

Guidelines for the coordination, selection, appointment, training and evaluation of tutors and demonstrators at Rhodes University

It is important that a tutorial (read also practical) coordinator be appointed to oversee all aspects of the tutorial programme. This includes organising the selection, appointment, training, etc. of tutors (read also demonstrators).

In **large** departments it may be necessary to appoint a senior post-graduate student *who is an experienced tutor*, to act as Senior Tutor with some coordination duties. The Senior Tutor acts as a link between tutors and coordinator / department and can deal with routine administrative or communication issues.

Tutor coordinators should meet regularly with tutors to ensure adequate two-way communication between department and tutors. Coordinators need to ensure that weekly briefing sessions are held where the content and methodology for the next tutorial are discussed. At briefing sessions the coordinator or lecturer-in-charge receives feedback from tutors about tutorials, tutor and / or student difficulties. Coordinators are responsible for the evaluation of tutors and the tutorial programme on a regular basis.

Tutors are appointed to work for a maximum of six hours per week. All tutors, including Graduate Assistants appointed to tutor, are expected to perform their tutoring tasks in accordance with the departmental and institutional guidelines that apply to tutors. Tutors should be furnished with a document outlining departmental expectations of tutors and tutorials as well as what tutors may expect from the department. This will include information about the departmental disciplinary code for tutors.

Selection of tutors

In departments where the pool of potential tutors is not restricted, the following process may be helpful in ensuring the selection of the best students as tutors:

- ❑ A letter inviting application is posted on departmental notice boards (and website) towards the middle third term.
- ❑ Application forms inviting prospective tutors to motivate why they would be good tutors are made available.
- ❑ Set closing date for applications (The first week of fourth term is reasonable).
- ❑ Staff members sift through application forms and rate applicants:
Important factors to consider are:
 - Involvement in extra-curricular activities (school and university taken into account)
 - Any leadership roles
(Above two are important in that they are likely to have contributed to the development of a sense of community and interpersonal skills.)
 - Public speaking activities (development of confidence, presence)
 - Academic record
- ❑ Short-listed candidates are interviewed to ascertain level and nature of motivation, potential level of commitment, and potential approach to tutoring / demonstrating, to make clear departmental expectations and to allow the prospective tutor to clarify any concerns.
- ❑ Positions are confirmed in January or February.

Tutor training and development

There needs to be adequate formal training for tutors at the beginning of each academic year. Such training should include:

- Orientation to the department
- Orientation to tutoring
- Nature and purpose of tutorials
- Facilitation of small groups
 - Group dynamics
 - How people learn in groups
 - Issues of diversity with special emphasis on language and culture
- Department's expectations of tutors
- Tutors' expectations of the department and of students*

At the end of the first term a session for the debriefing of tutors should be held. The need for further training should be evaluated at this point.

Tutors as assessors

Where tutors assess student work, adequate training and support for this task needs to be given. Lecturer moderation of tasks assessed by tutors is imperative to ensure reliability of the assessment process.

Third year students as tutors

It is recognised that tutors in their third year of study may not be as mature as post-graduate tutors in terms of their own academic development and therefore may require more support from tutor coordinators and course lecturers.

Jo-Anne Vorster and Kevin Williams
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Code of conduct for tutors and demonstrators at Rhodes University

The Tutors' and Demonstrators' Code of Conduct is directed towards encouraging professionalism in tutor / demonstrator practice.

Tutors should:

- Be sensitive to the diverse nature of the student body with particular emphasis on language, culture and gender.
- Facilitate learning and guide students through the process of knowledge construction in the discipline.
- Where relevant, support students to bridge the gap between their fear of technology and their access to technology.

- Support and encourage learning to develop positive self-images as learners, and positive images of the discipline area.
- Be empathic in their encounters with students. Tutors must enable students to risk constructing and testing their knowledge within the tutorial / practical context.
- Refrain from discussing staff members or other students with members of their tutorial / practical group.

Tutor Practice that would support the Code of Conduct would require tutors to:

- Diligently carry out the tasks assigned by the department.
- Attend tutorial briefing sessions. It is mandatory for tutors to prepare the tutorial work prior to the meeting with the lecturer.
- Prepare thoroughly for each tutorial. This involves having a thorough understanding of the work as well as planning the way the tutorial will be run.
- Never miss a tutorial without making prior arrangements.
- Endeavour to create and maintain a comfortable atmosphere within the tutorial or practical group.
- Be enthusiastic about their subject.
- Help learners to recognise that risking making mistakes enables learning.
- Be patient with students.
- Value the opinions of their students.
- Encourage participation at tutorials.
- Make use of the full tutorial period. Extra time can be utilized for revision purposes or dealing with student problems.
- Assess assignments accurately, timeously and in a constructive manner.

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