UJ Assessment Guidelines for

Learning at a Distance

Introduction

The guidelines in this document are aimed at assisting academics in considering how assessments may be amended, as the University temporarily moves into online teaching and learning. These should be used flexibly and in conjunction with your faculty/college assessment strategy. Due to the teaching and learning challenges resulting from COVID-19, Faculties and the College of Business and Economics (CBE) have already discussed the need for change in the way students are assessed going forward. Every discipline or module, depending on the learning outcomes (LOs) and curricula, will have different assessment methods and format requirements.

Given the current constraints, an increased level of flexibility will be required to ensure that student assessments accommodate our diverse student needs and that assessment is fair. It is recommended that student assessments incorporate more emphasis and contextualisation regarding the overall purpose of the module, the method and form of assessment as well as the demands that it will place on the students from an accessibility perspective. As students will be easing into online learning, it is strongly recommended that no high-stake assessments should be scheduled for the first two weeks.

Students will be anxious and distressed as a result of the current uncertainty and the changes introduced in order to continue the academic programme through pure online teaching and learning. It is recommended that academics exercise flexibility with students who are unable to complete assessments for a variety of reasons. The aim is to ensure that students have a fair chance at completing an assessment. It is crucial to clearly communicate to students any changes in curricula and assessments as well as procedures for extension requests.

Purpose of the Document

The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines regarding online assessment. The document contains a list, examples and exploratory notes, which academic staff can use if they wish in planning, designing and implementing effective, efficient, relevant and student-orientated assessments. It should be noted that the guidance provided in this document is not an exhaustive list. It also acknowledges that Faculties and the CBE already have internal guidelines applicable to student assessments. In that light, the purpose of this document is not to replace those individual faculty and college specific guidelines, but instead to complement it.

First Semester Examinations

The University has made an executive decision that no formal face to face examinations will take place in the first semester of 2020, except for modules where it is an absolute requirement. In the case where an examination is administered online, consideration must be given to students who are unable to participate, and alternative arrangements should be made. For all other modules, if the assessment was planned to take the form of an examination, it would be advisable to prepare and accommodate alternative assessment(s), which are summative in nature. These will have to be managed online, using the University's Learning Management System (LMS), Blackboard.

For the purpose of this document, all online activities such as assessments and assignments will be regarded as continuous assessments that contribute to a final mark. In cases where qualifications are linked to Professional Body requirements advice should be sought regarding assessment requirements and whether there is flexibility. Similarly, modules that have a practical component may require directives from the Professional Body regarding alternative methods or deferment. As such information becomes available please communicate with students.

Rethinking Assessments

It is important to revisit the planned semester assessment(s) and consider how best to amend these to ensure that the assessment(s) are meaningful and manageable for students and staff. Specific emphasis should be placed on assessments being inclusive for students. A very important consideration is that assessments should be student centred especially within an online environment. Student centred does not mean jeopardising the quality of an assessment. It requires a student assessment to be relevant, meaningful, and concise, adding to the student's learning process and most importantly creating a scenario or context to which the student can relate.

There are two key steps to reviewing assessment:

1. Review the learning outcomes in the module and identify those which will be the focus for the current assessment; and
2. Review the module's current assessment methods.

Support and guidance are available to assist academic staff in reconsidering the module learning outcomes and current assessment methods to accommodate student needs within an online environment of assessment.

Below are some suggestions that academics developing online assessments should consider within the practices of the relevant faculty/college:

1. Ensure that work submitted by students to date, has been marked and marks have been uploaded.
2. Where necessary and indicated by your faculty/college, complete the module assessment change form template. It is essential to keep a record of all approved changes to assessments. Where the traditional June examination is replaced by other forms of assessment, it is recommended that this be captured. The format of recording can be determined by the relevant faculty/college. For example, if there are changes to the examination with respect to weighting or format, this should be recorded.
3. Ensure that amendments are in line with the learning outcomes and that revisions to assessment consider the complexity of the module and the feasibility thereof.
4. For exit level modules, the input of the external examiner will still be solicited on the examination equivalent. The same will apply for modules with an internal moderator.

