

**FOR INFORMATION**

**PUBLIC**

**OPEN SESSION**

**TO:** UTSC Academic Affairs Committee

**SPONSOR:** Prof. Karin Ruhlandt, Vice-Principal, Academic and Dean  
**CONTACT INFO:** [vpdean.utsc@utoronto.ca](mailto:vpdean.utsc@utoronto.ca)

**PRESENTER:** Prof. Katherine R. Larson, Vice-Dean Teaching, Learning & Undergraduate Programs  
**CONTACT INFO:** [vdundergrad.utsc@utoronto.ca](mailto:vdundergrad.utsc@utoronto.ca)

**DATE:** April 30, 2025 for May 7, 2025

**AGENDA ITEM:** 2

**ITEM IDENTIFICATION:**

Changes to Academic Handbook: Clarifying Assessment Practices to Reflect Overall Student Performance in Courses

**JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:**

The UTSC Academic Affairs Committee (AAC) “is concerned with matters affecting the teaching, learning, and research functions of the Campus” (*AAC Terms of Reference*, Section 4). Under Section 5.7 of the *AAC Terms of Reference*, the Committee receives annually from its assessors, reports on matters within its areas of responsibility, including statements of current issues, opportunities and problems, and recommendations for changes in policies, plans or priorities that would address such issues. Furthermore, the Committee receives annually, from the appropriate administrators, reports on services within its areas of responsibility, including research.

**GOVERNANCE PATH:**

1. UTSC Academic Affairs Committee [For Information]: May 7, 2025

**PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:**

No previous action in governance has been taken on this item.

**HIGHLIGHTS:**

As a result of student petitions, the Dean’s Office has become aware of instances where students’ final grades in courses were dependent on a single assessment. This has had a particular impact on first-year and graduating students. Relevant sections in the UTSC Academic Handbook have been updated to

clarify the expectation that final grades should be determined on the basis of students' overall performance in a course and to provide guidance for faculty when finalizing syllabi. These updates bring the handbook into clearer alignment with the tri-campus University of Toronto [Assessment and Grading Practices Policy](#).

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

For information.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

There are no net implications to the campus operating budget.

## **DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED:**

UTSC Academic Handbook for Faculty and Staff (2024-2025): <https://www.utoronto.ca/academic-handbook/>

## Section 7 (Assessing Your Students)

(New text and edits highlighted.)

This section describes the policies and best practices for administering term tests and final examinations at UTSC, which instructors will need to understand in order to implement their course plans (see [Section 5](#)); see also [Section 8 Grading Practices](#). To ensure that students have the opportunity to be assessed across multiple assignments and receive a grade that reflects their overall performance in a course, faculty are discouraged from making a passing grade on a single assessment (for instance, the final exam or a midterm) a condition for passing the course. This is especially important in first-year courses. A passing grade on assessments that involve group work should also not normally be considered a requirement for passing a course. Faculty may submit requests for exemption on pedagogical grounds to their department Chair. Expectations regarding assessments should be clearly outlined on the syllabus.

### 7.1 Term Tests

The administration of term tests is the responsibility of the academic units. Instructors may schedule term tests in regular class periods, or request a time outside of class. In the event that term tests are to be scheduled outside regular class meetings, faculty and/or the departmental office are responsible for submitting scheduling requests to the Office of the Registrar by the first day of classes. The Office of the Registrar will make the necessary arrangements for any term tests that are scheduled outside of class.

The Office of the Registrar produces the term test schedule by the end of the second week of classes, enabling instructors to announce test dates to students promptly after the term begins. Priority for such scheduling is given to multi-section courses with large enrolments.

Course instructors must ensure to follow these regulations:

1. Unless a change is due to an exceptional circumstance (e.g. power outage or weather closure), any change to the date of a term test must be made at least 2 weeks in advance of the new proposed date, and must have the consent of the majority of the students present at the regular class where the change is presented (having first provided notice at the regularly-scheduled class meeting prior to the one at which the change is presented); faculty and/or the departmental office should notify the Office of the Registrar of any changes to the term test schedule;
2. No test worth more than 10% of the final grade may be given in the last two weeks of a term; this applies only to originally scheduled tests, and not to make-up tests;
3. No test, other than those scheduled by the Office of the Registrar, may be given, and no other assignment can be due, during the Study Breaks, including Reading Week;
4. If students must pass the midterm to pass the course, this must be explicitly stated in the course syllabus; and
5. The relative value of each part of a term test must be indicated to the student, and for written examinations the value must be indicated on the test paper.

## 7.6 Examinations and Final Assessments

The [University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy](#) (January 2020) outlines the expectation that for most undergraduate courses at the University of Toronto that meet regularly as a class, a final examination conducted formally under University auspices and worth at least one-third of the final grade will be scheduled, except where exemptions have been approved (see section [7.8](#) below).

For graduate courses, there is no requirement for a final examination; however, where examinations are used, the relative value of each part of an examination should be indicated to the student, and the same examination protocols apply as in undergraduate courses.

Examinations are a valuable pedagogical tool for many disciplines, but UTSC also recognizes that departments are increasingly moving towards a broader range of modalities and pedagogical formats for final assessments. Exploration of alternate modes of final assessment is encouraged, and course instructors considering alternatives to a final examination should take into account principles of inclusive course design: see [5.1-5.3 Planning Your Courses](#) for relevant resources and guidelines, and [7.8](#) for alternative examination format regulations.

For courses where a final examination will be taking place, note the following regulations:

- Students must be told the relative value of each part of an examination and, in the case of a written examination, the value must be indicated on the examination paper;
- ~~If students must pass the final examination in order to pass the course, this must be explicitly noted in the course syllabus/outline;~~
- By default, examinations should be scheduled as in-person assessments; online assessment is an option in cases where it is of pedagogical value (see [section 7.7](#) below);
- Examinations can also be given in take-home format, with the submission date listed in the examination schedule.

## Section 8 (Grading Practices)

### 8.1 Principles of Grading

The academic standards for a course should be appropriate to the discipline and to the level of the course. If you are teaching an existing course for the first time, you should consult with your Department Chair and with previous instructors. It may be helpful also to look at past assignments and tests to get a sense of what an appropriate standard might be. If your grades are to effectively assess what students have learned they must be assigned in a manner that is thoughtful and fair. They should be closely tied to the learning objectives set out in the course syllabus.

When grading assignments or tests, it is essential that your grading should be reasonable and consistent. If a student inquires about their grade you will then be able to explain with confidence how you arrived at your assessment.

As stated in Section 7, to ensure that students have the opportunity to be assessed across multiple assignments and receive a grade that reflects their overall performance in a course, faculty are discouraged from making a passing grade on a single assessment (for instance, the final exam or a midterm) a condition for passing the course. This is especially important in first-year courses. A passing grade on assessments that involve group work should also not normally be considered a requirement for passing a course. Faculty may submit requests for exemption on pedagogical grounds to their department Chair. Expectations regarding assessments should be clearly outlined on the syllabus.