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QUALITY ASSURANCE at Stellenbosch University

Themes and criteria: Evaluation of departments and programmes

Introduction

The policy documents *“Quality Assurance at Stellenbosch University: Points of Departure and Framework” (2011-2016 cycle)* and *“Policy and Procedures for Departmental Evaluation”* stipulate that:

- a. Departments must be evaluated at least once in the 2011-2016 cycle,
- b. The evaluation of post-graduate programmes forms part of the periodic evaluation of departments,
- c. The evaluation of undergraduate programmes forms part of the periodic evaluation of faculties.
- d. Departments, whose programmes are accredited by professional bodies, will not be evaluated as *departments*, in terms of the University’s evaluation system for departmental evaluations (these departments can apply at the Quality Assurance committee that SU’s evaluation be replaced by the evaluation of the professional bodies),
- e. Postgraduate programmes offered in departments responsible for professional undergraduate programmes, have to be evaluated according to the SU system for programmes evaluations.

The *Policy and procedures for Departmental Evaluation (2011-2016)*, determines that “[b]ecause the evaluation of postgraduate programmes (with a view to accreditation) takes place during the departmental evaluation, this evaluation needs to meet the minimum requirements for programmes accreditation prescribed by the HEQC (Higher Education Quality Committee)”.

The above principle is expanded on in this document. It specifies in closer detail the criteria to be used for each of the abovementioned purposes, i.e. departmental evaluations and programmes evaluations. The criteria in this document are based on the HEQC’s audit and programme criteria, which has been adapted to fulfil the institution’s own needs, whilst also still adhering to national requirements. Departments and programme committees are free to develop additional criteria and to evaluate themselves according to those criteria.

The criteria are as follows:

- Section A** - Criteria for the evaluation of departments
- Section B** - Criteria for the evaluation of postgraduate programmes
- Section C** - Criteria for the evaluation of undergraduate modules
- Section D** - Criteria for the evaluation of undergraduate programmes

In support of the evaluations based on the above criteria, the following core information will be provided by the Division for Institutional Research and Planning:

- » Strategic management indicators
- » Total number of module enrolments
- » FTE-student enrolments
- » FTE-staff
- » FTE students per FTE teaching/research staff member
- » Publication units (PU) per FTE-SLE₂ per department and faculty
- » Post level utilization: Teaching/research staff with permanent appointments
- » Undergraduate module-results according to module, race and gender (over a period of at least 3 years)
- » Number of post-graduate qualifications awarded according to major field of specialisation
- » Graduation rates for post-graduate programmes, if there are more than 30 enrolments per programme (over a period of 3 years)
- » Study history of all enrolled post-graduate students in the year of evaluation

¹ The information is provided for at least the 3 years preceding the year of evaluation.

² The FTE-SLE is an adapted FTE-C1-staff value. The adaptation factor is calculated by weighing the various C1 levels in the department. The weights are determined from the remuneration-scales (max) for each level, with senior lecturer having a weight of 1.

Section A

CRITERIA FOR THE EVALUATION OF DEPARTMENTS

As explained in the introduction, departmental evaluations consist of 3 parts: the evaluation of the departments as organisational unit, the evaluation of the post-graduate programmes that resort within the department administratively and the evaluation of undergraduate modules offered by the department. The criteria for departmental evaluations therefore include *SECTION A* (organisational functioning of the department), *SECTION B* (postgraduate programmes) and *SECTION C* (undergraduate modules).

A 1: Departmental management, leadership, and general functioning	
1.1	The department's academic direction, focus areas, content and outputs meet the requirements associated with academic excellence and appropriateness.
1.2	The department achieves the goals set by the strategic management indicators (goals can be set either by the Dean or the department).
1.3	Succession planning in terms of departmental management and senior staff takes place.
1.4	Internationalisation is purposefully striven towards.

