



**RHODES UNIVERSITY**

Grahamstown • 6140 • South Africa

# The Rhodes University Policy on Curriculum Development and Review

<b>Policy Volume</b>	Teaching and Learning
<b>Policy Chapter</b>	Two
<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>	1998
<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>	Curriculum Development and Review
<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 ensure that all Rhodes University curricula advance the academic project by taking into account the multiple purposes of higher education as identified in the Higher Education Act of 1997 as well as achieving the Institution’s Vision and Mission and the ‘academic proposition’ identified in the Institutional Development Plan 2018 – 2022. This Policy is guided by the institutional Policy on Teaching and Learning.
<b>1.3. Reason for Policy</b> (What this policy aims to achieve)	<p>This policy aims to contribute to the assurance and enhancement of the quality of curricula at Rhodes University by providing a set of principles and directives and by identifying roles and responsibilities for those involved in curriculum design and review.</p> <p>To a large extent, curriculum design is guided by principles related to the introduction of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the use of the learning outcome as a ‘language of description’. Learning outcomes describe what students should be able to do at the end of a period of study. These outcomes are then ‘pegged’ at a particular level of learning and ‘measured’ using credit values which provide an indication of the amount of learning time required to achieve them. The use of learning outcomes, NQF levels and credit values as a principle in curriculum design is therefore key to the functioning of the NQF.</p> <p>Research (see, for example, Biggs, 2012) has shown that, inter alia, the ‘constructive alignment’ of course purpose, learning outcomes, assessment criteria, pedagogical approaches and learning materials is conducive to student learning. ‘Constructive alignment’ is therefore widely used as an overall approach to curriculum development where learning outcomes are used. This policy draws on the principle of constructive alignment to guide practice at Rhodes University.</p> <p>Rhodes University’s primary academic offering at undergraduate level is the general formative degree. In recent years, the value of teaching in-depth disciplinary knowledge has increasingly been identified in research. The Institutional Development Plan (IDP) and the Teaching and Learning Policy refer to this strength. Strategic Goal One of the IDP is to ‘Maintain and strengthen our general formative degree offering and the research – teaching - community engagement nexus</p>

which enable our students to access powerful knowledge'. Accordingly, the Teaching and Learning Policy (2019) notes that the University will strive to 'ensure that the general formative degree continues to be recognised as a powerful means of equipping students for the world of work and also to act as critical and socially responsive students'.

In pursuit of Strategic Goal One, Objective 1.4 of the IDP is to 'Strengthen and enhance flexibility in the curriculum and our unique approach to the dual major degree'. The Teaching and Learning Policy builds on this by noting the flexible way in which students are able to build curricula within the general formative degree framework by pursuing study across faculties and departments.

Strategic Goal Two of the IDP is to 'enable access to Rhodes University by all academically qualifying students and provide them with conditions which enable all students to flourish and which promote their holistic development as critical citizens'. The Teaching and Learning Policy draws on this goal by identifying the need for augmented and extended courses that embed support for student development in mainstream teaching.

In acknowledging the location of Rhodes University in a small town in one of the poorest provinces of South Africa, the Teaching and Learning Policy also identifies Community Engagement as integral to curriculum design and aims to promote service learning.

The Teaching and Learning Policy also acknowledges the multilingual nature of South African society and the way language can be used to exclude in teaching and learning. Accordingly, it prioritises the use of the indigenous African languages to support teaching and learning.

The Curriculum Development and Review Policy therefore aims to draw on these strengths of the Rhodes University approach to curricula outlined in both the IDP and the Teaching and Learning Policy by providing more guidance to those involved in the design and review of curricula.

