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ANNEXURE A - Definition of terms
ASSESSMENT AND MODERATION OF STUDENT LEARNING

This Assessment and Moderation of Student Learning Policy supersedes the existing Evaluation Policy and Procedures (S/147/89).

1. Preamble

The promotion of an outcomes-based approach to education, and the requirement that qualifications should be registered on the NQF, has profound implications for the assessment of student learning.

To progress towards a more just, effective and efficient assessment provision in Higher Education, a more comprehensive role for assessment is required. The purposes for which assessment is used needs to extend beyond the summative (the measuring, recording and reporting of end-point achievement) and diagnostic (indicating aptitude and preparedness for a course of study), to emphasise the use of assessment for developmental and/or formative purposes i.e. to inform and strengthen teaching and learning.

(HEQC, 2003:1)

This policy is informed by:

- SAQA policy document on Criteria and Guidelines for Assessment of NQF Registered Unit Standards and Qualifications (SAQA, October 2001);
- Requirements and guidelines for education and training quality assurance bodies: Establishing criteria for registration of assessors (SAQA, February 2001);
- Assessment practices and procedures for outcomes-based education and training (SAQA, October 2001:7);
- The HEQC Institutional Audit Framework (HEQC, April 2004);
- The CHE Improving Teaching and Learning Resource (CHE, 2003); and
- The University of Fort Hare Vision, Mission, Corporate Goals and Strategic Objectives (UFH General Prospectus, 2004:3).

2. Principles on which the policy is based:

This policy is based on the principles that:

- academic staff are responsible for the education and academic standards that they provide for students to achieve the qualifications they are awarded;
- assessment should both enhance students’ learning experiences and improve the quality of teaching and learning;
• assessment is an important quality assurance mechanism;
• inclusivity in education is recognised and academic staff should strive to provide for inclusiveness in assessment;
• assessment practices and procedures are based on an outcomes-based approach to education and training;

3. Policy objectives

Assessment of students’ performance in modules/courses/programmes is a key component of the University’s teaching responsibility. The process of assessing students should have an educational value in addition to being a way of determining whether a student should progress to the next level, or be required to repeat. The assessment of students should therefore be designed to achieve as many of the following purposes as possible:

• To be an educational tool to teach appropriate skills, knowledge, values and attitudes;
• To set educational standards;
• To determine minimum levels of competence;
• To provide a measure of student ability for future employers;
• To determine whether students have met the outcomes of a module/course;
• To inform students of their competence;
• To inform academic staff about the quality of their instruction and to foster ongoing development thereof;
• To contribute towards the evaluation of a course;
• To detect learning problems;
• To contribute towards decision-making related to student progress;
• To provide students with feedback on their progress; and
• To inform curriculum development and review.

4. Principles of good assessment practice

Assessment is viewed as an integral part of teaching and curriculum development. This means that it should be used to develop as well as measure learning. Since assessment can be used both to maintain and challenge existing institutional social structures, assessment practices need to be transparent and assessors need to be accountable.

Credibility in assessment is assured through the assessment practices being governed by the following principles:

• Fairness
  Assessment practices that are reasonable and procedures that are conducted in an equitable manner.
• **Validity**
  Validity concerns the accuracy and appropriateness of methods of assessment and the meaningfulness of the inferences made from the assessment results. Validity seeks to answer questions such as ‘Are we assessing the right things?’ and ‘Are we assessing things in the right manner?’ (HEQC, 2003:7).

• **Reliability**
  Reliability concerns issues of consistency in assessment, such as whether the same results would be achieved on another occasion or by another assessor; whether the assessor has influenced the results in any way; and whether the results can be generalized to other performances.

• **Transparency**
  Assessment practices need to be clearly communicated to the student and open to scrutiny by stakeholders.

• **Practicability**
  Assessment practices must be feasible and reasonable given the context and resources available.

