

# UCT Assessment Policy: Report on Feedback

## [UCT Assessment Policy: Report on Feedback](#)

### [Section 1: Faculty Feedback](#)

[Humanities](#)

[EBE](#)

[Commerce](#)

[Science](#)

[Health Sciences](#)

[Law](#)

### [Section 2: Units and Committee Feedback](#)

[Institutional Planning Department](#)

[Student Representative Council](#)

[Office for Inclusivity and Change](#)

[Senate Teaching and Learning Committee Feedback](#)

[Online Education Sub-Committee](#)

The newly revised draft of the [UCT Assessment Policy](#) was disseminated for review and feedback from the 15th of March 2022. The UCT Assessment Project Team and the Assessment Framework Working Group (AFWG) took the lead in disseminating the policy as well as ensuring engagement with the document and collecting feedback on it. Faculty representatives in the AFWG shared the draft policy with departmental structures in their respective faculties. The draft policy was also shared at several committee meetings by Project Team members as well as with special units at UCT. A small number of policy experts were also requested to review the policy. Lastly, to aid in the dissemination and engagement around the policy a [webpage](#) was also created which allowed visitors to download the [draft policy](#) and [feedback form](#) which could be returned to a dedicated mailbox ([assessmentpolicy@uct.ac.za](mailto:assessmentpolicy@uct.ac.za)).

The UCT Assessment Project Team has been responsible for managing and analysing the returned feedback on the newly revised draft of the UCT Assessment Policy. This feedback will be used to guide the policy development process and be incorporated as best as possible into the further amendments made to the policy.

This report summarises the feedback that has been collected by the UCT Assessment Project Team, which includes submissions from the various faculties, units and committee meetings. There were 55 feedback submissions gathered in total. Feedback was largely submitted using the designated feedback form, however a number of written submissions (e.g., meeting minutes, written responses) were gathered as well.

The report has two broad sections. The first section summarises feedback submitted by members belonging to the six faculties at UCT. It is intended to provide an overview of the unique issues that appeared in each faculty as well as an idea of the overlap in issues across faculties. The second section details feedback provided by units and committees at UCT.

# Section 1: Faculty Feedback

## Humanities

Staff from twelve departments in the Humanities Faculty submitted feedback on the policy. A single Faculty-level submission was also offered. The feedback on the policy included the following:

- Most departments responded positively to the policy
- Many are already applying strategic action 1 and 2
- Accountability in assessment is important (being consistent with deadlines to develop trust)
- Unclear what implementing the framework means in concrete terms, generally vague and does not acknowledge practical difficulties
- Departmental autonomy to practice assessment in ways that are appropriate to their discipline/accommodating diversity in implementation/importance of disciplinary standards/consistency at what level (faculty or departmental)
- Concerns with Strategic Action 1:
  - Increased workload for staff and students
  - Timelines would need adjusting
  - Registration related problems would need to be addressed
  - Informal assessment to be acknowledged vs assessments with no marks have little value to students with no incentive to complete them (cultural issue)
  - Need for tutor training and acknowledgement and budget
  - Administration frustrating
  - Need to take into account external examination
  - Retaining a percentage of summative/cumulative assessment
  - More explicit addressing of feasibility and administration and budgetary support
  - Increased risk of collusion/cheating
- Concerns with Strategic Action 2
  - Concern around the implementation of assessment in multiple languages
    - Resourcing required to make this feasible
  - Need to consider student expectations across different study levels
    - Self and peer evaluation will require student training/education, as well as having students engage in assessment design
  - Streamline terms and cluster principles.
  - Policy section on consequences and interventions vague
  - Collusion and cheating need to be dealt with more convincingly
    - Summative evaluation can balance the possibility of collusion/plagiarism in formative assessment
    - Clarity around how to mitigate it - more sophisticated logistical support needed
- Implementation guidelines suggestions:
  - Overview of assessment methods
  - Include samples/examples
  - Guide/tools to detect and handle cheating/dishonesty would be useful
  - Help from CHED in designing assessments

- Guidance on assessing in multiple languages
- Need to take into account challenges experienced moving face-to-face, online and blended
- Not needed: could limit application and enforce “one size fits all” approach/ be restrictive. Instead adopt a differential approach.

## EBE

One departmental submission and one faculty-level submission was collected from the EBE Faculty. This feedback detailed the following points for consideration:

- Many Chem Eng/CEM courses are already applying strategic action 1 and 2
- Policy purpose and language unclear (framework vs policy)
- Strategic Actions not new
- Authors and AFWG members to be included in the document.
- Language used in policy is sometimes ambiguous
  - Need for education around assessment, evaluation and examination
- Needs to accommodate the approach to assessment from various disciplines
- Key concern is how professional degrees meet accreditation exit outcomes within the proposed assessment policies proposed by UCT.
- Needs to clearly speak to current teaching and assessing climate, not sufficiently futuristic in its view of assessment and lacks “aspirations”
  - Student learning/knowledge generation has also changed due to pandemic and needs to be taken into account
  - Must speak to e-assessment and issues related to it
  - Must speak to using technology in assessment
- Concerns with Strategic Action 1:
  - Contradiction in that we are supposed to document WHAT we will be teaching up front in course descriptions etc. By definition we can thus not decide WHAT we will be teaching based on continuous assessment.
  - Practical challenges when completing continuous assessment in multiple languages and giving timely feedback - resourcing required
  - Retaining a percentage of summative/capstone assessment - a cornerstone of faculty assessment and Graduate Attributes, required by our accrediting bodies. Concern is if a particular required % continuous assessment was enforced and what implications this would have for course external moderation (as discussed in UgTLC).
  - Increased workload, risk of being alienated from research commitments without sufficient resourcing
- Concerns with Strategic Action 2:
  - Having students engage in assessment design would be challenging but valuable - support required
  - Concern around the implementation of assessment in multiple languages
    - English is UCT’s language, large change with significant implications for every aspect of assessment
    - Requires reasonable bounding
    - Resourcing required to make this feasible

- Errors
  - Implications for teaching language?
- Implementation Guidelines suggestions:
  - Practical guidelines (best practice to ensure implementation) and not just assertions
  - Could reflect a more balanced view between face-to-face and e-assessment (UCT's position on integrity and security should be clarified)
  - How would implementation differ/stay the same in a blended /hybrid/ f2f / online class?