In providing guidance on curriculum review, the Policy acknowledges the need for curricula to be up to date, to remain relevant to students and other stakeholders and to take account of the changing contexts and, significantly, to take account of

	the University's location in Africa. Review is thus identified as a means of ensuring that this does happen and guidance is provided for review processes.
<b>1.4. People affected by this Policy</b> (e.g. All units of the University)	All departments, institutes and centres offering academic qualifications.
<b>1.5. Who should read this Policy</b> (People who need to heed this policy to fulfil their duties)	All lecturers, course co-ordinators, heads of departments and deans.
<b>1.6. Website address/link for this Policy</b>	<a href="https://www.ru.ac.za/institutionalresearchplanningqualitypro motion/policies/">https://www.ru.ac.za/institutionalresearchplanningqualitypro motion/policies/</a>

## 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 1997 Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework 2013 South African Qualifications Authority Level Descriptors 2012
<b>Related Policies</b>
Teaching and Learning Policy Evaluation of Teaching and Courses Assessment of Student Learning External Examining Rhodes University Policy on Academic Integrity (under development)
<b>Related Protocols</b>
Rhodes University Institutional Development Plan 2018 – 2022 Rhodes University Institutional Transformation Plan 2019 -2022
<b>Related Frameworks</b>
Rhodes University Quality Assurance Framework for Teaching and Learning
<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 for designing a curriculum and constructing a course guide. Module curriculum template

### 3. POLICY DEFINITIONS

(Technical or Conceptual terms used in the policy)

TERM	DEFINITION
<p><b>Curriculum</b></p>	<p>The curriculum is a structure that distributes access to knowledge and to knowing by specifying what is taught, who is taught, who teaches and how learning is assessed. The curriculum is therefore politically, socially and culturally implicated.</p> <p>The term ‘curriculum’ encompasses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge, i.e. the list of subjects, topics and texts included in a course of study;</li> <li>• Ways of knowing, skills and practices;</li> <li>• Teaching methodologies;</li> <li>• Assessment practices.</li> </ul> <p>All curricula are informed by the nature of the discipline/field, the philosophical beliefs of the teacher, who the students are and the broader context in which the curriculum is enacted.</p> <p>Curriculum is both the planned process, the actual implementation of the teaching and the students’ experiences of the learning process.</p>
<p><b>Curriculum alignment</b></p>	<p>Curriculum alignment refers to coherence between different levels of curriculum as well as elements within a curriculum. At the macro level, this means vertical coherence between the purpose of a qualification, qualification exit level outcomes and outcomes for courses and modules. At the meso level, this means horizontal coherence between courses and between modules that make up a course. At a micro level, curriculum alignment refers to internal coherence between course/module elements, that is: purpose of course/module, learning outcomes, teaching methodologies and assessment methods.</p>
<p><b>Learning outcome</b></p>	<p>A learning outcome describes what students should be able to do by the time they have completed a module, course or programme leading to a qualification. Outcomes are complex and embody knowledge, skills, practices and values/attitudes.</p>
<p><b>Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF)</b></p>	<p>Level descriptors describe the competencies at each level of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The competencies are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scope of knowledge</li> <li>• Knowledge literacy</li> <li>• Method and procedure</li> <li>• Problem solving</li> <li>• Ethics and professional practice</li> <li>• Accessing, processing and managing information</li> <li>• Producing and communicating of information</li> <li>• Context and systems</li> <li>• Management of learning</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accountability.</li> </ul> <p><a href="http://www.saqa.org.za/docs/misc/2012/level_descriptors.pdf">http://www.saqa.org.za/docs/misc/2012/level_descriptors.pdf</a></p>
Course	At Rhodes University, the term 'course' refers to a semester long programme of study or, alternatively, a yearlong programme of study. Courses can be broken down into smaller modules or units addressing specific topics or taught by different individuals.
Extended Course	An extended course is a course in which time is made available for additional tuition by extending its duration. Typically, a semester long 'regular' course becomes a yearlong extended course. The credit value of the extended course is the same as that for the regular course unless a faculty explicitly indicates otherwise.
Augmented Course	An augmented course is a course in which time is made available for additional tuition by increasing the number of tuition periods. The augmented course has the same duration as a 'regular' course but the number of teaching periods per week are increased. This would mean that a semester long 'regular' course still runs over a semester but additional teaching periods are inserted. It is possible for modules within a regular course to be augmented.

