POLICY

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

Introduction

Assessment is critical to teaching and learning. Our purpose as a higher education institute is to provide a student with knowledge and skills in a particular field, and we therefore have a responsibility to determine adequately if the student has indeed mastered the requisite knowledge and skills. Assessment has to be an integral part of the teaching and learning process. A high-quality assessment process has to be credible and produce credible graduates. This is critical for the graduate entering the workplace as well as for the higher education provider.

As a higher education institute, FPD has an added responsibility to teach the student more than what is required in a particular field. There is a responsibility to contribute to the student gaining life skills and how to become a useful, valued member of society. If we accept that responsibility, then we also have a responsibility for proper assessment of those skills.

Assessment has moved away from a process where the student simply recalls and repeats what has been taught. The approach to assessment had to change with the introduction of the outcomes-based system, where the student has to be able to do things and not just know things.

A varied assessment process, encompassing many different forms of assessment, should assess all aspects of the outcomes of a qualification. It must give the student the opportunity to display knowledge and skills in ways that better reflect what they truly know and can do.

FPD prides itself on producing graduates who are competent in the workplace. To this end we have embraced the outcomes-based approach to teaching and learning and the relevant assessment strategies.

Emphasis is placed on both formative and summative assessment, ensuring that both student and facilitator always know exactly where they are in relation to the learning process.

An assessment policy must ensure that the assessment process complies with the key principles of good assessment, namely fairness, validity, reliability, learning effect and practicability. Our assessment policy aims to be of the highest quality, and the policy therefore addresses the following issues:

1)   planning, ensuring that the best possible assessments are carried out for the different parts of the programme,
2)   procedures, confirming that assessments are carried out according to the standards of best practice,
3)   review, assuring that the assessments can be adapted for improvement, and
4)   revision, for assessments to be continuously improved, and any shortcomings addressed.

Policy scope

Assessment is a structured process in which evidence of performance is gathered and evaluated against accepted criteria and standards [1]. The process of gathering and assessing evidence of performance has to be carried out in a formal and credible way. This policy addresses the requirement for a formal and credible assessment process.

This document defines assessment and its purpose in FPD, and provides clear guidelines for assessment policies, systems and procedures for performing the process of assessment.

Definitions

Assessment	Systematic evaluation of a student's ability to demonstrate the achievement of the learning goals intended in a curriculum[2]. • *Formative assessment* is a type of assessment used to improve learning and to give feedback to students on progress made. It serves needs intrinsic to the educational process [2] • *Summative assessment* formalised assessment which is used to certificate the attainment of a certain level of education. It is used to serve needs extrinsic to the educational process [2]
Assessment Criteria	The standards used to guide learning and to assess learner achievement and/or to evaluate and certify competence [1]
Assessment Instruments	Refers to the nature of the assessment task given to the student. [3] Examples of instruments include assignments, case studies, questionnaires, examinations, portfolios, simulations, etc. [3]
Assessment Methods	The activities that an assessor engages in as s/he assess a student and the student's work.[3] These activities include: observation, evaluating a product, and questioning orally or in writing.
Competence	Competence is seen as applied competence – the union of practical, foundational and reflexive competence [4] • *Practical competence* is the demonstrated ability to perform a set of tasks in an authentic context • *Foundational competence* is the demonstrated understanding of what the student is doing and why • *Reflexive competence* is the demonstrated ability to integrate performance with understanding, so as to show that the student is able to adapt to changed circumstances appropriately and responsibly, and to explain the reason behind an action.
Evidence	The proof provided by the student to show that s/he complies with the requirements of the criteria of the standard for which they wish to gain credits [3]

