STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

Learning and teaching policy[1]

Date of implementation: 2007
Date of review: 2012

SECTION A: Policy

1. Introduction

Stellenbosch University strives to make a contribution to society at large, through teaching. With **Vision 2012**, the University commits itself to an outward-oriented role within South Africa, in the rest of Africa, and globally, as an academic institution of excellence and a respected knowledge partner. It contributes towards the scientific, technological and intellectual capacity of Africa. Through Vision 2012, the University further commits itself to fostering a campus culture that welcomes a diversity of people and ideas and that promotes Afrikaans as a scientific language of teaching in a multilingual context.

Excellence is the underlying value in all undergraduate and postgraduate learning and teaching programmes at the University. In the Strategic Framework (April 2000), the University's vision for the field of teaching is formulated as follows:

A university characterised by quality teaching, by the constant renewal of teaching and learning programmes, and by the creation of effective opportunities for learning / study.

It would not be possible to achieve these objectives without quality teaching. The University thus places a high premium on the promotion, acknowledgement and reward of good, accountable teaching practice and acknowledges the central role of the teaching staff in the realisation of Vision 2012.

The higher education environment has changed substantially over the past few years and this presents us with new challenges in terms of the needs of learners – not only in terms of the types of skills that are required in the work environment, but also with regard to the innovative use of technology to support learning.

2. Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the manner in which learning and teaching are carried out at the University supports the above vision and overall values. The policy encapsulates the University's philosophy of learning and teaching and also creates a framework for the strategic management of learning and teaching at the University.

One of the outcomes of the learning and teaching policy is the delivery of graduates who fit the profile of the graduate of Stellenbosch University (as formulated in a Senate Resolution, September 2001), which focuses on:

1. shaping developed and well-rounded people whose potential is enhanced to the fullest;
2. educating and shaping people who are competent and equipped for professional life;
3. shaping people who are adaptable and equipped for lifelong learning;
4. shaping people who can play a leadership role in society as responsible and critical citizens in a democratic social order;

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[1] Replaces the *Strategy for Learning and Teaching (2002-2004)*

5. training people who are capable and equipped, through the application of their high-level skills, to play a constructive role in the responsible and sustainable development of the country and society, and who, in so doing, contribute to the wellbeing and quality of life of all people;
6. shaping people who are equipped to function effectively in a multilingual context[2].

With these aims in mind, the policy gives further substance to one of the central elements of the vision of the University, namely "gaining national and international standing on the basis of producing graduates who are sought after for their well-roundedness and for their creative, critical thinking".

3. Learning and teaching approach

One of the **building blocks** for the realisation of the University's vision in the field of teaching and learning is the commitment of Stellenbosch University to actively move towards the creation of a ***student-centred learning and teaching environment***. In other words, learning is central to the teaching process and serves as point of departure for the University's organisation of learning and teaching. Within student-centred university education, the "transferring knowledge" approach makes way for "teaching activities that facilitate learning" and the focus is on the nature, quantity and quality of learning that takes place.

The lecturer, as a facilitator - a "mediator" or a type of "manager" - and innovator of the learning process, is responsible for the implementation of the University's approach to leaning and teaching within his/her teaching activities. This includes, among others, (1) the organisation of the learning environment to create sufficient purposeful opportunities for learning and assessment, (2) informing students about the University's approach to learning and teaching, (3) an awareness of the various academic support initiatives to which students can be referred and (4) the creation of an accessible learning environment.

However, the primary responsibility for the learning process lies with the student who must ensure that he/she is familiar with the University's approach to learning and teaching, and is informed of the learning opportunities that have been created and the availability of relevant academic support initiatives. The student takes responsibility for his/her own learning by (1) using the available learning opportunities to their utmost, and (2) approaching the relevant departments or centres for help. The student has a further responsibility to respond to requests for providing feedback on teaching, modules and programmes with the necessary diligence.

Through the provision of relevant policy and strategic initiatives, the University aims to create an environment in which (1) the potential of each student is maximised and developed, (2) effective student learning is supported and encouraged, while (3) suitable provision is made for the support of the University's diverse student composition. Furthermore, the University is responsible for the acknowledgement and reward of effective teaching, ensuring that students and lecturers are familiar with the implications of the chosen approach to learning and teaching, and making available sufficient, suitable resources in support of learning and teaching, and with due regard for what is financially viable.

3.1 Points of departure with regard to learning and teaching at Stellenbosch University

With reference to the University's existing points of departure with regard to learning and teaching, as contained in various institutional documents, the following are applicable to this policy.

3.1.1 The policy is informed by the high premium placed by the University on **quality**, also in terms of learning and teaching.
3.1.2 The policy is **guided by the University's mission statement and mandate**.
3.1.3 The policy aims to give concrete expression to the University's **values**. It therefore gives expression to the scholarly ideal of excellent scientific practice and the values associated with this, especially in the field of teaching.
3.1.4 The policy views the **interaction between research and teaching** and the **mutually enriching effect of research and teaching on one another** as being of key importance for

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[2] Point 6 was added as a result of the consultation process that led to the crafting of this policy.

the University. This does not, however, take place in isolation of the University's commitment (as formulated in the mission) that it should be able to be "applied to the benefit of the community", and thus implies that **community interaction** (in some or other form and integrated with and following on from research and teaching) also forms part of the task of the lecturers in every department.

3.1.5   The policy takes reliable and recent results of **research on learning and teaching in a university context** seriously.