## Commerce

Staff from six departments in the Commerce Faculty submitted feedback on the policy. There were generally multiple submissions from each of these departments (in total 16 feedback submissions). A single faculty-level submission was made as well. Their feedback included the following:

- Many positive responses to the policy
- Many are already applying strategic action 1 and 2
- Changes:
  - How is the new proposal different from what we have currently been doing all along?
  - How does this proposed change affect our research agenda?
  - Why change the current system that has been working reasonably well?
- Policy engagement with UCT community: There is a need for face-to-face or online presentations to allow us to engage on the matter. The team that is driving the change in policy should engage with departments in order to understand where we are and for us to understand where they want to take us. Would it be possible for those leading this project to address academics at departmental level to discuss the implication of the change? “
- Policy revision cycle too long
- Prescription: Is policy prescriptive or a guideline of the university's assessment philosophy. If it is meant to be prescriptive then better and more definitive benchmarks need to be included to better guide courses as to how they should structure their assessments. Policy should be as broad and flexible as possible. The more prescriptive it attempts to be across a very large range of subjects and learning levels, the more it risks undermining its own goals. Should allow for discipline specific tailoring of the assessment policy, including guidance on new ways of thinking about assessment in the online space. Flexibility must be permitted, taking account of the level and the purpose of courses, for example 1000 vs PG level courses.
  - I would like to see a distinction between professional programs (i.e. BCom – Chartered Accounting) and other more flexible degree programs in terms of what is allowed
- Policy currently does not fully address the main purpose of assessment (i.e., provide evidence of the quality and equity of a degree or certification). The issues associated with the integrity of assessments in the online space (specifically relating to continuous assessment) is not addressed. There is little or no mention of assessment

for educational rigor and 'knowledge'. The policy refers to learning outcomes, but the alignment with knowledge and how these are assessed seems to be missing.

- The policy should make it clear that assessment approaches shouldn't compromise on the quality of student/integrity of assessment method.
- How does the assessment policy interface with DP's, supplementary exams, deferred exams, how assessments are taken (online, in-person, etc), external examination, student workload, timetabling, as well as the support which will be offered to academics to implement the policy.
- What strategies are in place to assist various departments in moving closer towards these goals. E.g., Will there be support from CHED or CILT? Is the policy factoring in student numbers and class sizes? External examiners: the role of external examiners needs to be reviewed as they are currently required to assess 50% of the course to make a judgement on standards and fairness. The continuous assessment process will make this challenging. Resources should be featured, as part of the policy. Specific plans have to be put in place to provide support that does not add further burdens on existing staff.
- In the case of transformational pedagogies which can be difficult to navigate, it would be beneficial for the lecturer(s) to be involved in the design of the evaluations, as the lecturer has a good idea of what stage of development the students are (or should be) at each point in the course. Feedback that speaks specifically to the transformative process would hence be beneficial in adapting the course to a particular class. This understanding should be built into the assessment in cases where this kind of pedagogy is used, in order to gain information that is useful in adapting the course as it unfolds.
- Concerns with Strategic Action 1:
  - Increased workload for staff (including administrative staff) and students - large class size and limited lab resources to consider and risk of already over assessing (anxiety and plagiarism risk)
  - Timelines could need adjusting
  - Needs resources to support it. Will require lots of preparation, change will be time consuming and take a long time.
  - Does the Formative vs Summative balance refer to contribution towards the final mark or the spread of activities?
  - Some disciplines that have professional accreditation require that students write invigilated exams. Other professional bodies in other disciplines require that students write strenuous exams, in one programme the final exam will need to be a substantive portion of the final result, as student is required to demonstrate their ability in successfully passing the programme as well as indicate sufficient preparedness for the professional examination (written within 3 months of completing degree) - duty to students to prepare students for these exams and ensure students are not prejudiced in these exams. move toward formative assessments might impact students' ability to adapt their learning style and approach required for summative assessments set by professional bodies. With regards to formative assessment it could be argued that the benefits are obtained regardless of how much they comprise of the student's final result
  - The requirements of the various accreditation bodies are often for individual work done under exam conditions means the format of continuous formative

assessments will need to be carefully reviewed, and peer-marking and other self-evaluation tools might not be well suited to assist with making continuous assessment more feasible.

- Is there any underpinning empirical evidence in our discipline that highlights the benefits and supports the change from summative to formative assessment? Are there any statistics on institutions that have success stories? Was industry involved in feedback on their expectations of graduate attributes?
- Educators tend to rely on tutors to help with regular assignment feedback which could compromise feedback quality. CA may inhibit the achievement of the provision of the desired effective feedback.
- Does everyone understand the proposed structure of continuous assessment and its application in supporting learning experiences of technical (i.e., IS or IT students)? It will be good to have some guidance on how this understanding will be created.
- Concerns with Strategic Action 2:
  - Need to balance the variety and number of assessments given to the students.
  - Assessments designed so that “time and effort are evenly distributed” is at odds with course goals, which are to accumulate skills, practices and reflective activities throughout the course - our instructors need flexibility to assign different types of assessments throughout the course which will necessarily differ in the amount of time and effort required by students
  - The manner in which we currently assess students is influenced by the nature of the work that they are required to do once they graduate and also by the professional accreditations
  - Principle 4 (reliability) of the assessment policy needs more clarity. How do we ensure consistency among multiple markers? Provide a clear memorandum or marking rubric enough? What does it mean to have consistency within a department and faculty? Should we have similar assessments within the department? Timeline adjustments, single markers and further admin training could support consistency
  - Add “feedback” to appropriateness
  - Registration issues for all students are resolved prior to commencing academic projects
  - To add to feasibility: It is important to ensure that resources such as PCs with assistive technologies
  - Not clear whether all principles apply to every course in the degree or is it the degree holistically.
  - Section on execution could be expanded to provide more details for example only how the cost constraint is to be considered. So, for each of feasibility, administration, and security it may help to provide additional guidance as well as to ensure consistency across departments and faculties particularly where students take courses across departments and faculties.
  - Fairness, Inclusiveness, support for student learning: need to be expanded and integrated with rigorous tutor training and the disability unit. There should be a standard university/faculty Tutor training programme that offers rigorous training to equip tutors. The university needs to use an integrated approach

where the disability unit (apart from providing disability letters) can be involved in assisting and training lecturers on handling certain disabilities or creating awareness.

