**The Roles and Responsibilities of Head of Department**

**1. Introduction**

The Head of Department plays a vital role in the University leadership, simultaneously having to understand and shape the “big picture” (vision, goals and direction) of the institution while also giving meticulous attention to the detail of running a department.

However, despite the enormous responsibilities assigned to the Head of Department, traditionally little is done to orient or train the new Head. This results in the Head having to learn from doing with so much time spent simply learning the ropes, that s/he ends up doing little more than serving as a caretaker!

Rhodes University has sought to address this problem by trying to provide guidelines of what is expected of the Head through producing this Head of Department Guide as well as through the induction for new Heads of Department in February of each year (provided there are sufficient new Heads of Departments). Staff development opportunities for Heads of Department are also provided.

**2. The Roles of a Head of Department**

**2.1 The Head of Department as Change Agent**

Change is a constant feature of higher education today, in South African as well as globally. After decades of a relatively stable tertiary education system, the past few years have seen an upheaval of these traditional systems where institutions have to adapt to survive.

Within this environment, the ability to manage change has become an increasingly valued competence. More and more, the HoD is participating in University-wide debates on change as well as taking part in decisions on the change needed.

As a Change Agent, it is the HoD's responsibility to:

 ensure that the department is abreast of relevant developments

 position the department within this changing context

 see decisions and new policy directives implemented at the departmental level

 provide vigorous and visionary leadership that will convince others of the need for and value of the change

 be decisive, purposeful and willing to take responsibility in seeing the process of change through to completion

 providing feedback on the effectiveness of implementation

 lead the change with sensitivity and a flexible approach

 maximise staff commitment to the change and

 deal with staff resistance.

Strong interpersonal and leadership skills are called for in bringing about change. Whilst the role of Change Agent is not necessarily the most important role of the HoD, the Head’s ability to manage change effectively will influence his/her success in the other roles of Academic Leader, People Manager, Administrator, Resourcer and Advocate.

**2.2 The Head of Department as Academic Leader**

This is the traditional role of the HoD, a role that is assumed with some ease by most of the current HoDs at Rhodes.

The overarching responsibilities of the academic leader are to:

 ensure that appropriate academic planning takes place

 promote excellence in teaching

 support research and development activities

 promote professional activities

 work closely with students

 mentor staff and serve as a role-model.

In some departments at Rhodes, the leadership role is shared amongst the professors in a department. Nevertheless, certain leadership functions such as planning and managing change and ensuring the implementation of teaching and learning and research policies remain the domain of the HoD.

*Academic Planning*

The importance of academic planning cannot be over-emphasised as it is a valuable way of ensuring quality and therefore, the department and institution's continued academic and economic success. Whilst departments and heads have always planned to some extent, in recent years this has become more systematic, frequent and more transparent.

Careful planning and a periodic assessment of departmental objectives ensures that a department has a clear idea of where it is going and what it wishes to achieve. Such an assessment requires the HoD to guide staff in their departments in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the department, appraising the viability of courses, looking at trends in student numbers and departmental cost structures. Many individuals are attracted to the headship because of a vision for their department, because they want to put their mark on it. However, the HoD also needs to encourage staff to contribute and commit to a shared vision for the department.

Long-range planning involves asking some of the following questions:

 What are the enrolment projections for the next five years? Given resources of the department, what is a viable strategy to pursue: expansion, maintenance of current operations, restructuring, curtailing efforts to recruit?

 What are the needs of those outside the university who employ our graduates? Are we meeting these or future needs?

 What are the educational needs of future students likely to be? What curriculum changes should be made, if any? Any additional resources needed to cope with these students?

 Are new instructional methods necessary/desirable?

 What changes are to take place within the domain of higher education that will necessitate changes within the department?

 Do planned changes fit in with the institution and the departments’ mission?

 What are the department’s equipment needs for the coming needs?

 What resources are needed to meet the anticipated changes? Will these necessary resources be available within the University or does funding need to be sought from elsewhere?

 Are the current facilities adequate to meet changing needs?

