

The Rhodes University Policy on Short Courses

Policy Volume	Academic Faculty and Students
Policy Chapter	Teaching and Learning Policies
Responsible Committee/Unit/Division/Faculty	Teaching and Learning Committee
Responsible Chairperson/Director/Manager	Director: Institutional Research, Planning and Quality Promotion Division (IRPQP)
Dates of First and Subsequent Council Approvals	15 December 2005; 13 May 2010; 2024
Policy Approval Pathways (e.g. committee, Senex, Senate, Council)	Faculty Boards – Teaching and Learning Committee – Senate – Council
Revision History: Approved Reviews	1 st revision 28 March 2002 – 2 nd revision 1 January 2005 – 3 rd revision 1 January 2006 – 4 th revision 1 January 2009 – 5 th revision May 2010 – 5 th revision September 2024
Review Cycle (e.g. every 2/5/7 years etc)	Every 3 years
Next Review Date	2027

1. POLICY PARTICULARS

1.1. Policy Title	The Rhodes University Policy on Short Courses
1.2. Policy Statement	This policy guides the processes and procedures related to the design and quality assurance of short courses offered by Rhodes University. Short courses should contribute to the dissemination of “locally responsive and globally engaged knowledge” and advance socially just and sustainable communities, institutions and businesses. The Institutional Development Plan (IDP) 2023 – 2028 commits the University to enable “wider reach and increased income from short courses and online continuous professional development, re-skilling and upskilling programmes”.
1.3. Reason for Policy	The purpose of this policy is to enable the delivery of short courses to facilitate institutional responsiveness to social, educational and labour-market needs, whilst ensuring quality of provision and proper record keeping. A significant number of short courses bearing the Rhodes University name are offered by departments, divisions and institutes and the external demand for short learning programmes is growing. Successful completion of short courses can contribute to the recognition of prior learning to facilitate access to whole qualifications. It is critical for the University to have a record of all courses being offered and avoid unnecessary overlap/duplication, as well as to protect its reputation and ensure that quality assurance measures are in place. The University also needs to respond to the Skills Development Levies Act as well as the SAQA Act, which indicate that skills development discretionary funds can only be accessed from the SETAs (Sector Education and Training Authorities) for learning programmes offered by accredited providers with satisfactory quality management systems.
1.4. Policy Objective/s	The policy aims to: - facilitate the University's agile response to social, educational and labour-market needs; - provide a framework for responding to specific labour market and skills development needs; - ensure that there are quality assurance mechanisms in place for the approval and offering of short courses at Rhodes University; - acknowledge and certificate learning which has taken place outside of the ‘whole qualification’ framework; - align short course activities with other University obligations and thereby ensure that the University's reputation, integrity and core business of teaching and research are not compromised; - protect the University's reputation and brand by approving, monitoring and evaluating the short courses offered in the University's name; - provide participants, employers, funders and other stakeholders with appropriate information and assurance that a quality management system is in place; - provide clarity and oversight on University relationships with external partners involved in short course offerings.
1.5. People affected by this Policy	Departments, divisions, centres and institutes offering short courses and support for short courses All staff of the University developing and offering short course programmes All prospective students enrolling for short courses
1.6. Who should read this Policy	All staff of the University developing and offering short course programmes Staff working with recruitment and admission into short courses Staff in divisions providing support for teaching and learning, e.g. IRPQP, CHERTL, Library, I & TS Staff in divisions providing other forms of academic development support All prospective students enrolling for short courses
1.7. Implementers of this Policy	DVC: Academic and Student Affairs, Faculties, IRPQP, Registrar's Division, CHERTL Departments, Units, Centres and Institutes offering short courses, Research Office, Centre for Postgraduate Studies
1.8. Website address/link for this Policy	https://www.ru.ac.za/institutionalplanningunit/policies/policiesa-z/

