

DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY ASSESSMENT POLICY	
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<p style="text-align: center;">Related Policies, Guidelines and Procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DUT Quality Assurance Policy • DUT Teaching and Learning Strategy • Policy and Procedures for Experiential Learning • DUT Examinations Procedures • DUT Recognition of Prior Learning Policy • DUT Research Policy • DUT Policy and Procedures for Non-subsidized Courses • General and Departmental Rules • Plagiarism Policy and Procedures for Staff and Students • Curriculum Renewal at DUT: General Education Guidelines • DUT Higher Degrees Assessment Policy 	

PREAMBLE

Student-centredness as a pedagogical approach and an all-embracing institutional philosophy is a defining feature of the organisational culture of the Durban University of Technology (DUT). Accordingly, the philosophy of student-centredness informs and pervades all institutional policies, rules and procedures, including those relating to learning, teaching and assessment. This policy is no exception. In this policy, various forms, strategies and modes of student assessment are seen as an integral part of the learning and teaching process (including Work integrated learning), which is underpinned by the notions of self-directed learning, student autonomy and critical self-reflection. The policy further seeks to influence and shape practice by foregrounding assessment strategies that require students to think critically about academic issues and problems and to explore a variety of approaches to solving problems in discipline- or profession- specific contexts.

In terms of learning theories and other discipline-specific approaches to learning and teaching in higher education (signature pedagogies), the policy, as a regulatory framework encourages academics to take into account not only demonstrable cognitive skills but also less quantifiable aspects of knowledge and knowledge acquisition, which may relate to values, attitudes, creativity and adaptability.

The policy also takes cognisance of the increasing role of technology in the three intricately intertwined processes of learning, teaching and assessment. The use of e-learning platforms for purposes of assessment is therefore regarded as an inherently student-centred approach to learning and teaching primarily because of the various ways in which it promotes self-regulated and independent learning.

The policy also takes as its point of departure the centrality of complete transparency between, on the one hand, academics who, in most cases, will play the role of assessor and, on the other hand, students whose cognitive competencies and practical skills will be assessed. Transparency will be evident in the clear stipulation of the learning outcomes to be assessed, the assessment criteria, the feedback given, and information on how the feedback is to be used by assessors and students alike. It cannot be overemphasised that prescribed assessment tasks should target the specified module and programme learning outcomes.

All assessments should be formative in nature. Therefore assessment tasks must be designed in ways that enable students to learn from the assessment tasks and from the feedback provided by the assessors.

In academic programmes, assessors must strive to adopt an integrative approach to knowledge that seeks to demonstrate the interconnectedness of knowledge as reflected in the exit-level outcomes of particular academic programmes.

Assessment tasks in various forms must also reflect the increasing cognitive complexity of the knowledge that students are exposed to as they progress from one level of study to another. The academic rigour and intellectual demands of assessment tasks must match both the conceptual and contextual aspects of the academic programme. All modules (and where applicable short courses offered by the university) must be assessed in such a way that students are afforded the opportunity to reflect on the ethical principles, values and personal qualities that are necessary for success in their lives as citizens and professionals who are life-long learners.

This policy is aligned with the current legislative and policy framework governing the South African higher education sector as well as with the requirements of the relevant professional bodies.

1. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

This policy provides a regulatory framework for assessment at DUT. The policy governs

all forms of assessment, which includes but is not limited to self- and peer-assessment, diagnostic assessment, practical assessment, various forms of written formative and summative assessment, practical and project assessment, and oral assessment. The policy further acknowledges the fact that assessment in the various disciplines and professions at DUT is conducted for various purposes and that it occurs in a variety of contexts. As a result, the policy will act as a framework for all assessments, including those that take place in postgraduate programmes (in particular, those with a coursework component) at all National Qualifications Framework (NQF) levels and those that form part of the recognition of prior learning (RPL) processes.

