



University of Fort Hare
Together in Excellence

UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY

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1. Preamble

Teaching and Learning excellence is fundamental to the vision and mission of the University of Fort Hare (UFH) and as such the University has a responsibility to ensure that all its students, undergraduate and post-graduate, gain the maximum benefit from the teaching and learning environment. The Teaching and Learning Policy seeks to provide for the alignment of the UFH vision and mission with the promotion of effective teaching practices within a conducive environment in order to promote increased throughput and retention in all academic programmes.

2. Policy Purpose

The purpose of the Teaching and Learning Policy is to define the University's ethos of teaching and learning in order to establish the general principles for implementation in more specific areas relating to teaching and learning. This approach ensures that a common understanding and purpose will underpin all course provision and act as a basis upon which Executive Deans, Faculties and academic staff can specify their detailed approaches to context specific conditions relating to the specific discipline, curriculum and student needs.

Furthermore, the Teaching and Learning Policy will act as a framework for discussing and promoting effective practice in all aspects of curriculum design, teaching, learning and assessment, and as a basis for the evaluation and ongoing development of programme provision.

3. Principles

The university's commitment to teaching and learning excellence requires effective teaching to be research-based, innovative, challenging, responsive to the diverse needs of learners, and underpinned by sound disciplinary and pedagogical principles. Teaching and learning excellence should be pursued deliberately by all academic staff who, as professional educators, take control of their teaching practice and seek to reflect on, research and improve it.

The university embraces a humanising pedagogy that is underpinned by the Charter of Ethical Principles and is committed to quality higher education that:

- values and facilitates learning in a wide range of disciplines at all levels;
- provides a wide range of programmes that both enhance career opportunities and provide learning pathways to other programmes;
- provides quality programmes for students from diverse social and cultural backgrounds;
- supports continuous improvement of its programmes and services in order to serve its students and its communities more effectively;
- provides a learning environment that promotes high quality teaching and learning with active participation by both students and academic staff in the learning process, and in which the students are placed at the centre;
- promotes the commitment of staff and students, to their own learning and to that of others;

- provides courses that are designed to encourage students to be self-motivated and independent learners, who are self-aware, able to reflect on their learning, and to manage their personal development and career planning;
- develops essential qualities so that students can benefit fully from their studies;
- supports groups of students who may face barriers to their learning;
- promotes teaching and learning strategies that are responsive to local and wider contexts;
- provides flexibility of delivery where possible and feasible;
- promotes teaching approaches that encourage intellectual freedom, as one of the underlying ethical tenets of the University;
- supports strategic collaborative partnerships for the delivery of courses, to reach a wider group of students, provided that the University's requirements for the quality of the courses are maintained;
- expands the role of its libraries and of its technological provision to engage with the changes in accessibility of information affecting teaching and learning;
- supports students' learning through the activities of the Units/Centres that directly interact with students or indirectly provide the context within which the delivery of a high quality student experience is seen as a primary responsibility;
- supports the professional development of academic staff as an integral part of improving the quality of teaching and learning;
- supports academic enquiry into teaching and learning and the sharing of results of this enquiry with others in their communities of practice

4. Scope of Application

4.1 Programme/Course/Module Design and Development

The Draft Policy on Curriculum Development and Review (in process, due March 2008) requires academic staff to develop curricula driven by learning outcomes and what students can 'do' rather than by a list of topics and/or content to be covered. To achieve this, programmes and courses/modules should be designed and developed with the following in mind:

- The curriculum should enhance the students' identification and acquisition of a wide range of academic and professional skills and provide opportunities for personal development;
- The curriculum design should engender a capacity of lifelong learning such that the outcomes are sustainable beyond the students' immediate learning experience;
- Learning outcomes should include knowledge of a subject as well as cognitive, general and professional skills, and values should be explicitly stated for each module/course/programme and these should be the pivot around which the whole module/course/programme is developed in line with SAQA and NQF requirements;
- The curriculum should be aligned in terms of the learning outcomes, delivery mode and assessment;

