

Extract from SAQA: Integrated assessment in the learnership curriculum

The following extract is taken from 'Guidelines for Integrated Assessment' ('SAQA September 2005). It contains useful ideas and suggestions for addressing integrated assessment in the design of learning programmes for learnerships.

Extract (pages 9-13):

2.1 DEFINING INTEGRATED ASSESSMENT

Integrated assessment differs from the historical approaches to assessment. It is unavoidable therefore that the concept is interpreted in different ways. The following definitions and descriptions of integrated assessment are presented to explore the commonalities (and differences) in understanding:

- (i) ... integrated assessment should [assess] the ability to combine key foundational, practical and reflexive competence with some critical cross-field outcomes and apply these in a practical context for a defined purpose. The context should be relevant to real life application (SAQA/CIDA, 2003: 62).
- (ii) ... it should measure the extent to which candidates have integrated the knowledge, skills, personal qualities taught and/or modelled through the different unit standards which make up the programme (proposed Advanced Certificate in Education – School Management and Leadership) (www.saq.org.za).
- (iii) ... assessment should ensure that the candidate is a consistently competent individual, capable of undertaking the whole activity being assessed rather than small time-consuming and trivial tasks. It is advisable to plan to assess not only one outcome as a whole activity, but several....across a number of different units. This process is called integration of assessment. Integrating assessment in this way will considerably lighten the burden on both assessor and candidate and will lead to more coherent and meaningful assessments (Scottish Qualifications Authority, 1997: 23).
- (iv) Integrated assessment at the level of qualification provides an opportunity for learners to show that they are able to integrate concepts, ideas and actions across unit standards to achieve competence that is grounded and coherent in relation to the purpose of the qualification ((www.saq.org.za) National Certificate: Tourism: Guiding)
- (v) ... making use of integrated tasks and activities, and a variety of methods, tools, techniques and contexts in assessing learners' performance (Department of Education (DoE), Draft revised National Curriculum Statement for Grades R – 9 (Schools)).
- (vi) ... the integration of knowledge and skills across subjects and terrains of practice is crucial for achieving applied competence as defined in the NQF ... the NCS [National Curriculum Statements] seeks to promote an integrated learning of theory, practice and reflection (DoE, Qualifications and Assessment Policy Framework Grades 10 – 12 (Schools)).
- (vii) The testing again and again of the same restricted range of skills and abilities can no longer be justified; instead of simply writing about performance, students should be required to perform in authentic or simulated real-world contexts. This demands innovative assessment approaches and methods, which ensure that all learning outcomes are in fact assessed, and that assessments add value to student learning (CHE, Draft New Academic Policy for Programmes and Qualifications in Higher Education (NAP), 2001: 112).
- (viii) Integrated assessment refers to:
 - Assessing a number of outcomes together
 - Assessing a number of assessment criteria together
 - Assessing a number of unit standards together

- Using a combination of assessment methods and instruments for an outcome/outcomes
 - Collecting naturally occurring evidence (such as in a workplace setting)
 - Acquiring evidence from other sources such as supervisor’s reports, testimonials, portfolios of work previously done, logbooks, journals, etc. (SAQA, 2001: 55).
- (ix) Integrated assessment at qualifications level enables learners to show that they are able to integrate concepts, ideas and actions across unit standards to achieve competence that matches the purpose of the qualification (LGWSETA, 2004: 13).

The key elements emerging from these definitions and descriptions of integrated assessment include the following:

KEY ELEMENT	SOURCE (see above)
The need to demonstrate applied competence, including the provision of evidence of the achievement of critical cross-field outcomes	(i); (vi)
Relating the assessment to a defined purpose (of unit standards and qualifications)	(i); (iv); (ix)
The context in which the assessment should be undertaken is key	(i); (v); (vii)
The practicability and efficiency of assessment approaches are important	(iii); (vi); (vii)
Integrated assessment approaches should “add value to student learning”	(iii); (vi)
Specifically linking the underpinning theory with practice makes integrated assessment a more authentic and coherent method to evaluate learning	(iii); (iv); (vii)
Integrated assessment should make use of a variety of assessment instruments whereby more than one mode of learning is assessed	(v); (vii); (viii)
Integrated assessment aims to assess in an appropriate manner, the extent to which learners can “integrate concepts, ideas and actions”	(i); (ii); (iv); (vi); (ix)
Integrated assessment is the assessment of knowledge, skills and personal qualities	(ii); (vi)

Table 2.1: Key elements emerging from various interpretations of integrated assessment

Clearly integrated assessment is actually no different from good practice. The purpose of this publication is to encourage a deliberate engagement with a form of assessment that promotes meaningful learning. This form of assessment supports the achievement of the purpose of the qualifications and unit standards.

