

ASSESSMENT POLICY

1. Policy Framework

1.1 Pearson Institute of Higher Education (PIHE) Tuition Policy

The following is a quotation from the PIHE Tuition Policy:

'Student assessment practice is an integral part of curricula and should be consistent with the [curriculum] principles outlined... . It should also enhance student progress and ensure the status and value of PIHE qualifications.

Curriculum Principles

- 1 'Curriculum' encompasses content, delivery and assessment.
- 2 Curricula should take cognisance of specific needs and situation analyses – quantitative and qualitative.
- 3 All stakeholders should have the opportunity of contributing to the curriculum. Student involvement is important.
- 4 Curriculum design should embody a learning centred approach, including
 - a. recognition of what the learner brings to the learning situation;
 - b. acquisition of appropriate learning strategies;
 - c. development of the intellectual skills that will foster learning, creativity and critical thinking.
- 5 Wherever applicable, curricula should be developed on an interdisciplinary basis.
- 6 Curricula should acknowledge that teaching is much more than a process of transmitting knowledge; it is a process of facilitating and optimising the learning process; it also incorporates the inculcation of an attitude that encourages a critical approach.
- 7 A suitable variety of teaching and learning strategies, methodologies and modes of interaction should be planned to provide quality learning opportunities and experiences.

8 Curriculum design and development include the responsibility of keeping abreast of current and innovative developments in curriculum philosophy and practice, and in academic thinking in the subject, evaluating these, and implementing appropriate approaches for varying learning contexts.

PIHE is working in a higher education context and at post-school level. The knowledge base within disciplines may still be evaluated using traditional methods of assessment and external assessors. However, students should also demonstrate how knowledge and skills are used in the process of making decisions with regard to appropriate performance or action. Knowledge and skills should transfer to new situations and be applied to new problems.

1.2 SAQA Act (Act 58 of 1995), NSB Regulations (Regulation 452, No. 18787: March 1998) and ETQA Regulations (Regulation 1127, No. 19231: September 1998)

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is an outcomes-based framework for education and training standards and qualifications. Outcomes-based Education (OBE) is an assessment-driven system that operates through the setting up of standards. *Qualification/ unit standards*¹ are parameters that guide students and the general public about qualities, values, attitudes, knowledge and skills expected of them as competent citizens, professionals, etc. SAQA regulations stipulate that standards contain information on purpose, specific learning outcomes and their associated assessment criteria, integrated assessment (including formative and summative), embedded knowledge, critical cross-field outcomes, range statements, accreditation process (including moderation), applied competence, assumptions of prior learning and recognition of experiential learning.

Outcomes are what a student can do and what he or she understands, i.e. the contextually demonstrated end products of the learning process. Outcomes are the results of learning processes – knowledge, skills, attitudes and values – within a particular context so that knowledge is applied, skills develop into competencies and attitudes and values harmonize with those of society and the workplace. An outcome can be demonstrated and measured. Outcomes can be expressed as 'Learners can ...'. For example, 'Learners can solve problems responsibly and creatively'. These outcomes can be assessed against predetermined criteria using a range of appropriate assessment methods.

¹Italicised words/ phrases are followed by a definition.

Applied competence is 'the ability to put into practice in the relevant context the learning outcomes acquired in obtaining a qualification' (NSB Regulations 1998). It is a combination of three types of competence:

- practical: knowing how to do things, ability to make decisions
- fundamental: understanding what you are doing and why
- reflective: learn and adapt through self-reflection; apply knowledge appropriately and responsibly.

Competence has to be described in terms of the specialist field and expectations of student achievement have to be realistic in terms of that description.

The focus is thus on output (assessment of competence in terms of preset criteria) rather than input (content), although this does not mean that the knowledge base of a discipline should be neglected. Rather it implies a balance in Higher Education studies between formative/ theoretical and practical relevance.

Assessment/ performance criteria specify how much learning has to be evidenced, at what level of complexity and responsibility and how well. Assessment criteria complete the stem: 'Evidence must show that learners ...': for instance, 'Evidence must show that learners use words according to standard dictionary definitions and the demands of context'. Assessment criteria have to indicate how to determine whether a student has achieved the outcome to a satisfactory standard and what makes the difference between acceptable and unacceptable performance of the outcome.

The outcomes and their associated assessment criteria will be available to students and other stakeholders so the learning and assessment system will be transparent, reliable and accountable. Students will know what is expected of them and employers will know what a learner who holds a particular qualification has achieved.

OBE has led to a broader, more learner-centred model of assessment, which aims at success for all learners. Two broad types of assessment are identified: formative and summative.

2. Defining Assessment

2.1 General

When someone learns, he or she acquires knowledge and/ or skill. During assessment, an assessor collects evidence to identify the level of knowledge and/ or skill acquired so that he or she can make decisions related to the learner and/ or the learning programme, depending on the purpose of the assessment. Diagnostic assessment might lead to decisions about what the learner needs to do to meet the desired outcomes. Summative assessment might lead to decisions on placement or certification. Assessment always involves current knowledge and skill but could also have predictive value. It should include ability to transfer knowledge to new contexts and to apply knowledge in specific contexts.

2.2 Outcomes-based Education

OBE assessment is criterion referenced: that is, it measures the student's achievement against a set of predetermined criteria and not in relation to the achievement of other students.

In OBE, each module or qualification states outcomes (general/ cross field and specific) and associated assessment criteria so clearly that students understand in advance what they have to do to achieve these outcomes and assessors can use the criteria to assess the outcomes with reasonable objectivity/ reliability. The outcomes and assessment criteria thus have to specify explicitly and transparently the level of complexity of the learning, how well students have to perform in order to be judged competent, what knowledge or skill or applied competence must be demonstrated and under what conditions and the range of evidence to be submitted.

