POLICY

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Introduction

The Foundation for Professional Development (FPD) strives to contribute to society at large through teaching and commits itself to an outward-oriented role within South Africa, the rest of Africa, and globally, as an academic institution of excellence and a respected knowledge partner. Excellence is the underlying value in all teaching and learning programmes at FPD.

FPD offers a wide range of programmes, from the formative general and professional to the vocational (career focused), addressing the national imperatives. FPD's commitment to excellence in teaching and learning is captured in its vision, mission and values statement. The vision states that the scope and character of programmes offered at FPD are "to build a better society through education and capacity development".

The commitments in the mission statement that have particular relevance for this policy are enabling social change through developing people, strengthening systems and providing innovative solutions.

Against the background of these commitments, FPD strives to guide and support students in acquiring:
- a sound knowledge base in the field of study concerned;
- scholarly and/or professional and/or technological dispositions, attributes and competencies appropriate to the field of study and/or future careers;
- academic, professional and employability knowledge and skills;
- attitudes and values that will enable participation in society as high-level human resources with a view to promoting growth and prosperity; and
- competencies and attitudes necessary for lifelong learning.

Purpose and scope of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the manner in which teaching, and learning are carried out at FPD supports its vision and values. The policy captures the institution's philosophy of teaching and learning and also articulates FPD's commitment to creating appropriate, meaningful learning opportunities and experiences for a diverse student body, in relation to programme type and National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level of programmes.

The policy also sets out a framework for coordinated decision making regarding teaching and learning activities across FPD by broadly describing the principles, aspirations and practices that relate to teaching and learning at FPD. It also applies to subsidised and non-subsidised academic programmes.

Definitions

Learning facilitator	An appropriately qualified individual who guides, assists, helps, advances and enables learning, for example Lecturers, Tutors, Mentors and Demonstrators.
Contact time	Purposeful, scheduled, face-to-face interaction between students and learning facilitators. This includes on-campus contact or contact during experiential learning.
Study guide	Is a programme-specific learning facilitation tool serving as a "map" for the students. It contains organisational as well as learning facilitation components.

Principles and aspirations

Focus on student learning

Teaching is not an end in itself, as the purpose of teaching is to bring about learning. Consequently, teaching at FPD is broadly conceptualised as the creation of meaningful learning opportunities for students. Therefore, the role of lecturers and other learning facilitators entails the guiding, promoting, enabling, and supporting of deep and meaningful student learning that will enable lifelong learning.

Deep and meaningful learning is promoted through learning opportunities, teaching and learning environments in which:
- learning activities are designed to challenge students to make connections between facts, ideas and skills, to identify and solve problems, and to apply and integrate their acquired knowledge in multiple contexts;
- students get the opportunity to engage in authentic learning activities via, for example, experiential learning and simulations;
- learning activities give students the opportunity to engage in varying ways with the learning content to accommodate a diversity of student needs;
- learning facilitators make learning content meaningful and relevant to students by attending to their perceived learning needs and by contextualising learning content;
- continuous assessment ensures that students receive explicit and constructive feedback regarding their progress;
- assessment focuses on the understanding and application of information rather than merely testing for recall;
- teaching and assessment are aligned to support the achievement of foreseen outcomes;
- there are positive relationships and interactions between students and lecturers where students and lecturers are mutually respected and appreciated;
- students receive assistance to:
  - grasp the inherent meaning or significance of learning tasks,
  - personalise learning tasks by linking them to their own experience or environment,
  - place the focus on the "big picture" by consciously trying to link the different components of the learning experience,
  - develop innovative and critical thinking skills.

Continued focus on independent, lifelong learning

Programmes and modules on the consecutive NQF levels are carefully planned in terms of the encouragement of independent and lifelong learning. This implies that self-study, as an integral part of all modules, should be explicit in the Study guide, taking into consideration that the level of the supervision and guidance will progressively decrease from first-year to postgraduate studies.

A structured focus on the development of teaching competence

FPD understands the core requirements of continuous professional development on the part of its lecturers and instructors. This includes development opportunities for staff offered by FPD, as well as faculty-based development addressing programme-specific or discipline-related needs such as educational orientation, assessment and moderation practices. The regular evaluation of teaching for development purposes is encouraged.

The development of teaching at the FPD also entails the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). This implies lecturers investigating the most favourable circumstances to promote and support learning in their specific fields of study to simultaneously develop their own teaching competence and teaching and learning in general to promote and share best practice. Schools are encouraged to establish forums to explore effective teaching and learning. Faculty are also encouraged to pursue participation in conference presentations, hosting workshops, peer-reviewed publications and other means of disseminating their findings to advance the knowledge in this field.

An outcomes-based approach in academic programmes

Teaching and learning at the FPD are organised in programmes, generically defined as a series of teaching and learning activities that lead to the attainment of a qualification. The programmes follow an outcomes-based approach, implying that learning outcomes guide and shape teaching, learning and assessment. Learning outcomes are described in terms of higher-order knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, consequent from the knowledge base of the field/discipline, the demands of the field/discipline and the needs of the profession or occupation concerned.

