STUDENT ASSESSMENT POLICY

BHIKSU UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA

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Description in Brief	This policy specifies policies, principles and strategies for student assessments at the Bhiksu University of Sri Lanka in all courses in the study programme.

SECTION 1

Rationale

Assessment describes any processes that evaluate the outcomes of student learning in terms of knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes and abilities. Also, it determines whether the students meet the intended learning outcomes of courses that are aligned with the program learning outcomes. It is the bridge between teaching and learning. This policy is meant to protect the students from excessive workloads and to ensure that all students are treated equally. Hence, student assessment will help to inform teachers and students about the quality of the assessment process and the student learning experience.

Assessment at the University is guided by core principles including; quality, validity, reliability, manageability, and fairness. It is expected that staff use these principles when planning, implementing and reviewing assessment tasks and processes. Reliable systems for grades and awards should be assured by ensuring core principles of assessments.

All parties including students, academics, academic support and administrative staff of the Faculty should respect student assessment policy. Students may come forward in cases of apparent violation of the student assessment policy. The matters of such should be referred to the Head of the Department, Dean of the Faculty or Vice Chancellor of the University to ensure that the faculty-student assessment policy is respected.

SECTION 2

Scope

This policy shall apply to all undergraduate, postgraduate courses, and extension courses offered by the University, that are evaluated by any form of Assessment.

SECTION 3

Definitions

"Assessment" means any form of student activity in a Course to which a grade is to be granted by the instructor.

"Assignment" means any form of Assessment other than examinations.

"Course" means any educational activity for which credit may be earned by a student.

"Course Coordinator"/ "Lecturer In-charge" means a member of the academic staff responsible for postgraduate and external courses.

"Examination" means the final (end semester) examination of a course, which is held during the formal examination period identified in the academic calendar at the University

"Examiner" means the member of the academic staff (including contract academic staff) responsible for the mode of Assessment and the grades to be granted in a Course.

"Mid Semester Examination" means a formative examination that is conducted middle of the semester.

"Student" means a person who is studying at the University.

"Subject in charge" means a member of the academic staff responsible an undergraduate course.

"University" means the Bhiksu University of Sri Lanka.

SECTION 4

Purpose and Objectives

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the process of assessing students to evaluate student learning outcomes and ensure that all student assessments are fairly and accurately designed.

Objectives

- to promote, enhance, and improve the quality of student learning through feedback that is clear, informative, timely, constructive and relevant to the needs of the student.
- to measure and confirm the standard of student performance and achievement in relation to intended learning outcomes of the courses.
- to reward student effort and achievement with an appropriate grade.
- to provide relevant information in order to continuously evaluate and improve the quality of the curriculum and the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process.
- to protect the students from excessive workloads, and to ensure that all students are equally treated.

SECTION 5

Designing Assessments and Principles

Designing Assessments

Assessment design is an important aspect of unit design, ensuring that formal and informal assessment reveals students' progress toward intended learning goals. Assessment design considers the what, when, and how of assessment are formulated. When designing assessments, in addition to promoting student learning, their purpose is to provide opportunities for students to demonstrate how well they have achieved, or are progressing towards achieving the intended learning outcomes of the course/programme.

Forms of Assessments

Diverse strategies shall be designed for assessing students including formative and summative assessments.

Formative assessments incorporate a wide variety of methods that teachers use to conduct in-process (during the semester) evaluations of students.

Elements of the Formative Assessment Process

These include (1) identifying the gap, (2) feedback, (3), learning progressions, and (4) student involvement.

Summative assessments are used to evaluate student learning, skill acquisition, and academic achievement at the conclusion of a defined instructional period/end-semester examination.

Summative assessments should be,

> Valid: measures what it is supposed to measure, at the appropriate level, in the appropriate domains (constructive alignment).
> Fair: is non-discriminatory and matches expectations.

At the commencement of each course, the forms of assessment to be utilized should be clearly documented and students should be informed.

