

Task Team on Assessment
Report to Senate Tuition and Learner Support Committee
03 May 2010

I. Introduction

Alternative approaches to assessment in open distance education framework should be appraised as a means of changing the educational paradigm towards a more constructivist one. Whereas traditional forms of assessment are still widely used and valuable, they however, do not fully recognize the multidimensional and complex character of the domains to be assessed. Further, such traditional means of assessment often overlook the innovation in assessment resulting from the adoption of ICT. Thus, The Task Team on Assessment notes that the investigation and introduction of alternative assessment methods is essential to effective student learning and by extension effective assessment.

It should be noted that the introduction of these alternative approaches represent a paradigm shift in assessment. Hence,

- a. Assessment moves from a tool to certify towards a tool to promote learning
- b. Assessment moves from uniformity of techniques to diversity of techniques
- c. Continuous assessment and meaningful feedback become a hallmark of effective assessment.

Assessment purposes have been categorised usefully as follows:

- Assessment *of* learning which characterises how we may traditionally view assessment. It involves judgements about student's summative achievements and certification.
- Assessment *for* learning is formative and diagnostic. It provides information about student's achievement which allows the teaching and learning activities to be changed in response to the needs of the student.
- Assessment *as* learning is two-fold and firstly, aimed at revision. Secondly, it is a subset of assessment for learning and sees student involvement in assessment, using feedback and self-monitoring of progress as moments of learning in itself.

In this report we hope to present work done by the Task Team thus far as guided by the above assertions. The report should be considered as a preliminary report.

II. The Team's Approach

The team agreed that alternative methods could not be suggested without considering the following:

- i. a clear analysis of what is currently practiced,
- ii. the strengths and weaknesses of the current practices
- iii. current innovative initiatives (including on-screen assessment)
- iv. what ICT currently offers and what is possible

To that end the team sat to do the following:

- i. collect updated comprehensive data on assessment practices across colleges
- ii. analyze and synthesize the data
- iii. perform extensive literature review on alternative assessment methods
- iv. conduct road-shows on assessment per college not only to engage colleges and cater for college's unique needs but to allow for a cohesive assessment philosophy

The Team also agreed that any analysis done should be informed by the University's tuition documents and literature reviews. The following were taken into consideration:

- i. **Formative Assessment**
 - It must be clear and transparent
 - It must be designed to support the teaching and learning process
 - Must be developmental in nature
 - It must assist in the planning future learning
 - It must diagnose the learner's strength and weaknesses to allow for appropriate intervention strategies
 - It must provide timely helpful feedback to the learner on his/her progress
 - It must be aligned with summative assessment

- It must help to make decisions on the readiness of learners to do engage in summative assessment
- ii. Summative Assessment
- It must be clear and transparent
 - It must designed to make judgement about achievement
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- iii. Integrated Assessment (Note: Could be either Summative or Formative)
- It must assess a number of outcomes together
 - It must assess a number of assessment criteria together
 - It must assess a number of unit standards together
 - It must Using a combination of assessment methods and instruments for outcome/outcomes
 - Collecting naturally occurring evidence (such as in a workplace setting)
 - Acquiring evidence from other sources such as supervisors' reports, testimonials, portfolios of work previously done, logbooks, journals, etc.

Compendium of Assessment Methods (Noted from “Criteria and Guidelines for Assessment of NQF Registered Unit Standards and Qualifications” Policy Document)

- **Alternative response questions**
True/False; Yes/No questions
Possible uses: Recall of information, Ability to discriminate
- **Assertion/reason questions**
Consists of an assertion and supporting explanation.
The learner has to decide whether the assertion and explanation are true, and if true, whether the explanation is a valid reason for the assertion. Sometimes the learner is asked to select his/her answer from a list of possibilities, e.g. True; True + Valid; True + Invalid.
Possible uses: Ability to weigh up options and to discriminate

- **Aural/oral tests**

These are mainly used to generate evidence on learners' ability to listen, interpret, communicate ideas and sustain a conversation in the language of assessment.

Possible uses: Interpretation of ideas, Expression of ideas

- **Completion questions/short answer questions**

Learners are presented with a question with a pre-determined answer consisting of a few words, or may be given a statement where key words are omitted. They are then required to complete the statement by filling in the word(s). Such questions may also involve the use of numbers, diagrams and graphs.

Possible uses: Recall of factual information; Test understanding and application of knowledge, e.g. in mathematical concepts

- **Examinations/tests**

These usually consist of a range of questions. Learners are required to respond to questions within a specified time.

Possible uses: Recall of information

Cognitive skills such as problem solving or analyses

- **Extended response questions**

These are usually in a written form. There are few restrictions on the content and form of the response. Continuous prose is normally required, but there may be limits on the length and/or time allocated.

Possible uses: Open-ended debates or other responses; Arguments; Reports

- **Grid Questions/matching questions**

Grid questions and matching questions are variants of each other. The learner is presented with two lists – a set of statements and a set of responses. The learner is required to indicate which response from the second list corresponds or matches each statement in the first list. Grid questions are presented in grid format. They differ from the other selected-response assessment instruments in that each question may have more than one correct response and each response may be used more than once.

Possible uses: Recall of information; Application of knowledge

- **Multiple Choice Questions**

Multiple choice questions consist of an incomplete statement or a question, followed by plausible alternative responses from which the learner has to select the correct one.

Outcomes involving higher order analytical skills are probably more validly assessed by means of free-response assessment instruments such as extended response questions, but multiple choice questions can be useful if carefully constructed.

Possible uses: Recall of information; Check understanding; analyses

- **Oral questions/restricted response questions**

The form and content of the response is limited by the way in which the question is asked. These questions do not have pre-determined correct answers (as in short answer questions, etc.) and the assessor has to exercise his/her professional judgment when interpreting learner's responses.

Possible uses: Allows for self-expression when questions are oral; Supports observation of tasks where underpinning knowledge and understanding are tested

- **Personal interviews**

A personal interview is probably the oldest and best-known means of eliciting information directly from learners. It combines two assessment methods, namely observation and questioning. An interview is a dialogue between the assessor and the learner, creating opportunities for learner questions.

Possible uses: A range of applications using different forms of questions, particularly open-ended questions Guidance and support to the learner

- **Questionnaires**

A questionnaire is a structured written interview consisting of a set of questions relating to particular areas of performance. Unlike a personal interview, it is administered and judged under standard conditions.

Possible uses: Assessment of outcomes particularly concerned with attitudes, feelings, interests and experiences

- **Structured questions**

A structured question consists of a stem (which describes a situation), followed by a series of related questions. The stem can be text, a diagram, a picture, a video, etc.

Possible uses: Recall of information; Application of knowledge and understanding; Analyses; Debates; Arguments

- **Assignments**

A problem-solving exercise with clear guidelines and a specified length. More structured and less open-ended than projects, but they do not necessarily involve strict adherence to a prescribed procedure and they are not concerned exclusively with manual skills.

Possible uses: Problem-solving around a particular topic

- **Case studies**

A description of an event concerning a real-life or simulated situation, usually in the form of a paragraph or text, a video, a picture or a role-play exercise. This is followed by a series of instructions to elicit responses from learners. Individuals or small groups may undertake case studies.

Possible uses: Analyses of situations; Drawing conclusions; Reports on possible courses of action

- **Logbooks**

A useful means of assessing learner's progress and achievements. It should have clear instructions for use and give guidance on how essential information is to be recorded.

Possible uses: In a workplace – monitor and check activities; record processes; record of achievements

- **Practical Exercises/Demonstrations**

An activity that allows learners to demonstrate manual and/or behavioural skills. The assessment may be based on the end-result of the activity (the product), or the carrying-out of the activity (the process), or a combination of both.

Possible uses: Demonstration of skill

- **Portfolios**

A collection of different types of evidence relating to the work being assessed. It can include a variety of work samples. Portfolios are suitable for long-term activities. It is important that the evidence in the portfolio meet the requirements of sufficiency and currency. The learner and assessor usually plan the portfolio jointly as sources of evidence may vary. The learner is then responsible for the collection of evidence and the compilation of the portfolio.

Possible uses: Recognition of prior learning and experience

Assessment of long-term activities related to each other

Assessment where direct observation may be difficult

- **Projects**

A project is any exercise or investigation in which the time constraints are more relaxed. Projects are: Practical, Comprehensive, and open-ended, Tackled without close supervision, but with assessor guidance and support. Projects can involve individuals or a group of learners. The choice of the project is directed by the assessor, usually by providing the learner with a topic or brief for the investigation.

