

Guidance on the use of Assessment Confirmation Checks

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This guidance note is intended to provide information on assessment 'confirmation checks', specifically when, why and how they should be used. Recommended processes are identified, and feedback on potential improvements is welcomed.

1. What is an assessment confirmation check?

An assessment confirmation check is a process designed to provide confidence that a student is appropriately knowledgeable with respect to the work that they have submitted.

2. Why would a confirmation check be used?

A confirmation check would be used in situations where the authenticity of submitted work is assured as part of routine practice for that unit, or where there is doubt over a particular student submission. This may occur:

1. As a result of [exceptional circumstances in assessment](#) situations. For example, some students located in China are unable to use Curtin's remote invigilation system. Therefore, in certain situations a staff member may choose to allow the student to sit a test without using the remote invigilation system. The staff member would then schedule an assessment confirmation check with the student to ask the student questions about their submitted assessment that allow the staff member to ensure that the test was completed by the student.
2. To provide assurance that a student did not use contract cheating, or assignment help website services to complete an assessment task.
3. To provide assurance that new technologies such as generative artificial intelligence (Gen-AI) tools were not inappropriately used in an assessment task.

The Assessing Student Work Procedure (ASPM p13) stipulates that:

2.7 The Unit Coordinator will identify potential threats to assessment integrity and security, and will implement any mitigating strategies required.

*2.5 Staff will take reasonable steps to ensure the authenticity of students' work. **Such steps may involve submission through Turnitin, use of TokenDiff, confirmation checks, or other similar processes consistent with the discipline.***

3. When can a confirmation check be used?

A Unit Coordinator can initiate a confirmation check on student work at any point they feel it is required. Full information about this can be found in the Assessing Student Work Procedure ASPM p13:

2.5.1 The Unit Coordinator may initiate a confirmation check on student(s) work at any point. The Course Coordinator/Lead, Head of School or relevant teaching area, Global Pro Vice-Chancellor or Academic Registrar may also require the Unit Coordinator to conduct a confirmation check(s) as necessary. Where the Global Pro Vice-Chancellor or Academic Registrar require the confirmation check, the relevant Head of School will be notified.

4. What is the process for a confirmation check?

A confirmation check generally involves a member of staff discussing a student's work with them, to confirm that the student is conversant with their submission.

The recommended process is:

- i. Advise students in advance that confirmation checks may be used and explain what it is - and what it is not.
 - a. Ideally, information on the use of confirmation checks should be added to the unit outline to ensure that all students are aware that it may be used within the unit or for a particular assessment task. Clarify whether the process will be used for the whole cohort or a sampled selection.
 - b. Note that if this information has *not* been added to the unit outline, assessment confirmation checks can still be used as per the ASPM p.13 clause 2.5.1 which states *"The Unit Coordinator may initiate a confirmation check on student(s) work at any point."*
- ii. Ensure that the confirmation check happens as soon as possible after the assessment and ideally within 7 days of the assessment. Memory decays rapidly, and a confirmation check that occurs too long after the assessment will be unreliable.
- iii. Ensure that the student is advised of the material to be discussed beforehand and that they have a copy of the work at the start of the confirmation check. Reassure the student that the purpose is not to 'catch them out' and that it is fully expected that the student will not always be able to remember details of their responses (even if they got the question right!) Establish a friendly rapport and conduct the confirmation check with the minimum of formality.
- iv. Generally, a confirmation check would need no longer than 10 minutes. Ask questions sampled from across the assessment task. Open-ended questions focusing on process are helpful here: e.g. 'Why did you select this answer?' There is no need to go through the whole assessment task. You should conclude the check as soon as you are satisfied that it is the student's own work.
- v. If at any point during a confirmation check misconduct is suspected, the confirmation check should be stopped, and the processes set out in Statute 10 and the Academic Misconduct Rules should be followed.
- vi. Provide the results back to the student as soon as possible and ideally within 7 days. If there are no issues of concern, it is helpful to give that feedback immediately at the conclusion of the check. If you are unsure, contact the Office of the Academic Registrar for advice.

5. When is an assessment confirmation check appropriate?

The use of a confirmation check may be appropriate for a range of different assessment situations including, but not limited to:

Example 1: Invigilated examination changed to an open book assessment completed over an extended period of time.

