



Stellenbosch

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UNIVERSITEIT

SCIENCE

EYENZULULWAZI NGEZENDALO

NATUURWETENSAPPE

FACULTY OF SCIENCE

RULES and RECOMMENDATIONS

for

EFFECTIVE ASSESSMENT

in

UNDERGRADUATE MODULES

June 2022

1 GENERAL PROVISIONS

1.1 Overall requirements

The Faculty of Science (FoS) subscribes to Stellenbosch University's [Assessment Policy](#) and the Assessments and Promotions Chapter in the General Calendar (Part 1) of the [SU Calendar](#). The university-wide assessment rules given in the SU Calendar and the faculty-specific rules and recommendations in this document replace the rules for the previous examination and flexible assessment systems and are **applicable from 2023 onwards** for assessments in all undergraduate modules.

In the Faculty of Science,

We design assessments that aim to impact students' learning positively and encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning through, amongst others, using feedback constructively and creating opportunities for assimilating new knowledge. We strive for assessments that are authentic (in the sense of the SU Assessment Policy) and fair and that do not overload lecturers, teaching assistants, or students.

The purpose of the Faculty of Science rules and regulations for effective assessment is to accommodate the current variety of assessment strategies and to allow for the introduction of new strategies, whilst being aligned with the SU Assessment Policy and SU Assessments and Promotions Chapter. For ease of reading we have used the headings and corresponding numbering of the latter document.

These rules are purposefully broad. Furthermore, rules that are already stipulated in other assessment documents (yearbook and assessment policy) are not reiterated, or repeated. The only instances where a rule is repeated is for the purpose of clarifying it for the Faculty of Science context.

The assessment of Master's theses and Doctoral dissertations are addressed in the [Faculty of Science Postgraduate Guidelines](#). The assessment of modules offered for honours degrees and structured MSc degrees are addressed in the [Faculty of Science Postgraduate Module Guidelines](#) (being formulated by the Vice-Dean (Research and Postgraduate Students)).

In case of queries not covered by the contents of this document, please contact the Vice-Dean (Teaching and Learning) for advice.

1.2 Scope of application and applicable assessment rules

The Faculty of Science's Rules and Recommendations for Effective Assessment aim to promote assessment practices that capture the spirit of the SU Assessment Policy. In doing so, the understanding is that lecturers are best placed to make carefully considered, achievable, and defensible assessment decisions that align with the module outcomes and learning opportunities. It assumes learning, on the side of both students and lecturers, as the starting point, and conceptualizes assessment as a two-way conversation. It operates from the following key premises:

- a) Maintaining a fair and achievable workload for lecturers, teaching assistants, and students throughout the semester, for example through spreading assessments over the course of the semester.
- b) Promoting assessment as a two-way conversation between colleagues as well as between lecturers and students, for example through moderation conversations as well as the assessment information in the module framework and the results of, or feedback on, formative assessment tasks such as tutorials.
- c) Viewing assessment as an integral part of the teaching and learning process, that includes opportunities to learn the required evaluative judgement, such as tutorials.
- d) An opportunity for students to learn, improve and show their mastery of the outcomes in a way that is fair, reliable, and of the required integrity, for example, allowing another opportunity for high-stakes tasks with sub-minima.
- e) Uniform and clear communication.

For each module there will be:

- An **assessment strategy** determining the use of the A1, A2, A3 assessment periods (as described in Section 5). This will be communicated in the addendum of this document, in an analogous way to the FoS Language Implementation Plan, as well as in the module framework.
- An **assessment plan** which will provide in the explicit details (as described in Section 6). This will be communicated in the module framework.

The FoS Teaching and Learning Programme Committee will not be monitoring or regulating the assessment plans but may offer advice and/or require access to these as the need arise (for example, when responding to student queries in consultation with colleagues). The FoS Teaching and Learning Programme Committee will need to be advised of changes to the assessment strategy for a module. If such changes are to be made while the module is being offered - then this will need to be approved by the FoS Teaching and Learning Programme Committee.

