



CURRICULUM DESIGN AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT RESOURCES POLICY

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Da Vinci Institute is an accredited private higher distance education provider offering qualifications on NQF levels five to ten, which are registered on the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF). This policy forms part of the institutional Integrated Quality Management System and details the principles for ensuring that programme offerings adhere to required academic standards and empower students to contribute to the transformation of their communities, society, and the economy of the future. This approach is underpinned by the Business- and Community-based Action Learning discourse on the co-creation and distribution of relevant knowledge.

Da Vinci offers outcomes-based, distance-education opportunities. This policy details the principles and processes underpinning the learning-programmes offered by The Institute. These principles and processes are also aligned to the requirements for a Mode 2 knowledge production system; all of which have been defined in an attempt to adhere to the required academic standards for an accredited higher education institution, which as a result, should facilitate the development of the required knowledge, skills and values to contribute to a community, society and the economy at large.

2 DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Accreditation	The principles and processes whereby programmes leading to qualifications registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) are evaluated by the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC), a permanent committee of the Council on Higher Education (CHE), for quality in terms of national criteria and are approved for delivery by institutions registered by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) that are confirmed to have the capacity to offer the programme (SAQA, 2014)

Term	Definition
Curriculum	A planned sequence of learning experiences. All the experiences that individual learners have in a programme of education whose purpose is to achieve broad goals and related specific and critical cross-field outcomes, which is planned in terms of a framework of theory and/or research and past and present professional practice
Curriculum Alignment	The principle of ensuring that the purpose of a programme or module is supported by the content selection, learning outcomes, teaching-learning methods and assessment practices used to deliver and assess it

3 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

This policy is benchmarked against, and should be read in the context of the relevant legislation, government policies and regulations underpinning the principles against which institutional policies, processes and standard operational procedures are developed, implemented and maintained.

A. Relevant legislation

- I. Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (no 108 of 1996)
- II. Distance Higher Education Programmes in a Digital Era: Good Practice Guide (CHE)
- III. Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) Criteria for Programme Accreditation (CHE, 2004)
- IV. Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997)
- V. National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment for NQF Qualifications and Part Qualifications and Professional Designations in South Africa (SAQA, 2017)
- VI. Work-Integrated Learning: Good Practice Guide. HE Monitor No 12 (CHE, 2011)

B. Applicable Da Vinci documents

- I. D19 - Assessment and Moderation Policy
- II. D4 - Teaching and Learning Policy
- III. D16 - Management of Experiential and Work-based Learning.

4 SCOPE

The policy applies to the design of curricula and the development of learning and assessment resources for all accredited qualifications and part qualifications of The Institute and other non-accredited programmes.

Design includes the revision of current material and the design and development of new material, as well as considerations regarding the linkages between learning outcomes and assessment activities.

Development refers to the actual writing of learning and assessment resources.

The core components of curriculum design and development are as follows:

- a) Design of programme frameworks
- b) Design and development of specific modules and their associated material
- c) Sourcing of handouts, tools, articles, worksheets and other learning resources
- d) Development of formative, summative and integrated programme assessments – lecturer plans and supporting resources, e.g. learning activities, presentation slides, video clips, games and online self-paced individual learning resources to facilitate distance learning
- e) The development of a programme structure, including the sequence and duration of modules and associated assessment strategy based on credits and the NQF level of the programme and the module.

5 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that design and development practices contribute to compliance with regulatory and other requirements, including guidelines offered in *The Council on Higher Education's Distance Higher Education Programmes in a Digital Era: Good Practice Guide* (CHE, 2014).

6 OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the policy include the following:

- a) Standardising design and development practices at The Institute
- b) Establishing a shared understanding amongst all role-players of the process and responsibilities
- c) Communicating the principles to prospective material developers and lecturing staff
- d) Ensuring appropriate monitoring and evaluation and continuous improvement of curricula and supporting material.

