**SUEQ Assignment 3A: In-depth study**

In this part of the assignment, I answer the questions about the research process that I carried out for writing the advice note.

***What was your original problem or question?***

Starting with the planning phase of this assignment, my focus was on the assessment policy of the MSc Programme in Environmental and Energy Management (MEEM). Based on the information I had at the time, I gained the impression that MEEM did not have a complete assessment policy. Several elements of a policy were included in different processes and documents. However, no specific document existed about the functioning and interaction of the elements of the quality of assessment pyramid. My motivation to work on the assessment policy and to prepare an advice note about it was driven by the recent changes that took place at the programme and course levels, such as the revision of programme-level learning outcomes (PILOs) and the (re)design or takeover of several courses by new teachers, and can have serious implications for assessment.

I defined the problem based on the confusion that arises from the lack of an assessment policy that is clearly communicated and effectively implemented. I also identified the main risks in terms of the ambiguity about the scope and purpose of assessment, students’ achievement of PILOs, and the assessment competences of teachers. My reasons for focusing on the assessment policy were to provide guidance to (new) teachers by clarifying the assessment vision, their roles in assessment, and the programme-level assessment quality measures, and to improve the transparency of assessment by informing all stakeholders.

***What was your approach? Who did you consult? What sources did you consult?***

To prepare the advice note I adopted an approach that consists of three main elements, which I followed in an iterative manner: 1) review of SUEQ materials, existing assessment policies, and other relevant documents 2) meetings and exchange with SUEQ trainers and MEEM colleagues, and 3) drafting the advice note and revising it based on feedback from trainers and colleagues.

For the document review, I consulted the materials on the SUEQ Canvas page, existing assessment policy documents of other programmes, and assessment-related documents at programme, faculty and university levels (Appendix A). SUEQ readings provided me the information on the method and steps to follow, such as the lecture notes about writing a policy memo, and the elements to pay attention to, such as the components of assessment policy and the assessment quality pyramid. I reviewed two assessment policies, each of which cover multiple programmes at the UT. Based on the advice from Helma Vlas, one of the SUEQ trainers, I also reviewed the assessment policy of Fontys ICT, a HBO programme in the Netherlands. Reviewing these documents gave me a comprehensive view on the policy components that are paid attention in different programmes and ideas on what to include in MEEM assessment policy. I also reviewed several programme, faculty and university level documents that are relevant for assessment quality. This review provided me with the overview of the corresponding policy components and possible changes that need to be made in them based on the improvement of MEEM assessment policy.

Starting from the initial steps of the assignment, I had online and in-person meetings and email exchanges with my colleagues within the MEEM programme and SUEQ trainers. With our programme coordinators, I discussed several times about different components of the policy during our monthly-meetings of the programme management team (PMT). In June, I had a meeting with the former programme director of MEEM to receive his opinion and input about the assessment policy. He shared with me the relevant documents that were prepared during the previous accreditation of the programme in 2019. This meeting and the documents have a broader view than I initially had about the existing components of MEEM assessment policy. The feedback that I received from Helma Vlas to Assignment 1C (proposal for in-depth study) was useful to justify my attention to the implementation of the assessment policy and identifying responsible stakeholders. Before sending the draft advice note for feedback, I met with Marleen de Haan, one of the SUEQ advisors, and a peer who is attending the SUEQ training. That meeting was useful to discuss my progress and have a better understanding of the expectations about all parts of Assignment 3.

Based on the review of documents and initial exchange with trainers and colleagues, I completed the draft advice note and received the feedback of Marleen de Haan and three of my colleagues, who are teachers within MEEM and involved in different courses. Marleen’s feedback was useful in terms of clarifying some of my arguments, such as the emphasis on five components of the assessment policy, and confirming my choices, such as integrating the evaluation of assessment policy into the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle. Regarding the MEEM colleagues that provided feedback, one of them is among the most-experienced MEEM teachers, whereas the other two are relatively new to the programme and completed their UTQ recently. Having feedback from these colleagues with different expertise and levels of experience was insightful. They provided me with viewpoints which helped clarify the target group and pay more attention to the implementation of the recommendations I made within the advice note.