2 SUBJECT AND MODULE TYPES

In the Faculty of Science, use is made of all the subject and module types listed under 'Subject and Module Types' in the SU Assessment and Promotions Chapter.

3 MARK TYPES AND PASSING A MODULE

In the Faculty of Science,

- a) **At least** the following mark types will be recorded on SUNStudent:
 - (i) For all modules, use is made of the Final Mark (FM) as described in Section 3.1 of the SU Assessment and Promotions Chapter.
 - (ii) For all modules, use is made of the Dean's Concession Assessment mark (DCA) as described in Section 3.2.2.6 of the SU Assessment and Promotions Chapter.

- (iii) For year modules, use is also made of the mid-year mark (MY) as described in Section 3.2.2.4 of the SU Assessment and Promotions Chapter.
- b) In order to use the full functionality of SUNStudent and SUNSuccess, it is recommended that, in addition to final marks, the various SUNStudent mark types described in Section 2 of the SU Assessment and Promotions Chapter are also used.
- c) For each module the **assessment strategy** (see Section 5) and the **assessment plan** (see Section 6) will provide specific details of how the Final Mark (FM) is calculated.
- d) The examination assessment system and associated terminology of class mark and examination mark will no longer be used from 2023.

4 ASSESSMENT PERIODS

In the Faculty of Science, the following assessment periods are used for each semester:

- a) **A1 period** is from the start of the semester until the last day of the semester's lectures to allow for practical assessments and assignment submissions. This understanding means the A1 period consists of only the AF period or a combination of the A1 period and AF period (described in the Sections 4.1 and 4.2 of the SU Assessment and Promotions Chapter).
- b) **A2 period** follows directly after the last day of semester's lecturing period. The dates are in the SU Almanac.
- c) **A3 period** follows directly after the A2 period. The dates are in the SU Almanac. Use of the A3 period is not compulsory.
- d) **A4 period** is used for the Dean's Concession Assessments (DCAs) scheduled in January or February.

5 FACULTY ASSESMENT RULES

For each module:

- a) There will be an **assessment strategy** that best suits the outcomes and pedagogical approach for the module, while meeting the rules in the SU Assessment and Promotions Chapter.
- b) The Faculty's Assessment Rules and Regulations, with an Addendum indicating the Assessment Strategy for each module, will be available on the Faculty of

Science website (under [For Undergraduate Students](#) and under [For Staff](#)) so they are readily accessible to all undergraduate students and all lecturers.

- c) The assessment strategy and dates will be decided in the year preceding the implementation, in accordance with Rule 6.1.7 of the SU Assessment and Promotions Chapter, deadlines determined by the Head: Timetables and Venues, and communicated to students by the Registrar.
- d) Any changes to the assessment strategy and dates during the implementation thereof will be subject to the approval of the Science Learning & Teaching Programme Committee.

The Faculty of Science makes use of the following broad assessment strategies.

For **semester modules**, the options are:

- **Option 1:** A1 covers part of the syllabus; A2 and A3 each cover the entire syllabus.
- **Option 2:** A1 and A2 each cover different parts of the syllabus; A3 covers the entire syllabus.
- **Option 3:** A1 and A2 each cover different parts of the syllabus; A3 covers selected parts of the syllabus.
- **Option 4:** A1 comprises assessment opportunities spread throughout the semester; A2 is an optional additional assessment opportunity; no A3 is offered.
- **Option 5:** A1 comprises assessment opportunities spread throughout the semester, and A2 and A3 are optional additional assessment opportunities.
- **Option 6:** specified variant of these strategies.