- Teaching, learning and assessment should be continuously evaluated to ensure ongoing fitness for purpose, as informed by research;
- The curriculum should be informed by research and knowledge acquisition activities, and enables students to understand, learn and benefit from research-led enquiry and, where appropriate, undertake such research appropriate to their level and discipline;
- The curriculum should be informed by the views of employers and professional bodies, and where appropriate, courses should be recognised by professional/external accreditation bodies to improve students' professional and career development;
- Collaboration should be undertaken with employers and professional organisations, to facilitate access to labour market information, to encourage an understanding of employer requirements and to provide access to work experience opportunities;
- Blended learning should add an extra dimension to face-to-face delivery;
- Curriculum development should support social responsibility and community development and empowerment through experiential learning;
- The curriculum should support the promotion of co-operative collaboration with role players within the university as well as external partners;
- In planning curricula, academics should accommodate as far as possible the diverse linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds of learners; and
- Provide support and developmental programmes to facilitate access to courses by those students that need such services should be clearly outlined.

In addition, all programmes/courses/modules should have:

- a clear purpose;
- clear statements of course aims;
- a coherent programme of subjects, modules, units that is consistent with its aims;
- employment-related outcomes where appropriate;
- defined access and articulation pathways;
- clear statements of learning outcomes;
- learning activities that are designed to achieve these learning outcomes;
- assessment activities that are aligned to the learning outcomes; and
- regular informal and formal evaluation and review.

4.2 Programme/Course/Module Delivery

Some programmes/courses/modules complement lectures with a tutorial programme whilst some may include practical work. Refer to the Policy and Guidelines for Peer Facilitated Learning (2007).

Course/module delivery that is designed to meet the needs of a diverse cohort of students is encouraged. In particular, course/module delivery should, whenever possible and appropriate, include the following:

4.2.1 Active Learning

The university seeks to promote a learning culture that focuses on active learning and student engagement, with the objective of achieving deep learning and outcomes that prepare its graduates for lifelong learning. To this effect it is the responsibility of each academic to:

- select teaching and learning methods that are designed to promote and assist student-centred and active learning;
- to enhance opportunities for flexible learning and enquiry-based approaches where possible and appropriate;
- engage students as active participants in the learning process, whilst ensuring that all learning involves a complex interplay of active and receptive processes, the constructing of meaning for oneself, and learning with and from others;
- encourage students to develop independent learning skills by providing appropriate tasks to develop analytical and critical thinking skills;
- emphasise the need for open-mindedness, evidence-based, critical analysis and the exercise of reflective and critical judgement as both the means and the outcome of effective learning.

4.2.2 Research

Academic staff are encouraged to continually enhance their professional and disciplinary expertise through research, scholarship, performance, consultancy or professional practice. In particular academic staff are encouraged to:

- support the development of scholarly activities in teaching and learning so as to inform curriculum design and delivery;
- encourage research in order to investigate salient issues impacting on teaching, learning and assessment in order to inform future policy and practice;
- ensure students learn within a culture of research and enquiry, and emerge from their studies with a sound basis for future self-development and enquiry;
- expose undergraduate students to the research base of the subject(s) they study, where appropriate, and incorporate current research and consultancy experiences directly into teaching and learning approaches;
- provide appropriate opportunities for undergraduate students to participate in research projects;
- involve postgraduate research students in seminars and conferences;
- encourage students to feel part of a community of researchers, while developing them in its practices, values and ethics; and
- develop the skills, experience and disciplinary or interdisciplinary expertise needed to achieve excellence in the supervision of postgraduate students.

4.2.3 Blended Learning

Academics are encouraged to promote blended learning, the effective combination of different modes of delivery: on-line learning, use of other forms of classroom-based technology and face-to-face delivery, to enhance the student

learning experience, as appropriate to the aims and outcomes of the programme/course/module and the needs of the students.

