

Guidelines for the Appointment and Promotion of, and Recognition for, Academic Staff in Disciplines that lead to Professional Qualifications

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HEMIS classification	
Aim	Set out the factors to be taken into account when (a) <i>appointing</i> and <i>promoting</i> academic staff and (b) <i>recognising</i> various forms of performance in the ongoing management of the kind of disciplines that lead to professional qualifications.
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Owner of these guidelines	Rector and Vice-Chancellor
Institutional functionary (curator) responsible for these guidelines	Chief Director: Strategic Initiatives and Human Resources
Date of approval	
Approved by	SU Council
Keywords	career-oriented training

The core of the guidelines

As regards the appointment or promotion of staff, Stellenbosch University (SU) differentiates between disciplines that lead to professional qualifications and other disciplines taught at the University.

1. Introduction

These guidelines govern two matters concerning disciplines taught at SU that lead to professional qualifications, namely:

- a) considerations regarding the *appointment and promotion* of academic staff in these disciplines;
- b) considerations regarding the *recognition* of various forms of performance in the ongoing management of such environments.

2. Application of the guidelines

These guidelines apply by default to the appointment and promotion of, and recognition for, academic staff in disciplines that lead to professional qualifications.

3. Definitions

'Career-oriented training' refers to law, engineering, health-related professions (e.g. medical doctors, physiotherapists), psychology (general as well as industrial), accountancy, actuarial science and education. Many other forms of training can be added to this list even though they do not necessarily lead to a professional qualification in the sense of eventual professional registration. In these cases, the training provided in a variety of subjects creates a certain profile that actually is similar to a professional qualification.

4. Aim of the guidelines

This document aims to draw up guidelines that will establish uniform processes regarding the appointment and promotion of, and recognition for, academic staff in disciplines that lead to professional qualifications.

5. Objectives of the guidelines

When staff from the category of professional disciplines are considered, a broader basis must apply – one that recognises experience and stature in practice, too.

6. Principles of the guidelines

Institutions of higher education in South Africa must expressly recognise professional qualifications as well as activities that are closely related to the professional work environment.

7. Terms of the guidelines

As set out in this document

8. Conflict resolution

Via the Human Resources Division (HR)

9. Control over the guidelines

9.1 Functions

The Rector is the owner of these guidelines and must ensure that they are drafted, updated and implemented, and that a curator and related structures and functionaries are appointed and that they function effectively.

9.2 Implementation

The Chief Director: Strategic Initiatives and Human Resources is the curator of these guidelines and must ensure that they are drafted, approved, reviewed, communicated and made available. The curator is also responsible for the interpretation and implementation of the guidelines, and must convene a task team to review them periodically, as circumstances require.

9.3 Monitoring and reporting

The owner of these rules is accountable and the curator is responsible for the necessary controls being established to monitor compliance with the rules and report on it.

9.4 Communication

Via the HR homepage

9.5 Reviewing

These guidelines will be reviewed ad hoc for amendment as necessitated by operational circumstances.

9.6 Noncompliance

The normal line management practices will apply.

10. Background

The issue about the way in which the qualifications, academic experience, and publication and research output should be evaluated of staff who teach disciplines that lead to professional qualifications has presented itself in various environments at SU. In cases

before the Appointments Committee of Senate – the AC(S) – it appeared that staff who teach the professional disciplines have a different entry pathway from candidates who follow an academic career and have delivered (mostly) solid publication and research output. Therefore, when staff from the category of professional disciplines are evaluated, a broader basis has to be taken as point of departure, recognising experience and stature in practice, too.

In the functioning of academic environments, too – especially as concerns performance evaluation – there is an apparent need for establishing a principle regarding such staff members' continuing involvement in their professional environments.

Certain environments at SU have already established formal principles regarding this matter and have instituted mechanisms for handling it. For example, the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences has developed formal mechanisms – which have already been implemented – for giving the necessary recognition to practice while ensuring that research objectives are obtained. One of the recommendations in these guidelines is that existing policy and arrangements in this regard be reviewed, where applicable, in light of the approach outlined in this document.