3. Assessors

3.1 Practitioner-Assessors

An *assessor* is 'the person who is registered by the relevant Education and Training Quality Assurance body in accordance with criteria established for this purpose by a Standards Generating Body to measure the achievement of specified National Qualifications Framework standards and qualifications' (NSB Regulations 1998). SAQA favours the practitioner-assessor model: in other words, the people who facilitate the learning assess the learning outcomes.

According to Education and Training Quality Assurance regulations (ETQA Regulations 1998), an ETQA will 'register constituent assessors for specified registered standards or qualifications in terms of the criteria established for this purpose'. However, 'if established under another Act of Parliament to govern a single coordinated system of multi-qualification providers, shall delegate the function of registering constituent assessors ... to its providers if their quality management system includes the monitoring of this function and the South African Qualifications Authority is notified'. One quality

management requirement is 'policies and practices for the management of assessment'. Another is that the institution has 'the ability to achieve the desired outcomes, using available resources and procedures considered by the Education and Training Quality Assurance Body to be needed to develop, deliver and evaluate learning programmes which culminate in specified registered standards or qualifications'.

PIHE's own staff are used as assessors in a manner that fits into the quality management system of the Institution and accords with the Institution's tuition and assessment policies. This will also apply to the appointment of outside persons. A system of workplace assessment might be initiated for some learning programmes/ qualifications.

3.2 Quality Management System at PIHE

The minimum requirement for appointment as a lecturer or external marker at PIHE is an Honours degree and appropriate experience. In the case of workplace assessment, appropriate professional criteria are drawn up for each programme/ qualification.

Senior staff members mentor all junior and new members of staff as they work together in teams.

All new members of staff undergo an orientation session with the appropriate Dean of Faculty and Head of Programme.

Selected staff from public higher education institutions externally moderates all final year examination papers. They also moderate representative samples of examination scripts.

The quality management system at PIHE are be subject to the moderation and quality assurance measures put in place by the Higher Education Quality Committee of the CHE or any other relevant ETQA in the higher education sector (e.g. professional body acting in this capacity). *Moderation* is 'the process which ensures that assessment of the outcomes described in National Qualifications Framework standards or qualifications is fair, valid and reliable' in relation to specific outcomes and associated assessment criteria (ETQA Regulations 1998).

3.3 Professional Development

Assessment is a crucial part of teaching and learning which requires considerable expertise. Staff are given the necessary training to set up fair, valid and reliable assessment for students. Staff development opportunities are available to help staff develop assessment criteria in line with their

learning outcomes and express the criteria in a form readily conveyed to students and to others (e.g. tutors) involved in the assessment process.

The selection of assessment methods to match learning objectives is a professional skill, which is to be evenly developed across all staff. Professional development need not equate simply with short courses or workshops – other methods such as mentoring, informal peer review, 'on the job' training and award courses may be equally effective.

4. Purposes of Assessing Learning

4.1 General

The purposes of assessing learning are

- Formative: to monitor and improve the quality of students' learning experiences by focusing on significant knowledge and skills and providing motivation to work through the material through tasks and feedback.
- Summative: to provide accurate estimates of current competence or potential in relation to desired outcomes to enable lecturers to make appropriate decisions (including diagnostic).
- Reflexive: to provide lecturers with feedback on their courses as part of systematic monitoring of criteria and standards in a quality assurance cycle.
- Administrative: to provide an accountable basis for credit and eventual certification of students in relation to outcomes of particular qualifications.

PIHE students will receive assessment that maximise their learning, while also providing them with effective cognitive skills (foundational and reflexive), practical skills and learning attitudes and values that they will need in practice after certification.

4.2 Parameters

Assessment occurs across the academic year or semester. Continuous assessment (formative) may take place through a combination of assignments, class tests and projects. Through one or more of these mechanisms, students will be provided with opportunities for both formative and summative assessment, as well as timely feedback on work completed. Ideally, students should be given initial assessment in sufficient time to allow diagnostic and corrective feedback to be incorporated into learning and to allow for later reassessment. Different intensities of feedback may be warranted by variations in the importance of different assessment items in terms of student learning, or by the resource implications.

Faculties may use one of the following systems for continuous assessment (formative):

- Students submit a minimum number of compulsory assignments to earn credits for examination admission (DP) (Due Performance). These may be multiple-choice questions, limited marked essay-type assignments and/or self-assessed assignments.
- Students are set compulsory assignments that contribute a percentage towards the final mark.
- Students are set non-compulsory assignments that, if submitted, contribute towards the final mark. (Students who do not submit these assignments are not penalised).
- Students write class tests

Assessment is planned as part of the package during the design phase of the course, module or programme and built into the study material with relevant feedback.

Assignments may be submitted as handwritten copies, in print or electronic media. In all cases systematic feedback will be given for the sake of transparency, to build students' capacity to self-evaluate, to address common problems encountered by students during the completion of the assessment and so on. If the lecturer marks the assignment, individual constructive comments will be included.

The choice of a continuous assessment method (formative) should take the level of the students and nature of the subject discipline into consideration. First year students need more bridging and more support to remain motivated. Regular assignments encourage regular study habits and an awareness of the standards of assessment within the module. More advanced students might require less direct guidance and be more able to undertake self-assessment tasks. Where self-assessment is used, students will be given guidelines on how to do self-assessment.

Besides traditional examinations, other types of evidence of achievement may be used; for example, portfolios, practicals, research projects, observation, etc.

The weighting of each of the assessment items will be published in the introductory Module Outline for the module.

4.3 Formative Assessment

The function of formative assessment is to encourage, direct and reinforce learning. It takes place continuously during the process of learning and teaching.