A 2: Research	
2.1	The mission of the department includes attention to the promotion of research.
2.2	A policy and/or plan exist that indicates the role of research in the department. Implementation of such policy/or plan is continuously monitored.
2.3	The department's research focus areas are academically grounded.
2.4	Strategy for research development exists which includes capacity development for researchers, especially black and female researchers.
2.5	Academic staff has research experience and produce recognised research outputs.
2.6	Explicit and clear criteria exist for the approval of research proposals.
2.7	Research is done at local and national level, and is done in cooperation with other institutions (locally, nationally and internationally).

A 3: Community interaction	
3.1	The department's community interaction adheres to the institutional Community Interaction Policy.
3.2	Community interaction is part of the department's mission, and attempts are made to promote community interaction in the department.
3.3	Community interaction is appropriately integrated with teaching and learning and research.
3.4	The department's CI activities are academically grounded and of a high standard.

A 4: Short courses	
4.1	The development, approval, delivery and evaluation of short courses adheres to US policy concerning short courses.
4.2	The impact of short courses is monitored and evaluated based on the department's mission.

A 5: Staff	
5.1	Academic staff (including assessors, moderators and supervisors) has relevant qualifications, at least at the same level as the exit level of the programme.
5.2	Majority of academic staff have more than 2 years teaching experience in areas relevant to the programme. In the case of professional programmes, a sufficient number of academic staff members also have relevant professional experience.
5.3	Academic staff in the programme is competent to apply the assessment policies of the institution. There is on-going professional development and training of staff as assessors.
5.4	Academic staff has research experience and deliver recognised research outputs.
5.5	Orientation and induction opportunities are available for new staff members (including PREDAC). Provision is made for regular staff development opportunities in which academic staff participate.

5.6	The programme has an appropriate ratio between full-time and part-time staff to ensure that there are no quality risks.
5.7	The academic staff complement is such that it ensures that students are exposed to a diversity of ideas, styles and approaches.
5.8	Procedures for recruitment, selection, appointment and payment are in line with the Basic Conditions of Employment and Labour Relations acts. Redress and equity receives attention.
5.9	Contractual arrangements relating to the hours and workload of staff ensure that all programme quality assurance, teaching, research, learning support, materials development, assessment, monitoring of part-time staff (where applicable), counselling and administrative activities take place.
5.10	Sufficient administrative and technical staff members are available.

A 6: Infrastructure

6.1	Suitable and sufficient venues are available at all official sites of learning, including teaching and learning venues, laboratories and clinical facilities, where appropriate.
6.2	Suitable and sufficient IT infrastructure and training is available.
6.3	Suitable and sufficient library resources are available.
6.4	Policies exist for the proper management and maintenance of library resources.
6.5	The use of library resources is integrated with the curriculum.
6.6	Sufficient library support is given. Students (both on and off campus) have sufficient access to library resources.