2. RELATED DOCUMENTS, FORMS AND TOOLS

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

Relevant Legislation (Legislation/Regulatory requirements/Organisational Reports – name these)
Higher Education Act (1997) National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act 67 of 2008 Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) (2013) A Good Practice Guide for the Quality Management of Short Courses Offered Outside of the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (2016) Criteria and Guidelines for Short Courses and Skills Programmes (2004) Policy for the Credit Accumulation and Transfer within the National Qualifications Framework (SAQA) (2014)
Related Policies
Rhodes University Admissions Policy Rhodes University Digital Education Policy Rhodes University Policy on the Evaluation of Teaching and Courses Rhodes University Teaching and Learning Policy Volume Rhodes University Recognition of Prior Learning Policy
Related Protocols
Code of Conduct for Attendees at Rhodes University Short Courses Rhodes University Institutional Development Plan 2023 – 2028 Rhodes University Levy Framework Rhodes University Protocol for the Approval to Undertake Additional Remunerated Work for All Staff
Forms and Tools (documents to be completed in support of this policy implementation)
Policy template for the policy itself. Documents pertaining to procedures for implementation, as well as monitoring and evaluation of the policy. Contract Approval Form Due Diligence Form Short Course Approval Template

3. POLICY DEFINITIONS

(Technical or Conceptual terms used in the policy)

No	TERM	DEFINITION
3.1.	Short course	Any learning programme of less than 120 credits which results in a certificate bearing the Rhodes University name, shield or crest and which is not listed as a qualification in the University calendar. This term incorporates all other related terms such as 'skills development programme' and 'short learning programme'.
3.2.	External partner	Any registered organisation/entity partnering with Rhodes University in the offering of a short course. This excludes external individuals who may be teaching on Rhodes short courses.
3.3.	Access	Refers to eligibility for admission to or entry into an educational programme.
3.4.	Advanced standing	The status granted to a student for admission to studies at a higher level than the student's prior formal studies would have allowed. A common example of advanced standing is 'exemption' that a student is granted from modules at a particular level of a programme.
3.5.	Benchmarking	Process of comparing programmes or courses in an institution against similar ones in other institutions, to assess their parity in terms of quality, standards, levels and other specified features.

3.6.	Certificate of competence	A formal document certifying the achievement of the outcomes of a short course, the HEQSF level at which the outcomes were achieved and the number of credits associated with this achievement. This certificate is not equivalent to a formal qualification.
3.7.	Good practices	Approaches, methods, techniques or ways of doing things that are generally accepted as being most effective in delivering desired results or outcomes in a particular industry or profession
3.8.	Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework	Sub-framework of the National Qualification Framework which is focused on higher education qualifications. It is developed and managed by the Council on Higher Education under the aegis of the South African Qualifications Authority.
3.9.	Learning outcomes	Contextually demonstrated results of specific learning processes. They include knowledge, skills, values and attitudes.
3.10.	Certificate of attendance	Confirms or provides recognition of attendance of a short course. It is not a statement of competence.
3.11.	Life-long learning	Learning that is flexible, diverse and available to individuals at different stages of their lives, in different places and within different contexts. It empowers individuals with learning tools, general and work-related knowledge and skills, inter-cultural and multi-cultural competencies, a sense of personal development, and self-actualisation.
3.12.	Quality	Embodies the fulfilment of minimum educational standards, ensuring fitness for purpose within the institutional context and mission in the broader national higher education framework. It also encompasses delivering value for money and fostering transformation by developing individuals' personal capabilities and capacities, while advancing the agenda for social change.
3.13.	Quality assurance	Refers to the processes of ensuring that specified standards or minimum requirements of quality in education are met.
3.14.	Quality management	The sum of institutional arrangements for assuring, supporting, developing and enhancing, as well as monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, research, and community engagement.
3.15.	Recognition of prior learning (RPL)	The principles and processes through which the prior knowledge and skills of an individual are made visible, mediated and assessed for the purposes of alternative access and admission to educational programmes, recognition and certification, or further learning and development.
3.16.	Short courses	Short learning programmes offered by higher education institutions outside their formal structured undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. They, therefore, do not lead to qualifications on the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF). They serve a range of social and educational purposes, including improving or refreshing participants' knowledge and skills in a particular field, improving participants' readiness for specific formal higher education programmes, continuing professional development, learning to use technology, personal fulfilment, social development and good citizenship, to mention a few. One category of short courses can be aligned to the outcomes and assessment criteria of HEQSF qualifications but are not credit-bearing. As such, these short courses may not be used as credit towards an HEQSF qualification, but could be used for the purposes of recognition of prior learning. Where applicable, the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level to which the qualification is aligned will be indicated in the short course application. A second category of short courses is aligned to a whole qualification and designed in such a way that modules can be offered as stand-alone, credit-bearing short courses. The whole qualification linked to these short courses should be accredited for this mode of delivery. Participants can accrue credits towards an HEQSF qualification by gaining module credits via short courses, however, it is not possible to do an entire qualification through the accumulation of credits via a series of short courses. Refer to the Rhodes University Recognition of Prior Learning Policy for the maximum numbers of credits towards a whole qualification that can be obtained through short courses.
3.17.	Types of short courses	Short courses as part of Community Engagement. These do not necessarily generate any income, but serve an important community development purpose. Short courses developed specifically for local people, community or employer organisations "Packaged" short courses offered to client or stakeholder groups upon request. These can be online, in-person or follow a blended approach. When in-person, courses are offered either on campus or at a location specified by the client or stakeholder.