- How the quality & authenticity of formative assessments will be maintained with various modes of learning (Blended, online etc). Risk of cheating and plagiarism. With the continuous assessment model, the quality and authenticity aspect should be emphasised more e.g. exam conditions for formative assessments.
- Legitimacy – perception of the appropriateness – Can we expect a fair response from those who are being assessed?
- Exam security – how to get away from invigilated exams? Need a clearer policy around student dishonesty/cheating
- Concern around the implementation of assessment in multiple languages
  - Impractical and inequitable. How will this be put into practice and how do we ensure fairness across a multiplicity of languages? The policy can only work if sufficient support and expert guidance is provided.
  - Large cadre of international students and staff are also broadly recruited. overlap between their non-English languages is very small. Non-English assessments would require third party marking. This necessity would detract from some of the other goals of this policy. Risks creating a situation in which instructors are able to pay more attention (and respond more appropriately) to the intra-term needs of students doing assessments in English than to students doing assessments in other languages, which have been marked by a third party. Requires controls to ensure that the translations contained no ambiguities, omissions, or mistranslations that would disadvantage students seeing one language rather than another.
  - Testing in multiple languages reduces the competitiveness of our students internationally.
  - Capacity to identify academic integrity issues. Sources from which students might plagiarise are largely English. Current plagiarism software is limited in its effectiveness and this issue would be exacerbated by the use of third-party graders. Overall, allowing assessments in non-English languages stands to create a very serious risk for academic integrity.
  - International language of Commerce is English - obligation to ensure students can communicate clearly and conduct business using it
  - Could result in poor preparation to enter into a career or study at a postgraduate level. All professional exams are offered only in English and students must be fully and equally prepared for them
  - All the Journals we submit to are in the English medium. If we would like to educate and equip undergraduate students with the skills needed to further pursue research should we not spend more resources in refining the writing skills of our students in English?
  - Investigate the Stellenbosch University language translation system
  - Teaching and assessment must occur in the same language. Assessments set are conscious of vulnerable students' primary discourse, this is also extended to lecture examples. If an assessment is

to be offered in more than one language, then I think the learning activities and curriculum content should also be offered in multiple languages; otherwise there may be misalignment between learning outcomes->pedagogy->assessment - need resources for this. will students be allowed to answer in multiple languages but the question remains in English?), or will the course need to be taught, asked and answered in multiple languages?

- Unsure how it could be incorporated into assessment practice, learning material in other languages included in module design.
  - SAICA has an approved language policy for its professional exams (English only)
  - Better ways to ensure fairness by identifying and resolving bias in the assessment
  - This is a good principle for inclusiveness especially for previously disadvantaged students. The practical guidelines should however include professional services for language translation to ensure quality of assessments is maintained in particular for teaching technical courses e.g. Programming etc
- Implementation Guidelines suggestions:
    - Great to see how the policy has been/can be implemented successfully including challenges and ways to overcome them, and receive guidance on how to follow these examples.
    - Perhaps instead of reinventing the wheel it would be useful to investigate what is done, how it is working, etc.
    - How can the additional time for student support be integrated in the current WAMs?
    - More information about transformative assessment methods and practices, and explain how these are different to non-transformative approaches
    - I would prefer a few workshops that focus on: 1. Examples on how other colleagues or faculties have thought about the new assessment policies 2. Feedback from students on this new policy
    - Ideas of good and/or best practice covering a range of disciplines and include examples from the professionally orientated and accredited courses/degrees. Examples by discipline (both of what is in line, and not in line with the policy). Examples of formative assessments in different academic disciplines.
    - How is this new proposal going to be implemented in practical terms? We need to see the implementation plan
    - Wide consultation: I would like to see wide consultation with academics and administrative staff on what this means and how it will be carried out. The involvement of government, business and tertiary institutions before coming up with an implementation plan. Engage with the students
    - More guidance on peer assessments (limits)
    - Assisting students with disabilities
    - Language translation
    - How would it apply to theory/essay based assessments vs mathematical/statistics based assessments
    - How objectives of the course can align to assessments



- Ways to deal with “feasibility, administration and security”

## Science

Feedback was gathered from seven departments in the Science Faculty. The Deans Advisory Committee also offered feedback on the policy. The feedback suggested the following:

- There were positive and negative responses to the policy
- Some are already applying strategic action 1 and 2
- Acknowledge that it is not meant to be a one-size-fits-all framework, there will be exceptions to some aspects of the strategic actions. Specify the extent to which specific adoption and adherence is encouraged. Will course convenors and HoDs still have full agency and freedom to determine what is best for their specific courses? Arguably it is too sweeping a policy to be implemented practically (without substantial loss in academic quality).
- Terms in the policy are also generally too vaguely defined. A definition of “assessment”
- Everyone involved in developing the policy is encouraged to bear in mind that educational assessment is entirely to enhance the teaching and learning outcomes.
- No solutions are provided for handling assessment difficulties
- Cheating in online assessments needs to be prevented
- It is a mistake to think that assessment can be improved in this top-down fashion. I’m afraid the policy reads as if written by people who do no teaching themselves at all.
- The department doesn’t have a formal set of aspirations for assessment. We are understaffed and don’t have time to write high-level policy documents. One thing that would help the department’s assessment would be more academic staff.
- Activity theory regards teaching and learning as a dialectic category pair. It is difficult to imagine that a policy ostensibly meant to improve teaching and learning focuses only on teachers and fails to mention learners at all. The document is a set of obligations imposed only on teachers without any mention of student-led activity, and also inform students of their responsibilities.
- Collective teaching practice of the department as a whole. Most likely, some good teachers would be enabled as such, but there were reservations on whether this would be commonly shared and how this can be effectively encouraged. A mechanism ensuring that policy is adopted and practised by all involved in the course needs to be established. Whilst teaching styles of academics differ from each individual lecturer, assessments must be consistent throughout the topics taught in each course and across all levels.
- There is not enough shared knowledge within the department on overall best practices, as well as formal teaching practices of individual lecturers. A mechanism to foster this would be a useful addition to the policy.
- Valuable lessons were learned over the past two years. It is important to build on the lessons learned and have a support structure of experts in the pedagogical principles of formative assessments available to members of academic departments. The excellent work that CILT did to support us in the shift to ERT and PDL comes to mind.