Possible uses: Comprehensive range of skills can be assessed

- **Role-plays**

Learners are presented with a situation, often a problem or an incident, to which they have to respond by assuming a particular role. The enactment may be unrehearsed, or the learner may be briefed in the particular role to be played. Such assessments are open-ended and are person-centered.

Possible uses: Assessment of a wide range of behavioural and interpersonal skills

- **Simulations**

Simulations mirror actual activities or conditions. They are suitable for assessments where demonstrations and observation will provide reliable and valid results, but where, for a number of reasons, it is difficult or not practicable to assess under actual conditions.

Possible uses: Assessments of actions under 'safe' conditions, e.g. operating machines which could be dangerous or where the breakdown of such a machine will cause a halt in production or endanger lives

- **Reflective Journal**

A reflective journal gives learners the opportunity to critically reflect on their own learning, to express their thoughts and experiences and to present this in an acceptable way. Even though it is a form of self-assessment, it can be submitted for assessment.

Possible uses: It gives the assessor a unique opportunity to follow the thought-processes of a learner and to monitor the way a learner thinks and grows

- **Self-assessment**

A checklist, questionnaire completed by a learner, notes jotted down or other forms of structured self-assessment undertaken after an action, demonstration, oral examination, etc.

Possible uses: Critical evaluation of progress by learner integration of activities within and across unit standards or different parts of a qualification

- **Peer assessment**

Assessment by the learner's peers, usually in the form of a checklist.

Possible uses: Assessment of paired or group activities; Assessment of teamwork

III. Reporting

This section reflects activities undertaken by the Task Team thus far. The reports are presented as attachments noting the voluminous nature of the reports.

Current Assessment Practices Across Colleges

This report is compiled from inputs provided by Colleges. Refer to Appendix 01 for the report.

Synthesis

This report synthesizes the above inputs. Refer to Appendix 02 for the report.

Current Innovative Initiatives

Report provided by ICT. Refer to Appendix 03 for the report.

What ICT Currently Offers

Report compiled by ICT. Refer to Appendix 04 for the report.

IV. Next Steps

The Task Team is near completion of its mandate. It however, believes that in order to allow for additional inputs, road-shows with Colleges should be conducted before a formal recommendation on alternate assessment practices is advanced. Road shows will then be completed by the end of May.

Appendix 01: Assessment Practices Across Colleges

Assessment practice	What are the <u>educational</u> advantages of this practice?	What are the <u>educational</u> disadvantages of this practice?	What is the feedback from <u>lecturers</u> about this practice?	What is the feedback from <u>students</u> about this practice?
<p>Multiple-choice questions (MCQs)</p> <p>MCQs are used extensively used throughout the university for both formative and summative assessment. In the case of formative assessment, many departments only make use of MCQs because of the administrative ease of receiving, marking and returning the assignments, although this is not always the case. Other departments mix MCQs with essay questions as well as with other assessment methods for formative assessment. In the case of summative assessment, MCQs are used usually in combination with essay-type questions and mostly for undergraduate modules. Many 1st year modules with large student numbers only make use of MCQs for the summative assessment. Some departments use less and less MCQs in the summative assessment as one moves to higher-level modules (e.g. 70 for first year, 20 for 2nd year, 15 for 3rd year and 10 for 4th year modules). Most honours papers do</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps to orientate the student in terms of the study material, the tutorial letter and the module in general and it forces them to buy the prescribed book • Assignments made up of MCQs can provide a better coverage of content than essay-type questions, thus broadening the scope of the assignment. Such assignments can be structured to include questions of defined grades of difficulty and discriminating power • MCQs compel students to work through a wider range of material in order to answer the questions – this provides them with a sound overall perspective (overview) of the study guide early on in the semester. • MCQ assignments combined with self-assessment exercises provides good examination practice • It is administratively very quick and easy to get the answers in, to mark them and to return a mark • Can use technology to receive and mark questions, as well as return a mark • Can automate the receiving and marking of questions, as well as returning a mark • Focuses more on theoretical knowledge – suits lower level modules where students may not yet have much practical knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no credit for partially correct thinking or for partially incorrect information provided – ‘all or nothing’ approach • The MCQ format may encourage guessing on the part of the student • In the case of formative assessment, there is no guarantee that it is the student’s own work • MCQs are not always standardised (pre-tested) • Logic of answers cannot be evaluated • Depth of understanding not tested • Student’s writing abilities and verbal skills are not being developed or assessed • Student’s don’t learn to integrate topics • Students do not learn how to answer essay-type or write reports questions • Student’s knowledge gaps are not clear • Cannot test the student’s ability to argue or criticise • Students do not study content intensively; they merely search for answers • Often tests only knowledge if the compiler of the MCQs is inexperienced • Difficult and time consuming to set good quality MCQs • An easy option for obtaining a year mark 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally positive • Frustrating setting MCQs • Difficult to set good MCQs • The only viable option given the short time between writing the assignment or exam and capturing marks • Necessary evil • No external markers required – easy to administer • Great solution for large numbers of students (no marking work or administration for lecturer) • Difficult to cover all topics thoroughly • It is a very (too) convenient assessment method • Limits ability to give constructive feedback • Preferred because of short marking turnaround time • Factors irrelevant to the assessed material (such as handwriting and clarity of the presentation) do not come into play in MCQ assessment and so the student is assessed purely on their knowledge of the topic • If students are aware of how to complete the mark reading sheet, their responses can be relied upon with clarity?? • Marking alleviation welcomed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students sometimes feel that lecturers are out to trick or confuse them • A good MCQ can involve a lot of work • Easy to do (positive) – well-liked • Easy to submit • Can be done speedily • Seen as cumbersome • Students can guess (guessing game) • Guessing makes them feel insecure • Although students may generally be positive towards MCQs, they may also underestimate the difficulty of MCQs • An easy option for obtaining a year mark • Students are assessed on their selections creating a lower likelihood of lecturer bias in the assessment process • Non-threatening examination method • If questions are tested and retested, then students enjoy answering them