Despite its importance, planning is often a function to which too little time is devoted. In the day to day life of the HoD, the important job of long-term planning is often compromised by dealing with the more urgent and immediate administrative demands. A number of departments at Rhodes overcome this problem by deliberately scheduling a “bosberaad” on an annual basis, usually at the end or beginning of each year. The academic review, held every three to five years, is also an attempt to get departments to focus on necessary long-term planning.

HoDs unfamiliar with the process of strategic planning are encouraged to attend the Certificate Course in Strategic Management, run by the Human Resources Development (HRD) Office. More specific guidance on the planning process for Rhodes is available from the Director, Quality Assurance and Academic Planning.

*Excellence in Teaching*

The University is strongly and explicitly committed to promoting and rewarding good teaching and HoDs are encouraged to share this vision. In recent years, the teaching and learning policies at Rhodes have increased the focus on teaching and in particular the need for professional development in this regard. To create and maintain excellence in teaching, the commitment of the whole department is needed. This means regular evaluation of the curriculum and lecturers, discussions of courses offered, evaluation of teaching and assessment methods as well as the analysis of failure and attrition rates and underlying causes.

At Rhodes as in other institutions in South Africa, a large emphasis is being placed on the establishment of teaching portfolios by staff. All new staff at Rhodes are required to create a teaching portfolio as one of the conditions of their appointment being confirmed. It is however, a practice which should be encouraged amongst all staff, for both evaluation and developmental purposes. The CHERTL (CHERTL) can assist those who are preparing their portfolios.

The first-time lecturer should not be left alone to devise his/her approach to teaching. Ideally, a mentor should be appointed to meet with the new staff member to discuss curriculum development, teaching methods, and assessment. Alternatively, new staff should be encouraged to participate in the Post-Graduate Diploma in Higher Education offered by the CHERTL which provides this guidance and support to new lecturers.

Regrettably some staff are indifferent to their teaching role resulting in poor preparation of teaching materials, mediocre teaching and not being available to students. Inadequate performance needs to be addressed by the HoD as failure to do so will have a negative effect on student perceptions as well as affect the morale of those staff who do meet the required standards. In the long-term failure to address such problems can affect the department's ability to attract and retain both students and staff.

Teaching excellence came under scrutiny with the HEQC's audit in 2005.

*Excellence in Research*

The HoD is responsible for promoting excellence in research amongst both students and staff by setting a tone that emphasizes the importance of research and development. This responsibility may be shared with other staff members. It includes ensuring that inexperienced staff members receive special encouragement and guidance such as the necessary information and help in getting research grants, in writing research proposals and publications. HoDs should attempt to ensure that new staff are given a reduced teaching load to allow them time to get their research underway. However, these staff must be held accountable for using the time on worthwhile projects.

A climate of intellectual discourse should be encouraged within a department through for example, the sharing of information on research and publication projects. A number of departments at Rhodes have regular research seminars where staff are invited to present their research in a non-threatening and supportive environment.

It is also the responsibility of the HoD to ensure that postgraduate students receive regular feedback on the progress of their research. Supervisors and post graduates need to be clear about departmental and institutional expectations. An approved University policy on postgraduate supervision needs to be adhered to and HoDs should ensure that all staff are aware of the requirements of this policy. The office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Development can also assist by providing your department with a supervisors’ workshop.

The research output of academic staff is coming under increased pressure with the introduction of the new funding formula. For more information on this, look at the Research Update under section B on strategic updates.

*Excellence in Professional Activities*

It is not uncommon for staff to affiliate with industry, commerce or government in a consultancy role. Staff should be encouraged to maintain these affiliations, provided that they do not compromise their university obligations in any way and that they help to keep sharp their practitioner or research skills. New staff should be assisted in engaging in professional activities in order to maintain standards of excellence. Good work will reflect positively on the department, poor work negatively.

Where such private work is undertaken, staff are required to apply for permission to the Vice-Chancellor. The relevant application form, which outlines the University’s policy as regards private work, is available from the Human Resources Division.

*Working with Students*

The Head of Department needs to stay in touch with how students feel about their courses and assessment as well as about the department and its staff. The class representative system at Rhodes University is one useful way to access student opinion e.g. through a student advisory committee. In some departments, these class representatives also participate in departmental meetings.