2. AIMS

Departments and Faculties are expected to interpret the policy in the various contexts of implementation. The policy strives to promote a shift in learning, teaching and assessment practices at DUT. The aims listed below seek to foster changes in practice in support of institutional initiatives such as a student-centred philosophy, reflective practice on the part of the staff, and self-directed learning on the part of students:

- 2.1 To offer a regulatory framework that facilitates and frames learning through the provision of explicit, accurate and usable feedback to students in order to enable them to take responsibility for their own learning.
- 2.2 To develop students' reflection on, and self-monitoring of the quality of their own work.
- 2.3 To facilitate progression of DUT students through their learning programmes in accordance with the academic rules of the university.
- 2.4 To encourage academic staff to use various assessment strategies for the purpose of enriching their own teaching and to provide their students with opportunities for self-directed learning and self-assessment.
- 2.5 To foster an attitude of scholarly inquiry (research of practice) on the part of academics (staff members) into assessment as a tool for enhancing the quality of student learning.

3. POLICY

- 3.1 All assessments will be aligned with the learning outcomes as stated in the *Module Descriptor* and *Study Guide* for each module. The latter should indicate details of Faculty-approved approaches and methods of assessment in each module. The *Module Descriptor* must specify whether a module will be assessed by means of an examination or not. In addition, all assessments should comply with and reflect the necessary alignment with the requirements of all official university documents.
- 3.2 In keeping with the principles of internal coherence and interconnectedness of the various components of learning programmes, assessment will be in line with the purpose of the qualification, the themes, goals and objectives of the stated learning programme, and the learning outcomes of the modules.
- 3.3 Students will be assessed using a range of appropriate methods that provide evidence that they have achieved the stated learning outcomes and met the assessment criteria as reflected in the relevant assessment rubric. Integrated assessments across different levels will be applied at module level and in the capstone project/module where it exists.

- 3.4 An *Assessment Plan* will be included in each *Study Guide*. The plan will include a schedule of assessments to be conducted during the semester/year. It will also stipulate assessment criteria and rubrics, assessment methods, and weighting and timing of assessments.
- 3.5 Assessment planning should be performed at Departmental and Programme levels and should include *Assessment Strategies* (Faculty and Departmental), an *Assessment Matrix* for the programme as a whole, and *Assessment Plans* (aligned to the matrix), and should ensure that transparency and fair assessment workloads are considered. The HOD or Programme Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that the assessment plans are moderated.
- 3.6 In instances of student non-compliance with assessment due dates, general Institutional and Departmental rules will apply.
- 3.7 The rules pertaining to admission to examinations where applicable must also be included in the *Study Guide* for each module and must be in line with DUT's General Rules for Students.
- 3.8. The assessment process will afford the students the opportunity to improve their performance through reassessment where applicable and in accordance with university rules.

For summative assessments including examinations, students will be reassessed in the following instances:

3.8.1 If the student has not achieved the required level of competence and has attained between 45% and 49% (inclusive) or as prescribed by the Faculty or Department.

3.8.2 If the student is absent from any assessment for any valid reason.

3.8.3 Where there are documented irregularities in the assessment process.

3.8.4 With regard to reassessments, mechanisms will be provided for student appeal.

3.9 Examiners and Moderators

Both internal and external moderation will ensure that students are assessed in a consistent, fair and accurate manner. Moderation will also ensure that all assessors are using appropriate assessment methods, at the appropriate level, and are making similar, consistent and academically credible judgments about students' performance. It is worth pointing out that the roles of the internal and external moderators are not substantially different.

The appointment of internal and external moderators and examiners is the responsibility of the Academic Department, subject to approval by the relevant Faculty Board. In order to get new perspectives on the assessment quality and standards, Faculties must appoint new moderators every three (3) years or justify why moderators will need to be retained.

3.9.1 Internal Examiners

Academic staff who teach a module are responsible for designing, implementing and marking both formative and summative student assessments, for recording and analysis of the results, and for giving feedback to students appropriately and in a timely manner.

3.9.2 Internal Moderators

- Internal moderation is conducted to evaluate assessment practices, approaches and mark allocations in order to provide developmental feedback to staff based on this.
- For summative assessments a representative sample of the students' work will be moderated. Where more than one marker is involved the sample will include scripts marked by each of the markers.
- The *Assessment Plan*, which includes assessment methods, will be moderated against the learning outcomes of the subject, before the commencement of the module.

