



Vaal University Of Technology

INSTITUTIONAL POLICY COVER PAGE (IPCP) (Policies, Procedures, Rules, Guidelines etc.)

To be completed by initiator of Policy/Policy owner:

1. POLICY TITLE:	Tutor policy		
2. FIELD OF APPLICATION: (All persons to whom policy applies)	All Stakeholders		
3. COMPLIANCE OFFICER(S): (Person/s responsible for ensuring policy implementation)	All Staff members		
4. STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION (State the stakeholder group/s consulted during policy formulation/revision)	Deans, HODs, lecturers responsible for tutors, Learner support development		
5. DESIGNATION OF POLICY OWNER: (Person responsible for maintaining policy)	Director: Preferred student Experience		
6. NAME OF POLICY OWNER/S:	Elize Heuer		

POLICY HISTORY *(To be completed by policy owner)*

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1. PREAMBLE

This Policy has been developed in the context of the VUT Teaching and Learning Strategy, which represents VUT's commitment to excellence in teaching and learning.

The Teaching and Learning Strategy adopted at VUT identifies the importance of tutorials as the key means of facilitating student learning. Tutoring allows for collaborative interaction in a relatively safe learning environment, and facilitates the reflection on and application of core academic practices and concepts within academic disciplines being studied. In particular, tutorials offer scope for the learning tasks prioritized by the **Social Constructivism** teaching-learning theory, which contributes to transforming information into usable knowledge.

2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE POLICY

The purpose of developing this Policy is to initiate the formulation of a framework which will facilitate a coherent institutional approach to the existing tutorial program. The development and implementation of this Policy will assist Faculties in utilizing similar standardized guidelines in appointment of tutors and peer assistants.

3. INTERPRETATION AND DEFINITIONS

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

3.1. Tutorial

A tutorial is defined as an intensive small group learning activity led by a tutor. Depending on the context a tutorial can take one of many forms, ranging from a set of instructions to complete a task to an interactive problem solving session. The aim is to promote an enabling learning environment which facilitates the development of discipline-specific skills and enhances the academic success of students.

3.2 Tutor

A tutor is defined as a senior student who completed a minimum qualification of a B Tech or Honours degree and who has performed well academically and is competent and equipped with knowledge, skills and values which will enable him/her to assist and guide students in their academic studies. The tutor should be a subject matter expert, knowing the content knowledge of the subject and assist the student to understand the concept and develop new perspective, in the wider context of the discipline. It is accepted that members of the lecturing staff may on occasion take on the role of tutor provided that it does not interfere with their normal work schedule. Remuneration will be the same as any other tutor. When the University does not have appropriate students to perform the duties of a tutor it can appoint persons not currently

affiliated with VUT. This Policy focusses on the sound management of senior students who are appointed as tutors.

3.3 Peer/lab assistant

A peer/lab assistant is a student in his/her final year of undergraduate studies who is appointed primarily to assist fellow students in their theoretical and/or laboratory practical work.

A peer/lab assistant always works in the presence of the lecturer or with very clear guidance and lesson plans (see attached *Guidelines*) and does not provide answers to difficult encounters or show students how to do a specific activity, but instead works with the student to model problem solving strategies and explain specific concepts i.e. facilitating the development of better understanding and mastering relevant skills.

Please note the term “tutor” hence forth includes peer and lab assistants unless otherwise stated

4. POLICY GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of the Tutor Policy is to have clear guidelines that govern the tutor programme, ensuring a positive impact on the pass and success rates of our students. This will be achieved by compulsory tutorials for all at risk and prerequisite modules as well as first year modules. The objectives include:

- A centralised system for the management of the tutorial budget
- A comprehensive training programme throughout the year
- Observation via class visits and report writing by the tutors
- A feedback and evaluation system

4.1 POLICY BACKGROUND

This Policy is essential and follows from the teaching and learning module of Vaal University of Technology and the need identify by the predetermined objectives as well as the drop in pass and success rates of our students.

There are a number of internationally accepted definitions of tutoring. Ngengebele Molatlhegi, Tshaka and Mamadisa (2007) describe tutoring and the role of the tutor as a recognised form of learner support. The tutoring practice is a continuous process where the tutor observes the student performance, share knowledge and expertise by continuously encouraging and support the student to reach the highest level of academic performance/level.

