

# Practical Exploration and Optimization Pathways for Special Inspections of Undergraduate Course Assessment Quality

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**Abstract:** Course assessment constitutes a critical component in the safeguarding of undergraduate teaching quality, as the rigor of its proposition, the standardization of its grading procedures, the integrity of its performance management, and the completeness of its archival practices directly influence the realization of program-level learning outcomes and broader talent development objectives. Grounded in the theoretical frameworks of Total Quality Management and formative assessment, this study was conducted on the basis of a special inspection of 27 undergraduate course assessment dossiers at a university. The core content and implementation procedures of the inspection were systematically reviewed, and the positive outcomes and promising practices observed in assessment management were summarized. Common challenges and their underlying causes in areas including proposition scientificity, grading rigor, depth of performance analysis, and archival refinement were objectively analyzed. On this basis, systematic optimization recommendations were proposed—including the consolidation of primary responsibility at the school level, the reinforcement of faculty members' awareness of quality standards, and the improvement of the closed-loop quality management system—with the aim of providing a reference for the continuous improvement of course assessment quality assurance systems in similar institutional contexts.

**Keywords:** Course Assessment; Examination Paper Inspection; Proposition Quality; Grading Standards; Teaching Quality Assurance.

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## 1. Introduction

Course assessment is widely recognized as a pivotal element in undergraduate education and instruction. It functions not only as a primary instrument for examining student learning outcomes and evaluating teaching effectiveness but also as an effective mechanism for promoting pedagogical reflection among faculty and driving continuous curriculum renewal. From the standpoint of educational evaluation theory, course assessment is fundamentally a criterion-referenced evaluation, and its scientific rigor directly determines the validity of teaching feedback and the accuracy of educational decision-making. The implementation of scientific and standardized assessment practices is of foundational importance for ensuring the quality of talent cultivation and fostering equitable student development. Against the backdrop of the ongoing advancement of the connotative development of higher education and the widespread adoption of the "student-centered" educational philosophy, increasing scholarly and policy attention has been directed toward the quality of course assessment. In its implementation opinions on the development of first-class undergraduate courses, the Ministry of Education has explicitly called for the rigorous enforcement of curriculum quality evaluation and for increased weighting of curriculum evaluation in professional accreditation and teaching assessment processes. This signifies that course assessment has been elevated from a routine teaching procedure to a strategic pillar of institutional quality assurance. Nevertheless, traditional internal assessment management practices are often characterized by limited perspectives, inconsistent standards, and weakened implementation, necessitating the establishment of systematic special inspection mechanisms for diagnosis and

improvement. As Total Quality Management theory posits, quality is not inspected into a product but is built into it; this principle suggests that the fundamental assurance of course assessment quality resides in the standardized operation of the entire process and the quality consciousness of all personnel involved, rather than in ex post facto remedies and corrections[1-5].

In response to these imperatives, a special inspection of undergraduate course examination papers was organized by the Center for Quality Assurance, in collaboration with the Academic Affairs Office. The inspection was designed with the core objectives of "diagnosing the current situation, identifying problems, and standardizing procedures." A combination of random sampling and targeted sampling was adopted, encompassing 27 undergraduate course assessment dossiers, with particular emphasis placed on three key stages: proposition and review, examination and grading, and analysis and archiving. The purpose of this exercise was to stimulate internal pedagogical reflection through external evaluation and to facilitate the construction and refinement of a full-chain quality closed-loop management system for course assessment.

## 2. Organization and Implementation of the Inspection

### 2.1. Objectives and Positioning

The core objectives of this special inspection were defined at three levels. First, through simulated evaluation sampling, the actual status of course assessment work in undergraduate programs—particularly the authentic level of proposition quality, grading standards, performance evaluation, and archival management—was to be objectively ascertained. Second, weak links and common problems throughout the

entire assessment process were to be identified, thereby prompting secondary schools and instructors to address deficiencies in their course assessment practices. Third, secondary schools were to be guided in establishing and improving their internal quality monitoring systems, and the full-chain quality management closed loop—from curriculum standard formulation and assessment scheme design to examination paper archiving and analysis—was to be perfected.