*Quality Assurance*

Within Rhodes University, quality assurance is regarded as key to institutional success with the Head of Department playing a vital role in ensuring quality in the academic department. Many external pressures to meet certain quality requirements are now being placed by government on institutions. For example, in 2005, Rhodes University was audited by the Higher Education Quality Council.

Leaming (1998) provides some ideas on how to assure quality within departmental endeavours:

 Start with a clear mission of what needs to be achieved and review this regularly. Quality should be integral to this mission

 Make sure that all staff accept and support the mission and objectives of the department. This should include a commitment to quality

 Build quality into the educational process, therefore relying less on the need for inspection

 Strive to constantly improve – no department is perfect

 Guide staff in understanding quality requirements through on the job guidance and development

 Drive quality with strong leadership

 Try to remove the fear of trying new methods and ways – encourage and acknowledge innovation

 Share ideas with other departments, adopt and adapt what others are doing

 Get rid of rhetoric and focus on the essentials

 Focus less on the numbers and more on the quality e.g. research publications, number of courses taught

 Allow staff to feel pride in what they do

 Encourage ongoing personal growth and development – find the money, release staff from activities

 Involve everyone in bringing about improvements in quality.

**2.3 The Head of Department as People Manager**

This role is experienced as the most challenging by many HoDs at Rhodes. This is not surprising given that whilst these individuals are highly qualified in their disciplines, many have not yet had the opportunity to manage other people.

*Developing or Maintaining an appropriate Culture within the Department*

The overall culture of the department is critical to the role of the People Manager and will influence the other aspects of this role such as selection, supervision of performance, development and promotion of staff. Heads have different qualities which influence how they affect the departmental climate.

However, the development and maintenance of a healthy department, requires the Head to:

 represent the department’s interests

 speak up for deserving staff within the department and institution

 be open to suggestions and available for consultation.

 value staff as individuals and professionals

 be transparent

 consult with staff so as to avoid a lack of trust and conflict

 encourage all staff to perform at a high standard

 deal with poor performers

 acknowledge good performance

 treat all staff equally unless there are specific departmental policies for not doing so

 avoid being identified with a particular grouping or faction as this will result in staff distrust

 be confident in the ability of staff and allow them to work with as much autonomy and responsibility as is feasible

 be decisive. Whilst this does not mean that staff should not be consulted, the HoD has to make the final decision including those that might make him/her unpopular with some staff.

 have a sense of humour – in particular be able to laugh at yourself

 be willing to make mistakes and when you do, take responsibility

 share the success of the department – acknowledge the contribution of others. Allow others to take the credit for their hard work in open fora.

*Selection of Staff*

The right choice of academic and support staff is crucial to the department’s health. At Rhodes, policies governing the recruitment and selection of academic staff and support staff exists. All Chairpersons of support staff posts (this is likely to be the HoD who administrative and technical posts within the department) are required to attend a policy workshop offered by the HRD Office. Both policies advocate that the HoD is responsible for determining the specific requirements of the vacant post in terms of the knowledge, skills and personal attributes needed. The Recruitment and Selection Section of the HR Division can help in this regard. The HoD is also required to consider employment equity issues in the recruitment and selection of staff.

*New Staff*

The Head of Department is responsible for ensuring that the new staff member settles down happily into the department and as quickly as possible, becomes a productive, contributing member of staff.

All staff are on probation and the Head of Department is required to do a formal review of performance and write a number of reports during the probationary period. For further detail on the probationary process, see Section G on Special Issues. However, informal feedback should also not be neglected. Chats at tea time, in offices, corridors etc as well as showing an interest in how the staff member is faring will inform the HoD of whether s/he is settling in, developing a sense of belonging and achievement or is having difficulties.

To ease the transition of new academic staff into the Rhodes environment, all new staff receive an orientation package. This package provides the staff member with the Staff Guide and further information on how to get a library card, an e-mail address etc. An orientation programme for academic staff is also run by the CHERTL in February of each year. Besides being an excellent introduction into the demands faced by new lecturers, this also provides individuals with an opportunity to meet other new staff. The HoD should encourage new staff to attend.

