CURRICULUM POLICY

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1. DEFINITIONS[1]

For the purpose of this policy, unless otherwise stated, the following definitions shall apply:

Academic programme	is a purposeful and structured set of learning experiences (ie the teaching, learning and assessment activities) that leads to a qualification (degree, diploma or certificate);
Assessment	is the systematic evaluation of a student's ability to demonstrate the achievement of the learning goals intended in a curriculum;
Benchmarking	is within a programme context, a process through which a programme is evaluated and compared against internal and external, national and international reference points, for the purposes of accountability and improvement;
Certificate	is the official document awarded by an accredited provider to a student on the successful completion of any academic programme of study;
Comprehensiveness	means a mix of programmes, including career-oriented certificates, diplomas, degree and professional programmes, general formative programmes, research master's and doctoral programmes;
Context embedded curriculum development	refers to curricula at UNISA *speak from* a specific location of the African continent and the broader contexts of internationalisation and globalisation, and *speak to* challenges and opportunities on the African continent and broader global and international environments;
Cooperative education	is an approach to learning that promotes the concept of enhanced learning based on cooperation between education institutions on the one hand, and industry, commerce and the public sector on the other;
Course review	refers to internal quality assurance procedures that a provider uses to monitor and reflect on the outcomes of the education it provides through a course. The findings from course reviews should feed into the reviews of the programmes of which they form part;
Credit	is a standard quantifying the volume of learning required for a programme/module in terms of the notional study hours required for the average student to master a particular learning outcome. (A measure of the volume of learning required for a programme/module, quantified as the number of notional study hours required for the average student to master the relevant learning outcome);
Credit accumulation and transfer (CAT)	is the process whereby a student's achievements are recognised and contribute to further learning even if the student does not achieve a qualification, and whereby credits obtained at one institution may be recognised by another as meeting part of the requirements for a qualification, or credits for an incomplete qualification may be recognised as meeting part of the requirements for a different qualification, or, where subject to limits, credits for a completed qualification may be recognised as meeting part of the requirements of another qualification (HEQF, 2007);
Credit rating	refers to an estimate of the amount of learning required in order to obtain one credit (10 notional study hours are regarded as equivalent to one credit);

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[1] Many of these definitions originate from the websites of the Council for Higher Education (CHE) and the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA).

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Critical outcomes	are those generic outcomes determined by SAQA which inform all teaching and learning, including but not limited to:

a) Identifying and solving problems in which responses show that responsible decisions using critical and creative thinking have been made.

b) Working effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation or community.

c) Organising and managing oneself and one's activities responsibly and effectively.

d) Collecting, analysing, organising and critically evaluating information.

e) Communicating effectively using visual, mathematical and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/or written persuasion.

f) Using science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others.

g) Demonstrating an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

h) Contributing to the full personal development of each student and the social and economic development of society at large, by making it the underlying intention of any programme of learning to make an individual aware of the importance of:

(i) reflecting on and exploring a variety of strategies to learn more effectively;

(ii) participating as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities;

(iii) being culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts;

(iv) exploring education and career opportunities;

(v) developing entrepreneurial opportunities;

Curriculum	is the whole set of learning experiences constituting a particular qualification or module. Curriculum includes key aspects of teaching and learning such as

- what is to be learnt – content
- why it is to be learnt – rationale and underlying philosophy
- how it is to be learnt – process
- when it is to be learnt – structure of the learning process
- how the learning will be demonstrated in creative ways and achievement similarly assessed;

Curriculum design	is the strategic process of informed and deliberate construction of learning opportunities to enable students to achieve the appropriate level and scope of discipline, skills, knowledge and understanding on completion of a unit of study;

e-learning	is learning facilitated by means of the use of ICT social technologies, communication technologies, online learning platforms and other multimedia devices;
Extended curriculum	refers to the essential components of the curriculum whereby student support is offered to underprepared students who have passed the preregistration assessment;
Formal programme	is an academic programme approved and funded by the Council for Higher Education;
Graduateness	is the composite set of learning outcomes and attributes which students are expected to have achieved when they have completed their qualification successfully. These include discipline-specific knowledge, skills and competencies as well as broader attributes which equip graduates to be innovative and effective in the workplace and active and informed citizens. UNISA's definition in this regard is formulated in a statement on graduate attributes;
Level descriptor	is a standard according to which the varying levels of complexity of qualifications are distinguished. These are guidelines provided by the HEQF for differentiating the varying levels of complexity of modules/qualifications;
Module	is an assessed learning component (building block) within a programme of study for a qualification (sometimes referred to as a subject or module).
Module review	refers to the internal quality assurance procedures that a provider uses to monitor and reflect on the outcomes of the education it provides through a module. The findings of module and course reviews should feed into the reviews of the programmes of which they form part;
National qualification	is a structure within which all qualifications are registered at national level;
Notional hours of learning	refer to the learning time that it should reasonably take an average student to meet defined learning objectives. It includes concepts such as contact time, time spent in structured learning in the workplace and individual learning;
Non-formal module or Programme	is an institution-approved academic module or programme at the University that receives no state funding (sometimes referred to as a non-subsidised academic module or programme);
Non-subsidised academic programme	is an institution-approved academic programme at the University that receives no state funding (sometimes referred to as an extracurricular programme or non-formal programme);
Open educational resources (OERs)	are learning materials that are freely available (largely online) for use, remixing and redistribution. These include learning content, tools and implementation resources. One of the most prominent role players is the Creative Commons, which governs OERs through different licences;
Practicals	are teaching and learning credit-bearing strategies which constitute a formal part of the teaching and learning plan of an academic programme (eg laboratory work, tutorials, research assignments, simulations) and which make provision for the application of theory, techniques and skills. These