1. National Qualification Authority. 2017. Standard Glossary of Terms. Available at: https://hr.saqa.co.za/glossary/pdf/NQFPedia.pdf
2. Council on Higher Education. 2004. Criteria for Programme Accreditation. Available at: http://nr-online.che.ac.za/html_documents/CHE_accreditation_criteria_Nov2004.pdf
3. SAQA. 2001. Criteria and Guidelines for Assessment of NQF Registered standards and qualifications. Available from: https://cdn.lgseta.co.za/resources/guidelines/2.4.1%20SAQA%20Criteria%20and%20Guidelines%20for%20Assessment.pdf
4. SAQA. 2005. Guidelines for integrated, Available from: https://www.saqa.org.za/docs/guide/2005/intassessment.pdf

Integrated Assessment	Integrated assessment at the level of qualification provides an opportunity for learners to show that they are able to integrate concepts, ideas and actions across unit standards/different areas of the curriculum to achieve competence that is grounded and coherent in relation to the purpose of the qualification [4]
Learning Outcomes	The contextually demonstrated end-products of specific learning processes, which include knowledge, skills and values [1]

Elements of an Assessment System

The following elements need to be taken into account for designing, implementing and maintaining an assessment system:

1) Assessment strategies must be in line with the aims and outcomes of the learning programme, since they relate to the outcomes specified in the qualification. Assessment must also be aligned with the opportunities for learning available to the student.
2) A range of parties is involved in the assessment of the student. These are determined according to context and outcome and can include peer, group and self-assessment. Moderators may also be included in this activity.
3) Assessment information, including learning outcomes, assessment criteria as well as assessment procedures and dates, should be provided to all students and assessors.
4) Records of assessments must be kept and students must receive detailed and accurate feedback on their progress and performance.
5) An appeal procedure is critical in supporting a good assessment system. The student must have recourse to appeal an assessment outcome. The appeal procedure should not in any way disadvantage the student.
6) Assessment practices have to be aligned to the relevant outcomes-based NQF level.
7) Assessment plans for each qualification indicating how the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria are assessed, need to be in place.

Principles of Assessment

Assessment is a structured process where evidence of performance is gathered and evaluated against agreed criteria and standards. The process involves identifying, gathering and interpreting information about an individual's achievements. Assessment is done by collecting evidence. Different forms of evidence are collected by using a variety of assessment methods; thereafter, such evidence is evaluated and recorded against assessment criteria. Judgements are made in order to make decisions on an individual's performance in relation to the required outcomes to determine whether the assessment criteria were met or not.

The emphasis is on continuous diagnostic assessment of the student's performance, including feedback and support, to enable the student to achieve the required standard. The assessment process should be seen as an endless part of the learning process. The focus is on continuous developmental assessment instead of judgemental assessment.

Fairness [3]

Assessment should in no way advantage or disadvantage a student. Unfairness in assessment may be due to, for example, unequal opportunities, lack of resources and equipment, inappropriate teaching methods or unqualified teachers. Unfairness may also be based on perceived bias such as race, gender, age, disability, social class, culture or language.

Assessment procedures and practices must be fair and must be transparent, clear and available to all students. In addition, appeals mechanisms must be accessible to all students. The assessment should thus be acceptable to the student and other relevant stakeholders.

Validity [3]

An assessment should be purposeful. Judgements based on irrelevant variables are invalid. The assessment must assess the student's ability to perform designated tasks.

Outcomes must be clearly stated to ensure validity. The assessor should determine the kind and amount of evidence required to recognise achievement of a particular outcome. The reasonable representation of the content to be learnt and the use of appropriate methods for assessing different constructs contribute to enhanced validity.

Reliability [3]

Reliability applies to the consistency of assessment which is achieved when the same judgements are made in the same or similar contexts each time an assessment is conducted. An assessment should not be influenced by variables such as:
- different assessors applying different standards (interrater reliability).
- insufficient evidence, such as inadequate sampling of the content.
- assessor bias in terms of gender, race, culture, language, religion, position etc.,
- assessor assumptions about the students' performance not based on evidence.
- assessors applying different standards to different students (intrarater reliability).
- assessment conditions being different for different students.

