



**RHODES UNIVERSITY**  
Grahamstown • 6140 • South Africa

# Protocol for the appointment of the Head of Department for Commerce, Humanities and Science

<b>Responsible Committee/Unit/Division/Faculty</b>	Human Resources
<b>Responsible Chairperson/Director/Manager</b>	
<b>Date</b>	March 2013
<b>Review Cycle (e.g. every 2/5/7 years etc)</b>	
<b>Last Reviewed</b>	March 2021

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## PROTOCOL FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF A HEAD OF DEPARTMENT IN THE FACULTIES OF EDUCATION, COMMERCE, HUMANITIES AND SCIENCE<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Introduction

The process by which heads of departments are appointed is managed by the Dean of the faculty and culminates in a recommendation by the Dean for consideration by the Institutional Planning Committee (IPC) and later Senate and Council.

Heads of departments (HoD) are appointed for a period of three years. The appointments process is normally completed by 1 January in the year in which the new HoD takes office on 1 July. The period of appointment is usually from 1 July to 30 June such that the new HoD has a period of orientation and settling down and is involved in planning for the next academic year.

### 2. Context of the Appointment of the HoD

The appointment of a HoD takes place within a context of an academic department seeking and needing leadership and individuals seeking leadership opportunities. It is acknowledged that in some departments, the responsibility of leadership is shared by the senior academics, such that the HoD role is more one of academic facilitator, administrator and people manager.

The determination of a new HoD must of necessity involve a critical interrogation of both institutional and departmental needs and the applicants' ability to meet those needs in the position of HoD such that the most appropriate person is appointed to lead the department in the most appropriate direction.

Institutional needs include ensuring alignment of the department with the strategic imperatives of the institution including transformation and employment equity; supporting the values of the institution and engaging in practices of good governance and sound leadership.

The current state of a department needs to be considered inclusive of its academic trajectory (related to teaching and learning, research, administration, professional involvement and community engagement) and the implementation strategies used to achieve that trajectory. The University Digest of Statistics, internal departmental documentation relating to mission, vision and strategies, as well as any University-wide imperatives serve both to contextualise and understand a department.

Applicants need to be fully aware of the roles and responsibilities of a HoD particularly as it pertains to the provision of academic leadership for a department. Additional roles and responsibilities include that of people management, change facilitator, administrator and resourcer as well as advocate. Applicants also need to weigh carefully the needs and expectations of a department (of its HoD) with their own career aspirations. For a more detailed description the HOD role, please refer to Appendix 1.

The final appointment of a HoD takes place within a framework that provides guidelines related to:

- Period and process of appointment (this protocol);
- Mentoring, support and development provided by the Dean and other senior staff in the institution (protocol on review and support of HODs);
- Resources provided to support the HoD and academic (protocol related to HoD academic leave and HoD research support);
- Allowance paid to HoDs (protocol related to HoD allowances and the determination thereof).

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<sup>1</sup> In the case of the Faculties of Pharmacy and Law, the Dean is also the HoD and the Deputy Dean is also the Deputy HoD. Therefore, when the individual is appointed as Dean or Deputy Dean, s/he is automatically appointed as HoD or Deputy HoD respectively. Should this change in the future, this process will then apply.

### 3. Principles

The process to appoint a head of department is guided by the following principles:

- a) It is recognised that academic departments differ in a variety of ways and that the role of HoD may also differ. The process of appointing a HOD may need to reflect these differences. Notwithstanding this, due consideration needs to be given to the principles listed below;
- b) Wide-based consultation, initiated by the Dean, is undertaken with departmental members as well as the Vice-Chancellor/Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic and Student Affairs/Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Development and Director: Human Resources. Where the Dean believes that this is not necessary, a motivation can be made to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic and Student Affairs to deviate from this process;
- c) If a vacancy exists in the department, the possibility of recruiting an external applicant for HoD role at the same time requires consideration;
- d) All members of staff (academic and support) usually participate in the process;
- e) The process of appointing a HoD usually provides an opportunity for applicants to state their case and to table evidence of their suitability for the role. In turn, staff have an opportunity to engage with the applicant;
- f) Employment equity and transformation considerations apply;
- g) The Dean may, as is deemed appropriate to the context and dynamics of the department, utilise a range of mechanisms to determine which applicants for HoD are deemed un/suitable ;
- h) A recommendation is made by the Dean after consideration of the input of staff, the information presented by the candidates, the needs of the department as well as institutional imperatives. No decision is taken solely on the input of staff;
- i) The Dean must be able to defend the particular process followed (where this deviates from the recommended process below) as well as the recommendation made.