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frequently take place on campus, but are distinguished from work-integrated learning and service learning;

Professional programme	is a programme that has to meet the licensure and other professional and work-based requirements of statutory councils;
Programme	is the purposeful and structured set of learning experiences that leads to a qualification;
Programme-based approach	is a curriculum approach whereby a structured set of learning experiences or outcomes (and related assessment criteria) are coherently developed to achieve the purpose of a particular field of learning which leads to a qualification;
Programme coordinator	is the designated academic responsible for coordinating all the sub-parts or modules (and their associated learning experiences) of a specific programme. A programme coordinator operates within the framework of an agreed-upon mandate and defined procedures and responsibilities;
Programme evaluation	is the external quality assurance processes which are undertaken in order to make an independent assessment of a programme's development, management and outcomes, through the validation of the findings of an internal programme self-evaluation;
Programme team	is the team responsible for the development of academic programme proposals, culminating in the preparation of applications in the correct format to provide the basis for discussion in the approval process;
Qualification	is the formal recognition and certification of learning achievement awarded by an accredited institution;
Qualification-based approach	is an approach in which a structured set of learning outcomes and related assessment criteria are coherently developed to achieve the purpose of a particular field of learning which leads to a qualification;
Qualification coordinator	is the designated academic responsible for coordinating a specific qualification who operates within an agreed mandate with defined procedures and responsibilities in accordance with approved policies;
Qualification descriptor	is the term specifying the exit level of a particular qualification type, its credit rating, purpose and characteristics;
Qualification designator	is the term describing a generic field of study, discipline or profession as stated in the HEQF qualification nomenclature, for example Bachelor of Science (BSc). (This applies to degrees only.);
Qualification qualifier	is the term reflecting the specifications related to a specialised learning field, eg Geology (BSc in Information Technology);
Qualification team	is the team responsible for the development of academic programme proposals, culminating in the preparation of applications in the correct format to provide the basis for discussion in the approval process;

Qualification type	is the national classification of qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework;
Recognition of prior learning	is the formal identification, assessment and acknowledgement of the full range of a person's knowledge, skills and capabilities acquired through formal, informal or non-formal training, on-the-job or life experience;
Service learning	is applied learning which is directed at specific community needs and is integrated into an academic programme and curriculum. It could be credit-bearing and assessed, and may take place in a work environment;
Short learning programme	is an institution-approved non-subsidised programme inclusive of credit-bearing (attendance-based and non-attendance-based) short learning programmes generating less than 120 credits and extending over a period of less than one year;
Signature modules	are modules aimed at achieving UNISA-specific characteristics as defined by UNISA's description of graduateness. These modules

Signature modules (continued):

- flow directly from and contribute to the university's values, vision, mission statement and strategic priorities

- are preferably interdisciplinary in nature, though situated in a specific discipline

- are taught and assessed in a specific discipline/department;

Student centredness	is the principle of systematically recognising students' world-views and lived experiences as well as prior learning in the development of curricula that will allow students to reach their learning objectives and aspirations;
Subsidised programme	is approved, funded, registered and accredited structured academic programmes which, on successful completion, lead to the award of a formal qualification (sometimes referred to as a formal programme);
Summative assessment	is formalised assessment which is used to certificate the attainment of a certain level of education. It is used to serve needs extrinsic to the education process;
Threshold concepts	are the core concepts in a curriculum based that students need to grasp before they will be able to progress any further;
Vocational learning	is the education process aimed at the development of vocational skills with view to occupational competence and economic independence;
Work-based learning	is a component of a learning programme that focuses on the application of theory in an authentic, work-based context. It addresses specific competences, identified for the acquisition of a qualification, which relate to the development of skills that will make the student employable and will assist in developing his/her personal skills. Employer and professional bodies are involved in the assessment of experiential learning;

2.   ABBREVIATIONS

CHE   means the Council on Higher Education, http://www.che.ac.za

DCLD   means the Directorate: Curriculum and Learning Development

HEQC   means the Higher Education Quality Committee, http://www.che.ac.za

HEQF   means the Higher Education Qualification Framework,
            http://www.che.ac.za/documents/d000148/