CRITERIA FOR THE EVALUATION OF *POST-GRADUATE PROGRAMMES*

B 1: Programme design	
1.1	The programme fits within the department and the faculty's goals and planning.
1.2	The programme content is academically grounded.
1.3	Programme outcomes, learning methods, learning material and expected time of completion cater for the learning needs of its target student intake and other stakeholders.
1.4	The design maintains an appropriate balance of theoretical, practical and experiential knowledge and skills.
1.5	Modules in the programme are coherently planned with regard to content, theoretical depth, level, credits, purpose, outcomes, rules of combination, relative weight and delivery.
1.6	The design offers learning and career pathways to students with opportunities for articulation with other programmes.
1.7	Programme outcomes meet national and/or regional labour market, knowledge or other socio-cultural needs. The requirements of professional bodies are taken into consideration, where applicable.
1.8	Policy and guidelines exist for the development and evaluation of learning material.
B 2: Student recruitment and selection	
2.1	Advertising and promotional materials contain accurate and sufficient information on the programme with regard to admission policies, completion requirements and academic standards.
2.2	Appropriate policy and procedures are in place for selection and admission of students. Selection criteria are in line with the institutional priority to promote diversity, and are applied consistently.
2.3	The quality and number of students take professional needs into account.
2.4	Student numbers do not exceed the programme's capacity to deliver quality teaching.
B 3: Strategy for Teaching and Learning	
3.1	Recognition of the importance of the promotion of student learning is reflected in the department's/faculty's mission and including resource allocation.
3.2	A teaching and learning strategy is in place which is appropriate for the institutional type, mode(s) of delivery (contact / distance / e-learning), and its student composition, etc.
3.3	Appropriate teaching and learning methods are used. The design and use of learning materials and instructional and learning technology receives appropriate attention.
3.4	Targets, plans for their implementation and ways of monitoring progress exist.
3.5	Guidance is given to students regarding programme outcomes and programme integration.
3.6	Suitable learning opportunities are provided to facilitate the acquisition of the knowledge and skills specified in the programme outcomes.
3.7	Opportunities for work based learning are created where possible and guidelines for the management thereof exist.
B 4: Assessment policy, procedures and practices	
4.1	Assessment and moderation practices adhere to the University's policies.
4.2	Policy and procedures are in place for monitoring student progress throughout the programme.
4.3	Policy and procedures are in place to ensure the validity and reliability of assessment practices.
4.4	Policy exists for secure and reliable recording of assessment results, settling of student disputes regarding assessment results, ensuring the security of the assessment system, especially with regard to plagiarism and other misdemeanours, and development of staff competence in assessment.
4.5	Policy and procedures are in place for the assessment and recognition of prior learning (ARPL) and it is applied effectively and consistently.
4.6	Assessment criteria are aligned with programme and module outcomes.
4.7	Faculty and institutional policy and rules for assessment are communicated to students, as well as students' rights and responsibilities in this regard.
4.8	There are clear and consistent published guidelines/regulations for marking and grading of results, aggregation of marks and grades, progression and final awards, credit allocation and articulation.

B 5: Supervision	
5.1	Policy, rules, and procedures for the appointment of supervisors are acceptable to the research community within the field of study. This includes that supervisors should have good research records, experience, expertise and peer recognition, and that joint-supervision should be considered as an option.
5.2	Explicit guidelines exist regarding the roles and responsibilities of supervisors and students. The department adheres to institutional policy in this regard.
5.3	Students are trained in research methodology.

B 6: Programme coordination	
6.1	Programme coordinators are appointed for programmes and their mandate and responsibilities are explicit.
6.2	Opportunities for student input and participation in programme planning and evaluation are created.
6.3	Programme coordinators monitor information regarding retention and throughput rates.
6.4	The class profile at enrolment and completion is comparable in terms of race and gender.

B 7: Academic development for student success	
7.1	Student and staff development initiatives are aligned with their development needs.
7.2	Curriculum development includes strategies for language competence development and development of numerical and cognitive skills that can improve disciplinary discourse.
7.3	Feedback regarding development initiatives are used for improvement and is monitored.

B 8: Programme evaluation	
8.1	There is evidence that the programme attempts to have an impact on the employability of students, where this is a desired outcome of the programme.
8.2	Conscious efforts are made to get the programme acknowledged externally.
8.3	User surveys are undertaken at regular intervals for feedback from academics involved in the programme, graduates, peers, external moderators, professional bodies and employers and used to develop improvement plans.
8.4	Impact studies are regularly undertaken to measure and evaluate the impact of the programme and its graduates.

CRITERIA FOR THE EVALUATION OF UNDERGRADUATE MODULES

C 1: Module design	
1.1	Module outcomes, learning methods, and learning material sees to the needs of the students and other stakeholders.
1.2	The module content is academically grounded.
1.3	The module designs maintain, where possible, an appropriate balance between theoretical, practical and experiential knowledge and skills.
1.4	Modules in the department are planned coherently in terms of content, level, purpose, outcomes and progression.
1.5	Policy or guidelines exist for the development and evaluation of learning material.