The assessment strategies may include but may not be limited to:
- **Written Examination** - may take the form of multiple-choice questions, short answer questions, structured questions, and essays, where appropriate.
- **Written Assignments** - may take the form of essays, reports, case studies and portfolios.
- **Research Presentation** - formal discussion groups where students will be assigned particular topics for research and will be required to present their findings.
- **Practical Assignments/Projects** - students may be required to complete a series of practical assignments or a project designed to test students' abilities under 'real world' conditions.
- **Practical examination** - may consist of practical questions and evaluation by a practical paper, spot tests, a practical, where appropriate.
- **Presentations** - the student will be given a topic and required to make a presentation which will be concluded with a formal discussion.
- **Viva-voce examination** – a panel of evaluators assesses the student/s according to the given answers.

All the other assessment methods including written examination can be implemented either individual or as group assessments.

Assessment Requirements

> Student assessment should be ensured following:

- **Aligned** – Assessment/s must align with expected intended learning outcomes (ILOs).
- **Fair** – The assessment procedures should not be discriminate among/against student/s.
- **Feedback** – Students should receive the feedback timely and it is better to indicate the way they can improve.
- **Reasonable** – Assessment workload is reasonable with the context of work done and reflects the content of course.

- ➢ **Relevant** – The assessment/should be matched with the knowledge and skills gained.
- ➢ **Reliable** – A reliable assessment procedure should be there to convey consistent results.
- ➢ **Transparent** – All assessments should be very clear to criteria/standards.
- ➢ **Valid** – A valid assessment procedures precisely measure the knowledge, skills or understanding and attitudes of the student.

Designing Principles

The following principles of assessment will underpin its comprehensive range of assessment policies, procedures and strategies.

Principle 1: Assessment Strategies for Advanced Student Learning

This is expected to ascertain that:

1. the assessment strategies are aligned with goals, context, learning activities and level descriptors (learning outcomes).
2. a variety of assessment tasks are used while ensuring that student and staff workloads are considered.
3. assessment tasks reflect increasing levels of complexity across a programme and facilitate inquiry-based learning.
4. constructive, timely and respectful feedback develops students' skills of self and peer evaluation and guides the development of future student work.
5. Assessment strategies and rules should be regularly monitored and reviewed.

Principle 2: Timely Communication of Assessment Strategies

This involves the following:

(1) the Course Coordinator/ Subject in charge ensures that the students are informed, in writing, during the first week of the semester about outlines, objectives and ILOs of the course, including the timing and extent of assessments. In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the Course Coordinators/ Subject in charge control, the evaluation scheme in a course is subjected to change, timely communication regarding the change to the students is an essential need.

(2) all staff involved in teaching a course share a common understanding of assessment strategies.

Principle 3: Valid and Fair Assessment Strategies

This requires that:

(1) assessment tasks are authentic and appropriate to disciplinary and or professional context.

(2) assessment incorporates rigorous academic standards related to the discipline(s) and is based on pre-determined, clearly articulated criteria with which students actively engage.

(3) students' assessment will be evaluated solely on the basis of student's achievement against criteria and standards specified to align with learning outcomes.

(4) To ensure a fair evaluation the University should adopt a well-defined marking scheme/ assessment rubrics, and various forms of second marking (open marking/ conference marking, blind marking).

(5) assessment strategies address issues of equity and inclusiveness to accommodate and build upon the diversity of the student body so as not to disadvantage any student by assuring the aspects listed below.
   a. There should be more than one assessment for each course.

   b. Failure to complete a specific requirement in assignment or other activities assigned in a course would prevent the student from passing the course and it should be communicated clearly in the course outline. In situations of such, the assigned percentage value for the assignment or activity must be worth no less than 5% of the final course grade.

   c. Students with disabilities have the right to request reasonable facilities in fulfilling the assessment requirements in a course.

   d. Students who fail to submit an assessment without a valid reason shall receive a grade of F (Fail) or Incomplete (I) for the Assessment.

Principle 4: Improved and Updated Assessment Strategies

This requires that:

(1) assessment tasks and outcomes are moderated through academic peer review and used to inform subsequent practice.

(2) assessments are regularly updated to ensure alignment with program learning outcomes or graduate qualities.

(3) professional development opportunities that are related to design, implementation and moderation of assessment are provided to staff.

SECTION 6

Examination - General

Language of Assessment

Students should complete the assignment in the language officially assigned as the medium of instruction in the study prospectus/ handbook.