For **year modules**, the corresponding options are:

- **Option 1:** A1S1, A2S2, A1S2 each cover different parts of the syllabus; A2S2 and A3 each cover the entire syllabus.
- **Option 2:** A1S1, A2S2, A1S2, A2S2 each cover different parts of the syllabus and A3 covers the entire syllabus.
- **Option 3:** A1S1, A2S2, A1S2, A2S2 each cover different parts of the syllabus; A3 covers selected parts of the syllabus.
- **Option 4:** A1S1 and A1S2 comprise assessment opportunities spread throughout each of the semesters; A2S2 is an optional additional assessment opportunity and no A3 is offered.
- **Option 5:** A1S1 and A1S2 comprise assessment opportunities spread throughout each of the semesters; A2S2 and A3 are optional additional assessment opportunities.
- **Option 6:** specified variant of these strategies.

In the Faculty of Science, the two 8-credit third-year modules, Biochemistry 323 and Bioinformatics 312, are each offered in a 6-week block. So, the assessment strategy will not make use of the A1, A2, A3 assessment periods and will need to be explicitly in the Addendum.

6 GENERALLY APPLICABLE ASSESSMENT RULES

For each module:

- a) The **assessment plan** will clarify the expectations for success in the module and the students' responsibilities vs lecturers' responsibilities with regards to assessments.
- b) The assessment plan will be finalised no later than one week before the start of the offering of the module.
- c) The assessment plan will be communicated clearly to all registered students as part of the module framework or study guide on SUNLearn.
- d) Any changes to the assessment plan will be communicated timeously, as far as practicably possible, via SUNLearn. However, when changes to an assessment plan are due to exceptional circumstances (such as load-shedding and general safety, health and environmental issues) these may be communicated at short notice.
- e) The assessment plan will include *at least* the following information:
 - (i) which assessment strategy (as defined in Section 5) and assessment periods, including relevant dates, will be used;
 - (ii) what assessment methods (e.g. projects, assignments, tests, practicals) and assessment modes (e.g., online or invigilated on-campus) will be used;
 - (iii) what criteria, if applicable, will be applied for admission to or exclusion from each assessment opportunity;
 - (iv) which assessments are compulsory;
 - (v) what sub-minima, if any, will be applied in the module;
 - (vi) how the final marks will be determined;
 - (vii) which assessment opportunities will have the marks capped;
 - (viii) what arrangement, if any, is in place for a missed assessment opportunity?

- f) The chosen assessment plan **should include both formative and summative assessments.**
- (i) The purpose of **formative assessment** opportunities is to help students judge their own progress and/or obtain regular feedback on their understanding. These should be offered on an ongoing basis and early enough in the module to ensure that students can adapt their studying appropriately and in time.
 - (ii) For a formative assessment opportunity offered as a test a mark may be awarded. A tutorial, during which students may obtain feedback on their understanding, may be considered as a formative assessment opportunity for which no mark is awarded.
 - (iii) It is the responsibility of the lecturer to ensure that they create effective formative assessment opportunities. It is, however, the responsibility of the students to ensure that they use these opportunities effectively.
 - (iv) **Summative assessment opportunities** are typically high stakes, with the purpose of awarding marks and deciding if a student has reached a specified level of attainment.
- g) The chosen assessment plan **should ideally include more than one type of assessment method or different question types** (e.g., having both constructed and selected response type questions or using test and projects and/or assignments).
- h) The chosen assessment plan **should distribute the academic and assessment workload throughout the semester** in order to make effective use of all contact time with students; to ensure an achievable workload throughout the semester for both students and lecturers; and to allow students time to assimilate new knowledge. To this end, it is recommended that:
- (i) Lecturers provide an overview of the spread of notional hours for the module.
 - (ii) Students be informed how many hours they should expect to spend on an assignment or task.
 - (iii) Considering the credits and notional hours of the module, some contact time (e.g., lecturing time) could be made available for students to work on large assignments or tasks.
- i) Students cannot be failed based on a single summative assessment opportunity (Rule 5.1.7 of the SU Assessment and Promotions Chapter). If students for any reason do not use an offered assessment opportunity (for example, because of 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.