		Custom-designed short courses for specific client or stakeholder groups. These can be offered online or in-person or follow a blended approach. When in-person, courses may be offered off-campus at a location specified by the client or stakeholder.
3.18.	Short course participants (or 'participants')	Individuals or groups who register for, and attend short courses to learn and acquire knowledge, skills, competencies and the desired attitudes or behaviour.
3.19.	Unit Standard	A Unit Standard refers to a specific component of learning that forms part of the NQF. It provides a registered statement of a discreet area of competence and desired education and training outcomes and its associated assessment or performance criteria. It is typically focused on a particular skill, knowledge area, or competency.
3.20.	Whole qualification	A whole qualification is understood to comprise at least 120 credits.

4. PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THIS POLICY

OVERVIEW
Short courses offer access to knowledge and opportunities to gain a diverse range of skills through structured learning programmes. Therefore, it is essential to maintain high-quality curricula, teaching, learning, assessment, and evaluation practices that foster meaningful learning experiences, in alignment with Rhodes University's teaching and learning-related policies.
Rhodes University strives to carry out the following, as far as is reasonably practicable:
4.1. Ensure effective short course coordination and governance structures.
4.2. Ensure relevant processes and procedures for short course design and development.
4.3. Ensure effective and efficient systems for course approval and registration.
4.4. Provide support for short course marketing, recruitment and registration of participants.
4.5. Ensure adherence to the rules and regulations of short course marketing, recruitment and registration of participants.
4.6. Ensure the provision of adequate teaching and learning resources, aligned assessment and evaluation strategies and procedures, as well as certification arrangements.
4.7. Ensure a system of support for records management; and a system and support for monitoring and review as a basis for continuous improvement.

5. DIRECTIVES FOR IMPLEMENTING THIS POLICY

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

5.1. APPROVAL PROCESS
5.1.1. All applications to offer short courses bearing the Rhodes University name or logo require the approval of: The Head of the relevant academic department/division CHERTL, for approval of the curriculum The dean of the faculty in the case of courses offered by academic departments/associated entities In the case of support divisions, the director or head of the division, followed by the dean of the faculty of the respective academic area The DVC: Academic and Student Affairs, who approves short course proposals in her/his capacity as executive management, with holistic oversight of the proposal. The IRPQP division coordinates the short course approval process and communicates outcomes to applicants.
5.1.2. All short course applications must be submitted for approval to the Chair of the Institutional Planning Committee (IPC), in a standardised format, the Short Course Approval Template (available from the IRPQP as well as on the Rhodes University website).
5.1.3. Course Coordinators will be notified in writing as soon as approval has been granted. Should approval not be recommended, the proposal will be considered at the next meeting of the IPC. Proposers should allow for a minimum of two weeks and a maximum of two months from submission to decision. Reasonable planning on the part of the applicant will eliminate delays.
5.1.4. Permission to offer a short course must be renewed every three years, i.e. a fresh application must be submitted to the IRPQP every three years. The evaluation outcome of each iteration of the course should inform further course development. Evidence of the latter will be considered when making a judgement on an application for renewal.

