The Rhodes University Policy on Teaching and Learning

Policy Volume	Teaching and Learning
Policy Chapter	One
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	June 2019, June 2025
Revision History: Approved Reviews	2019, 2025
Review Cycle (e.g. every 2/5/7 years etc)	5 years
Next Review Date	2030

1. POLICY PARTICULARS

1.1. Policy Title	**Rhodes University Policy on Teaching and Learning**
1.2. Policy Statement	The purpose of this policy is to guide all teaching and learning activities at Rhodes University ensuring that they are aligned with the institution's unique characteristics and niche within the higher education system, making them 'fit for purpose'. In particular, the policy encourages teaching and learning drawing from theoretical and empirical research on teaching and learning, fostering an environment that supports diverse groups of students to thrive as learners. This policy aligns with two strategic goals outlined in the University's Integrated Development Plan (IDP): 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: The policy supports creating an environment that actively engages a diverse student body in deep, meaningful learning, enabling access to transformative knowledge. It furthermore supports the cultivation of critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, enabling students to become socially responsible global citizens who can adapt to complex challenges. 2. Promote access and success for all academically qualifying students and create academic conditions which enable them to thrive and succeed: The policy supports a high-quality learning experience by creating an inclusive and supportive academic environment that provides the diverse student body with the opportunity to thrive and succeed.

1.3. Reason for Policy	This policy ensures alignment of Rhodes University curricula with the Higher Education Act of 1997, the University's Vision and Mission, and the academic goals of the Institutional Development Plan (2023-2028). The general formative degree builds essential intellectual capabilities, critical thinking, and social awareness needed for navigating professional and societal challenges in context, this can be further enhanced through targeted capstone programmes such as Post Graduate Diplomas which help students apply foundational knowledge to specific workplace requirements. In accordance with the IDP, the policy supports: • Strategic Goal One (Objective 1.4): Develop and strengthen academic staff's digital pedagogical capability and capacity to design and implement blended (online and face-to-face) teaching and learning. • Strategic Goal Two (p.46): Promote access to Rhodes University for academically qualifying students and create academic conditions which enable them to thrive and succeed. • Strategic Goal Three (p.48): Create an engaging and transformative student experience that promotes holistic development, growth and academic success. Recognising its Eastern Cape roots while embracing both local responsiveness and global engagement, Rhodes University emphasizes meaningful community engagement to develop socially responsive graduates who understand South African society's complexities. Rather than treating community engagement as an add-on, the IDP (p.39) calls for its deliberate integration into academic programs. The University's research-intensive curricula places scholarly inquiry at the core of teaching and learning, deliberately connecting cutting-edge research, innovative pedagogy, and community engagement. This research-led approach enables students to apply academic knowledge to real societal challenges while developing critical citizenship skills through sustained interaction with communities locally and internationally, preparing graduates to contribute meaningfully as researchers and knowledge creators in diverse contexts.

1.4. People affected by this Policy	This policy applies to:
	• All students
	• All faculties;
	• All teaching members of the academic staff;
	• Divisions providing support for teaching and learning.
1.5. Who should read this Policy	• All Deans;
	• All Heads of Departments;
	• All teaching members of the academic staff;
	• All students;
	• Staff working with the recruitment of students;
	• Staff in divisions providing support for teaching and learning.
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
Related Policies
The Rhodes University Policy on Teaching and Learning needs to be read in conjunction with the following:
• Rhodes University Policy on the Evaluation of Teaching and Course Design
• Rhodes University Policy on Curriculum Development and Review
• 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
Forms and Tools
CHERTL Brief Guides

3. POLICY DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
Teaching	Guiding and directing students' learning
Research	The production of new knowledge
Community Engagement	A range of activities through which a university learns from communities while sharing its knowledge with them in return.
General formative degree	Results from following a programme of learning which begins by introducing students to a broad range of subjects at first year level but which then requires them to follow two of these subjects through to a more advanced third year level as 'majors'.
Digital pedagogies	Digital pedagogies encompass the thoughtful integration of digital technologies into teaching and learning practices to enhance educational experiences and outcomes. These approaches leverage digital tools, platforms, and resources to create engaging, interactive, and accessible learning environments while developing students' critical digital competencies. At Rhodes University, digital pedagogies go beyond technical skills to embrace a values-based approach that fosters critical digital and AI literacies, encouraging students to evaluate, create, and communicate information ethically and effectively. This pedagogical framework prepares students to navigate digital landscapes in their studies and future careers while maintaining a critical perspective on technology's role in knowledge creation and dissemination.
Digital literacies	Digital literacies involves accessing, managing, understanding, integrating, communicating, evaluating, and creating information safely, ethically and appropriately through digital technologies to support studies and future careers.
Research-intensive university	An institution that, as a result of its focus on research makes a major contribution to research outputs at a national level.
Extended courses	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 courses	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' needs.