7 HIGH-LEVEL PROCESSES

The Institute's design and development processes are informed by the following:

- a) The Institute's guiding principles as set out in the Institutional Quality Management Policy (A1), including the following:
 - The Institute's dream (vision statement), captured in our purpose (mission statement), brought to life in our principles and brand promise
 - Mode 2 knowledge production
 - Experiential Learning
 - Multiple perspectives of reality (ordered, unordered and disordered)

- The TIPSTTM Managerial Leadership Framework
- Adult-Learning Principles (androgogy)
- Distance Education Principles
- Collecting versus connecting the dots
- Energy flow within systems (coordinated, collaborative and cooperative contexts) .

b) The macro design framework for the curriculum design for distance-education programmes as set out in *The Council on Higher Education's Distance Higher Education Programmes in a Digital Era: Good Practice Guide* (CHE, 2014:17) – see Figure 1.

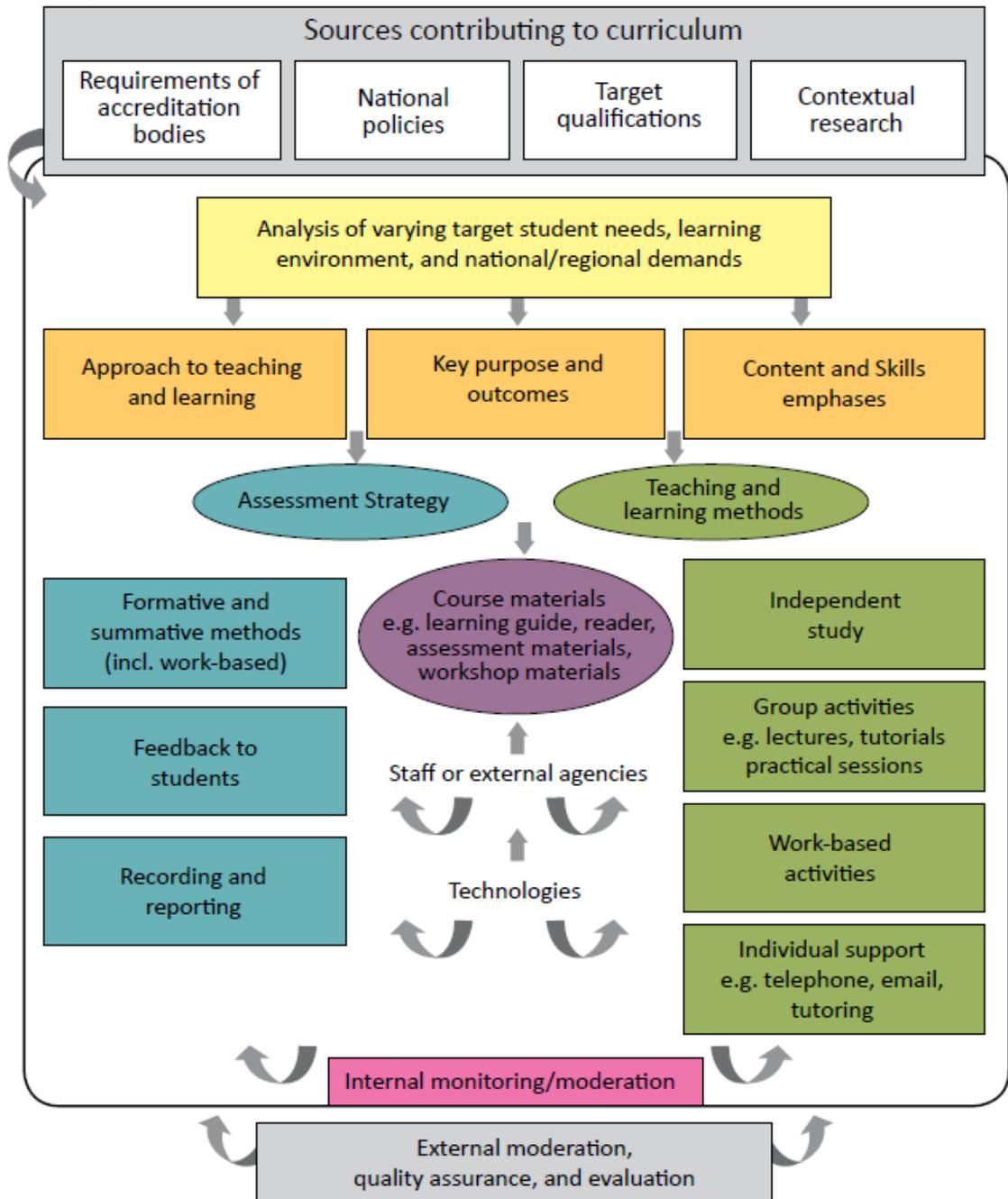


Figure 1: Curriculum design for distance education programmes (CHE, 2014:17)

In the context of a business-based distance learning institution, the model has been interpreted to provide guidance to developers in the form of a curriculum design process and a resource development process.

Discussions on elective streams subject to academic structures and processes are initiated by considering the needs of target markets, learning environments, and national/regional demands. Regulatory requirements (e.g. CHE and DHET) and national skills needs as identified in the National Development Plan and the National Skills Development list of scarce skills, are taken into account.