Lorenza et al. (2013) define tutoring as a practice by which an expert or tutor assists a novice in the learning process. It is an on-going support strategy that assists students in achieving academic excellence. Hampson in (Davis, 2014) articulated that tutoring in a small group increases learning as compared to large classes. In this period the tutor should make sure that the learning outcomes are clearly defined and engaging students actively to develop their skills to improve performance. Empowering students by developing their individual strength and allow them to participate critically in the process of learning (Department of Education 2001) will lead to improved performance.

The Quality enhancement project (2015) highlighted that faculties play a pivotal role in engaging students actively in their learning. However, facilitating active engagement is often overlooked. Students have different learning needs based on their past experience or social backgrounds. Students need to engage with content in order to construct new knowledge and integrate with existing knowledge; the theory comes from Vygotsky's theory of social constructivism. Vygotsky in Mcleod (2013) see a more knowledgeable person assisting the student by guiding and encouragement to reach the Zone of Proximal Development which is from the known to unknown. The tutor should introduce the concepts from the known to the unknown continuum to guide the student to master the skill and to work independently. It is of paramount importance that students take responsibility for their own learning.

The widening of access in Higher Education led to a greater need to understand the diverse backgrounds of our students. This diversity includes gender, sexual orientation, prior school experience, liability status and attendance mode (Lawrence, 2005). Therefore students should not be viewed as underprepared, rather the focus should be on what teaching approached can be used to address diversity. The goal of wider access for redress is connected with the process of democratization and reconstruction after *apartheid*, as much as with social and economic objectives (Warren 1999). That means a shift from equipping students to participate in an industrial economy to find and create work in a knowledge society in a global age.

According to McGuire there should be a focus on higher-level thinking skills: analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Formally introducing students to these different levels of learning is crucial to develop their understanding of these distinctions. This is best done through collaborative learning activities and providing a learning environment that increases motivation and engage in learning. Content knowledge, classroom participation, flexibility, subject mastery, inclusive tutorial teaching methods, personal attributes and values are essential ingredients for effective, inclusive tutoring.

To engage students in an **inclusive** and **transformative** learning and teaching environment the tutor needs to think and plan about how the tutorial session can be accessible for all the students. When planning activities, learning objectives should represent what the students would gain from the lesson. Students with different learning styles need to meet these learning objectives. The identification of skills students need to develop should be a centre of the learning process. The tutors need to make tutorial teaching methods more flexible and adapt to students' needs and always be aware of other support services that can be recommended. (International Baccalaureate Organization 2013).

We should acknowledge that learning involves the understanding and the meaning of what others communicate concerning values, ideals, feelings, moral discussions and such concepts as freedom, justice, love, labour, autonomy, commitment, responsibility and democracy. Our expectations, framed within cultural assumptions and presuppositions, directly influence the

meaning we derive from our learning experiences. (Taylor, E, The theory and practice of transformative learning: a critical review).

The tutorial teaching systems at universities play a key role in developing students, to master course content, and skills, attitude and values required to academic excellence. The effective tutorial teaching begins prior to the student tutor entering the classroom. Student tutors have to formulate their goals and think about how they will achieve them before facing the classroom. The tutor's understanding of teaching and learning will guide the tutor on how to engage with students in the classroom.

The tutor needs to create a tutorial teaching and learning environment where students are free to participate in a non-threatening environment. Diversity and respect should always be maintained in the learning environment. The tutorial teaching approach should address the different learning styles of the students; this will provide an effective way to improve the quality for all students. The tutor needs to understand the environmental factors that will impact negatively in the learning environment and control them.

In this context of change, increased student diversity and the current unequal and inadequate learner support is necessary. Universities should replace their existing remedial and exclusive provision and adopt inclusive policies and practices. It is important that those offerings should be discipline specific and integrated in the subject curriculum.

Taking the aforementioned arguments into account we need a transformation tutorial model with the following characteristics:

1. Acknowledge that all students can learn.
2. Acknowledge that learning take place through a process of making meaning of one's own experiences
3. All students need academic support.
4. Accepting and respecting that all students are different and have different needs.
5. Using tutorial teaching methods to meet the needs of all students.
6. Respecting the difference in students whether age, gender, language, ethnicity, disability or HIV status.
7. Maximizing the participation of all students in the tutorial session to better understand the habit of the minds of students and their particular points of view
8. Empowering students by developing their individual strength and allow them to participate critically in the process of learning.
9. Ensure that tutorials are a continuous process, offered in small groups with clearly defined learning outcomes.
10. Faculty involvement is vital and tutorials should be integrated in the curriculum.