To ease the transition of new support staff into the Rhodes environment, the HRD Office has initiated a formal induction programme for these staff.. A buddy system for new administrative assistants in academic departments is also operational. For further information on these two programmes, the HRD Officer can be contacted.

*Supervision of Staff: Performance, Promotion, Merit Awards, Training and Development*

Full-time academic staff have as their supervisor, the HoD. In the case of support staff there may be other supervisors overseeing the day to day work e.g. in the administrative assistant in the case of cleaners or technical staff in the case of laboratory assistants. However, the HoD still holds overall responsibility for their performance. This means that the HoD needs to be familiar with a variety of systems that govern the management of performance including dealing with discipline, promotion, merit awards and training and development.

At Rhodes, there is currently no formal appraisal system. However, a significant number of academic departments have informal appraisals for academic staff. An appraisal system for support staff is currently being considered for implementation.

Managing the performance of staff includes dealing with poor performance. In the Rhodes context where there is large-scale autonomy for staff, some individuals may be able to get away with unsatisfactory performance. It is often difficult for the new Head to confront such a staff member. However, just because the problem has been inherited does not mean that the problem should be ignored, as it may have been in the past. Formal or informal appraisal procedures may hold these people more accountable. However, if problems persist, the HoD is advised to discuss the matter with the Dean, Vice-Chancellor or Director of Human Resources.

One way to encourage good performance is to motivate academic staff to apply for personal promotion or to recommend support staff for a merit award. Given that applying for promotion is an emotive experience, HoDs play a critical role in guiding staff. The HoD should discuss with academic staff the promotion procedures and criteria and how each individual may best meet them. Where regular appraisals are held, the HoD is more likely to be in a position to know when staff are ready for promotion and can then encourage them and support their application. Staff who wish to apply for promotion but who, in the HoD's opinion, are not ready, need to be advised and guided by the HoD or Dean. Successful management of personal promotion can go a long way to fostering a positive culture in a department.

Such guidance should also occur where an academic staff member has been unsuccessful in his/her application for promotion. Here, the Dean or HoD takes on this responsibility. In the case of support staff who have been unsuccessful in applying for a merit award, the lack of success should be looked at and an action plan put in place to deal with performance areas still needing attention. The Support Staff Merit Awards Committee places significant emphasis on the report of the Head of Department and trusts that heads are providing an accurate assessment of how the staff member has “gone the extra mile”. Workshops are run to assist managers and HoDs as well as staff on how to complete an application for a merit award. HoDs should ward against applications being denied on the basis that insufficient information was provided in the incorrect format as this is demotivating to all concerned.

The development of staff is also critical to their effective performance. Whilst the University can provide opportunities for staff development, it is up to individual staff members under the guidance of the HoD, to take advantage of the opportunities presented. The HoD can assist staff in identifying their development needs. The informal or formal appraisal is a useful opportunity to discuss such issues with staff. Furthermore, such a forum ensures that training needs are linked to actual job performance. This in turn will ensure the effective use of development funds and the transfer of learning. Staff development opportunities are regularly communicated to staff and HoDs via top-list, hod-list (email listings), Rhodos and circulars. HoDs should ensure that these are brought to the attention of staff. HoDs wishing to discuss staff development opportunities for themselves or their staff should contact the HRD Manager.

**2.4 The Head of Department as Administrator**

HoDs have to deal with a significant amount of paperwork which is often laborious, yet important. This paperwork includes departmental correspondence and requests for information, maintenance of student records, collation of student marks, passing information on to staff about the University’s plans and forthcoming activities as well as submitting budgets and reports. Additional paperwork is also being generated with new developments such as formal quality assurance, outcomes-based education, new teaching policies and academic reviews. While some of this can be delegated to other staff to handle, the Head is still responsible for that delegation and for following up to ensure that deadlines and requirements are met.

Having a clear overview of the information coming in, dividing it into manageable categories and dealing efficiently and expeditiously with it, are vital to the HoD's time management. Recognising that a significant portion of what lands on the HoD's desk comes from within the institution, particularly the administration, a Rhodes calendar of administrative events has been put together, specifically for this HoD Guide. This calendar is intended to assist HoDs in their planning of activities during the year through being able to anticipate the kinds of administrative requests they will face (see Section D for this calendar). HoDs may find the calendar useful as a base on which to create their own personal and/or departmental calendar.

