**undergraduate Assessment RULES**

**faculty of arts and social sciences**

**(APRIL 2022)**

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# Introduction

## Background

The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences subscribes to Stellenbosch University’s Assessment Policy and the Assessments and Promotions chapter in the General Part (part 1) of the Calendar. The university-wide assessment rules given in Part 1 of the Calendar apply from 2022 onwards for assessments in all undergraduate and postgraduate modules, and these rules replace the previous examination and flexible assessment systems.

The above-mentioned Assessments and Promotions chapter, which is referred to as the "**SU Assessment Rules**" in the remainder of this document, requires that

* All faculties and centres that host programmes and/or modules must, within the parameters given in this chapter of the Calendar, formulate assessment rules that regulate the assessments of modules and/or programmes hosted by the faculty or centre.
* A faculty's or centre's assessment rules may make provision for a range of assessment schemes so that, for modules hosted by the particular faculty or centre, the home environment may use any compliant assessment scheme without requiring further faculty-level, or higher level, approvals. Also, the rules may make provision for an internal approval process for module-specific assessment schemes.

This document gives the assessment rules that apply in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, and in particular to undergraduate and postgraduate modules with a home department in this faculty and to undergraduate and postgraduate programmes hosted by this faculty. The Faculty's assessment practices are subject to the SU Assessment Rules and to the rules given in this document, which are aligned with the principles and provisions of the Policy. Note that this document does not repeat all the rules given in the Calendar, but some rules are repeated here for ease of reference.

The assessment of Master’s theses and Doctoral dissertations is not addressed here, but in the chapter dealing with "Postgraduate Qualifications" in the General part (Part 1) of the Calendar, with faculty-specific details on the website of the Higher Degrees and Research Committee.

In case of queries not covered by the contents of this document, please contact the chairperson of the Academic Offering Committee and the Vice-Dean for Teaching and Learning for advice.

## Purposes of assessment

This section is taken from the Provisions section of the Assessment Policy and is given here for ease of reference.

Assessments serve various purposes that would further the primary goal of facilitating learning and preparing students for lifelong learning, such as:

* **diagnostic purposes**, which evaluate 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;
* **summative purposes** (i.e. assessment of learning), which inform 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;
* **formative purposes** (i.e. assessment for learning), which serve 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 assessment also can promote learning, as this requires students to engage with the assessment criteria;
* **sustainability purposes** (i.e. assessment as learning), which form students to become lifelong learners who can judge their own performance; self- and peer assessment are key in this regard; and
* **evaluation purposes**, when assessment results are considered along with other information to evaluate the quality of a learning and teaching event/module/programme.

Any assessment may serve more than one purpose.

## Framework for effective assessment

This section is taken from the Provisions section of the Assessment Policy and is given here for ease of reference.

Assessments that promote student learning need to be designed according to the principles of effective assessment. The purpose of the framework below is to provide assessors with guidelines for measuring their assessment practices – individual assessment opportunities as well as processes at module and programme level. Nevertheless, the responsibility remains with faculties and centres and their staff involved in assessment to interpret this framework for their own contexts and implement it accordingly.

Assessors must ensure in every instance that assessments comply with these principles – at all *levels* of assessment (e.g. individual assessment opportunities and at module or programme level) as well as all assessment *methods and instruments* (e.g. online tests and multiple-choice tests).

Important: These principles form an integrated framework and are not to be considered or applied in isolation. Instead, they must be balanced against each other as far as possible. This may mean that individual principles do not apply to the same extent to each assessment; still, each principle applies holistically at modular and/or programme level.

### Validity

 Assessments are valid if they measure what they are supposed to measure, and when the deductions and actions that are based on the assessment results are appropriate and accurate.

Indicators of validity:

a. The assessment component of a programme is planned and developed in a manner that allows students to demonstrate the extent to which they achieved the stated outcomes, both specific and generic.

b. The assessment is aligned with the learning outcomes and assessment opportunities.

c. Measures are in place to ensure that what is assessed will reflect the content of the stated outcomes sufficiently.

d. The assessment methods (for example tests, assignments, tasks, practicals, orals, etc.) are selected according to the nature of the learning outcomes that are being assessed.

e. The number of opportunities for the different types of assessment are in proportion to the different learning outcomes.