C 2: Teaching and learning strategy	
2.1	Appropriate teaching and learning methods are used. The design and use of learning materials and instructional and learning technology receives appropriate attention.
2.2	Targets, plans for their implementation and ways of monitoring progress exist.
2.3	Guidance is given to students regarding module outcomes and module coherence.
2.4	The effectiveness of teaching and learning interactions is regularly monitored and evaluated. Results of such processes are used for improvement.
2.5	Suitable learning opportunities are provided to facilitate the acquisition of the knowledge and skills specified in the programme outcomes.

C 3: Assessment policy, procedures and practices	
3.1	Assessment and moderation practices adhere to institutional policy.
3.2	Policy and procedures are in place for monitoring student progress in modules.
3.3	Policy and procedure ensures the validity and reliability of assessment practices.
3.4	Policy exists for secure and reliable recording of assessment results, settling of student disputes regarding assessment results, ensuring the security of the assessment system, especially with regard to plagiarism and other misdemeanours, and development of staff competence in assessment.
3.5	Assessment criteria are aligned with programme and module outcomes.
3.6	Faculty and institutional policy and rules for assessment are communicated to students, as well as students' rights and responsibilities in this regard.
3.7	There are clear and consistent published guidelines/regulations for marking and grading of results, aggregation of marks and grades, progression and final awards, credit allocation and articulation.

C 4: Academic development for student success	
4.1	Student and staff development initiatives are aligned with their development needs.
4.2	Curriculum development includes strategies for language competence development and development of numerical and cognitive skills that can improve disciplinary discourse.
4.3	Feedback regarding development initiatives are used for improvement and is monitored.

CRITERIA FOR THE EVALUATION OF UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

D 1: Programme design	
1.1	The programme is consonant with the faculty's mission, planning and resource allocation.
1.2	The programme content is academically grounded.
1.3	Programme outcomes, learning methods, learning material and expected time of completion cater for the learning needs of its target student intake and other stakeholders.
1.4	The design maintains an appropriate balance of theoretical, practical and experiential knowledge and skills. It has sufficient disciplinary content and theoretical depth at the appropriate level.
1.5	Modules and/or courses in the programme are coherently planned with regard to content, level, credits, purpose, outcomes, and rules of combination, relative weight and delivery.
1.6	The design offers learning and career pathways to students with opportunities for articulation with other programmes within and across institutions, where possible.
1.7	Programme outcomes meet national and/or regional labour market, knowledge or other socio-cultural needs. The requirements of professional bodies are taken into consideration, where applicable.
1.8	Policy and guidelines exist for the development and evaluation of learning material.

D 2: Student recruitment and selection	
2.1	Advertising and promotional materials contain accurate and sufficient information on the programme with regard to admission policies, completion requirements and academic standards.
2.2	Admission requirements are explicit and in line with the national goal of widening access to higher education. Provision is made, where possible, for flexible entry routes, incl. RPL.
2.3	Appropriate policy and procedures are in place for selection and admission of students. Selection criteria are in line with the institutional priority to promote diversity, and are applied consistently.
2.4	The quality and number of students take professional needs into account.
2.5	Student numbers do not exceed the programme's capacity to deliver quality teaching.

D 3: Staff	
3.1	Academic staff (assessors, moderators and supervisors) has relevant qualifications higher than the exit level of the programme, but at the minimum, a degree.
3.2	Majority of academic staff have more than 2 years teaching experience in areas relevant to the programme. In the case of professional programmes, a sufficient number of academic staff members also have relevant professional experience.
3.3	Academic staff in the programme is competent to apply the assessment policies of the institution. There is on-going professional development and training of staff as assessors.
3.4	Academic staff has research experience and deliver recognised research outputs.
3.5	Orientation and induction opportunities are available in which new academic staff members participate, incl. PREDAC. Provision is made for regular staff development opportunities in which relevant academic staff participate.
3.6	The academic staff complement is such that it ensures that students are exposed to a diversity of ideas, styles and approaches.
3.7	Procedures for recruitment, selection, appointment and payment are in line with the Basic Conditions of Employment and Labour Relations acts. Redress and equity receives attention.
3.8	Contractual arrangements relating to the hours and workload of staff ensure that all programme quality assurance, teaching, research, learning support, materials development, assessment, monitoring of part-time staff (where applicable), counselling and administrative activities take place.
3.9	Sufficient administrative and technical staff members are available, especially also for distance education programmes.