Academic Concern due to Illness, Injury or Mishap

(1) The Faculty is committed to supporting students in their academic pursuits. Students may request academic concession in circumstances that may adversely affect their attendance or performance in a course. Generally, such circumstances fall into one of two categories, conflicting responsibilities and unforeseen events.

> (i) Conflicting responsibilities include, but may not be limited to: representing the University in a competition or performance; observing a religious rite; working to support oneself or one's family; and having responsibility for the care of a family member and or any other situation accepted to the Faculty Board and the Senate.

> (ii) Unforeseen events include, but may not be limited to: ill health or other personal challenges that arise during the academic program.

(2) Students who intend to, or who as a result of circumstance must request academic concession and also must notify to the Faculty Board.

(3) Special consideration is provided in circumstances where genuine illness, injury or mishap occurs during a semester or at the time of an examination. It is an academic judgment which depends on the nature of the illness, mishap or injury and its impact in relation to assessment or examination.

(4) Students who are absent during the semester and are unable to complete tests or other graded work (continuous assessment only), should discuss with their Course Coordinators/ Subject in charge regarding how they can make up for missed work, according to written guidelines given them at the start of the course.

(5)   All requests for special consideration must be genuine and made in good faith. Attempts to use special consideration as a means of gaining an unfair advantage in an assessment must be rejected.

(6)   Making a request for special consideration that is not genuine or in good faith may lead to disciplinary action against the student.

(7)   A request for special consideration does not guarantee that the request will be granted.

(8)   Special consideration **should not be** granted for:
   (i)   balancing workloads from another course of study or disciplines;

   (ii)   information and communications technology-related problems, except where they could not have been prevented, or the effects can be minimized by reasonable carefulness of the student

   (iii) national sporting, religious or cultural commitments or other unforeseen events for which special arrangements may be provided in accordance with the clause (4) of the same section of this policy.

(10) Special consideration granted to one or more students should not be disadvantage to other students.

Students with Special Needs

(1)   Students with a permanent or temporary disability who have satisfied the University's requirements for supporting documentation, and may be eligible for reasonable adjustments and or accessible examination and assessment arrangements.

(2)   Students wishing to apply for accessible examination and assessment conditions must make their application through the Dean of the Faculty within a specified timeframe.

(3)   Accessible examination and assessment conditions include, but are not limited to:
   (i) extra time for reading, writing, resting or toilet breaks

   (ii) use of assistive technology

   (iii) use of a designated room and experienced supervisors

Review/ Re-scrutinisation of Marks

Provisions shall be made for students to request to review/ re-scrutinise their marks/grades in accordance with the UGC circular. In the first instance, students are encouraged to

approach the Lecturer to discuss their concerns about their grades. A request for a re-scrutinisation must be made in writing and submitted for verification by the DR/SAR/AR (examinations) as prescribed within 10 working days of formal notification of the grade.

Formative Assessments Guidelines other than Examinations

(i)   The teacher shall ensure that students are provided with sufficient time to complete in-term formative assignments prior to the commencement of the final examination.

(ii)   Unless otherwise specified by the Faculty, the due date for in-term assignments shall be no later than the 12th week of the semester as specified in the University academic calendar.

(iii)   The formative assessments should be aligned with the intended learning outcomes.

(iv)   Teachers should explain the performance evaluation criteria to students to work on self-improvement.

(v)   Teachers should encourage peer discussions and provide comprehensive feedback to students.

(vi)   All formative assignments after grading should be given back to the students for their further improvement.

(vii)   Penalties for late submitted assignments must be stated in the course outline.

(viii) The marks obtained from formative assignments should contribute to the overall summative marks for the course.

Plagiarism

(i) When the University has reasonable cause to suspect that a student has represented the work of another person as his or her own, the University may take any reasonable means to verify the originality of the work.

(ii) Necessary actions must be taken for offences as specified in the examination by-laws.

Pre-requisites to Examination

A student's right to take an examination is subject to:

(i)   being registered in the course

(ii)   being able to produce valid student identification before and during the examination

(iii) the fulfilment of any course requirements (e.g. required percentage of attendance, required marks from continuous assessment), for taking of the examination.

