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Extended Curriculum Programme (ECP) Guidelines



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ECP guidelines

Type of document:	Guidelines
Purpose:	The purpose of these guidelines is to support consistency in the implementation of ECPs at SU and to offer guidance in terms of practices and student selection for ECPs.
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Owner¹:	Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Learning and Teaching
Curator²:	Senior Director: Learning and Teaching Enhancement
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Validity:	In the event of differences in interpretation, the English version of these guidelines shall prevail.

¹Owner: Head(s) of Responsibility Centre(s) in which the rules functions

²Curator: Administrative head of the division responsible for the implementation and maintenance of the rules

Table of contents

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Purpose of the guidelines**
- 3. Implementation of the guidelines**
 - 3.1 DHET policies
 - 3.2 SU policies
 - 3.3 ECP Steering Committee
- 4. Definitions**
- 5. Place of ECPs in TLA at SU**
- 6. Access for success**
- 7. Pedagogies**
- 8. ECP models and types of modules**
- 9. Roles and responsibilities regarding ECP at SU**
 - 9.1 Faculty management
 - 9.2 The ECP programme leader/coordinator
 - 9.3 The academic programme coordinator(s)
 - 9.4 Academic staff (this applies to all academics who teach)
 - 9.5 Professional academic support staff (PASS)
 - 9.6 Students enrolled in an extended curriculum programme
- 10. Guideline control**
 - 10.1 Roles
 - 10.2 Implementation
 - 10.3 Monitoring and reporting
 - 10.4 Release
 - 10.5 Revision
 - 10.6 Conflict resolution
- 11. Supporting documents**
- 12. Related documents**
- 13. References**
- 14. Addenda**

Addendum A: The Department of Higher Education and Training's models for extended curriculum programmes and modules

1. Introduction

In the 1980s, academic development (AD) emerged as *academic support* for a small number of black students entering historically white universities. This support was intended to “bridge the gap” between the students’ backgrounds and the university environment (Boughey, 2007). From the early 1990s onwards, academic development included *student* support and the support of *lecturers* as this developmental work also became about the development of pedagogies and curricula to meet the needs of a changing student demographic (Boughey, 2007). The shift away from focusing solely on the students’ needs towards focusing on institutional practices and structures that inhibit student success was an important one, and it is a shift that continues to take place in the midst of a decolonial and critical turn in higher education research and practice.

Higher education policy has supported the ECPs by creating the Foundation Provision Grant that supports the offering of these programmes. This is a recognition of the impact that ECPs have in realising the national goals of access to and success in higher education for students from socioeconomically disadvantaged families.

The history of extended curriculum programmes (ECPs) aligns with the history of academic development in South Africa and its conceptual and political shifts. With these AD shifts in mind, ECPs at SU are currently understood as a type of academic development practice designed to address the needs of a particular group of students while considering the institutional structures and practices that best support or hinder the success of all students.

2. Purpose of these guidelines

The purpose of these guidelines is to support consistency in implementing ECPs at SU, and to offer guidance in terms of practices and student selection for ECPs.

3. Implementation of these guidelines

The implementation of these guidelines is regulated by:

3.1 Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) policies

The relevant DHET policy documents that guide the management and implementation of ECPs at South African universities are:

- The general foundation policy titled “Foundation Provision in Ministerially Approved Programmes” (DHET 2012¹); and
- The Funding Policy on Extended Curriculum Programmes (Foundation Provision) (DHET 2018).

These documents are available on the webpage of the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL): <https://www.sun.ac.za/english/learning-teaching/ctl/t-l-policies-and-guidelines/institutional>

¹Nominations for a Ministerial Reference Group for Academic Development responsible for developing policy related to extended curriculum programmes were requested in July 2024. An updated national ECP policy is expected in due course.

3.2 SU policies

These guidelines are informed by, and should adhere to and be read in conjunction with all other SU policies and guidelines in the area of teaching-learning-assessment (TLA) as listed in Sections 11 and 12 below.

3.3 ECP Steering Committee

The ECP Steering Committee provides strategic institutional guidance about the ECPs at SU and supports the implementation of these guidelines.

The committee consists of representatives from faculties that offer ECPs including the ECP leaders/coordinators, the Centre for Student Counselling and Development (CSCD), the Registrar's Office and the Division for Learning and Teaching Enhancement (DLTE).