## **2.2. Methods and Content**

The inspection was conducted using a strategy that combined "random sampling" with "targeted sampling," whereby two courses per undergraduate program per grade (covering both examination courses and assessment courses) were selected, with priority given to core specialized courses and foundational specialized courses. The inspection encompassed all stages and links of the assessment process, with specific attention directed to three aspects. First, at the proposition and review stage, emphasis was placed on the correctness of test content, its alignment with course objectives, the standardization of examination papers, and the completeness of review procedures. Second, at the examination and grading stage, attention was focused on the impartiality and rigor of grading, including whether grading was strictly conducted in accordance with scoring standards, whether grading scales were applied consistently, whether score calculations and verifications were accurate, and whether records of regular performance were complete and adequately documented. Third, at the analysis and archiving stage, evaluation was made of whether the Examination Paper Quality Analysis Report objectively analyzed score distributions and thoroughly examined students' strengths and weaknesses, as well as the standardization of grade registration forms and the accuracy of grade entry.

## **3. Major Outcomes and Positive Practices**

The inspection results revealed a series of commendable practices and useful explorations in course assessment management across secondary schools, as summarized below.

### **3.1. Foundational Management Found to Be Orderly and Standardized, with Materials System Relatively Complete**

Most courses were found to comply with university management requirements and to demonstrate good completeness of foundational teaching materials. Core documents such as examination paper formats, proposition approval forms, and grade registration forms were generally complete, and supporting materials such as A/B papers, answer keys, and scoring standards were found to be standardized in form. The accuracy rate of grading and score aggregation was relatively high. In some courses, the collection and organization of core archival materials—including examination room registration forms, sign-in sheets, blank examination papers, and student sample papers—were performed effectively, demonstrating good archival management awareness.

### **3.2. Active Exploration of Assessment Methods Observed, with Technological Applications Enhancing Efficiency**

Some courses actively experimented with reforms in assessment methods; for example, a model combining "machine scoring with centralized subjective question grading" was adopted, which was found to effectively improve the efficiency and fairness of objective question scoring. Certain practice-oriented courses were able to explore project-based evaluation methods in light of disciplinary characteristics, conducting summative assessments through project production and presentations, thereby enhancing the alignment between assessment and course objectives and reflecting the educational philosophy of "learning by doing, assessing in the process."

### **3.3. Process-Oriented Assessment Emphasized, with Formative Evaluation Beginning to Show Results**

Some courses maintained clear records of regular performance, and process-oriented materials (such as laboratory reports, assignments, and project practices) were managed in a standardized manner, forming relatively complete formative assessment schemes. Some courses emphasized the scientific design of assessment weights, and a diversified evaluation system combining process-oriented assessment and summative assessment began to yield positive results, contributing to a comprehensive and dynamic reflection of students' learning engagement and growth trajectories.

### **3.4. Continuous Improvement Mechanisms Initially Established, with Teaching Management Refinement Gradually Emerging**

Some courses were able to optimize teaching content and assessment schemes on the basis of prior teaching experience, demonstrating an emerging awareness of continuous improvement. At the examination organization stage, rigorous management processes such as batch grading and archival verification were applied, and materials review mechanisms were initially established, revealing a positive trajectory toward the transformation of teaching management from extensive to refined modes of operation.

## **4. Outstanding Common Problems and Cause Analysis**

While the achievements were affirmed, several common problems warranting attention were also identified through the inspection. It should be noted that these problems are predominantly localized phenomena with varying degrees of severity; the following analysis is intended to provide directional reference for continuous improvement efforts.