<p>not have MCQs. Some departments allocate 2 marks per question, while others allocate only 1.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excellent for testing basic concepts • If properly structured, MCQs can test deeper insight, as well as analytical abilities • Students with poor writing skills are not disadvantaged • MCQs allow quick feedback, especially when they are used for self-assessment on myUnisa • Can test small chunks of content for finer detail • Can be combined with a mini-case study to incorporate a practical perspective • Develops the students ability to evaluate options and choose between options • It helps the students to link the assessment with the relevant sections of in the prescribed book and study guide • It is relatively easy to complete, enabling students to meet assignment deadlines and to get admission to the exams • Vast number of students make the writing of essay assignments almost impossible – MCQs are useful for the assessment of large numbers of students • MCQs can be used as a learning tool for students, especially if supported with detailed feedback. • MCQs can be used as a module diagnostic tool enabling lecturers to identify problems with either the content or with student learning and to make necessary adjustments • Can be used as a preparatory tool for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot give marks for method followed – only for answer • Poor performance can impact on motivation • Feedback needs to be comprehensive and clear otherwise the learning opportunities for students may be limited using this form of assessment, and this is not always the case • Limited opportunity for personal feedback • Validity of assessment questioned • Mastery of content questioned by external stakeholders • MCQs are best adapted for assessing well-defined or lower-order skills and are not always suitable for problem solving and higher order reasoning • Skills such as scientific writing are not assessed • A student who has absolutely no idea of the answer can simply select a random answer and still have a chance of receiving a mark for it • Questions phrased ambiguously may cause student confusion • Students do not learn to think or write critically and scientifically – problems can be expected at honours level • Lacks objectivity • No opportunity to explain/discuss the content • Focus is only on completing the assignment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not demonstrate student's applied competencies • Can access knowledge on all levels and cover content well • Lecturers are sceptical about MCQs' ability to assess all learning outcomes 	
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	<p>summative assessment if MCQs are included in summative assessment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can also be used for self assessment • Easy and quick to mark • Almost instant feedback • Good questions can be stored in a 'bank' and reused • If lecturers are well trained and questions are quality assured, MCQs lend themselves to the development of objective assessment items • It enables the lecturer to assess if a student acquired a well-rounded and systematic knowledge base as well as a coherent and critical understanding of research in the subject in question <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First assignment gives student access to the exam and is usually an MCQ exam • Ensures objectivity, reliability and validity • More content of the module can be covered • In some subjects (e.g. pharmacology) MCQs can be formulated in such a way that lower-level and higher-level knowledge can be assessed (e.g. straight-forward questions vs scenario-based questions) • Useful to gain exam admission and indicate that they are active students • MCQs can be set at different cognitive levels. For example, a question may simply challenge a student's ability to recall facts, while another may assignment a student's ability to apply factual knowledge to given situations; or, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students get a false impression of how well they are doing • Students need to learn how to complete the mark-reading sheet • Lecturers tend to favour "recall" type questions, as they are the easiest to design. • Experience has shown that in an ODL environment, it is necessary to win the acceptance of students to this type of assignment/exam questions. Proper communication with the students is therefore essential in order to ensure that they feel comfortable with this type of assignment/exam questions. Feedback from students can be very important and can only lead to an overall improvement of the existing question, for possible inclusion into a question bank. • Creativity cannot easily be tested (the 'synthesis' level of Bloom's taxonomy is very difficult to assignment by using MCQs). Creativity is best tested by discursive questions such as the "essay-type" question. Bear in mind however that essay questions tend to have a poor sampling of content, have a poor scoring reliability (particularly if several persons are marking large numbers of scripts), and are notoriously time consuming to mark. • Students cannot justify choices that have been deemed "incorrect" by the marker. Two ways (apart from the necessary clarity of language in the stem and 		
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	<p>at a higher level, a question may assign a student's ability to evaluate given information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MCQs can be designed with a diagnostic end in mind, in order to find out whether specific areas of a given subject are adequately known, or in order to detect misconceptions. This can provide feedback on the effectiveness of instruction. • Students with poor reading skills and second-language learners need not be disadvantaged, provided the assignments are designed appropriately. Misreading of a question stem or an alternative may result in the loss of a few marks only; conversely, the misreading of an essay-type question, followed by the poor writing skills normally associated with a second language, can cause the student to lose an inordinate number of marks. • Statistical information on performance can be readily obtained. One can not only find out how the class performed on a particular question, but determine whether the question was suitable in the context in which it was presented. The statistics that are gathered may also be used to rank questions with respect to their difficulty and their ability to discriminate between students of different competences. • Assignments made up of MCQs can be administered frequently, and thus provide 	<p>alternatives) of removing this problem are: [a] building the argument into the alternative, and [b] allowing students to discuss the questions with the lecturers and tutors after the assignment (on myUnisa discussion forum). In addition to allowing issues to be clarified, the questions might possibly need to be ignored in the calculation of assignment scores, and corrected for or eliminated from future assignments.</p>		
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	<p>regular information on student performance, not only to the instructor but also to the students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In MCQ assignment, the lecturer "sets the agenda", and there are no opportunities for the candidate to avoid complexities and concentrate on the superficial aspects of the topic, as is often encountered in essay-type questions. 			
<p>Essay-type questions (long questions)</p> <p>Essay questions are used by departments for both summative and formative assessment.</p> <p>In the summative final exam, departments generally require a student to select two from three questions (i.e. there is usually some element of choice for learners).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learners gain the skills of doing the necessary research for the assignment, as well as gaining analytical and writing skills • If the essay question is linked to a case study or phrased in practical way, the question can test practical knowledge • Can test a student's deeper knowledge/learning • It is a good method to test critical thinking and to integrate theory and practical application • The choice of questions offers students the option to choose those questions that they are more comfortable with • The question may contain assessment criteria that indicate to the student what is expected of them • Is able to test greater depth of knowledge for the relevant NQF level descriptors • Students can incorporate real-life examples in order to illustrate their understanding of the theory • Essay questions gives students the chance to reflect (i.e. self reflection) on 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the case of formative assignments involving essay-type questions, learners often just copy the information provided in the study guide/prescribed book or copy and paste off the web • Students often do not incorporate practical examples in their answers and base their answers on the theory alone • Feedback on the part of lecturers takes longer to provide • Administering the marking and providing feedback is much slower – results in administrative strain especially in the case of formative assessment • May require external markers to be appointed to assist with marking • Students can write inconsequential and irrelevant content • Handwriting may be a problem • Inexperienced lecturers tend to test mere book knowledge • With long essays it is difficult to stay consistent and objective in mark allocation • The question of consistence of marking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It's a lot of work to read through and mark each essay question (time consuming to mark) • The most used method thus far • Prepares students for the real world • Students are less likely to get another student to do the essay for them, but still not sure if it is the student's own work • Plagiarism is a problem in the formative assessment where long questions are used • Essay questions really test the students' understanding • Students 'spot' certain topics and do not study everything • Difficult to compile a memorandum to answer all possible answers • Effective memorandum is difficult to prepare • Challenging • Relying on external markers can be strenuous at times, especially if they do not perform or let the lecturer down. • Moderation is a very important task (of markers during the marking process and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students like essay questions in the formative assessment as it is easy to copy from the study guide – favourable • Students prefer questions with short answers – they find it difficult to analyse a situation as sketched in the question and to apply the theoretical knowledge they have learnt in answering the long essay question • Essay questions are not popular – difficult and time consuming to answer • Students may be intimidated by this form of assessment, especially in final exam • The contribution of assignments towards the final mark is not sufficient (the formative assessment requires a lot of effort, but only contributes 10-20% toward the final mark) • Not enough time provided to answer the questions