### 4. Process

Steps in the process include:

- a) The Dean of the Faculty initiates this process, ideally more than 6 months before the end of the current HoD's term;
- b) The Dean may consult with the Vice-Chancellor/Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic and Student Affairs, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Development and Director: Human Resources to consider the specific department's concerns and needs and staffing dynamics, including employment equity considerations;
- c) The Dean meets with all staff of the department to outline the role and responsibilities of the HoD, the equity profile and plan of the department, and the academic considerations of the department, and to encourage applications from staff. The opportunity (i.e. a current vacant post or upcoming retirement) and need to look externally should be explored;
- d) The Dean meets with the applicants to discuss the position of HoD and to explore the impact on individual career trajectories;
- e) Applicants usually make a presentation including a question and answer session to relevant staff of the department. Such a presentation will usually include the applicant's vision for the department. Applicants may also provide an overview of their leadership experience and contributions in other institutions and contexts. Where the applicant is a current HoD and there is no contestation, the Dean may elect to not have this presentation or may elect to run a different process of engagement between the staff and HoD. Where there is only one applicant and this person is not the current HoD, the holding of the presentation is advised;
- f) The Dean meets with the staff of the department, preferably and usually on an individual basis to canvas views on the suitability of applicants or where the current HoD is the only applicant, the satisfaction with the current HoD continuing. However, group discussions may also be feasible. The Dean may elect to hold a secret ballot where necessary. The Dean may also elect to consult senior members of the Faculty on their views of a new HoD;
- g) The Dean considers all the information on the applicants e.g. presentations, document on leadership experience, staff input/secret ballot and departmental and institutional needs;
- h) Once the Dean identifies all appointable candidates for the position of HoD, diversity and employment equity requirements of the University will apply. With consideration to the demographic profile of the HoDs within the institution and particularly within the Faculty, the Dean makes a recommendation that seeks to achieve diversity;
- i) The Dean communicates the recommendation to the applicants and then to staff;

- j) Where feasible and appropriate, a development conversation should take place with “unsuccessful” applicants to identify areas of future growth and development opportunities available. The Director: HR may assist;
- k) The Dean recommends for approval the appointment of a new HoD to IPC, Senate and Council; and
- l) The Dean retains all records of this process including any secret ballot. The Dean writes a confidential written report that details the process undertaken and argues for the recommendation of the particular applicant. Where the above process has not been followed, the reason for this and the actual process followed must be included. This report will not serve before IPC, Senate or Council but will be provided to the Vice-Chancellor.

Where the Dean wishes to follow a different process:

- (i) Approval for this must be sought from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic and Student Affairs;
- (ii) Points 4 (h) to (l) as outlined above must still be followed.

**Written: Professor D Sewry with input from Deans, Director: HR, HoD Forum**

**Presented to the HoD Forum: October 2012**

**Presented to Deans Forum: March 2013**

**Last updated: March 2013**



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Applies to all Heads of Academic Departments

**No grade**

DATE PROFILE LAST UPDATED

February 2013

<b>POST TITLE</b>	Head of Department		
<b>FACULTY</b>	All	<b>REPORTING STRUCTURE</b>	Dean
<b>JOB TYPE (ACADEMIC/SUPPORT)</b>	Academic	<b>CONTRACT/PERMANENT</b>	Contract, 3 years, usually from 1 July
<b>Outside funded (yes or no)</b>	No	<b>Full-time/part-time</b>	Adjunct to academic role

**MAIN JOB OBJECTIVE/S**

The role of the Head of the academic department (HoD) is to:

1. Provide intellectual and academic leadership,
2. Lead and manage people, processes, resources and associated administration,
3. Represent the department both internally and externally to the institution, championing of the needs of the department where necessary,

In addition, as a member of the leadership of the Faculty and institution, the HoD is required to:

4. Contribute to overall leadership and direction of the Faculty,
5. Contribute to the overall institutional leadership and direction of the University.