• **Recognizing creativity**
  In spite of the focus being on assessing previously identified learning outcomes, it is acknowledged that assessment is a creative process, both in terms of its dialogical nature, and in terms of the assessor’s role in responding to unexpected and unstated outcomes. It is to be expected, especially at tertiary level that students will respond creatively and unexpectedly in the learning process. Assessors need to be responsive to this, and be prepared to reward innovative and creative thinking.

• **Inclusivity in assessment**
  The South African Constitution values human dignity and is non-discriminatory. It aims to develop a humane and caring society. The University embraces this philosophy. In line with this thinking, the University should have in place a system wherein students can declare the aspects in which they are challenged. These could be physical, and/or emotional challenges. The University undertakes to put in place assessment practices that will ensure that such students are not disadvantaged or unfairly discriminated against.

5. **Assessment and Moderation of student learning**

The above principles inform the points of policy listed below.

5.1 **Learning outcomes**

In an Outcomes-based approach, assessment procedures determine whether or not students have met the stated learning outcomes of a
module/course/programme. Assessors therefore need to ensure that their assessment is valid in terms of the outcomes it is intended to assess. Thus, learning outcomes need to be developed as a basis for curriculum design, and validity in assessment is achieved by aligning assessment tasks and assessment criteria with the stated learning outcomes.

5.2 Assessment task(s)

Assessment tasks (with assessment criteria) that facilitate student learning must be developed for each module/course/programme and must be submitted to, and be approved by, the programme co-ordinator, prior to the implementation of the assessment task(s). Approval of the assessment task(s) will be based on the extent to which the assessment task(s) meet the requirements articulated in the policy.

5.3 Assessment criteria

Assessment criteria against which the stated learning outcomes will be assessed must be developed for each assessment task in each module/course/programme. The assessment criteria for each assessment task must be explicitly articulated in the learner guide.

In addition, assessment criteria should be openly and clearly communicated at the same time as the assessment task is given to students, both in the interests of transparency and accountability, and to enable the students to use the assessment criteria to monitor and develop their own learning. In other words, students must be informed as to the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes they need to demonstrate in order to achieve the stated learning outcome(s) of the task.

The learning outcomes and assessment task(s) with assessment criteria should also be communicated to the internal- and external- examiners and moderators to enable them to make informed judgements.

5.4 Variety of assessment methods

Assessment should be varied i.e. a range of assessment methods should be used to cater for students’ different learning styles and multiple intelligences when assessing stated learning outcomes e.g. practicals, reports, oral presentations, portfolios, posters, case studies, projects, observations, essays etc.

5.5 Frequency of assessment

Assessment needs to be frequent to provide guidance to students on their performance and to provide assessors with guidance on how to improve their assessment practices and to feed back into curriculum development.
5.6 Integration of assessment

There must be evidence of the integration of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes across assessment tasks. In addition, there must be opportunities for students to demonstrate the achievement of a number of learning outcomes within a single assessment task.

5.7 Formative assessment

Formative assessment should be employed to provide students with feedback on their performance, and to provide guidance to students on how to improve their performance in future. As such, formative assessment is designed to be for the benefit of student learning rather than being for educational decision-making. Formative assessment serves to support the student in the learning process towards achievement of outcomes, and to inform curriculum development. Each Faculty should therefore introduce interventions into the curriculum for students in need of support as and when the need arises.

5.8 Continuous assessment

Assessment should be designed to take into account all aspects of a student’s performance at various stages of the learning process during a module/course/programme.

5.9 Summative assessment

A minimum of two summative assessments per semester are required, with the summative assessment counting not more than 50% of the final mark. The proportionate weighting of formative assessment, summative assessment and final examinations should be carefully considered by each Faculty in order to justify the amount of time and effort expended on each.

5.10 Monitoring

Individual lecturers, assessors and programme co-ordinators are responsible for monitoring the progress of cohorts of students and for introducing curriculum interventions to address challenges as and when these arise.

5.11 Disclosure to learners

Assessment results may be disclosed to students only through designated channels as authorised in the University Examination Policy.

