RHODES UNVERSITY

DATABASE MANAGEMENT POLICY

1.   POLICY PARTICULARS

DATE OF APPROVAL BY RELEVANT COMMITTEE STRUCTURE:
Information Technology Steering Committee: 8th October 2015

DATE OF APPROVAL BY SENATE:

DATE OF APPROVAL BY COUNCIL:

COMMENCEMENT
DATE: 1 June 2004

REVISION HISTORY: August 2012, October 2015

REVIEW DATE: Every three years: next revision due during 2018

POLICY LEVEL: All persons developing or utilising University databases and datasets

RESPONSIBILITY

-    IMPLEMENTATION & MONITORING: Information and Technology Division (MIS)
-    REVIEW AND REVISION: Information Technology Steering Committee

REPORTING STRUCTURE: Director : Information and Technology Services → Registrar →
Senate → Council

2. REASON FOR POLICY

2.1   The integrity of the administrative data is the responsibility of various sections within the University administration. In particular, the student data is owned by the Registrar, financial data by the Executive Director: Infrastructure, Operations and Finance and staff data by the Director: HR. Rhodes University does not have a dedicated CIO and responsibility for protection of data is viewed as a joint task between the Registrar, Executive Director: Infrastructure, Operations and Finance, Director: Information and Technology Services and Director: HR. The University recognises the need for ensuring accuracy of data that is requested by various bodies which may be internal or external to the University. The Database Policy should be viewed as a document that will ensure accuracy and on-going development in an ever-changing Information Technology environment. The policy should not be platform- or current technology- dependant but should oversee the management of data at Rhodes University as well as the integration of data across systems to ensure a single point of entry of every data subset.

2.2   Over time the University data set has increased in an attempt to computerise more than just financial and student processes. Some of this computerisation has been done on the central server and some not. In some cases not having centralised data has led to data problems when trying to link the various data sets. A Data Manager was appointed in 2003 to, among other duties, ensure consistency and accuracy in the generation of University data. This role has since changed into a Manager: Management Information Systems (MIS) function falling under the Information and Technology Services Division.

2.3   External requests for data stem mainly from the Department of Higher Education and Training, SAQA, CHE, Universities South Africa (previously HESA), HSRC and NRF. Internal requests for datasets come from all areas of the campus such as the Registrar's Division, Finance Division, Human Resources Division, Information & Technology Services Division, Division of Students Affairs - and Infrastructure and Operations Division to name but a few. Researchers in academic departments also request data from time to time.

2.4   The Information and Technology Services Division, in particular MIS section, is tasked with providing a data structure that allows and ensures accurate and adequate flow of data through the University and out to external parties.   In order for MIS to be able to assess all data requirements knowledgably and advise with solutions to all, it is necessary for the MIS section to be made aware of and play a role in the development of all datasets. This does not necessarily mean that all development will be done in-house or that it shall all be housed on the same platform. In fact, the data will be viewed as critical and non-critical to University administration, and advice will be affected by whether the dataset is viewed as a necessary part of the University dataset, urgency, platform requirements, long-term plans for project, I&TS staff resources and ability to service the request, as well as current expertise within the I&TS team. The user's data requirements as well as ensuring that the University adheres to the Protection of Personal Information Act, all need to be considered when advice is given. If the recommendation of MIS is

considered inappropriate, an appeal can be made through either the Registrar, Executive Director: Infrastructure, Operations and Finance or Director: HR, whoever is the appropriate data owner.

2.5   Requests for data will continue to be serviced provided the request is in keeping with the Protection of Personal Information Act and the new Consumer Protection Act. If MIS deems it necessary to clarify the data request with a member of Senior Management, the matter will be referred to the relevant owner of the dataset. A new POPI policy will be developed to ensure that the information provided is defendable legally and constitutionally.