- j) Careful consideration should be taken before implementing sub-minima.
 - (i) The purpose of sub-minima is to ensure that students who pass the module have achieved specific module outcomes. For example, a module may have a sub-minimum for each of the practical and theoretical components of the module or a module offered in different blocks may have a sub-minimum for each block.
 - (ii) In cases where sub-minima are used the rule that students cannot be failed based on a single assessment opportunity (rule 5.1.7 in the SU Assessment and Promotions Chapter) should be adhered to.
- k) It is recommended that:
 - (i) Each Department/Division/Centre uses a standardised format for formulating the assessment plans for modules offered.
 - (ii) Each question paper presents questions in English and Afrikaans using the two column format, with English on the left and Afrikaans on the right.
 - (iii) Each question paper should include the following statement (with the year changed to the current) in the footer of the front page:

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6.1 Timetable related assessment provisions

- a) There will be a **Science Assessment Calendar** available on the Faculty of Science website. This is for easy reference by all staff and all undergraduate students of all assessment opportunities, excluding weekly formative assessments of modules, offered by the faculty. There will be no monitoring or regulating of the dates by the Science Learning & Teaching Programme Committee.
- b) The assessment opportunities will be scheduled as follows:
 - (i) Centrally scheduled assessment opportunities will be done in accordance with communication and deadlines determined by the Head: Timetables and Venues (Stellenbosch Campus). The dates of these assessment opportunities will be automatically included in the **Science Assessment Calendar**.
 - (ii) All internally scheduled assessment opportunities will be done in consultation with the **Science Assessment Calendar** on the Faculty of Science website. The dates of all internally scheduled assessment opportunities will be entered into the **Science Assessment Calendar**

by the module coordinator or the program leaders no later than one week before the start of the module.

- (iii) **The last week of the Science A1 period** may be used for practical assessments or assignment submissions, considering the preceding points regarding scheduling of assessments.
- c) The time allocations for assessments that make use of a time limit must be communicated clearly to students.
- d) Changes to the scheduling and/or mode of an assessment that are necessitated due to exceptional circumstances (such as load-shedding and protocols for managing health and safety of all) may be communicated at short notice.
- e) Any other changes to the assessment strategy (described in Section 5) and dates during the implementation thereof will be subject to the approval of the Science Learning & Teaching Programme Committee.

6.2 Admission to assessments

For each assessment opportunity the criteria for admission to or exclusion from the assessment opportunity must be clearly communicated in the module's assessment plan.

6.3 Allocation of final marks

- a) The default in the Faculty of Science, at least for 2023, is that the final marks for modules are calculated and entered by the module's home department or division or centre on SUNStudent, following Rule 6.3.1 in the SU Assessment and Promotions Chapter.
- b) All final marks are out of 100.
- c) Final marks are to be handled using the following provisions:
 - (i) Final marks are to be loaded as integers and final marks between 35 and 50 are to be allocated in multiples of 5 in accordance with Rule 3.1.4 of the SU Assessment and Promotions Chapter.
 - (ii) A discussion of the assessor(s) and moderator(s) is encouraged to determine the rounding.
 - (iii) Note that the rounding may affect meeting subsequent prerequisites or pass-pre-requisites.
- d) For a module with sub-minima for different components or different module outcomes, there may be limits on the final marks, as described in Rule 6.3.4. This will determine whether a student may register for a module for which

the module is a pre-requisite or whether a student may need to re-register for the module and complete all or certain components.

6.4 Recording of results

- a) Rule 6.4.1 of the SU Assessment and Promotions Chapter requires that SUNStudent, and no other platform, keeps the definitive record for the final marks for each module.
- b) Departments should not communicate final marks to students in another way, inter alia to avoid the potential for contradictory information.
- c) Rule 6.4.3 of the SU Assessment and Promotions Chapter requires that environment hosting a module is responsible for recording on SUNStudent, for all the students registered for the module, at least the final mark.
- d) All assessment marks contributing to the final mark that are not loaded onto SUNStudent should be made known to students on SUNLearn or other secure platform used for the module, according to Rule 6.4.16 of SU Assessment and Promotions Chapter and in accordance with the POPIA act.
- e) A student may query a mark recorded, no later than 7 calendar days after the assessment results were published.

