

Teaching and Learning Policy

Purpose	To promote an enabling institutional environment where quality teaching and learning can flourish across the student body, the academic staff cohort, support services divisions and management bodies.
Type of document	Policy document
Accessibility	This policy is a public document and is published on the Stellenbosch University website.
Date of implementation	2018
Date of next revision	The Policy must be reviewed during its fifth year of operation. It may be reviewed earlier, or more than once during its period of operation, if the owner of the Policy considers it necessary.
Owner of this Policy	Vice-Rector: Learning and Teaching
Institutional functionary (curator) responsible for this Policy	Senior Director: Learning and Teaching Enhancement
Date of approval	26 September 2018
Approved by	SU Council
Keywords	Policy, teaching and learning, professionalisation of academics for their teaching role, scholarship of teaching and learning
<i>The English version of this policy is the operative version and the Afrikaans version is a translation thereof.</i>	

1. Introduction

Stellenbosch University (SU) strives to contribute to society at large through all its endeavours, including its teaching. The SU vision positions the University as Africa's leading research-intensive university, globally recognised as inclusive and innovative, where we advance knowledge in service of society.

This policy aims to give effect to SU's vision in all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at the University, acknowledging the dynamic higher education context within which the institution has to function.

This policy aims to promote quality teaching and learning that embraces the rich potential of an increasingly diverse student body and the need for graduates who can contribute to a complex society. SU thus places a high premium on the recognition and reward of scholarly teaching towards the professionalisation of the teaching role.

Definitions of learning and teaching concepts are provided at the end of the document.

2. Implementation of the policy

- 2.1 While recognising that SU as a whole is a learning organisation, this policy applies to teaching and learning activities in all registered courses including short courses and academic programmes across all faculties, offered both on and off-campus; including parties such as students, academic staff, the support services divisions and management bodies.
- 2.2 The implementation of this policy is a collective responsibility, which rests with all the parties listed in 2.1 above.
- 2.3 All other SU policies, rules and strategies in the area of teaching and learning should be informed by, and read in conjunction with, this policy.

3. Conceptual frameworks

- 3.1 This policy is premised on the understanding that **teaching and learning is a shared endeavour** with reciprocal responsibilities between students, academic staff, the support services divisions and management bodies.
- 3.2 The approach to teaching and learning contained in this policy is **aligned with the repositioning of SU**, from seeing itself as being *the best in the world*, to re-envisioning itself as being *the best for the world*, with a focus on context and responsiveness. This contextualised and responsive approach to *excellence* resonates with the view that teaching and learning is a process with both social and individual dimensions. These dimensions are relational, but the social context is more complex and nuanced, and potentially has a more profound effect on teaching and learning than any individual characteristics of students or academics.
- 3.3 This policy adopts a **holistic understanding of teaching and learning**, which includes both individual and social understandings of teaching and learning.
- 3.4 **Teaching** is understood as a practice that is deeply embedded in and shaped by the contexts in which it takes place. Good teaching practice is therefore more than

a set of skills, tips or strategies that are decontextualised from the social spaces in which they occur.

- 3.5 This policy promotes a **learning-centred approach to teaching** that is focused on learning as a partnership, where students are seen as co-creators of knowledge and learning environments. In a learning-centred approach, teaching activities facilitate knowledge-building and actively engage students in their own learning. To this end, SU should ensure that the learning-centred approach to teaching is integrated across the institution and that sufficient, suitable resources are available to support teaching and learning.
- 3.6 In terms of this policy, **scholarship** is considered as linking practice to theory, and theory to practice, encapsulated by the dimensions of **discovery, integration, application and teaching**.¹

4. Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to promote an enabling institutional environment in which quality teaching and learning can flourish.

5. Aims of the policy

- 5.1 To contribute to **achieving SU's Vision and Institutional Strategic Framework** so as to enable inclusivity and equitable access to SU for all prospective and current students and staff in pursuit of excellence.
- 5.2 To **achieve student success**, i.e. to deliver graduates who reflect the SU graduate attributes (Strategy for Teaching and Learning 2017-2021).
- 5.3 To provide **conceptual frameworks for understanding teaching and learning**, as well as underpinning principles for quality teaching and learning.
- 5.4 To promote the **professionalisation of academics in their teaching role**, and the **scholarship of their teaching practice**.
- 5.5 To provide for the **effective use of appropriate infrastructure and learning technologies**.
- 5.6 To promote **academic programme development and renewal**.