Attached are examples of documents used to record changes in assessment that could be adapted for use by other faculties.

Faculty of Education (a Change of Assessment form and an example of a completed form)

Faculty of Health Sciences

College of Business & Economics

Assessment Principles

The purpose of this part of the document is to remind you of the principles of assessment and to offer **options for consideration** in the transition to distance learning and teaching.

ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLE	IMPLICATIONS FOR TRANSITION TO REMOTE TEACHING
Assessments must be **aligned** with module learning outcomes (LOs) and contribute to the programme purpose.	• Revised assessments must be aligned with learning outcomes. • Provide students with a clear indication of what changes you have made and the reasons why the changes were made. • Explore ways in which the overall assessment load can be reduced across modules and programmes.
Revision of assessment in modules may have **implications** for the overall programme.	• Revised assessment strategies should be planned by the department or discipline as a whole. • Identify and devise strategies for those LOs which may not be achievable online (for example, practicals, work-integrated learning, laboratory sessions). This could be done in subsequent modules of the programme. • Make plans for the assessment and moderation of exit-level modules. Some faculties/college will have specific needs and ought to consider appending these general guidelines with faculty specific guidelines.
Ensure that the **purpose** of assessments and how they contribute to achieving learning outcomes are clear to students.	• Communicate all assessment changes to students clearly. • Provide students with a clear plan of how the revised teaching, learning and assessment are connected to and contribute to the programme.

(table continues on pages 4-7)

ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLE	IMPLICATIONS FOR TRANSITION TO REMOTE TEACHING
Use a **variety** of assessment methods. The purpose of any assessment is the key factor when deciding on the method and format of an assessment.	• A variety of assessment methods can be used, ranging from case studies, mind maps, comparative summaries to well-structured short answer questions. • Offer smaller, more regular opportunities to determine insight into and application of the content. • Smaller self-assessment tasks may be useful in measuring prior knowledge. • Students should also have opportunities to review their own performance and assess their learning using self-tests, journaling or short quizzes that contain built-in feedback. This will help students to take responsibility for their own learning and develop them as independent learners.
Communicate clear **criteria** for the successful execution of tasks to students.	• Assessments and assignments should have clear, detailed instructions, which include information such as date and time of submission, the length of the document/word count, mark allocation, etc. • Supply clear evaluation criteria that spell out how the division of work must take place and explain how marks will be allocated. • Where possible, distribute assignments together with a rubric and explain to students how to use the rubric to guide their response. • Communication with students should be open, supportive and engaging, allow them to express their difficulties, whether with the technology or the learning required. • Take into account the circumstances of the students and allow for flexibility within reasonable limits. • Make provision for students to catch up with assessments if required.
Assessments must be **fair** and should not disadvantage any groups of students.	• A quick, short, low stake assessment at the beginning of the term will be useful as a 'temperature gauge' (it could provide insight into student well-being/prior learning as well as access to resources). • Assessment tasks must consider students' access to online and other resources. Be clear on what they would need to complete a task. • Learning new software/technologies and procedures are counterproductive unless there is a clear benefit and the students have easy access to the required technology. • For group projects and assessments, it is essential to make sure that students are able to connect with one another.

ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLE	IMPLICATIONS FOR TRANSITION TO REMOTE TEACHING
Assessments, their design and submission processes must be flexible. Create conditions to **help students** complete assessment tasks – be flexible.	• Avoid time-limited assessments if possible. If you do use this, create flexible assessment windows – e.g. give students a window of four hours in which to complete a test of 30 minutes. • Ideally, submission deadlines should be for a few days/ weeks (rather than a few hours). • If you use tests and assessments, consider allowing students more than one attempt (not only due to connection problems, but also to create security and lessen stress on the part of the student). • Allow submissions after the due date – on Blackboard submissions will be marked as late, but submissions are accepted. • Acknowledge the resolve and ingenuity of students. • If possible, offer students choices in how they show how they have reached the learning outcomes.
Do not over-assess and keep assessment **simple**.	• Revisit planned assessment and revise the nature/number of tasks students are expected to complete for the module. • Do not over-complicate either the tasks or the materials you use. All sources provided ought to be easily accessible using a cellphone or potentially no additional technology at all. • Although not recommended, if videos or audios are used for assessments/assignments purposes, they must only be a maximum of 5-6 minutes in duration and MUST have a transcript available for students that have data restrictions and cannot view/listen to the videos/audios. • For modules that rely heavily on image-dense material, please minimise the size of image and save the document as a PDF. • Consider the pacing of assignments and be mindful of students' access to resources and their workload.
Balance summative and formative assessments.	• Avoid 'high-stake' summative assessments, especially at the beginning. Instead implement smaller, continuous assessments that engage students and guide their learning. • Divide bigger tasks or tests into a series of smaller activities which are easier for students to complete on a small device and easier to mark. • Dividing larger assignments into smaller sections will boost students' confidence in working in this new environment without academically prejudicing them unnecessarily.

ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLE	IMPLICATIONS FOR TRANSITION TO REMOTE TEACHING
Apply **authentic** assessment that requires application.	• Design questions that require application to the real world and are relevant to students' current context. • Design assessment tasks to minimise mere recall which could contribute to plagiarism.
Ensure that assessments are at the right **cognitive competency** level.	• Assessments should require analysis, critical thinking, application and interpretation skills that measure insight into the subject matter at hand, and that require the application of knowledge to a problem. For exit-level outcomes consider using complex and broadly defined tasks. • Competency-based assessments may require demonstrations or practical applications and require careful planning.
Feedback is essential for learning and must be constructive to facilitate learning.	• When feedback is provided soon after an assessment it will be more meaningful and important to students. • Feedback and guidance should be constructive and help students to improve. • Feedback should be focussed on helping students to understand whether they have/have not met the criteria for the assessment. • Feedback should focus on content as well as a discipline's language and style of argument. • Well-structured feedback will assist students in learning to make judgements on their own performance. • Consider allowing multiple submission attempts as this serves a developmental purpose, especially when using SafeAssign or Turnitin. • Feedback can be given directly on written assessments in a text format or as a voice note (if marking online), else it can be given in a Word document. • A generically compiled document with feedback can be provided. • Feedback from students, in turn, provides information to lecturers on how to change future teaching and assessments, if required. Feedback on tasks can be given after final submission date to allow for flexible and staggered submission dates.
Maintain the **integrity** of assessment.	• Document all changes according to procedures decided on by the Faculty. • Make effort to reaffirm importance of practice of academic integrity by staff and students.

ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLE	IMPLICATIONS FOR TRANSITION TO REMOTE TEACHING
Provide **guidelines** on the submission process.	• Give your students a simple file naming convention, for example, Lastname_studentnumber_Essay1_docx. (Jones_2101010_Assignment6_docx). This process simplifies administration. • Make sure you use PDFs for all/most content documents and PowerPoint presentations as they minimise file sizes and are mobile-friendly. *Use Handbrake and VCL Media Player to reduce files sizes. • Every assessment or assignment should have a Word document (or Excel spreadsheet where applicable) version available for emailing to students that have limited access to the Internet. The assessment/assignment document can then be downloaded, completed and emailed back to the lecturer.

For excellent resources on online assessments go to:

Using lessons learned during the #FeesMustFall period, UFS, UCT, UP and UJ created a website with guidelines and great ideas for online assessments. **Click here**

Duan van de Westhuizen's *Guidelines for Online Assessment* for Educators is an open source publication providing guidelines, strategies and tools for online assessments.

Types of Assessments

The purpose of online assessments also governs the type and format of the assessment. Online assessment may be used for diagnostic, formative or summative assessment purposes; a variety of possibilities is offered below.

Important notes

- The Blackboard App only supports True/False, Multiple Choice, Short Answer, Essay and Either/Or question types – thus do not use the other question types. Most questions can be formatted to be used successfully in the available question types.
- As a rule of thumb, short questions should be scaled; varying from the recall of information and 'figuring out' of answers with little or no guessing (approximately 35%), to more advanced, insight-requiring questions (50%), to higher-order questions that require application and interpretation of content (15%).
- A content-specific rubric, marking grid or evaluation criteria must be supplied for written assessments/assignments.

