Guidelines to the Extended Degree Programmes of Stellenbosch University

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Extended Degree Programmes (EDPs) form part of a wider university strategy to give expression to endeavours by Stellenbosch University (SU) to broaden access and also to enhance the development and success of educationally disadvantaged students. The establishment of the Institute for Mathematics and Science Research (IMSTUS) – specifically the Scimathus project – and the First-year Academy are examples of other efforts comprising SU's strategy to broaden access and facilitate the development and success of educationally disadvantaged students. EDPs should therefore not be viewed as isolated but rather as part of a wider endeavours embodying the mission, vision and values of SU.

The establishment of EDPs[1] is a reaction to two specific needs that are increasingly felt locally as well as globally[2], namely 1) the creation of alternative access routes with a view to broadening access and 2) the promotion of success, especially among students with inadequate school preparation or non-traditional preparation. This type of programme was introduced at SU as long ago as the early 1990s and has been adapted over the years to keep pace with the changing context and to reflect SU's increasing knowledge and experience of the needs of students.

EDPs are housed at present in departments in faculties, whereas the Centre for Teaching and Learning has a coordinating function while offering lecturer and curriculum support. Since funding for the programmes is largely provided by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), its guidelines determine how EDPs are put into practice.

1.2 Purpose of the document

The purpose of this document is to steer how EDPs are conceptualised, put into practice and managed in order that the programmes can be reconciled with the University's mission, can contribute to realising the University's vision and will reflect the University's values. Under discussion here are particularly SU's Vision 2012 and the aims of the Overarching Strategic Plan (OSP).

1.3 Definition of aspects relating to EDPs

1.3.1 Educationally disadvantaged students

Because EDPs concern educationally disadvantaged students, it is necessary to define the concept 'educationally disadvantaged students' clearly. The concept has different dimensions, namely:

- Socioeconomic circumstances
- Educational or teaching circumstances
- Personal circumstances

The first refers to the circumstances in which a student had to function daily while at school. It includes access to basic services (electricity, safe and reliable transport, etc.) in the environment where the student lived at the time. The second dimension refers to the student's school environment. It includes access to teachers with appropriate training, the availability of

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[1] In this document, "Extended Degree Programme", "EDP" and, where appropriate, "programme/mes" are used interchangeably.

[2] The distinction between global and local trends is summarised in the document *'n Strategiese Raamwerk vir die Eeuwisseling and Daarna*.

resources and infrastructure to facilitate learning and general access to opportunities that promote learning. The last dimension refers to circumstances that affect the student at a personal level. It includes the financial position of the household in which the student functions while studying, as well as personal trauma or crisis (e.g. the death of a family member and the concomitant implications for the student's family life).

However, this description is still not a complete representation of what being educationally disadvantaged can entail. Historically this term, in the South African context, has also been associated with race (specifically coloured and black students) and often still remains an indicator, with social standing featuring increasingly as well. The University might benefit from paying more formal attention to this matter because it has implications for both the selection of students for EDPs and the support mechanisms made available to these students.

1.3.2 Educationally disadvantaged: an operational definition

Two dimensions are distinguished for the definition of 'educationally disadvantaged', namely socioeconomic circumstances and educational or teaching circumstances. Each is characterised by a variety of indicators (Table 1). The indicators presented here are a practical rather than comprehensive description of these dimensions and were determined by the information SU will have available from 2012 onwards from student applications.

Should faculties wish to apply this definition during the selection process of EDP students, a matrix approach with weights allocated to the various indicators is recommended.

Table 1: Dimensions of an educationally disadvantaged status

Socioeconomic circumstances	Educational or teaching circumstances
Parents' highest qualifications (as an indicator of first-generation students)	Grade 11 and 12 results
Geographical origin (i.e. whether the student attended a rural or 'township' school)	Access Test (TGT) or National Benchmark Test (NBT) results
Race[3]	Difference between home language and language of instruction
	The school fund amount of the school the student attended (as a rough indicator of the school's socioeconomic position)

Other indicators that may also be considered in a selection process include the following:
- Total household income
- Access to basic services
- Teacher-learner ratio
- Qualifications of teachers in key subjects

In cases where personal trauma and/or disability affected the prospective student's Grade 12 results, discretionary admission by the dean may be applied to place students.

