

# The Rhodes University Policy on the Evaluation of Teaching, Learning and Course Design

<b>Policy Volume</b>	Volume A - Academic Faculty & Students
<b>Policy Chapter</b>	A1: Teaching and Learning Policies
<b>Responsible Committee/Unit/Division/Faculty</b>	Teaching and Learning Committee
<b>Responsible Chairperson/Director/Manager</b>	DVC: Academic and Student Affairs
<b>Dates of First and Subsequent Council Approvals</b>	June 2019
<b>Revision History: Approved Reviews</b>	2019
<b>Review Cycle (e.g. every 2/5/7 years etc)</b>	5 years
<b>Next Review Date</b>	2024

## 1. POLICY PARTICULARS

<b>1.1. Policy Title</b>	The Rhodes University Policy on the Evaluation of Teaching, Learning and Course Design
<b>1.2. Policy Statement</b> (State in a single paragraph the policy mandate and how this relates to the University Mission and Vision)	The purpose of this policy is to guide the evaluation of teaching and course design at Rhodes University. Effective evaluation is key to ongoing review processes that ensure that teaching and learning are relevant to ever changing contexts.
<b>1.3. Reason for Policy</b> (What this policy aims to achieve)	Evaluation is understood as a reflective and multi-dimensional process that draws on a range of perspectives, including those of students, peers, external examiners, and the lecturers themselves. While student perspectives are essential,

	<p>meaningful evaluation draws on multiple sources, including, for example, peer reviews, self-assessment, and focus groups, to develop a comprehensive understanding of teaching and learning.</p> <p>Student feedback, both formal (e.g. end-of-course surveys) and informal (e.g. in-class discussions), is essential to this process, as are opportunities for students to offer feedback during and after their learning experience. Insights from former students can also add value. Equally important is the engagement of academic staff as reflective practitioners who bring critical insight into the teaching and learning process.</p> <p>At Rhodes University, evaluation proceeds along two streams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Teaching (Module)</b></li> </ul> <p><b>Evaluation</b> is a private and developmental process focused on individual growth and pedagogical reflection.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Course evaluation</b> is a more public exercise focused on curriculum coherence, alignment, and the achievement of programme outcomes.</li> </ul> <p>Effective evaluation follows an ongoing cycle: gathering feedback, interpreting it alongside other forms of evidence, engaging in critical reflection, implementing changes, and reporting back to students and other relevant stakeholders. This cycle supports the continuous enhancement of teaching and learning in a manner that is inclusive and responsive.</p> <p>While evaluation serves a quality assurance function, holding departments and individual staff accountable for their decisions, it must also encourage innovation and responsiveness. Evaluation processes should create conditions that support academic staff in experimenting with new pedagogical approaches without fear of punitive consequences. At the same time, evaluation must offer constructive insights that guide the development of innovative teaching and curriculum design and support addressing challenges that may emerge during their implementation.</p> <p>Given its complexity, evaluation requires time, resources, and commitment. To be effective and sustainable, it must be purposeful, well-integrated into academic processes, and aligned with broader institutional goals for teaching and learning quality.</p>
--	---

<b>1.4. People affected by this Policy</b> (e.g. All units of the University)	All teaching staff All students CHERTL Staff
<b>1.5. Who should read this Policy</b> (People who need to heed this policy to fulfil their duties)	All teaching staff All students CHERTL Staff
<b>1.6. Website address/link for this Policy</b>	<a href="https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/institutionalplanning/documents/The_Rhodes_University_Policy_on_the_Evaluation_of_Teaching_and_Course_Design_June_2019.pdf">https://www.ru.ac.za/media/rhodesuniversity/content/institutionalplanning/documents/The Rhodes University Policy on the Evaluation of Teaching and Course Design June 2019.pdf</a> (To be updated)

## 2. RELATED DOCUMENTS FORMS AND TOOLS

(University Policies, Protocols and Documents (such as rules/policies/protocols/guidelines related to this policy))

<b>Relevant Legislation</b> (Legislation/Regulatory requirements/Organisational Reports – name these)
Higher Education Act of 1997
<b>Related Policies</b>
Teaching and Learning Policy Policy on Curriculum Development and Review
<b>Related Protocols</b>
<b>Forms and Tools</b> (documents to be completed in support of this policy implementation)
E.g. Policy template for the policy itself. Documents pertaining to procedures for implementation, as well as monitoring and evaluation of the policy.  Brief Guide to the Evaluation of Teaching and Courses Rhodes University Ethical Standards Committee (RUESC): Guidelines on the ethical use of student data in teaching and learning. Rhodes University Quality Promotion Framework