In this publication, the formal definitions derived from the SAQA regulations are used.

Assessment is defined in the following way:

A structured process for gathering evidence and making judgments about an individual’s performance in relation to registered national standards and qualifications (SAQA, 2001: 16).

Integrated assessment is seen as an important mechanism to present evidence of applied competence. (See the description of it that appears in the NSB Regulations (SA, 1998: 4) quoted in the Introduction on p10).

These two definitions encapsulate many of the principles and concepts that are used to describe assessment in the emerging South African education and training system. Integrated assessment is put into practice by doing the following:

- Assessing a number of outcomes together [or]
- Assessing a number of assessment criteria together [or]
- Assessing a number of unit standards together [and]
- Using a combination of assessment methods and instruments for an outcome/outcomes [and]

- Collecting naturally occurring evidence (such as in a workplace setting) [and/or]
- Acquiring evidence from other sources such as supervisor's reports, testimonials, portfolios of work previously done, logbooks, journals, etc. (SAQA, 2001: 55).

In the new education and training model the term *applied competence* points to one of the key principles of the NQF, i.e. that knowledge should reflect foundational, practical and reflexive competencies. This means that learners must be able to demonstrate *understanding* of the underpinning theory, i.e. the basis of their *practice* in a particular context and through reflection, be able to *integrate performance with understanding* (SAQA, 2001: 21).

The NSB definition also suggests that integrated assessment is not a once-off event because it “uses a range of formative and summative assessment methods”. These assessments may have more than one purpose and may take different forms. In the *Criteria and Guidelines for the Assessment of NQF registered Unit standards and Qualifications* (SAQA, 2001: 26) *formative assessment* is broadly described as “assessment that takes place during the process of learning and teaching”, with the purpose of supporting learning. *Summative assessment* is used to make a “judgement about [learner] achievement” that is used at a particular point (usually at the end) of a learning programme to measure progress in terms of the requirements of national standards and qualifications so that credits can be awarded.

Summative assessments take place throughout a curriculum (refer to Figure 1.1), at points when a judgement is made about whether a learner is able to progress to the next level/semester/unit of learning. The curriculum will therefore consist of a series of small or large learning programmes. A learning programme can be considered small if it covers only a particular unit of learning, (for example a skills programme, or short course, or part of the module) and large if it ends only at the completion of a full year of study in a discipline (refer to Figure 3.4 and 3.5 in chapter 3).

It is important that a learning programme should have a range of assessments (i.e. diagnostic, formative and summative) planned to take place at the appropriate moments. The NSB Regulations state that designers of qualifications should ensure that “integrated assessment [is] appropriately incorporated to ensure that the purpose of the qualification is achieved” (SA, 1998: 8).

Integrated assessment should offer an *opportunity to demonstrate the depth and breadth of learning* at all stages and in a variety of ways throughout the learning programme. As mentioned in Chapter 1, integrated assessment can be used at different levels and for different purposes during a learning programme. For example, at *qualification exit level*, a set of integrated assessments could be used when credits have been accumulated over time and at different learning sites (possibly through a series of skills programmes). This would be done in order to assess the integration of knowledge and skills in terms of the purpose of the qualification (LGWSETA, 2004). This approach contrasts with assessing a learner in discrete parts of a qualification (i.e. in terms of subject areas) where the assumption is that the overall purpose of the qualification has been achieved. In practice, educators seldom have an overview of the purpose of the qualification. Instead they focus on their own disciplines and the linkages between the parts of the qualification are not necessarily made. This suggests that it may be necessary to develop assessments at the qualification exit level that will evaluate learning across subjects and *terrains of practice*.

Throughout the learning programme, educators must seek to assess the *application of knowledge within their disciplines*, both for formative (or developmental), as well as for summative (or judgmental) purposes. This means that coherent “chunks of learning”, including theory and practice, will be assessed.

This can be achieved through “clustering” of unit standards and learning outcomes. The advantage is that the understanding of *theory, in support of practice*, is assessed. It also avoids duplicating the assessment of learning outcomes that overlap with outcomes in other disciplines or modules.

Integrated assessment, in terms of the assessment of more than one unit standard or learning outcome, should never be forced. Unit standards or learning outcomes will need to be assessed discretely, particularly in the early stages of a learning programme. However, educators should guard against over-assessment where each outcome “(or worse, each assessment criterion) [is assessed separately resulting in] hundreds of little fragmented meaningless assessments of the check-list type, taking up valuable learner and educator time without anything of value being learnt” (LGWSETA, 2004: 13). Assessments are important moments in the course of learning programmes. The cost and practicability of assessment should be carefully considered when planning integrated assessment.

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