IKS   means the Indigenous knowledge systems

PQM   means the programme qualification mix

RPL   means recognition of prior learning

SAQA   means South African Qualifications Authority, http://www.saqa.org.za

STLC   means the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee

UNISA   means the University of South Africa, http://www.unisa.ac.za

UNGC   means the United Nations Global Compact, http://www.unglobalcompact.org/

WIL   means work integrated learning

3. BACKGROUND TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS DOCUMENT

Since 2007 there has been a concerted drive at UNISA to: *revisit* epistemology as foundational to transformation; *promote* African thoughts, philosophies and interests to counter the legacy of western intellectual hegemony; *highlight* the importance of student centredness as a change agent; practise a critical scholarship focused on African perspectives towards society and knowledge production; *foreground* an awareness of our strengths and opportunities in the market; and *ensure* quality and the importance of research and its centrality in steering UNISA towards transformation. On 17 January 2007 UNISA also became a signatory to the United National Global Impact (UNGC).

To support these drives for change and transformation, several institutional workshops were organised to align UNISA's strategy and curricula to societal, regional and continental needs. Subsequently, processes were put in place to align UNISA's strategy, operations, culture, research, teaching, learning and community engagement with the UNGC principles and to make sure that these principles become part of mainstream UNISA thinking. On 25 February 2009, the Directorate: Curriculum and Learning Development (DCLD) was requested to submit to the UNISA/UNGC Steering Committee a discussion document on the possible review of UNISA's Curriculum Development Guidelines in order to include the UNGC principles.

The DCLD was requested to provide guidance on curriculum issues around the UNGC and around Council's recommendation. At that stage, UNISA only had a document (The framework for a team approach in curriculum and learning development, FTA) which described the processes involved in curriculum development, but gave no clear guidance on principles informing curricula at UNISA. The DCLD drafted a discussion document which proposed, inter alia, that a curriculum framework or policy be developed in order to provide clear principles and guidance regarding the development of curricula at UNISA. During its meeting in May 2009, the UNISA Senate Teaching and Learning Committee (STLC) mandated the development of a UNISA curriculum policy.

The formulation of this policy was undertaken by a workshop (to which all the colleges at UNISA sent representatives), a literature review, and a comparative study of curriculum policies in the South African higher education context. A draft policy was then formulated and circulated among individuals, departments and colleges for comment. The expectation of the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee is that the UNISA curriculum policy will ensure that curriculum development in the different colleges, though distinctive with regard to programme and discipline focus, will give expression to the principles agreed upon.

4. INTRODUCTION

The forces impacting on higher education curricula have multiplied in recent years, with different constitutional, academic, socioeconomic, geopolitical and cultural forces all claiming a stake in higher education curricula. Inevitably, the curriculum is a highly contested space. Where higher education previously enjoyed greater autonomy in determining what it offered and how it was offered, currently it is facing far more intense demands to contribute directly towards innovation and economic development, and to produce graduate attributes and research relevant to the modern knowledge economy.

More and more stakeholders claim their shares in shaping higher education curricula, for example regulatory bodies, market demands, the corporate sector, regional and national development priorities, the internationalisation of higher education, ongoing demands to accommodate cultural pluralities in curricula, changing student profiles, and institutional foci and expertises. Among those different stakeholders there are also different opinions on definitions of graduateness and what a university education should entail.

In the specific context of UNISA, we need to have a common understanding of how the curricula offered by the University should respond to globalisation, internationalisation, national development objectives and the skills shortage, and to the broader crises facing humanity, namely international and regional conflicts, poverty, sustainability, corruption, health priorities and pandemics, economic instability, environmental concerns and living in an increasingly complex and fast-changing world.

As no education is neutral, UNISA will critically and creatively explore its own unique contributions to seeking solutions to the challenges facing communities on the African continent without losing sight of the impact of the internationalisation and globalisation on curricula and the skills required of our graduates. The internationalisation of higher education is notable for the multiple ways in which it has manifested around the world. Although each local, national and regional context presents unique characteristics, several broad trends can be identified globally. These developments include the mobility of people, programmes and institutions; the rising prominence of collaborative research; evolving curricula; approaches to teaching and learning; and an increasingly heightened sense of the interconnectedness of the higher education enterprise across the globe.

Despite and in the midst of all these claims and counter-claims on higher education curricula, UNISA is committed to continuously grow "Towards *the* African university in the service of humanity", and it is envisaged that the UNISA curriculum policy will provide guidance on the principles which will help UNISA achieve its mission and vision.

The policy aims to provide an overview of the principles according to which curricula at UNISA will be developed. These principles, once implemented, will result in UNISA's curricula meeting international good practices in curriculum design, and being responsive and student-centred. The implementation of the policy will provide clear principles to which colleges, schools and departments can refer in determining the validity of the increasing demands on curricula in higher education.