Nature of Examination

Examinations shall be "closed book" examinations unless otherwise specified by the Course Coordinator/ Subject in charge.

Content

The content of the examinations in a course shall be changed in each semester.

Use of Computers, Equipment, Tools or Aids, Electronic or Other Devices by Students

(i) Use of computers, mobile/smartphones and other equipment, tools or aids, electronic or other devices, during the course of an examination is prohibited unless specifically permitted by the Course Coordinator/ Subject in charge/Department/Faculty.

(ii) Where the use of items is permitted in the course of an examination, students shall comply with all restrictions imposed on such use.

Confidentiality of Examination Questions

All examination questions are confidential and shall be returned to the lecturer unless otherwise determined by the lecturer/Unit/Department/Faculty.

Scheduling and Weighting

The University's designated period for final examinations in regularly scheduled courses must be adhered to. Where applicable, if a final examination is part of a course, the allocation of marks should comply with the guidelines outlined in the relevant handbook.

SECTION 7

Procedures for Conduct of Examinations

The Faculty should ensure that the procedures to govern, administration and conduct of examinations which shall include:
  (a)   seating arrangement for students

(b)   the time constraints on entry to and exit from an examination hall

(c)   the circumstances for, and conditions under, which students may leave and re-enter an examination room

(d)   the personal items (electronic or other), if any, to which students may have access during the taking of an examination

(e)   the interruption of any examination by an external event

SECTION 8

Responsibilities for Implementation of Examinations

(1) The Senate is Responsible for:

(i)   ensuring that the assessment strategies at the University comply with this policy

(ii)   appointing of examiners (Setters, Moderators, First and Second Examiners)

(2) Dean and Faculty Board are Responsible for:

(i)   ensuring Faculty strategies and standards in relation to assessment are consistent with this policy and any associated procedures

(ii)   appointing a responsible coordinator where the teaching of a course is shared by more than one department

(iii) recommending examiners (Setters, Moderators, First and Second Examiners) to the Senate.

(3) Heads of Departments are Responsible for:

(i)   the policy is contextualised and implemented in all course units.

(ii)   recommending examiners to the Faculty Board.

(iii) appointing Course Coordinators.

(4) Course Coordinators and/or Principal Examiners are Responsible for:

(i)   developing and implementing an assessment strategy which is consistent with this policy and any associated procedures.

(ii) managing the moderation of assessment design and marking to ensure the validity and reliability of assessment within the course ILOs.

(iii) ensuring that assessment requirements for a course, are discussed and understood by all members of staff involved within the course in teaching and assessment

(iv) monitoring and reflecting on student assessment outcomes and student feedback data to make changes to the assessment strategy for the course unit for reviewing, as appropriate

(5) Lecturers and Tutors in a Course are Responsible for:

(i)   assessing student work fairly, consistently and in a timely manner.

(ii) providing timely feedback which enables students to further improve their learning and performance wherever possible.

(iii) advising students in relation to expectations relevant to specific assessment tasks.

(6) Students are Responsible for:

(i)   actively engaging with assessment tasks, including carefully reading the guidance provided, spending sufficient time on the task, ensuring their work is authentic and their own (whether individual or group work) and handing work within timeline.

(ii) actively engaging in activities designed to develop assessment literacy, including taking the initiative where appropriate (e.g. asking for clarification or advice).

(iii) actively engaging with and acting on feedback provided.

(iv) providing constructive feedback on assessment processes and tasks through student feedback mechanisms.

(v)   becoming familiar with the student assessment policy of the Faculty and procedures and acting in accordance with this policy and procedures.

Assessment Rubrics

Each assessment task must have a clear marking scheme or rubric. This will ensure that marking is reliable and consistent.

Grading System for the Assessments, Detailed Certificate of Results and Academic Transcript

Students should refer to the University handbook for details of the grading system at the University. The results shall be released providing only the grade without a mark. Upon confirmation of all results by the Senate, the student can obtain a detailed certificate of results, only inclusive of subject grades, GPA and class obtained. Grades and marks for all courses will appear on the student's Academic Transcript. The student's Academic Transcript will be issued by the examination branch of the University in response to a written request made by the student as per the request by an outside institution.

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