Curriculum design (in support of the core curriculum), starts with an identification of the integrated authentic assessment products and assessment criteria for each module. The level descriptors are used to ensure that assessment is pitched at the correct level of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

7.1 Curriculum design

The following process guides the design of all curricula at Da Vinci:

- a) Determine the purpose, rationale of a proposed programme
- b) Deduce the programme outcomes and associated assessment criteria
- c) From the programme outcomes deduce modules and module outcomes
- d) From the associated assessment criteria deduce the assessment strategy
- e) From the assessment strategy develop suitable assessment tools to measure programme and module outcomes (e.g. Preparatory Activities, Reports, Oral Examination, Integrated Assessment)
- f) Benchmark all of the above dimensions in curriculum design against national and international academic best practice, the relevant National Qualification Framework (NQF) levels, and consult the relevant Subject Matter Expert (Lecturer)
- g) Identify underpinning knowledge, skills and attitudes/values required to master the competence
- h) Document the above in the:
 - I. Programme Outline
 - II. Integrated curriculum design for a programme
 - III. Detailed curriculum design per module
 - IV. Assessment rubrics.

7.2 Programme Approval Process

The curriculum framework is evaluated by the Teaching and Learning committee, consisting of external Subject Matter Experts, Lecturers, a representative of the Senate and/or professional/industry bodies, if applicable, which makes recommendations to the Senate for ratification.

