POLICY

CERTIFICATION AND AWARDS

Introduction

The purpose of this policy is to describe the process that FPD follows for issuing a Higher Certificate; Advanced Certificate; Advanced Diploma or Postgraduate Diploma or Degree; and/or a Certificate of attendance or completion (short courses) to a student as well as the principles that support the relevant decisions and processes.

Policy scope

This policy applies to all employees, students, partners, and those contracted to provide, promote and maintain the high standards of certification for those students who completed a qualification through FPD.

Definitions

Academic Certificate	Is a document that certifies that a person has received specific education or has passed a test or series of tests. The word certificate will also refer to any form of Certificate and Diplomas.
Validity	Validity in assessment refers to measuring what it says it is measuring, be it knowledge, understanding, subject content, skills, information, behaviours, etc. [1]. The SAQA Guidelines on Assessment [1] states that for assessors to achieve validity in the assessment, they should: • State clearly what outcome(s) is/are being assessed. Harlan[2] (2005:214) indicates that students need support to help them to understand the assessment criteria and what is required from them to meet that assessment criteria. • Use an appropriate type or source of evidence. • Use an appropriate method of assessment. • Select an appropriate instrument for assessment. The assessor, when designing assessment, needs to take into consideration the specific outcomes/objectives, the assessment criteria, the range of assessment methods available and the context in which the individual is expected to perform, to be able to determine the type and amount of evidence required during assessment. The type and amount of evidence will also influence the decision on the type of assessment methods and instruments required. [1]

[1] SAQA. 2001. Criteria and Guidelines for Assessment of NQF Registered standards and qualifications. Available at: https://cdn.lgseta.co.za/resources/guidelines/2.4.1%20SAQA%20Criteria%20and%20Guidelines%20for%20Assessment.pdf
[2] Harlan, W. 2005. Teachers' summative practices and assessment for learning – tensions and synergies. The curriculum journal; 16 (2), 207-223. DOI: 10.1080/09585170500136093

Reliability	Reliability refers to the degree to which consistent judgements can be made in the same or similar contexts every time a specific assessment is administered. [1] The outcome of the assessment should not be influenced by variables such as: [1] • Assessor bias in terms of the learner's gender, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religion, like/dislike, appearance and such like. • Different assessors interpreting qualifications inconsistently. • Different assessors applying different standards. • Assessor stress and fatigue. • Insufficient evidence gathered. • Assessor assumptions about the learner, based on previous (good or bad) performance. To avoid such variance in judgement (results), assessments should ensure that each time an assessment is administered the: [1] • Same or similar conditions prevail. • Procedures, methods, instruments and practices are the same or similar. In addition to the above, the SAQA Guidelines on Assessment states that: [1] • Assessors should be trained and competent in administering assessments. • Assessors should give clear, consistent and unambiguous instructions. • Assessment criteria and guidelines for unit standards and qualifications should be adhered to. • Assessors should meet and talk to each other. • Assessors should be subject experts in their learning field(s). • Where possible, more than one assessor should be involved in the assessment of one learner. • Assessors should use checklists, or other objective forms of assessment, in addition to other assessment instruments. • Internal and external moderation procedures for assessment should be in place. • Clear and systematic recording procedures should be in place.

Student Records

Student details are recorded on the central Learner Management System (LMS). The persons capturing the data (Administrator and Coordinator) understand the importance of accuracy for student record truthfulness and correct certification.

All student data for each individual student is completed on the student portal, including attendance (if applicable), results of assessments (if applicable), the date of completion and date of issuing the certificate.

Each student's status of results must also indicate whether or not the student achieved a distinction upon completion of the programme or short course. This is included on the LMS as well as on the printed report for each course. The pack of certificates must include the report for the Head of School's signature.

Student data for students registered for formally registered FPD qualifications is uploaded onto the National Learner Record Database (NLRD) and transferred to the appropriate ETQA learner database. Proof of this submission (June and December of each year) is generated by Council for Higher Education (CHE) for submission to Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) with the annual report.

The Student Portal is password protected and every entry done on the system can be tracked in terms of date and the last person who entered specific data.

Printing and Issuing of Certificates

The LMS system serves for the verification and certification of Higher Education (HE) programmes and short courses.

Once all final results are captured, consolidated and verified the certificates are printed off-site by a designated member of the team. The Registrar and the Head of Student Engagement oversee the certification process.

Students enrolled on the database, but who have not completed the programme, will remain on the system.

Students who have completed the programme and met all the requirements will receive their printed certificates. Each certificate will include a unique FPD Student Number. This unique number is linked to the specific student on the LMS and linked to the student's information.

Each certificate linked to formal qualifications is authenticated by hand with an institutional seal. The Managing Director, Academic Executive, and Registrar or Head of Education Innovation or Head of School sign each certificate linked to formal qualifications.