The implementation of this policy will result in UNISA's graduates having characteristics distinguishing them from other graduates. Finally, the implementation of the policy will contribute to UNISA's vision "Towards *the* African university in the service of humanity".

5. PRINCIPLES GUIDING CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

The policy recognises that the different colleges at UNISA all have distinctive foci, stakeholders and unique challenges to address in their curricula as well as in their curriculum development processes. It is, however, important to state clearly that despite these differences, all UNISA curricula should adhere to the principles stated in this policy. The policy and its principles are broad enough to provide scope for the distinctive character of the different colleges, curricula and foci, but the policy is also clear enough regarding the non-negotiable elements of curricula and curriculum development at UNISA. The policy applies to all academic programmes (subsidised and non-subsidised) and professional or non-professional programmes, as well as vocational and cooperative education programmes.

There are six broad principles guiding curricula at UNISA, namely

5.1 Responsiveness
5.2 Student-centredness
5.3 Accountability
5.4 Curriculum structure
5.5 Quality assurance
5.6 Impact

5.1 RESPONSIVENESS

Responsiveness within the UNISA context refers to a sensitivity and continuous awareness of societal expectations, reflected in our qualifications and curricula as they respond to the needs and challenges faced by our students and community. UNISA's curricula are context-based curricula addressing a variety of contexts, from the institutional context to the national context with its priorities and the international context. Each of these contexts is characterised by a number of trends, opportunities and challenges.

Curricula at UNISA respond firstly to our character as a comprehensive open distance learning institution and to our mission and vision. Our curricula secondly also respond to UNISA's immediate (regulatory, political, socioeconomic, environmental and technological) and broader international contexts.

5.1.1 RESPONSIVENESS TO UNISA'S CHARACTER AND VISION

UNISA is a comprehensive ODL higher education institution. The comprehensiveness of our curricula encapsulates a range of offerings, from strictly vocational to strictly academic certificates, diplomas and degrees.

UNISA accepted an ODL Policy in 2008 which provides the rationale and parameters of ODL. UNISA's "openness" and our distance learning character result in many students registering at UNISA who would not have had an opportunity to enrol in higher education if it was not for UNISA. Our student profile is therefore different from the student profiles of face-to-face and residential higher education institutions. This does not imply that our standards should be lower than national and international benchmarks. However, our ODL character implies that our curricula should be carefully planned and structured to ensure a reasonable chance of success for students ranging from the under-prepared but with potential to the sufficiently prepared.

Furthermore, curriculum design and the outcomes of curricula should be aligned with the vision, mission and values of the University. As products of an ODL and comprehensive higher education provider and as a result of UNISA's commitment to serve humanity, UNISA's graduates should have distinctive graduate qualities, with a clear appreciation of our location on the African continent, notwithstanding the increasing internationalisation of higher education. UNISA graduates have, as a result of their successful completion of their studies in an ODL context, unique qualities. These qualities are included the following statement on graduateness.

UNISA graduates

(i) are independent, resilient, responsible and caring citizens who are able to fulfil and serve in multiple roles in their immediate and future local, national and global communities

(ii) have a critical understanding of their location on the African continent with its histories, challenges and potential in relation to globally diverse contexts

(iii) are able to critically analyse and evaluate the credibility and usefulness of information and data from multiple sources in a globalised world with its ever increasing information and data flows and competing worldviews

(iv) know how to apply their discipline-specific knowledges competently, ethically and creatively to solve real-life problems

(v) are critically aware of their own learning and developmental needs and future potential

In order to support students to enhance these characteristics, academic departments are prompted to investigate possibilities to

(i) offer specific modules and/or

(ii) plan and implement a final capstone assessment in which final-year students can provide evidence of their graduateness

Such signature modules and/or final capstone assessment should have the following characteristics:

(i) They are interdisciplinary and often inter-college in nature. The issues to be discussed in signature modules are sufficiently complex that the lens of a single discipline or college does not create an adequate picture and, in order to view such issues completely, an image is required that is created from the lenses of multiple disciplines.

(ii)   They contribute to the definition of graduateness of the institution.

International practice regarding the offering of signature modules differs. These modules are credit bearing and are mostly offered on first-year level, although some institutions require students to submit a portfolio of evidence before they graduate (as [a] capstone module[s]) of their competence in the outcomes envisaged in the signature modules.

Signature modules at various institutions deal with specific foci like computer literacy, reading, writing, communication and studying skills and using institutional resources (if these modules are offered on first-year level). When signature modules or portfolios of evidence are required before graduation, these modules and portfolios encompass evidence that students can develop their own opinions in well-structured arguments about topical and context-bound issues. They can also use theory-driven arguments from at least two theoretical approaches but not limited to historical, educational, business, political, social, economic, scientific or environmental perspectives.

5.1.2   RESPONSIVENESS TO UNISA'S CONTEXTS

Responsiveness to UNISA's contexts includes, but is not limited to, taking cognisance of the higher education regulatory framework within our national context (3.1.2.1– 3.1.2.2), our continental (3.1.2.3) and international contexts (3.1.2.4).