11. The broader context of career-oriented training that leads to professional qualifications at SA universities

'Career-oriented training' occurs in various disciplines, the most important ones being law, engineering, health-related professions (e.g. medical doctors and physiotherapists), psychology (general as well as industrial), accountancy, actuarial science and education. Other forms of training can be added to this list even though they do not necessarily lead to a professional qualification in the sense of eventual professional registration. In these cases, the training offered in a variety of subjects creates a certain profile that actually is similar to a professional qualification.

In some countries developments have created a situation where not all forms of these kinds of career-oriented training are provided at universities. (E.g. in many European countries disciplines such as fine arts, music, librarianship and accountancy are studied at separate institutions or are linked, instead, to institutions similar to technikons.) In several European countries engineering is taught at specialised technological universities, together with more applied subjects from other disciplines. However, even in those countries the traditional differentiations are becoming increasingly blurred, and these days a wider variety of disciplines are taught at a single institution.

In South Africa it has become the norm for training at the highest level in these disciplines to be provided at universities. (At other levels of expertise training in such disciplines are provided at technikons or technical colleges, too.) A large percentage of university students go there precisely to obtain such professional qualifications, among other things with the expectation that it will grant them easier access to a job. In fact, these disciplines draw some of the best students at university.

Consequently South African universities are not monolithic institutions. The same institution that presents itself as a research-based or research-driven university on the strength of its performance in certain scientific disciplines, in the case of other disciplines is the home of high-level professional training in which the focus on research is not as

strong as, or academic activities at the highest level are of a completely different nature from that in disciplines where conventional research output is an important criterion.

This means that universities that strive to be known as research institutions must achieve their research objectives by means of the output of only part of the academic staff. Inversely this means that such universities develop and maintain their reputation as sources of top-level expertise in other disciplines (particularly in those disciplines where professional qualifications count) precisely because they accommodate such professional disciplines. This also determines universities' relevance to the high-level training needs of a country.

Therefore, institutions of higher education in South Africa must expressly grant recognition to professional qualifications and activities that are closely related to the professional work environment, and SU wishes to do so. That is the reason why the relevant considerations need to be set out and why mechanisms need to be instituted to ensure that such recognition is implemented in practice.

12. Attributes of an environment that offers career-oriented training aimed at professional qualifications, and what such attributes imply

Environments that offer such training have the following specific attributes, which have certain implications:

- 12.1 *Professional councils* often exert a strong (sometimes even an overbearing) influence on curricula, and in many instances also are involved in further (extra-universitarian) examinations that graduates need to pass in order to obtain the relevant professional qualification.
- 12.2 Training (large parts of it, at any rate, and definitely where key areas are concerned) must be provided by staff *who possess professional qualifications themselves*, because they can prepare students for obtaining a professional qualification.
- 12.3 The credibility and stature of university training among students and future employees are related to *the reputation in practice* of the staff who train students for an academic qualification. This reputation in practice differs from the outputs of a person who opted for an academic career, instead; in the latter case a more conventional criterion – research publications – is applied:
 - a) In certain instances reputation in practice is demonstrated by the fact that a person's *stated opinions* are considered authoritative in the field of study (e.g. in the form of a legal opinion, authoritative textbooks written by the author that collate and reinterpret knowledge at the highest level, a new approach established in a professional discipline or a very successful specialised practice).
 - b) In other instances reputation in practice is related to *successful projects* of significant scope that are regarded as involving the kind of expertise and approach to practice that should be passed on to new entrants to the discipline (e.g. the management of successful engineering projects of an even wider scope).