3.   POLICY STATEMENT

3.1   POLICY DECLARATION:

In order to ensure that information collected and provided, both internally and externally, is consistent and valid and to ensure that data is accessible where necessary, integrating seamlessly between systems, the University wishes to regulate the development of *databases housing datasets* used for the administration of the University.

3.2   POLICY OBJECTIVES:

The Policy aims to regulate the development of databases by allocating primary responsibility to I&TS (MIS), and ensuring that all persons involved in developing databases or datasets follow a standard, centralised procedure in order to conform with current Information Acts such as POPI and RICA.

3.3   DEFINITIONS:

Data: Isolated Facts

Information: Organised or summarised data

Database: A collection of interrelated data items

DBMS: Database Management System – systems software that facilitates the management of a database

Dataset: The result of a query on the database that provides a subset of the data housed in the database

Platform: The computer technology (hardware and software) used by and to access the database

4.   POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

4.1   THE ACTIONS AND PROCESSES BY WHICH THE OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY WILL BE ACHIEVED:

In order to attempt to control duplicate datasets on campus, all Rhodes staff requiring a database to assist with **administration of students, alumni, residences, staff, general business procedures such as finance** should proceed in the following way:

1) Contact I&TS and discuss your requirements. If necessary an appointment will be set up to discuss the database further.
2) I&TS will assess the request and determine whether the data should be centralised.
3) Should I&TS recommend the data should be centralised, development will either be done by the I&TS team on a platform that is currently being supported within the University or if the database already exists, access to the relevant datasets will be provided. Consideration will be given to the protection of data, in particular personal information when decisions are being made.
4) Should I&TS decide that it is not necessary for the data to be centralised, or that the data should be centralised but not necessarily developed by the I&TS team, a documented reason will be provided and where necessary I&TS will be involved in discussions with a third party service provider eg.Sage, ARCHIBUS, working alongside the Business Process owner who requests the database. This will ensure that if necessary the data is accessible within the University at a future date and that it can feed into the centralised data warehouse for planning purposes. Integration of the various systems across the University is a function of I&TS (MIS). Availability of I&TS staff resources, current University administration data requirements and requirements of business process owners making the request will be taken into consideration when a recommendation is made.
5) Transparent documentation will be kept on the nature of each request and the reason for each recommendation.

Data Requests for Centralised Data managed by MIS

1) All emailed requests must be made by emailing support@ru.ac.za
2) Telephonic requests are suggested if discussion with MIS is required before the request can be formalised in an email.
3) Data requiring personal details rather than aggregated data will be referred to the University Information Officer or his/her nominee for approval. Whilst the University can use personal information for internal use, external requests will only be considered where appropriate eg. Kroll, DHET HEMIS submissions and DHET approved research projects.

4) Research related to University interests undertaken within the academic arena must first get ethical clearance from the Ethics committee before a request is made.

5) In keeping with the Protection of Personal Information Act, authorities approving the release of data need to be informed as to how and where the data will be used before the data can be provided. MIS acting as an agent, will require the same even where departments have access to individual information but are requesting a global view of information. Although MIS is empowered to use discretion and release certain data without the explicit permission of the Information Officer this data should conform to the POPI and be limited to headcount information only. If there is any concern that confidentiality and/or the POPI are being breached, the university Information Officer will authorise or deny the request.

6) All requests for detailed information other than that of a routine nature must be made to the relevant authority. MIS will facilitate a workflow system that supports the request and processing of such requests.

This policy will be communicated to all heads of departments, and administrative managers by the Director: I&TS, as well as sent individually to all known developers and users of University datasets. New employees to the University will receive notification of the Policy during their integration into the University via the I&TS Client Liaison Officer. This communication should be made at the start of any new Policy amendments as well as a reminder at the midpoint of the Policy cycle.

4.2   REVIEW PROCEDURE:
The Information Technology Steering Committee will, at its third or fourth meeting of 2018, review the effectiveness of the policy and recommend any revisions to Senate and Council for implementation from 1 January 2019.