#### 4. PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THIS POLICY

<b>OVERVIEW</b>
Rhodes University strives to carry out the following, as far as is reasonably practicable:
1. Continue to prioritise the general formative degree as the main undergraduate offering.
2. Continue to allow for flexibility in the undergraduate curriculum.
3. Consider the way the structure of courses can be adapted to best meet the learning needs of students. Alternative structures include augmented and extended courses.
4. Design curricula at all levels that are responsive to the discipline/field, to students' learning needs and to the social context taking into account our position as a university in Africa. Curricula should be relevant, up to date, and demonstrate awareness of the way some knowledge and ways of knowing have been historically privileged over others as a result of colonialism.
5. Design curricula in which all elements are aligned at macro, meso and micro levels.
6. Develop learning outcomes, which include knowledge and understanding as well as cognitive, general and professional practices and skills for each course or programme. These should be in line with HEQSF requirements and SAQA level descriptors.
7. Consult with key stakeholders in the curriculum design and review process. Stakeholders should include current and past students, academics, and professional bodies and, where appropriate, employers in the public and private sectors.
8. Review curricula on an ongoing basis in order to accommodate new ideas and knowledge in disciplines/fields. Such changes should also be informed by the

legitimate learning needs of particular cohorts of students and take into account the affordances of digital technologies for enhanced learning and teaching.

9. Address the need for equity and redress in the curriculum. Curricula need to be designed in such a way that they can meet the educational needs of all the students admitted to the University. Ways in which the articulation gap between school and university can be bridged need to be clearly stated.

10. Consider the diversity of the student body and of academics by designing curricula which are sensitive to the different backgrounds and orientations of those engaged in the teaching and learning processes.

## 5. DIRECTIVES FOR IMPLEMENTING THIS POLICY

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

### **Directive 1**

In all curriculum design processes, the principles described above should be considered.

### **Directive 2**

In the development of curricula, departments/schools should clearly formulate their purposes as well as learning outcomes. This will facilitate the identification of specific outcomes for various courses and modules. Such planned outcomes need to be explicitly communicated to students in course/module guides and should appear in the University calendar and other relevant documents.

### **Directive 3**

Regular critical review of curricula should be standard practice in every department. Given the rapid pace of change, it is suggested that curricula should be reviewed every three years and that at six year intervals, a more comprehensive overhaul be undertaken.

### **Directive 4**

Student and peer feedback data should be elicited regularly to feed into curriculum review decisions.

### **Directive 5**

In developing and reviewing curricula, wide consultation should take place with students, key players, potential employers and academics from other institutions. Interdisciplinary curriculum planning should be encouraged.

### **Directive 6**

In planning curricula, departments should accommodate the diverse educational, linguistic and cultural backgrounds of students. Infused in all curricula should be strategies for inducting students into the literacies, discourses and practices of specific disciplines/fields.

### **Directive 7**

Course co-ordinators will be required to report via their HoDs, their Dean and Faculty Board to Senate on a regular basis in respect of their development and review of curricula in an annual 'Coordinator statement' which forms part of the Rhodes University Quality Assurance Framework for Teaching and Learning.

## 6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
ROLE 1	All members of academic staff teaching a course or part of a course are responsible for embedding the principles in this policy in their curriculum design and review.
ROLE 2	HoDs and Deans are responsible for identifying courses that could benefit from being restructured in order to provide additional tuition and support to students.
ROLE 3	Course co-ordinators are responsible for reporting on curriculum development and review in the annual statement submitted for quality assurance processes.
ROLE 4	HoDs and Deans are responsible for monitoring course coordinator statements and for setting up structures to ensure that any problem areas identified as a result of this process receive attention.

### 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.

HoD CHERTL

DVC Academic and Students Affairs

### POLICY REVIEW PROCEDURE

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

Policy approval and review will take the following route: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Teaching and Learning Committee</li><li>2. Faculty Boards</li><li>3. Senate</li><li>4. Council</li></ol>
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>