4. Definitions

SU adheres to the national ECP definitions as included in the DHET documentation. The two most pertinent definitions are given below:

4.1 Extended curriculum programme (ECP)

An ECP is a coherent and fully integrated programme leading to an undergraduate qualification that comprises a collection of learning opportunities consisting of both foundation and mainstream content. The duration of the mainstream programme is extended by six months to a year through the addition of credit-bearing foundation modules.

4.2 Foundation module

A foundation module is a

- credit-bearing module that forms an integral part of an ECP;
- module of which at least 50% is a foundation offering;
- module that is a prerequisite for attaining the ECP qualification of which it forms an integral part; and
- module at NQF level 5 or 6.

5. Place of ECPs in TLA at SU

SU is committed to being an inclusive world-class university in and for Africa. All students admitted to the University should have an equal chance of completing their studies and achieving the required outcomes of learning (Draft SU T-L Policy 2024).

ECPs are part of the broader TLA endeavour at SU, embodying the institutional mission, vision and values in support of the SU Restitution Statement.²

The ECPs at SU create a unique space for students to achieve the required outcomes of learning and complete their studies. The ECP is a pedagogic space designed to support students' transition between secondary school and higher education with a manageable pace and workload.

The design of ECPs provides opportunities for students to become academically and socially integrated in the University environment through opportunities for personal, social and

²SU Restitution Statement (2018) Available at: <http://www.sun.ac.za/english/about-us/strategic-documents>

professional growth.

These growth opportunities in the ECPs are designed for and facilitated through:

- engagements in smaller class groups where students and lecturers learn from one another;
- the development of closer connections with lecturers;
- allowing students more time to engage actively with TLA activities and their own learning;
- targeted and individualised academic and psychosocial support initiatives as part of a holistic approach to student success;
- a focus on the attainment of self-confidence, academic literacies, and life and work skills;
- students building their own social and learning support structures; and
- learning opportunities where students engage with the foundational knowledge required for knowledge building and critical thinking in subsequent years.

At SU, the faculties of AgriSciences, Arts and Social Sciences, Economic and Management Sciences, Engineering, Science and Theology offer ECPs. Faculties coordinate, manage and implement the ECPs, while the Division of Learning and Teaching Enhancement assists through an institutional coordinating function.

6. Access for success

ECPs were introduced “as a means of promoting access and success for students who had historically been denied access to quality higher education” (CHE 2020:1). The purpose of an ECP was to “give students the academic foundations for successfully completing their studies” (DHET 2012:1). Admitting students to an ECP who do meet regular programme requirements has been shown to be associated with sustainable academic success (CHE 2020).

At SU, application for ECPs is framed as follows³:

- Faculties offer two programmes leading to the same qualification.
- Each of these two programmes has different specified admission requirements.
- Students choose which of the two programmes they want to apply for.
- It is the faculty’s prerogative to place the student in the appropriate programme.
- Should a student apply for the mainstream programme and not be admitted, the faculty can offer the student the opportunity to apply for the ECP.

Each faculty, in consultation with the Committee for Teaching-Learning-Assessment (CTLA), determines the minimum admission requirements and selection criteria for their ECPs and publishes both in their yearbooks.

7. Pedagogies

The schooling system does not always prepare students sufficiently for the challenges associated with studies in higher education. The ECPs aim to bridge any knowledge and skill gaps students may

³The current practice of placing students on the ECPs will remain for 2025 to allow time for the necessary yearbook changes.

have and facilitate epistemological access (Garraway and Bozalek 2019) in accordance with the principles of socially just pedagogies.

ECPs are therefore “expected to employ innovative and responsive teaching techniques to deliver an enriched and supportive curriculum that prepares students for their current and future studies” and ideally, ECP lecturers should be at the forefront of teaching and innovation in higher education (Garraway and Bozalek 2019).

8. ECP models and types of modules

ECP students enrol for an extended version of a mainstream programme. The “extension” can follow various models that are valid for different educational purposes and target groups, as described in Addendum A.

Faculties at SU offer different versions of ECPs that suit the disciplinary context of their programmes. All new ECPs must undergo the same internal approval process as required for mainstream programmes, along with an external approval process that comprises approval by the DHET, accreditation by the Council on Higher Education (CHE), and registration with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

9. Roles and responsibilities regarding ECP at SU

These guidelines are premised on the understanding that access for success at SU is a shared endeavour with reciprocal responsibilities among all institutional role players including management bodies, all academic staff, ECP students and the professional academic support services (PASS) divisions.