### **4.1. Scientificity of Proposition and Review Mechanisms Found to Require Strengthening**

Proposition quality is recognized as the source link in the course assessment chain. As educational measurement principles indicate, the validity, reliability, and discriminatory power of test questions directly determine the effectiveness of

assessment outcomes. The inspection revealed that, in some courses, a certain degree of deviation was observed between the question types, question quantities, and score distributions of the examination papers and the approved curriculum standards, indicating room for further improvement in the precision with which proposition work aligns with course teaching objectives. In a few courses, the equivalence of A/B papers was not yet optimal, and improvements were needed in repetition rate control and question variation design. In some test questions, the proportion of assessment targeting higher-order cognitive abilities—such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation—could be further increased, and there was scope for improvement in the richness of question structure and the refinement of discriminatory design. In addition, with respect to the completeness of information entered and the specificity of review opinions recorded on proposition review forms, the substantive gatekeeping function of the review process was found to require further reinforcement.

#### **4.2. Refinement Management in the Grading Stage Found to Require Improvement**

The standardization of grading work is directly related to the objectivity and fairness of performance assessment. The inspection revealed that, in a few courses, there was scope for improvement in the standardization of grading marks—for example, in the consistent use of grading symbols and in the annotation of scoring bases in cases of partial credit. For subjective questions such as comprehensive, computational, and design questions, the degree of refinement in scoring according to sub-points could be further enhanced to reduce fluctuations in grading scales. The accuracy of statistical processes such as sub-score summation and total score calculation was found to require strengthening, and the signature confirmation mechanism for score modifications was found to demand stricter implementation. In terms of regular performance assessment, the completeness of process records in a few courses could be further improved; the correspondence between regular assessment methods and course objectives could be made more explicit; and the setting of regular performance weights could be further justified to better fulfill the diagnostic and motivational functions of formative assessment.

#### **4.3. Depth of Performance Management and Analysis Found to Require Further Exploration**

Performance analysis and pedagogical reflection are recognized as key links in the closed-loop management of assessment and as the core mechanism for realizing the principle of "evaluation to promote teaching." The inspection found that, in a few courses, grade registration forms contained incomplete signatures, and the consistency between system scores and paper-based scores could be further strengthened. The quality of the Examination Paper Quality Analysis Reports varied considerably; some reports were found to focus on data presentation while lacking in-depth pedagogical diagnosis, and the analysis of students' reasons for losing points could be more specific. Reflection on the achievement of course objectives could be deepened, and the proposed improvement measures could be further enhanced in terms of relevance and operability. The completeness and depth of some course summary analyses were found to require improvement, and the effectiveness of pedagogical reflection could be further realized.

#### **4.4. Completeness of Archiving Found to Require Improvement**

Archiving management is considered the "last mile" of assessment work and the foundational guarantee for quality traceability. The inspection found that, in a few courses, materials such as answer keys and scoring standards, original records of regular performance, and examination paper analysis reports were incomplete in the dossiers, and the completeness of information entered on the dossier covers could be further improved. The consistency between electronic archival materials and paper-based archival materials was found to require strengthening, and the systematic organization and standardized storage of process-oriented assessment materials could be further optimized. These findings suggest that there remains scope for improvement in the standardization and refinement of archival management.

Taken together, the emergence of the above problems was found to involve multiple contributing factors. At the institutional level, the internal quality monitoring mechanisms of some teaching units are still in the process of being improved, and regular self-inspection and process-oriented supervision require strengthening. At the capacity level, faculty members exhibit varying degrees of need for improvement in professional competencies such as proposition design, implementation of grading standards, and writing of pedagogical reflections. At the awareness level, some instructors and administrators need to deepen their understanding of the strategic position of course assessment in talent development, and the cultivation of a quality culture requires sustained effort.

### **5. Optimization Pathways and Improvement Suggestions**

In response to the above problems, efforts should be made at both the school level and the teacher level, with coordinated measures and comprehensive strategies adopted to systematically promote the continuous improvement of course assessment quality.

