



**RHODES UNIVERSITY**

*Grahamstown • 6140 • South Africa*

# The Rhodes University Policy on the Assessment of Student Learning

<b>Policy Volume</b>	Teaching and Learning
<b>Policy Chapter</b>	Three
<b>Responsible Committee/Unit/Division/Faculty</b>	Teaching and Learning
<b>Responsible Chairperson/Director/Manager</b>	DVC Academic and Student Affairs
<b>Dates of First and Subsequent Council Approvals</b>	June 2019
<b>Revision History: Approved Reviews</b>	2019
<b>Review Cycle (e.g. every 2/5/7 years etc)</b>	Every 5 Years
<b>Next Review Date</b>	2024



## 1. POLICY PARTICULARS

<b>1.1. Policy Title</b>	Assessment of Student Learning
<b>1.2. Policy Statement</b> (State in a single paragraph the policy mandate and how this relates to the University Mission and Vision)	This policy guides the assessment of all student learning at Rhodes University in order to contribute to the development of the graduates envisioned in the University's Vision and Mission statements and the academic proposition identified in the Institutional Development Plan.
<b>1.3. Reason for Policy</b> (What this policy aims to achieve)	<p>This policy aims to ensure that assessment is used validly, reliably and fairly to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that the standards of qualifications awarded by the University are achieved.</li> <li>• Develop students' learning through the provision of feedback.</li> </ul> <p>In the face of cultural, social and linguistic diversity, assessment has the potential both to challenge and maintain social structures. This policy therefore also aims to ensure that assessment is valid and consistent, that assessment practices are transparent and that assessors are accountable for the judgements they make.</p>
<b>1.4. People affected by this Policy</b> (e.g. All units of the University)	All students All teaching staff
<b>1.5. Who should read this Policy</b> (People who need to heed this policy to fulfil their duties)	All students All teaching staff
<b>1.6. Website address/link for this Policy</b>	<a href="https://www.ru.ac.za/institutionalresearchplanningqualitypromotion/policies/">https://www.ru.ac.za/institutionalresearchplanningqualitypromotion/policies/</a>

## 2. RELATED DOCUMENTS FORMS AND TOOLS

(University Policies, Protocols and Documents (such as rules/policies/protocols/guidelines related to this policy))

<b>Relevant Legislation</b> (Legislation/Regulatory requirements/Organisational Reports – name these)
Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 Constitution of South Africa SAQA Level Descriptors (2012)
<b>Related Policies</b>
Teaching and Learning Policy Policy on Curriculum Development and Review
<b>Related Protocols</b>
<b>Forms and Tools</b> (documents to be completed in support of this policy implementation)

E.g. Policy template for the policy itself. Documents pertaining to procedures for implementation, as well as monitoring and evaluation of the policy.

### 3. POLICY DEFINITIONS

(Technical or Conceptual terms used in the policy)

TERM	DEFINITION
Formative Assessment	This term refers to assessment that is intended to develop rather than measure learning through the provision of feedback.
Summative Assessment	This term refers to assessment that is intended to measure learning against a set of published criteria.
Learning Outcome	This term refers to the things students should be able to do after a period of learning and teaching.
Associated Assessment Criteria	This term refers to what an assessor needs to be able to see to ensure that students can indeed meet the outcomes of a period of study.
Assessment Task	This refers to a task that allows students to demonstrate performance against a set of assessment criteria.
Validity	The concept of validity relates to the extent to which i) assessment measures the learning it is intended to measure and ii) the extent to which inferences and decisions (for example a decision to 'fail' a student) based on the results of assessment are correct.
Reliability/Consistency	'Reliability' refers to the extent to which assessment is able to consistently measure learning, across different groups of learners, at different times and when administered by different assessors.