For successful and reliable assessment, it is imperative that the following be in place:
- predetermined criteria and guidelines for assessment,
- knowledge of the learning area to be assessed,
- systematic procedures for the assessment of evidence, and
- assessors adequately trained in good assessment practice.

Practicability [3]

An assessment must consider monetary-, time-, resource- and facility constraints. An assessment procedure that is too costly, time consuming or cumbersome will not be applied correctly and will not be sustainable.

The combination of the assessment principles of fairness, validity, reliability and practicability will result in a credible assessment process.

Learning effect

Students should learn as a result of participating in the assessment – both summative and formative (i.e. assessment <u>for</u> learning as opposed to only assessment <u>of</u> learning). Faculty and teachers should also learn from assessment in terms of understanding where the weaknesses are in the teaching and learning process and the quality of the assessment itself.

Types of Assessment

Formative Assessment

The focus of formative assessment is to provide feedback about the student's performance, competence and progress against the competency standards. The emphasis is on progress towards achieving competence and is carried out throughout the duration of learning. This information is used to assist, plan and support the student's learning path.

Formative assessment has the following characteristics: [3]
- designed to support the teaching and learning process,
- assists in planning future learning,
- diagnoses the student's strengths and weaknesses,
- provides feedback to the student about his/her progress,
- helps to make decisions on the readiness of students to do a summative assessment,
- is developmental in nature,
- credits/certificates are not awarded.

Summative Assessment

The purpose of summative assessment is to make a judgement about achievement. [3] This is often carried out at the end of a programme of learning, but scores collected from the formative assessment tasks may also contribute to the final summative grade. The focus of summative assessment is to determine whether the student has achieved the required learning outcomes and is competent to obtain formal recognition, namely credits or certification.

Assessment and Evidence

All assessment is based on the evaluation of evidence. [3] Students are expected to demonstrate competence in relation to the required outcomes of a qualification by means of evidence, which can be compiled from a variety of sources. It is the responsibility of the assessor to make an informed assessment decision based on available evidence. An informed assessment decision can only be based on evidence of sufficient quality. The fundamental principles of quality evidence are validity, authenticity, sufficiency and currency.

Principles of evidence

Validity [3]

Evidence must relate directly to the required outcomes and criteria to be assessed; therefore, the evidence must be appropriate to what is being assessed.

Authenticity [3]

Evidence must be attributable to the student. In the case of indirect and historical evidence (e.g. evidence based on group work) there is opportunity for a student to present evidence that is not assured, where such assessors need to verify that the student made a fair contribution to the end result.

Sufficiency [3]

There must be sufficient evidence to allow an informed judgement whether the student has met all the requirements for competence. This is achieved through the use of various sources of evidence and a variety of assessment activities. On the other hand, evidence should not be excessive or unnecessary. (see Practicability above).

Currency [3]

Currency refers to two very different concepts, both equally important. Firstly, does the evidence provided correspond with the student's newly acquired skills? Secondly, is it current to the specific discipline in which they are to be trained?

Types of evidence

The types of evidence that can be used for assessment of competence are direct, indirect and historical. [3]

Direct

Direct evidence is evidence actually produced by the student. This is the most valid type of evidence and should be the assessor's primary source of evidence. Direct evidence easily establishes authenticity. Examples of direct evidence include: direct observation of a task, oral or written questioning and product testing.

Indirect

Indirect evidence is evidence produced about the student from another source, for example the testimony of a supervisor in a logbook. In the case of indirect evidence particular attention needs to be paid to authenticity.

Historical

Historical evidence provides the assessor with information on the student's capability in the past. This type of evidence is least valid because it does not necessarily assess current performance and thus may require additional evidence for support.

The Assessment Process

The assessment process involves the following steps:

1) Knowledge of the component of the qualification and the whole qualification.
   - The assessor must have a thorough knowledge of the subject and qualification. This includes the purpose, outcomes, assessment criteria and other relevant information.