	<p>their learning and understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better tests the student's understanding of the study material and of the theory • If used for formative assessment, it is the best preparation for the final exam • Makes it possible to provide detailed and individual feedback • It helps student to develop written skills • Helps students formulate answers to questions • Assists students to develop critical thinking and answer planning • Students can clearly see where they are lacking in skills • Overall assessment of knowledge within a practical simulated environment • It enables the lecturer to assess the student's knowledge base and understanding of the qualitative approach to research as well as the necessary skills to conduct qualitative research • It enables the lecturer to assess the student's ability to deal with unfamiliar concrete and abstract problems and issues using evidence-based solutions and theory-driven arguments • This form of assessment enables lecturers to obtain a good feel for the student's appreciation of the study material and research as well as his/her ability to convey ideas in writing • Open-book exams have a higher throughput rate • Helps students develop their writing skills • They learn to summarise and integrate 	<p>amongst lecturers can be a problem</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students often find it difficult to express themselves in writing especially if it is not their home language • Students may not always understand the question due to their limited English language skills • Due to time constraints the whole syllabus is not examined (better if MCQs are included as part of the exam) – the questions may only cover a section of the study material and not the whole content • Some students have a problem managing their time especially in the final exam • Lag in individual feedback in the case of formative assessment • Poor performance can impact on motivation • In the case of a summative exam, the efficacy of the assessment is dependent on the well-being of a student on a particular day • Limited time in the exam to demonstrate full knowledge, skill and competence level • A pass mark does not mean that the learner has mastered the subject or a failing mark does not mean that the student is not knowledgeable • Students often learn material 'parrot fashion' without having a real understanding of what they have learnt • Not all students understand all sections 	<p>of the entire process afterwards)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disappointment with the low marks often obtained by students • Frustration with inability of students to express themselves and/or write proper sentences • Doesn't always reflect student's competency accurately as it doesn't always distinguish between true understanding and rote learning • Examiner's report should be required for the evaluation of the paper • Not an effective method to assess if students have acquired the necessary applied competencies • It also affects the throughput rate if pass rates are dependent on summative assessments which constitute 80% of the module mark • Time consuming but a good way in which to interface with students • It can be effective if questions focus on outcomes and aim to assess applied and not just knowledge-based competencies • Students do not follow the instructions in TL101 on how to answer essay-type questions • Lecturers seem to consider essay questions as standard practice in Unisa • Difficult and time consuming to construct in order avoid ambiguous and arbitrary questions. • Very few students manage to do all of the assignments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exams questions do not always match the level, nature or structure of the assignment questions • MCQs not enough preparation for essay-type exams • In the case of formative assignments the short time span between assignment deadlines results in students not giving their assignments proper attention or not completing assignments no. 2 and 3 • Students accept/expect this type of assessment • Once-off opportunity to demonstrate knowledge, skills and competence • Students can ask for feedback on a summative exam or ask for a remark • Sometimes the nature of the questions, if memory only is tested, does not help students to succeed • Some students may not be well prepared for assessment because of the short time available to them due to semesterisation • In the case of formative assessment, students receive individual feedback which can help improve understanding, as well as prepare for the next assignment or even the exam • Students experience a number of administrative problems with
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	<p>information from the study material</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn to apply theoretical knowledge in a practical context • Better suited to higher-level modules • It also allows for justification and deviation from the model answer 	<p>of modules equally well, which can have an impact on results depending on what questions are asked</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students receive feedback (very) late • Markers may not be experienced or properly trained • Feedback provided may not be very instructive (limited time for instructive feedback) • If not linked to programme outcomes, the assessment becomes too modules specific • Tendency to recycle papers • Cumbersome and time consuming to mark given the large student numbers • No feedback after summative assessment which is a problem if the student has to repeat the module (can ask for feedback however) • Essay-type questions are not necessarily conducive to deeper understanding as external markers do not give adequate comments • If students do not complete all of the assignments they are disadvantaged in the exams • Open-book exams may cause some students not to interpret, or analyse information, but rather duplicate information from sources • Lack of supporting resources (books, articles, access to the internet, etc.) • Students still pass even if they regurgitate the study material otherwise year marks will be too low 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflexive assignment is a good guiding tool to use for students to prepare for writing the proper (content) assignment • Students struggle with written assignments as they tend not to use the prescribed book • It content is not in study guide, they are not aware of it and do not integrate it into their assignments • Often students have the theoretical knowledge but are unable to analyse, synthesise, apply, integrate or think 'out of the box' • Students do not read widely or integrate information from other various sources • It requires critical thinking • Lasting value as a learning experience questionable • Moderation is important to ensure quality • Incorporate a reflexive assignment that serves as a checklist when preparing and writing the main assignment 	<p>registrations, dispatch of study material, submission of assignments, which impacts negatively on their studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited feedback from lecturers • No clear link between formative and summative assessment (what is being asked and why) • Not enough formative assessment • Students find this form of assessment challenging because they do not have the necessary skills for scientific writing • Some students do not understand the purpose of a reflexive assignment; as a result they do not use it when writing their assignment • Want to be spoon fed and told exactly where to find the information • Necessary evil • Many students are too examination orientated and neglect learning <p>Suggestions for improvement: <i>"I think we should have more assignments. If assignments were designed in such a way that people are pushed to get 100 credits to gain entrance to the exam, with the first assignment calculated on the basis of the percentage mark they received x 100 credits (ie if they got 65%, they would get 65 credits, but they need</i></p>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outside markers not always properly trained or assessed, but the fast turn-around time of markers makes training difficult • Cram learning • Stressful experience for students especially in the final exam • Students use selective learning to deal with the bulk of the information they need to learn for the exams – that is, they spot. 	<p>100, so they would still have to do the next assignment to gain entrance to the exam). There should be at least three assignments to enable a student to gain entry to the exam (eg 40% + 50% = 90 credits, not enough to gain entrance to the exam- they would still have to do assignment 3). A student that got 50% in assignment 1 and 60% in assignment 2, would not have to do assignment 3, except that the assignment could count towards the year mark). I think this will motivate most of the people to write all the assignments so that they can qualify for the examination and get a better year mark. Because if you write one assignment and they say you qualify for examination, sometimes you just take it for granted that it's fine, I've qualified for the examination."</p> <p>"In my view we can have maybe four or five assignments a year. And also, that may be frustrating because three assignments contribute 10% to the final mark. Some students I was talking to said it's not fair, even the lecturers said it's not fair. It should be maybe 40%. To encourage those who are studying to prepare for the exam. Because others are not studying. The time we are doing our assignments they are not studying, they are busy doing something else. But we who took all our time to study,</p>
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				<i>at least they should contribute maybe 40% or 50%. "</i>
<p>Short written (paragraph?? – see my comments below) questions</p> <p>Not really addressed widely by the respondents, some departments do occasionally make use of short questions worth say 5 marks each (i.e. Briefly explain what is meant by) to test knowledge and basic understanding – good for lower levels. Can be used for formative and summative assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can test a wider range of knowledge • Quick to set up and relatively easy to mark (easier than long essay-type questions) • Can ascertain deeper learning • Short questions can help clarify understanding • Excellent for concept clarification in own words with a practical example • Assesses language ability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not good for testing higher levels of understanding • Usually not very practical in nature – focuses on the theory • Students may battle to understand and answer the question due to limited English language skills • Marking is time consuming (less so than with long essay questions) • Uneven marking standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to set up and mark • Still requires lecturer marking • May take long to mark (especially when compared with MCQs) • Language ability can be a stumbling block 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probably easier for students to complete • Students typically enjoy these questions which they tend to answer in bullet form • Less intimidating than long essay questions
<p>Practicals</p> <p>Although some departments refer to practical projects, a practical in the Unisa context is an assessment that involves actual physical activities that are to be assessed. While practicals may serve as assessment methods in their own right, sometimes they are linked to portfolios of evidence or workbook. In these instances, the practical is not the assessment tool, but the portfolio or workbook is. A practical may involve practical work in a hospital or school, or a workshop, or seminar that they attend or a lab-based session.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It complements theory • Allows student to apply/demonstrate the theoretical knowledge • When combined with a workbook, the workbook serves as a guide and format for the practical • Lecturer can establish the student's level of competency, as well as the integration of theory with practice • In some cases, lecturers use online methods to provide photos of situations which students then need to recognise and report back on (useful for highlighting unusual circumstances) • Students learn the importance of time management and inter-personal skills • It is important to allow students to submit a draft and revisions before the final submissions to enable them to learn from their mistakes and to improve on the portfolio 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecturers cannot conduct practical examination as lecturers are not affiliated with hospital and are dependent on third-party assessors • Students often need access to computers and the internet • Students have problems securing appointments or practical positions within institutions (hospitals, schools, etc.) – can be demotivating for students as well as time consuming • It is often difficult to assess work in its own right without the context in which the practical took place • It can be difficult to agree on assessment criteria for practical work - there may be several ways of performing a task well. • When doing the workshop, for example, it can be very distracting to be watched and students may be inhibited when 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A practical enables students to understand information and/or concepts studied in the theory better • Dependence on external laboratories limits the time/length of the assessment • Willing examiner has to be found who is not involved in the training • Outside examiners give very positive feedback and provide suggestions which are fed back into the teaching • Time consuming to assist students find appropriate positions to do their practicals – requires liaison with hospitals, schools etc. • Lot of content is covered and it is flexible • Language could be an obstacle • The contexts within which the practical takes place can vary dramatically – not uniform (lecturer may not be fully 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on the nature of the practical, it may give the student the opportunity to meet their lecturer • It provides the student with an opportunity to ask questions about sections of the work they don't understand • It provides the student with an opportunity to better understand and apply the theory they have studied • Students want more sessions • Students are used to this type of assessment and have no problem with it • Students sometimes find it difficult to get the time off to do these practicals • Students find this form of assessment a valuable learning

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical workshops and seminars enables the student to demonstrate what they have learnt • Immediate feedback • Students learn from their peers • If assignments are incorporated into practical work sessions, students approach their practical work sessions more critically and earnestly 	<p>someone is observing their performance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The practical is often registered as a separate module from the theory making it difficult for some students to link the two modules together 	<p>aware of all the contextual issues)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student may not have access to all the resources to do the practical properly • All lecturers are involved in team work by doing detailed observations while students demonstrate the practical skill involved. Lectures ensure that students have a shared understanding of the level expected of their work • Assess as a team • Setting up exhibition (??) 	<p>experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students very positive about workshops/seminars/practicals • Number of activities must be realistic given the number of credits • Very time consuming • The personality of some students is such that they do not participate very actively (shy/embarrassed) • We specify the nature of the evidence that student should collect, but students can feel restricted or limited by this • Student has an opportunity to check what other students may be doing • Gives the student a chance to recognise his/her strengths and weaknesses and to reflect on these • Students remark that practicals given them more insight into the workplace
<p>Portfolios (of evidence)</p> <p>Although portfolios are referred to by some departments as practical projects, in the Unisa context, a portfolio is a non-venue based exam processed via the assignment system before or during an exam. A portfolio can be submitted via myUnisa or the assignment scanning process. A project – which in many respects is similar to a portfolio – cannot be submitted via myUnisa.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop specific research skills and methodologies • Can involve Work Integrated Learning • Develops scientific writing, research and creative skills • Provides a clear indication of learning development • Demonstrate practical research competence • Students are given as chance to carry out some basic research and gain experience in this regard • Students learn report-writing skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on existing level competence • Dependent on existing level of expertise (practising field of assessment is advantageous) • Limited opportunity to conduct continuous assessment practice • It is not always possible to establish the authenticity of a portfolio as learners may submit work that was not done by them (However, given the effort required to complete a portfolio, it is more unlikely for a student to get someone else to do 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive • Lecturers are generally supportive of this method of assessment • It is more interesting to assess as each portfolio is different from the others, incorporating different views, information and ideas from students • Students are encouraged not just to reproduced what is in the prescribed book, but to use their initiative • It allows one to use different methods of evaluation such as peer evaluation, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging • Voluminous content • High value for practical approach and simulations • Time consuming and difficult • Students are not always so positive about this assessment practice as it may involve travel to faraway places • Most students find it more interesting than a normal assignment • It enhances their creativity