5.1.2.1   Higher education regulatory frameworks

(i)   Each qualification/module will be developed according to the guidelines provided by the HEQF and SAQA.

(ii)   Each qualification/module will have its own set of outcomes describing the exit level competencies and abilities of students after they have successfully completed the programme.

(iii)   Each module in a programme will be explicitly linked to the exit level outcomes of a qualification.

(iv)   Specific outcomes which include knowledge and understanding of a subject, as well as cognitive, general and professional skills and values, should be explicitly stated for each module and qualification and these should be the pivot around which the whole module/qualification is developed.

(v)   The specific outcomes will be appropriate to the HEQF level descriptors and will address the critical cross-field outcomes as prescribed by SAQA. Each learning outcome should have its own set of assessment criteria, clearly stating the nature of the evidence that will be used to evaluate competency in the stated outcomes.

(vi)   Planned outcomes and assessment criteria are explicitly communicated to students.

(vii)   Each academic programme addresses the critical generic outcomes as determined by SAQA.

5.1.2.2   Responsiveness to our local context

UNISA's curricula take cognisance of the following issues in our local context:

(i)   Skills development

In response to national development needs, UNISA's curricula will specifically address the development of transportable skills in all curricula depending on the focus of the curriculum.

(ii)   Diversity

In planning curricula, departments should accommodate as far as possible the diverse linguistic, cultural and religious backgrounds of students. With the support of UNISA Language Services, academic departments will be responsible for the inclusion of multilingual word/phrase lists in all modules[2].

(iii)   Equity, redress, increasing access and the extended curriculum

UNISA's Admission Policy deals with the minimum criteria for admission (including readmission criteria) to UNISA for all academic programmes offered by the University.

UNISA provides alternative pathways for under-prepared (academic and non-academic) students when they register for academic programmes.

UNISA *as an institution* will be responsible for identifying students at risk, who need additional support. Each college will determine the need for an extended curriculum (and/or other academic support) appropriate for students who, after proper pre-registration assessment, need extra support and additional modules (an extended curriculum).

5.1.2.3   Responsiveness to our continental context

UNISA's vision states unambiguously that UNISA is striving "towards" being *"the* African university in the service of humanity". From a strategic perspective this implies that UNISA is truly part of Africa and will therefore promote African thought, philosophies, interests and epistemologies through inquiry, scholarship and partnership.

Western knowledge and application has often been utilised throughout education systems and policies in the achievement of growth and development on the African continent. The time has however dawned for the African continent to utilise existing and new African knowledge and insights that will enhance and ensure growth and sustainable development. African society therefore needs to seek out knowledge and the application thereof that is relevant and can effectively be applied on the continent to achieve sustainable growth. Thus, the production and application of knowledge will require a rebirth, revision and rehabilitation of African indigenous knowledges.

Africanisation is rooted within the African common identities, largely defined by their histories and a shared struggle against colonialism. These historical legacies have impacted on growth and development, as well as the social, economic and political contexts on the continent. The historical legacies have prompted the development of more democratic governance and sounder economic policies. In addition, a sense of supportive cohesion has been created in terms of which the majority of Africans feel comfortable with embracing mutual collectiveness and ubuntu. UNISA academic departments must interrogate and acknowledge these historical legacies in their approach

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[2]   Academic departments do not necessarily have the expertise to develop these lists themselves, but should accept the responsibility to ensure their development by appropriate persons with expertise.

to qualifications and course offerings and in their ambition to serve the needs of African society.

Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) refers to the systems of knowledge in philosophy, science, technology, astronomy, education, mathematics, engineering etc that are grounded in the total "cultural" (very broadly defined) heritage of a nation or society, and maintained by communities as they negotiate their sustenance and livelihoods. These systems are undergirded by an interlocking web of ethical, social, religious and philosophical sub-systems that determine broad patterns of cognition which provide them with a rational essence and emotional tone. In order to acknowledge such systems, UNISA's curricula

(i)   promote African thought, philosophy, interest and epistemology[3]

(ii)   are located and rooted in the African context, addressing African concerns, challenges, opportunities for innovation and critical engagement

(iii)   develop African knowledges and IKS as knowledge systems in their own right

(iv)   offer alternative worldviews to the dominance of Western canons and contribute to a multiplicity of voices, alternative canons and diversity in thought

(v)   do not promote a new hegemony but rather stimulate curricula as spaces for interplay between diverse knowledge systems[4]

5.1.2.4 Responsiveness to our international context

UNISA will take seriously the increasingly international characteristic of our student   profile and the increasing globalisation of the application contexts of our curricula.

Undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications will prepare students for local *and* international application contexts. The University will do this by encouraging the use of different cultural viewpoints, examples and local and international case studies.