Assignment type	Assignment description	Examples
Written assignment (essay)	An assignment based on comprehensive writing.	• Article review, case study, essay, critical analysis, summary, note taking, literature review, letters, report writing, story writing – with or without additional research required. • This is how you **create an assignment on Blackboard: click here** • Different essays are to be used for assessing certain skills: **click here** • Example of a critical analysis essay: **click here** • Example of a compare and contrast essay: **click here** • Examples of assignment/assessment instructions: **click here**
Comprehen-sion type or reading response questions	Text or video information is supplied that requires responses in written format.	• Text or short video followed by different types of questions such as short questions, analysis, and application of knowledge to a situation. • Suitable for laboratory technique demonstrations followed by questions. • Scenarios or life events can be presented which have to be analysed, interpreted or explained. • This is how you upload a video on Backboard: **click here** **Videos should be accompanied by a transcript.**
Compiling a planning document	An assignment that contains all steps followed to plan a process or procedure.	Examples of these are project plans, a report containing steps/procedures, a website plan, contract plan, or progress reports on plans.
Projects	Simulation of a project.	Actual steps of a project are followed, and all relevant documents compiled. A mini project could contain a proposal with a portfolio of evidence which is assessed internally or by an external partner.
Problem-solving assignment	An assignment based on solving a problem or problems.	Includes any problem-related content that requires investigation into an issue to solve a problem such as mathematical, scenario-based, chemistry, theory and construction problems.

Assignment type	Assignment description	Examples
Research-based assignment	An assignment based on research tasks.	Assignments based purely on research such as a mini proposal or a market research project.
Practice-based	A single event or a combination of performances analysis.	Report/analysis or presentation in various formats reflecting on the said performance/practice.
Report writing	Comprehensive report writing.	Reporting of skills in a laboratory which may/may not include the writing up of results. A project report falls into this category as well.
Online test short questions	An assessment that requires responses from students.	These can be presented on different platforms such as a Google form test, a paper-based test or an online Blackboard test for example. **Not all Blackboard (Bb) question types can be used.** Please refer to the links below for short question possibilities and tips on settings for tests on Blackboard: Types of questions on Blackboard Tips and settings for tests, assignments and discussions Example of a Word or Excel-based assessment
Written assessments	An assessment where the student must construct their own responses.	Essays, short answers, concept maps, etc. and could be submitted via Turnitin or SafeAssign.
Open book assessments	An assessment where the student must construct their own responses.	Students may use any information at their disposal to construct answers. This type of test requires questions that demand application of knowledge and skills.

Assignment type	Assignment description	Examples
Practical assessments	A practical assessment undertaken in class. If a clinical assessment is undertaken in a real clinical or hospital (e.g. podiatry) this would be a workplace-based assessment.	Demonstration of a practical skill can be recorded and submitted. Can be done synchronously or asynchronously, using Blackboard Collaborate or Microsoft Teams. **Keep available technology and data usage in mind for these assessments. Not recommended**
Data analysis	Examples of data analysis is given.	Students may not be able to collect their own data, but raw sets of data can be analysed.
Portfolio assessments	A presentation of an organised collection of work.	• Various media elements can be used to compile a portfolio. This varies from videos, written text, images, descriptions, tables, reports, hyperlinks, etc. – mostly in a booklet format. • Blackboard assignments, wikis and blogs can be used to compile portfolios.
Work-based assessment or Case studies	Practical assessment conducted in an actual workplace or practice setting. Generally associated with work-based assessments.	• If available, supervisor reports suffice but direct observations will not be possible and case-based discussions should rather be requested. • If possible, a detailed, in-depth study of a phenomenon is reported on.
Discussions	Building content and constructing ideas.	Focused discussions allow for collaboration and content building. Refer to attached documents on how to create a discussion and using discussions as assessments with examples. How to create a discussion Focused discussions as assessments
Peer and group assessments	Assessments are done in pairs or groups.	Discussions, blogs, wikis and portfolios can be used for peer and group assessments. **Peer and group assessments must be closely monitored, and explicit evaluation guidelines must be supplied.**