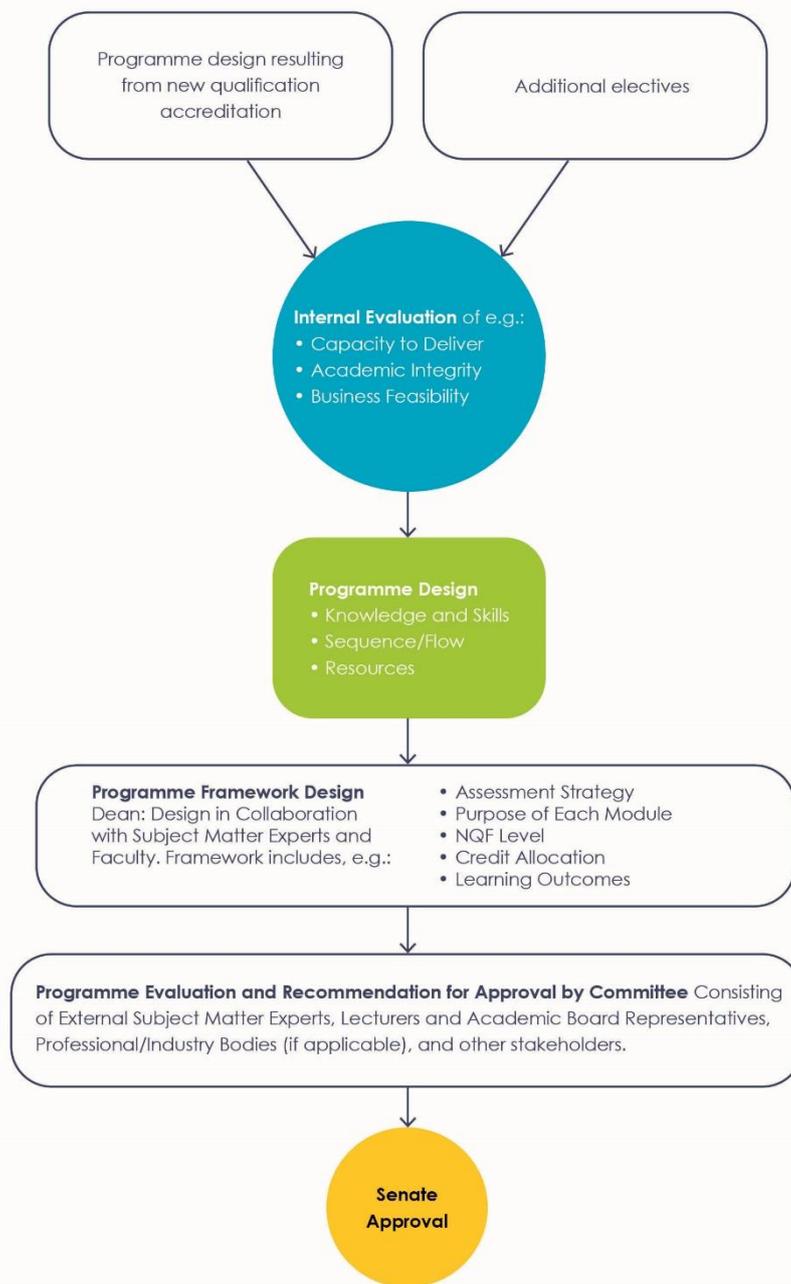


Figure 2: Programme Approval Process

7.3 Development of Learning, Lecturing and Assessment Resources

Figure 3 illustrates the application of distance-learning principles using the courseware set as the core learning and assessment tool. The courseware set, guides students on their journey, ensuring that the discovery process invites them to investigate current learning resources from a variety of sources.

Learning resource development is based on the assessment products and criteria, drawing on a range of resources, e.g. the Da Vinci library and learning resource centre, including textbooks as appropriate, documented industry practice, academic databases, material that is in the public domain, and the student's own workplace practice, where possible.