5.2 STUDENT-CENTREDNESS

UNISA's ODL Policy states that UNISA places the student at the centre of the entire learning process from the moment the student intends registering through to graduation, and continuing on through to its alumni, who play a vital role in evaluating impact and as ambassadors for the institution. Students are therefore invaluable stakeholders in the development of curricula.

Students' current epistemologies and prior learnings should form an integral part of planning the curriculum. Curriculum development should take cognisance of the life-worlds, experiences and expectations in structuring the curricula in such a way as to not exclude students from the curricula, but to ensure that our curricula start where they are, with regard to the epistemological foundations and outcomes of the curriculum.

UNISA's curricula should contribute to their fulfilment of their educational goals, whether personal fulfilment or preparation for employment.

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[3]   The singular does not imply that African thought, philosophy, interest, and epistemology are homogenous concepts.
[4]   Senex approved on 19 April 2007 a number of recommendations regarding Africanisation.
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5.3 ACCOUNTABILITY

The academic department and College in which a particular curriculum is designed, developed, revised and taught are accountable to UNISA for adherence to this policy and the processes prescribed.

Under no circumstances will the responsibility for the development of a curriculum and accreditation be ceded to any internal or external stakeholder. Although each stakeholder contributes specific expertise to the curriculum process (as stipulated by the *Framework for the implementation of a team approach to curriculum and learning development at UNISA)*, the final initiative and accountability for the academic integrity, teaching and learning quality lies with the academic department. Should external (to the academic department) stakeholders contribute to the development of the curriculum and/or materials, the academic department remains finally accountable for assuring the quality of any contribution.

Where departments use external experts to contribute to or author study materials, the academic department remains accountable to ensure quality and adherence to this policy.

5.4 CURRICULUM STRUCTURE

The curriculum structure refers to the alignment of curricula with the pathways as envisaged and determined by the HEQF as well as the internal coherence and alignment of the different modules.

5.4.1 INTERNAL CURRICULUM COHERENCE

Academic programmes comprise a selection of modules which, together, result in students having reached a satisfactory level of competence in the outcomes envisaged for the total programme. Each of the modules should therefore contribute to the outcomes graduates should achieve at the end of the programme.

Departments ensure that all the compulsory modules in a particular academic programme refer to one another, either as the prerequisites for the follow-up modules or by referring students back to previous modules. The modules build on each other and provide a well-designed journey with a particular focus.

The modules at the start of such a well-designed curriculum, comprising several HEQF levels, form a coherent whole.

5.4.2 CREDITS AND NOTIONAL HOURS

Credits are a means of indicating the time (notional hours) that the student needs to achieve the competencies envisaged in a particular unit of learning. Credits are set for both qualifications and modules and are linked to time frames, the duration of a programme, contact time (where applicable), estimated time required for completion of assignments, learning activities in preparation for assessment opportunities and so forth.

The notional hours encompass all the time students need to work through the curriculum. All activities concerning the curriculum are included, for example formative and summative assessments, contact sessions with lecturers, *my*Unisa, online or multimedia activities, service learning, work integrated learning etc.).

Developing curricula in an ODL context does not preclude adherence to notional hour requirements. Institutional guidelines regarding notional hours are available.

5.4.3 QUALIFICATION LEVEL CURRICULUM PLANNING

The University follows a qualification-based approach and takes cognisance of the portability of the qualification and of the learning pathways of students, either in entering

the qualification, in its midst, or after successful completion of the qualification. All formal qualifications offered at UNISA should be approved by the CHE and registered by SAQA. All informal qualifications should be internally approved by the Senex.

5.5 CURRICULUM PROCESSES

5.5.1 CURRICULUM REVIEW AND REVIEW CYCLE

The UNISA curriculum reviewing processes should form part of a curriculum plan in order to accommodate new ideas and knowledge as well as to avoid rigidity. Such changes should be informed by developments in the world of learning and by innovation and development in a particular discipline. The curriculum review will address the following aspects:

a) comparability of qualification/programme in comparison with qualifications or programmes offered by other HEIs

b) how the qualification answers/responds to the HEQF and other education legislation

c) how the qualification/programme relates to benchmark statements/criteria by professional bodies/the SETAs (where applicable)

d) relevance to professional and statutory bodies (PSBs) including the requirements of specific nation states (where applicable)

e) classification profiles for students who have successfully completed the qualification (where applicable)

f) trends in the number of students who have completed the qualifications

g) student and employer feedback

h) market needs

Though academics departments are primarily responsible for ensuring the academic relevance and integrity of their offerings, all academic offerings are quality assured by institutional cycles and processes.

5.5.2 STAKEHOLDERS AND CONSULTATION IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

International good practice in curriculum development provides for the involvement of a range of stakeholders in curriculum development, depending on each stakeholder's expertise and availability. Therefore, UNISA follows a team approach to curriculum design. Consultation with all internal stakeholders and relevant external stakeholders is key to curriculum development at UNISA as prescribed by the *Framework for the implementation of a team approach to curriculum and learning development* (FTA). The FTA consolidates the principles advocated by the UNISA curriculum policy and tuition policy, and serves as operational document to guide the development of learning materials within a team approach.