#### **5.1. School Level: Consolidating Primary Responsibility and Strengthening Internal Quality Control**

First, it is advisable to conduct a series of tiered and categorized training sessions for all undergraduate instructors, program directors, and teaching secretaries on topics such as the implementation of curriculum standards, the design of assessment schemes, standardized proposition and grading procedures, and the writing of high-quality examination paper analyses, with the philosophy of Total Quality Management integrated into all aspects of assessment work. Second, schools should encourage the development of standardized test question banks (paper pools) for core courses in each program, and exemplary cases of excellent proposition, standardized grading, and in-depth analysis reports should be collected to create a virtuous cycle of knowledge sharing and experience transmission. Third, the audit responsibility system should be strictly implemented, clarifying and reinforcing the review responsibilities of program directors and associate deans in curriculum standard review, assessment scheme approval, proposition quality gatekeeping, and final performance confirmation, thereby embedding

quality awareness into every node of the management chain. Fourth, grassroots teaching organization activities should be strengthened, requiring each program's teaching and research section to regularly conduct thematic activities on course assessment—including collective lesson planning to determine assessment priorities, joint formulation of scoring standards, cross-review of examination papers, collective rechecking of grading quality, and discussion of examination paper analyses—thereby implementing quality assurance at the smallest teaching unit. Fifth, a school-level regular self-inspection mechanism should be established, with each school conducting both periodic regular self-inspections and random spot checks of its own examination papers each semester, undertaking self-diagnosis and self-improvement prior to the university-level inspection, thus forming a "Plan-Do-Check-Act" (PDCA) quality cycle.

## 5.2. Teacher Level: Strengthening Standard Awareness and Enhancing Professional Competence

Teachers are recognized as the direct executors of course assessment, and their professional competence and standard awareness directly affect assessment quality. Teachers should firmly establish standard awareness, taking the Curriculum Standards as the fundamental basis for teaching and assessment, and ensuring that proposition, grading, and weights are strictly aligned with the standards. At the same time, they must strictly comply with grading standards, carefully studying and implementing the university's unified regulations on examination paper grading, ensuring that marks are assigned with evidence, deductions are justified, marks are clearly recorded, and modifications are signed, so as to uphold fairness and justice in assessment with a high sense of responsibility. In terms of regular performance assessment, teachers should scientifically design diversified and process-oriented regular assessment methods, and detailed process records and timely feedback should be maintained, so that regular performance truly reflects students' learning engagement and progress and genuinely fulfills the "learning-promoting" function of formative assessment. In addition, teachers should invest the necessary effort in writing the Examination Paper Quality Analysis Report on the basis of detailed assessment data and students' answer performance, accurately reflecting teaching effectiveness, conducting in-depth problem analysis, and proposing specific improvement measures, thereby transforming assessment data into intellectual resources for teaching improvement.

## 6. Conclusion

Standardized assessment management is recognized not only as a mandatory requirement of teaching evaluation but also as an intrinsic necessity for ensuring talent development quality, promoting students' fair development, and driving teachers' pedagogical reflection. This special inspection has systematically reviewed the current state of undergraduate course assessment management, identifying both commendable practical experiences and directions requiring attention and improvement, and providing a reference basis for subsequent quality enhancement efforts. Taking this inspection as an important opportunity, all secondary schools should adopt multiple measures—including the consolidation of school-level responsibilities and the enhancement of teacher competencies—to build a scientific, standardized, and rigorous quality management system for undergraduate course assessment. Looking ahead, the long-term mechanism for course assessment inspection should be further improved, institutional constraints and cultural guidance should be strengthened, and quality awareness should be internalized as the conscious action of teachers and students, making assessment quality monitoring an indispensable component of the teaching quality assurance system. This will serve to consolidate the foundation of undergraduate teaching quality and promote the connotative and sustainable development of the university's undergraduate education.

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