TOP 10 TIPS FOR WRITING GOOD ASSESSMENT ITEMS

1. **Check the assessment task aligns with your learning objectives**
   Check that the learning objectives being assessed align with the learning objectives stated in the course profile.

2. **Ensure assessment tests the learning desired (not something else)**
   Check that the assessment task will validly and appropriately assesses what you want it to. Ensure that the assessment does not require any additional knowledge or skill not being assessed; such as the ability to create a PowerPoint. Be mindful that international students may not have some of the ‘presumed’ knowledge or background of domestic students.

3. **Use clear, precise, student focused language**
   Be clear about what it is you want students to do. Do you want them to recall a list or formula; describe a process; explain, analyse or interpret some data or a case study? **Being clear in the way the task is described is not the same as giving them the answer.** It helps greatly if these terms have been explained prior to assessment and more so if students have had an opportunity to practice answering them (formative assessment).
   Ask a colleague to review for clarity of meaning (or ambiguity).

4. **Avoid colloquialism and slang terminology (unless defined)**
   For example, the following sentence: “A year 11 student misses her netball finals following a friend’s birthday bash” may cause unnecessary anxiety for (say) an international student who is not familiar with our high school year structure or sport, has not heard the term ‘finals’ or understands that ‘bash’ can be used as a colloquialism for celebration or party!

5. **Avoid double negatives**
   The use of double negatives is confusing and requires additional time for students to work out the actual meaning. Think about the following statement;
   “The sample did not have no contamination, as expected.”
   In other words, “The sample was unexpectedly contaminated.”
   When double negatives are combined with MCQs or True/False questions, they can become even more difficult to decipher. For example, is the following statement true or false?
   “Not using the principles for good assessment will not yield poor assessment items.” (False).

6. **Check for spelling and grammar**
   Ask a colleague to proof read to check for spelling and grammatical errors.

7. **Give sufficient time for students to complete a task/exam:**
   It will take longer for students to read, understand and formulate their thoughts in answering an exam question than it would you. Applying concepts and principles will also take longer for students to do than simply recalling factual knowledge.

8. **Check the breadth of assessment coverage**
   Does the assessment coverage allow students to demonstrate the overall level of their learning? Have you inadvertently focussed on or omitted some important aspects?

9. **Check the value and balance of marks are appropriate for complexity of learning required**
   Asking students to simply recall pieces of information is usually given a lower value than a task requiring higher cognitive skills such as analyse, explain, defend an argument. Is the assessment of learning objectives balanced? Have you inadvertently over emphasised (say) the assessment of content knowledge at the expense of higher cognitive skills?

10. **Check the marks all add up**
    Check that the marks for each question, section and total paper all add up. Ask a colleague to double check.