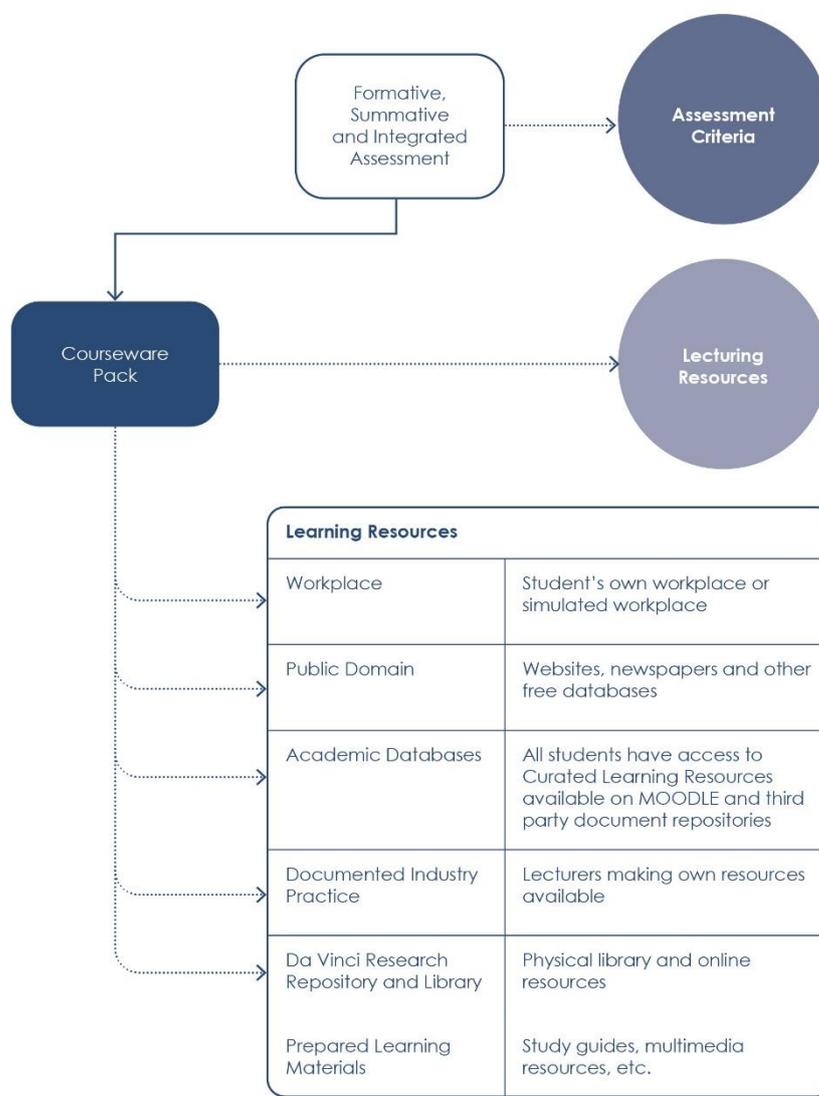


Figure 3: Resource Development Process

The development of learning and assessment resources is a cooperative effort between the following role-players:

- Dean: Design
- Instructional Developer
- Specialist Subject Matter Experts (Lecturer)
- Industry Experts.

To ensure best quality, all drafts of learning and assessment resources are sent to a:

- Language editor
- Graphic designer.

The Institute subscribes to the continuous improvement of learning and assessment resources. The framework in Figure 4 illustrates the iterative nature of learning and assessment resource development (CHE, 2014:20).

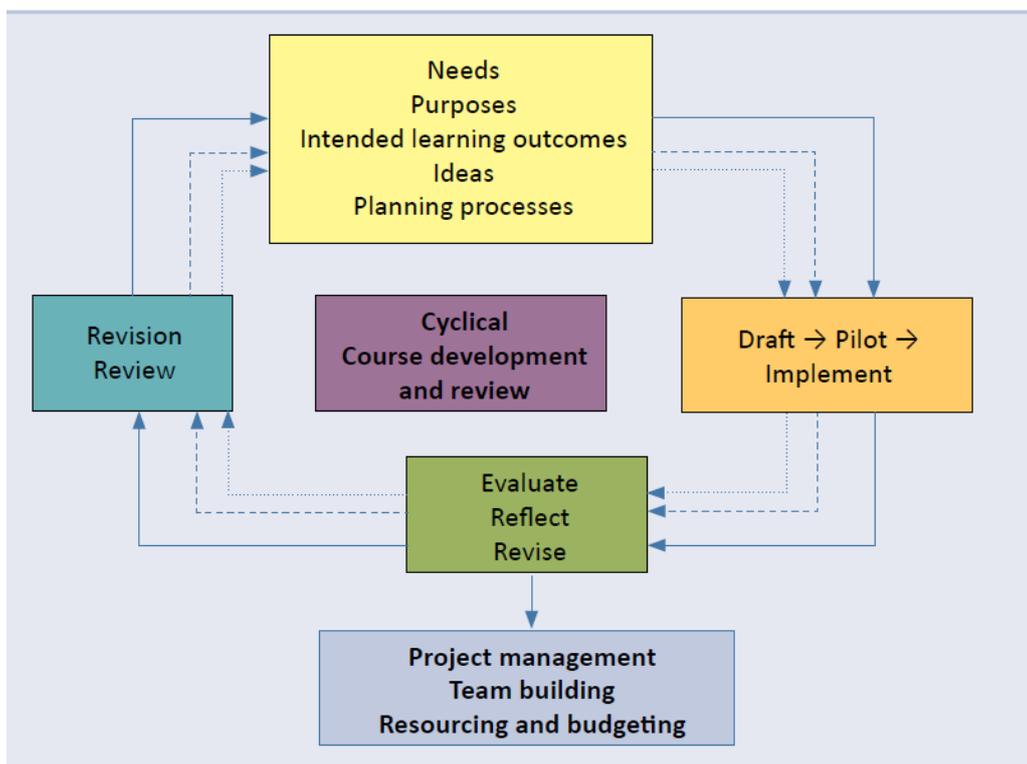


Figure 4: The iterative nature of learning resource development (CHE, 2014:20)