6.5 Discussing marked answer scripts with staff

Students may view and discuss their marked answer scripts with the lecturer concerned, subject to provisions in Section 6.5 of the SU Assessment and Promotions Chapter.

6.6 Rules for student conduct at assessment

The Faculty of Science follows the rules for student conduct at assessments as provided in Section 6.6 of the SU Assessment and Promotions Chapter.

In addition, the faculty does not tolerate plagiarism and has a formal process for dealing with such cases. Click [here](#) for the SU Plagiarism Policy.

Students should be informed of the consequences of plagiarism and how it will be dealt with for specific assessment opportunities. This can include:

- a) Specifying how Turnitin reports will be used e.g., is there an acceptable similarity index.
- b) Explaining what counts as plagiarism.
- c) Giving students preliminary feedback on activities with opportunities to address instances of plagiarism.
- d) Using Turnitin as a learning tool to give students feedback.

6.7 Accommodation of religious considerations

The Faculty of Science follows the provisions in Section 6.7 of the SU Assessment and Promotions Chapter.

6.8 Accommodation of special needs during main assessments

The Faculty of Science follows the provisions in Section 6.8 of the SU Assessment and Promotions Chapter.

6.9 Moderation

In the Faculty of Science, the purpose of internal moderation is 3-fold:

1. to promote assessment as a continuous conversation;
2. to ensure the best possible assessment strategy by learning from each other;
3. to develop our own evaluative judgement.

Thus, in accordance with the University's 'Regulation for internal and external moderation and the processing results', all modules should have an internal moderator.

The Faculty of Science further recommends that there should be an ongoing conversation between the lecturing team or module coordinator and the internal moderator. This conversation can take the format of:

- a) An initial discussion of the assessment plan as evidenced in the module framework (constructive alignment, scheduling, communication, assessment methods, outcomes and sampling of content).
- b) Follow-up discussion(s) during the semester as deemed necessary.
- c) Moderation of the assessment products (questions/opportunities and student work) during and/or at the end of the semester.

6.10 Appointment of assessors and moderators

The Faculty of Science appoints assessors and moderators in accordance with the University's 'Regulation for internal and external moderation and the processing results' and Section 6.10 of the SU Assessment and Promotions Chapter.

6.11 Assessment to confirm a distinction

In cases of doubt about whether a student should pass a module with distinction or not, the Faculty of Science follows the procedure in Section 6.11 of the SU Assessment and Promotions Chapter.

7 DEAN'S CONCESSION ASSESSMENTS

The internal regulations for Dean's Concession Assessments (DCAs) are published in SU Calendar Part 5 (Science) and should be read in conjunction with the DCA rules and procedures in Section 7 of the SU Assessment and Promotions Chapter.

8 RECALCULATION OF FINAL MARKS AND RE-EVALUATION OF ASSESSMENT SCRIPTS

Marked scripts for assessment opportunities offered during the A1 period are ideally returned 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.

The Faculty of Science follows the application procedures for the re-calculation of final marks and re-evaluation of scripts in Section 8 of the SU Assessment and Promotions Chapter.

9 REPEATING A MODULE

The Faculty of Science follows the provisions in Section 9 of the SU Assessment and Promotions Chapter.

10 RESTRICTIONS ON THE REGISTRATION FOR MODULES

The Faculty of Science follows the provisions in Section 10 of the SU Assessment and Promotions Chapter.

11 PROMOTION

The Faculty of Science follows the provisions in Section 11 of the SU Assessment and Promotions Chapter.