Assignment type	Assignment description	Examples
Wikis and blogs	Building content and constructing ideas individually or in a group.	Can be used for individual or collaborative group content production. Blogs are structured like a website organised by posts, while a wiki resembles a website organised by content. **This is how you create a blog, with an example, and a wiki:** Creating a blog in Blackboard Example of a blog How to create a Wiki
Creative production	Creative production: technical or artistic in essence.	• Here actual articles are produced ranging from visual presentations of artwork, actual objects, website designs, games, architectural models, DVDs, audios, graphic designs, articles of clothing or jewellery to App-, software- or programme development. • The use of this assessment type, specifically for prototyping and manufacturing, depends on the availability of materials, software and required submission format.
Poster assignment	Visual presentation of content.	• Content is presented in a visual format such as a mood board, infographic, concept board or concept map, etc. • There are free online tools available for creating innovative posters. Electronic posters can be submitted as a Word or PDF document or as a screenshot (image).
Journals	Journals are a personal space for students to communicate with you and are gradable.	Individual compilation of a portfolio presented in a journal format. How you create a Journal Example of a Journal entry
Simulations	Completion of existing or free, downloadable simulations.	There is a vast array of free simulations available specifically for Science, Chemistry, Mathematics, Biology, Lab techniques, etc. **Take note that these require downloading and a fair amount of data usage.**

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities will need to be supported with the required adjustments made. Please stay in contact with the Disability Unit for additional guidance. The following methods are available to assess students with disabilities:

Oral Administrative Tests:

Assessments can take the form of an oral test, unless a student has a speech disability. Students with hearing disabilities can be given written questions and they can reply with the appropriate answer in a form most suited. Most students with disabilities would benefit from this method of assessing. For questions that have a graphical representations/interpretation, an alternative means of questioning may need to be investigated and considered.

Essay Type Exam Questions:

These types of questions would have to be concise to accommodate those students with learning disabilities as well as giving an appropriate time extension if necessary.

Alternative Testing:

If your course involves the use of pictorial representation for extrapolative purposes, and the module has students with visual disabilities, you may have to amend the way you assess. This is because the student with the visual disability might not be able to access the images in order to answer the relevant question(s). In this instance, it is advisable for the student to rather explain elements, concepts or scenarios as opposed to extrapolating information from the image to answer the question(s).

Time Extensions:

Depending on the complexity and method of assessment, students with learning, visual and/or physical disabilities may require additional time (over and above the time required to complete the questions/ tasks) to complete the assessment(s).

Open Book Assessments:

You will have to consider alternative means of questioning, depending on the nature of the module, as well as the provision of additional time, based on the complexity of the assessment(s) as well as the type of disability students enrolled for the particular module.

Additional resources

- **Phil Race's website** has a useful table to help you consider the pros and cons of various forms of assessments.
- **Substantial resources** on all aspects of learning at a distance and assessment curated by Daniel Stanford at DePaul University.
- Sally Brown and Kay Sambell explore all kinds of alternative assessments **here**.
- UFS's Centre for Teaching and Learning has an excellent open source guide **#UFSTeachOn** that focuses on low-tech solutions for teaching at a distance. Included are resources for online assessments.
- The Centre for Teaching and Learning in Louisville, KY, USA has 5 tips for designing online assessments and good arguments for developing authentic assignments

  Creative Methods of Assessment in Online Learning

  Authentic assessment in the online classroom

- The UC Berkeley Centre for Teaching and Learning provides examples of assessment types that are not "traditional". **Alternatives to Traditional Testing**
- Open Polytechnic Kuratini Tuwhera provides guidance on different assignment types. **Types of assessments**
- Explore the website of ***Bard Centre for Experimental Humanities*** with over 20 great ideas for assignments that students can do on their own, assignments students can do in groups, offline discussion suggestions and ideas for summative assessments.
- London School of Economics (LSE) Toolkit advice on Take-Home Assessment. **Assessment toolkit**
- Michael Rowe's (UWC) blog on: **Universal principles of learning task design. The crisis edition.**
- This website has a large number of educational resources, practices, and articles for lecturers and students. **Teaching resources**