In addition, The Institute's Assessment Process is informed by moderators' feedback and trends analysis of marks that serve at Marks meetings and Assessment Committee meetings. These measures form an integral part of the design of assessment instruments, as well as the use and review thereof.

8 PRINCIPLES

8.1 Pedagogical/Andragogical and curricular modalities for experiential and work-based learning

A combination of pedagogical and curricular modalities (CHE, 2014: 34) is employed to meet the needs of the target group and achieve the purpose of the qualification, i.e.:

- a) Problem-based learning, i.e. the 'structured exploration of a research or practice based problem' (Savin-Baden and Major, 2004 in CHE, 2011)
- b) Project-based learning, i.e. 'intellectual enquiry, real-world problems, and student engagement' (CHE,'2011)
- c) Work-based learning, i.e. 'learning for, at, or through work' (Brennan and Little, 1996 in CHE, 2011)
- d) Work-directed theoretical learning, i.e. ensuring that theory relates to work situations (CHE, 2011)
- e) Workplace learning, i.e. as a 'learning resource and as a benchmark of practice'.

Learning opportunities and assessment instruments are selected to optimise the student's learning journey and apply the learning and assessment principles described in this policy. These modalities are particularly important in the application of theory in the workplace or in authentic real-life contexts. The integration of all of these modalities find expression in the formative, summative and integrated assessments.

The above modalities ensure an appropriate mix of theory and practice to achieve the purpose of each qualification. Learning and assessment opportunities and resources are designed to promote the application of theory within the workplace or in authentic real-life contexts.

8.2 Distance Education

The design and development of all curricula and supporting material is aimed at placing students at the centre of the learning experience through the ongoing construction of knowledge (CHE, 2014: 44). A wide range of learning opportunities and assessment instruments encourage students to engage with the content.

Learning opportunities include activities which build comprehension, critical thinking, competencies (CHE, 2014: 49-50), in addition to developing problem solving, creative thinking and innovative thinking competencies.

The design of the learning resources uses mechanisms that encourage engagement with an application of theory and ongoing engagement with the distance education student through the following:

- a) Learning outcomes and assessment strategy as communication throughout the programme
- b) Stakeholder engagement (where appropriate)
- c) Work-place based related projects and assignments (where appropriate)
- d) Activities at various levels of difficulty in regard to mastery of skills and competencies as expressed through the criteria and descriptors of the associated NQF level. These progress in complexity from one level to the next
- e) Pedagogical, andragogical and curricular modalities that facilitate engagement of the students
- f) The reflective processes that support the personalising and internalisation of learning.

8.3 Learning Management System (LMS)

An LMS platform is used to ensure the availability of resources and the capacity to deliver in the distance mode.

The following functionalities of this LMS platform are employed:

- a) Distribution of learning and assessment resources
- b) Access to research and information resources
- c) Availability of resources related to student support, such as, the On-boarding Manual and Quick Reference Guide: Harvard method
- d) Submission of assessments
- e) High similarity evaluation
- f) Facilitate the development of communities of learning
- g) Interactive communication.

The continuous enhancement and optimisation of the student's LMS Platform experience is a priority.

8.4 Articulation and Coherence

The NQF level descriptors are integral to the design of all curricula and modules to ensure horizontal and vertical coherence within and between modules and programmes. This facilitates (1) internal articulation between the suite of programmes offered by The Institute; and (2) articulation with programmes offered by other higher education institutions, enabling Credit Accumulation and Transfer.

In terms of (1), modules and programmes are not designed and material is not developed in isolation. The integrated design of fields of specialisation, e.g. in the Business Management and Leadership modules, inform the revision of existing curricula and material as well as the design of new programmes.

