaging in academic misconduct. Improvements in communications, more access to practice assessment in online exam conditions, technical operations and procedures should all be seen as critical to supporting academic integrity.

UMSU is also concerned that increased volumes of allegations of academic misconduct make it more likely that academic divisions will implement processes for addressing these allegations that do not sit within existing policy frameworks and have the potential to adversely impact students – this has been the case in Biosciences where students have been issued summary warnings and put on an internal misconduct list without a chance to defend the allegation.

Finally, we are also aware of faculty-based misconduct panels convened in the absence of direct evidence of wrongdoing, effectively reversing the burden of proof, requiring students to establish that they did not engage in academic misconduct.

### ***Recommendations***

12. The University ensures that students in all subjects are provide with practice examinations for all subjects with online exam components.
13. That the University develops and implements academic integrity modules designed specifically to support students to meet the requirements of open book and online examinations.

### **Quality assurance**

The contents of this submission suggest that the conduct of assessment was the culmination of a process that has significant implications for quality assurance. This needs to be understood in the context of the

connection between online course delivery and online assessment; that online assessment cannot be seen as unrelated to online delivery.

This is reflected in the feedback UMSU has received from students where the connection is drawn between the quality of online course delivery and the nature of students' experience of online assessment.

The need for significant scaling adjustments in certain subjects is also suggestive of issues in quality assurance around course delivery that are manifested in assessment outcomes. By accepting scaling adjustments across cohorts in this way there is an implied acceptance that the need for scaling was entirely related to student performance. UMSU argues that where significant scaling across a cohort of students is required this suggests that the issue to be addressed is more likely to relate to a lack of continuity between teaching and assessment, and that this should be investigated. Before Boards of Examiners authorise scaling of this type, there should be greater interrogation of why such scaling is being considered, and consideration given to alternative remedies that do not disadvantage students.

Broadly speaking this reflects the reactive approach that the University has taken to addressing the impacts of the pandemic on students. This is evidenced by the University's response to issues like WAM calculations, educational quality and Special Consideration – the clear message that was sent to students by these responses was that while there was a transition to online delivery neither the transition to online delivery nor the quality of online delivery should have any impact on students' capacity to complete assessment requirements. That once this transition had been completed that, from a teaching and learning perspective, things were pretty much business as usual.

The University has demonstrated this approach in its consistent refusal to engage with the substance of student complaints about the quality of their educational experience.

The misconceived notion that things are "business as usual" is also reflected in the approach to Special Consideration that denied that the transition to online learning should be a basis for any adjustment to students, and the ongoing approach that requires students who are experiencing almost universally encountered impacts of the pandemic to nevertheless demonstrate that they are adversely affected.

Rather than maintaining this narrow approach – one that appears to be rooted in an institutional culture of distrust of students – the University's approach to assessment should be based on an acknowledgement of the impacts on students of living through a pandemic. To that end the University should embrace approaches that proactively address the experiences of students.

The University's current approach appears to be based on a narrowly construed concern about academic misconduct that is referred to as "academic integrity". While UMSU acknowledges the importance of maintaining the integrity of its educational experience and qualifications and its centrality of these to quality assurance, we submit that the notion of academic integrity is not fixed and needs to be considered in the context in which teaching, learning and assessment all occur.

If one of the purposes of academic integrity is to ensure that assessment outcomes are an accurate and untainted reflection of students' engagement with course material, then that the needs to be considered in the context in which students engage with that course material.

The feedback from students suggests that Semester 1 has been anything but business as usual for teaching and learning. If the University's approach to academic integrity is subject to marginal change then this should be on the basis of a demonstrable continuity between the conditions of teaching and learning prior to and during the pandemic.

Consistent with the approaches of both government and non-government organisations to the impact of the pandemic on the entire community, this University should act on the basis of a presumption that students are experiencing some form of adverse impact as a result of the pandemic. This should include:

- Extending Semester 1 WAM arrangements to include:
  - Semester 2 subjects
  - Winter intensives
  - Year-long subjects
- Applying greater flexibility for students around compliance with assessment requirements
- Implement a presumption of Special Consideration by accepting that for many students the simple fact of the pandemic is a cause of the impacts Special Consideration is intended to mitigate.

### ***Recommendations***

14. That the University shift to a proactive approach in responding to students' experience of the pandemic – this requires acting on the assumption that there will be an impact rather than expecting students to consistently and repeatedly demonstrate that impact.
15. That the University implement greater flexibility for students in compliance with assessment requirements that reflect the nature of students' experience of the pandemic.
16. That the University introduce a specific process for students to raise issues of educational quality associated with online delivery, that includes the capacity for rapid action and response.

## Summary of Recommendations

1. In respect of both technical errors, internet or platform related and user error – there should be maximum flexibility in accepting late submissions and a presumption that work submitted later due to reported technical difficulties should be marked.
2. User error will be improved if students are given more frequent opportunities for practice exams under the same conditions, as recommended in May.
3. All files uploaded by students are automatically checked to ensure that they are not corrupted or unreadable. Students whose files are identified as corrupted or unreadable should be provided an immediate opportunity to resubmit that file.
4. Faculties should not have a right of veto over previously approved AEAS on the basis of technological limitations. Implementation of AEAs is an academic judgement made in respect of the student's need for accommodation and should not be removed.
5. Details of examinations, including hurdles and weighting must be communicated in conformity with policy and late changes should only be permitted where there is timely communication. Students use these details in order to plan their study effectively, and changes announced during or post SWOTVAC should not be allowed.
6. Standardisation of subject grades should be done having regard to a reasonable sample and benchmarked against online assessment.
7. The University should review its communications with students to reflect the Vice-Chancellor's position: that students are at the heart of everything the University does. The interests of students should be central to the University's approach to its communications with students. These communications should be proactive, consistent, empathetic, regular, defensible and reliable; students receiving communications from the University should be able to clearly understand the nature of a decision that is being communicated, how it will affect them, why the decision was made and that they will be able to rely upon the information that is communicated to them.
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  - f. Support for University staff to ensure students are provided with accurate information fit for their circumstances
10. That the University ensure that academic staff responsible for the design of assessment are provided with sufficient training and support to ensure that assessment tasks are aligned with curriculum, noting the impact of online delivery on teaching and learning.

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12. The University ensures that students in all subjects are provide with practice examinations for all subjects with online exam components.
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15. That the University implement greater flexibility for students in compliance with assessment requirements that reflect the nature of students' experience of the pandemic.
16. That the University introduce a specific process for students to raise issues of educational quality associated with online delivery, that includes the capacity for rapid action and response.