5.1.5.	Changes to the budget and personnel related to course offerings subsequent to the initial approval or renewal must be reported to the DVC: Academic and Student Affairs, IRPQP, and Finance divisions to facilitate relevant payments.
5.2.	ACCREDITATION OF SHORT COURSES
5.2.1.	The University is recognised by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) as a registered provider of higher education and has been delegated authority by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) to accredit its own short courses. Employers are therefore able to include Rhodes University-accredited short courses when claiming a refund of their Skills Development Levy.
5.2.2.	It should be noted that short courses which are based on Unit Standards are most in demand and staff are encouraged to align their short course offerings with registered Unit Standards (see http://www.saqa.org.za for further details). Assistance in developing Unit Standards is available from CHERTL.
5.2.3.	The design of a whole qualification is such that the constituent modules may be offered as short courses. Where students register for a whole qualification and have completed one or more modules as short courses at Rhodes University during the previous 3 years, exemption/credit may be given by the Registrar and the Dean of the relevant Faculty, provided the short course certificate is returned in exchange for the registration of a whole qualification certificate. Departments are encouraged to align their short courses to existing academic modules where appropriate.
5.2.4.	The higher education band of the NQF encompasses levels 5 – 10. While there is no clarity as yet on whether higher education institutions can offer short courses below level 5, the DHET discourages institutions from doing so. Where an application is made at Rhodes University to offer a short course below level 5, a full motivation for doing so must be provided, such as community engagement or internal capacity development/skills training.
5.2.5.	Section 3.16 provides details on credit-bearing and non-credit bearing short courses while Section 3.19 provides more details on Unit Standards.
5.3.	REMUNERATION AND WORKLOAD
5.3.1.	Remuneration for additional work, over and above the substantive role of the staff member, is regulated by the Rhodes University Protocol for the Approval to Undertake Additional Remunerated Work for All Staff.
5.3.2.	Attention should be given to the need to compensate staff if they are required to work additional hours on short courses; this is to be considered on a departmental/divisional level, with reference to the Protocol (5.3.1). Workload arising from short courses should however not compromise the substantive role of the staff member, or place undue pressure on them, the institution or other staff. This too should in the first instance be considered by the head of department or division.
5.3.3.	Permission to offer remunerated work related to short courses is ultimately granted by the DVC: Academic and Student Affairs.
5.3.4.	Any income to be earned from offering a short course should be declared in the Short Course application.
5.3.5.	Any additional payments to staff are contingent on actual income generated from the course.
5.3.6.	Where a staff member does not earn extra income from contributing to a short course for Rhodes University, this is not regarded as external or additional work; however, due consideration should be given to the impact of additional hours worked on the staff involved, other staff, and the institution.
5.3.7.	In cases where expertise to offer a short course or part thereof is sought externally or from another entity at Rhodes University, this should be factored into the short course budget. Payment can then be made to an individual or their employer as agreed.
5.4.	COURSE-RELATED RESPONSIBILITIES
5.4.1.	A Rhodes University staff member or members should be designated to take responsibility for the collection of fees, the quality assurance of the course (see 3.12) and the issuing of certificates.
5.4.2.	Potential students must be informed that the course will not be offered if the agreed minimum number of students is not reached. Should the course be cancelled for this reason, students will be refunded in full.
5.4.3.	All persons taking Rhodes University courses must be recorded by the Registrar's Division. A list of students registered for a particular course, including identity numbers and addresses, must be provided to the Registrar as soon as possible after commencement of the course, and must be revised once the course has been completed.
5.5.	CERTIFICATION
5.5.1.	The University (Registrar's Division) will issue certificates of competence, and where no assessment of competence was conducted, certificates of attendance.
5.5.2.	Certificates issued will normally be based on a standardised format and may only reflect competency (where applicable). Where approval is granted for recognition of attendance rather than competence, a certificate of attendance will be provided by the Registrar's Division.
5.5.3.	Where certificates are stolen, lost or misplaced, certificate holders must contact the Registrar's Division for replacements. Acceptable proof of certification must be provided in the form of a letter from the course coordinator or Head of Department/division where the course was offered.