Another important element of the HoD's administrative role is that of serving on or chairing committees. Not all departments at Rhodes hold departmental meetings whilst others find them useful in providing an opportunity for every academic staff member to meet to discuss problems or new initiatives. Staff meetings are one forum through which to encourage staff participation, allow for communication and the resolution of grievances. Some Heads at Rhodes have established a committee structure within their departments. For example, there may be sub-committees to deal with issues such as curriculum, space, research programmes, library funds, etc.

The HoD will also serve on other committees such as Senate and subcommittees of Senate. The Head has a responsibility to ensure that the interests and concerns of staff in his/her department are raised. In addition, the HoD has a responsibility to communicate to staff those matters under discussion and decisions taken at Senate. Through doing this, the HoD creates a broader understanding amongst staff of decisions being taken at higher levels in the University.

**2.5 The Head of Department as Resourcer**

In the study conducted at Rhodes, many of the HoDs differentiated between having to find resources externally (outside of the University) versus internally.

Some staff see the HoD's major role as one who fights on their behalf for a larger share of the institution's resources and they assess the merit of the head mainly in terms of their success in securing resources. This is an unfair and limited perspective. This view however, may be due to a lack of knowledge on how resource allocation works within the institution. It would be wise for the HoD to share such information with staff. It is the nature of institutions of higher education that there is little discretionary money available once the financial pie has been sliced up to cover the basic expenses of each department. However, HoDs should not be discouraged by this. In the long run, the department which does its homework and which demonstrates clearly what it wants and why, will earn respect within the institution.

The need to raise funds externally is becoming increasingly important within Rhodes, as internal resources are constantly being stretched. Being able to secure outside funding is rewarding for the HoD as it allow the Heads and the department to use their discretion in how these funds can be used. The relevant staff in the Development Division are able to assist.

Leaming (1998) offers some basic advice in how to be a successful fundraiser:

 Demonstrate that giving money to the department is a good investment

 Develop a strategic plan of the department's future and what resources are needed

 Develop strong links with alumni (the Development Division can assist with this)

 Get to know potential donors – share your vision with outsiders, become known in the community

 Make time for fundraising

 Get the necessary skills in fundraising – attend training, read the necessary books

**2.6 The Head of Department as Advocate**

The role of HoD has a significant political dimension since Heads occupy a ”middle management” position between executive management and staff, trying to satisfy the needs of both parties. It is likely however, that at some point in time, this may result in a situation of divided loyalties for the Head, where decisions carry both negative and positive consequences. HoDs are more likely to have a wider and a different perspective to that of their staff. Whilst HoDs have an understanding of other relevant institutional concerns, their colleagues may lack this. This may lead to situations where a departmental or staff member’s proposal cannot be supported within the context of broader University considerations. The best advice for situations such as these is to be open and consistent in decision-making and communicating with staff on such decisions.

In the role of advocate, the Head represents his/her department, seeking to further its interests and reputation by promoting the department within the institution and conveying the right impression of the department and its staff. Whilst HoDs may be conscious of the impression they are making, this has to be balanced with seeking help when it is needed. A reluctance to do so may lead to a situation where problems worsen. HoDs are encouraged to seek the advice of the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, the Dean or other experienced HoDs.

**3. Being an effective Head of Department**

Being an effective Head should mean being of service to the department, but not a sacrifice. Whilst the HoD will devote much of his/her energy to the welfare of the department as a whole, his/her individuality must not be lost sight of. All Heads have particular strengths and weaknesses, dislikes and likes and it is recognised that this individuality will shape his/her role as a HoD.

*Set realistic Personal Expectations, Negotiate Staff Expectations*

One of the key issues that should be clarified at the outset of a new HoD's term of office are personal as well as staff expectations regarding how much teaching, administration and research supervision the Head will be expected to do. Clarifying one's personal expectations is important in being realistic about what can or cannot be done, allowing the new Head to plan for this change rather than feeling overwhelmed. New Heads are encouraged to seek advice from current or previous HoDs as well as the Dean as to how they have approached the issue of multiple roles and demands.