The purposes of formative assessment can vary. Diagnostic testing establishes student strengths and weaknesses and requires decisions on remedial work. Self-assessment could lead to a decision on the part of the student to revise a section of work or consult a lecturer or study group. For the lecturer, assessment might determine the success of learning and teaching strategies employed and a decision on how they can be improved.

At PIHE, learning and assessment are integrated. Well-constructed self-, group- and peer assessment tasks have the potential to provide valuable learning experience and encourage lifelong learning. SAQA's critical outcomes require education to produce people who can take responsibility for own learning, engage in critical thinking and make responsible decisions. They also require people to be able to work co-operatively with others. The role of self-, group and peer-assessment is crucial in achieving such outcomes.

4.4 Summative Assessment

An important function of summative assessment is to assess exit outcomes of significance, indicate achievement, maintain standards and provide certification. Summative evaluation helps to make the system accountable.

At PIHE, examinations, or equivalent assessment such as a portfolio of evidence, project, practical, etc. assess a representative selection of the outcomes practised and assessed in the formative stage. Summative assessment also tests the student's ability to manage and integrate a large body of knowledge to achieve the stated outcomes of a module/ course/ paper/ programme.

4.5 Integrated Assessment

The function of integrated assessment is to

- give meaning to a qualification (purpose);
- permit a demonstration of competencies (application) across disciplines/topics/themes;
- use multiple assessment instruments (diversity).

Integrated assessment is any assessment that expects students to integrate knowledge and skills learnt in order to produce a specified result. In many ways final examinations are integrated assessment as are theses, practical work in teaching, nursing, counselling, etc. Students have to demonstrate applied competence by integrating foundational, practical and reflexive competence in a variety of contexts (authentic and simulated; familiar and unfamiliar; abstract and concrete).

At PIHE, all assessment integrates knowledge, skills and attitudes and applied competence. However, for programme purposes, one module at third-year level may be identified for each programme to act as a 'capstone' module. In other words, it will deliberately integrate all the learning in the programme. It is taken simultaneously with other modules during the student's final year of enrolment. In this way a programme can ensure that its exit level outcomes are achieved.

4.6 Asynchronous Assessment

One option for assessment at PIHE, practical assignments/projects, lends itself to asynchronous tuition and assessment practices: that is, instructional delivery and learning/ assessment that is

accomplished in a time-free and place-free interactive mode. Such learning/ assessment should be designed to provide a media and instructionally rich learning environment.

4.7 Credit Accumulation Transfer and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

Credit Accumulation Transfer involves the transfer of credits from other tertiary institutions (formal, accredited learning). RPL involves the assessment and accreditation of experiential learning (previously unaccredited learning from non-formal and informal experience). PIHE's policy on experiential learning is related to the assessment policy because we assess evidence of learning in portfolios or from (challenge processes) to accredit experiential learning. Experiential learning is assessed against the outcomes of particular modules and/or qualifications.

5. Principles

5.1 General

5.1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the assessment should be clear; that is, to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses, to focus attention on main areas of learning, to assess if learning outcomes of significance have been achieved, etc.

5.1.2 Assessment Criteria

Criteria for assessing achievement should be clear. In an OBE system, the outcomes and associated assessment criteria are specified in advance. To make the assessment system as transparent as possible, assessment requirements should be communicated clearly, accurately, early and in some detail to all students at the beginning of the academic period (e.g. at the start of a study guide, in calendars, in promotional material, etc.)

5.1.3 Assessment Gap

The method of gathering information on the students' performance should be appropriate to the task and appropriate to the subject discipline; for example, practical skills should be tested by practical means. Otherwise, there is what is known as an assessment gap.

5.1.4 Fairness

Assessment should be fair: that is, not advantage or disadvantage any student (see 'face validity' below). Stating outcomes and assessment criteria explicitly and transparently ensures fairness. The assessment environment should be as open as possible, students

should be provided with as much information as possible and should be free to ask questions. Fairness should be a major consideration in the administration of assessment. Fairness will be ensured by

- allaying fears students may have about assessment;
- giving students practice in assessment methods;
- using a variety of methods to assess assignments;
- providing for the possibility of resubmission;
- promoting a study skills programme;
- taking account of various types of diversity and avoiding bias;
- facilitating assessment for students with special needs (disability, ESL, etc.), particularly with regard to central examinations.

[Fairness can sometimes be affected by practical factors, semester v year, time constraints, etc.]

5.1.5 Validity

The assignment or examination must be valid. This means that it measures what it intends to measure. Three important forms of validity are:

- *Face validity.* This means that the assessment should be perceived to be fair, giving learners a reasonable opportunity to show what they know and what they have mastered. For example, any suggestion of bias that may be to the detriment of some would reduce face validity learners (e.g. gender or ethnic bias).
- *Content validity.* Assessment should relate to the stated outcomes of the course and should cover the knowledge (ideas and skills) adequately. Assessment should focus on testing mastery of important outcomes, and not on peripheral details.
- *Construct validity.* This refers to the extent to which assessment succeeds in measuring and evaluating the abilities (theoretical or practical 'constructs') that it intends to assess. For example, if the intention is to assess critical thinking, the assessment should test this precise skill.

5.1.6 Reliability

Assessment should be reliable; that is, produce the same results when particular students are tested again on the same test in a similar context. Value judgements (such as passing or failing grades) should be as objective as possible. If students' marks differ depending on who marks the assignment, for example, the assessment is not reliable. The use of the same outcomes and assessment criteria in assessing all learners enhances reliability.