### 4. PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THIS POLICY

OVERVIEW
Rhodes University strives to carry out the following, as far as is reasonably practicable:
1. In South Africa, as learning is described using i) credits ii) HEQSF levels and iii) learning outcomes, assessment needs to measure and develop learning across the full number of credits and at the HEQSF level specified.
2. Assessment needs to be perceived as an integral part of teaching and curriculum development as the availability of outcomes and assessment criteria associated with them allows students to understand what they need to learn.
3. The achievement of both validity and reliability is enhanced through the development of assessment criteria associated with learning outcomes.
4. Transparency and accountability are enhanced by the publication of assessment criteria as a task is set.
5. In pursuit of validity and reliability, assessment needs to be 'aligned' in relation to all the elements of a curriculum (for example, course purpose, outcomes, teaching approach, learning materials) as well as to the purposes of the qualification and the purposes of higher education itself.

6. Assessment functions as a powerful tool for learning when feedback on performance is provided.
7. Higher education is characterised by long-standing assessment practices including the use of examinations to measure learning. While formal examinations may be necessary, questions about, for example, the proportion of coursework to examinations and the form examinations should take must always be considered in relation to the concepts of validity and reliability.
8. Given the importance of assessment to be valid, consistent and fair in the face of increasing diversity in the student body, there is a need for all Council appointed staff members to demonstrate their competence as assessors before their appointments are confirmed.
9. Support for the development of the competence of academic staff members as assessors will be available from the Centre for Higher Education Research, Teaching and Learning (CHERTL).

## 5. DIRECTIVES FOR IMPLEMENTING THIS POLICY

(Actions and processes by which the objectives of the policy will be achieved.)

<b>Directive 1:</b> Validity, reliability and fairness must be ensured through the development of assessment criteria that are aligned to the learning outcomes set for any courses.
<b>Directive 2:</b> Assessment tasks need to be designed in order to allow students to demonstrate performance against these criteria.
<b>Directive 3:</b> Assessment criteria need to be developed at course design stage and, wherever possible, they need to be communicated to students as tasks are set.
<b>Directive 4:</b> Students need to be provided with feedback on their performance that is constructive and in time to allow them to develop their learning further before another assessment takes place.
<b>Directive 5:</b> All courses need to encompass both formative and summative assessment.
<b>Directive 6:</b> All teaching staff appointed to Council funded posts need to demonstrate their competence as assessors by meeting the requirements of a set of criteria related to assessment by the end of their probationary period.
<b>Directive 7:</b> The University will provide support for teaching staff to demonstrate their competence against these criteria.

## 6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

(Roles and responsibilities of Key personal/Divisions/Faculties/Departments)

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
ROLE 1	Academic teachers are responsible for designing the assessment for the courses or portions of courses they teach that adheres to the principles stated in this policy.
ROLE 2	Course coordinators are responsible for reporting on the assessment that has taken place in the courses for which they are responsible in course statements submitted at the end of each academic year.
ROLE 3	HoDs and Deans are responsible for monitoring the assessment that takes place in courses for which they are responsible.

<b>ROLE 4</b>	Ultimately, Faculties are responsible for the quality of assessment in courses in their area of responsibility.
<b>ROLE 5</b>	CHERTL is responsible for providing support to lecturers on assessment
<b>ROLE 6</b>	The Human Resources Division is responsible for ensuring that probationary requirements are met.

**CONTACTS** (Please see Appendix A)

Direct any questions about the policy to the relevant Office-bearers, designations and contact details are listed in Appendix A.

HoD CHERTL

DVC Academic and Students Affairs

**POLICY REVIEW PROCEDURE**

(Actions and processes by which the policy will be reviewed)

<p>Policy approval and review will take the following route:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teaching and Learning Committee</li> <li>2. Faculty Boards</li> <li>3. Senate</li> <li>4. Council</li> </ol>
<p>The Policy will normally be reviewed every FIVE years.</p>
<p><b>Communication of the review process</b></p>

## LIST OF APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

#### CONTACTS

(Direct any questions about the policy to the relevant Office-bearers; designations and contact details are listed below)

<b>Area of Concern</b>	<b>Division/Faculty/Department</b>	<b>Telephone</b>	<b>Email</b>
Guidance on implementation	CHERTL	8171	<a href="mailto:Chertl-admin@ru.ac.za">Chertl-admin@ru.ac.za</a>