- Proposed policy should place critical thinking skills, taught by Socratic method, front and centre.
- Concerns with Strategic Action 1:
  - There are some positives in shifting weight to formative assessments, variations in interpretation on the pedagogic underpinnings of the various assessment approaches need nuanced interpretation. There is unlikely to be a 'one-size-to-fit-all', given the diversity in fields of study and even variation within a field depending on level of study. Acknowledge the variation in content and learning outcomes at various levels. Even within a single course there are often different sections that cover different types of work, which can necessitate different emphases on formative or summative assessment. This extends to different courses at the same year of study; different years of study; widely different class sizes; different streams; then of course beyond a single department to various other departments and faculties. It will be up to each academic to decide what will be appropriate for each course, and a blanket statement of this kind cannot be applied to this department.
  - Could argue to change the assessment weighting such that a greater emphasis is placed on the formative component - concerns about cheating and plagiarism and gaming the system. These need to be invigilated/controlled, using the continuous online assessment module, that plagiarism and cheating increased substantially, which inflated marks. Academics end up spending a huge portion of our time writing plagiarism and cheating reports to legal representatives in the Faculty in the online continuous model of assessment. Substantial risks of certain aspects of continuous assessment (such as gaming, and plagiarism) are not addressed to any degree of satisfaction. Talk about how these will be mitigated – and exceptionally strong guidelines worked out.
  - Need to proceed with care and maintain rigorous assessment procedures. need to keep tight control of assessments from beginning to end.
  - Should be limited to reducing the weighting of the final exam (slightly) – any change away from this could have substantial effects on academic quality. Although I am not convinced by the research suggesting that continuous assessment is better than capstone – both are important, and both capture different things about student performance
  - If we have more formative assessments then the value of spending substantial time in setting final exam papers (that need to be moderated by external etc) that won't count for much is not feasible. Setting exam papers is a process that starts 3 months before the final exam to ensure all processes are followed. One option we could think of is that we move to use the same paper for main exam and SUPP/DE
  - Significant time and workload implication and the impact on benchmarking. How will this be ensured? Indeed, the principle on reliability – consistency - speaks to this but is there a framework on how to ensure this? Simply saying 'resources would be provided' is not enough. A commitment towards additional teaching budget for the appointment of teaching assistants to assist course convenors and lectures with developing and grading formative assessments, would be very encouraging to see!

- How do we check the quality of the feedback given in tests, practical write-up and other assignments? A big question mark for me is how effective this programme is in this aspect of teaching.
- Impractical for academic staff who have commitments to train graduate students and do research as well. Will the University be providing extra resources to provide this type of teaching support?
- CA a terrible idea - my students always do significantly BETTER in the final exam than in their class records. So moving to less emphasis on the exam would DECREASE the pass rate. Who wants that?
- No encouragement of good practice on the part of students (only lecturers). Student engagement with feedback is limited. So the policy places a lot of emphasis on academics and tutors doing more work, without understanding that it will be wasted, because the policy does not understand student behaviour. Providing good feedback in a timely manner to large classes is an enormous amount of work and, as per my previous point, most students ignore it. Is this the best use of limited resources?
- The idea that an assessment can be not-high-stakes but taken seriously by students is an illusion. Students do not engage with teaching and learning activities unless they are incentivized to do so, normally by associating a summative component. Even when there is a summative component, students don't engage. Please could you clarify why we should expect students to engage with assessments if the summative component is reduced or removed.
- Disagree with more testing - already over-assess.
- Arms Race nature of assessment: if you don't test, your colleagues in other courses will, and students will not work on your course.
- Certain courses where the curriculum is determined by a professional body that relies solely on summative assessment for further professional development, high-stress deadline driven product delivery is how industry works- students need to be trained for both.
- Uncertain on how to interpret the pyramid. Does it mean that the aim is the have summative assessments only constitute a tiny proportion, say 20%, of the assessment for a course as measured by contribution to the final mark? Does not clearly identify the difference between the traditional- and continuous assessment models in terms of the proportion of formative and summative assessments. What proportion of the total marks must be formative assessments in order for the model to be considered a continuous assessment? I do not find the proposed models clear enough. Are we being asked to do away with capstone assessments? What summative assessments are being suggested and in what percentage relative to the total marks? I think that at least a third of the total marks must come from capstone assessments, which can be conducted to also evaluate the success of our continuous assessments throughout the semester. General agreement to reduce the final weighting of the capstone assessment, without losing the requirement for sub-minima, there is little agreement on formative assessment styles. Capstone examinations also need sub-minima or we might find students horribly failing the capstone exam, but passing the course