5.1.7 Practicality

Good assessment is practicable, that is, not too difficult or expensive to implement. Good assessment practice should be cost effective; that is, assessment should not be carried out by expensive means if adequate information about learner performance could be obtained by equally valid, alternative, less expensive means. Quantity and type of assessment should allow lecturers to achieve reliable results in a reasonable period of time.

5.1.8 Cognitive Complexity

At higher education level, the assessment should have adequate cognitive complexity to assess higher levels of thinking. Assessment criteria should therefore include level descriptors.

Assessment should also – progressively from first year level to final year level – show growth in the use of higher cognitive levels to assess learners. This relates to for example, the use of Bloom's Taxonomy to ensure varied and appropriate focus on different cognitive levels.

5.2 Outcomes-based Education

An outcomes-based system is criterion referenced; that is, outcomes are assessed against clearly defined criteria. These criteria are determined in advance, sometimes negotiated with students.

The relationship between assessment and learning outcomes, the definition of standards, the performance expectations held of students and feedback on performance can all be more easily and explicitly expressed when criterion-referenced assessment is used.

Other advantages of criterion referencing are transparency, student involvement and greater inter-marker reliability. While the use of criterion-referenced assessment supports the educational purposes of assessment, it does not impede the functional purpose. Students can be marked and graded according to their levels of achievement against well-defined criteria. The fact that the criteria are explicit means that the judgments made is more readily defensible.

These well-defined criteria can be expressed as a statement of standards or by the use of examples, which are provided in advance so that students can direct their learning accordingly. More precise explanations may be provided after assessment has taken place because it is possible to point to the characteristics of the students' performance that led to the judgment that a particular outcome has or has not been achieved. While such judgments may sometimes be fallible, their overall reliability is likely to be enhanced by the explicitness of the criteria used.

A major advantage of criterion referencing is that the criteria and standards are explicit, and thus open to debate in terms of their rigour, consistency and application. The most effective defence of quality is to subject the criteria and standards to systematic scrutiny. Such scrutiny is applied in one or a combination of the following:

The current checking of examination papers by colleagues is extended to the checking of assessment criteria and marking schemes of assignments and examinations.

- Faculty teaching and learning committees (if applicable) periodically review criteria in particular subjects, perhaps giving special attention to new subjects and 'problem' (high-risk) subjects.
- Professionally oriented departments already have their standards reviewed by the relevant accrediting bodies.
- Examination of assessment standards can become part of departmental reviews. The external examiner system is augmented by departmental reviews with external members, especially in view of the open nature of second and third level modules in some faculties where it is difficult to determine which modules will be taken in the final year.
- It is in each department's/ discipline's long-term interests to maintain its standards at a level commensurate with its reputation and aspirations.

6. Academic Standards

6.1 Relevance in Assessment

Lecturers are trained to improve the quality of assessment, not necessarily the quantity of assessments. The emphasis then should be on quality not quantity. Lecturers will use only enough to give a valid result. Assessment is ultimately an exercise of professional judgment by academic staff; such judgements must be readily defensible procedures to ensure accuracy and equity in assessment.

Assessment, based on the learning outcomes and predetermined assessment criteria, will be sufficient to ensure that judgments made about student learning performances are as valid as possible; and lecturers should regularly review the assessments they set.

The amount, mode and distribution or spread of assessment should be appropriate to meeting the stated outcomes of a module/programme and should measure the extent to which these outcomes are met.

The amount of formative and summative assessment should reveal whether or not students have developed the required understandings and skills to practise what they have learnt in a work situation or practical environment.

Lecturers should not be tempted to set assessment with a view to simplify marking rather than educational benefit. To ensure validity, the focus should be on measuring students' mastery of significant, not trivial, outcomes. To ensure reliability, outcomes and assessment criteria should be known in advance and assessed over time using a suitable variety of methods.

During the planning for a new module/programme, teaching, learning and assessment methods should be developed simultaneously in relation to student learning and the meeting of learning outcomes.

6.2 Methods and Instruments

Lecturers will use both formative and summative assessment strategies. Formative assessment may for example, comprise group assignments, class discussions, seminars and other activities demonstrating the achievement of set outcomes. Summative assessment will include a range of items such as written and/or oral examinations, portfolios, projects, laboratory practicals etc., appropriate to the outcomes and NQF level.

Reliance upon a single method of assessment is discouraged; in particular, a final examination should not normally constitute more than two thirds of the total assessment for a module/ course/ paper.

The assessment method should be suited to the competence to be assessed.

6.3 Learner-centeredness and learning-centeredness

Giving students practice in the particular assessment methods to be employed may lessen the threat posed by assessment; for instance, if a significant proportion of the final assessment is to be multiple-choice items, students should have practice in answering multiple-choice questions.

The timing of assessment should take student workload into account.

First-year students have particular assessment requirements, which need to be addressed in order to maximize their learning. In summary, the following can assist the transition of first-year students from school to university:

- bridging courses which could be set up for all academic disciplines;
- formative assessment which gives constructive feedback and an idea of higher education-level expectations before major summative tasks are undertaken;
- exposure to assessment methods that will be used for summative purposes;
- advice on the use of feedback in learning.

Students are responsible for incorporating feedback from lecturers in their learning; making use of the assessment criteria that they are given; being aware of the rules, policies and other documents related to the assessment criteria of a course; and providing lecturers with feedback on their assessment methods and practices.

6.4 Exit Outcomes of Significance

Assessment will be designed to assist students in their learning and not direct them to unimportant goals. Instead, the assessment programme will alert students to the relative importance of different types of learning and how their effort should be distributed. Lecturers highlight the relationship between the outcomes of the module/ course/ paper and the proposed assessment.