The multidimensional nature of the proposed conceptual and operational descriptions indicates that a 'educationally disadvantaged' status is the result of structural or other factors outside the student's control. The factors influencing this status are also not restricted to the student's school experience (although the student's school experience is probably the most important influence to consider) and can include any factors that had a negative impact on the student's learning and developmental experience.

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[3] The term, normally used as a biological construct, is used here as a socioeconomic construct that provides an indication of disadvantage.

1.3.3 Extended Degree Programme (EDP)

For the purposes of this document an EDP is described as:

- A collection of learning activities consisting of both foundation and mainstream contents
- A coherent and fully integrated programme[4] leading to an undergraduate qualification
- A programme that is extended by six months to a year by the addition of credit-bearing foundation modules
- A programme that, despite extension due to the addition of foundation modules, still consists of the same number of Hemis units as the corresponding mainstream programme.

The name 'Extended Degree Programme' and the faculty-specific synonyms 'Alternative Access Programme' and 'Foundation Programme' should be reserved for programmes that meet this definition. This does not imply that all programmes meeting the defining characteristics may be known only as 'Extended Degree Programmes', 'Alternative Access Programmes' or 'Foundation Programmes'. This directive does however preclude the possibility that any programme not meeting these characteristics may use any of these names.

The DHET directives allow for at least two different EDP models. The first model reserves the first year of study for foundation modules, after which students in their second, third and fourth year follow the mainstream curriculum of respectively year 1, 2 and 3. The second model integrates and spreads foundation modules throughout the mainstream offering. The addition of foundation modules means that the mainstream offering must also be spread out to ensure a realistic workload.

1.3.4 Foundation offering

Foundation offering is defined as follows:

"The offering of modules, courses or other curricular elements that are intended to equip underprepared students with academic foundations that will enable them to successfully complete a higher education qualification that has been approved by the Minister of Education. Foundational provision focuses particularly on basic concepts, content and learning approaches that foster advanced learning. Even where the subject matter is introductory in nature, foundational provision must make academic demands on the students that are appropriate to higher education.

Foundational provision is intended primarily to facilitate the academic development of students whose prior learning has been adversely affected by educational or social inequalities. Foundational provision is thus aimed at facilitating equity of access and of outcomes" (DoE 2006).

1.3.5 Foundation modules

A foundation module is defined as follows:

- A module of which the contents are a foundation offering
- A credit-bearing module forming an integral part of an EDP
- A module of which at least 50% is a foundation offering
- A module that is a prerequisite for attaining the EDP qualifications of which it forms an integral part
- A module at NQF level 5 or 6.

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[4] Defined as "a purposeful and structured set of learning experiences that leads to a qualification" (CHE 2004).

DHET allows for three types of foundation module. The first consists entirely of a foundation offering. The second is an extended module consisting of a combination of the entire contents of the corresponding mainstream module as well as significant foundation content. To fit in the additional load, the module is offered over a longer period (six months to a year). The last type is an expanded module offered over the same period as the corresponding mainstream module and containing all the content of this module but with the contact time per week increased to include significant foundation content.

1.4 The purpose of an Extended Degree Programme

Bearing the above in mind, the purpose of an EDP is conceptualised as follows:

- To create alternative access opportunities for students with the potential to be successful in studies at a higher education level, but who would otherwise not have the opportunity to study at SU because of inadequate school preparation.
- To facilitate success. Increased participation cannot be divorced from eventual success.

2. Points of departure

2.1 Directives for implementation, management, quality control and accountability should apply in the same way as for all other programmes. In this regard the Student Feedback Policy, the Assessment Policy, the Learning and Teaching Policy, the Policy on Teaching and Learning Materials, the duties and responsibilities of programme committee chairs and programme coordinators, the Access Policy, the Language Policy and the Language Plan are important to align the teaching activities related to EDPs with the University's mission and vision.