Blended provision	Comprises a combination of online education and face-to-face provision.
Mainstream courses	Standard core academic courses that are part of the primary curriculum and taken by the general student population.
Multilingual pedagogies	Pedagogies that use multiple languages to support student engagement and academic success. This approach enables student to draw from their full linguistic repertoire for communication and learning.
Service Learning	Takes learning to the service of communities and, at the same time, brings learning from those communities to bear on academic knowledge and knowing through formally curriculated and assessed activities.

4. PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THIS POLICY

OVERVIEW
Rhodes University strives to carry out the following, as far as is reasonably practicable:
1. Ensure that teaching and learning within the institution is 'fit for purpose' in the sense that it is cognisant of and responds to the context in which it exists as a research-intensive university in the Eastern Cape.
2. Ensure that academic knowledge and knowing are recognised as but one form of knowledge and one way of knowing and that these are privileged in the academy.
3. Ensure that support for development of disciplinary literacies are embedded in the courses.
4. Forster students' digital literacies to prepare them to navigate and succeed in environments where artificial intelligences and digital competencies are becoming essential.
5. Ensure that greater epistemic access is fostered by drawing on students' linguistic resources through multilingual pedagogies.
6. Community Engagement is integral to teaching and learning in the mainstream curriculum in Service Learning. The aim would be to ensure that all students have the opportunity to engage with Service Learning at some point in their curriculum.
7. Ensure that planning and strategies around the use of ICTs in teaching and learning takes place and that support and resources are available for this.
8. Ensure that earmarked funding is used to drive the goals of this policy.
9. Ensure that all staff are supported and developed to fulfil their roles as academic teachers at Rhodes University.
10. Ensure that the library is adequately resources to meet the institution's teaching and learning needs.

5. DIRECTIVES FOR IMPLEMENTING THIS POLICY

Directive 1: The curriculum should consider the origins of knowledge and the way course structures can be used to provide development of and support for students. In this regard, a 'flexible curriculum' should be considered where necessary.

Directive 2: The curriculum will be subject to ongoing review and development.

Directive 3: Staff should reflect on their roles as academic teachers and the extent to which they are providing access to knowledge and ways of knowing to the students they teach. Evidence of this reflection will be required at the completion of the probationary period and whenever an application for personal promotion is made.

Directive 4: Lecturers will be supported in this process of reflection through the provision of formal courses and advice offered at a more informal level.

Directive 5: In promoting multilingualism, Indigenous African languages will be supported in order to allow their use as resources for making sense on the world and experiences within it.

Directive 6: The curriculum should consider how engagement with communities can be used to provide a service to those communities as a means of learning from them.

Directive 7: Blended teaching and learning should enable students to harness the potential of the increasingly pervasive and rapidly evolving digital landscape. The use of ICTs in teaching and learning will be supported through this strategy, planning and resourcing.

Directive 8: Earmarked funding will be carefully directed towards supporting the principles of this policy.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
ROLE 1	CHERTL is responsible for supporting and developing members of the academic staff in their teaching roles so that they can meet the requirements of this policy.
ROLE 2	Academics are responsible for their own ongoing development as teachers and for engaging with a process of ongoing reflection on the curriculum and the pedagogy it comprises. Academics are also responsible for drawing on the range of initiatives that may be available to them to support their teaching and their students' learning.
ROLE 3	Departments and Faculties are responsible for the quality of curricula and of the assessment it encompasses. They therefore need to ensure that policies on teaching and learning guide their work, and that they adhere to procedures for reviewing both curricula and assessment practices. Significant changes are approved by faculties before being recommended to Senate. Faculties are responsible for providing time at meetings for their discussion.
ROLE 4	CHERTL is responsible for working in collaboration with the IT Division in order to strategize and plan for the use of ICTs in teaching and learning and in order to provide support for their use. CHERTL and the IT Division are responsible for

	budgeting for the use of ICTs.
ROLE 5	The library is responsible for providing resources as well as services which support teaching and learning. This takes the form of providing diverse learning resources, ensuring discovery and access through effective systems and infrastructure, cultivating information and digital competencies, fostering supportive learning environments and facilities, enabling knowledge creation, and providing essential support.
ROLE 6	The Teaching and Learning Committee is responsible for the development and review of all policies related to teaching and learning and for providing guidance on teaching and learning matters to Faculties and to Senate. The Committee is also responsible for approving proposals for the use of earmarked funding and for monitoring its use.
ROLE 7	The Division of Student Services and Development is responsible for the development of the residence system as a living and learning space along with those who serve as Residence Head and hall fellows.

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	CHERTL	8171	Chertl-admin@ru.ac.za