Senior management has in the past been asked to provide some guidelines as to what is appropriate but has resisted doing so because of the uniqueness of each HoD's situation. They do however, believe that it is not unrealistic for the HoD to expect other members of staff to assist with administrative duties and strongly encourage HoDs to involve staff, where appropriate, in the administration of the department.

Part of dealing with staff's expectations is learning to say “no”. Although this is difficult, knowing how and when to say no, is crucial to the Head's effectiveness.

*Delegate Successfully*

The obvious way for a HoD to shed some administrative responsibilities is to delegate them to others. However, for academics who may be used to working independently, this can prove difficult. The administrative staff should be given a significant portion of the administrative load, but fellow academic staff should also understand that there is a need for them to share some of the administrative responsibility (particularly that requiring policy decisions and which have implications for the academic integrity of the department), for the good of the department as a whole. A willingness and ability to delegate is also critical in the development of other staff members. It gives staff the opportunity to develop new skills and take on more responsibility and can even assist in their preparation for personal promotion and/or the HoD role in the future.

*Time Management*

Many HoDs feel themselves under great pressure, requiring them to use their time as efficiently as they can.

Some advice includes:

 Set goals of what is important and needs to be achieved. Keep these in mind all the time and avoid being distracted by other more urgent but perhaps less important tasks. This will avoid feeling frustrated when at the end of the day you have been very busy but feel as if nothing has been achieved. Some Heads of Department put aside dedicated time every day for research or reading purposes – time when they are at their most productive e.g. first thing in the morning.

 Spend time going through all the paper work and where possible, only handle the piece of paper once – either addressing the issue yourself, passing it onto the secretary for dealing with or to another staff member to address.

 Keep a To-do list so that you don’t forget what still needs to be done.

 Train your support staff to help you save time e.g. through screening your e-mail, correspondence or telephone calls.

 Consider using an electronic diary (e.g.Microsoft Outlook) that you and your support staff have access to.

*Determining the Decision-making Process*

It is important for the HoD to consider the nature of decision-making that will take place in the Department. Departments today tend to be run on more democratic lines than would have been the case two decades or more ago. This is the situation with many departments at Rhodes who prefer to utilise a more collaborative approach to ensure co-operation and commitment from staff. However, rather than view this as the only way, the HoD needs to consider issues such as how decision making has taken place in the department previously, whether staff are satisfied with this kind of decision-making, the contexts for decision-making and the competence required to make particular decisions.

*Managing Conflict*

Given that conflict is intrinsic to any managerial job, the effective HoD will have sound conflict management skills. More often than not, conflict is viewed as something negative, to be avoided or ignored, something which will destroy relationships if addressed. Ironically however, it is often the failure to deal with conflict quickly and decisively that leads to the demise of the relationship. In managing conflict, one must focus on commonalties in the relationship and not only differences. One should also be careful about the use of power in managing the conflict. Poor use of power will result in exacerbating rather than solving the problem. The Deans, Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellors are available to assist in conflict situations.

*Personal Development and Growth*

Apart from the opportunities provided by the University such as formal training programmes, there is much that new Heads can do for themselves to ease their transition into their new roles. In the first instance, the new Head should regard this new experience as a learning opportunity. This means that the HoD needs to be open to learning, willing to admit when s/he is at fault and where possible, to correct mistakes made. The new Head could also seek external evaluation of his/her strengths and areas of development in the variety of roles played and use this evaluation as an opportunity to set goals. In some departments at Rhodes University, staff are invited on an annual basis to give the Head feedback on his/her performance as an HoD. Feedback from the relevant Dean should also be sought.

**4. Summary**

There is no doubt that the HoD role is a complex and challenging one. The multiple roles of change manager, academic leader, people manager, resourcer, administrator and advocate will make new and different demands on the individual in this role. Successful HoDs who have been able to master these challenges have regarded this new leadership experience as an opportunity to develop, are realistic about what they can achieve and have managed their time effectively.

Recognising the complexity and importance of the HoD role particularly in the current climate of rapid transformation, emphasis is being placed on the development of HoDs. Rather than relying on experience as the sole teacher, there is greater stress on being proactive by providing development and training opportunities for new Heads. At Rhodes, this has involved the provision of this HoD Guide, the running of a new Heads induction and a training and development programme for all HoDs.