4.2.4 Affirmation of Diversity

The university recognises that its students are highly diverse with respect to such factors as: age, gender, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, experience, prior knowledge, learning styles, economic status, and ability. The university also recognises the importance of its organisational diversity, with a broad range of faculties and activities across urban and rural locations, and embraces within these a culturally diverse mix of staff and students. The university thus requires academic staff to ensure that:

- teaching and learning methods are selected to meet the learning needs of a diverse range of students (including international students, those with disabilities and those who are under-prepared);
- a range of teaching and learning approaches are used together with appropriate learning resources (e.g. learner guides, course notes, literature etc) to achieve clearly identified learning outcomes by the students;
- diversity among their students in teaching and learning situations is celebrated;
- international/national/local and inter-cultural material and perspectives are incorporated into course content, learning resources, and teaching approaches;
- tolerance and respect for diverse viewpoints, beliefs and practices are encouraged; and
- an understanding of diversity is gained through the participation in staff development programmes.

4.2.5 Resources

The university undertakes to provide and maintain high quality resources and study space to support emerging teaching and learning requirements. Academic staff are encouraged to:

- develop learner guides and learning resources that are up-to-date and appropriate for their teaching and learning requirements;
- use up-to-date literature to support teaching and learning;
- use educational technology to support teaching and learning;
- make use of available library facilities to support teaching and learning; and
- ensure that appropriate communication channels are in place so that students have equal, sufficient and timely access to information.

4.3 Assessment

The university encourages the use of a variety of assessment methods which are valid and reliable and that contribute to the learning process and measure the achievement of the stated learning outcomes. Refer to the Assessment and

Moderation of Student Learning Policy (2004) and Recognition of Prior Learning Policy (2006).

4.4 Evaluation of Teaching and Courses

The university is committed to gaining feedback from students through the evaluation of teaching and courses to further develop the curriculum and to improve teaching. Refer to the Evaluation of Teaching and Courses Policy (2006).

4.5 Curriculum Review

Ongoing refinement and development of the curriculum (including teaching and learning) should be informed by feedback from internal and external stakeholders. Refer to Draft Curriculum Development and Review Policy (in process, due March 2008).

4.6 Academic staff Professional Development

The university is committed to the continuous professional development of all academic staff in relation to teaching and learning and seeks to promote developmental activities which are both discipline specific and in support of teaching, in general.

4.6.1 New Staff Induction Programme

The Induction Programme is designed to acquaint new academic staff members with the ethos of Fort Hare, the demands and development of good teaching practice, and the special challenges which they will face in the light of changes in education nationally and internationally.

4.6.2 Peer Mentoring Programme

Through a careful selection process, mentors and mentees are brought into partnership and then assisted in defining their goals and the procedures they will follow for the benefit of the mentee. The aim of the programme is to enable more experienced mentors to share their competencies with their less experienced mentee, which could be research, teaching, social outreach or administrative practices. Each partnership is therefore unique and its progress carefully evaluated, with due respect for the privacy of the individuals.

4.6.3 Teaching Development Programme

Academic staff may register for the Post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education and Training (PGDHET) as a whole qualification or as Continuing Education modules to support their teaching role.

4.7 Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the act of using the ideas, writings, works or inventions of another as if they were one's own without acknowledging and/or referencing the source. Academics should acknowledge the importance of their own role in students' acquisition of academic

discourse and take active steps to provide students with an explanation as to why, as well as how, sources may be used and cited in building academic knowledge. This information should normally be presented as part of the course material at the start of each year. Academic staff should therefore:

- inform students as to how material from such sources as books, articles, the internet and the work of other students, may and may not be used in preparation of assignments;
- provide training in the formal procedures to be followed in the acknowledgement and citation of the source material; and
- alert students to the nature of plagiarism, inform them that it constitutes a serious offence, and provide information about the disciplinary procedures that are in place for dealing with suspected cases (refer to Plagiarism Policy to be drafted).

4.8 Cheating

The integrity of the teaching and learning process, and the academic qualifications that are gained as a consequence by any dishonesty in the preparation and submission of coursework for assessment may be referred to as 'cheating'. The University has a statutory responsibility to develop intellectual independence in its students and to assess the achievement of this goal through a variety of ways *inter alia* coursework (essays, assignments, reports, tests, practicals, tutorials, seminar work), work-based learning and examinations. For purposes of the Teaching and Learning Policy coursework is differentiated from research. Coursework is assessable work produced by students and normally submitted during periods of teaching whereas assessable work considered as research in a teaching and learning context would normally refer to student theses and dissertations. The conduct expected of students and academic staff carrying out research at the university is outlined in the Policy on Research (Refer to the Policy on Research ??) whilst examinations are conducted under the Examinations Policy (Refer to the Examinations Policy updated 2007).

