



RHODES UNIVERSITY
Grahamstown • 6140 • South Africa

Protocol for the Appointment of Marking Assistants

Responsible Committee/Unit/Division/Faculty	Deans Forum
Responsible Chairperson/Director/Manager	Deans of Education, Commerce, Humanities, Law, Pharmacy and Science
Date	September 2022
Review Cycle (e.g. every 2/5/7 years etc)	n/a
Last Reviewed	n/a

Rhodes University

Faculty of Education, Commerce, Humanities, Law, Pharmacy and Science

PROTOCOL FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF MARKING ASSISTANTS

1. Purpose

This protocol seeks to formalise and regulate the appointment of Marking Assistants. It should be read in conjunction with the *Rhodes University Policy on the Assessment of Student Learning*, which underscores the necessity that assessment is used validly, reliably and fairly to a) ensure that the standards of qualifications awarded by the University are achieved; and b) develop students' learning through the provision of feedback.

2. Definition

Marking Assistant: A Marking Assistant is any person who has not been directly involved in the teaching of a course/module being assessed, but who has sufficient expertise in the course and/or discipline to contribute to the marking of assignments, examination scripts, and/or other formative and summative assessment tasks. For the sake of this protocol, we differentiate Marking Assistants as follows:

- **Academic staff** not directly involved in the teaching of the course/module being assessed, but with the requisite disciplinary expertise to assess for such a course/module. This would include fellow lecturers in the department, whether permanently appointed or temporary. It could also include formally appointed postdocs and teaching assistants, so long as a formal contract of employment with the University exists.
- **Undergraduate or postgraduate student assistants** within the Department. This would include all undergraduate or postgraduate tutors, practical demonstrators, Prestigious Scholarship holders, etc. Student assistants may have been appointed at the departmental level, but do not hold a formal contract of employment with the University (i.e., they are not on the staff payroll and not accountable via the staff disciplinary code).

3. Principles

Recognising that assessment is seated at the core of the academic project and that the integrity of assessment is crucial, the marking of continuous/formative assessments (for marks and not for marks), as well as summative assessments, shall be governed by the following principles.

Principle 1:

Departments have a responsibility to ensure that assessment processes include the provision of meaningful feedback, provide opportunities for learning, and that the marking allows a valid judgement of student work.

Principle 2:

Departments have a responsibility to distribute staff workloads as equitably as possible, such that members of the academic staff are not overloaded to the extent that Marking Assistants are required.

Principle 3:

The appointment of Marking Assistants is only to be considered in justifiable circumstances and/or where there is a sound pedagogical basis for such an arrangement (e.g. group marking by staff, facilitated peer assessment, 'routine' tutorial marking, and so forth). Lecturers have a contractual responsibility to undertake substantive assessments for their courses/modules; hence it cannot be the case that marking is delegated to Marking Assistants by default.

Principle 4:

The *majority* of work submitted by a student for any course, whether via continuous/formative or summative assessment, must be marked by either the person/s who lectured the course or contracted members of academic staff (following due process of appointment as Marking Assistants). The exact proportion of marking that may be delegated to student assistants (who are not contracted members of academic staff) is to be decided by individual Faculty Deans, in consultation with the relevant HoDs.

Principle 5:

Individual Faculty Deans reserve the right to further define the *types* of assessment tasks marked by student assistants (who are not contracted members of academic staff) and/or the *percentage* of work marked by student assistants (who are not contracted members of academic staff). Appropriate records should be kept to formalise such limitations.

Principle 6:

Undergraduate or postgraduate student assistants may *only* mark assessment tasks with the approval of the HoD and the knowledge of the Faculty Dean, following due process of appointment as Marking Assistants. In certain cases, the approval of the Faculty Dean may also be required (see 4.2 below).

Principle 7:

An online assessment which is marked electronically is deemed to have been assessed by the person/s who lectured the course/module and set the electronic assessment.

Principle 8:

Marking Assistants must be a suitable fit in terms of qualifications, experience and expertise.

Principle 9:

The Head of Department, in consultation with the relevant course co-ordinators and the lecturer/s directly involved in the teaching of the course/module being assessed, are responsible for ensuring that Marking Assistants are adequately prepared and supported (in terms of guidance as to the assessment process such as through a marking rubric or memo). They must maintain oversight and carry responsibility for the integrity of the marking process.

Principle 10:

Private/informal arrangements to "outsource" marking – i.e., any arrangements made without the approval of the HoD and the knowledge/approval (where relevant) of the Faculty Dean - are not permitted.

4. Appointment Process

All applications for the appointment of Marking Assistants require, at a minimum, the *approval* of the Head of Department and the *knowledge* of the Dean of Faculty. In some cases, applications for the appointment of Marking Assistants may also require the *approval* of the Dean of Faculty.

4.1 Appointment of Members of Academic Staff

In cases where the proposed Marking Assistant is another academic staff member (but not directly involved in the teaching of the course/module being assessed):

HoD *approval* is required, and the Dean is to be *informed*. The HoD needs to provide relevant details, regarding the course, assessment task and weighting, and arrangements in place to ensure the integrity of the marking process.

Example:

Course X 201

Examination (70%): group marking by staff who are discipline-competent who will all mark the same script, followed by a discussion of the mark awarded and any variations to the rubric, followed by marking of the rest of the scripts. The lecturer moderates the scripts.

4.2 Appointment of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Student Assistants

In cases where the Marking Assistant is an undergraduate or postgraduate student undertaking the marking of weekly tutorials and pracs which, individually, count a negligible amount towards the final mark:

HoD *approval* is required, and the Dean is to be *informed*. The HoD needs to provide relevant details, regarding the course, assessment task and weighting, and arrangements in place to ensure the integrity of the marking process.

Example:

Course Y 101

Weekly assignment (20%): 13 assignments (weighted (20/13)% each) marked by tutors who will attend a pre-tutorial session and discuss the marking rubric.

In cases where the Marking Assistant is an undergraduate or postgraduate student undertaking the marking of anything other than weekly tutorials and pracs:

HoD *approval* is required, as well as Dean *approval*. The HoD needs to provide relevant details, regarding the course, assessment task and weighting, and arrangements in place to ensure the integrity of the marking process. In addition, the HoD should provide a brief motivation, which also speaks to the suitability of the proposed Marking Assistant to assess the task in question.

The Dean, on recommendation of the HoD, may also approve, on application, any other means for appointing Marking Assistants, consistent with sound academic and organisational practice.

In assessing an application for the appointment of Marking Assistants, the Dean will consider the following:

- The specificity of the discipline and attendant pedagogical considerations.
- The strategies in place to ensure the integrity of the assessment process.
- Staff workloads, class sizes and/or staff: student ratios.
- Any relevant staffing challenges.
- The nature and weighting of the assessment for which marking assistance is required.
- The suitability of the proposed Marking Assistant/s relative to the assessment in question.