POLICY

STUDENT SUPPORT

Introduction

The Foundation for Professional Development (FPD) seeks to provide a supportive teaching and learning environment that is responsive to individual student needs. The academic and English language entry levels for each programme are regularly monitored, benchmarked, and adjusted where necessary, to ensure that students entering FPD programs have the academic and English language proficiencies required to complete their chosen programme successfully.

At the same time FPD recognises that, for many reasons, students may not always achieve the academic results which they are capable of. This document outlines the academic support available to all FPD students.

This policy is intended to provide staff and students with information regarding the facilities and resources that are available to students to support them with the academic and English language demands of their programmes. The policy also outlines the expectations and responsibilities of staff to identify students with learning support needs and to direct them to or provide them with appropriate resources. Students deemed academically 'at risk' are defined and the support strategies in place for these students are described.

This policy is aligned with the provisions set out by the Constitution of South Africa[1], the Higher Education Act (No. 10 of 1997)[2], and the Council for Higher Education's Criteria for Programme Accreditation[3].

Student Orientation

All students are required to attend the Orientation Programme prior to commencement of classes. The Head of School is responsible for the delivery of the Orientation program to all students. The Orientation programme encompasses a range of educational, programme planning, and social information sessions. These include:

- Registration.
- Virtual Library and additional resources orientation.
- Learning Management System and IT systems introduction.
- Programme planning.
- Academic expectations including plagiarism.
- Student Support Services information.

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[1] Republic of South Africa. 1996. Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996. Available at: https://www.justice.gov.za/legislation/constitution/saconstitution-web-eng.pdf
[2] Republic of South Africa. 1997. Higher Education Act Number 101 of 1997. Available at: https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/a101-97.pdf
[3] Council on Higher Education. 2004. Criteria for Programme Accreditation. Available at: http://nr-online.che.ac.za/html_documents/CHE_accreditation_criteria_Nov2004.pdf

Orientation sessions are supported through appropriate resources posted on the website and the Student Portal.

Student Administration and Engagement Coordinator or delegated member of staff is responsible to verify student attendance at Orientation and following up with students who do not attend or who arrive late. The orientation and follow up procedures are designed to ensure that all students are appropriately introduced into their programme.

Identification of Individual Student needs

Academic and Student Administration and Engagement staff maintain close scrutiny of students and monitor participation and assignment submissions. The Student Administration and Engagement staff will contact students who fail to participate and/or who fail to submit one or more assessments. They may identify these students as in need of learning support. The Head of School will consult the Student Administration and Engagement staff on the learning support needs and interventions to support students.

Learning support needs of students may arise from issues associated with:
- English language
- Study techniques
- Time management
- Organisational skills
- Working with others
- Information technology
- Content

The requirements of the programme

Learner support needs may be identified:
- By poor participation or poor assessment outcomes.
- By self-referral by a student.
- When a lecturer/tutor has identified that a learner is experiencing difficulty (this may be by observation in tutorial or upon analysis of assessment items submitted early in the term).
- When a learner seeks assistance from the Student Administration and Engagement staff or some other member of staff.

On-going Student Learning Support

Programmes commence during Orientation to assist students entering higher education with the transition to a tertiary level study arrangement. The support programmes include resources, follow up with students, and informal support provided by lecturers/tutors. The support programmes utilise a wide range of resources, such as videos and articles available in the library. Individual assistance is available from academic staff.

English Language and Academic Assistance

English language and academic engagement session and resources include such topics as essay writing, report writing, Harvard referencing, avoiding plagiarism, making oral presentations, and examination guidelines.

Library

Library information sessions are held during Orientation.

Information Technology

Information technology staff are available on campus and virtually to help students with the technology and software available to them, including connectivity issues related to their programme. Computer terminals are available to students with programmes such as Ms Word, Ms Excel and Ms PowerPoint . Staff are also available to assist students with issues relating to accessing of virtual platforms, virtual library and accessing study material on the virtual platform.