9.1 Faculty management (for example, deans, vice-deans of T&L, faculty managers, student success person) should

- ensure that ECPs are integrated with the offering of the faculty and managed in the same way as other programmes;
- oversee the implementation of the ECP guidelines and budget;
- ensure the integration of the ECPs (both staff and students) in and across faculties;
- ensure appointments made for ECP lecturers follow the same procedure as other appointments, and staff involved in ECPs are bound by the same rules and regulations;
- ensure lecturers/academic staff involved in an ECP are appointed in a department and undergo annual performance appraisals and evaluations;
- ensure ECP lecturers/academic staff are included in departmental and programme renewal activities;
- ensure that each faculty appoints a programme leader/coordinator for the faculty’s ECP⁴;
- serve on the ECP Steering Committee; and
- submit a report about the implementation, management and practices of the ECP in the faculty to the Committee for Teaching-Learning-Assessment (CTLA) at least once a year.

⁴This functionary should perform the same roles and responsibilities as those set out in the Guidelines for Programme Committee Chairs and Programme Leaders.

9.2 The ECP leader/coordinator should

- offer students the opportunity to attend an orientation session that clearly explains the purpose and outcomes of the programme as well as the modules that students should complete to achieve success;
- track students' attendance and academic progress to detect early warning signs of students who might need additional support or guidance;
- encourage students to attend class and participate actively during class to maximise their learning;
- facilitate support initiatives for students in the form of additional tutorials or mentorship programmes, where possible;
- create an ECP community of practice where academics involved in ECPs can share best practices as well as TLA innovations;
- provide information on ECP matters;
- serve on the ECP Steering Committee; and
- liaise with the academic programme coordinator about programme renewal activities.

9.3 The academic programme leader/coordinator should

- include the ECP programme leader/coordinator in programme renewal activities;
- liaise with ECP staff about the TLA design of hurdle/gatekeeper modules; and
- promote collaboration among ECP lecturers and mainstream lecturers.

9.4 Academic staff (this applies to all academics who teach) should

- employ innovative and responsive teaching techniques to deliver an enriched and supportive curriculum that prepares students for their current and future studies;
- subject foundation modules and programmes to the same quality assurance as other modules and programmes;
- encourage students to attend class and participate actively during class to enhance their learning;
- facilitate support initiatives to students in the form of additional tutorials or mentorship programmes, where possible;
- track students' attendance and academic progress to be able to detect early warning signs of students who might need additional support or guidance;
- participate in ECP orientation sessions;
- communicate ECP student matters to the ECP programme leader/coordinator; and
- align ECP foundation module content with subsequent modules.

9.5 Professional academic support staff (PASS)

9.5.1 The Division for Learning and Teaching Enhancement (DLTE)

The Centre for Learning Technologies (CLT) can support academics involved with ECPs in the meaningful and innovative use of technology for learning.

The Centre for Academic Planning and Quality Assurance (APQ) can support academics involved in ECPs with quality assurance and renewal of the ECPs.

The Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) can

- support lecturers involved in ECPs with TLA matters;

- support lecturers, departments, and programme committees in planning ECPs and their constituent modules;
- conduct evaluation of and research on foundation modules and programmes as well as all aspects concerning ECPs;
- disseminate relevant information and organise professional learning opportunities for lecturers, at the request of faculties;
- liaise with the DHET regarding ECP matters; and
- serve on the ECP Steering Committee.

9.5.2 The Centre for Student Counselling and Development

The Centre for Student Counselling and Development's educational psychologist and counsellor provides psychological support to ECP students. This support encompasses the entire spectrum of care and targets developmental, preventative and curative interventions. These services include:

- screening to determine the nature of the challenges experienced;
- developing an intervention plan (groups and individuals);
- providing career guidance;
- providing academic support;
- providing psycho-educational support;
- providing counselling and psychotherapy; and
- serving on the ECP Steering Committee.

9.6 Students enrolled in an extended curriculum programme

As expected of all students at SU, ECP students should take responsibility for their own learning, as unpacked under the roles and responsibilities of students in the Draft Teaching-Learning Policy (2024).

To achieve this, the foundation modules of the ECPs are designed to also focus on providing students with opportunities for becoming actively involved in the TLA process and regulating their own learning, as all learning requires an investment of time and effort by students themselves. Specific learning opportunities are included to enable students to regulate their own learning through:

- identifying their own learning gaps;
- actively seeking support when needed;
- devising strategies to close learning gaps; and
- becoming independent learners.