3.9.3 External Moderators

External moderators are academic peers who are independent experts whose appointment must be reviewed annually by Departments. In some cases, external moderators may be professionals in industry. All modules at or above the NQF level of the qualification must be externally moderated by a peer with the minimum of a masters degree or equivalent professional qualification, as approved by the Faculty Board. External moderators will be given copies of the *Study Guide*, which incorporates the relevant *Assessment Plan*. External moderators may recommend that the marks of individual students or the entire group be adjusted and may comment on the following aspects of the assessment process:

- The validity of the assessment methods used in relation to learning outcomes.
- Student performance as assessed against stated outcomes, professional standards and generic qualification standards.
- The reliability and consistency of the marking process.
- Any concerns relating to irregularities and other issues with regard to DUT and/or professional standards and regulations.
- Recommendations with regard to calculation errors.

3.10 Security arrangements must be in place for overall management of assessments, to ensure the integrity of assessment data.

3.10.1 Executive Deans working in collaboration with Heads of Department are accountable for security arrangements to ensure the integrity of the assessment data.

3.10.2 An examination audit panel is responsible for checking and verifying all examination results.

3.10.3 All marks for assessments will be entered onto ITS in a timely manner to allow the Examinations Department to publish student results in line with the university calendar. The recommended period for entering assessment marks on ITS is within ten (10) working days of the date of the assessment.

3.10.4 Results are published by the respective Faculty Offices.

3.11 The review of assessment practices will be conducted annually by the relevant Head of Department through the Annual Quality Monitoring process and every six (6) years through Programme Review and Evaluation. Assessment practices may also be reviewed thematically.

3.12 Continuous Assessment is governed by the principles of assessment as outlined in this policy. As an assessment approach, continuous assessment involves the use of a variety of assessment instruments to assess the various components of learning within the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. These assessments are conducted at regular intervals over the course of a module and are premised on a developmental approach. This requires scaffolding learning and providing regular feedback within a stipulated time to students. Continuous assessment serves to determine the students' achievement of learning outcomes, to identify learning and teaching challenges, and to inform curriculum-planning decisions. There should be consistency within each programme regarding the types, number and weighting of assessments as well as re-assessments. The staff who teach on a module are responsible for structuring, designing and implementing the continuous assessment plan for the module. The Assessor should ensure that the combination of assessments addresses all the outcomes of the module and that the assessment methods used are fair, valid, reliable and trustworthy. There should also be reliability and consistency in the generation of marks and the calculation of the final mark of the module.

4. APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all academic programmes of the university at all sites of delivery (including sites for work placement), Work Integrated Learning (WIL) as well as Postgraduate Diplomas, structured/professional Masters Degrees. In this regard the policy must be read and implemented in conjunction with the Higher Degrees Assessment Policy.

5. DEFINITIONS

TERM	EXPLANATION
Assessment criteria	Assessment criteria are statements whereby an assessor can judge whether the evidence provided by a student is sufficient to demonstrate competent performance.
Assessment Plan	The <i>Assessment Plan</i> stipulates the learning outcomes, assessment criteria, assessment methods and timing of assessment.
Competence	This refers to the achievement on the part of the student of the stated learning outcomes and standards of performance.
Current (assessment)	Assessment is current when evidence produced by the student is related to the applicability of skills, knowledge and understanding in the current context.
Fairness	Assessments are fair when the process is clear, transparent and available to all students. Inclusive and equitable assessment ensures that tasks and procedures do not disadvantage any group or individual.
Feedback	This refers to the information – in the form of explicit comments and suggestions – that allows the student to improve his/her learning and performance.
Formative assessment	This refers to assessment that is used to support the student developmentally and to feed back into the teaching and learning process. This suggests that there is a relationship between assessment, learning and teaching, and that assessment informs and strengthens both the teaching and learning processes.
Continuous assessment	Continuous assessment (CA), which is largely formative, is an assessment approach that involves the assessment of all the outcomes of a module by means of a variety of methods, with timely and frequent feedback to the student throughout the module. CA collectively informs a final mark for the student for that module.
Integrated assessment	This refers to assessment that makes use of a 'holistic' approach, in that the tasks combine the assessment of a variety of different skills at the same time; and/or assess a number of outcomes together; and/or assess a number of assessment criteria together; and/or use a combination of assessment methods and instruments; and/or acquire evidence from other sources, for example, portfolios, journals, logbooks, and supervisor reports.