### Authenticity

Authentic assessments practices are closely aligned with activities that take place in real-world settings, thereby requiring students to apply relevant skills and knowledge. This could enhance student learning for a changing world and create opportunities to develop and assess graduate attributes where necessary and/or applicable. Authenticity is about creating learning environments that involve true-to-life contexts and scenarios, ensuring that assessments measure whether students can use their knowledge effectively, as opposed to reproducing surface knowledge that is quickly forgotten after the assessment opportunity. This may, however, not be equally relevant to all learning contexts.

Features of authentic assessment include:

a) a task that is aligned to what would be expected of the student in the real world/workplace;

b) a task that produces a polished product with value in its own right;

c) a task that requires higher order thinking, that incorporates reflection and self-assessment;

d) learning opportunities that are seamlessly integrated with the assessment opportunities;

e) a task that requires collaboration between students, and even between students and professionals;

f) students making choices and judgements regarding secondary tasks; and

g) a complex task focusing on an open-ended inquiry, requiring diverse and novel responses.

### Reliability

Reliable assessment consistently distinguishes between performance that is acceptable, exemplary or in need of improvement. The results of individual assessment tasks or opportunities, as well as the results of assessment processes (modules and programmes) must be repeatable in different contexts or over time.

Indicators of reliability:

a) Methods are selected that are known for being reliable in assessing the stated outcomes.

b) Attention is paid to the factors that could influence the reliability of the method.

c) The number and variety of assessment methods are consciously selected to improve their reliability.

d) When one or more examiners are involved in marking the same item, care is taken to ensure uniformity.

e) Assessment criteria is communicated to the students and, where appropriate, to external moderators.

### Educational impact

Assessment influences what, when and how students learn.

Lecturers that assess to promote learning do the following:

a) Employ content-appropriate assessments that are relevant to the set outcomes.

b) Use assessment formats appropriate to the outcomes.

c) Schedule assessments to foster a deeper approach.

d) Consider as far as possible how each individual assessment contributes to the holistic assessment within the module and programme, including how each is aligned with the outcomes and contributes to the final mark.

### Academic integrity

In order to determine whether students have learned and achieved the outcomes of a module or programme, lecturers need to know that the work they are assessing is the students’ own; i.e. that they can count on academic integrity. SU has established procedures to promote the academic integrity of all assessment practices, also in the online environment. This implies that all those involved are fully informed of the University regulations in this regard, as set out in the SU's Policy on Plagiarism (in support of Academic Integrity) (SU, 2016), which applies to invigilated face-to-face as well as online (whether non-invigilated or invigilated) assessments.

### Transparency

Transparent assessment means that students are informed about the reasons for the assessment, when it will take place, etc.

Indicators of transparency:

a) Students are informed of any environment-specific appeal procedures that are additional to those set out in the Calendar (part 1).

b) Students receive clear information about the assessment requirements against which their performance will be measured during the various assessment opportunities and assessment methods.

c) Marks for assessment tasks, as well as the final mark, are determined according to clearly defined assessment criteria, not with reference to the performance of other students.

d) The module framework clearly explains the formula for allocating weighting to different assessment opportunities, according to which the final mark is calculated.

### Fairness

In a fair assessment system, all students are treated without prejudice or discrimination. Assignments for assessment must be formulated in accordance with discipline-specific convention and the provisions of the SU Language Policy.

Indicators of fairness:

a) All students have learning opportunities before assessments take place.

b) The calculation of marks for a module is a considered, justifiable process.

c) Measures are in place to ensure that student performance be judged reliably and validly.

d) A variety of assessment methods are used, where applicable, including formative assessments which allow students to learn from their mistakes before summative assessments take place.

e) The criteria for assessments are communicated to the students before they have to do a task.

f) Purposeful efforts are made to safeguard assessment as far as possible against any intended or unintended forms of unfair discrimination.

### Achievability

The costs and practical implications of the assessment process must be reasonable within the context and the purpose of the assessment. This may include that the timing of each assessment, as well as the time and effort required of students, must be appropriate for the purpose of the assessment and its contribution to the final mark (where applicable).