10. Institutional process

10.1 Roles

10.1.1 The owner of these guidelines is the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Learning and Teaching, whose role is to:

- a) oversee the development of the guidelines;
- b) ensure that the necessary documents are drawn up;
- c) appoint a curator for the guidelines;
- d) ensure that the curator functions effectively; and
- e) appoint a task team for the periodic revision of the guidelines, as required.

10.1.2 The curator of these guidelines is the Senior Director: Division of Learning and Teaching Enhancement, who is responsible for:

- a) the formulation, approval, revision, communication, release and monitoring of the implementation of these guidelines; and
- b) the interpretation of the guidelines, for guidance regarding its implementation, and for convening a task team to review the guidelines periodically, as required.

10.2 Implementation

The implementation of the guidelines occurs via the environmental plan of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Learning and Teaching, which stipulates the strategic focus areas and operational priorities in teaching, learning and assessment. At faculty level, the implementation of the guidelines occurs by way of the specific faculty implementation plans, where reasonably practicable.

10.3 Monitoring and reporting

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Learning and Teaching is accountable for creating the necessary control measures to monitor and report on these guidelines, and the curator is responsible for implementing such measures.

Senate monitors the implementation of the guidelines by means of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Learning and Teaching's annual report on teaching, learning and assessment presented to Senate.

10.4 Release

These guidelines are a public document that appears on the SU website. They are approved by Senate after consultation with the relevant faculty boards.

Sections 11 and 12 of these guidelines may be updated editorially as new guideline documents are released, with the approval of the Committee for Teaching, Learning and Assessment and a report submitted to Senate for information.

10.5 Revision

These guidelines are reviewed every five years, or sooner if deemed necessary.

10.6 Conflict resolution

Conflicts in respect of these guidelines are to be resolved along the normal line management channels in the existing SU structures, such as the faculty teaching and learning committees, the Senate Subcommittee for Teaching, Learning and Assessment (CTLA), and Senate itself.

11. Supporting documents

Document name	Status (e.g. identified, in process or approved)
Policy on Plagiarism (In Support of Academic Integrity)	Approved November 2016
Strategy for Teaching and Learning 2017–2021	Approved March 2017 Currently under revision
Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework 2019–2024	Approved 2019
Draft Transformation Policy	In process
Assessment Policy	Approved September 2021
Draft Teaching-Learning Policy	In process

12. Related documents

Document name	Status (e.g. identified, in process or approved)
Admissions Policy	Approved 2017
Code of conduct guiding the relationship between the supervisor and student	Approved Contained in SU Calendar Part I
Designing Learning, Teaching and Assessment (DeLTA) process	Developed in 2020
Disability Access Policy	Approved March 2018
Disciplinary Code for Students of Stellenbosch University	Approved 2020
Regulations for Peer-to-Peer Learning Support	Approved August 2020
Guidelines for Programme Committee Chairs and Programme Leaders	Approved 2018
Conceptual Framework Document for Academic Literacies at Stellenbosch University	Currently under revision
Information Literacy Training Framework	Approved September 2014
Internal and External Moderation and the Processing of Results	Approved September 2014 Currently under revision
Language Policy of Stellenbosch University	Approved June 2021
Policy with regard to Student Feedback on Modules, Lecturers and Programmes	Approved 2008 Currently under revision
Revision of the student feedback system: Interim report of the task team	Task team report (Afrikaans and English) 28 April 2015
Policy for Quality Assurance and Enhancement at SU	Approved September 2019
Performance Management Policy and Strategy	Approved 2018
Recognising Co-Curricular Achievements	Approved November 2018
Regulation for Internal and External Moderation and the Processing of Results	Approved 2014 Currently under revision
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit	Approved 2017

<u>Accumulation and Transfer (CAT)</u>	Currently under revision
<u>Regulation for the Committee for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment</u>	Approved June 2017
<u>Various policies on research at SU</u>	Approved on various dates
<u>Social Impact Strategic Plan 2017-2022</u>	Approved 2016
<u>Staff Wellness Policy</u>	Approved 2012
<u>Strategy for the Use of ICT in Learning and Teaching at Stellenbosch University</u>	Task team output document, April 2013 Currently under review
<u>Glossary of Governance and Management Document Types</u>	Approved August 2022

13. References

Boughey, C., 2007. Educational Development in South Africa: From Social Reproduction to Capitalist Expansion? *Higher Education Policy*. 20:5-18.