Moderation	Moderation means the process that ensures that assessment is fair, valid, reliable and practicable.
Outcomes	This refers to contextually demonstrated knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that a student must achieve by the end of the formal learning process.
Practicable (assessment)	Assessment is practicable when it takes into account the available resources – human, financial, and physical. The amount of assessed work required will be manageable in terms of the demands on students' time.
Quality assurance	This requires ensuring that agreed standards are met, and that steps are taken to improve quality where problems are identified. It also refers to accreditation processes.
Relevance	Assessment is relevant when it reflects the nature of the programme, and its purpose and outcomes, including critical cross-field outcomes.
Reliability	Assessment is reliable when its processes are dependable and it focuses on the specified learning outcomes.
Standards	These are nationally agreed statements of outcomes and assessment criteria, against which performance is assessed.
Student autonomy	Assessment will encourage student autonomy when the student progressively learns to be self-sufficient, self-directed and self-reflective.
Sufficient	Assessment is sufficient when there is enough evidence to meet all the criteria needed to certify that the student is competent. The use of various sources of evidence and a variety of assessment activities will ensure that the evidence is sufficient.
Summative assessment	This means assessment that makes possible total evaluation of the extent of the student's progress at the end of a module or finite part of the programme. Results of summative assessment may be used to determine whether the student may proceed to the next level of study in a programme.
Validity	Assessment is valid when it effectively measures student attainment of intended learning outcomes at the required level.

6. CONTACT FOR SUPPORT

The *Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching* (CELT). Resources will be developed by CELT to promote good practice in assessment.

7. POLICY AUTHORITY/DOCUMENT OWNER

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning)

8. RELATED POLICIES

See cover page.

9. IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

Subsequent to the approval of this policy by Senate, all staff will implement the policy from 13 March 2019. Various forms of context-specific support will be provided by CELT to academic staff to enable them to apply effective, innovative, and relevant approaches and strategies to student assessment. The policy will be available to all staff on the DUT intranet. All documentation should use terminology consistent with that used in the definition of terms under Section 5 of this policy.

10. MONITORING

10.1 **Institutional level:** Responsibility for monitoring DUT's Assessment Policy, procedures and regulations will lie with Senate, which will ensure that academic and administrative procedures related to assessment (including resources and infrastructure) operate in line with the philosophy, principles and intent of the policy. This will be effected through the Quality Assurance Committee, a sub-committee of Senate.

10.2 **Faculty level:** Overall responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of this policy and related procedures within Faculties will lie with the respective **Faculty Board** under the leadership of the **Executive Dean**. The Faculty Board must approve the appointment of examiners and moderators in line with the criteria for appointment of examiners and moderators.

All Faculties and Departments will state their Assessment Rules and Regulations, in Faculty, School and Departmental rules documents.

10.3 **Departmental level:** The **Academic Head of Department** will be responsible for ensuring that the quality of all Departmental offerings meets the requirements of the registered standards and qualifications and that the Departmental offerings are in alignment with DUT policies and procedures for quality promotion and assurance. The **Head of Department** together with the **Programme Co-ordinator** will assume day-to-day responsibility for assessment of qualification outcomes in terms of an approved *Assessment Plan*, including the nomination of examiners and moderators. The Head of Department will 1) develop and document a system for quality management of assessment, and 2) ensure that over-assessment does not occur.

10.4 **The Centre for Quality Promotion and Assurance (CQPA)** will conduct thematic reviews across the university on various aspects of assessment and will make recommendations for improvement. Specific recommendations may also emerge through programme review and evaluation. These recommendations will be submitted to the Quality Assurance Committee and the Senate, for discussion.