Assessment Strategy

Writing the assessment strategy for a module

The assessment strategy of a module should adhere to the national policies as well as the *SU Assessment policy* (2021) and the rules, regulations and guidelines about assessment as described in the SU Calendar (Part 1): General (applicable from 2023). The information on assessment in the module specification should correspond with the faculty's assessment plan.

	Take note:
In the *SU Assessment policy* (2021), assessment is defined as follows:	

> **Assessment** *refers to the systematic evaluation of students' abilities to demonstrate their having achieved the learning goals set for a curriculum[1]. This can include a variety of tasks, products, outputs or competencies used to gather evidence and compare the students' performance against the set assessment criteria and outcomes.*

Adhering to the principles of assessment

The *SU Assessment policy* (2021) indicates the following policy principles that are applicable to defining an assessment strategy for a module:

- The University's vision, mission and values guide learning, teaching and assessment. Assessment forms the essence of an **integrated approach to student learning** where assessment constitutes the learning and teaching practice through which the most direct influence may be exerted on student learning, as well as the practice in which most is at stake for students.

- This policy promotes assessment that **enhances student learning**. This is achieved specifically by means of *formative* assessments (assessments *for* learning), which offer students opportunities to learn how to judge their own understanding. Thus they are prepared for *summative* assessments (assessments *of* learning), which are implemented to measure (by lecturers, peers and students themselves) what learning has been achieved. According to this approach, assessment happens not only at the end of the learning process but throughout, and the formative and sustainable elements of assessment are emphasised.

- This policy situates assessment as an integrated part of a learning and teaching process that **constructively aligns** learning outcomes, learning opportunities and assessment practices (Biggs, 1996).

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[1] Council on Higher Education. 2016. Policies on the Recognition of Prior Learning, Credit Accumulation and Transfer, and Assessment in Higher Education [Online]. Available: https://fundisa.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/RPL-CAT-Assessment-Policy-Document.pdf [2020, October 7].

- This policy advocates a **flexible** assessment approach that encourages faculties and responsibility centres to do various assessments throughout the learning period of the module to contribute to the final mark. Although test-type assessments during dedicated assessment periods are still widely used where necessary, the University's **position is that an effective assessment strategy requires consideration of the variety of assessment forms or methods** available.

- This policy assumes that assessors approach assessment as a purposeful activity in which each step of the process has been carefully considered and justified. Such assessment strategies **do not privilege one form/method or purpose of assessment over another**; instead, they include the following:

    o A sufficient number of appropriate **formative** assessment opportunities allow students to judge their progress before the final summative assessment. Essential in the process of formative assessment is adequate learning-centred feedback to inform future decisions. This feedback need not be one-to-one or lecturer generated but can also be automated, self- or peer-generated.

    o Reliable and fair **summative** assessments that produce valid conclusions about students' progress and achievement or mastery of the study material. The validity of decisions about student achievement depends significantly on the reliability and replicability of the assessment methods, the fairness of the assessment strategies and the transparency of the assessment process.

    o A sufficient number of opportunities to develop the skill of **lifelong learning or sustainable assessment**; encapsulated by the SU graduate attribute "an enquiring mind". One way of serving this end goal is to deliver students who can assess their own work and that of others fairly, i.e. opportunities for self-and peer assessment.

Determining the purposes of assessment

The SU Assessment policy (2021) also outlines the following purposes of assessment that should be carefully considered:

Purpose of assessment	Description
Diagnostic purpose	It evaluates students' strengths, weaknesses, prior knowledge and skills before their instruction; e.g. as a pre-assessment for a module/contact session/tutorial, to decide what action(s) may be required of the students and/or the lecturer, or for the purpose of selection, admission and/or placement.
Formative purpose Assessment *FOR* learning	It serves the learning process primarily by offering students an opportunity to develop the requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes with the aid of learning-centred feedback; self- and peer

Purpose of assessment	Description
	assessment also can promote learning, as this requires students to engage with the assessment criteria.
Summative purpose Assessment *OF* learning	It informs decisions and findings on students' progress, e.g. for promotion or certification, to make value judgements about their performance; summative purposes also include selection, admission and placements.
Sustainable purpose Assessment *AS* learning	It helps to encourage students to become lifelong learners who can judge their own performance; self-and peer assessments are key in this regard.
Evaluation purpose Assessment as a *QUALITY* indicator of learning and teaching	It refers to when assessment results are considered along with other information to evaluate the quality of a learning and teaching event/module/programme.