- Here, the mitigating strategy (invigilation) has been lost, and a confirmation check then becomes a method whereby academic integrity can be maintained.
- In this situation, an alternative method could be to use Curtin's IRIS remote invigilation system to invigilate the open book assessment. There is no need to use a confirmation check if an assessment is invigilated.

Example 2: Suspicion of use of contract cheating services or inappropriate use of generative artificial intelligence (Gen-AI) tools.

- If a student submits work that is remarkably different to work that has previously been submitted or known capability level and you question the authenticity of the work, it may be appropriate to conduct a confirmation check.

6. What a confirmation check is NOT supposed to be:

A confirmation check is **not** an examination (or re-examination) of the student's work. A confirmation check seeks to only confirm that it is the student's own work. Confirmation checks are not part of the grading process and should not be used to vary a student's marks.

A confirmation check is **not** intended to be an alternative to the processes set out in Statute 10 and the Academic Misconduct Rules. Whenever there are reasonable grounds to suspect that misconduct has occurred, the correct response is to report the matter, not to initiate a confirmation check.

7. Why has Curtin adopted confirmation checks?

Confirmation checks are valuable because they allow Curtin to maintain academic integrity standards despite required changes to conventional assessment practices prompted by the widespread availability of contract cheating services, recent technological developments in Gen-AI, and the pandemic. Research reported by Deakin indicates the value of the confirmation check approach for maintaining academic integrity.¹

8. What are the possible outcomes of a confirmation check?

A confirmation check yields a binary outcome – either the student is deemed to have completed the work, or the outcome is that the member of staff concludes that they now have reasonable grounds to suspect that it is not entirely the student's work. This would then trigger the usual processes under Statute 10 and the Academic Misconduct Rules.

9. What should I expect from students?

You can expect some students to occasionally appear to be nervous/defensive, especially if they have not had much contact with that member of staff beforehand. In itself, these behaviours should not be taken to indicate any lack of integrity on the student's part. Students WILL make mistakes during a check. Keep in mind that in multiple choice tests, a student:

- a) may have guessed what the answer was - and got it right.
- b) may have ruled out a couple of wrong options to guess from the remainder.
- c) may not be able to remember why/how they chose the answer.
- d) all of the above are expected normal behaviours in multiple choice tests!

10. What are grounds for concern?

Most students would normally be expected to complete the confirmation check without any major issues. However, given the discussion in the preceding Section 9, it should be clear that there are reasons why students will occasionally stumble or make mistakes.

Staff members should **only** take further action where there are reasonable grounds to believe that the student was not conversant with their submitted work. It would be reasonable to initiate a

¹ https://www.deakin.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0003/2091567/07-cradle_academic-integrity-online_PM.pdf

report under the Academic Misconduct Rules only where the process reveals that the student's understanding of their completed work displays a large inconsistency with their graded result.

11. Can the confirmation check be done virtually?

Yes. It is perfectly acceptable to meet face to face or use an online medium such as Cisco Webex.

12. Should the confirmation check involve 2 members of staff or be recorded?

Whilst it is possible to conduct confirmation checks with more than one member of staff, this is not recommended because it is likely to exacerbate student stress, and the process becomes too complex/resource-intensive. Instead, it is recommended that the confirmation check is audio recorded, or video recorded in the case of an online confirmation check. Note that this is a recommendation, not a requirement.

If a confirmation check is recorded, the video/audio artefact should be retained for a period of 7 days and disposed of within 12 months of the recording date – unless it is required to be used as part of a misconduct case. Generally, once the confirmation check has been passed the recording should be disposed of as soon as possible within the timeframes quoted.

13. Can students bring a support person with them during the confirmation check?

Yes, if they wish. The support person is not permitted to answer on behalf of the student.

14. Can students opt out of a confirmation check?

Normally, no. Exceptionally, an alternative means of demonstrating academic integrity could be sought, but only if supported by a reasonable justification, submitted prior to the assessment event. This might involve reverting the assessment to a traditional face to face examination or using Curtin's IRIS invigilation software. Contact the Office of the Academic Registrar for advice if needed.

However, an alternative means of demonstrating academic integrity would be entirely appropriate for some students who are supported by a CAP for whom an oral assessment is difficult or impossible. These situations should not be considered exceptional requests.

15. Where can I get further information or help getting started?

Contact Jon Yorke or Lesley Sefcik from the Office of the Academic Registrar.