### Learning-centred feedback

Lecturers must provide feedback that enables the students to distinguish between sections that were completed satisfactorily and those requiring further study. Student learning is promoted and supported not by a one-sided focus on marks, but by supporting students to monitor their own learning and reflect on learning experiences. Learning-centred feedback on formative, summative and sustainable assessment tasks is critical in this regard, but may be inappropriate or unfeasible in the case of some final assessment tasks.

Indicators of feedback that promotes student learning:

a) Formative and sustainable assessment with learning-centred feedback is an integral part of the assessment of programmes and modules, whenever applicable.

b) Assessment opportunities are scheduled throughout the semester to promote the quality of learning, which is encouraged and supported by learning-centred feedback.

c) Students have the opportunity to respond to feedback and thereby improve their performance in subsequent tasks.

d) Student performance is utilised as a source of information for reflecting on teaching and assessment practice.

e) Students are educated in using feedback on assessment to further development.

f) Lecturers continuously reflect on assessment practices by applying the principles of sound assessment and constructive alignment.

# Marks and Assessments Terminology

Please refer to the SU Assessment Rules for the definitions of the subject and module types (e.g. semester module and year module) and the assessment periods. Please note that, as from 2022, the name "duly completed module" has replaced the name "attendance module" and "occasional module" has replaced "extra module".

In accordance with the SU Assessment Rules, the following mark types are recorded in SUNStudent:

MYM (mid-year mark)

The MY is the mid-year mark for undergraduate year modules, typically aggregated from assessments completed during the first semester.

MTD (mark to date)

The MTD is a mark aggregated from assessments completed throughout the course of the module and is used to inform students of their status before A2 assessments, similar to the “class mark” used previously.

A2/A3 mark
An A2 or A3 mark is the mark awarded for an assessment in the respective assessment period.

A4 mark

An A4 mark is determined during January/February assessments and/or other ad hoc times as centrally stipulated (which are distinct from the Dean's Concession Assessments). Note that not all modules offer A4 assessments.

FM (final mark)

The FM reflects the final performance in a module, except in "duly completed modules" (as defined in the SU Assessment Rules).

DCA mark

A DCA mark is determined during a Dean's Concession Assessment.

# Allowable Assessment Arrangements

Staff leading the offering of a module choose an assessment arrangement that

Best suits the outcomes and pedagogical approach selected for the module.

Meets all the requirements of the Assessment Rules of the Faculty.

Meets all the requirements of the SU Assessment Rules, including the following provisions:

The assessment arrangements must provide for processes by which a student’s work in a module is systematically assessed and weighed through consecutive opportunities during the semester or year using a variety of assessment methods, such as assignments, tests, portfolios, orals, practical performance, laboratory investigations, seminars, tutorials and project reports.

The assessment arrangements must support effective assessment, as described in the SU Assessment Policy, which includes the nine criteria for effective assessment. These criteria are: validity, authenticity, reliability, educational impact, academic integrity, transparency, fairness, achievability and learning-centered feedback.

The assessment arrangements must provide for timeous feedback to students after formative and summative assessments during the lecturing period of the semester. The assessments and feedback should afford students the opportunity to advance their own learning and receive feedback on the extent to which they have mastered the module outcomes. Assessments that are primarily intended to be formative may (but need not) play a summative role too (for example short tests during tutorial periods).

No single assessment opportunity may be the sole determination of a pass or fail, except if the Faculty's Assessment Rules expressly permits this situation. If students for any reason do not use an offered assessment opportunity (for example because of assessment timetable conflicts, illness, personal commitments, religious considerations or leave granted by the Registrar), it will still be considered to be an opportunity offered to that student.

Completing additional, optional or supplementary assessments may not reduce a student's final mark.

# Final Mark Calculation

## General Provisions

The final marks for modules are calculated and entered on SUNStudent by the module's home department or centre.

Environments are to use the final mark calculation indicated on the given module’s Form B or, where there were updates to this calculation that were approved through the correct channels, the latest version of this calculation.

Students must be made aware at the start of a module of the exact formula(e) and manner by which their marks will be calculated.