- Not clear exactly what is meant by continuous assessment - perhaps too broad to be meaningful. What does informal in class engagement count as? A clear definition of what makes a typical traditional versus continuous assessment model.
- Supplementary exams have been successful in our department for both 1st and 2nd year courses. A decrease in the weight of summative assessment makes the practice of running one supplementary exam at the conclusion of the last assessment difficult (if not impossible). How will borderline cases be treated in a continuous assessment model?
- Concerns with Strategic Action 2:
  - use of 'SHOULD' - prescribes assessment methods as opposed to recommending and allowing leeway to tailor assessment for particular course/year of study. there is clearly no "one size fits all", with respect to different curricula.
  - Having students engage in assessment design - feasibility concerns, possibly complicates further, whereas reducing and simplifying would be most prudent. Substantial confusion about the roles of students and lecturers. Students cannot, and should not be expected to, make judgements the way lecturers can and do. It's not the student's job. If you expect it, it will be done badly, based on the wrong criteria; e.g.; "if I did badly it was unfair." Getting students to evaluate the work of their peers: this can be VERY damaging indeed. The last thing an already weak student needs is to be exposed to another weak student's incoherent and illogical and incorrect attempts. I don't think that it is appropriate at undergraduate level, particularly in Science, where students are not in the position to make good judgements about what the learning objectives of the course are, or should be, and how best to assess whether they have met those objectives. Please could you clarify exactly what is meant by this. difficult to imagine how students can be involved due to the nature of the discipline which is generally extremely objective rather subjective in nature. Most assessments focus on demonstrating understanding of physical phenomena or solving problems. Our students need to know certain things and possess particular skills as outcomes towards graduation and they do not necessarily have insight into those outcomes and skills a priori to enable them to give input into their own assessment. strong disagreement with peer/self review. Need extremely carefully thought out guidelines for self/peer assessment. peer evaluations - encourages gaming, and plagiarism – and is frankly sometimes an excuse for academics to "kill two birds with one stone. I am not (yet) convinced by unessays and certainly not by self/peer evaluations.
  - Misunderstanding of what self/peer evaluations are. Self/peer evaluations are part of the formative assessment process. They allow students to gauge their own progress, ability to understand the assignment, commitment to learning, effort, etc. It doesn't mean a student gives themselves a final mark, but rather evaluates along the way as a means of improving the final hand-in (whatever that is). A formative model that further includes self/peer assessment might have students even more involved in taking ownership, by for example reading and critiquing each other's drafts and providing commentary, which can then be used in revision towards the final product.

- Human resources support should be strengthened. More funding is needed for tutors in general – particularly if more formative assessments are going to be required
- Use multiple methods of assessment - same concern as for student engagement in assessment design, an argument could be made for being consistent as opposed to expecting students to constantly adjust. How many more different methods and types of assessment should we be willing to consider?
- Significant increase in the workload. Is this appropriate?
- Without a discussion of feasibility the rest of the document is simply wish listing. It is especially important that the document makes clear exactly what it means by the word reasonable in the discussion of feasibility.
- Security should feature in the main graphic, as it is a large problem
- I am concerned that reading them in conjunction with the scope of the document and in the absence of guidelines for making tradeoffs re feasibility will lead to disaster. From the scope these guidelines should apply to all students and staff at every level and all assessment practices should meet the criteria outlined. This is simply not possible. There is also no mechanism, and hopefully no will, for monitoring whether this happens, or for enforcing this. The practical upshot is that good teachers will continue using good assessment practices, and bad teachers will continue using bad practices, and this document will remain totally disconnected from the realities of teaching at UCT.
- Concern around the implementation of assessment in multiple languages
  - capacity concerns, needs resourcing, unimplementable. Be clear on how assessments and assessments products will be translated and what the expectations are of the lecturer and department, and what external support will be available. We cannot just run assessments into Google-translate and then mark them. The software is not yet good enough. Whose responsibility would it be to get an assessment (question paper) translated? Whose responsibility would it be to mark an assessment completed in a language which the teacher does not speak?
  - How would we as a university ascertain the integrity of the assessment?
  - Understanding and interpreting the questions in an assessment is often one of the learning objectives of a course. We could scaffold all our assessments so that every student understands exactly what symbolic manipulation they need to do, but that would strip all higher-level cognitive demand from the course and impoverish our degrees. I am sympathetic to our second language students, but we should not design assessments to accommodate them (quick, easy, cheap), we should instead provide support (slow, difficult, expensive) so that they can meet our assessments at their current level. How will it work in large classes with many languages?
  - It could be difficult to assure consistency (which stands out under the principle of reliability) in marking when this depends on the accuracy

- of a translation that is unlikely to be verifiable by those that are tasked with quality control (e.g., course convenors and external examiners).
- Which languages? UCT needs to decide first what its language/s of instruction is/are, before offering multiple language assessments.
  - Many languages don't have the technical words used in our course to enable translation). Translation of science concepts requires translators who also know the science to avoid ambiguities arising.
- Implementation Guidelines suggestions:
    - Offer specific implementation details, as many clear examples as possible, with links to international standards on how to achieve them successfully. provide example course outlines to be used as a reference point
    - Include an annexure of assessment models, e.g. quizzes, spot test, formal end-of-term/year exam and oral exams indicating how these are either aligned or not aligned with the objectives of a continuous/formative assessment model.
    - Please consult all faculties when the guide is being developed since different disciplines naturally lend themselves to different types of evaluation and assessment. Each department and field of specialisation has its own peculiarities, which I believe will in turn require specific practice guidelines. Even different courses within a given programme or department can require different approaches. Given this, I think that it would be best to collect as many course-specific suggestions as possible, rather than try to call for the implementation of a general one. If the practice guidelines are not written by a group of people who have taught and convened at least one large course (preferably 500+ students, ideally daily lectures) for the last five years, they will not be worth the paper they are printed on. The group writing the report should be weighted by size of the student body. We should not have a handful of academics from Health Science and PACA dictating to upper campus how to run our assessments. Most members should be from ACC, ECO, MAM, STA and similar departments.
    - Clear guidelines on the minimum/maximum weights that formative and summative assessments

## Health Sciences

One feedback submission was made by the Education Development Unit in the Faculty of Health Sciences. This detailed the following:

- Positive responses to the policy
- State who was consulted and drafted the policy
- Who is the intended audience of the policy? Maybe the target audience can be explicitly captured within the introduction?
- There is a need to identify intermediaries to support the assessment policy such as assessment committee if Faculties do have them. Perhaps, they may also contribute towards the monitoring and evaluation?