5.5.4.	Short courses will not be reflected on 'whole qualification' academic transcripts.
5.6.	SHORT COURSE PARTICIPANTS
5.6.1.	The admission criteria for short courses should be determined based on the level of the course and the intended competencies. For short courses that offer credit towards qualifications, the admission standards should be similar to those required for respective full qualifications.
5.6.2.	Participants registered for short courses will not automatically be entitled to use University facilities such as computer laboratories, sports facilities and the Library. Permission to use such facilities must be specifically negotiated as part of the Short Course application.
5.6.3.	Short course participants are not subject to the University's student disciplinary code. However, the University reserves the right to deregister (deny attendance at Rhodes short courses to) any short course participant who brings the University into disrepute or who materially interferes with the maintenance of order and discipline at the University. The Code of Conduct for the Attendees at Rhodes University Short Courses (2024) has further details.
5.7.	FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS
5.7.1.	The University will levy a fee according to the Rhodes University Levy Framework on completion of the course as a contribution to administrative and infrastructural costs and in recognition of the University's national and international reputation. The levy will not normally be applied to short courses offered in the University's interests by Rhodes staff to Rhodes staff and/or students where staff are not paid and/or participants are not charged fees.
5.7.2.	Income from short courses should be deposited into a special department, division or institute account and payments from this account approved by the Course Coordinator according to the original application. Once approval has been granted by the IRPQP, any changes to the original application must be approved by the IRPQP.
5.7.3.	The Finance Division will allocate an account number and also produce a final statement of income and expenditure and distribution of profit within a reasonable time upon completion (normally within two months of completion of the course).
5.7.4.	As short courses do not qualify for Government subsidy, there is no automatic staff/partner/dependent discount as is the case with full qualifications. Any discounts on course fees will be at the discretion of the Course Coordinator. Rhodes University Support Staff wishing to take a short course (whether or not it is offered by Rhodes University) should note that application for financial assistance may be made to the Ad Hoc Training fund administered by the Division of People and Culture. Academic Staff wishing to take short courses should apply to CHERTL if the course is related to teaching, and to the Director: Research Office, if the course is research-related.
5.7.5.	Any legal disputes, non-payment or late payment of fees due, must be dealt with in accordance with the University debtor recovery policies, procedures and practices.
5.8.	ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF SHORT COURSES
5.8.1.	Where a certificate of competence is to be awarded, the assessment tasks must be aligned to the learning outcomes they are intended to assess.
5.8.2.	Assistance with ensuring valid assessment is available from CHERTL.
5.8.3.	The Course Coordinator is required to ensure that an evaluation of the student experience of the course is carried out, and a summary of the evaluation as well as proposed improvement plans should the course be offered again, must be provided to the IRPQP when an application to renew the approval of the course is submitted.
5.8.4.	Assistance in designing evaluations is available from CHERTL.
5.9.	EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIPS
5.9.1.	Persons teaching on short courses who are not Rhodes University staff members are not subject to University disciplinary procedures. However, the University reserves the right to withdraw approval for teaching on Rhodes University short courses from any person who brings the University into disrepute.
5.9.2.	Rhodes University does not engage in 'franchising' – lending or selling its name and reputation to external organisations where this is done to provide credibility or increase profits for the external partner. However, the University does recognise that mutual benefits can accrue in certain circumstances, as long as aims and responsibilities are clearly defined and QA processes are carefully managed. Partnership arrangements will only be considered where they contribute to the University's intellectual environment, community engagement efforts, reputation, and/or competitiveness.
5.9.3.	Where a Rhodes University short course offering involves an external partner, details of the proposed arrangements, including a motivation for entering into an external partnership, must accompany the short course application (see Section D of the short course application). This may require a formal contract or Memorandum of Agreement between the University and the external partner. The University's legal services unit should be approached for assistance in this regard.
5.9.4.	The intellectual property rights for short course content/curricula offered in the University's name will reside with the University, except in the case of SAQA-registered Unit Standards, which are considered to be public property.