6. Policy principles

- 6.1 The vision, mission and values of SU guide teaching and learning.
- 6.2 SU recognises that the mutually enriching interplay between **teaching and learning, social impact** and **research** is of key importance at the University.
- 6.3 Teaching practice comprises a **mix of various modes of delivery**, ranging from face-to-face to fully online.

¹ Boyer, E.L. 1990. *Scholarship reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. Special report. Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching: 5-25.

- 6.4 The policy is **comprehensive** in that it relates to students, academic staff, the support services divisions and management bodies.
- 6.5 The **holistic** development of the student involves **the integration of the curriculum and co-curriculum**.²
- 6.6 SU promotes the **continuous renewal of its academic programmes** by means of a systemic process with clearly assigned roles and responsibilities for the various roleplayers (e.g. programme committee chairs, programme leaders, lecturers and students).
- 6.7 The **implementation of the Language Policy** facilitates pedagogically sound teaching and learning.
- 6.8 All resources that support student learning, such as **libraries, laboratories and learning technology resources**, form an integral part of the learning offerings in all modules and programmes.
- 6.9 SU places a high premium on the **quality**³ of its **academic offering**, including teaching, learning, assessment and programmes.
- 6.10 This policy is premised on the principle that quality teaching and learning should be informed by scholarship. The **Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)**⁴ and the body of knowledge underpinning it, should inform both the professionalisation of academics in their teaching role, and the scholarship of their teaching practice.
- 6.11 The **professionalisation of academics in their teaching role** is linked to the notion of a professional university **teacher**. This occurs through a range of professional learning opportunities, which provide both formal and informal spaces as well as accredited and non-accredited courses for the ongoing development of academics as teachers. Academics draw on the scholarship of teaching and learning to professionalise their teaching practice.
- 6.12 SU enables the holistic career progression of academics along a **track** that integrates the **three academic roles** of research, teaching and social impact, while recognising professional requirements, where applicable.
- 6.13 The **teaching role progresses** from *reflective practitioners* to *scholarly teachers*, who then become *teaching scholars* and, ultimately, *leaderly teaching scholars*. *Reflective practitioners* think deliberately and critically about their teaching practice, and systematically review and document their professional growth. *Scholarly teachers*, additionally draw on educational literature to reflect on their teaching practice and professional growth, and move beyond personal reflection

² The co-curriculum at SU encompasses the in-class and out-of-class learning experiences of students for non-degree purposes.

³ Quality, as defined by the Council on Higher Education in South Africa, consists of the interrelated dimensions of fitness of purpose, value for money, and transformation.

⁴ SoTL refers to a broad body of knowledge originally arising from seminal work by Boyer (1990), which draws on the notion of scholarship to bridge the false dichotomy between teaching and research.

to observation and peer review of their teaching. *Teaching scholars* research their teaching practice and document their professional growth with a view to publishing their findings publicly and contributing to the body of teaching and learning knowledge. *Leaderly teaching scholars* contribute to the body of teaching and learning knowledge through publication, and provide leadership in the field of teaching practice institutionally, nationally and internationally.

- 6.14 Another principle informing this policy relates to the **acknowledgement of good teaching**, as well as the **recognition, reward and promotion of excellent teaching** across all systems of the University. Good teaching is expected of all academics at any stage of their careers. In this regard, SU supports the professional learning of academics for their teaching role as critical and scholarly lecturers who design engaging curricula and deliver a dynamic and enriched campus experience. However, SU is also building the notion of teaching excellence into the systems and criteria for the performance appraisal and promotion of academics, and into the institutional reward systems, by introducing the teaching portfolio as a vehicle by which teaching excellence is judged.