New calculations for marks for a given module may only be applied after it has been approved by the Academic Offering Committee.

All marks in the formulae are out of 100, as required by the SU Assessment Rules.

If a student did not complete an assessment, no mark is recorded on SUNStudent for that assessment.

Final marks are to be handled using the following provisions:

Final marks are to be loaded as integers.

The rounding of marks should be done according to transparent considerations and processes.

Final marks between 35 and 50 are awarded in multiples of 5.

If a student did not demonstrate a particular outcome that was specified in the module framework as a pass requirement, the final mark may not exceed 45.

If a student did not complete an assessment identified as compulsory for a given module, the module will be considered as incomplete irrespective of the average mark obtained for remaining assessments and the appropriate code entered in lieu of a mark.

## Weightings for final marks

4.2.1. For a semester module, no single assessment may contribute more than 60% to the FM.

4.2.2. For a year module, no single assessment may contribute more than 30% to the FM.

## Provisions for modules previously using the examination system

Modules with a major summative assessment at the end of the module (previously known as the examination system) use the following guidelines, unless a different calculation has been approved as described in 4.1.4.:

4.3.1. An MTD of at least 40% is required for access to the final assessment.

4.3.2. The MTD and A2/A3 mark are combined in the ratio as described in 4.1.2 and 4.1.3, and subject to the limitations in 4.2.

4.3.3. If the mark in the final assessment is 50 or more, the student may not be awarded an FM of less than 50.

4.3.4. If the mark in the A2 assessment is between 40 and 49.5, the student is given access to the A3 assessment (formerly known as the second examination opportunity). The mark awarded for the A3 assessment may not exceed 50, but if it is lower than the mark for the A2 assessment, the A2 mark stands.

4.3.5. If a student has access to the A3 assessment but does not use the opportunity, the mark from the A2 assessment stands.

4.3.6. For students who write only the A3 assessment, the provision in 4.3.3. applies and there is no further opportunity to write another final assessment.

## Provisions for A4 assessments

Provisions for A4 assessments are to be determined based on the standard provisions for modules listed above and the current context. An A4 assessment is typically not a standalone event, but replaces an assessment that was missed or deferred earlier in the module, typically due to factors beyond the control of the environment and the student. The marks from these assessments would therefore be included in the relevant calculation of the FM and other marks, as applicable.

# Use of and Access to Assessments

In modules where tests are included as a part of the assessment structure, there is only one opportunity to write the test assessment and this is the default. Students may not choose to write the supplementary test. Access to the supplementary test may be granted in accordance with the following provisions:

#### If a student misses an assessment due to medical reasons or a clash with a scheduled assessment in another module, the student is granted access to an additional assessment opportunity.

#### If a student misses an assessment opportunity due to circumstances beyond their control (e.g. medical reasons, religious considerations, accidents), the home environment of the module may decide whether to grant access to a supplementary assessment opportunity based on the verification and approval of the reasons for missing the original opportunity.

In modules that use a major summative assessment at the end, students may decide whether they will write the first or the second opportunity as their first attempt. Students are strongly encouraged to write the first opportunity because students forfeit access to a supplementary assessment when they do not write the first opportunity, which would result in these students failing the module if they are, for example, sick at the time of the subsequent opportunity.

Students should note that the SU Assessment Rules include that the decision to make use of an assessment is irreversible once a student has entered the venue for that assessment. A mark will be determined for that assessment and may be used in the calculation of the student's final mark. Even if a student becomes ill while writing an assessment, the student must complete the assessment session.

Final-year students who, irrespective of the reason, make use of an assessment in a module during the A3 period in November, cannot receive a qualification that requires the particular module during the graduation ceremonies in December of that year. The earliest that the student can receive the qualification is in March or April of the following year.

# Discussing Marked Answer Scripts with Staff

Students may view and discuss their marked answer scripts with the lecturer concerned, subject to the following provisions:

The opportunity to discuss marked answer scripts with the lecturer(s) concerned is not an opportunity for the re-evaluation of the assessment.

Students may only view their marked answer scripts in the presence of the lecturer concerned, or someone else approved by the chair, head, or director of the home department or centre.