It is incumbent on academic staff to inform students of the unacceptability of cheating, and ensure that they are provided with guidance to ensure their full understanding of the unacceptability of this practice. Academic staff should also ensure that assessment methods are designed to reduce the opportunities for cheating where possible and practicable.

4.9 Support Services

The university undertakes to provide the following services to support teaching and learning:

4.9.1 Library

The university seeks to provide access to library facilities with an appropriate range of material to support an innovative and responsive learning environment and to provide electronic access to learning materials and other library resources. In addition, library staff should have the full range of knowledge, experience and skills to ensure that the library services achieve its full potential in support of teaching and learning.

4.9.2 Technical Services Centre

The Technical Services Centre (TSC) is tasked with ensuring the necessary technical support and availability of appropriate information and communication technologies to support teaching and learning, and academic administration across all campuses of the university.

4.9.3 Administrative Systems

The university undertakes to provide administrative systems that are driven by the academic enterprise and support teaching and learning.

5. Office of Accountability

The monitoring of the implementation of this policy will be the responsibility of the Executive Deans and their respective academic staff.

The evaluation and review of this policy will be undertaken by the Teaching and Learning Centre on a three-year cyclical basis with wide consultation with stakeholders.

The policy will be available on the university and Teaching and Learning Centre websites and will be disseminated to academic staff through the Faculty Teaching and Learning Committees and other appropriate university committees.

6. Related Policies

The Draft UFH Teaching and Learning Policy should be read in conjunction with the under-mentioned institutional policies, some of which still need to be formulated.

- Assessment and Moderation of Student Learning Policy (2004)
- Co-operative Education Services Policy (2005)
- Admissions Policy (?)
- Continuing Education Policy (2006)
- Curriculum Development and Review Policy (in process, due March 2008)
- y (in process, due March 2008)
- Plagiarism Policy (to be drafted)
- Policy and Guidelines for Peer Facilitated Learning (2007).
- Recognition of Prior Learning Policy (2006)
- Evaluation of Teaching and Courses Policy (2006)
- Research Policy (?)
- E-Learning Policy (to be drafted)
- QMA Policy (?)
- Examinations Policy (updated 2007)

Appendix A:

Acronyms and Abbreviations

NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PGDHET	Post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education and Training
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
TSC	Technical Services Centre
UFH	University of Fort Hare

Definitions

Assessment is the process of gathering evidence and making judgments about students' achievements in relation to stated learning outcomes, and recording and reporting of these judgments.

Blended Learning is an educational formation that integrates e-learning techniques including online delivery of materials through web pages, discussion boards and/or email with traditional teaching methods including lectures, in-person discussions, seminars, or tutorials

Cheating is defined as obtaining or attempting to obtain, or aiding another to obtain credit for work, or any improvement in assessment of performance, by any dishonest or deceptive means.

Curriculum means all of the experience 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 research or past and present professional practice.

Learning refers to the activities and responsibilities of students in the attainment of specific and critical cross field outcomes.

Plagiarism is defined as the act of using the ideas, writings, inventions or words of another as if they were one's own without acknowledging and/or referencing the source.

Recognition of Prior Learning means the comparison of the previous learning and experience of a learner howsoever obtained against the learning outcomes required for a specified qualification, and the acceptance for the purposes of that which meets the requirements (SAQA 2002)

Teaching refers to appropriate facilitation practices for particular learners and disciplines, for the promotion of learning towards the attainment of specific and critical cross field outcomes. Teaching includes one-to-one consultations with students; classroom teaching; supervising students in laboratories; supervising theses, dissertations or projects; advising students, assessing students work; preparing teaching and course materials; liaison with librarians to support learning; contributing to course design and curriculum development.

References

South African Qualifications Authority (2002) *National Initiatives Concerning Prior Learning – Policy Document*. Pretoria.