7. Policy provisions

In addition to the abovementioned points of departure, this policy also distinguishes four interlinked dimensions to achieving quality teaching and academic programmes: (i) the *professionalisation of academics for their teaching role*, (ii) the *scholarship of their teaching practice conducive to a learning-centred approach*, (iii) *appropriate learning infrastructure and learning technologies*, and (iv) *continuous programme renewal*. The policy provides for these interlinked dimensions in the following ways, subject to the availability of financial and human resources from within and external to SU:

7.1 Professionalisation of academics for their teaching role

- 7.1.1 That there are **sufficient, suitable opportunities** for promoting the appropriate professional learning of academics, for their teaching role on all campuses;
- 7.1.2 That the academics are **enabled and encouraged to make use of the abovementioned opportunities** and that such development forms part of their Professional Development Plans (PDPs) in their work agreements;
- 7.1.3 That **student feedback** serves as the primary source of information about students' experiences of teaching and learning, but should always be used in conjunction with other sources;
- 7.1.4 That a **variety of perspectives and information sources** (such as the Quality Assurance system; moderation; student feedback; programme committees; performance management) and evidence shall be used during the evaluation of teaching, drawing on criteria for quality teaching;
- 7.1.5 That, especially with regard to permanent appointments and promotion, the use of a **teaching portfolio** is highly recommended during the evaluation of teaching;
- 7.1.6 That attention is paid to the **integration and synergy of the three academic roles**, viz. research, teaching and social impact, in the annual work agreement

between the academic and the departmental chairperson, and in the performance appraisal;

- 7.1.7 That the **promotion pathway** of academics takes account of research (including research on teaching), social impact, as well as the practice of teaching (based on SoTL principles);
- 7.1.8 That SU manages the quest for **increased throughput while raising standards** and is supportive of academics in this regard;
- 7.1.9 That the **institutional processes at SU** are explicitly geared towards attracting high quality academics, as well as the ongoing development of their teaching role.

7.2 Scholarship of teaching practice conducive to learning-centred teaching

- 7.2.1 That during the planning of modules and programmes, at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, academics pay attention to **students' diverse academic needs**.
- 7.2.2 That academics make a concerted attempt to acknowledge the diversity of learning needs and offer **appropriate guidance to students** for utilising available academic development opportunities.
- 7.2.3 That SU provides **integrated systems for the ongoing monitoring and evaluation** of all students, particularly those most vulnerable, e.g. students from previously disadvantaged circumstances, students without financial support, students whose living environments are not conducive to university study, etc.
- 7.2.4 That, across the institution, there is a shared responsibility to pay attention to **holistic student success** and the development of the whole student across all levels.
- 7.2.5 That all role-players at the university familiarise themselves with the reasons for and practical implications of SU's commitment to a **learning-centred approach** to teaching and learning.
- 7.2.6 That SU management makes the **necessary resources** available to achieve quality teaching and effective learning at the university in a sustainable manner.
- 7.2.7 That **scholarly university teachers** are distinguished from reflective practitioners by actively engaging in SoTL with a view to researching and subsequently publishing on teaching practice.

7.3 Appropriate learning infrastructure and learning technologies

- 7.3.1 That SU creates **enabling physical and virtual learning environments** which support and encourage quality teaching and effective learning at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels.
- 7.3.2 That academics and students have **access to multi-functional learning spaces** to accommodate a variety of teaching and learning configurations.

- 7.3.3 That academics and students have access to **supporting learning technologies, technology infrastructure and appropriate professional learning opportunities and support** to use this infrastructure and these technologies effectively in teaching and learning.
- 7.3.4 That academics utilize learning technologies to expand both the **reach and richness of the academic offering** for both on- and off-campus students.

7.4 Continuous Programme Renewal

- 7.4.1 That academic programmes are **continuously renewed** to ensure an alignment with the changing context and the SU graduate attributes, thereby enhancing graduates' contributions to the South African and global societies and their career opportunities.
- 7.4.2 That the **roles and responsibilities** of the various role-players (e.g. programme leader, programme chair, head of department, etc.) are clearly defined and contextualised within faculties.
- 7.4.3 That the various role-players are **recognized and rewarded** for the respective roles they play in the management of programmes as well as renewal processes.
- 7.4.4 That the **necessary capacity** (e.g. human and financial resources) is made available to support the programme renewal within faculties.