Design and development in collaboration with lecturers and subject-matter experts, ensure that both academic integrity and current best practice is reflected in a coherent manner over the course of the learning and assessment journey of the student.

9 THE DA VINCI APPROACH AND PHILOSOPHY

The Da Vinci conceptual frameworks underpin the Da Vinci approach and philosophy.(refer to the Explanatory notes on the Da Vinci Conceptual Frameworks).

9.1 Assessment

Each of the modules have formative and summative assessments and on completion of the programme an integrated assessment, which honours both the principles of authentic learning and assessment, reflecting foundational, practical and reflexive competence (SAQA, 2005). Refer to the D19: Assessment and Moderation policy.

9.1.1 Assessment as Learning

The formulation of assessment instruments prior to the development of learning and assessment resources, ensures that assessment opportunities are designed to maximise assessment as learning opportunities and to provide feedback for learning and improvement.

9.1.2 Formative and Summative Assessment

Formative assessment should be designed to deepen the learning engagement, allow the student to gauge personal development in relation to module content and prepare for summative assessment, while also giving early indication of progress to The Institute.

Summative assessment provides evidence of student achievement that corresponds to the purpose, exit-level outcomes and NQF level of the programme being assessed. This will ensure the integrity and validity of the education provided in distance mode of delivery (CHE, 2014).

9.1.2.1 Summative Assessment Criteria

Summative assessment adheres to the following:

a) Holistic Assessment Design

Starting the curriculum design process with the design of the assessments as authentic assessment products, contributes to the design of a holistic assessment strategy. In view of assessment for, and as learning, each learning

and assessment activity and resource is selected, designed and developed as an integrated whole.

b) Authentic Assessment

Formative, Summative and Integrated Assessments are designed to ensure theory is applied in the context of real-life situations and where applicable within the student's own workplace.

c) Summative Assessment levels

- Students are required to undertake a summative assessment at two levels at The Institute:
- Modular level – on completion of each module students are required to undertake a summative assessment to demonstrate their knowledge and skill as reflected by the required module learning outcomes
- Programme level – on completion of all summative assessments students may be required to undertake an examination (Invigilated Assessment, Portfolio of Evidence, etc) to demonstrate their knowledge and skill as reflected by the required programme exit level outcomes.

9.1.3 Assessment Rubrics

Assessment rubrics are provided to students prior to the learning and is used to ensure the following:

- a) Assessment criteria and feedback to students is more objective, transparent and consistent
- b) Students and lecturers develop a shared understanding of the assessment criteria
- c) Learning, conducting assessment as learning, assessing assessments and providing feedback on student performance is guided by assessment criteria in the rubric
- d) Assessment rubrics are used for online marking of all assessments. This ensures specific constructive feedback to students. It also provides specific information for the review of programmes.

9.1.4 Moderation of Assessments (prior to use)

Formative, Summative and Integrated assessment instruments are moderated prior to use. The following role-players are involved in the moderation process:

- a) Dean: Design
- b) Executive Dean: Academic
- c) Lecturers (internal and external)
- d) Subject Matter Experts (external stakeholder)

Assessments are moderated prior to use to ensure compliance with principles described in this policy.

9.2 Programme review

A formal and comprehensive programme review is conducted after the full programme has been offered. The minimum period is determined by the prescribed duration of a programme (cyclical).

The Institute's programme review schedule is published and updated on a continuous basis to ensure existing and new programmes are submitted to structured and formal review on a regular basis. Programme reviews are conducted by external evaluators, utilising the Evaluation of Learning, Facilitation and Assessment Resources review and reporting format.

Evidence of all programme reviews are kept on record.

10 RESPONSIBILITIES

The roles and responsibilities of the main role-players are specified in their annual Key Performance Indicators and is informally agreed in terms of specific projects.

11 REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

Regular review and amendment of this policy will be done in line with the approved institutional policies and regulatory requirements. This will take place in consultation with the relevant quality assurance structures at departmental and institutional level, under the auspices of the official custodian of this policy, namely the Executive Dean: Academic.