5.9.5.	The intellectual property rights for short course content/curricula of joint partners will reside with them for the predetermined portion of their contribution to the specific short course. The use of the University's logo, name and brand may only be authorised by the Rhodes University Course Coordinator and/or Registrar as appropriate, and may not be used by any external partner without prior permission.
5.10.	COMMUNICATION OF POLICY
5.10.1.	The Short Course Policy, procedures and Short Course Approval Template will be distributed to all Heads of Departments/Divisions at the beginning of each year. A message will be sent to Toplist by CHERTL to this effect and the documents will also be available on the University website.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
ROLE 1 Course Coordinator	Responsible for obtaining permission from HoDs /line managers to offer a short course. Design the course and develop an appropriate budget. Arrange access to RUconnected and the Library if necessary. Ensure that accurate records of course participants are lodged with the Registrar's Division for certification purposes. Where appropriate, organise a certificate ceremony in consultation with the HoD. Other responsibilities are outlined in 5.4 above.
ROLE 2 HoD/Line manager	Responsible for approving applications from entities and individuals associated with entities to offer short courses.
ROLE 3 CHERTL	Responsible for the curriculum approval aspect of short courses, which includes sections A, B, and C of the Short Course Approval Template. Assists academics with the processes and procedures related to teaching and learning for course design, development and evaluation. Circulation and communication of this policy.
ROLE 4 IRPQP	Manage all processes related to the communication of the Rhodes University Short Course Policy, final approval and registration of short courses. Keep accurate records of all short courses offered on behalf of Rhodes University. Keep records of short course evaluations.
ROLE 8 Faculty Dean	Responsible for approving applications from entities and individuals associated with entities to offer short courses.
ROLE 7 DVC: Academic and Student Affairs	Responsible for the granting of permission to offer short courses.
ROLE 5 Research Finance	Responsible for the disbursements of funds associated with short courses; supporting implementers with budget preparation and financial reporting.
ROLE 6 Registrar's Division	Responsible for issuing short course certificates and keeping records of participants who have received short course certificates.
ROLE 7 Institutional Planning Committee (IPC)	Responsible for overseeing short course approval processes and ensuring alignment with institutional policies and best practices, while meeting the requirements of external stakeholders including the DHET and CHE, teaching and learning partners, students, and associated entities.

7. CONTACTS

Approval Phase	Division/Faculty/Department	Telephone	Email
Curriculum Approval	CHERTL	8171	Chertl-admin@ru.ac.za
IPC Approval	IRPQP	8060	irpqp@ru.ac.za
Registrar Approval	Registrar's Office	8276	registrar@ru.ac.za

8. POLICY REVIEW PROCEDURE

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

8.1. The Institutional Planning Committee reconsiders the effectiveness of the Short Course Policy every three years, or as necessary.
8.2. The Committee's recommendation is submitted (via the IPC minutes) to the Senate and Council for consideration.
8.3. If revisions are recommended and approved, a copy of the revised policy is widely distributed to all Heads of Departments or Divisions by the IPC Secretariat, and the web version is replaced by the new policy.

9. POLICY CONTEXT: RELEVANT DOCUMENTS CITED/CONSULTED/ADOPTED

1	Provided in Section 2
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LIST OF APPENDICES

Code of Conduct for Attendees at Rhodes University Short Courses