In an effort to achieve optimal assessment, lecturers will consider how their assessment methods relate to the stated outcomes of a module/ course. The use of a device like an assessment planning grid may reveal that the achievement of one particular outcome is assessed many times while other outcomes are not assessed at all. Assessment will cover the full range of outcomes, with no particular outcome being under- or over-assessed. A single unit of work such as a module should have at least two to six specific outcomes.

6.5 Awarding of Grades

PIHE will work within a percentage-based system but with descriptive meanings, which provide conceptual support for a criterion-referenced assessment. Attention needs to be paid to defining the difference between 'competent/ pass' and 'not yet competent/ fail', then other grade standards ('far from competent with no hope of re-assessment/ supplementary'; 'exceptionally competent/ distinction') can be pegged accordingly. For undergraduate students in majors the grading of 'eligible for admission to higher degree' needs to be included. Professional discretion should be used in setting grade standards according to criteria.

6.6 Feedback

Feedback is fundamental to the learning process and appropriate/relevant feedback should be offered on all items of assessment. Lecturers will provide timely feedback that identifies where misunderstandings have occurred and the ways in which the student can improve. Feedback will be provided on both marked and self-assessed assignments. Self-assessed tasks will only be set where it is possible for the student to assess his or her work reliably; that is, assessment that requires experience and a measure of subjective judgement may not be suitable for self-assessment tasks, particularly at first-year level.

PIHE policy on student right to feedback on assessment is based on the following principles:

- open exchange of information relating to student assessment;

- feedback on performance in assessment is a crucial part of the learning process and has the potential to improve academic performance;
- assignment feedback must be timely and informative; however, the mode of delivery and level of intensity (for example, written comments, model answers, lists of common mistakes, consultation with staff member) will depend, among other things, on the importance of the assessment item and resource implications and capacity;
- students are responsible for incorporating feedback into their learning;
- the right of students to have access to their individual marks, to know on what basis they have been evaluated, in particular what criteria were considered, and to be able to challenge, through the appropriate channels, what they consider to be an incorrect assessment.

6.7 Transparency

Any assessment task will be accompanied by clear assessment criteria and memoranda that are effectively communicated to students and markers. At the beginning of each semester/ year the relevant lecturer will provide students with a written statement on the outcomes of the module, how performance will be assessed and other general assessment expectations. This statement will include an explanation of how the proposed assessment method(s) will give expression to the outcomes of the module, the number and type of each item of work to be submitted for assessment, a guide to the relative importance of every item of assessment to be submitted, a description of the type of assessment to be employed for each item, and a timetable for when the assignments are to be submitted during the semester/ year. It will clearly identify those assignments that must be submitted or other criteria (e.g., group assignments, lecture and seminar attendance or field work) that must be met before the student is eligible for admission to the examination or year mark.

Faculty policy for managing incidents of nonconformity with assessment requirements will be included in this statement. Such policies will include the conditions and penalties of late submissions, granting of extensions, possibility of resubmission, violation of assignment specifications (e.g., number of words), plagiarism and tutorial class participation (where it contributes to assessment). The criteria by which a student's level of achievement will be judged and an indication of who will make the judgment for that piece of assessment will also be provided to students well in advance of the submission date for the assessment item.

Students must obtain a minimum score for their “DP” (Due Performance) to be permitted to write the examination. Students are made aware of their cumulative DP after each assessment, and use this as an indicator of their progress.

6.8 Reflexive Research on teaching effectiveness

Lecturers will view student performance in assessment as feedback on their teaching. Assessment is a means of learning about students' misunderstandings so teaching can be

modified accordingly. Therefore, as part of the process of reflexive research into tuition, lecturers will use the results of assessment to reflect on the relative contributions to learning of each part of the process of teaching and assessment.

7. Methods of Assessment

The assessment method used should be appropriate to the learning outcomes and knowledge base (both foundational and practical) of particular disciplines. Methods will also reflect the purposes of assessment and the extent to which various kinds of assessment achieve these purposes. The appropriate use of a variety of methods will ensure that relevant and sufficient evidence is collected.

No single assessment method can assess a student's learning fully. It is necessary to use a set of assessment methods to achieve consistent and fair results. The total assessment plan for a module/programme should be carefully designed to cover and give expression to all learning outcomes. A variety of learning outcomes requires a variety of modes of assessment, such as examinations, assignments, practicals, group assignments and projects, and oral presentations. Many important learning outcomes cannot be assessed adequately by examinations. While many of the traditional methods continue to serve well, there may be better methods in terms of educational value, content and skills coverage, ease of administration, marking and so on. Lecturers may use a range of methods and instruments traditionally associated with the assessment of knowledge but they may also use a range of methods (observation, product evaluations, written and oral questioning) and a range of instruments (practicals, role plays, written assignments, tests, examinations, demonstrations, projects, case studies, simulations, etc.). The method and instrument must match what is being assessed, and appropriate and sufficient evidence must be collected

[We need to consider that we have registered whole qualifications with their own sets of outcomes. By virtue of thinking on this global level we might argue that each examination constitutes continuous assessment across the qualification and possibly even a learning programme leading to a qualification. If we test for exit outcomes of significance, we may do so by testing different outcomes on thirty different occasions through examinations of thirty modules. In assessing the outcomes of modules we must be aware not only of the outcomes of that module but of the outcomes of the whole qualification and possibly learning programme of which they form part. Which of the specific outcomes of the learning programme does the module support? Which cross field critical outcomes does the module support?]

8. Plagiarism

Plagiarism hinders learning and is unlawful; and is discouraged primarily on these grounds. It also affects the reliability of marks. However, fear of plagiarism does not dominate the choice of assessment methods to the detriment of educational value. Where there is suspicion of plagiarism, the integrity of the paper is scrutinised and no blanket decisions are taken which may compromise innocent students.