2) Planning the assessment
   - It is important for the assessor to plan the assessment to ensure that the student will be assessed in a fair and effective manner.
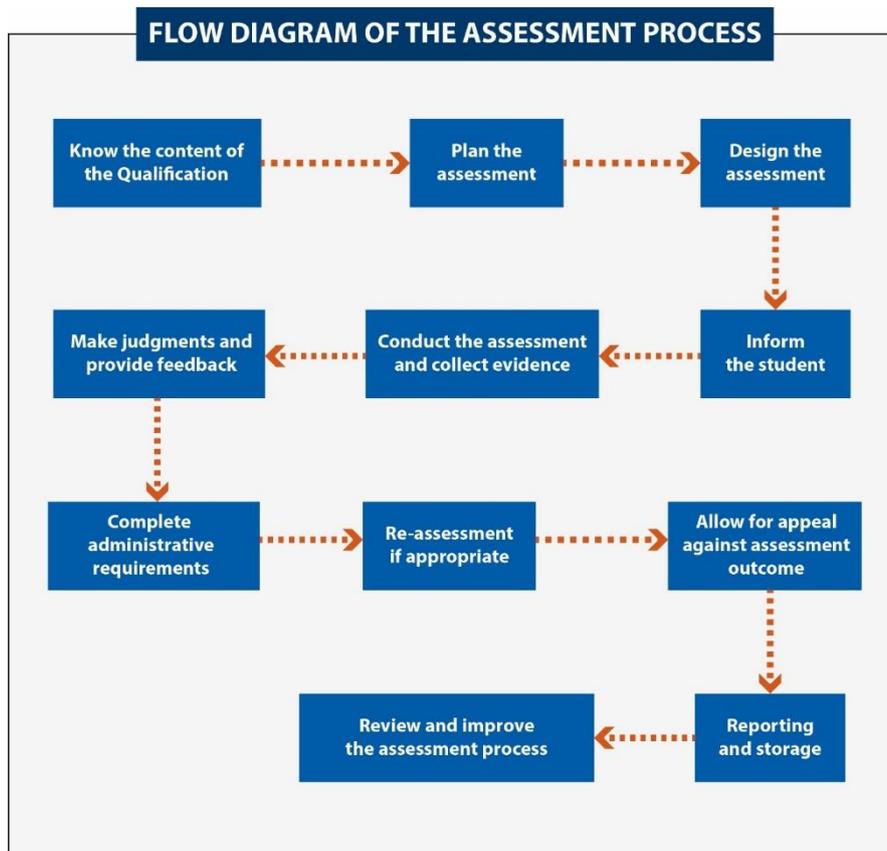
3) Informing the student
   - It is important that the student understands from the outset what their role and responsibilities are regarding assessment. The students should know:
     - the kinds of assessment activities that they could be asked to perform,
     - the standard and level of performance expected,
     - the type and amount of evidence to be collected, and
     - their responsibility regarding the collection of evidence.

4) Designing the assessment
   - The assessor designs the assessment. This includes determining the assessment methods and instruments as well as the development of appropriate assessment materials.

5) Conducting the assessment and collecting evidence
   - Assessment must be conducted in an appropriate and non-threatening environment. The requirements of the tasks should be correctly and clearly communicated.

6) Approval of final marks
   - The Academic Committee will confirm the award of credits to students who have achieved the learning outcomes and passed the assessment. A pass constitutes a minimum score of 50%.

7) Making judgements and providing feedback
   - Students should be informed about the judgement criteria and process.
   - The student should receive feedback timeously. The feedback should include which outcomes of the different assessments have been achieved successfully or not. The feedback should also indicate the status of the outcome of the judgement in terms of the criteria and process.

8) Completing administrative requirements
   - The assessor should record the results of the assessment in compliance with requirements of the institution.

9) Evaluating the assessment process
   - The evaluation of the process could involve:
     - obtaining feedback from the student regarding the assessment and how the process could be improved,
     - reviewing the entire process with other assessors and moderators, and
     - making appropriate changes which could include recommendations regarding changes to the subject, unit standards or qualification.