With this support, senior management is confident that HoDs will be able to meet the challenges faced. In doing so, it is hoped that the HoD enjoys a fulfilling and successful term of office, reaping many of the rewards experienced by previous HoDs at Rhodes including a sense of pride and accomplishment at seeing the department and its staff develop and at having a well-run and efficient department.

**The material for this section has been drawn from the following sources:**

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**2. The Dean - Head of Department Relationship**

The Dean's major role is as Chair of the Faculty Board which is his/her source of authority and basis for action. S/he is expected to promote Faculty cohesion and to ensure that Faculty decisions and agreed policies are implemented. The Dean-HoD relationship is largely of an administrative nature focused on academic issues, although some management issues are also involved e.g., in the allocation of equipment and being involved in the recruitment, selection, probation and promotion of staff.

Deans are a vital support to new HoDs who need help in getting oriented to their new roles, in understanding the University's expectations and in implementing the University’s policies. The Dean plays a critical role in fostering a climate that supports HoDs by helping them to cope with new and changing demands and responsibilities. Deans serve as teachers and mentors through providing advice, guidance and promoting professional development opportunities, encouraging the HoDs to develop their leadership skills. The Dean also serves as a critical link between University senior management, the Faculty and the academic departments. Monthly meetings are held between the Deans of Faculties and senior management to discuss issues of mutual concern.

The need for frequent communication between the Dean and HoD is obvious and this communication should deal with more than just the mechanical, routine features common to the department and Faculty. Infrequent communication can lead to the HoD feeling isolated and even overwhelmed. The initial onus for communication in this relationship is on the Dean, who should also lead discussions on the mutual expectations within the relationship.

The following may be regarded as reasonable expectations of this partnership:

 The HoD can expect the Dean to be willing to share critical knowledge and detailed information that is not readily available to a HoD but which could assist him/her in a greater understanding of the department and institution. Such information could include that which is specific to the department as well as information on how other departments are tackling similar challenges or new initiatives.

 The HoD plays an important role in communicating information. S/he is required to relay information to their staff from the Dean in a timely and accurate fashion as well as pass along information to the Dean and other appropriate administrative offices. Both parties can expect that information is shared in an open and transparent manner. The Dean can also expect the HoD to pass information onto departmental staff.

 The Dean may be able to assist in reducing the unnecessary record keeping and paperwork needed from the HoD. This includes ensuring that the administration does not inundate HoDs with low priority, often overlapping requests for data and reports.

 Departmental reviews between the Dean and HoD are encouraged, where the open sharing of data, ideas and plans occurs. Such reviews help the Dean to give praise for meaningful accomplishment, provide guidance where it is needed and in general, help to create an atmosphere that nurtures a sense of partnership and negates a sense of professional isolation.

 The Dean can expect the HoD to know University and Faculty policy, to adhere to it and where relevant, to ensure its implementation at the departmental level.

 Although Faculty dictates general policy, Deans should not interfere in the internal affairs of the department. The HoD is expected to attempt to resolve departmental problems. However, where requested to do so, the Dean can be asked to mediate internal disputes. Certain sensitive situations or problems may legitimately be brought to the attention of the Dean and in making a final decision, the HoD may not necessarily be included. In these situations, the Head must be willing to accept these careful, difficult decisions. Where there is unhappiness amongst the staff with decisions or the management style of the current HoD, they are advised to consult with the Dean before taking any action.

 The HoD must evidence careful planning and assessment of departmental objectives to support departmental requests for resources. Furthermore, s/he must realise that these need to be positioned within the University’s mission and strategy.

 Consult with your Dean before making far-reaching decisions.

At Rhodes, the role of Dean may vary depending on the circumstances within the Faculty. For example, in the Faculties of Humanities, Science and Commerce, there is a full-time Dean. In the one department faculties of Law and Pharmacy, the Dean and HoD may be the same individual. In the Faculty of Education, the Dean is not full time, having other responsibilities such as teaching within his/her department.

**Information has been taken from the following sources:**

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