<p>Instead students compile and then submit their research <i>project</i> via the postal system.</p> <p>Portfolios are often linked to practicals. The student completes a practical and then produces a portfolio <i>of evidence</i> about his/her involvement in and learning gained from the practical, which is then assessed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portfolios can provide evidence of a wide range of competencies (e.g. theoretical and practical) • It can represent a student's work done over a long period of time (covering planning, drafts, supporting documentation, and the final portfolio), or it can focus on a specific (more narrow) task. • Information gathered through portfolios provide data that could be used to improve learning • Portfolios also encourage students to go through work prior to the examination • Insight into the study material is gained through the use of portfolios • Provides evidence of learning that has taken place through work and experience (e.g. hospital or classroom practice) • Tests a variety of skills such as reading, comprehension, selection, evaluation, synthesis, writing, and presentation of the portfolio • Portfolio tells much more about students than exam results. They can contain evidence reflecting a wide range of skills and attributes, and can reflect students work at its best. • Portfolio can reflect development and how fast students can learn from feedback and is especially relevant to art practice <p>Portfolio includes items such as summaries, and reflection on the meaning of concepts and critical evaluation</p>	<p>the portfolio for them.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students often copy and past for online and offline sources – plagiarism is rife • Time consuming • None • It can take a long time to assess a portfolio • Portfolios are much harder to mark objectively • The ownership of evidence can sometimes be in doubt 	<p>rubrics, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students can present their work orally • Second (and third) assignments are required to give the student a chance to improve should they fail the first assignment • Workplace facilitators appreciate the input from students • Lecturers interact with students through the drafts of the portfolio 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no right or wrong answer, evidence is what counts • Those who complete the portfolio have an in-depth content knowledge of the particular module • Preparing for the examination is less challenging for those who successfully complete their portfolios • Useful but time consuming • Helps students reflect on their own learning • Good students flourish • Weaker students also benefit and learn from the exercise • Students prefer it to exams
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<p>Projects</p> <p>Although portfolios are referred to by some departments as practical projects, in the Unisa context, a project is a non-venue based exam processed via the assignment system before or during an exam. A portfolio can be submitted via myUnisa or the assignment scanning process. A project, which is similar to a portfolio, cannot be submitted via myUnisa. Instead students compile their research project via the postal system.</p> <p>Can be used for both formative and summative assessment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally very practical – requires application of theory • Project draws on many techniques • Students apply all techniques in final project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult for someone who is not good with writing or struggles to write in their second (third) language • Many students do not have the subject experience or research knowledge to complete the project • Students with poor computer skills or limited access to computers are at a disadvantage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suits some modules better than others • Best way to test practical application • Generally students that do well with practical projects also do well with written exams • Time consuming to mark and give feedback • Plagiarism is a problem in projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not have access to resources (eg computer/internet) to gather data • Positive – can apply what they have learnt in the workplace or theory • Lack of writing skills make it very difficult for students to complete projects
<p>Case studies</p> <p>Although case studies can be used as entirely stand-alone assessment methods, they are most often used in conjunction with easy questions, short questions and MCQs. Can be used for formative and summative assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tests insight and practical application • Can be used in conjunction with essay questions and MCQs • Assists students to develop critical thinking and to apply what they have learnt • Enables students to clearly see where they are lacking skills • Requires many and various skills gained by students (problem solving, communication, creativity, writing skills, understanding, judgement, independent thinking, problem analysis) • Case studies provide students with in-depth training and the chance to apply techniques they have learnt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback takes longer • See comments under essay-type questions • Learners do not understand the methodology completely and experience problems answering case study assignments • Students with poor computer skills and limited access to computers/internet are at a disadvantage • Very time consuming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepares students for practical situations • Preparing an effective case study is complex and time-consuming • Marking case studies is also time consuming especially for large student numbers and lecturers tend to shy-away from case studies • One of the few methods that truly tests student's practical application • Generally students that do well with practical projects also do well with written exams • Although time-consuming, it provides a good idea of whether the student actually understands and can apply the knowledge they have learnt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard for students to integrate topics • Research undertaken by one department suggests that students prefer the case study method to purely theoretical questions • Positive – can apply what they have learnt in the workplace • Completion is time-consuming • Students find it worthwhile

<p>Oral exams</p> <p>Generally only used for summative assessment, although strictly speaking there is nothing preventing this method for being used for formative assessment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face opportunity to test knowledge and understanding • Very flexible – lecturer can clarify meaning • Quick and easy to arrange 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can only be used as a stop-gap or for special circumstances • Cannot test large numbers of students • Student may not be good under stress or vocally strong 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quick and easy • Lecturers may not prepare properly (off-the-cuff) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very stressful • Intimidating
<p>Recognition of prior learning</p> <p>Summative and formative assessment do not really apply to this assessment method</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access is allowed to candidates who did not go through the standard formal path • There is flexibility to recognise equivalent exposure/ability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students might lack knowledge or ability in some areas (their prior learning was not comprehensive enough) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students might lack knowledge or ability in some areas (their prior learning was not comprehensive enough) • Assessment relies only on academic records, but the candidate is not interviewed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The practice has not been implemented fairly; students from the same institution and programme have been treated differently (one accepted; the other denied)
<p>Tests</p> <p>Students are required to complete a test at the end of a compulsory workshop or to attend a special sit-down test. Used for formative assessment only</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students can build up a year mark • They must study on a regular basis • It helps them build up examination practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor performance impacts negatively on motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common problem areas can be addressed before the examination • Guidance can be given re poor exam-room practice • Volume of work cannot be tested • Can students apply themselves (??) logically to new situations • Being a practical module, there is no written module and the test helps to discriminate between students and to give them some indication of their progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When year mark not applied, there is no incentive to write • Due to large numbers the inconsistency in marking can be frustrating • Students find the tests less threatening than the exam hall (glad that they do not have to write an examination for this module) • Students enjoy personal contact with other students and the lecturer
<p>Workbook</p> <p>Health workers have to undertake a situational analysis (a practical) in a health service environment and then complete a workbook – mostly linked to a practical. Primarily used for formative assessment and almost always used in conjunction with a</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students have an opportunity to experience and record how a health service is managed in a practical real-world situation by completing the workbook • Serves as both a guide and format when combined with a practical • Often used to do a situational analysis which helps students better understand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students might regard this as a useless, frustrating exercise (given how difficult it may be to get consent for the health services to do a situational analysis), not realising the benefit for them as they often experience difficulties in the workplace once they start working • The lecturer at Unisa has no control over the health service manager that 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See the value of it to 'buy time' for the students to submit their situational analysis(??) • A well-developed workbook helps the student to observe and integrate theory and practice • This is an opportunity to emphasise the importance of legislation in health services to students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students find the format user-friendly

practical.	the context and environments within which they must work	accompanies the student during the situational analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workbook was found to be an excellent tool to guide students to achieve module outcomes • Helps identify the areas where the students did not reach the outcomes 	
<p>Self assessment</p> <p>Only for formative (informal) assessment. This type of assessment includes activities that are embedded in the study material, such as short activities and feedback as well as self-assessment questions at the end of each study section/unit/chapter. This type of embedded assessment tests the student's understanding of the material that just been covered,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student learns from own mistakes – the evaluation process is a learning process • Self-assessment can be incorporated throughout the study material • Students can test themselves to see if they understand the content covered • Offers students many opportunities to revise and revisit the study material • Many different forms of exercises provide variety and test a range of skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can't evaluate whether the student has really understood the question or whether the answer is correct • Students mark themselves lightly • May not see why they have made a mistake • Can show student how marks were allocated • Students don't always know what is important • Students can cheat and check answers when they get stuck • Suits motivated students best • Less able students do not work through the exercises well enough and lack the insight to test their progress properly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No control over whether the self assessment was done or not • Can give guidance with inserted notes • Positive – deemed essential as part of the overall assessment practice in the institution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not always have the time to do comprehensively • Easy to ignore – no incentive to write • Students like the extra practice, especially if it involves an old exam paper or old exam questions • Students that find the study material confusing do not like this form of assessment and it may even disillusion them
Paragraph questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tests a variety of skills, such as reading, comprehension, selection, evaluation synthesis , writing and presentation skills through the writing of paragraphs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairly favourable • Weaker students battle with selection skills and condensing arguments into coherent paragraphs
Critical critique of text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students can provide their own opinion on a specific topic. • Students get practice in arguing their opinion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students may perhaps not have the skill of argumentation fully developed to do justice to this kind of assignment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling of achievement if well structured answers are received. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students enjoy giving their own opinions.