5.6 CURRICULUM RESOURCES

Curricula at UNISA encompass more than the study guides and (where applicable) additional prescribed materials. A curriculum is the whole learning experience including what is to be learnt (content), the rationale for the learning, the processes by which the learning take place, the structure of the learning process and how the learning will be assessed.

In developing a curriculum, lecturers author, refer to and use a number of resources to enable students to be successful. Resources most used by departments include (but are not limited to):

- study guides
- prescribed textbooks
- prescribed articles and chapters in books
- online resources
- lecturers and tutors

Prescribed textbooks, chapters and articles follow on the design of the curriculum process and do not dictate it. The curriculum of modules cannot be determined or prescribed by available textbooks in the field/discourse. UNISA has approved a *Policy: prescribing books, readers and journal articles and recommending books and journal articles* which provides guidelines on prescribing and/or recommending books, articles and chapters from books.

This policy envisages that UNISA will also seriously consider making increasing use of the following resources:

5.6.1   Open educational resources
5.6.2   Multi-, intra- and transdisciplinary sources
5.6.3   Community resources

5.6.1 OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

UNISA commits itself to critically evaluating the appropriateness and availability of OER before prescribing text books. The sourcing and adaptation of OERs are a standard and supported part of the module design and materials development process. UNISA further commits itself to make materials, tools and management resources available to its employees, using the different licence types as proposed and governed by a range of OER providers like the:

a)   Creative Commons,

b)   Comprehensive Knowledge Archive Network,

c)   Connextions,

d)   Google Open Content,

e)   Free/Libre Open Source Software (FLOSS),

f)   MIT Open Courseware,

g)   Open Learning,

h)   the Open Courseware Consortium,

i)   Open Educational Resources Programme (JISC),

j)   Open ICEcat catalog,

k)   UNESCO Open Training Platform,

l)   the Virginia Open Education Foundation,

m)   Xpert and others.

UNISA creates and supports processes for the identification and review of potential UNISA OERs and markets and celebrates its OER releases (for example in an open institutional portal).

5.6.2 MULTI-, INTER- AND TRANSDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES

Multi-, inter- and transdisciplinarity concerns that which is at once among the disciplines, across the different disciplines and beyond all disciplines. The goal is to understand the present world, of which one of the imperatives is the unity of knowledge. The creation of knowledge based on these imperatives requires the generation of transformative heuristics. Multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary approaches are encouraged but not at the expense of disciplinary expertise.

Acknowledging the richness of such an approach, the University of South Africa aims to imbed multi-inter-and trans-disciplinarity within its offerings and in so doing add value in achieving our University vision "towards the African university in service of humanity".

5.6.3 COMMUNITY RESOURCES

UNISA acknowledges the richness of the oral traditions and cultural heritage of our students. These oral traditions and cultural heritage often provide alternative explanations and world-views. UNISA will encourage academics and students to explore IKS as curriculum resources, and as IKS resources are identified, UNISA will include these resources as valid epistemologies and knowledge systems.

5.7 CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

5.7.1 INCOME STREAM IMPLICATIONS OF CURRICULA

Financial viability is *one* of the considerations to be taken into account with regard to the development of curricula. Depending on an offering's alignment with the mission, vision and market penetration of UNISA, colleges take into consideration the cost and funding for the development of curricula and teaching strategies in the development of modules and qualifications.

5.7.2 PEDAGOGY AND TECHNOLOGY

The different colleges, schools and departments will evaluate the specific impact of their students' profiles on the use of technologies in their respective contexts. They will also adopt approaches to teaching and learning (including all materials and resources) which foster active learning. An approach of active, authentic, collaborative intellectual engagement will guide the development of such materials.

While the effective use of technologies is one of the key characteristics of graduates*, the use of technology at UNISA is in the service of more effective teaching and learning.* In supporting teaching and learning, UNISA will embed e-learning, m-learning and a range of information and communications technologies (ICTs) as far as possible (considering the student profile) at the centre of the student experience by, *inter alia*,

a)   ensuring widespread use of *my*Unisa

b)   reviewing production processes and systems to ensure that technological innovation is supported at scale

c)   ensuring that employees and students (where appropriate) receive adequate training to play their part in the development, implementation and experience of e-learning/m-learning across the University

d)   increasing the use of broadcast digital assets

e)   building an online student profile, while driving personalised learning opportunities and student support

f) focusing and increasing our active investigation and development of innovative e-learning pedagogy and next-generation distance learning across the University and ensuring the dissemination of outcomes

g) benchmarking the use of e-learning/m-learning in higher education institutions (HEIs) and other organisations internationally, taking into account differences in student profiles, contexts etc.

h) enhancing our quality assurance mechanisms for e-learning/m-learning and the use of ICTs

i) monitoring student and customer behaviour online as a key market and business intelligence resource.