9. Assessment Procedure and Practices

To ensure the professional and legal accountability of assessment practice the following procedures hold. The Academic Board on the recommendation of the Dean of Faculty may amend them from time to time. They should also be subject to systematic review and benchmarked against national and international standards.

All processing of assignments and examinations is the responsibility of the academic departments: marking, adding of marks, quality control of marking and calculation of marks, provision of feedback, etc.

9.1 Assignment System

9.1.1 Procedures

Assignments, tests, projects, practicals and other formative assessments are constructed by the principal lecturers resident at Midrand Campus, and administered synchronously across all campuses. Where possible, formative assessments are randomly generated from electronic test banks, which assures the integrity of the paper and the testing process. Where such assessments are submitted for evaluation, they will be received and recorded by the appropriate lecturer. All items of formative assessment completed by a student during the semester or year will be marked promptly and returned to the student with feedback and the mark and/or grade. The mark record will be returned to the Faculty Administrator.

9.1.2 Admission to the Examination (DP)

Students may have to complete a set number of formative assessments etc to earn sufficient credits to be awarded a due performance (DP) certificate. Academic departments with the approval of the Dean of a Faculty can determine the regulations from time to time.

9.1.3 Use of Year Mark towards Final Mark

Students will be informed in advance if the year mark is to count towards the final mark as this effectively means that formative assessment forms part of and builds to summative assessment.

Students need to be made aware of the fact that a poor year mark could cause them to fail at the end of the semester/ year if it is part of the final mark.

The percentage that the year mark counts should not be such that the student could pass without obtaining some sub-minimum in the examination; for instance, 40%.

Academic departments will be able to determine the relative percentage of year and examination marks with the approval of the Senate and Exam Board.

The parameters for this are to be published in an introductory module outline.

9.2 Central Examinations

9.2.1 Examination Schedule

Many subjects rely, in part, on centrally administered examinations which are organized through the Registrar. To accommodate the smooth running of these examinations, and for clarification, these examinations are subject to specific rules and other policies, as determined from time to time by the Senate.

Unless otherwise approved by the Senate, semester examination sessions will be three hours long, to enable the scheduling of two examination sessions per day.

The examination timetable will be made available to students in advance of the examination, providing them with a fair amount of time for planning and preparation. Any changes to this timetable will be communicated to students at least on to two weeks in advance of the examination date. Students are responsible for attending the examination session.

Students with special needs (disability, etc) are entitled to make special arrangements to undertake their assessment.

9.2.2 Deadlines

Faculties will adhere to deadlines set by the Registrar regarding

- the setting of examination papers and their submission to the examination section for printing;
- the submission of DP lists;
- the submission of examination results.

9.2.3 Quality Assurance

Faculties will establish criteria for quality assurance in

- the appointment of internal and external assessors,
- the use of memorandums which focus on the outcomes and assessment criteria predetermined for the module/ course/ paper,
- the training and supervision of internal and external assessors and

- the quality control of marking.

The Registrar will put quality control systems in place.

9.2.4 Attendance by Examiners

It is important to monitor and minimise errors in examination papers during examinations. It is also common for candidates to request guidance or clarification. On these occasions it is important that the examiner give a ruling promptly. For these reasons the Senate has endorsed the following policy:

- An examiner should be available at the commencement of an examination to answer queries in relation to alleged errors or ambiguities in the papers.
- If examiners are unable to be present, they should arrange for availability during the examination by another staff member as their nominated representative.
- If neither an examiner nor a representative can be available, then as a last resort the a telephone number at which an examiner may be reached must be provided.

9.2.5 Time to Read the Examination Paper

Giving students time to read the examination paper before the official starting time allows a greater chance for errors in an examination question paper to be discovered before an examination gets under way. If an error in an examination question is discovered during the actual course of an examination, it may seriously disadvantage students who have attempted that question compared to those students who have not. It then becomes more difficult to compensate or adjust the results of affected students in an equitable manner.

Reading time provides an important element of consistency for students and can be especially useful to those students who have a tendency towards greater anxiety about examinations. In addition, students from non-English speaking backgrounds may draw particular benefit from extra time to read the examination paper.

To provide consistency for students, there should be a standard reading time of 10 minutes for all supervised examinations involving a written examination paper.

There may be some instances (for example, practical examinations) where reading time is not appropriate. Reading time also does not make sense where there is no effective supervision, either from specially hired supervisors or members of staff.

It may be that, for a one-hour examination in class time, a 10-minute reading time is impractical or unwarranted; and 5 minutes may be more appropriate. Alternatively, for an extra-long examination, 15 or even 30 minutes for reading may be more sensible.

In all cases, where there is a departure from the 10 minutes standard reading time, examiners should ensure that students have adequate notice of the change. Notification could be by mention on examination timetables, by means of notice boards or handouts. For central examinations, it is also important that early notice of any changes to the standard reading time is given to the Examinations Section.

9.2.6 Publication of Results

PIHE will advertise on notice boards and other appropriate places all available information referred to in section 1 above (except individual feedback) as soon as possible after the final processing of examination results. No results may be given to students before the official publication date.

Examination results should be finalized by the date notified by the Registrar in the memorandum circulated at the end of each semester/year. Examiners should be aware that a result of X (no assessable work received) is recorded in place of an incomplete result for a subject in a course work programme

- in the case of first semester results: in the middle of June;
- in the case of second semester/October to November results: second week of December.

The Registrar may approve an extension of time.

Any changes to examination results made after submission of an examiner's return, whether initiated by an examiner or a Dean of Faculty, must be in accordance with the rules. They will be authorised according to a standard procedure using a standard form that can be obtained from the Registrar.