2.2 EDPs form an integral part of SU's registration planning, especially in view of the aims of the OSP.

2.3 The concept of an EDP can be reconciled with the University's mission and vision.

3. Role players

3.1 Role players in the academic environment
3.1.1 The faculty
3.1.2 The dean
3.1.3 The department
3.1.4 The programme committee chair of the faculty
3.1.5 The programme coordinator/programme committee
3.1.6 The EDP-student
3.1.7 The lecturer

3.2 Role players at the institutional level
3.2.1 The Vice-Rector (Teaching)

3.3 Role players in the support environments
3.3.1 Students and Academic Support
3.3.2 The division Institutional Research and Planning
3.3.3 Student Records

4. General directives and responsibilities

4.1 Directives and guidelines
4.1.1 Access models should be considered and designed to address both the needs of faculties and the institutional needs mentioned elsewhere in this document. To give expression

to the EDPs' goals, it is suggested that these programmes be run in all cases as selection programmes. Selection will be facilitated by the creation of institutionally defined guidelines for admission to these programmes that reflect both academic and non-academic variables. In this regard, the University's Access Policy is important; no access model may be in conflict with this policy's provisions.

4.1.2   Students may be compelled to register for these programmes.

4.1.3   EDPs should be integrated with the offering of the faculty and managed in the same way as other programmes.

4.1.4   Foundation modules should have appropriate departmental homes. This directive is meant to ensure that an environment in a faculty takes administrative and logistical responsibility for the foundation module. At the same time, this practice will see to it that staff who teach foundation modules have an academic home where they receive the necessary support and access to opportunities for further development.

4.1.5   Both the support environments and the academic environments are encouraged to do research on foundation modules and programmes and to share best practice and knowledge.

4.1.6   Faculties should report on these programmes to the same structures as they use to report on other programmes. In addition, the First-year Academy Committee also could present a forum where both the challenges and successes of the different programmes can be highlighted.

4.1.7   EDPs should be structured in such a way that they promote success not only in the first year, but also in later years. The workload should therefore increase incrementally to prepare students for the greater workload of later years.

4.2   The responsibilities of different role players

4.2.1   Responsibilities in the academic environment

4.2.1.1 Designing fully integrated[5] programmes containing both mainstream and foundation modules.

4.2.1.2 Designing foundation modules (based on relevant theory and research) that prepare students for success in the mainstream. Academic support staff will offer support for the design of such modules where there is a need for such support.

4.2.1.3 Appointing suitable lecturers (if required) for the teaching of foundation modules. Faculties are encouraged to use established mainstream lecturers as far as possible to teach foundation modules because this helps to integrate foundation modules.

4.2.1.4 Supporting lecturers in relevant departments.

4.2.1.5 Including EDP lecturers in departmental activities, evaluation processes and curriculum review.

4.2.1.6 Subjecting foundation modules and programmes to the same quality control mechanisms as other modules and programmes.

4.2.1.7 Releasing reports on the programmes according to set criteria when requested to do so.

4.2.2   Responsibilities of the support environments

4.2.2.1 Supporting EDP lecturers as to learning and teaching issues.

4.2.2.2 Supporting lecturers, departments and programme committees in the planning of modules and programmes. The support environments should offer knowledge of theories, research and best practice.

4.2.2.3 Evaluating EDPs as an institutional intervention.

4.2.2.4 Conducting further research on foundation modules and programmes as well as all aspects concerning EDPs.

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[5] "Integrated" programmes are described as programmes in which the content and modus operandi of foundation modules are successfully articulated with the content and operation of mainstream modules as well as with the programme as a whole.

4.2.2.5 Disseminating relevant information and organising development opportunities for lecturers at the request of faculties.

4.2.2.6 Liaising with the DHET regarding EDP matters.

4.2.2.7 Raising additional funds to ensure that EDPs proceed smoothly.

4.2.2.8 Preparing reports as requested.

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