8. Roles and responsibilities regarding teaching and learning at SU

- 8.1 The **role of the academic is multifaceted**, including responsibilities relating to teaching and learning, research and social impact. All of these responsibilities are interconnected.
- 8.2 A key function of the academic role is that of **knowledge expert** who designs learning opportunities that enable students to access disciplinary knowledge. Knowledge is understood to be more than just disciplinary content. It also includes the principles, concepts, procedures and practices underpinning how knowledge is produced within and across disciplines.
- 8.3 Both **learning and knowledge-building are central to the teaching process** and serve as points of departure for SU's organisation of teaching. This implies that academics need to be **knowledge experts** in their disciplinary field, as well as **reflective practitioners** whose practice is informed by SoTL.
- 8.4 The **academic** is responsible for the implementation of SU's approach to teaching and learning within the context of his/her teaching activities. This includes, among others, (i) informing students about SU's approach to teaching and learning, (ii) creating a learning environment that enables access to knowledge, (iii) organising the learning environment to create sufficient purposeful opportunities for knowledge-building, active learning and assessment, and (iv) making students aware of the various academic development initiatives at the University.

- 8.5 The **student** accepts responsibility for his/her own learning. This responsibility includes, among others, (i) familiarising him-/herself with SU's approach to teaching and learning, (ii) taking responsibility for learning how to become a successful participant in the knowledge practices of his/her field of study, (iii) using the available learning opportunities, (iv) approaching the relevant departments or centres for appropriate academic development initiatives, and (v) providing feedback on modules and programmes with a view to continuous development.
- 8.6 In promoting an **enabling institutional environment** in which quality teaching and learning can flourish, it is the role of organisational units in charge of physical and virtual infrastructure to provide and maintain adequate facilities for teaching and learning, while it is the role of SU management to provide resources and strategic direction in support of the teaching function.
- 8.7 Through the provision of **relevant policy and strategic initiatives**, SU aims to create an enabling environment where (i) the potential of staff and students is maximised and developed, (ii) effective teaching and learning is supported and encouraged, while (iii) suitable provision is made for the support of SU's diverse student composition, and (iv) suitable provision is made for the professional learning of academics for their teaching role.

9. Policy control

9.1 Roles

- 9.1.1 The **owner** of this policy document is the Vice-Rector: Learning and Teaching, whose role is to:
- oversee the development of the policy;
 - ensure that the necessary documents exist;
 - ensure that the curator functions effectively; and
 - appoint a task team for the periodic revision of the policy document, as required.
- 9.1.2 The **curator** of this policy document is the Senior Director: Learning and Teaching Enhancement, or a senior professional academic support services (PASS) staff member who is familiar with SU's Strategy for Teaching and Learning and is appointed by the Vice-Rector: Learning and Teaching.
- 9.1.3 The curator is responsible for:
- taking care of the formulation, approval, revision, communication, release and monitoring of the implementation of this policy document; and
 - interpreting the policy, guiding its implementation, and convening a task team for the periodic revision of the policy, as required.

9.2 Implementation

The Teaching and Learning policy provides the broad guidelines and institutional intent for teaching and learning at SU. Within this context, SU develops and continually updates its Strategy for Teaching and Learning. The implementation of

the policy and strategy occurs via the Environmental Plan of the Vice-Rector: Learning and Teaching, which stipulates the strategic focus areas and operational priorities in the field of teaching and learning. At faculty level, the implementation of the policy occurs by means of the specific faculty implementation plans, where reasonably practicable.

9.3 Monitoring and Reporting⁵

The Vice-Rector: Learning and Teaching is accountable for the creation of the necessary controls for the monitoring and reporting of this policy. The curator is responsible for carrying out these controls.

Senate monitors the implementation of the policy by means of an annual report on teaching and learning presented to Senate by the Vice-Rector: Learning and Teaching.

9.4 Release

This policy is a public document, which is published on the SU website. The policy is approved by the Council of the University after consultation with all faculty boards, Senate and the Institutional Forum. Sections 12 and 13 of this policy may be updated editorially as new policy documents arise, with approval given by the Committee for Learning and Teaching, and reported for information to the Senate.

9.5 Revision

This policy is reviewed every five years, or sooner if deemed necessary.