The viewing and discussion of such marked answer scripts may take place after the last day that has been set for the submission of final marks and with due allowance for any further arrangements which the environment concerned may have made with the approval of the relevant faculty board or centre management structure. However, such viewing and discussion of marked answer scripts may take place earlier if the applicable assessment rules include such provisions.

Any request for such discussion must be made within one month after the last day that has been set for the submission of final marks and according to any further arrangements which the department or centre concerned may have made with the approval of the relevant faculty board or centre management structure.

# Information on SunLearn and in Module Frameworks

As required by the SU Assessment Rules:

The Faculty's assessment rules must be readily accessible to students and staff affected by the rules, for example by placing them on SUNLearn.

The manner in which the applicable assessment rules are implemented in each module shall be made known to the students at the start of the relevant semester or year by means of the module framework or study guide. This information includes:

what subminima will be applied in the module, if applicable,

how the final marks will be determined if final marks are awarded in the module or, if a duly completed module, what is required of students to complete successsfully,

what assessment period(s) will be used,

which assessments are compulsory, and

if the module is a semester module, whether it will be completed in one term, and if so, in which term.

# Prerequisite, Pass Prerequisite and Co-Prerequisite Modules

Unless expressly indicated otherwise, the provisions of this section were taken from the SU Assessment Rules.

## Prerequisite pass module

A prerequisite pass module is a module which students have to pass before they are permitted to proceed to the module(s) for which this module is prescribed.

## Prerequisite module

A prerequisite module is a module in which students have to attain a final mark of not less than 40 before they are permitted to proceed to the module(s) for which it is prescribed. However, for students that registered for a prerequisite module while it was examined by the "examination" assessment system, a class mark of 40 is required to meet a prerequisite.

Students must pass all the modules needed to satisfy prerequisites in their programme before they will qualify for the awarding of the degree, certificate or diploma concerned.

For modules hosted by this faculty, if students have once complied with a prerequisite rule, that compliance shall continue to remain valid automatically for 3 years even if they repeat the prerequisite module and do not meet the minimum level when repeating the module. To clarify, if a student is awarded a final mark of at least 40 in year n, that will comply with the corresponding prerequisite rules in years n, n+1, n+2 and n+3. After these 3 years, the home environment of the module has the discretion to determine whether the compliance still applies.

## Corequisite module

A corequisite module is a module for which students have to register in an earlier semester than, or in the same semester as, the module for which it is prescribed.

Student must pass all the modules needed to satisfy corequisites in their programme before they will qualify for the awarding of the degree, certificate or diploma concerned.

# Dean’s Concession Assessments

The internal regulations for Dean’s Concession Assessments (DCAs) are published in Calendar part 4 (Arts and Social Sciences) and should be read in conjunction with the SU Assessment Rules.

# Other Faculty-Specific Rules

## Duration of assessmens

As a general rule, 60 minutes are allocated to each 50 marks in written assessements. However, the home environment of a module has the discretion to specify their own time allocation. The time allocations for assessments that make use of a time limit must be communicated clearly to students.

## Recording and dissemination of marks

The SU Assessment Rules stipulate that SUNStudent will provide access for students to their own marks. Departments should not communicate these marks to students in another way, inter alia to avoid the potential for contradictory information.

The SU Assessment Rules require that environments hosting modules are responsible for recording on SUNStudent, for all the students registered for the module, all applicable marks.

Assessment marks not loaded onto SUNStudent should be made known to students through SUNLearn. The SU Assessment Rules require that each student's marks should be made known only to that student if reasonably practicable. Otherwise, lists of marks where students can see other students' marks should only identify students by their student numbers and not display students' names or surnames.

Please note specific provisions in the case of honours, postgraduate diploma, and master's programmes in the SU Assessment Rules.

## Safekeeping of marked scripts

As a rule, marked scripts are handed back to students, whether on paper or electronically. In modules where this is not the case, lecturers should keep the marked scripts for a period of at least one semester after the assessments have taken place. Note that professional accreditation requirements may require that marked scripts be kept for a longer period.

## Copyright on question papers

All question papers for main summative assessments should normally include the following statement (with the year changed to the current) in the footer of the front page:

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