A flexible approach to teaching and learning

FPD strives to provide for the academic, professional and career-related learning needs of a diverse student body by the creation of learning opportunities using different modes of access to course content and delivery (presentation). These modes include face-to-face contact between learning facilitators and students, use of information and communication technology, and experiential learning. The different modes are used to complement one another in a way that is appropriate to the student and module/programme profile, as well as module/programme outcomes. All programmes at the FPD include interaction (primarily electronically) between the lecturer, other learning facilitators (if applicable) and students. The contact component of programmes makes provision for a variety of learning opportunities such as lectures, block meetings, workshops, seminars, group and individual tutorials, small-group discussions and laboratory explorations. The following applies to contact time:

- The contact time is determined as a percentage of the number of notional hours per programme/module in accordance with Faculty rules.
- The percentage of the contact time is adapted according to the student and module/programme profiles, e.g. more contact time for first-year students or for laboratory work.

Information and communication technologies (ICT)

The FPD encourages the use of ICT as a means to facilitate student access to and engagement in meaningful learning experiences. ICT could be utilised in one or more of the following ways:

- as a communication tool with and among students;
- to supplement teaching by, for example, making complementary materials and learning activities available via the learning management system endorsed by the FPD;
- as a means of facilitating learning through the integration of face-to-face teaching and ICT, also known as blended learning. This implies that some components of the learning process are facilitated via ICT, and other components are facilitated in the classroom. Lecturers, in collaboration with the ICT team at the FPD, develop modules/programmes that employ such an approach;
- for assessment of learning.

Work Integrated Learning

Work Integrated Learning (i.e. service learning, work-based learning, etc.) (WIL) forms an integral part of some professional and career-focused programmes in FPD, and is in accordance with professional regulatory requirements, where applicable. It involves different sites of learning such as community, industrial, commercial, and clinical settings. Please see Policy A2: Work Integrated Learning for more information on WIL.

A key focus on improvement of student retention, throughput and graduation rates

While maintaining and improving academic standards, FPD strives for improving student retention, throughput and graduation rates through the creation of an environment that enhances the likelihood that students are successful in their studies and are able to graduate.

Different retention mechanisms are developed and implemented to assist students with various types of issues that inhibit their ability to succeed and graduate. Such measures include:

- good induction strategies to the faculty, department and programme;
- early identification of under-performing students and students who are at risk;
- monitoring and follow-up of poor attendance with appropriate interventions where applicable;
- early diagnosis of student learning requirements for basic skills and additional learning support and the provision of such support (e.g. study skills, counselling, tutoring support and mentoring schemes etc.);
- Understanding and recognition of different learning styles, coupled with a sensitivity and openness to presenting information in different ways to accommodate different learning styles; and
- a variety of measures to maintain and improve student motivation (peer support, prizes and ceremonies, target setting aligned with formative assessment and feedback etc.).

Study guides

Study guides are available for all qualifications. Guidance is more explicit and detailed in undergraduate programmes. The Study guide is available as an electronic copy.

The study guide should contain the following:

- details of content and administrative support involved in the specific module, their preferred contact details and their availability;
- grievance procedures and protocol available to students;
- attendance requirements (if applicable);
- module outcomes and assessment criteria;
- assessment information such as dates and format;
- prescribed texts and additional reading lists or sources; and

- self-study requirements.
  The learning facilitation component of the guide is organised into learning units which could include the following: unit outcomes, a reference to the learning content to be studied, activities for students, self-assessment or review questions and assessment information related to the learning unit.

Assessment

Assessment of students' knowledge, skills, values and attitudes forms an integral part of teaching and learning. The principle of continuous and integrated formative and summative assessment applies. These are explained in detail in the FPD Assessment Policy ([Policy A7: Assessment of Learning](#)) and is structured to promote appropriate learning and adequate opportunities for interventions as necessary. Continuous formative assessment provides students and lecturers with essential timeous feedback on their progress to apply adjustments or supportive measures. Summative assessment in the form of marks, scores or levels of achievement are necessary for accountability through a formal declaration of the student's competence at the end of a module, year of study or programme. Some/all of the formative assessments may contribute to the summative score to encourage continuous learning and avoid the negative effect of high-stakes assessments.

Academic development and support

Academic development implies interventions and strategies geared towards the development and enrichment of students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels as a response to the need for widening access, improving retention and throughput and overall enhancing performance.

Consequently, academic development strategies and interventions should form an integral part of all accredited programmes and modules. In particular, FPD encourages and supports the use of tutors and mentors in undergraduate programmes for student support and academic development purposes; whereas, in postgraduate programmes involving research, it is the role of the research supervisor.

Language of teaching and learning

The language of learning, teaching and assessment and academic administration is determined by FPD's Language Policy ([Policy SR2: Language](#)) as approved by the Academic Committee.

Quality assurance of teaching and learning

FPD is committed to ongoing monitoring and regular evaluation of its teaching and learning structures, processes, activities, and outcomes to ensure the quality of its programmes.

The quality assurance (QA) of teaching and learning is the responsibility of Heads of Schools and the Academic Committee who develop and implement relevant policies, monitor practices and outcomes, and ensure that appropriate interventions take place if necessary. The Academic Committee is the highest decision-making body in FPD overseeing matters of teaching and learning, including QA.

The relevant faculty QA structures for teaching and learning are responsible for the development of a faculty policy and its implementation, as well as the monitoring of practices.

Heads of Schools report to the Academic Committee on quality assurance of teaching and learning.

The same requirements apply to divisions outside faculties that offer non-subsidised academic programmes.

The relevant faculty structures are also responsible for programme reviews as required by the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC).

Faculty policies on teaching and learning

A faculty must ensure that the faculty's teaching and learning practices are in accordance with this policy.

Accountabilities

The Academic Committee is responsible for review and approval of this policy on an annual basis. The policy is to be distributed to staff via induction and distributed to students and FPD's community via the website and other publications.