D 4: Strategy for Teaching and Learning	
4.1	A Strategy for Teaching and Learning is in place that reflects the institutional type, methods of representation and student composition of programmes.
4.2	Teaching and learning methods are appropriate for the design and use of learning materials and instructional and learning technology.
4.3	Targets, plans for their implementation and ways of monitoring progress exist. Recognition of the importance of the promotion of student learning is reflected in the faculty's mission and resource allocation.
4.4	Guidance is given to students regarding programme outcomes and programme integration.
4.5	An appropriate balance and mix exists of teaching techniques and the use of technology for teaching and learning.
4.6	Suitable learning opportunities are provided to facilitate the acquisition of the knowledge and skills specified in the programme outcomes.
4.7	The effectiveness of teaching and learning interactions is regularly monitored and the results used for improvement.

D 5: Assessment policy, procedures and practices	
5.1	Policy and procedures are in place for assessment and internal and external moderation.
5.2	External moderation of students' learning achievements is conducted by appropriately qualified personnel. Moderators are appointed in terms of clear criteria and procedures and conduct their responsibilities in terms of clear guidelines.
5.3	Policy and procedures are in place for monitoring student progress in the course of the programme.
5.4	Policy and procedure ensures the validity and reliability of assessment practices.
5.5	Policy exists for secure and reliable recording of assessment results, settling of student disputes regarding assessment results, ensuring the security of the assessment system, especially with regard to plagiarism and other misdemeanours, and development of staff competence in assessment.
5.6	There are appropriate policies and procedures for RPL and it is applied consistently.
5.7	Assessment criteria are aligned with programme and module outcomes.
5.8	Faculty and institutional policy and rules for assessment are communicated to students, as well as students' rights and responsibilities in this regard.
5.9	There are clear and consistent published guidelines/regulations for marking and grading of results, aggregation of marks and grades, progression and final awards, credit allocation and articulation.

D 6: Infrastructure	
6.1	Suitable and sufficient venues are available at all official sites of learning, including teaching and learning venues, laboratories and clinical facilities, where appropriate.
6.2	Suitable and sufficient IT infrastructure and training is available.
6.3	Suitable and sufficient library resources exist which complement the curriculum.
6.4	Policies exist for the proper management and maintenance of library resources.
6.5	Library resources are integrated with the curriculum.
6.6	Sufficient library support is given. Students (both on and off campus) have sufficient access to library resources.

D 7: Programme coordination	
7.1	Programme coordinators are appointed for programmes and their mandate and responsibilities are explicit. The department adheres to institutional policy in this regard.
7.2	Opportunities for student input and participation are created.
7.3	Programme coordinators monitor information regarding retention and throughput rates.
7.4	The class profile at enrolment and completion is comparable in terms of race and gender.

D 8: Academic development for student success	
8.1	Student and staff development initiatives are aligned with their development needs.
8.2	Curriculum development includes strategies for language competence development and development of numerical and cognitive skills that can improve disciplinary discourse.
8.3	Feedback regarding development initiatives are used for improvement and is monitored.

D 9: Work-based learning (where applicable)	
9.1	Learning contracts or agreements are implemented. Regular and effective communication takes place between the institution, students, mentors and employers involved in work-based learning.
9.2	A system is in operation to regularly and systematically record and monitor the progress of the student is learning experience in the workplace.
9.3	A mentor system is in place.

D 10: Programme evaluation	
10.1	There is evidence that the programme attempted to have an impact on the employability of students, where these are the desired outcomes of the programme.
10.2	Conscious efforts are made to get the programme acknowledged externally.
10.3	Student feedback and user surveys are undertaken at regular intervals for feedback from academics involved in the programme, graduates, peers, external moderators, professional bodies and employers and used to develop improvement plans.
10.4	Impact studies are regularly undertaken to measure and evaluate the impact of the programme and its graduates.