An excellent resource for determining the optimal use of a range of technologies is the *Handbook for Emerging Technologies for Learning* (Siemens & Tittenberger, 2009).

5.7.3 RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

UNISA's policy on the recognition of prior learning (RPL) establishes guidelines, principles, responsibilities, processes and criteria for the implementation of an organisational RPL strategy at UNISA. As such it offers a point of departure for the development of departmental operational strategies for RPL best suited to the needs and requirements of individual subjects, modules and training programmes within UNISA. UNISA curricula will take into account students' prior learning and experiences and, where possible, accredit students for the prior learning based on valid and appropriate evidence.

5.7.4 WORK-INTEGRATED LEARNING

UNISA approved the Experiential Learning Policy which provides clear guidelines on the scope and development of WIL elements in a curriculum.

Where applicable, a work-integrated learning component should be included in the curriculum. A work-integrated learning (WIL) curriculum process must necessarily involve bodies and persons outside the university that have an interest in the outcomes of the curriculum process and of the qualification. Where programmes lead to the registration of graduates with professional bodies, institutional and departmental mechanisms must be established to involve such parties in the curriculum process. Advisory committees are one way of facilitating the participation of all interested parties/stakeholders.

The actual practice of a vocation does not necessarily follow the logical guidelines underlying science, but is often a combination of potential fields of application of a number of related or even unrelated scientific/academic disciplines. The approach required for dealing with the practice of a vocation successfully involves, to a lesser extent, the theoretically scientific basic principles approach, but to a greater extent, the ability to apply the practical outcome of scientific principles that they may be of use to the particular vocation or industry. The unique feature of vocational education is that the needs of the actual practice of the vocation are to a great extent determinative of the structure and content of the related university vocational qualification. The education is therefore not structured around a scientific discipline. University vocational programmes are often multidisciplinary and fully integrated packages for the application of technology/vocational practice and are specifically vocation-oriented.

To comply with this requirement, sufficient liaison mechanisms should be maintained with the industry sector and, where applicable, with the vocational councils/bodies for every WIL programme.

5.8 QUALITY ASSURANCE

The institutional audit and qualification/programme accreditation requirements, as stipulated by the HEQC to assure the quality of academic qualifications/programmes with a view to continuous improvement, include the management of the quality of the planning, development and design of these qualifications/programmes. Quality of curricula is assured by institutional cycles of quality audits and review and include the following:

a) The management of the quality of qualifications/programmes and the planning, development and design, in accordance with the HEQC criteria, requirements and procedures, is the responsibility of Qualification/Programme Coordinators, Heads of Departments, School Directors and Executive Deans of Colleges.

b) Colleges ensure that there are quality structures and mechanisms in place to monitor quality and report to the Directorate: Quality Assurance and Promotion.

c) The relevant college and department qualification/programme teams are responsible for the development and design of qualifications/programmes in accordance with the agreed criteria, the implementation thereof and the monitoring of processes and practices.

d) College tuition committees are responsible for ensuring the appropriateness and readiness of proposals.

e) College boards are responsible for approving the proposals for submission to the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee on the basis of the college's academic and strategic plan, the strategic resources required for the successful delivery of the proposal and the adequacy of the documentation. College boards are responsible for submitting proposals to professional boards if required.

f) UNISA's Senate is responsible for approving proposals.

5.9 ENVISAGED IMPACT OF THE CURRICULUM POLICY

5.9.1 It is envisaged that this policy on curriculum development will have a positive transformative impact on UNISA curriculum practices and the effectiveness of our teaching and learning.

5.9.2 Colleges, schools and departments will

a) re-evaluate academics' key priorities and allocation of time to allow for sufficient time to develop quality curricula and learning materials designed according to the principles as embodied in the UNISA tuition and assessment policies.

b) encourage, acknowledge and appreciate scholarship in curriculum and teaching and learning development as valid research outputs and as valid grounds for promotion.

c) provide sufficient support to academic employees responsible for curriculum development and review.

d) encourage interconnectivity and alignment between research, community engagement and curriculum development.

5.10 RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE POLICY

The Vice Principal Academic: Teaching and Learning is responsible for the implementation of the Policy, its future amendments and updating, ensuring that all persons affected by the Policy are aware of the Policy and any amendments and the electronic availability of the Policy.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 This policy is the culmination of several processes to transform UNISA to achieve its mission "Towards *the* African university in the service of humanity". This policy provides guidance on the core of *being* UNISA, namely our curricula.

6.2 The policy provides a number of principles according to which all curricula at UNISA will be developed. These principles, based on good international practices in curriculum design, result in our curricula being responsive and student-centred. Colleges, schools and departments should refer to the policy in determining the validity of the increasing demands on curricula in higher education.

6.3 The litmus test for this policy will be our graduates' appraisal by an increasingly critical global higher education landscape and our graduates' ability to serve humanity.

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