10) Re-assessment
   - The assessment process should make provision for re-assessment in certain situations. Re-assessment has the following implications:
     - it should take place in the same relative situation or context
     - the same methods and instruments may be used whilst the task and materials should be different. However, the level and complexity of such re-assessment should be equivalent to the initial assessment.

11) Appealing against an assessment outcome
   Appeals is critical in supporting good assessment system design and management, ensuring that students have access to appeal an assessment outcome to either the assessor or the institution.

12) Reporting and storage
   In terms of the Protection of Personal Information Act, the examiner, moderator, Head of School, Registrar and designated members of the Student Administration and Engagement Unit should treat personal information received as strictly confidential. Appropriate technical and organisational measures should be in place, ensuring that personal information is kept secure and is protected against unauthorised or unlawful processing, accidental loss, destruction or damage, alteration, disclosure or access. FPD should be notified promptly should they become aware of any unauthorised use, disclosure or processing of personal information.

FLOW DIAGRAM OF THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Know the content of the Qualification → Plan the assessment → Design the assessment

Make judgments and provide feedback ← Conduct the assessment and collect evidence ← Inform the student

Complete administrative requirements → Re-assessment if appropriate → Allow for appeal against assessment outcome

Review and improve the assessment process ← Reporting and storage

Continuous Assessment

It is a requirement for all programmes or modules to obtain a continuous assessment mark as a year mark. Continuous assessment should include formative and summative assessment in the form of assignments, projects, practical, class tests and semester tests or examinations.

The weighting of each of the forms of assessment is determined by the relevant school during the planning of the programme or module and communicated to the student by means of the study guide.

Heads of Schools are responsible for the accuracy of gradebooks and schedules, as well as capturing and calculation of continuous assessment in line with the prescribed study guide.

Continuous assessment marks will be displayed on the electronic student portal and will be sent via e-mail to each student. Students bear full responsibility for checking the correctness of their continuous assessment marks during this period and to inform the relevant School or the Student Administration and Engagement Unit of any inaccuracies.

A sub-minimum mark of at least 50% should be obtained in the summative/final examination in order to pass the module.

Guidelines for the processing of continuous assessment marks:
- Assessments that are formally assessed should be signed off by the assessor and moderator with the marking grid and stored in the authorised repository.
- Continuous assessment marks need to be captured on the Student Administration System or FPD student portal in the gradebook (this must include the date of assessment, weighting and marks allocated). All marks are entered as percentages to be further processed according to a specific formula to the final continuous assessment mark.
- Continuous Assessment marks need to be signed off by the assessor, moderator, Head of School and Registrar as required before distribution to students.
- Only the official continuous assessment marks are valid.

Assessment process and information

Assessment is recognised as an integral part of the teaching and learning process and equal to teaching should receive high priority. Assessment must be integrated into the teaching and learning process according to the principles of good assessment.

Assessment will be a combination of formative and summative assessment. The precise nature of the combination depends on the nature of the subject; and assessment methods and instruments, weights and guidelines will all be stated explicitly in the study guide for each module and programme.

Assessment methods and instruments should be continually evaluated to integrate more effectively into teaching and learning and the desired outcomes thereof. The continuous review and upgrading of assessments must be in agreement with assessment review mechanisms. The Head of School will annually review assessments for each qualification in accordance with the principles of assessment.

The results of all assessments must be recorded on a computerised results system. All assessment instruments and records of results must be kept permanently, in a secure manner.

All assessments must comply with the institution's rules of examination (See Policy A8: Examinations).

Links to all the Academic Institutions policies must be included in the study guide.