Academic Programme Coordinator

The Academic Programme Coordinator is also responsible for the effective and efficient delivery of the programme. This person is appointed by the Head of School, and functions within the parameters of FPD's policies on Teaching and Learning (Policy A6: teaching and Learning), Assessment (Policy A7: Assessment of Learning), Moderation (Policy A9:Moderation) and Recognition of Prior Learning (Policy A4: Recognition of Prior Learning). The Academic Programme Coordinator works in close cooperation with all academic staff members involved in the delivery of the programme and reports to the Head of Academic Cluster on a regular basis. The Academic Programme Coordinator is responsible, in cooperation with the Head of School and lecturers, for the development and implementation of online module study guides, sound implementation of teaching and learning and the execution of FPD's assessment and moderation policy. The Head of School is responsible for the coordination of the continuous evaluation of the programme. Their academic guidance towards vertical progression within the programme and the horizontal alignment of the different modules is of utmost importance in the successful delivery of the programme. The Head of School also evaluates the references and resources prescribed by each lecturer for the different modules. The Head of School has an open-door policy and students interact directly with them, they, in turn, interact with lecturers, Academic Programme Coordinator and with the Student Administration and Engagement Unit.

Head of School or lecturers provide regular workshops covering topics such as time management, examination preparation, essay and report writing, referencing, avoiding plagiarism, library research, and stress management. Other topics are covered as required, with the objective of helping students to improve their performance.

Head of School is additionally available for individual counselling with students by referral from staff or self-referral. Appointments can be made in person, by email with the Student Administration and Engagement Unit.

Documentation of students seeking support

Records of students referred for additional academic or English language support are maintained by the Student Administration and Engagement Unit. Summary data forms part of the educational metrics reported to the Academic Committee.

Academic Staff Consultation

Individual student consultations with the subject lecturer, tutor or other appropriate academic are an integral part of the learning experience for each subject. Some of FPD's programmes provides a structured tutorial. Further engagement sessions are scheduled to allow students the opportunity to clarify points of confusion, discuss aspects of the subject in more detail and obtain feedback on their assignments, both in draft form and completed work.

The scheduled times of tutorials are prominently displayed online, in study guides and provided individually to students. If a lecturer/tutor considers that additional times for consultation are required, at particular times of the year, these may be arranged with the approval of the Head of School.

Electronic consultation

Programmes are available on the Learner Management System which provides students with access to subject resources and also includes a "discussion board" facility that allows for the posing of questions by students and lecturers and response by both students and lecturers. Such community-based facilities are moderated and controlled by the Academic Programme Coordinator.

Students are encouraged to contact the Student Administration and Engagement Unit or School directly by email should they have any questions that cannot wait until the next tutorial session.

Consultation with Academic Programme Coordinator

Head of Schools are available for individual consultations at times when they are not engaged in teaching or associated administrative duties. Head of Schools are normally full-time permanent staff and are generally available from 8:00am to 4:30pm, Monday to Friday. Appointments can be made in person, by emailing the Student Administration and Engagement Unit.

The Head of School can connect the student with a range of academic and programme management advice, from programme planning and subject enrolments, to dealing with appeals and progression issues.

Support available on programmes:

- Orientation sessions
- Virtual Library and resources
- Student portal to interact with facilitators and peers
- Contact facilitators via e-mail
- Consultations with Head of School

Students at risk

Definition

Students are required to achieve minimum academic standards. The Student Administration and Engagement Unit and School monitors the academic performance of students against the minimum academic standards at the end of each module.

Students do not meet minimum academic standards in a programme if they:
- fail a particular unit of study more than once; or
- fail 50% or more of the units of study attempted in a year.

Students who do not meet the minimum academic standards are deemed to be "at risk". The Head of School will arrange engagements for all students who are deemed to be "at risk", advising such students of the possibility that conditions may apply on their continued enrolment.

Intervention strategies

During the engagement session, the Head of School will determine what additional support will be provided to the student. This may include, but is not limited to, the student:

- attending academic skills programmes;
- attending tutorial or study groups;
- Advice on deferral and
- Referral to support services.

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.