***What changes did you make?***

While preparing the advice note, I made three main changes to my initial plans. I elaborate on each of them below.

**1) Emphasis on five assessment policy components instead of writing a full assessment policy document:** My initial plan was to prepare a complete assessment policy document as part of this assignment, but I realised in the meantime that such an endeavour needs a comprehensive research and much more time than the 20 hours that I had in total for Assignments 3A and 3B. Therefore, I decided to focus on components that would be useful especially for the new teachers of MEEM. I used my time to review existing assessment policies of other programmes and receive feedback via email. I aim prepare the complete assessment policy document as part of the preparation for the next accreditation.

**2) Limited input and feedback of several stakeholders instead of a broad involvement:** There were two reasons for changing the mode of interaction with stakeholders. First one is again the time limitations, which proved impossible to organise several meetings with multiple stakeholders. To facilitate the input and feedback of teachers, I informed the teachers beforehand about my SUEQ focus on assessment policy, and shared the draft advice note with them in advance. To prepare the complete assessment policy, I will organise meetings with all MEEM teachers and PMT in 2024, also as part of the preparation for programme accreditation. In my initial planning, I had the intention to receive the feedback from the programme committee and the examination board, too. However, since I narrowed down my focus to five components of the policy, I plan to request their feedback after drafting the complete assessment policy.

**3) Change of the target group from other programme directors to programme coordinators and teachers, in particular course coordinators:** As mentioned above, my initial plan was to write a complete assessment policy document, which could also be useful for other programme directors at the UT. However, after I changed my focus to making improvements about five components and providing guidance to new teachers, I decided to shift the target group to teachers. When I requested feedback from MEEM teachers, two of them commented that the target group of the advice note should be clearer and that some recommendations should target the PMT, who needs to facilitate and organise some of the actions, such as the provision of guidance on assessment dossiers, and the evaluation and revision of the assessment policy on a regular basis. Another colleague emphasized the role of course coordinators, who have relevant responsibilities, such as demonstrating the assessment competences and meeting the assessment quality criteria at the course level. Considering this feedback, I decided to target both the teachers and programme coordinators, and include the stakeholder responsible taking actions for each recommendation that I made.

**Appendix A. Documents Reviewed**

Assessment Policy BSc International Business Administration (IBA) and MSc Business Administration (BA), 2019-2024.

Assessment Policy Fontys ICT, <https://beleidswiki.fhict.nl/doku.php?id=en:beleid:toetsbeleid>.

Assessment Policy Health Opleidingen UT, Health Sciences - Biomedical Engineering - Technical Medicine, 2018.

CES/UT, n.d., Assessment Policy Programme Level. <https://www.utwente.nl/en/examination-board/Safeguarding_assessment_quality/Assessment_Policy>

Education and Examination Regulations (EER) of BMS Master programmes, 2023-2024.

MEEM, 2019. Self-assessment Report. Appendix 7 – MEEM 20 Assessment Plan.

MEEM, 2023. Programme-specific Appendix to the Education and Examination Regulations (EER) 2023-2024. <https://www.utwente.nl/en/bms/education/regulations/2023-2024-eng/EER%20master%202023-2024/psp-msc-eem-2023-2024-join-bms-eer-12.pdf>

MEEM, 2023, Teachers’ Guide.

SUEQ reading materials on page “Materials from the session about Advice memo - Gert Brinkman - and some extra resources and tips”

UT, 2016. Quality Assurance Framework for Student Assessment, <https://www.utwente.nl/en/examination-board/Policy-rules-guidelines/quality-assurance-framework-student-assessment-ut-12-dec-2016.pdf>

Van den Berg, F., 2023. Components of Assessment Policy at Programme Level. <https://canvas.utwente.nl/courses/12196/pages/m1-assessment-policy?module_item_id=379468>