Principles for Assessing Learning Outcomes of Degree Students at HSE University

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HSE University teachers, including guest lecturers, practitioners and researchers, involved in the academic process with degree students, must adhere to the following basic principles, when designing courses, selecting instructional materials, preparing assessment materials and grading learning outcomes:

1. **Focus on a differentiated approach** to assessments, which shall be applied in terms of course content, processes and products (final results);

2. **The objectivity of assessment**, which builds upon developed criteria and strict subsequent adherence thereto. Criteria should be realistic, achievable, precise and unambiguous for both students and teachers;

3. **Transparency of assessment**, i.e., samples of assignments (assessable learning outcomes) and set criteria for their assessment are spelled out and known prior to the start of courses;

4. **Cumulative grading**, whereby teachers (experts, board members) shall assess **students' achievements** and not the extent to which their results fail to conform to particular reference points;

5. Assessments bear a **relative aspect**, whereby learners' achievements shall be assessed and differentiated against **the learning results set and specified in a course syllabus** and/or external professional standards, international examinations, etc.;

6. A tendency to award **progressively higher or lower grades** must be ruled out.

General Rules for Assessing Student Learning Outcomes

Each assessment element specified in a course syllabus should include assessment criteria. With this in mind, the HSE University Syllabus Builder features a field for respective criteria.

The assessment criteria shall offer a specific grading scale for assessing student academic success along with projections of what students should be able to demonstrate in their final work, presentations or tests. This is not strictly required to have assessment criteria tied to a grading scale. However, it is important to identify each expected learning outcome to be checked through a respective assessment element: (i.e., how a learner knows, applies, solves, builds, evaluates, constructs, demonstrates, etc.)

At the school/faculty level, it is recommended to provide teachers, at their and other subdivisions, with a sample of well-rounded assessment criteria, as recorded in a syllabus (1-5).

The rules for grading student learning outcomes may be applied to a broader or narrower range of documentation:

- unified generalized guidelines at the school level for all syllabi implemented by all teachers or for all syllabi for a specific type of courses (*e.g., for theoretical courses, for practical courses, for advanced courses, for courses without prerequisites, etc.);*
- unified generalized guidelines for a single syllabus with respect to a all assessment elements specified therein;
- designated guidelines for each assessment element under a given syllabus; in such instances, the rules and criteria for assessment may coincide.

General Rules for Assessing Student Learning Outcomes

For the purpose of averting grade inflation, the following recommendations may apply to granting grades in the “excellent” band:

Grades of **9** and **10** can be awarded to students, who have, proactively, gone above and beyond their course syllabus and excelled at it, e.g., have studied additional materials and created products based thereupon, which are useful to the instructor and fellow students and considered significant by the instructor, while also displaying high-quality critical and creative thinking skills; solved complex and advanced assignments; proposed original and innovative solutions, while also demonstrating a higher level of mastery of expected learning outcomes when assessed under certain assessment elements or remarkable mastery beyond the scope of the entire given course.

This rule may be applied to assessment elements within a course: to each or several.

Students’ full high-quality mastering of a given course syllabus (all teacher’s requirements have been met by the student in full order as they were specified in the syllabus) shall be graded as “Excellent” – **8** points.

Teachers can, but are not obliged to, propose an extra/additional assignment to each or several assessment elements, or describe the terms when such an element can be assessed at a grade higher than **8** points.

> This rule may be applied to calculations of grades for an interim assessment for a course: teachers under a course syllabus may describe any additional (or differing quality-wise) student activities that can result in a grade over **8** points.

Guidelines for awarding grades on a 10-point and 100-point scale (cognitive skills)

“Unsatisfactory” grade

0 points (0%)	Level	1 point (1-19%)	2-3 points (20-39%)
Student failed to start on an assessment element: submitted written work without answers or completed assignments; did not answer questions to verbal test questions; in other cases, whereby the student has not provided any answers	Recognition and understanding (declarative knowledge – knowing ‘what’)	Unrelated elements of technical information; complete lack of structure in learner’s declarative knowledge	Significant gaps in technical knowledge and fragmented, unstructured declarative knowledge
		Weak understanding of the subject, incorrect interpretation or lack of logical approaches in student’s explanations	Weak understanding of the subject, major mistakes in interpretation of individual elements without recognition of the confines of the given field of knowledge
Identified academic misconduct, such as copying works or using unauthorized materials when preparing verbal answers; using cheat sheets and/or hints during verbal tests; double submission of written works; plagiarism; committing forgeries in written and verbal works; fabrication of data and outcomes	Explicit application and analysis (procedural knowledge – knowing ‘how’)	Vague understanding of existing methods and analytical techniques	Ability to describe the option of applying certain methods and analytical approaches
		Weak analytical abilities or flawed argumentation	Beginner analytical abilities and unconvincing argumentation
	Implicit application and critical thinking (research component)	Lack of independence in thinking processes, limited ability to reproduce the structure of one’s own body of knowledge and piece various blocks of a learner’s own knowledge together	Beginner level of independent thinking, ability to partially or erroneously reproduce the structure of one’s own body of knowledge
		Expression of assumptions regarding possible problems in ongoing research and outlining approaches to their solution	Ability to identify problems in current research and describe possible approaches to rectifying such issues