Appendix 02: Synthesis of Assessment Practices

Assessment method	Formative	Summative	VB vs NVB	Comments	Application of assessment type
Multiple-choice questions (MCQs)	Yes	Yes	VB (summative) NVB (formative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full MCQ – usually used for assignments and for 1st year exams • Partial MCQ (used in conjunction with other assessment types such as essay questions – generally only used in exams) 	<p>MCQs comprise short questions with multi-answers to choose the correct one from. The options may vary from simple choices such as true/false, yes/no, correct/incorrect to selections from multiple options of up to five possible answers.</p> <p>MCQs are used extensively throughout the university for both formative and summative assessment. In the case of formative assessment, many departments only make use of MCQs because of the administrative ease of receiving, marking and returning the assignments, although this is not always the case. Other departments mix MCQs with essay questions as well as with other assessment methods for formative assessment.</p> <p>In the case of summative assessment, MCQs are used usually in combination with essay-type questions and mostly for undergraduate modules. Many 1st year modules with large student numbers only make use of MCQs for the summative assessment. Some departments use less and less MCQs in the summative assessment as one moves to higher-level modules (e.g. 70 for first year, 20 for 2nd year, 15 for 3rd year and 10 for 4th year modules). Most honours papers do not have MCQs. Some departments allocate 2 marks per question, while others allocate only 1, although fractions of marks may be allocated (e.g. 1.25 marks), especially when negative marking is used if the student selects an incorrect answer.</p>

<p>Long essay-type questions</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>VB (summative) – can be NVB in the case of a home exam NVB (formative)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the case of summative assessment, papers can be closed-book (unseen) or open book exams. Also possible (but not common at Unisa) are: revealed exams where the student gets all or part of the actual paper some time before the exam, or home exams (used for very comprehensive and practical exams). • In the case of formative assessment, the above categories do not apply and all questions can be completed at home using whatever resources the student wishes 	<p>These are the traditional longer essay-type questions that are a common assessment type in most tertiary institutions. These questions may be sub-divided into sub-sections. They may also be associated with a case study or function as entirely stand-alone questions within their own set contexts. Long essay-type questions are generally worth anywhere from 8-50 marks.</p> <p>Essay questions are used by departments for both summative and formative assessment. In the summative final exam, departments generally require a student to select two from three questions or similar (i.e. there is usually some element of choice for learners). Long essay-type questions are often combined with other assessment methods such as MCQs, short questions, case studies, etc.</p>
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<p>Short questions May be referred to as paragraph questions?</p>	Yes	Yes	VB (summative) NVB (formative)		Short questions normally require a short written answer comprising a paragraph or two. They may be used to clarify concepts, provide definitions, or outline topics. They are usually worth 3-8 marks. Not widely in Unisa, some departments do occasionally make use of short questions worth say 5 marks each (i.e. Briefly explain what is meant by) to test knowledge and basic understanding – good for lower levels. Often used in fill-in-exams – see below.
<p>Fill-in assignments / exams (also referred to as paragraph questions according to assignment section)</p>	Yes	Yes	VB (summative) NVB (formative)		Often used for quantitative modules such as financial management where the student would fill-in the gaps in a long calculation or formula. Can also be used for short questions with keywords or phrases missing that the student must then fill-in. In other instances the question may require the student to complete a sentence or provide a definition, etc. Interestingly enough, hardly any departments referred to fill-in exams.
<p>Practicals Although some departments refer to practical projects, a practical in the Unisa context is an assessment that involves actual physical activities that are to be assessed and is different from a project. This is about proficiency demonstration and</p>	Yes	Yes	VB	<p>Practicals take various forms such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workbooks • Venue-based practicals • WIL type practicals • Portfolios of evidence 	Practicals involve venue-based practical (real-world or simulated) tasks that students are expected to do. For example, a practical may involve practical work in a hospital or school, or the attendance of a practical workshop, seminar or lab-based session. Some of the practicals are organised and run by Unisa, others involve work-place practicals that are outside of Unisa’s control. In some cases, Unisa provides a workbook that the student must complete about the practical that they have done, in other instances, the students submits a portfolio of evidence about the work they have done. The workbook is more structured and preset than the portfolio of evidence which is more in the hands of the student. What is confusing is that in some instances it is the report

<p>is also sometimes referred to as work-based assessment if the assessment takes place in the actual workplace.</p>					<p>about the practical (i.e. the workbook or portfolio of evidence) that is being assessed and not the practical directly. In other instances, the student gets evaluated at the time of completing the practical and there is no further submission of reports, workbooks or portfolios.</p> <p>Some practicals are used for formative assessment only, while others are used for summative assessment only (for example, some modules are practical in scope only without any formal exam – the submission of the final practical report/workbook, or the completion of the practical itself represents the final summative assessment).</p> <p>Practicals are common in the Sciences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the case of workbooks, these are sent to the student as part of their tutorial matter. The student is expected to have their workplace supervisor/assessor complete the workbook and in so doing to report on their progress and abilities (e.g. workbooks completed by school principals for teachers practicing at schools) • Examples of venue-based practicals include the science practicals that are undertaken at Unisa’s own labs or exam practicals that are completed at NWU by Unisa students. While it is possible for the lecturers to simply assess the student on the basis of his or her observed activities in the lab, it is more common for the student to complete a ‘lab report’ (or similar documentation) and for this to be the evidence that is assessed. • WIL-type practicals are similar to the workbook-
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					<p>based practical except that there are no preset tasks as dictated by Unisa in the form of a workbook. Instead, the mentor/supervisor/assessor provides a more informal, albeit still structured report on the student (e.g. reports on engineering students by their workplace supervisors)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some departments organise practicals which students are expected to attend. Upon completion of the practical, the student is then expected to submit a portfolio of evidence. It is somewhat like a workbook but not structured as a workbook is – each student creates his/her own portfolio of evidence which may be very different from the next students. Although the portfolio of evidence is linked to a practical, it is administered as a portfolio – see below (in other words, the portfolio is the assessment method and not the practical)
<p>Portfolios (of evidence) This is about proficiency demonstration.</p>	Yes	Yes	NVB (although the practical they may be associated with is indeed VB)	<p>There appears to be some misunderstanding as to the difference between portfolios and projects. In the Unisa context, a summative assessment portfolio is a non-venue based exam processed via the assignment system before or during the exam. A portfolio</p>	<p>Portfolios are often linked to practicals. The student completes a practical and then produces a portfolio <i>of evidence</i> about his/her involvement in and learning gained from the practical, which is then assessed. Portfolios do not always have to be linked to a practical, however.</p> <p>There is no reason why aspects of the portfolio, such as a first draft, or a near-complete report cannot be submitted as an assignment. Thus a portfolio can serve as a formative and summative assessment practice. In fact, a portfolio can serve as an assignment on its own, without having to culminate in a summative result. Portfolios are usually fairly comprehensive practically-orientated tasks that the</p>