	Take note:
In the module specification, the use of formative assessment (i.e. assessment *for* learning) and summative assessment (i.e. assessment *of* learning) should be **clearly defined**.	

Deciding on the assessment methods

It is also necessary to carefully consider on the specific assessment method(s) to be used in the assessment strategy as these determine the nature of the assessment task(s) to be undertaken by students. These can be grouped into five broad group categories:

Assessment methods	Assessment tasks
Tests and examinations	Tests and examinations include selected and/or structured answers, oral, practical, lab or clinical exams
Assignments	Assignments include written assignments, lab reports, reports, etc.
Assessments based on observation	Assessments based on observation or records of practice include logbooks, portfolios of evidence etc.

Assessment methods	Assessment tasks
Assessments based on research	Assessments based on research include research proposals, research reports, theses, dissertations, etc.
Other types	Other types of assessment include peer assessment, artistic performance, creative synthesis such as musical compositions, website design, architectural drawings, other types of artefacts, etc.

Defining the other assessment considerations

From an operational and logistical perspective, it is necessary to consider:

- The **number** of assessment opportunities that students will have during the learning period (i.e. year or semester);

- The **mode and medium of assessment**: individual, pairs or groups; written or oral; paper-based or online; use of learning technologies in assessment; use of computer software or other equipment in assessment; weight assigned to each assessment task; how assessment task will be marked, e.g. use assessment criteria and mark allocation as described an assessment rubric.

Drafting the assessment plan

	See Annexure 1
Annexure 1: Example of how to compile assessment plan in a module specification	

Take note:

Please **adhere to the requirements** applicable from January 2023 as described in the **SU Calendar (Part 1)** on assessments, the processing of marks and publication of results.

For example: Assessment plan

Method of assessment	Description of assessment	Number of assessment opportunities	Weight (%) assigned to each of these assessment opportunities
[refer to the purpose of the assessment, i.e. formative or summative as well as the assessment method to be used]	[describe the methods of assessment e.g. written test, oral presentation, group assignment, etc. as well as the mode of assessment e.g. individual or group, written or oral, paper-based or online, with the use of specific technology, e.g. laboratory equipment, video recording, MS Powerpoint presentation, etc.]	[how many of these assessment tasks are students required to complete]	[what is the total weight assigned to the combination of the assessment tasks listed in the previous column].
For example: **Formative assessment**: Classroom assignment or lab report	Students will individually complete a **written classroom assignment** to [refer to the relevant learning outcome/s to be assessed]. Tutors will use an assessment rubric to assess these assignments. Students will compile, in pairs, a **written lab report** using the specified laboratory equipment and techniques to [refer to the relevant learning	4 (consisting of 5% each)	20%

Method of assessment	Description of assessment	Number of assessment opportunities	Weight (%) assigned to each of these assessment opportunities
or groupwork project, or online game-based teamwork, etc.	outcome/s to be assessed]. Students will use an assessment rubric to complete peer assessment. Students will compile, **in groups of 3-5**, an oral presentation to report verbally on their observations during a site-visit to [refer to the relevant learning outcome/s to be assessed]. Students will be assessed by the lecturer using an assessment rubric. Students will participate, in groups of 3-5, in an **online game-based teamwork activity** to [refer to the relevant learning outcome/s to be assessed]. Students will be assessed automatically by the computer programme against pre-determined criteria.		
For example: **Summative assessment** Written class test	Students will complete a written paper-based test to [refer to learning outcome/s to be assessed – this will often be more than one learning outcome. Students will complete an online test to [refer to learning outcome/s to be assessed – this will often be more than one learning outcome.	2 (consisting of 15% each)	30%
For example: **Summative assessment:** Final summative assessment	Students will complete a written paper-based final summative assessment or examination of [specify the duration, e.g. 3 hours] to [refer to the learning outcome/s to be assessed – in most cases, these should cover the knowledge and skills acquired in the module].	1 (i.e. final assessment mark)	50%