10. Conflict settlement

Conflicts within this policy are to be resolved along the normal line management channels within the existing SU structures, such as the faculty teaching and learning committees, the Senate Sub-committee for Learning and Teaching, and Senate itself. The final decision authority for this policy resides with the SU Council.

11. Definitions

11.1 Scholarship: In terms of this policy, **scholarship** is considered as linking practice to theory, and theory to practice, encapsulated by the dimensions of **discovery, integration, application and teaching**. SoTL refers to a broad body of knowledge originally arising from seminal work by Boyer (1990), which draws on the notion of scholarship to bridge the false dichotomy between teaching and research.

11.2 Vulnerable students: Vulnerable students are for example students from previously disadvantaged circumstances, students without financial support, students whose living environments are not conducive to university study, etc.

⁵ Refer to "Rules for Policy and Management Documents".

11.3 Learning-centred approach: A **learning-centred approach to teaching** is focused on learning as a partnership, where students are seen as co-creators of knowledge and learning environments. In a learning-centred approach, teaching activities facilitate knowledge-building and actively engage students in their own learning.

11.4 Student success: Student success is viewed holistically not only as whether students have earned a degree, but to deliver graduates who reflect the SU graduate attributes.

12. Supporting documents

Item no.	Name of document	Status (identified, in process, approved, etc.)
	Strategy for Teaching and Learning 2017-2021	Approved in March 2017
	SU's Vision and Institutional Strategic Framework	Approved by SU Council in June 2018

13. Related documents

Item no.	Name of document	Status (identified, in process, approved, etc.)
PD0326	Staff Development Policy	Approved in October 2016
	Duties and responsibilities of programme committee chairs and programme leaders	Under revision
	Regulation for the Committee for Learning and Teaching (CLT)	Approved in June 2017
	Strategy for the use of ICT in teaching and learning at Stellenbosch University	Task team output document, April 2013
	SU Rules for Obtaining and Utilising Student Feedback about Programmes, Modules and Lectures	Approved in 2016 Under revision
CS0051	Conditions of Service for Research and Support Service Staff	Approved in June 2017
	Implementation plan for Flexible Assessment	Approved in 2017.
	Assessment policy and practices at	Under revision

Item no.	Name of document	Status (identified, in process, approved, etc.)
	Stellenbosch University	
	Code of conduct guiding the relationship between the supervisor and student	Approved. Contained in SU Calendar Part I
	Regulation for internal and external moderation and the processing of results	Approved in September 2014
	Quality Assurance Policy	Under revision
	Language Policy of Stellenbosch University	Approved in 2016
	SU Policy on Teaching and Learning Materials	Approved: June 2007 Under revision
	Disability Access Policy	Approved in April 2018
	Policy on Plagiarism (in support of Academic Integrity)	Approved in November 2016
	Stellenbosch University Procedure for the investigation and management of allegations of plagiarism	Approved in August 2016
	How does Stellenbosch University, as a research-led institution achieve excellence via the integration of the three roles of the University?	Discussion document, October 2010
	Guideline document for Academic Literacy at SU	Under revision
	Stellenbosch University Policy regarding Joint and Double Degrees at Master's and Doctoral Level with Foreign Universities	Approved in December 2012
AP0045	Guidelines for the appointment and promotion of lecturers	Approved in January 2011
	Guidelines for the <i>Implementation of Excellence in Teaching</i> awards at Stellenbosch University	Approved in 2017
	Recommendations of the Task Team for the Promotion and Recognition of Teaching	Approved in 2015

Item no.	Name of document	Status (identified, in process, approved, etc.)
REG-001-2017	SU Regulation for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)	Approved in June 2017
	Social Impact Strategic Plan 2017-2022	Approved in November 2016
	Regulation for recognising co-curricular achievements	Under revision
POL-001-2017	SU Admissions Policy	Approved in February 2017
BEL-001E-2013	Research Ethics Policy	Approved in June 2013
	Strategy for the support of Postgraduate Students	Under development
	Policy in respect of the Presentation of Short Courses at Stellenbosch University	Second Policy, Second Revision approved in June 2018. Second Policy, Third Revision in process.