It is recognised that these roles intersect and are integrally connected.

<b>DESCRIPTION OF KEY ROLES and RESPONSIBILITIES</b>	<b>MINIMUM STANDARD EXPECTED</b>
<p>This is a generic role profile. It is recognised that academic departments differ in a variety of ways and that the role of HoD may also differ. While the HoD may look to other senior academics to share the academic leadership role and/or the leadership and management roles, the HoD still remains responsible for the execution of these key roles and responsibilities.</p>	
<p><b>Intellectual and academic leadership including:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Driving and facilitating the positioning of the department in the Faculty and institution,</li> <li>2. Driving and facilitating the positioning of the department at the national and international milieu with particular reference to the strategic imperatives of the Faculty and University;</li> <li>3. Ensuring awareness of the changes, challenges and opportunities within the HE sector, strategic imperatives of the institution and exploring what this means for one's own academic department and driving implementation of strategic imperatives at the departmental level;</li> <li>4. Providing intellectual academic leadership in terms of the department's teaching and learning, research and/or community engagement activities;</li> <li>5. Driving and facilitating the conceptualisation, interrogation, implementation and review of academic standards, processes and systems at the level of the department;</li> <li>6. Championing the academic endeavour and ensuring that this remains the focus of the institution and that decisions are made that support (and do not undermine) these endeavours;</li> </ol>	<p>Effective positioning of the department given the Faculty and institutional strategic imperatives and effective positioning of the department at the national and international level within the discipline.</p> <p>The HoD strives to uphold the principle of collegiality through consultation with members of the department. Much of the work of the HoD in terms of leadership is done with staff.</p> <p>Proactive engagement, promoting the values of the institution, Faculty and department. Proactively contribute towards the leadership of the Faculty and institution and to do so in a constructive and effective manner. Participation and contributions are informed, effective and timeous.</p> <p>The quality of academic leadership is very good and contributions made enhance the academic project particularly at the departmental level.</p> <p>Department strategic plans are appropriate (in terms of focus, resources, institutional imperatives but allowing for "stretch"). Plans are efficiently and effectively implemented. The HoD is able to get support for the plans and is able to navigate conflicts and tensions.</p> <p>The HoD ensures implementation of the relevant frameworks for teaching, research and Community Engagement (CE) within the University. Where there are problems, the HoD champions the resolution of these productively.</p> <p>Academic standards, processes and systems at the departmental level are aligned with those at the Faculty and institutional level. Implementation is effective. Where problems exist, the HoD</p>

<p>7. Participating in the key debates related to the current and future functioning of the institution.</p>	<p>appropriately motivates for changes within the Faculty and institution.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Leadership and Management of people and processes and associated administration</b></p> <p>The HoD is responsible for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensuring the smooth functioning of the Department in respect of the academic programme and engaging in effective academic planning and quality assurance;</li> <li>2. Ensuring the smooth functioning of the Department in respect of staff inter-alia: driving an appropriate departmental culture, staffing appointments, new staff induction and orientation, probation, personal promotions, staff development, consideration of academic leave applications, dealing with staffing problems;</li> <li>3. Ensuring the smooth functioning of the department in respect of resources (budgets, equipment, furniture, infrastructure) inter-alia: determining of department needs, understanding resource allocation in the institution, submitting of budgets, appropriate financial management within the department, accessing external funds where feasible</li> <li>4. Ensuring appropriate capacity in the department to run the department including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working collaboratively with staff to establish areas of responsibility within the overall work of the department;</li> <li>• Involving senior staff in the academic leadership of department and delegation of appropriate portfolios;</li> </ul> </li> <li>5. Managing the support staff of the department inter-alia: selection of staff, staff induction and orientation, probation, dealing with performance problems including disciplining of staff, training and development of staff, motivation and recognition of staff including motivating for merit awards where appropriate;</li> <li>6. Ensuring appropriate implementation of systems and processes to ensure knowledge management;</li> <li>7. Participating in a variety of University Committees and in some cases, Chairing of Committees.</li> </ol>	<p>Academic planning is effective taking into account student enrolments, viability of courses, employer needs, future student educational needs, changes to instructional methods, transformation imperatives related to the academic project etc. The quality of the academic programme is evaluated and improvements made. Problems are identified and solutions sought.</p> <p>The HoD is able to engage effectively with others inside and outside the institution, fostering productive relationships e.g. with the key structures such as CHERTL and support staff structures in the institution including the Registrar’s Division, Research office, Finance, HR, Community Engagement (CE) etc).</p> <p>Processes, systems and practices are efficient and effective. Input on processes owned by other areas e.g. Registrar’s Division, HoD of Students Division, HR Division is provided. Where there are problems, the HoD is persistent and consistent in finding a solution together with the relevant area.</p> <p>The HoD executes his/her responsibilities effectively and efficiently within the relevant frameworks, policies of the Faculty and institution. The HoD is able to implement change successfully. Appropriate advice is given to staff in line with policy parameters.</p> <p>The HoD is able to effectively negotiate the delegation of work to staff in the department and is able to ensure commitment and follow through.</p> <p>Management of support staff are in line with relevant HR frameworks and this is done effectively and efficiently. The HoD seeks to establish a productive, supportive relationship.</p> <p>Effective and efficient systems are implemented that allow for continuity from one HoD to another, from the HoD to Acting HoD, during periods of absence as well as in the event of the resignation of administrative staff in the Faculty.</p> <p>There is active participation in University Committees; responsibilities are executed appropriately and timeously.</p>