The study guide must include the following important aspects of Assessment of learning:
- Certification
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)
- Grievance procedures
- Students with special needs
- Student resources
- Plagiarism
- Presentation of assignments
- Referencing method

- Assessment overview
- Grading Approach
- Compliance
  - Formative assessment details
  - Summative Modular assignments details
  - Overview of Summative Exams
  - Mark allocation

Students' final marks must be submitted to the Academic Committee for approval before being released to students.

Examination Rules and Regulations

Examination rules and regulations are to be found in the Examination Policy and Procedures documentation (See Policy A8: Examinations) and study guides.

Missed Assessments and Re-Assessment

Formative and Summative Assignments

All formative and summative assignments must be handed in on the date provided in the timetable – available on the FPD student portal and emailed to students on commencement of their programme.

All assignments that were handed in late or not handed in receive a mark of 0%.
- In the event of a student not being able to hand in assignment on time due to ill health or a death in the student's immediate family, the student must request additional time from the Registrar. Provision of additional time may be equal to the period the student was booked off plus one additional week. Students will be required to present a doctor's certificate for illness or a valid death certificate for a death in their immediate family (direct grandparents, parents, siblings, spouses and children).
- A grade penalty will apply for all assignments received from participants who were granted the additional study period. Upon assessment, such assignments will be assessed and awarded either a "maximum pass mark of" 50% or a fail mark.

Formative Practical Assessments: (if applicable)

A student will only receive the opportunity to repeat a practical if they can provide the following:
- a valid doctor's certificate for illness booking them off for the period of the practical, or
- a valid death certificate for a death in their immediate family (direct grandparents, parents, siblings, spouses and children).

The Registrar should receive such letter as soon as possible after the missed assessment.

Summative Assessments - Examinations

Rules for admission to examinations and supplementary examinations are set out in the examination rules and regulations of the institution (See policy A8: Examinations).

All students must complete and submit the formative assessment requirements as set out in the study guide. The formative assessments will be used to calculate the module/year/semester mark which contributes a specific percentage towards the final mark - all set out in the study guide. A module/year/semester mark of 40% is required to be allowed to write summative examinations.

The summative examination mark, as set out in the study guide, contributes a specific percentage towards the final mark. An examination mark of 50% is required to pass the exam. A final mark of 50 % is required to pass the module.

Rounding up of marks
- The final mark for a module or programme must be rounded up or down by the Moderator.
- Marks should be rounded up or down to two decimal points:
  - Marks that are less than or equal to ≤0,4 are rounded down.
  - Marks that are greater than or equal to ≥0,5 are rounded up.
- A final mark of 49% is a rounded up to 50% (pass) and 74% is rounded up to 75% (distinction).

A student will only be given the opportunity to write a supplementary examination if they can provide the following:
- a valid doctor's certificate for illness booking them off for the period of the examination, or
- a valid death certificate for a death in their immediate family (direct grandparents, parents, siblings, spouses and children) or
- a mark of 45 – 49 % in the summative examination.

Summative Assessments - Portfolios of evidence (POE):

50% is required to pass a POE or Research Project. An incomplete POE must be resubmitted including outstanding evidence. Failing to do so before a final deadline will result in the POE not being accepted for final certification.

Appeals Procedures

FPD's rules of appeal allow students to appeal any assessment decision. As per the study guide, the appeal process will commence when the student applies for appeal by means of a written application (letter or e-mail) to the Registrar.

Quality Assurance of Assessment

An Assessment of Learning Policy must be in place to ensure that the assessment process complies with the principles of good assessment, namely fairness, validity, reliability and practicability.

Quality assurance procedures include internal and external moderation, internal and external examination, staff development in assessment, analysis of assessment results, correct combination of formative and summative assessment, and adherence to principles of assessment.

These issues are all addressed in the review process following assessments, and any shortcomings identified in any of the above processes must be incorporated into future assessments.

Students' final marks must be submitted to the Academic Committee for approval before being released to students.

Accountabilities

The Academic Committee is responsible for review and approval of this policy on an annual basis. The policy is to be distributed to staff via induction and distributed to students and FPD's community via the website and other publications.