- 12.4 In many instances such professional staff members would not have been able to reach their exceptional level of performance in practice if they had channelled some of their energies into more *conventional research outputs*. In the same way staff in the academic lane, had they become practitioners, possibly would not have enjoyed the kind of project involvement that could lead to exceptional performance in their discipline. (In some disciplines, nevertheless, the outputs of the academic environment do converge with those of the practical environment; e.g. in delivering high-level papers at subject-specialist conferences.)
- 12.5 Professional persons in the academic environment usually must be able to *remain in contact with practice*, be it by means of involvement in professional councils or societies, or by means of contractual research or consultation (depending on the general practice in the discipline concerned). The value of such professional networks in positioning a university in a certain field must not be underestimated.
- 12.6 Persons who have developed a solid professional career *sometimes are very expensive* to employ. Provision must be made for suitable remuneration, or for the possibility that such staff members may generate additional income through their involvement in practice. This aspect (i.e. differences in salary, or some staff members' being allowed the opportunity to generate additional income) often causes great mistrust in the academic environment. Nevertheless, the situation is unavoidable; therefore, faculties have to develop methods of taking divergent expectations, outputs, performance results and salaries into account.
- 12.7 In many instances reputation in practice influences the *level of appointment* of professional persons (particularly with reference to the 'seniority' of the level of expertise that they are associated with). Sometimes it is impossible to appoint such staff members at junior level at a university. For example:
- a) Although a doctoral degree could be expected of a person who is appointed as senior lecturer in a particular environment, professional people could hardly be appointed on the strength of their stature in practice. That would be paying insufficient consideration to their reputation in practice.
 - b) Because of their reputation in practice or in the business sector some persons will consider a position at a university only if they would be appointed as professor or associate professor.
- 12.8 Sometimes the activities of university staff who have close ties with the professional world correspond so closely between the two environments that such staff members can shift between the university and a professional environment, which allows them to *change employers* far more easily than other academics. Therefore, SU must take care continuously to foster an academic environment that would support such staff members in performing suitable professional work within their academic environment.
- 12.9 Often staff who sustain such involvement in practice cannot be expected to deliver *research output* in the same form and of the same volume as other staff members. In this regard, too, various practices are followed: In fact, most disciplines expect persons who have exchanged practice for an academic environment to continue working at a different (and higher) level than those who remain in practice; the idea being that such staff members should develop the cutting-edge expertise in their

field even further.

- 12.10 Disciplines differ greatly regarding the transition between practice and an academic career. Because of their subject expertise on a broad front deans are best suited to provide input. Nonetheless, input by academics from academic departments at universities of repute, as well as by recognised experts from the industry, should also be taken into account.
- 12.11 When a person from a practice environment is appointed in an academic one, thorough career planning in the form of a performance agreement is essential; it must set out clearly what kind of performance is expected in the academic sphere and which forms of interaction with practice can be maintained, as well as the form that the concomitant performance evaluation will take. Thus misunderstanding and unreasonable expectations are eliminated on both sides, and agreed performance expectations are acknowledged (e.g. that the person is expected to remain at the forefront of the field and to deliver input of high-quality expertise). The expectations set out in this way can also serve as criteria for evaluating requests for promotion. (In order to facilitate integration into the academic environment a form of mentoring may also be considered.)
- 12.12 All the while care must be taken that rules regarding recognition of other output besides research publications are aligned with the nature of the discipline concerned, instead of serving as a facade for certain staff members to be excused from delivering research publications.

13. Recommendations

Recommendations based on these guidelines:

- 13.1 regarding professional environments –
that the deans of faculties that offer career-oriented training with a view to a professional qualification should ensure that the characteristics and requirements of such an environment receive due consideration; among other things, characteristics and requirements regarding expectations, appointment, remuneration, flexibility, and performance evaluation and management;
- 13.2 regarding faculties and departments, and transparency –
that deans should ensure that this matter receives attention at facultorial and departmental level with an eye to creating an environment where a wide variety of activities receive due recognition;
- 13.3 regarding professional environments –
that measures should be established to ensure that considerations regarding professional qualifications and activities are taken into account by committees that have to do with staff policies, appointments, promotions and performance evaluation and (other) forms of recognition (where professional considerations are relevant to appointments or promotions, subcommittees must indicate to the AC(S) what role such considerations played in their recommendation in each instance);
- 13.4 regarding the importance of research –

that, since research is important in the positioning of SU, all academic environments should ensure also that appropriate research is undertaken and research output is delivered, and that the importance of research is not compromised;

13.5 regarding existing policies and arrangements –

that existing policies and arrangements in faculties that already attend to the consideration of professional qualifications and professional involvement be reviewed, where appropriate, with reference to the considerations and approach set out in this document.

14. Supporting documents

Item no.	Name of document	Status <i>(e.g. identified, in process or approved)</i>
AP0045	Guidelines for the Appointment and Promotion of Lecturers	Approved

15. Related documents

Item no.	Name of document	Status <i>(e.g. identified, in process or approved)</i>
AP0045	Guidelines for the Appointment and Promotion of Lecturers	Approved

AP0046-Guidelines for the Appointment and Promotion of, and Recognition for, Academic Staff in Disciplines that Lead to Professional Qualifications (**Dec 2017**)