The Registrar signs each certificate linked to completion or attendance of short courses.

Certificates printed per academic year are on record on the LMS (linked to each student's individual profile) and in the certificate register held by the Registrar.

Qualifications are only conferred at the official awards ceremony. Certificates for formal qualifications are issued/awarded with the individual student's academic transcript. All students attending the awards ceremony complete an attendance list as proof of receipt of their certificate.

Issue of Reprints

The procedure for reprints will include:

The submission of an academic record signed by the Registrar. Requests for a reprint are received by email, which will serve as evidence of a request to reprint.

If the student has the original certificate available (for example in a case where the original is damaged) the original certificate must be returned to the FPD, along with a certified copy of the student's ID and academic results.

A request for the issue of a certificate reprint, containing student details, reasons for the reprinting must be sent to the Registrar for authorisation, who will request the reprint of the certificate.

If the student requests a reprint for a lost certificate, the above process applies, accompanied with an affidavit from the student stating the reason for the request.

In case of an error on the certificate, the Registrar will request a reprint. The incorrect certificate must be returned to the Registrar. The Registrar will keep a record of incorrect certificates.

All reprints must be authorised and authenticated by signatures of the Managing Director, Academic Executive and the Registrar or the Head of Education Innovation or the Head of School.

All returned certificates will be recorded and then destroyed.

All newly issued certificates will be recorded next to the student details on the LMS and in the Certificate Register.

The charge levied for the reprinting of certificates may change from time to time.

Certificate Distribution

Authenticated and signed certificates are securely stored in the Registrar's office and are handed to the graduation co-ordination team on the day of graduation for distribution.

Security and Monitoring

Certification documents are securely stored.

The Student Administration and Engagement Administrator and Coordinator capturing student data are supervised to ensure quality data capturing. Results are verified in terms of validity and reliability before released to students. Final results are verified by the Registrar and the Head of School before printing instructions are issued.

As set out by the CHE's Criteria for Institutional Audits[3], clear and efficient arrangements are in place to ensure that the integrity of the certification process for qualifications are not compromised. These include:

- Effective mechanisms to quality assure the processing and issuing of certificates.
- Effective security measures to prevent fraud or the illegal issuing of certificates

FPD's Academic Cluster is the only department in FPD which may issue certificates for formal qualifications. The LMS is used to audit the information, for each student who completed their qualification, for correctness and that all requirements are met, for example prerequisite subjects are credited in accordance with the qualification. Access to the LMS is protected by passwords for individuals who are authorised to access the system, for example Student Administration and Engagement Administrators and Coordinators who enter marks. Two individuals check whether a student meets the requirements for the qualification. Thereafter, the student's information is sent to a trusted individual (as delegated by the Registrar) who is responsible to issue the certificate (i.e. places an order for printing of certificates). This process is an additional follow-up phase to ensure that a qualification is not approved, and the certificate issued by the same individual. All certificates are printed by external FPD-approved printers.

FPD student certificate numbers and an institutional seal verify authenticity.

The Managing Director, Academic Executive, and the Registrar or the Head of Education Innovation or Head of School sign each certificate.

All printed certificates are recorded on the LMS and in the Certificate register.

Reprints are highly regulated as specified above.

Certificates are distributed under the direct supervision of senior management and the Academic Executive.

[3] CHE. 2004. Criteria for Institutional Audits: Higher Education Quality Committee. Available at: https://www.uj.ac.za/corporateservices/quality-promotion/Documents/quality%20docs/national/CHE_Institutional-Audit-Criteria_June2004.pdf

This policy is reviewed annually and monitored by the Academic Committee.

Awarding Certificates towards Qualifications

FPD has an annual ceremony which is for the awarding of qualifications.

Student names are published against their completed qualifications in the programme of the annual award ceremony, which is the legal framework for the award of qualifications. A copy of the programme is submitted annually as part of the DHET annual report requirements.

Students receive their official certificates representing the qualification completed during the meeting as described above.

Qualifications are awarded to students in *praesentia* or in *absentia*.

Students who did not attend the award ceremony must either collect their certificates from FPD in person or pay the required fee to have their certificate couriered to them.

Awards for Excellence

FPD acknowledges the effort put forward by students to excel in their academic careers by giving awards for academic excellence at the annual awards ceremony.

The Best Student Award is given to students , based on the following:

- A student must have an academic average of above 75% in all consecutive years (if applicable) of the qualification (i.e. distinction) to be considered for the Best Student Award.
- The student with the best performance, expressed by the highest average mark, will be given the Best Student Award.

Only one award will be made per qualification.

Accountabilities

The Academic Committee is responsible for review and approval of this policy on an annual basis. The policy is to be distributed to staff via induction and distributed to students and FPD's community via the website and other publications.