Guidelines for awarding grades on a 10-point and 100-point scale (cognitive skills)

“Satisfactory” and “Good” grades

Levels	4-5 points (40-54%) – satisfactory	6 points (55-59%) – good	7 points (60-79%) – good
Recognition and understanding (declarative knowledge – knowing ‘what’)	Possession of incomplete, inaccurate and often erroneous technical information and poorly structured declarative knowledge, partial recognition of respective blocks of knowledge and interrelation therein	Full, but not in-depth possession of technical knowledge strictly within the framework of a syllabus, some inaccuracies within the structure of demonstrated declarative knowledge, minor mistakes with respect to specific blocks of knowledge and related interconnections	Full and in-depth possession of technical information, allowing for minor inaccuracies in the structuring of declarative knowledge under a syllabus
	Understanding key aspects of a subject within the framework of a syllabus without recognition of the core extent of the field of knowledge	General understanding of a syllabus content, while demonstrating an approximate understanding of the general parameters of the field of knowledge	Excellent understanding of the subject under the syllabus, including the extent of a given field of knowledge
Explicit application and analysis (procedural knowledge – knowing ‘how’)	Ability to apply a limited spectrum of standard methods and analytical approaches, although with significant mistakes	Ability to apply a full spectrum of methods and analytical approaches, allowing for minimal mistakes	Ability to apply a full spectrum of methods and analytical approaches, allowing for minor mistakes
	Ability to carry out basic analysis and demonstrate weak evidence-based argumentation	Ability to carry out complex analysis and demonstrate robust evidence-based argumentation	Ability to carry out complex analysis and demonstrate robust evidence-based argumentation
Implicit application and critical thinking (research component)	Sufficient ability to think independently, ability to piece together individual blocks of one’s own knowledge	Ability to independently reproduce the structure (classify) and expand one’s own knowledge	Excellent level of independent thinking, ability to independently synthesize new knowledge
	Ability to formulate research questions, describe possible approaches to finding solutions, juxtaposing alternatives	Ability to formulate research questions and find solutions thereto, allowing for individual inaccuracies, as well as assess critically alternative approaches	Ability to formulate research queries, solve set tasks and critically assess possible alternative solutions without error

Guidelines for awarding grades on a 10-point and 100-point scale (cognitive skills)

“Excellent” grade

Levels	8 points (80-89%)	9-10 points (90-100%)
Recognition and understanding (declarative knowledge – knowing ‘what’)	Wide range of exact/technical information and precise, structured declarative knowledge within the confines of the syllabus	The depth of knowledge of exact/technical information significantly exceeds that specified by a course syllabus, with the knowledge acquired through independent structuring of declarative knowledge, e.g., gained from further reading
	In-depth understanding of a subject within the confines of the syllabus, including precise recognition of the extent of the field of knowledge	Original interpretation of learned materials, demonstrating in-depth comprehension of the given subject, well above the criteria set by the syllabus, e.g., owing to the study of additional resources
Explicit application and analysis (procedural knowledge – knowing ‘how’)	Able to select and effectively apply suitable methods and analytical approaches learned as per the syllabus	Ability to effectively apply contemporary methods and analytical techniques; demonstrate flexible procedural knowledge beyond the confines of the syllabus; find solutions to tasks outside of the syllabus upon one’s own initiative
	Excellent analytical skills and multifaceted and robust evidence-based argumentation	Excellent analytical abilities and inventive, unassailable evidence-based argumentation; ability to generate quality results during studies under a course that are suitable for printing in original research-based/applied works; self-directed and innovative work outside of the confines of a given course
Implicit application and critical thinking (research component)	High level of independence of thinking, ability to synthesize new knowledge that may bear social importance	Excellent range of original thinking, ability to generate new areas of knowledge
	Ability to formulate pressing research questions, as well as find optimal solutions and critically assess possible alternative approaches to finding solutions	High level of ability to pose unique research questions, as well as identify innovative solutions while critically assessing them

Useful Links

HSE Academic Handbook

https://www.hse.ru/en/studyspravka/

Regulations on Course Syllabi for Bachelor's, Specialist, and Master's Degree Programmes at HSE University

https://www.hse.ru/en/docs/314115111.html

Regulations for Interim and Ongoing Assessments of Students at HSE University

https://www.hse.ru/en/docs/559556402.html