## 3. POLICY DEFINITIONS

(Technical or Conceptual terms used in the policy)

TERM	DEFINITION
Evaluation	Evaluation refers to the process of gathering and interpreting feedback from multiple perspectives, such as students, peers, external examiners, and self-reflection, to assess the strengths and weaknesses of a course or module. At Rhodes University, the term 'course' refers to a semester long programme of study or, alternatively, a year long programme of study. A module refers to a part of a course focusing on a particular topic. This process is supported by empirical data (e.g. success and

	throughput rates) and informed by relevant theory and research. The process involves a dialogue with students on the way forward regarding the feedback received. Illustrated in Appendix B.
Evaluative data	This refers to the range of information gathered to inform evaluation. This includes data from survey questionnaires, focus groups, peer observations, student feedback, self-assessment and reflection, student performance (e.g. pass and throughput rates), and external examiner reports.
Evaluation Reports	Refers to a reflective document in which insights from evaluative data are balanced against each other and triangulated to arrive at a complete understanding of the object being evaluated.
Evaluation of Teaching Practices	The process of eliciting evaluative data on the perceptions of an individual's teaching practices from a number of perspectives (students, peers, self). These perceptions are then balanced against each other in order to try to identify strengths and weaknesses.
Course	At Rhodes University, this refers to a semester-long or year-long programme of study. Courses are housed within departments.
Course Evaluation	The process of eliciting evaluative data on the perceptions of a course or module from a number of perspectives (for example, students, peers, external examiners, and self). Empirical data related to success or throughput rates and theory and research are also used in this process.
Module	This refers to a section of a course focusing on a particular topic or taught by a particular academic.
Formative Evaluation	This refers to evaluation conducted during the implementation of a module with the intent of identifying areas for improvement and developing practice in progress.
Summative Evaluation	This refers to evaluation conducted upon completion of a module and or course to assess its overall effectiveness and to suggest improvements for its subsequent iterations.
Evaluative cycle	<p>A period, not normally exceeding three years, in which <i>formal course evaluation</i> reports are submitted for quality promotion purposes. Where courses form part of programmes reviewed by professional bodies, evaluation cycles for those courses may be aligned to professional body review cycles.</p> <p><i>Teaching evaluation</i>, however, is an ongoing, developmental process that supports continuous reflection and improvement.</p>

Course coordinator	Departments normally appoint an academic as course coordinator to take responsibility for the leadership and administration of an academic programme for a particular year course.
Academic teacher	The individual lecturer (permanent, contract or ad hoc) responsible for the lecturing and related teaching and learning activities related to a particular course.

#### 4. PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THIS POLICY

<b>OVERVIEW</b>
Rhodes University strives to carry out the following, as far as is reasonably practicable:
1. Given the complexity and tensions inherent in evaluation processes, this policy acknowledges that evaluation processes accommodate different teaching structures, pedagogies, practices and contexts for which standardised tools are inappropriate. Instead, it advocates for a range of discipline- and course-specific evaluative tools to best assess unique course designs and/or teaching and learning pedagogies.
<p>2. Evaluation is best conceived as a process in which academics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) identify salient aspects of their teaching or course design along with the beliefs and theories which underpin them;</li> <li>ii) design and ask questions that allow them to observe the impact of teaching and course design decisions and the validity of the assumptions about learning that inform these decisions;</li> <li>iii) reflect on the implications of what they have learned from an analysis of the data for both practice and its underpinning theory;</li> <li>iv) engage with fellow academics and students to 'close the feedback loop'; and</li> <li>v) are supported in their professional development as emerging experts in their field and in how they offer their expertise within that field.</li> </ul>
3. All data collection by staff and students must uphold the principles of respect, dignity, transparency, accountability, and integrity. Personal information should remain confidential, and identifying details must not be shared.
4. Evaluations must be informed by data. Evaluative data can be generated using formal methods (for example, survey questionnaires, focus group interviews, peer observation) and informal methods (for example, in-class discussions or reflection exercises). This data should be triangulated with other data sources arising from routine academic tasks (for example, external examiner reports, student performance analyses) to inform the evaluation report.
5. Evaluations must take the form of a written report that reflects on the implications of the analysis of evaluative data. These reports should identify aspects to be addressed and strengths to be developed, and make suggestions for improvement.