- Monitoring and Evaluation is important - can this be formulated and integrated within the policy to ensure that we all are accountable or committed to implement the policy?
- Qualified assessors (or adequately prepared for the method of assessment they are involved in) are required to mark/grade student assessments - linked to academic integrity and standard
- Link between the examination policy and assessment policy made clearer. Why are they separate documents?
- Is there a relationship between NQF, SAQA assessment policy and the institutional assessment policy?
- Role of the external examiner being a suitably qualified person to inform on content and the assessment process, beyond Postgraduate programmes as part of the quality enhancement of programmes may be important to think about
- Can Faculties develop their own assessment procedures that speak to the university assessment policy?
- Implementation is a concern therefore staff support, and ongoing training may be useful
- Concerns with Strategic Action 1:
  - The advantages (and disadvantages of continuous assessment) have not been explicitly offered in the policy introduction.
  - There is support for the transition especially from formative to summative. Ongoing support and evaluation is provided for academics/ faculty to practice as assessment suggested - linked to academic integrity and standard
  - How will supplementary/ re-examinations/ pass/fail decisions align with the transition to continuous assessment, whether as in course or summative assessments?
  - How do we ensure that we make students part of the continuous assessment process?
  - With regard to changing to continuous assessment, how do we engage with lecturers about formative assessment and the benefit of it? Rather than adding a rule of subminimum in a small summative assessment that may impact students' progress.
- Concerns with Strategic Action 2:
  - Online assessment be included under fairness - so that aiming to maintain academic integrity of the course and programme is recognised.
  - Under validity and reliability - should both be criterion referenced? Then specific to the reliability section - standard of pass for fail is not mentioned- is this intentional? Using diverse methods for testing diverse abilities (e.g., knowledge, skills, behaviour & attitude)/ competencies etc.
  - Under Transparency: When should students be informed of the assessment as a guide? And if assessments change under exceptional circumstances beyond the control of the university (COVID, protest, fire) what are the processes that need to be followed i.e., student input for assessment change or no change? 'Normal' assessment change versus exceptional change as explained above e.g., what would the processes be to communicate timeously? And what would a 'normal' change look like e.g. change of time/ date etc?

- Under Feasibility, Administration, Security: Are all assessments scheduled during university times/ calendar? Or Faculty times? Assessment responsibility – should students familiarise themselves with programme assessment requirements per year, for example, to make themselves aware when assessment is scheduled. Maybe consider a similar process to the plagiarism declaration process where students are required to sign they cannot leave before the marks are released in case they need to stay for supplementary or re-examinations in courses that will offer these.
- Under authenticity where it refers to live assessment, would this include assessment in places of work such as health care institutions? Regarding authenticity: assessment degrees with high levels of practical exposure and in workplace environments such as Health Science principles 3 , 4 and 5 may be difficult to adhere to because they are influenced by no 7.
- Implementation Guidelines suggestions:
  - Clarify regarding online and face-to-face assessment guidelines and separate the two each with separate guidelines
  - Identify different forms of assessment that could be used for online assessment versus contact.
  - Who are the stakeholders that the assessment policy takes into consideration?
  - How will the assessment policy be communicated?
  - How will staff be trained about this and who will do the training? This may be necessary for example to address the default position where some courses may include sub minimums that prevent students from continuing or passing the course

## Law

One faculty-level submission was offered by the Faculty of Law. This feedback suggested the following:

- There is a need for clarity on the status of the policy - prescriptive or discretionary and encouraged?
- Need to see an implementation framework/ set of guidelines
- Need clarity on the recommended amount/proportion of continuous assessment and the proportion of formative: summative assessment
- There were concerns about the practicalities and feasibility of implementation - academic and administrative capacity, external examination requirements etc.
- This policy needs to be integrated with the Exams Policy and the work currently being done on a new Academic Misconduct Policy

## Section 2: Units and Committee Feedback

### Institutional Planning Department

This department submitted a single feedback document. This detailed the following points:



- The following statements could be included in the document: (1) A statement on how assessment can enable staff development/ learning, on their pedagogical and curriculum practices, (2) A related point is that assessment in general is an ongoing professional development area for academics and that UCT should and will invest in development of staff across all levels, in this area, (3) Moderation should be incorporated as a principle.
- Include Guidelines for review of Academic Departments and the T&L Strategy
- Currently more of a framework and less so a policy - in keeping with guidelines that are forthcoming
- Policy provides the space and permission for teaching staff to be bold and innovative - not clear in the document
- Space for a statement around what formative assessment is in relation to the allocation of marks for assessment that has been earmarked as formative? It is good practice to not allocate marks for formative assessment but we are still doing that at UCT. We may want to take a position on this.
- Need clarity around what the relationship is between principles and criteria. The criteria seem more to be explicating the principles and how they translate into practice so I'm not sure of the language and it may be unclear to the practitioner.
- What of integrated assessment that is practised in some disciplines?
- The notion of single assessment for an academic offering as being high stakes should also be included and cautioned against
- With regards to multiple types of assessment, emphasise that assessment is also feedback on teaching practice.
- Key aspects of alignment are assessments that also relate to professional competence as described in professional standards and graduate attributes. I wonder if there is not also a space here where you mention teaching activities to make mention of assessment as appropriate to the mode of delivery.
- The administration and security of assessment is framed too lightly. This needs to be emphasised and I wonder if it should not be included under the principle of credibility and that there should be a statement about reading this in relation to the exams policy manual?
- I recommend that we use the word course as this is the smallest unit of analysis for an academic offering at UCT.
- Have often heard the word in course assessment used interchangeably with continuous assessment. You may want to include the various ways in which these types of assessment are referred to.

## Student Representative Council

The Student Representative Council (SRC) at UCT was consulted for feedback on the policy. No objections were raised by the SRC on the draft policy.

## Office for Inclusivity and Change

Two feedback submissions were provided by the Office for Inclusivity and Change. Their feedback recommended the following:

