The Rhodes University Policy on Curriculum Development and Review

Policy Volume	Teaching and Learning
Policy Chapter	Two
Responsible Committee/Unit/Division/Faculty	Teaching and Learning Committee
Responsible Chairperson/Director/Manager	DVC, Academic and Student Affairs
Dates of First and Subsequent Council Approvals	1998
Revision History: Approved Reviews	2025
Review Cycle (e.g. every 2/5/7 years etc.)	5 years
Next Review Date	2030

1. POLICY PARTICULARS

1.1. Policy Title	**Curriculum Development and Review**
1.2. Policy Statement	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 2023 – 2028 (p.38). This Policy is guided by the institutional Policy on Teaching and Learning.
1.3. Reason for Policy	This policy ensures Rhodes University's curriculum is align with the Higher Education Act (1997), the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework, and the University's Vision and Mission. While the curriculum is guided by the Teaching and Learning Policy (2025-2030), it is further supported by the Institutional Development Plan (2023-2028), which provides strategic direction and resourcing to enhance curriculum quality. Together, these frameworks inform the principles and directives that shape curriculum development across the institution. The policy emphasises alignment with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), which defines learning outcomes, level, and credit values to structure student achievement. Constructive alignment, as highlighted by Biggs (2012), integrates course purpose, learning outcomes, assessment, and teaching methods to support effective learning. Rhodes University's general formative degree remains central fostering strong disciplinary knowledge in line with Strategies Goals 1(*Ensure quality scholarly teaching and learning to enable students to access powerful knowledge, engage in their learning and become critical problem solvers who are socially responsible global citizens*) & 3 (*Create an engaging and transformative student experience that promotes holistic development, growth and academic success*) of the Institutional Development Plan.

1.4. People affected by this Policy	All students in departments, institutes, centers and units offering academic qualifications.
1.5. Who should read this Policy	All students, lecturers, course coordinators, heads of departments and deans.
1.6. Website address/link for this Policy	https://www.ru.ac.za/governance/rupolicies/

2. RELATED DOCUMENTS, FORMS AND TOOLS

Relevant Legislation
- Higher Education Act 1997   - Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework 2013   - South African Qualifications Authority Level Descriptors 2012
Related Policies
The Rhodes University Curriculum Development and Review Policy needs to be read in conjunction with the following: - Rhodes University Policy on the Evaluation of Teaching and Course Design   - Rhodes University Policy on the Assessment of Student Learning   - Rhodes University Policy on External Examining   - Rhodes University Policy on Academic Integrity (Plagiarism Policy)   - Rhodes University Digital Education Policy   - Rhodes University Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Strategy   - Rhodes University Educational Technology Strategy   - Rhodes University Language Policy
Related Protocols
- Rhodes University Institutional Development Plan 2023 – 2028   - Rhodes University Institutional Transformation Plan 2019 -2022
Related Frameworks
Rhodes University Quality Promotion Framework for Teaching and Learning
Forms and Tools
- AI Guidelines   - Blended Learning Guidelines   - Brief guide for designing a curriculum and constructing a course guide.   - Reimagining Assessment at Rhodes University

3. POLICY DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
Curriculum	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. The term 'curriculum' encompasses: • Knowledge, i.e. the list of subjects, topics and texts included in a course of study; • Ways of knowing, literacies, skills and practices; • Teaching methodologies; • Assessment practices. 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. Curriculum is both the planned process, the actual implementation of the teaching and the students' experiences of the learning process, whether face-to-face, blended.
Blended Learning	A combination of in-person and online strategies where different blended learning approaches incorporate the best of both and integrate these in appropriate and contextually relevant ways to support disciplinary knowledge building and active learning
Learning outcome	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.
Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF)	Level descriptors describe the competencies at each level of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The competencies are: • Scope of knowledge • Knowledge literacy • Method and procedure • Problem solving • Ethics and professional practice • Accessing, processing and managing information • Producing and communicating of information • Context and systems • Management of learning • Accountability. • https://www.saqa.org.za/level-descriptors-for-the-south-african-national-qualifications-framework/

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.
Module	A module is a self-contained unit of study that forms part of a qualification or degree program. It represents a specific subject or topic area with defined learning outcomes, credit value, assessment methods, and teaching hours.
Extended Course	Courses which provide additional tuition and support by extending the length of the course without reducing the number of contact periods per week. A semester course thus typically becomes a year-long course.
Augmented Course	Courses which provide additional tuition without extending the length of the course. A semester course thus continues to be offered over a semester although additional contact periods are timetabled each week.
Flexible Curriculum	Provides a mix of mainstream, extended and augmented courses in order to provide appropriate learning opportunities for students who may require more time and more support in the transition from school to university. Students following a flexible curriculum usually take longer to attain a degree and carry a lesser load in terms of the number of courses in their first (and perhaps) second year of study. Deans and other academics advisors are able to use this mix of course opportunities to provide routes to suit students' study needs.

4. PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THIS POLICY

OVERVIEW
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 curriculum, in terms of structure and design mode of delivery, assessment and review.
3. Consider the way the structure of degrees and courses can be adapted to best meet the learning needs of students. For example, by using the four-year flexible degree and augmented and extended courses. The articulation gaps between different levels of study also need to be taken into account.
4. Design inclusive curricula that embrace the diversity of the student body and academic staff, incorporating multilingualism, varied backgrounds, perspectives- while actively addressing equity and historical redress. Curricula should be responsive to the educational needs of all students, ensuring fair access, representation, and meaningful participation in the learning process.

5.	Design curricula that are underpinned by educational research.
6.	Design curricula at levels that are relevant and up to date, and are responsive to the discipline/field, to students' learning needs and the social context of the university.
7.	Design curricula that privilege academic knowledge and knowing, while recognizing and including alternative and diverse knowledges and ways of knowing.

8.	Design curricula in which all elements are aligned at macro, meso and micro levels.
9.	Develop learning outcomes, which include knowledge, literacies, skills, practices, values and attitudes for each course or programme. These should be in line with HEQSF requirements and SAQA level descriptors.
10.	Design curricula that integrate academic knowledge with community learning, fostering reciprocal relationships that enrich academic understanding. This integration may be achieved by way of inclusion of activities such as knowledge transfer (from the institution to the community), structured, formally curriculated, and assessed activities in service-learning courses and engaged research.
11.	Consult with key stakeholders in the curriculum design and review process. Stakeholders may include current and past students and, academics, and where appropriate, professional bodies and employers in public and private sectors.
12.	Review curricula as required by Rhodes University Quality Promotions Framework on an ongoing basis.
13.	Provide appropriate support to all academic staff for curriculum development and review, as needed.

5. DIRECTIVES FOR IMPLEMENTING THIS POLICY

Directive 1
In all curriculum design processes, the principles described above should be considered.
Directive 2
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 3
Curricula must have clearly defined purposes and learning outcomes, at qualification level, these must be translated into specific outcomes for individual course and modules. All learning outocmes should be clearly communicated to students through course guides, the University calendar, and other relevant documents.
Directive 4
Student and peer feedback data should be elicited regularly to feed into curriculum review decisions.
Directive 5
All departments must regularly conduct critical review of their curricula as a standard practice. Curricula not subject to the review requirements of professional bodies should be reviewed every three years, with a more comprehensive evaluation and revision taking place every six years. This review must include broad consultations with students, key stakeholders, potential employers and academics from other institutions. Interdisciplinary curriculum planning is essential.
Directive 6
Course coordinators must submit reports on curriculum development and review through their Heads of Department, Deans, and Faculty Boards to Senate in accordance with Rhodes University Quality Promotions Framework.
Directive 7
All faculties and academic departments are required to integrate principles of diversity, equity, and quality assurance into curriculum design and review processes. This includes the development of curricula that: • Reflect the diverse backgrounds, languages, and perspectives of both students and academic staff • Address historical and systemic inequities through content, pedagogy, and assessment practices; and • Respond effectively to the varied educational needs of all enrolled students.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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	Heads of Department (HoDs) and Deans are responsible for actively managing and ensuring the quality and integrity of curriculum development and review processes.
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 identifying courses that could benefit from being restructured to provide additional tuition and support to students.
ROLE 5	CHERTL offers support for curriculum development and review where needed.

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

Policy approval and review will take the following route: • Teaching and Learning Committee   • Faculty Boards   • Senate   • Council
The Policy will normally be reviewed every FIVE years.
Communication of the review process

LIST OF APPENDICES
APPENDIX A CONTACTS

Area of Concern	Division/Faculty/Department	Telephone	Email
Guidance on implementation	Centre for Higher Education Research, Teaching and Learning	8171	Chertl-admin@ru.ac.za
Course and programme review	Institutional Research Planning and Quality Promotion	7364	r.nnadozi@ru.ac.za