				can thus be submitted via myUnisa or the assignment scanning process, whereas a project cannot.	student is expected to work on during the course of the semester or year. The major difference between portfolios and projects is the way they are submitted and captured within the Unisa system
Projects This is about proficiency demonstration and is also referred to as a <i>report</i> or <i>review</i> .	Yes	Yes	NVB	There appears to be some misunderstanding as to the difference between portfolios and projects. In the Unisa context, a project is a non-venue based exam or assignment that students submit via the postal system. The project cannot be submitted via myUnisa or the assignment scanning process.	<p>Students compile their research on their own time and then submit their draft or final report via the postal system. There is no reason why aspects of the project, such as a first draft, or a near-complete report cannot be submitted as an assignment. Thus a project can serve as a formative and summative assessment practice. In fact, a project can serve as an assignment on its own, without having to culminate in a summative result.</p> <p>Projects are usually fairly comprehensive practically orientated tasks that the student is expected to work on during the course of the semester or year. The major difference between portfolios and projects is the way they are submitted and captured within the Unisa system</p>
Tests and quizzes Two very similar assessment methods. A quiz is more informal than a test. A test mark is likely to count towards the final	Yes	No	VB	Examples of tests include the Saturday tests that form part of the CTA course, as well as test conducted during tutorial classes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the case of the CTA test, these tests are organised and conducted by DSAA and venues, dates and invigilators are specifically selected/appointed for this purpose • In the case of tests done by tutors/lecturers during tutorial classes Invigilation is done by the tutor/lecturer during tutorial classes

mark, whereas a quiz is more of a confirmation for the student how he/she is progressing					
Case studies	Yes	Yes	VB (summative) NVB (formative)		Although case studies can be used as entirely stand-alone assessment methods, they are most often used in conjunction with easy questions, short questions and MCQs.
Group assignments Involves collaboration and may also involve the presentation of the group report to the class	Yes	No	NVB		In some modules groups of students are formed and these groups are formally recorded as such. The group members have to work together to complete a group assignment. They will submit one assignment for the group. All members of the group will receive the same mark for the assignment. Members of the group who do not participate will not receive a mark.
Cross-word puzzles	Yes	Yes	VB (summative) NVB (formative)	Mostly used for formative assessment, but there is no reason why it can't be used for summative assessment, although it might prove quite stressful in an exam to have complete a crossword under time pressure	Software programs exist that enable lecturers to construct crosswords incorporating key concepts that are alluded to by the questions that accompany the crossword. Students are expected to read the question and then complete the accompanying crossword filling in the answer to the question where appropriate. Research shows that students find this type of assessment very useful to learn key concept.
Monkey puzzles					Students have the choice between short questions.

					Functions like an MCQ but will completed as a written assignment??
Oral (viva) exams Such an oral may also involve a presentation made to a class or a small group of assessors	Generally no	Yes	VB		This method involves the lecturer asking the student a number of questions in a face-to-face situation. The student is expected to answer the question verbally. Often used as a stop-gap for special circumstances (e.g. students with one module outstanding).
Attendance register	Yes	??	VB		This is a pre-printed attendance register which must be completed by the student and signed by the mentor/facilitator/supervisor and is normally used in WIL courses to indicate where the students will do their practicals
Self assessment	Yes	No	NVB	A major part of formative assessment	Most of Unisa’s study material has tasks embedded in the material that students can complete in their own time. There are also self-assessment questions at the end of each study unit. MyUnisa also offers self-assessment MCQs that students complete (assuming the lecturer has prepared these). In the case where self-assessment is included in the study material, this is referred to as embedded assessment.
Recognition of prior learning	N/A	N/A	N/A		The student provides evidence of the learning he/she has gained and this evidence is then evaluated. Student may be required to complete further assessment (such as writing an exam or completing an oral exam)
Workbooks	Yes	Yes	VB		Workbooks are generally used in conjunction with practicals – see practicals above. It’s not clear to me whether workbooks are a separate assessment method or whether they are part of practicals (i.e. are they always only used in conjunctions with practicals?)

Assessment methods not covered or addressed

- **Journal/reflective diary writing** – These are regular comments written by students over a period of time in order to record and reflect on their personal learning experiences. They provide the student with an opportunity to express their feelings, thoughts and beliefs about the content and the process of learning in the context of the module being studied. AN informal writing style is used.
- **(Class) Participation** – Students are evaluated on the number of times they participate in a class or forum discussion, as well as the extent and quality of their contribution to the class/forum discussion.
- **Skills testing** – Testing students with questions relating to issues or material that the student is not familiar with but which can be answered using skills and techniques developed in a particular module. That is, the method tests learning process rather than knowledge.
- **Literature review** – A literature review involves surveying the literature in the chosen area of study and critically analysing and synthesising the information gathered into a summarised written report. (Can be classified as a project/report/review?)
- **Performance assessment** – In certain of the arts (music, performing arts), the student's performance is assessed, separate from the theory
- **Simulations** – This may involve role play or a computerised 'game' in which the student (or group of students) has to deal with a particular scenario. The involvement and decision-making of the student(s) is assessed at the end of the simulation.
- **Peer assessment** – Peer assessment involves students assessing the work of other students.

Observation – This involves the lecturer's observation of the student's behaviour, involvement, decisions and overall performance and then assessing and reporting on this behaviour. IS linked to performance assessment and class/forum participation.

Appendix 03: Feedback on Onscreen Marking Project



MEMORANDUM

To: Prof D Singh
Deputy Registrar

From : Mr. JJ Moller
Deployment Specialist PAS
Directorate ICT: UNISA

Date: 29-April 2010

UNISA

Muckleneuk Campus
Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge
Pretoria

Directorate ICT
Cas v Vuuren Building
PO Box 392, UNISA, 0003

Telephone: +27(12) 429 6764

Re: Feedback on Onscreen marking project

Background

The Unisa Tool for Onscreen Marking (UTOM) is distributed and used by academics in Unisa. The following document provides feedback regarding the status of the tool functionality as well as experiences users have had so far.

Appreciation I would like to thank every single lecturer who participated so eagerly in the sprints. Those ,who during the design phases, so diligently marked assignments and others that even went the extra mile by marking assignments twice, just to test the system. My appreciation, also, to colleagues who went out of their way to provide support to others over and above their normal duties.

Summary

Some lecturers hated the idea and did not want to hear anything about onscreen marking, whilst others loved it. One lecturer said “...*since I started working here at Unisa this was the best present I ever got from Unisa*’. Although some did not feel too passionate about the idea they still offered valuable suggestions to make it more user-friendly and suitable to their style of marking.

Although there is a lot of good-will among staff regarding the possibilities of onscreen marking, Unisa will have to be very careful in making it a compulsory methodology. A few academics are VERY much against this in principle and in some courses, it might be near impossible to mark on screen. Unisa needs to plan a phasing in process which may take a number of years.

Accommodating all the suggestions into one toolset will make the toolset very complex to use. Part of the success experienced during this phase was the ease of use of the current toolset. Therefore, a good balance between complexity and ease of use will be essential when improvements are considered.

The marking tools did perform well; however, there were by far not enough people on the ground to could provide one on one support for academics wanting to use the tools. The router tool, although easy and intuitive to use, was not robust enough for a variety of unique users needs. The limited resources needed to provide high level technical support is a huge risk factor. Currently there is only one person to do the support, while he has other responsibilities as well.

Before rolling out a solution like this to the whole Unisa community, **more support staff** will be required to provide the support needed, as well as **more programmers** for the development and ongoing maintenance for the router.

I did receive specific reports about problems experienced with the router and some comments even indicated an unwillingness to proceed with onscreen marking until the technical problems are sorted out.

It was also reported that the onscreen marking works easier and faster but also comments to the contrary. One lecturer reported that it initially took longer per assignment until she realized that all the assignments submitted in PDF format were generally of a higher standard and lengthier than the written assignments and therefore required more attention and time.

Laptops, touch screens, stylus, and other input devices were utilised, and it seems to be a good idea to consider these input devices. Although more testing of these devices will be necessary suggestions are that these alternate input devices and laptops, instead of desktops, will be a good investment towards the success of this initiative. Alternative input devices might supply solutions to some of the problems caused due to the lack of the math's and science font capability.

The Onscreen Marking Toolset

Router

Router installation and functionality has caused many problems. Due to the unique way each lecturer (or group of lecturers) works, different errors and glitches were identified which could not be foreseen during development and testing. Because only one person at ICT could support the router tool, it became problematic when support was required and this person was not on campus.