Council on Higher Education. 2020. Extended Programmes with an Integrated Foundation Phase: Theoretical Considerations for Curriculum Design. CHE no. 14, December 2020.

Department of Higher Education. 2012. The general foundation policy from the Department of Higher Education and Training: Foundation Provision in Ministerially Approved Programmes.

Department of Higher Education. 2018. The Funding Policy on Extended Curriculum Programmes (Foundation Provision).

Garraway, J. and Bozalek, V., 2019. Theoretical Frameworks and the Extended Curriculum Programme. *Alternation*. 26(2).

Addendum A

The Department of Higher Education and Training's models for extended curriculum programmes and modules

The current DHET policy⁵ provides three **programme models** as a guide when designing an ECP. The **modules** included in each programme may also follow various designs that are appropriate for different educational purposes and target groups.

1. Models of extended curriculum programmes

Model 1 for programmes: Extended curriculum incorporating a “fully foundational first year”

This model includes a fully foundational first year, followed by the mainstream curriculum of the mainstream programme. This means that all 120 credits of foundation provision are offered in the first year. Foundation modules do not carry any credits towards the final qualification, since they are meant to fill the gaps in prior learning.

Model 2 for programmes: Mainstream first-year curriculum taken over two years, with incorporation of substantial foundation provision

The second model involves a “slow-stream approach” to the foundation phase by including foundation modules in the first two years of the programme. Therefore, the credits of the first year of the mainstream programme that are normally achieved in one year are completed over two years.

Model 3 for programmes: Foundation support in first three years of programme

This model spreads foundation modules across three years of the extended four-year curriculum. This implies that support and development of students' learning extend beyond the first two years of study. In some disciplines, it is useful to provide development and support in relation to courses at the higher curriculum levels that are known to be challenging for students.

2. Examples of how ECP modules may be designed

The components of the extended part of the programme could be:

- a) foundation modules (focusing on the academic foundations of disciplinary knowledge of a module; academic, digital or numerical literacy; professional and academic skills needed to succeed in the workplace);
- b) modules strategically placed in the second/third year of a programme to support students in succeeding in, for instance, hurdle modules; and
- c) additional lectures or tutorials to support the TLA activities of mainstream modules.

The DHET guidelines currently state the following:

Model 1 for modules: a “fully foundational” module

The most common form of a fully foundational module is one that prepares students for the mainstream first-year module in the subject(s) concerned. In other words, ECP students complete this kind of module before proceeding to the mainstream first-year module in the subject.

⁵ The policy has been in a renewal phase since 2019.

Model 2 for modules: an “extended” module

An extended module combines mainstream course material with substantial foundation material and takes significantly longer to complete than the corresponding mainstream module. An example of an extended module in mathematics, for instance, is one that covers the same content as a mathematics semester module but is taught over the full year – incorporating substantial foundation provision – with the same contact time (for example, five contact periods) per week as the mainstream module. The extended module, therefore, would require about twice as much staff time and notional learning hours as the mainstream semester module.

Model 3 for modules: an “augmented” module

An augmented module covers all the material of a mainstream module and has the same duration but is taught separately and integrates substantial foundation material through additional, formally timetabled contact time. To meet the definition of a foundation module, the contact time of an augmented module must be approximately double that of the mainstream module. An example of an augmented module in mathematics, for instance, is one that covers the same content as the mainstream mathematics module but uses twice as much contact time (for example, ten contact periods) per week to incorporate substantial foundation work. As a result, the augmented module would also require about twice as much staff time and notional learning hours as the corresponding mainstream module.

3. Approval of extended curriculum programmes

The DHET policies referred to earlier outline the procedures to follow when applying for accreditation of a new ECP. The Centre for Teaching and Learning and the Centre for Academic Planning and Quality Assurance⁶ can assist with the design of new programmes and facilitate the accreditation process.

In addition, all new ECPs must undergo the same internal approval process as required for mainstream programmes, along with an external approval process that comprises approval by the DHET, accreditation by the Council on Higher Education (CHE), and registration with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

⁶<https://www.sun.ac.za/english/learning-teaching/learning-teaching-enhancement/APQ/Pages/Programme-new-renewal.aspx>.