9.2.7 Supplementary Examinations

The Academic Board awards supplementary examinations to students who fail their examinations in order to provide them an additional opportunity to fulfil prerequisite subjects and/or to allow them to complete their degrees. Supplementaries may be given where course rules specifically allow for them. Such supplementary exams are only granted to a student with a mark from 45% - 49%.

The Dean of Faculty, in consultation with the Head of Programme may grant a student one supplementary examination for every module passed in one examination sitting.

- (a) A mark below 40% will not be considered supplementary entry unless the conditions in (b) apply.

- (b) A mark below 40% may be considered for supplementary entry if all of the conditions pertain:
 - (i) The student concerned is a final year student AND
 - (ii) The module in question is the ONLY credit outstanding for the fulfillment of the requirements for graduation for the qualification as a whole.
 - (iii) A student not in the final year of study and not subject to (a) will be awarded supplementary examinations if:
 - i. The overall mark obtained for the module is between 45% and 49%
 - ii. The overall mark obtained is 44% AND the student has obtained a minimum of 45% for the examination in the module in question.
 - (iv) A student who obtains 50% for the module will be awarded a pass in that module.
 - (v) A mark of 49% will automatically be converted to 50% if and only if the student had passed the examination in the subject in question AND this case applies to not more than one subject.
- (c) Sub-minimums for papers will be determined by each Faculty.
 - (i) When a module has more than one examination paper, students are required to obtain a sub-minimum for each paper.
 - (ii) Students who pass all (year marks and examination marks) but do not meet the sub-minimum in one paper will be granted a supplementary examination.
 - (iii) Students with a mark between 45% and 49% for the overall mark will only be given a supplementary if they meet the sub-minimum for all the exam papers in that module/subject.

Supplementary examinations for semester courses are held in the same periods as following examinations. Supplementaries awarded in courses involving whole year subjects are generally held from January to February.

The Registrar requests that results from supplementary examinations are finalized within seven days of the examination date.

9.2.8 Special / Deferred Examinations

If a student is unable to sit a scheduled examination for medical or other adverse reasons, he or she may apply for a special examination. A medical certificate should accompany applications made on medical grounds; those on other grounds must be supported by a personal declaration

stating the facts on which the application is based; other corroborative evidence may also be accepted.

If the application is approved by the relevant Dean of Faculty, the student will be advised accordingly and told the period during which the special examinations will be held. Students whose applications are not approved are also advised as quickly as possible.

Marked scripts must be submitted to the Head of Programme and Dean of Faculty with a covering memorandum.

Students who are absent from an examination because of proven illness are entitled to an examination and a re-examination (supplementary) opportunity.

The results of deferred examinations will be calculated from the examination paper and the year marks where appropriate.

9.2.9 Oral Examinations

For appeal purposes, where oral examinations are used the primary questions must be available in written form, the interview must be recorded and the examiners must submit a written report. More than one examiner must be present.

9.2.10 “On Hold” Without Penalty (Suspension of Studies)

If a student's performance in a module is greatly jeopardised because of health or other personal problems, they may apply to the Dean of Faculty to withdraw from the module and avoid academic penalty.

9.2.11 Student Access on Previous/Past Examination Papers

A limited number of past Examination question papers are made publicly available except where prohibition of access to a particular question paper has been sanctioned by the Dean of Faculty where the Dean can demonstrate that access to past papers may compromise future examinations.

9.2.12 Guidelines for Exemption From Release of Examination Question Papers

Students may keep some examination papers but others must be handed in, as per the examiners instructions.

Context

Feedback is essential to an effective learning process, and affirms the importance of student access to examination scripts as a means of obtaining that feedback. In the case of examinations, such feedback is enhanced by reference to examination question papers.

Based on the recommendations of the Senate, the minimum entitlement of students is to be able to view both their examination script and the question paper under supervision.

The Senate recommends that students have access to examination question papers, unless determined otherwise by the tuition committee in exceptional circumstances.

The Senate develops criteria for determining the circumstances in which examination question papers are not to be released.

Criteria

Arguments for withholding examination question papers must be based on educational grounds. For example, there may be limited scope for developing questions in certain content areas, or the optimal assessment methodology to meet course objectives and permit valid assessment may limit the number of questions that can be written. In some cases, questions must be developed and refined across time and over repeated administration. It is accepted that in these circumstances access may prejudice the method or procedure for conducting the examination or attaining the objects of the examination.

The lecturer/ course co-ordinator/ Dean of Faculty must demonstrate that there are exceptional circumstances that will significantly compromise the educational value of the examination if the examination question paper is released.

The criteria and information will be taken into account in determining an application for exemption:

- the outcomes of the module/paper, content area, nature and type of all assessment, and how the assessment reflects the outcomes;
- information about the module/paper (number of students enrolled, number of staff involved, other resources for setting and marking assessment);
- the teaching methods used to help students to prepare adequately for the type of assessment proposed;

- how feedback on performance is given;
- reasons for the difficulty in setting new questions in terms of content or type of questions;
- reasons the assessment would be compromised by the release of the question paper (keeping in mind that release will not be necessary until after special and supplementary examinations are complete in the case of final examinations);
- if the argument is to be made on methodological grounds, why this assessment method is the best or only way to test outcomes and why it would be prejudicial if this method were not used;
- where other modules/papers in the institution using similar assessment methods do not seek an embargo on questions, the distinction between assessment methods/ content in those and the module/paper in question; -
- any additional factors that favour nondisclosure.

Access to an examination question paper may be sought under the Constitution. An argument for nondisclosure based on educational grounds will be consistent with the *prima facie* case that would need to be argued under the Constitution. However, considerations favouring disclosure, such as the desirability of providing students with feedback, will also be taken into account in determining whether an examination question paper should be disclosed under the Act. Lecturers/ course coordinators/ Dean of Faculty are urged to take such factors into account when making internal application for exemption under these guidelines.