- A continuous model of assessment with built in extended time for hand-ins where needed may be advantageous particularly for students with mental health concerns and students with chronic medical conditions. For example, some students struggle with mental health concerns and require flexibility with deadlines, reduced time pressure and volume of work due to the variability of their disabilities. Students with chronic medical conditions also have flare ups which cause them to miss fixed testing/exam dates. Fixed deadlines and the stress of immovable high stakes hand in and test and exam dates frequently causes these students great distress and in the worst case scenario, students have to apply for LOA.
- Intentional application of assessment principles to assessment design could include a range of testing models following Universal Design Principles which recognizes a diversity of learning approaches. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) could shift the focus from a deficit model, where students who are challenged by one method of lecture presentation (e.g., video with no transcript), are not singled out for individual accommodations in order to make the lecture accessible. Embedding UDL into teaching and learning at UCT will produce systemic change and promote inclusion for all, not only for students with disabilities.
- Shifting the weighting from high stakes summative examinations to an even distribution between formative and summative evaluation may serve to neutralise time specific challenges. Some events may prevent a student from attending a set timed test or exam and providing their best academic results. Students can use the DEC process to rewrite exams, on provision of medical confirmation of illness. However, students with ongoing medical challenges e.g., epilepsy may find themselves in a repeating cycle of flare ups and recovery. Ongoing assessment would be a more accurate reflection of the student's ability in this instance. UCT should reconsider how exams are graded for students who are neurodiverse to allow for appropriate leniency over and above exam accommodations. The request for a differentiated approach in how exams are graded for neurodiverse students has not been considered before by the university.
- Use lessons from COVID lockdowns and the subsequent rapid move to online learning. The use of the Examity Online Proctoring system has proved to be crucial for exam writing of students who are unable to be physically present for a scheduled exam. It is noted with concern though, that this service must now be paid for upfront by the student using their credit card, at the time when the student books the service. more consideration for the vulnerability all students were experiencing, Some students with disabilities reported that asynchronous learning suited their medical needs. They could self-regulate their personal care eg catheter management or administration of medicine at optimal times. There was more consideration for the vulnerability all students were experiencing, some students with disabilities reported that asynchronous learning suited their medical needs. They could self-regulate their personal care eg catheter management or administration of medicine at optimal times.
- Learning gaps addressed through feedback and support: finding additional tutorial support is challenging, and sometimes not possible for the departments to provide due to resource and budgetary constraints. Would it be possible to expand on how this additional support would be given and how students can receive this support?
- Recommendations for the implementation guidelines: The inclusion of the CILT Ed Tech Advisors as key members of the Team.

## Senate Teaching and Learning Committee Feedback

The Senate Teaching and Learning (Senate T&L) Committee met twice to review the development of the draft Assessment Policy.

On the 24th of March 2022 the newly revised draft of the Assessment Policy was introduced to the Senate T&L Committee for review and discussion. The following feedback was offered by the Committee:

- The language in the document is mixed - it does not clarify whether the policy is discretionary and aspirational (as in the guidelines talking about supporting the application of the principles) or whether it is prescriptive (information must be clearly communicated to students). It might be that this committee gives a strong steer to make the document prescriptive, and given the history of this university, ways must be found to make it actionable. However, if people take on board whichever parts work for them, then decisions will need to be made about whether it does become a policy. Helpful to make a distinction between frameworks, the policy itself and the guidelines that are provided. The current document more closely resembles a framework than a policy. There are several elements of the document that must be taken into the policy. A policy has a normative objective in that people are expected to do what the policy says and that we have a specific time to achieve this. Once the policy describes what we think the university should be doing, the language must be found to convey that. Need to define the framing – this is what we're proposing, these are the reasons for it, and this is the plan for the next three years. Distil the framework from the policy, the bureaucracy can assist with what can be achieved. Distil the elements that are policy and those that are the framework to clear up the ambivalence. The document must clarify whether it is prescriptive and be clear in its tone and tenure. It may need to be approached as a framework until there is buy-in and ownership from the constituencies as it is the sensible and right thing to do, rather than forcing people to conform in punitive ways. There is a need for a framework – certain elements can be part of the policy, but we need to work on the details until the policy has the advantage of office, stating that it is the university's aspiration for the policy to become effective from a specific date.
- A policy should strongly indicate what is expected, but making it implementable will generate interesting conversations. The AFWG would assess the ambivalences in the document and find ways to mediate them to develop one clear tonal line. This comes back to the idea about what the policy is for and how it's complemented by other resources, documentation and support mechanisms, etc. We have to be clear about how much of this policy will set what else happens in terms of support for assessment practices, disciplinary contexts, guidelines, how much people talk about assessment as a practice and their attitudes towards it. It should be practised as a partnership, and work must be done around our orientation towards the purpose of assessment, which may resurface the philosophical underpinnings of what is done and why.
- There is space in the document for colleagues to think about the philosophical underpinnings of assessment and its alignment in its potential for curriculum change. There should be a section at the outset about what we commit to and why we do assessment, what it means in terms of the knowledge project and power relationships in an academic setting and how it translates to change.

- How can an assessment framework speak to graduate attributes? Much of what is assumed in assessment practice is that we mark only what is visible, but we make inferences beyond what is visible to who students are and the claims we make about who they are as graduates
- The idea of assessment as an attitude, which might be the wrong word, in the approach that the assessor takes and the approach that the assessed takes in receiving the assessments. The document could expand on the partnership between these two in the assessment process as it is an attitude of the mind and a transformational issue. The document does not signal that doing an assessment is hard work or voluntary. The space must be broadened because it is scary what can be claimed about our graduates based on sometimes relatively narrow focuses of assessment
- Place more emphasis on the assessment criteria where the underlying theory is the shift from norm referencing to criterion referencing. Academics have to get academics to grasp that, and students should be involved with the criteria, not set them but work with them. She called for more emphasis on assessment criteria as a means to build student agency and to build student engagement in the assessment process. However, it would require academics to specify assessment criteria explicitly and ideally for every task. It loads up on design and loosens up on the marking.
- Changing the Assessment Framing at the university is part of the transformation of teaching and learning at the university, part of changing curriculum, pedagogies and relationships of power inside and outside the classroom, between students and among students and between staff and students. Assessment is a space that could be used to develop some of the graduate attributes, such as criticality, ability to self-assess, and ability to give feedback. The participation of students in the setting up and understanding of the criteria is hugely important. A policy is another tool that can be used in the deep transformation of the curriculum and the culture of teaching and learning at UCT. It is essential to keep engaging to avoid slipping back into the familiar, and possibly easier option.
- Assessment could be enhanced beyond its disciplinary methods and embrace trans-disciplinary work. The focus on inter, trans and multi-disciplinary boundaries. It should be highlighted at the policy level by flagging certain basic practices and signalling what is valuable.
- Policy is inseparable from curriculum review. Policy is one of the critical elements of changing pedagogy and approaches to teaching and learning. It must contribute to transformation, more emphasis to be placed on the extent to which assessment as a practice is essentially a transformative act, or ought to be, and not focused only on the replication of ourselves, knowledge or knowledge systems.
- In the pandemic assessments have placed the university at risk, owing to its lack of constructive alignment
- Increases the consciousness across the university, provides the opportunity to think about a variety of assessment methods and to have them well aligned to the learning experience. The intention was to try to bring into consciousness a whole range of practices and to signal that some minimum concepts and principles should receive attention in assessment.
- Policy needs to align with the programme accreditation requirements for a tight and rigorous policy