***Effective internal and external representation of the Department and liaison between the Department and other stakeholders***

Within the institution, the HoD is responsible for:

1. Representing the department's interests at the Faculty and institutional level;
2. Acting as a liaison between department and other stakeholders within the University;
3. Communicating to the department about institutional imperatives and allocation of resources particularly where scarce resources have been allocated elsewhere;
4. Creating awareness in the department of institutional interests and where this may be in conflict with those of the department, navigating these tensions and potential conflicts;

Outside of the institution, the HoD is responsible for:

1. Representing the department's interests and at times, also representing the institution's interests;
2. Liaising with similar departments at other Universities as required.

The HoD is able to engage effectively with others inside and outside of the institution, fostering productive relationships and promoting a positive but realistic image of the institution.

Communication with stakeholders, internal and external, is timeous, uses appropriate media and is accurate.

***QUALITIES OF A SUCCESSFUL HOD***

**Academic competencies:**

- Ability to foster a research culture in the department, appropriate to the context of the department
- Ability to foster a culture that values teaching & learning and that prizes excellence in the department
- Understanding of what community engagement means within the department and with an ability to encourage participation by academics in CE

**Leadership competencies:**

- Understanding of the social, political and economic challenges facing HE institutions today, at the global and national levels and the implications of this for an institution such as Rhodes University
- Strong understanding of the Rhodes university context, how the institution operates, where to access information
- Unquestionable personal integrity with a keen sense of fairness, able to balance the competing demands within a HE institution with staff, student, stakeholder expectations and institutional resources
- Personal credibility and an ability to engender respect and instill confidence in people at different levels within the institution as well as those outside of the institution
- Ability to inspire and encourage colleagues, and a commitment to collegiality
- Ability to develop productive relationships with staff in support Divisions holding these Divisions accountable to the agreed service levels
- Ability to think creatively and innovatively particularly as regards the academic project
- People skills with a consultative and inclusive style, able to build consensus and commitment to new initiatives, commitment to transparent leadership
- Ability to develop, articulate and implement strategic goals
- Strong planning, organisational and administrative skills with the skills and resilience to cope with multiple demands and periods of high volume in terms of work and stress
- Sound numerical ability, able to work with budgets and analyses of student and staff statistics

**Personal attributes:**

- Passion to see staff, students, the department, the Faculty and the institution developing and succeeding
- High level of personal responsibility and a strong sense of accountability
- High level of professionalism and conduct that will enhance the reputation of the University
- Personal flexibility: willing to consider alternative perspectives and ideas but with an ability to make difficult decisions independently
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills with an ability to relate to staff at different occupational levels as well as from different cultures and backgrounds
- Champions transformation and diversity: culturally aware and sensitive, fosters an attitude of appreciating diversity, has the ability to drive the transformation agenda (staff, students and curriculum)
- Reflexive practitioner in leadership role, seeks feedback, able to withstand criticism and use constructive criticism to improve

**Last updated: March 2013**