Additional functionality requested:

- Improved selection options (Pick 100 assignments or Pick x where x is defined by the user).
- Routing on language, numbers and percentages
- Search on name, student number and marks (e.g. find all assignments which scored 40)
- Some lecturers felt that the routing should be an administrative function carried out by the assignments section or that it should be fully automated, whereas others liked the control it provides over the routing process.
- Routing between markers during the marking process was problematic and the process was unclear. This is typically required for situations where one person marks only one portion of the paper and someone else marks another portion.
- The rerouting process for moderation etc was not clear, in the same manner as routing between markers

- Lecturers want to know where an assignment goes when finished. There are not enough system error warning messages to alert lecturers that actions might have a negative effect on work already marked. The same is true for feedback or confirmation from the system that an action has been successfully carried out and will have the following effect.
- Not enough training and practice opportunities were available.

Ticks and Impression

This part of the marking worked extremely well; however, a few suggestions were received:

Additional functionality requested:

- Default setting to be set so every time one selects the tick it already knows your preferred value. Some lecturers are against this very point where others asked for this type of feature.
- Marks per question so that lecturers could indicate 5 marks out of 10 for Question 1, etc.
- A balance needs to be achieved between a complicated set-up procedure before marking can start vs settings that require repeated inputs at the point when one picks a tool.
- A way to deduct marks (currently deleting the tick or a negative impression mark are the only two ways to do this).
- The score in the circle visible as a score out of a possible score. The current method as well as this option should be allowed for different purposes. See bullet on “Marks per question” above.
- Different way to initialize the marking tools

Comment Tool

Several lecturers used the commenting tool to add comments and others used it with the scores as a simple rubric. This tool was robust and gave very few problems.

Additional functionality requested:

- Click and drag comments across.
- Use same “element” for another question.
- Spell checker in comment boxes.
- Maximum marks per element or not.

Rubric

Fewer lecturers tried the more complicated rubric tool; although it is promising, it also needs some major improvements and specific training.

Additional functionality and improvements requested:

- Scrolling text per box required because the current boxes are too small
- The paging is unfamiliar and may cause problems and scrolling pages would work better
- In general, there are too many steps to follow to completely finish with the tool
- Some want to apply the same rubric to more than one question
- Open rubric and Finalize buttons should be larger or placed elsewhere so they are more visible from the pdf document.

Installation & Licenses

Unisa must provide **Adobe licenses** for external markers. A licensing solution is needed for Unisa staff using personal PCs and laptops when they are marking from home on non-Unisa computers.

After careful consideration of a possible licensing agreement that could accommodate external staff, it has been decided that managing these licenses will take too much administrative time from staff members and it is a flawed system from the onset. It is therefore suggested that all external markers should have their own copy of Adobe Professional as a base for the onscreen marking toolset. This will need to be written into their contracts, as a prerequisite for hire.

Should Adobe have a built-in lapse time for licenses, license agreements could seriously be considered and undertaken by Unisa. This way, external markers would not then have 'Unisa licenses' after they leave the employ of Unisa. Initial talks with Adobe indicated that Adobe 10 will have a time-lapse option built into the licensing and that might direct Unisa towards taking this particular route.

Installation by the technical team has not been without errors. Before deployment of a new tool that requires installation to the broader Unisa Community, the technical team should undergo proper training. This means that they need a firsthand working knowledge of what the product does, and how it works. With a firsthand working knowledge of what they have installed, the technical team could then test the tool before they sign off the job card.

Suggestions and prerequisites for future deployment

- Licenses for external markers MUST be sorted out one way or the other
- Installation staff must receive training on the marking tools and router before they install it on PCs

Marking strategies catered for

Strategies

The Unisa Tool for Onscreen Marking accommodates five distinct marking strategies:

Strategy 1

Using a tick mark \surd counting $\frac{1}{2}$ a mark or a tick that will count whatever value you set it to count. The tool also has an inverted tick mark counting zero marks, but which indicates a section as having been read and a cross mark indicating a mistake, also counting zero marks. The tool will add up all the ticks and give a final score when requested to do so. The value of the ticks may be changed to different values if the marker chooses to do so.

Strategy 2

You may want to give an impression mark for a page, section or paragraph. You then simply click the appropriate icon and enter a mark. This mark can be assigned a specific label like Question #, Q#, Section #, Page #, P# etc or may also be left blank (empty). Some users indicate that they would prefer to use the inverted tick mark with the impression mark.

Strategy 3

You can write comments on the student's assignment. These comments may be shared with other markers linked to specific labels as well. Using the normal sticky note feature in Adobe, you can copy and paste these comments to the assignment. The comment tool can be used in collaboration with strategy 1 or 2.

Strategy 4

Using the commenting tool, you can also attach a mark to a comment. Thus the marker can then easily provide the mark and comment in one step.

Strategy 5

The rubric tool requires extensive setting up beforehand but can be useful especially if you want to ensure an even standard across all markers.

Road ahead

The way we go about determining the road ahead (or writing a project plan for the next phases of the tool rollout) should depend upon how we answer the following important questions:

- When and how will ICT upgrade the router? Suggest a new project plan for a new version of Router development.
- What next? 1) Should Unisa continue using the tool sets as they stand (with an improved router) for further testing; or 2) should we go out on tender for something very similar as an end-to-end solution; or 3) should we purchase something similar? I suggest we continue with the current online marking tools but improve the Router drastically ASAP and continue testing and experiencing the onscreen marking.
- Should we decide to go out on tender, what are the tender procedures in terms of describing our needs?
- When should the tender go out?
- How do we investigate and plan the timelines for phasing in onscreen marking for the whole University?
- Should Unisa convert all files to PDF upon receipt? or do we require students to submit only PDFs? or do we allow both options? Legally it is better to only accept PDF documents because then no-one can claim we altered an assignment. Is it therefore viable to state that only PDF documents will be accepted as assignments?
- Should we make it policy that all electronically submitted assignments stay electronic?
- Obtain Adobe Licenses for everyone having to mark onscreen.

Risks

Avoid risks through planning and support (in other words, we need to get everyone's buy in). If not, the following could happen:

- Lecturers could conceivably inform their students NOT to submit online, if all online submissions MUST be marked online and the lecturer is resisting.
- Due to the fact that there is not enough support for lecturers and students, we should be cautious of increased usage at this stage as there is a great risk of opening ourselves up for failure.

- The HR process of contracting external staff (and contract workers) is not adequate and does not include provision for onscreen marking options. This will prevent many of the larger courses from using onscreen marking.
- Math fonts and scientific writing and characters can be problematic with existing tools.
- Adobe Licenses for everyone is too expensive

Johann Möller
Deployment Specialist
Portal & Academic Solutions



 (012) 429-6764

082 902 9733

 (012) 429-3394

 jmoller@unisa.ac.za

Appendix 04: What ICT Currently Offers

Tool name	What it does	Unisa Status
Self Assessment	Create questions students must answer online. Can accommodate multiple choice; multiple correct; fill in the blank; paragraph; pairing type questions. The tool allow for extensive feedback. Question pools and random draw from question pool allow for students taking the test more than once.	In use as self assessments by some academics and others used it for course evaluations. Math font limitation requires some work around but it is limited in that respect.
Polls	One question polls making it possible to ask students opinion about something. Not scored	New and not used widely
Portfolio tools	Whole set of portfolio tools allowing for online portfolios.	Not tested at all. Just aware that they exist. Tried to market it to some academics to try it out but the ones using portfolios prefer to do so in paper formats
Gradebook/Syllabus/Assignments	Admin functions supporting the recording of scores very much like the current back – end systems of Unisa. Gradebook is for recording the results of assignments and Assignments are the submission of assignments. Syllabus is the tool that one will use giving students a overview of the outcomes and course objectives.	It is available but not tested in a Unisa context.
Online marking	Allowing lecturers to mark and comment	In pilot phase

	<p>assignments online and used with the router uploading the marks automatically to the Unisa admin systems. Strictly speaking this is not a myUnisa tool. Students only submit assignments online.</p>	
<p>Blogs, Wikis, Announcements</p>	<p>All these tools require some participation between all participants. When used effectively a lot of learning can be achieved. Some academics however find that giving marks for contributions in these tools are the only way to motivate students to do what is good for them. They will provide rubrics and criteria that will be used during the assessment of participation in these tools. This will be mainly a manual process.</p>	<p>Lecturer could include questions in the assignment referring back to the tools like these which are not generally scored to capture a mark for participation within an official assignment.</p>

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