6. A distinction must be made between the evaluation of teaching and the evaluation of course design. The evaluation of teaching practices is aimed at the development of an individual's teaching. It is therefore understood as a personal process requiring the establishment of a reflexive space to experiment without fear of censure. A course evaluation, on the other hand, is aimed at ensuring that the course aligns with its goals and students' needs. Course evaluation is, therefore, a more public process aimed at accountability and alignment, whereas the evaluation of teaching is more private and developmental.

7. In addition to the developmental purpose of evaluations, evaluation reports can be included as evidence submitted by academic teachers for probationary and personal promotion purposes, or as course statements for quality assurance processes.

8. HoDs can request evidence of evaluation to address student complaints or concerns. However, HoDs cannot undertake an evaluation of a staff member's teaching without prior consultation with the staff member.

9. All academic teachers may discuss evaluative data or evaluation reports with HoDs, mentors, or a CHERTL representative, where necessary.

## 5. DIRECTIVES FOR IMPLEMENTING THIS POLICY

(Actions and processes by which the objectives of the policy will be achieved.)

**Directive 1:** All academic teachers will evaluate their pedagogic practice on an ongoing basis to contribute to their own development in this area.

**Directive 2:** Courses will be evaluated on an ongoing basis. They will be evaluated formatively to identify challenges that can be addressed immediately and summatively upon completion to assess their effectiveness and to identify areas for further improvement.

**Directive 3:** Course evaluations will be included in course coordinator reports provided to HoDs and Deans at the end of each evaluative cycle (i.e., every 3 years as part of the quality assurance process).

## 6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

(Roles and responsibilities of Key personal/Divisions/Faculties/Departments)

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
<b>ROLE 1</b>  Academic teachers	Academic teachers are responsible for continuously evaluating their own teaching to support their professional growth and improve student learning. This includes gathering and reflecting on feedback during and after teaching, and responding appropriately. It is important to close the loop by providing feedback to students on the outcome of the evaluation process. Evidence from evaluations may be used for teaching portfolios (e.g., for probation and promotion) and should inform day-to-day teaching practice.

<b>ROLE 2</b> Course coordinators	Course coordinators are responsible for overseeing the evaluation of the course as a whole. This includes coordinating the collection, analysis, and synthesis of feedback from students and academic teachers, and using this to complete the course evaluation report required at the end of each quality promotion cycle. They are also responsible for ensuring that feedback is responded to ('closing the loop') and that evaluation findings inform curriculum review and improvement.
<b>ROLE 3</b> HoDs	HoDs are responsible for ensuring that i) academic teachers evaluate their teaching on an ongoing basis and ii) course coordinators evaluate the courses for which they are responsible. HoDs are also responsible for discussing evaluative data and/or reports with academic staff and providing the necessary support to these individuals.
<b>ROLE 4</b> CHERTL	CHERTL is responsible for providing support for evaluation processes and the interpretation of results, as well as for ongoing support.
<b>ROLE 5</b> Students	Students are responsible for their own learning and, as such, are responsible for responding to module and course evaluation elicitation methods honestly and with the aim of improving the teaching and learning experience.

### **CONTACTS (Please see Appendix A)**

Direct any questions about the policy to the relevant Office-bearers, designations and contact details are listed in Appendix A.

### **POLICY REVIEW PROCEDURE**

(Actions and processes by which the policy will be reviewed)

Policy approval and review will take the following route: 1. Teaching and Learning Committee 2. Faculty Boards 3. Senate 4. Council
The Policy will normally be reviewed every FIVE years.
<b>Communication of the review process</b>

## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX A**

#### **CONTACTS**

(Direct any questions about the policy to the relevant Office-bearers; designations and contact details are listed below)

<b>Area of Concern</b>	<b>Division/Faculty/Department</b>	<b>Telephone</b>	<b>Email</b>

Guidance on implementation	CHERTL	8171	<a href="mailto:Chertl-admin@ru.ac.za">Chertl-admin@ru.ac.za</a>



## APPENDIX B

### The RU Evaluation Process Infographic

