Policy title	Policy Assessment	Year	2017
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Signature			

1. PURPOSE OF THE ASSESSMENT POLICY

While it is acknowledged that **eta** employs faculty who are qualified subject experts in their field, the aim of this assessment policy is to ensure consistency and fairness in assessment. To this end, **eta** evaluates its assessment design and monitors assessment practices through an internal moderation process. This policy outlines the principles which underpin **eta**'s assessment design and assessment practice and provides an overview of the range of assessment activities as well as the ratio of theory to practice-based assessments.

2. PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENT

It is acknowledged that assessment serves a variety of purposes including base line, formative, summative as well as evaluative. This policy addresses **eta**'s diagnostic, formative and summative assessment. The purpose of assessment is indicated as follows:

2.1 Base line / diagnostic assessment is used to identify students' strengths and weaknesses for admission or recognition of prior learning.

2.1.1 <u>South Africa:</u> admission requirements are in accordance with the regulations given by the Department of Higher Education and Training.

2.1.2 **eta** <u>Operators Outside South Africa:</u> admission requirements are in accordance with the local Educational Regulatory Body.

2.2 The purpose of formative assessment is to evaluate students' progress against intended learning outcomes and provide students with feedback on their progress. This is done to:

- Motivate students
- Help students improve their learning
- Consolidate work to date
- Provide lecturers with a profile of what the student has learnt

This type of assessment is intended to encourage students to keep up with their work. With this aim in mind, students' complete tasks throughout their academic year, contributing to a Continuous Assessment (CASS) mark. Thus our current practice is to score CASS tasks which contribute 40% to their overall year mark.

2.3 Summative assessment addresses students' reflexive knowledge and skills against a qualification's key objectives or *exit level outcomes*. The assessment activities are used to provide judgement on a student's achievements in order to:

2.3.1 Establish a student's level of achievement at the end of a programme, module or subject.

2.3.2 Grade or rank students to proceed or exit from the programme.

2.3.3 Select students for further learning.

2.3.4 Predict future performance and competence in specific learning areas.

2.3.5 Underwrite a `licence to practice` and registration on a professional register where applicable.

3. ASSESSMENT DESIGN

The **eta** Centre for Academic Development (CAD) is responsible for the design of assessment and the development of assessment instruments. Assessment designers are experienced programme developers who have gained experience in assessment design.

The assessment development process includes mapping programme outcomes to curriculum so that learning and assessment ensures a range of activities that provide evidence of concepts, applied knowledge and skills. Following the programme development phase, assessment is checked for integration into the curriculum. Tasks are designed, instructions written and memos developed. All task instructions must be ready for publication in the Study Guide and the Assessment Guide. All memos are ready and loaded to **eta** connect one term prior to delivery.

Our assessment must be relevant, coherent and fit-for-purpose. In the design, consideration is given to the integration of assessment, its level, complexity and relevance and whether it demonstrates the achievement of intended outcomes **eta**'s assessment design and assessment decisions are guided by the following principles:

- Fairness: assessment must align to the curriculum and results must be interpreted and judged fairly. To this end, assessment is moderated for

consistency of marking and to ensure fair practise in marking, between students and between assessors.

- Reliability: the design of assessment tasks and the assessment instruments ensures a level of reliability in assessment decision.

- Consistency: consistency of decision making between different students work and between assessors is monitored through the **eta** moderation processes.

- Openness and transparency: Students are provided with explicit information on what their tasks are, when they should be submitted and against what criteria they will be assessed. Assessment timetables are provided at the start of the course and assessment preparation sessions ensure that students are fully informed about assessment expectations.

- Integration: Assessment is a continuous process, it is integrated into the learning process and assessment "milestones" are achieved throughout the process of learning and assessment.

(Luckett & Sutherland, 2000)

Students' work that is submitted for assessment must reflect direct evidence and will be assessed according to the following criteria:

- Valid: assessor checks if the evidence is relevant, relates to the outcomes and shows that the learner has the knowledge and skills related to the stated outcomes.

- Sufficient: assessor checks if the learner has provided enough evidence that meets all conditions indicated in the assignment instructions and shows if the required standard has been achieved, against explicit assessment criteria.

- Authentic: the evidence submitted must be the learners own work and must be direct evidence produced by the learner.   Supplementary evidence is accepted to support direct evidence e.g. appendices or examples supporting work or additional certificates for purposes of recognition of prior learning (RPL).

- Current: the evidence must relate to competencies for which the student is being assessed and based on current science and knowledge.

- Relevant: the evidence must relate to the course outcomes and assessment criteria.

(Luckett & Sutherland, 2000)

Assessment must be relevant, coherent and fit-for-purpose. Much consideration is given to the integration of assessment, its level, complexity and relevance and whether it demonstrates the achievement of intended outcomes (Luckett & Sutherland, 2000). Our assessment designers are cognisant of the building blocks required to take learners from foundational levels of learning where they can express theory, knowledge and comprehension to reflective competence where they are expected to show the ability to problem solve, critically think and provide coherent and planned answers that reflect their ability and understanding (Ramsden, 2010).