- Which division is responsible for monitoring policy
- Policy feedback transparency: supports that all feedback is shared and visible to everybody before the next version of the policy is released.
- Concerns with Strategic Action 1:
  - Continuous assessment removes the big bulk test cramming in June or November exams, which does not bring out the best in our graduates. This approach helps to know whether our students have the correct levels of skills and knowledge related to what they are learning. Students will have better time management and can pay attention to the critical stuff to facilitate success rather than the big exams where many come short. The intention was to focus on how assessment contributes to student success.
  - Increased workload. However, if you have students working with each other in groups and with tutors around the assessment criteria, either to peer-assess or self-assess in low stakes assessments, they will be empowered and understand what counts in the course. They will take the feedback much more seriously as it will be familiar to them. She acknowledged that this might be more relevant for the guidelines than for the policy.
  - Students' attitudes with formative assessment - students don't want to do anything that's not for marks
  - Slippage between the terms continuous and formative - usually means continuous, always for marks, but probably low stakes building up to high stakes. This issue might need to be addressed explicitly by not emphasising formative too much, but instead, it's continuous learning and for formative purposes.
- Concerns with Strategic Action 2:
  - More could be said about what it takes to design good criteria for assessment because we want students to exercise agency and understand what they're meeting in an assessment act. It must also enable choice and innovation, and creativity in those spaces.  
How does the institution's environment either enable or prevent the possibilities of having a more learner-oriented position around assessment and feedback?
  - Concepts of validity and reliability are contestable, it is critical that issues of rigour and trustworthiness are evident with what is indicated in the document. In terms of reliability, the application of the policy is around consistency, which is debatable as it comes from a positivist framework of how we think about assessment. This is being challenged in the literature and in practice, and it should be stated clearly as to how it is used. Generally, where does the issue of relevance lie in this framework? Possible psychometric bias, or measurement theory bias, in the definitions of expressions of concepts like validity, reliability and fairness. This needs attention as it is crucial to understand these concepts in their contextual landing as opposed to a definitional sense and not in only positivist ways.
  - Referring to the second of the seven principles, to promote and support student learning - whether the words 'and research' could be added after learning because when learning is assessed, research activities are part of that assessment. Varied practices and inconsistencies in assessing research (apart from the PhD) exist across the university, even though they may be

discipline-specific. Suggested further engagement as it might have to ask about the extent to which an assessment framework promotes or enables research to be undertaken and allow students to think about research.

- No reference to the secure and reliable recording of assessment results but suggested that it might not be included as it was already in the Exams Policy Manual.

A second meeting was held with the Senate T&L Committee on the 23rd of June 2022. This meeting considered the faculty feedback that had been collected on the draft Assessment Policy (see [here](#) for the slides from this meeting). The feedback from this meeting related to two main themes. The first included connecting with others who are working on assessment. The second considered the scope of the policy development work. Lastly this meeting also offered some suggestions for next steps to consider in policy development.

1. Connecting around assessment

- a. Focus on the intersections of this work with the second semester of 2022
- b. Consider Assessment Policy alignment with other existing academic policies
- c. Connect the assessment work with the curriculum change work. People are working on curriculum reviews and improving their courses -there are lessons and recommendations in this space
- d. Need for a cross-section of people working in the different areas of assessment, teaching and learning and curriculum
- e. Importance of bringing in language specialists and mental health experts to make the links to the brutality of the assessment function and process

2. Scope of the work on the policy

- a. The project is exploring the possibility that as an institution there could be certain minimum practices, standards, and philosophies of assessment. It was hoped that there are overarching inclusive directions and basic minimum requirements across all faculties that everyone could accept. Overall, it might be helpful to develop guidelines about how assessment could be done and supported better
- b. It is essential to determine the difference between a framework, guideline and whether the document is a policy
- c. Complexities noted: a one size fits all approach could be challenging to develop given the diversity and complexity of the university environment. A framework that offered the bare minimums must allow room for flexibility within disciplinary groupings

3. Significance of the work:

- a. Academics of students is the top presentation for mental health care. This has capacity implications at exam time and is also important for those looking to defer exams.

Suggestions for possible next steps:

- a. Consider hosting a panel discussion or debate that reflects and engages on the messiness of the process to facilitate understanding across the university, particularly with regard to determining the difference between a framework, guidelines and policy.

- b. Need to balance the bigger 'why' questions with what is needed right now
- c. Extend the discussion into the domains where people are already doing this work. A working framework should be presented for further debate to keep the conversation going. There won't be agreement on everything, but shared interests could be identified through ongoing discussions that would help to develop a policy.

## Online Education Sub-Committee

The Online Education Sub-Committee met on the 26th of August where the assessment policy development was discussed. This meeting mostly considered higher-level steps that could aid further development of the policy:

- Assessment is a key component of curriculum work and of curriculum change work
- A guideline discussion document would be useful for energising the process and discussion. We need a document out for discussion and comment that allows folks to think critically about how we would like to see assessment moving forward. We need to engage about for example, assessment weightings, assessment purpose, types of assessment, and the practices that we would value moving forward. The document is intended to bring to light assessment issues as part of curriculum change and will help focus discussion, but it's not entirely necessary to have a document and we could just discuss this too. There was no particular destination or process of engagement recommended with regards to the document.
- Assessment impacts student mental health (related to assessment periods and overlap, assessment load, and deferred exams) - connects it to curriculum change process
- There are many overlapping projects in this space and it is somewhat tricky working across the whole ecosystem. There is much happening at project level and committee level around education. It would be critical for folks from this committee to be involved in the discussions across the committees. We need to bring the various groupings together as a strategy to develop the Assessment Policy. Need to talk more about how we can shape the processes in a way that is more integrated.