Procedures

The Dean of Faculty, will determine each case for exemption, based on the criteria listed above.

Where exemption is granted, the Dean of Faculty will, no later than the week prior to the beginning of the semester/year in which the subject is to be offered, submit a report to the Senate containing a list of subjects where the examination question paper has been exempted from release, and the justification for the decision. The report should include the facts and information taken into account in reaching the decision.

The Senate will review the application of the exemption criteria and, in cases where it considers the justification for exemption is inadequate, may, after consultation with the Dean of Faculty, authorize the release of the examination question paper.

The Dean will seek annual confirmation from the relevant lecturer/ course co-ordinator that the educational basis on which he or she made the original judgment is unchanged, and will so notify the Senate.

Where the Board agrees to non-release of examination question papers, lecturers

- are responsible for making arrangements to ensure the security of the question paper so as not to undermine the decision to exempt the question paper from release.
- will provide materials to help students prepare for the assessment and to give students feedback on their performance.

9.2.13 Arrangements for Near Relatives and Close Associates

An examiner is placed under additional pressure where a near relative or close associate is enrolled as a candidate in a module for which the examiner is responsible. There is not only the risk that a student might be unfairly advantaged and justice not be done; there is also the possibility that, in an attempt to be impartial, the examiner will over-compensate and thus disadvantage the student. Even if neither advantage nor disadvantage to the candidate actually occurs, there is still the risk that justice will not be seen to have been done by others inside or outside PIHE.

In circumstances where a staff member teaches subjects in which near relatives or close associates are enrolled, it may be preferable for the staff member to remain involved in setting assessment items based on his or her lectures, and in marking assignments and seminar performances undertaken by students in their tutorials, except those of near relatives or close associates.

There may not be sufficient expertise in a department for the assessment items to be marked by someone else without the assistance of the particular staff member in question; in these circumstances, it may be necessary to use an examiner external to PIHE.

There are problems in determining who should count as a 'near relative' or 'close associate'. The policy on the involvement of staff members in selection or promotion procedures should cover the cases of a spouse, child, brother, sister or parent. Any extension of the category should be considered on the same basis as that used for determining when a 'close associate' is involved. Some examples of the latter are close friends, neighbours and spouses of colleagues.

The following principles have consequently been approved as comprising institutional policy on this matter:

- Where there are near relatives or close associates enrolled in a subject, a staff member may still be involved in setting the assessment, or in marking the assessment of students other than the near relatives or close associates. Special care should be taken to ensure that proper security of the assessment items and scripts is maintained in such cases.
- At no stage in the assessment procedures should a staff member participate in decisions involved in the determination of a grade for a near relative or close associate.
- Should there be a partial involvement of a staff member in an assessment process where a relative or close associate is involved as a candidate, special care should be taken to ensure that other staff members, especially those of junior status, will not be placed in an malicious position when they are called on to assess the performance of the relative or close associate of the staff member.
- In every instance in which a near relative or close associate of a staff member is involved as a candidate, the Head of Programme/Dean of Faculty should be informed of the fact at the earliest possible stage and should be asked to approve the arrangements proposed.
- In any case of doubt or special difficulty, the question should be referred immediately to the Registrar.

9.2.14 The Use of Calculators and Other Electronic Devices

The following set of policy guidelines for the use of calculators (or computers) in central and departmental examinations has been approved:

- Except in 'open-book' examinations (to which students are permitted to bring any textual materials including calculators), examiners will provide clear instructions on examination papers stating which type of calculator, if any, is permitted.
- Except in 'open-book' examinations, calculators with advanced text storage capability will not be permitted.
- Examination supervisors will determine whether calculators have an advanced text storage capability by whether or not they have a QWERTY keypad.
- If subject co-ordinators wish to vary general policy on the type of calculators (including computers) allowed to be brought into examinations (and if this has the support of their

Head of Programme/Dean), then they are to assume total responsibility for advising students well beforehand and for monitoring calculators (or computers) used in examinations.

- The examinations supervisor will explain clearly to students before the examination what type of calculator is permitted and not permitted; and that random checks will be conducted in the course of the examination.
- Unless specifically permitted, no other form of electronic calculation or storage device, or device capable of allowing communication within or beyond the examination room, will be permitted in an examination.

9.3 Appeals Process

9.3.1 Departmental Arrangements

The provision of outcomes, assessment criteria and feedback should reduce the incidence of students who are unsure about why they have received a particular mark. Students may approach the lecturer/ Head of Programme and question the result for any assessment item.

If a student is still dissatisfied with the result after an explanation, he or she may request a re-mark. Different departments have their own arrangements for this process but the policy often includes provision for the mark to go up or down. Details of the departmental re-mark policy should be contained within the departmental handbook or other departmental publication provided to all students. External examiners will be used in the appeals process, not the original examiner.

Students may approach the lecturer/ Head of Programme if they feel that their performance is not adequately represented by their final result.

9.3.2 Faculty Arrangements

Once a student has exhausted all avenues at programme level, or if the module is a faculty offering, the student may seek the advice of the relevant Dean of Faculty.

9.3.3 Appeals to the Senate

If the student is still dissatisfied, and the grounds for appeal fall within the jurisdiction of the Senate, he or she may pursue the case at this level.

The Senate can consider assessment related appeals made on the following grounds:

- improper action in the conducting of the assessment;
- irregularity in the conducting of the assessment;
- negligence on the part of any person involved in conducting of the assessment;
- discrimination against the candidate;
- prejudice or bias on the part of the examiner or any other person involved in determining the result to be awarded;
- failure to accord sufficient consideration to any matter of specific relevance to the student making the appeal in question.