- All assessment memos and model answers must be referenced by the designer so that model answers can be checked against their references.

- Once an assessment has been drawn up it is reviewed through an internal moderation process.

- The assessment, having been passed through internal moderation is then sent to a subject matter expert for external moderation (question paper and answers).

4. ASSESSMENT VALIDITY

The validity of our assessment is based on a model developed by Perkins (1993) where we assess what we set out to teach. In his model he describes four categories, being:

- <u>Content knowledge</u>: the acquisition of facts, concepts and routine procedures.
- Problem solving knowledge: the ability to solve typical problems associated with the discipline.
- <u>Epistemic knowledge</u>: the awareness of what learning and understanding in the field is and how to justify or explain answers through debate and discussion.
- <u>Inquiry knowledge</u>: how to challenge results and assumptions and be able to construct new knowledge.

To ensure validity of assessment, assessors are provided with marking sheets for multiple choice papers and with standardised memos with model answers and quality indicators for assignments, projects and practical demonstrations. To ensure that assessors comply with the use of the memos, national monitoring is conducted and assessment is moderated to ensure consistency of practice between students work and between assessors.

While it is difficult to reach an ideal state of assessment validity, an ongoing process of awareness creation, through regular moderation has improved consistency of marking, thus enhancing assessment validity. In summary, we aim for assessment validity by ensuring standardised assessment design with standardised memos.

Moderation of assessment occurs before the end of each academic year and prior to the publishing of final results. Moderation of assessment quality controls assessors' marking consistency against memos and we continuously evaluate our processes through ongoing reviews of assessment design, student results and assessor marking.

All summative assessments are both internally and externally moderated prior to being used. Marked copies of completed assessments are then centrally moderated by CAD.

5. ASSESSMENT METHODS

The assessment methods adopted are specific to the key learning outcomes for each qualification. Depending on the nature of the qualification and its outcomes, there is a split of practical to theoretical assessment which is contextual to the learning programme being taught. Our assessment methods and their related assessment instruments include the following:

Theory (knowledge and comprehension)
- Knowledge tests in the form of multiple choice question papers
- Short and long answer question papers
- Written assignments

Application (applied knowledge)
- Practical demonstrations or simulations
- OSPE (oral student's practical exam)

Reflexive knowledge (analysis and synthesis of theory and application)
- Practical projects showing the application of knowledge, written recording, adapting emerging knowledge to different situations or requirements

6. USING ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS AND ASSESSMENT GUIDES

Assessment instruments are designed at CAD and provided to each **eta** region. Assessment Guides explaining the overall assessment strategy for each programme are also provided. Assessors responsible for assessment are required to utilise the prescribed assessment instruments. These instruments can be in the form of memos, with model answers, rubrics, marking sheets with quality indicators or evidence checklists with quality indicators. If an assessor does not agree with an assessment instrument that has been provided, objections must be stated in writing to the CAD National Monitor, providing the reason for the objection as well as an alternative model answer. This alternative answer must include text references or sources to indicate why the alternative is an improvement on the original memo. Such objection should reach the CAD office no later than two weeks before the assessment date.

7. RE-ASSESSMENT

Re-assessment is decided once module marks are collated and one re-assessment is allowed at no extra fee.

Refer to Policy Assessment Rules for details.

Students who do not complete assessment within the validity period of the qualification risk having to repeat their entire learning programme.

Refer to Policy Registration (student policies) for details on validity of qualifications.

8. SPECIAL NEEDS

8.1 Assessment for students with special needs (e.g. dyslexia, English 2nd or 3rd language, disabilities) is managed on an individual needs basis**.** Special needs are discussed between the student and assessor and the agreed outcomes signed for and recorded in the student's file, by the student and assessor. Assessment should be able to cater for the needs of students with special needs without compromising the validity of assessment.

8.2 Assessors should make contingency plans in the event of candidates with special needs and assessors should be able to adapt assessment for candidates with special needs in the following way:

- For second or third language English: candidates may ask for oral tests and assessors can adapt questionnaires for such purposes. Such adapted assessment instruments must be moderated and verified by the National Monitor. Any adaptations of questionnaires for orals must be noted and reported to CAD for quality assurance purposes.

- It may be difficult to adapt long-term assignments; however, if the candidate can suggest alternative ways of demonstrating ability that meets the criteria, the assessor can consider this and ask for verification by the National Monitor.

- Some assessments require practical demonstrations. It is important to note that candidates are required to demonstrate and show good technique thus if the candidate is handicapped in a way that inhibits his/her ability to meet criteria then he/she may not be able to achieve the acceptable standard. If assessment criteria can be met, despite physical disabilities then special needs must be considered and contingency plans must be documented to show how the assessment was conducted or adapted.

References

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