3.1.6   The policy assumes that **e-learning constitutes an integral part of the learning provision** of all programmes, not only in terms of providing information and interactive learning opportunities, but also familiarising students with all aspects of the knowledge society.

3.1.7   The policy is **holistic** and relates to the students, the lecturers and the University's support and management services, as well as to all modules and learning and teaching programmes.

3.1.8   The policy recognises the **limitations inherent in central planning** and thus aims to ensure a healthy and meaningful balance between centralisation and decentralisation in the allocation of functions and responsibilities.

3.1.9   The policy accepts that all resources that support student learning, such as libraries and laboratories, also form an integral part of the learning offerings in all programmes.

3.2   **Provisions of this policy**

In addition to the abovementioned points of departure of the University with regard to learning and teaching, the policy also stipulates the following:

Promotion of quality teaching:

3.2.1   That there should be sufficient, suitable opportunities for the promotion and development of the appropriate teaching skills of teaching staff on all campuses (e.g. Stellenbosch, Bellville Park and Tygerberg Campuses, as well as the Faculty of Military Science);

3.2.2   That the teaching staff shall be given an opportunity to make use of abovementioned opportunities;

3.2.3   That a variety of information sources and evidence shall be used during the evaluation of teaching, including the indicators for quality teaching[3];

3.2.4   That the results of student feedback shall only be applied in support of other sources of information and not serve as the primary source of information on teaching;

3.2.5   That, especially with regard to permanent appointment or promotion, the use of a professional or teaching portfolio is highly recommended during the evaluation of teaching;

3.2.6   That, in the case of lecturers, attention shall be paid to the integration of the three academic roles, viz. research, teaching and community service, in the agreement between the lecturer and the departmental chairperson;

3.2.7   That a concerted effort shall be made to create opportunities for the practice of a professional teaching career based on SOTL principles, including research on teaching;[4]

3.2.8   That coherence between throughput and standards (quality) will be a point of departure in teaching and learning;

Promotion of effective learning:

3.2.9   That, during the planning of modules and programmes, attention shall be paid to the provision and optimal utilisation of generic as well as targeted forms of academic support across the spectrum of the students' divergent and special learning needs;

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[3] Included in this are sources of information that currently are being considered by the Task Group on the Stature of Teaching and learning.

[4] The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL) of Boyer. Boyer, E. L. 1990. Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Princeton, NJ

3.2.10   That a concerted attempt shall be made to meet students at their level and offer appropriate guidance – for example via supporting first-year students by means of the First-year Academy initiative;

3.2.11   That focused attention shall be paid to the establishment of an early warning system to identify students at risk;

3.2.12   That, at faculty level, attention shall be paid to student success with regard to both general and specific success rates; and

3.2.13   That students shall actively be informed of the reasons for and practical implications of the University's commitment to a student-centred approach to teaching and learning.

Financial support:

3.2.14   That, as far as possible, earmarked funds are made available to address the diverse and special learning needs of students; and

3.2.15   That, as far as possible, funds are made available to develop lecturer's teaching skills, and to acknowledge and reward quality teaching.

4.   Learning and teaching issues covered in the following documents

1. Assessment Policy
2. Policy on Student Feedback
3. Policy regarding Module Frameworks and Study Guides
4. Policy regarding Learning Materials[5]
5. Language Policy and Plan
6. Rules for Internal and External Moderation
7. Duties and Responsibilities of Programme Coordinators and Programme Committee Chairpersons
8. The Policy for the Assessment and Recognition of Prior Learning (ARPL)
9. Performance Indicators for the Measurement of Quality Teaching[4]
10. Service Learning Policy and Framework
11. Interim approach: wrt dealing with plagiarism
12. Policy on Intellectual Property

5.   Implementation

The point of departure of this policy is that the learning and teaching responsibilities at the University rest with the parties listed below and that they are thus responsible for the implementation of the policy.

Expertise with regard to learning and teaching is primarily located in the faculties. However, student success depends on the intervention of different aspects of the learning and teaching process, to which various role players make an important contribution. These role players eventually form a team of partners who ensure excellence at the University.

5.1 Role players

5.1.1   Role players in the student corps
The student
The Academic Affairs Council

5.1.2   Role players in the academic environment
The lecturer (also those appointed on a part-time/session basis)
The programme coordinator
The programme committee chairperson of the faculty
The department / module team
The dean
The faculty

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[5] Draft document

5.1.3 Role players at institutional level
The Committee for Learning and Teaching
The Academic Planning Committee

5.1.4 Role players in the support environments
The Academic Planning and Quality Assurance Division
The Academic Support Division

5.1.5 Role players from the professions and the world of work

5.2 Monitoring the policy

Responsibility for this policy lies with the Vice-Rector (Teaching) who presents an annual teaching report to Senate on the state of teaching and learning at the University. The implementation of the policy occurs via the Teaching Management Plan of the Vice-Rector (Teaching), where the relevant management and monitoring structures, as well as the strategic focus areas and operational priorities in the field of learning and teaching, are set out. The plan is revised every year in consultation with all the relevant role players.

The annual revision of the Teaching Management Plan is the responsibility of the Vice-Rector (Teaching) and the Teaching Management Team, while the Vice-Rector (Teaching) and the Committee for Learning and Teaching ensure that the Learning and Teaching Policy is revised and evaluated when necessary.

The existing Quality Management processes provide for the evaluation of all teaching at the university.