5.12 Recording of assessment results

The recording of all assessment results should be done in a rigorous manner by the assessor, with departments and Faculties keeping records of assessment results. Once a final assessment decision has been reached, it
should be recorded in accordance with the institutional Examination Policy to facilitate effective reporting on assessment decisions.

5.13 Moderation procedures

5.13.1 Internal Moderation

Each Faculty should put in place a process to monitor consistency in assessment between assessors within courses/modules/programmes. Faculties should be guided by the HEQC guidelines and the University Examination Policy. An internal member of either the department or a member of another department, with the relevant expertise in the said field, should carry out internal moderation.

Internal moderation includes consideration of:

- The design of the assessment itself to ensure that the choice and design of assessment methods are appropriate for the standards being measured by the assessment;
- The implementation of the assessment according to the specified guidelines;
- The marking and review of the assessment process to ensure that assessors are using feedback to develop their assessment procedures.

5.13.2 External Moderation (Verification procedures).

The aim of external moderation (verification) is to:

- monitor the standards of the assessment
- monitor assessors' decisions;
- monitor the credibility of assessment methods and instruments
- check the internal moderation processes;
- monitor and/or observe assessment processes and results;
- provide advice and guidance to assessors for improving assessment practices.

Verification of assessment in programmes or departments should be carried out by recognised experts in the field and should be informed by both the institutional Examination Policy and HEQC guidelines. The verification process should form part of the programme review.

The verification process should include the following steps:

- The verifier should be appointed for a period of not more than three years with the possibility of an extension of a further three-year period.
- The criteria for the appointment of verifiers should be agreed upon within faculties, and approved by Senate.
- Executive Deans of faculties should approve the appointment of verifiers and should recommend their appointment to Senate.
The verification process should include one site visit in the three-year period of appointment.

The verification process should not be confined to the verification of students’ performance alone, but should include a review of the stated learning outcomes of the programme, course or module as well as the learning materials and assessment tasks designed to achieve the learning outcomes, in order to feedback into curriculum development.

Faculties should include external moderation expenses in their annual budgets.

Faculties should have in place a process to assure quality of external moderation/verification process.

5.14 Re-assessment

The assessment system should allow for re-assessment. There are different cases for re-assessment. These could be:

- If a student has almost achieved the level of competence required to meet the stated learning outcomes of a summative assessment task(s) or has attained between 45% and 49%, the student should be re-assessed. Such re-assessment shall only be granted at the discretion of the Executive Dean in consultation with the programme co-ordinator in terms of the policy laid down by the relevant Faculty. Where possible, this re-assessment could take the form of an oral presentation.

- If a student has almost achieved the level of competence required in an examination to be credited with the module/course/programme, or has attained a final mark of between 45% and 49%, the student should be re-assessed. The University General Rules should guide the process.

- Dealing with irregularities in assessment practices.

5.15 Student appeal against assessment results

Any student, who feels that s/he has been unfairly assessed, may institute an appeal as defined by the University rules. For the end-of-term/semester examinations, the standing University regulations on re-marking of examination scripts (University General Rule G.10) and scrutiny of examination scripts (University General Rule G.11) hold. For continuous assessment a process similar to the University General Rule G.10 and G.11 is recommended.

5.16 Deviation from the Assessment and Moderation policy

In the event of any deviation from this policy, explicit justification and alternative guidelines need to be provided to the Executive Dean of Faculty, or his or her equivalent, prior to the implementation of the said deviation.
5.17 Training of assessors and moderators (verifiers)

Assessors and moderators (verifiers) should have appropriate training as assessors.

5.18 Support for policy implementation

The Teaching and Learning Centre will provide academic staff with a variety of means of support in order to meet the requirements of this policy and of sound assessment practices.

5.19 Quality assurance of assessment

Executive Deans, in collaboration with programme co-ordinators, will be required to submit an annual report to the Senate Quality Assurance Committee detailing their Faculty assessment procedures and practices to ensure quality in Teaching and Learning, and on-going evaluation to develop curricula to meet the needs of students. This information should form part of the institutional Faculty and Departmental review leading to the HEQC audit.

5.20 Security procedures

Procedures for security of assessment processes must be in place for each Faculty. These are detailed in the University Examination Policy.

5.21 Duly Performed Status

For information concerning the duly performed status refer to Section 3.2 and Section 4.6 of the University Examination Policy.

5.22 Plagiarism

For more information concerning plagiarism refer to the separate University Plagiarism Policy (to be drafted).

5.23 Accountability

Accountability for the implementation of this policy rests with the DVC: Academic and the Executive Deans of the respective Faculties.

6. References:


ANNEXURE A

ASSESSMENT AND MODERATION OF STUDENT LEARNING POLICY

Definition of terms

**Assessment** - The process of gathering evidence and making judgments about students’ achievements in relation to stated learning outcomes, and recording and reporting of these judgments.

**Assessment criteria** – Articulations of the competences required to determine whether or not an outcome has been achieved.

**Assessment tasks** - Learning activities designed to obtain evidence about a student’s level of competence against stated learning outcomes.

**Continuous assessment** - A system of assessment by which all aspects of a student’s performance during a module/course/programme are taken into account when making a judgment about the student’s level of competence.

**Credits** - The value assigned to a given number of notional hours of learning which may be accumulated until conditions have been met for the award of a module/course/programme/qualification.

**Criterion-referenced assessment** - The process of using pre-specified criteria or standards against which to make judgments about a student’s performance.

**Critical Outcomes** - Broad, generic cross-curricula outcomes that underpin all learning recognized by SAQA.

**Diagnostic assessment** - A specialised procedure which is concerned with determining the cause(s) of persistent or recurring learning difficulties that are left unresolved by formative assessment.
**Evaluation** - The process of gathering information from students, peers and literature in order to reflect on the quality of teaching and courses.

**Expected Levels of Performance** - Standards that students are expected to achieve during a module/course/programme.

**Formative Assessment** - Assessment which is conducted during instruction to provide students with feedback about what learning they have achieved in order to improve their competence as well as to develop the curriculum.

**Final mark** – the mark obtained at the end of a completed module/course/programme, the composition of which is determined by the rules for that particular module/course/programme. The general rule of the University being that the final mark is the average of the semester/year mark and the examination mark.

**Integration** - The grouping of specific learning outcomes from different modules/courses/programmes in terms of skills, knowledge, attitudes and values.

**Internal Moderation** - A process designed to ensure that assessment methods are appropriate for the standards being measured, the judgments about students’ performance against stated learning outcomes are carried out in a consistent and trustworthy manner, and to provide assessors with feedback to improve their assessment practices.

**Learning outcomes** - High quality, culminating demonstrations of significant learning in context.

**Moderation** - The process of ensuring that all assessors who assess a particular qualification are using equivalent assessment methods, and making similar, and consistent judgments about students’ performance against stated learning outcomes.

**Norm-referenced assessment** - The process of comparing a student’s performance with that of peers in the same class or cohort.

**Outcomes-based education** - A learner-centered, results oriented approach to education that requires students to demonstrate evidence that they are able to achieve stated learning outcomes.

**Peer assessment** - The assessment of students’ learning/performance by other students in the same class or cohort in order to help each other improve their learning/performance.

**Portfolio** - A portfolio is a deliberate, strategic and specific collection of a student’s work or evidence of a student’s work over time that demonstrates the learning that has occurred in order to meet stated learning outcomes.

**Rubric** - An assessment tool to record a student’s level of performance against stated outcomes and assessment criteria.
**Self-assessment** - The process whereby students make judgments about their own performance against stated outcomes and assessment criteria.

**Summative assessment** - Assessment conducted at the end of a module/course/programme to determine a student’s level of performance i.e. what the student knows and can do, in relation to stated outcomes and assessment criteria.