11. Transformative learning approach should be adopted: Move from the known to the unknown in teaching and understand the different mind sets and learning styles of the students.
12. Assessment should form part of the tutorials to ensure self-reflection and feedback to the lecturer.

Some students may require more specialized form of support to be able to develop their full potential. Tutors should identify them and inform lectures for referral and further support.

5. PRINCIPLES, VALUES AND PHILOSOPHY

This Policy is informed by the following principles:

1. The tutorial program must be integrally related to the other modes of teaching and learning used in the module.
2. Tutorials should be an extension and not a repetition of formal lectures.
3. Preferably a tutor group should not exceed 30 students.
4. Provision should be made in the timetable to ensure that the tutor programme is integrated in the curriculum and that venues are available.
5. A tutorial system provides an interactive environment which enhances the academic engagement of students and facilitates transformative learning.
6. Tutorials offer opportunities for students to understand that knowledge is a mutually constructed and dynamic process, which should develop and explicitly reflect on their own learning process. The tutor's facilitative role is central.
7. The tutor should be a subject matter expert. Peer assistants and lab assistants should have basic knowledge of the subject. Using the knowledge of the content of the subject and assist the student to understand the concept and develop new perspective in the wider context of the discipline is the main aim of tutorials. Therefore the academic qualification should be higher than the course tutored. An effective tutor's academic qualification is higher than the course tutored, they possess the ability to communicate effectively with the student, and encourage the students to verbalise their own knowledge so that other students can learn from the interaction.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibilities for the implementation of tutoring should be shared by Faculties, Department, tutors, students and the Preferred Student Support department, which is located in the Centre for Academic Development.

6.1 Faculties

1. The academic staff member responsible for the module in which the tutorial is offered is responsible for the recruitment of tutors and the management of the tutorials and will advise the Head of department regarding the appointment of the tutor(s). The Centre for Academic Development will provide guidelines for the selection of tutors (see attached Guidelines).
2. Lecturers book for the training in advance and the Tutor development unit will inform you if the tutor did not attend the session.
3. The responsible Lecturer should do class visits to support the Tutor development unit.
4. Lecturers must have a proper mentoring and monitoring system in place to ensure that tutors undertake the tutorials specified, to the requisite standard. Any observation notes is confidential and should be used for developmental action.
5. If a tutor does not attend 3 sessions or more the lecturer is obligated to terminate the contract.
6. Assessments should be part of the tutorial sessions and should contribute 10% of the year mark.
7. The lecturer will give clear guidance on setting the assessment for the tutorials and the tutor will be responsible for marking these assessments.
8. VUT should appoint Tutors in full time positions, especially in scarce skills modules.
9. Both generic and subject-specific training for tutors are requirement for employment and Departments must make plans to supplement the generic training with subject-specific training, as appropriate
10. Subject specific training will be the responsibility of the lecturer.

6.2 HR department

1. Appointment processes must comply with the due dates specified by HR. Late payment of tutors, due to late submission, is not acceptable. This has a negative impact on availability of tutors for scheduled training dates.
2. Lab assistants and peer assistants work for 9 hours a week.
3. Tutors work 10 hours a week, divided between preparation and contact. Tutors that are not affiliated with VUT may work 20 hours a week.

6.3 Centre for Academic Development

1. The Centre for Academic Development will take responsibility for the generic training. The coordinator: Tutor Development will take responsibility for the training.
2. The two day tutor development training offered by the Tutor Development Unit is compulsory for all appointed tutors and peer assistants, as are the subsequent feed-back sessions organized once per term by the Tutor Development unit. Departments must make plans to supplement this with subject-specific training, as appropriate. Tutors must be made aware that training is not remunerated, but is rather to be seen as fundamental requirement that will equip them with general professional skills and allow for future employment.
3. Tutors who did not complete the training will not receive payment.
4. There should be good communication between the lecturer, tutor and the tutor development unit.
5. Punctuality should be emphasised for both tutors and students.
6. It is advisable that there should be clear guidelines for the tutors regarding their duties. Find attached with the Guidelines a contract that must be signed between the lecturer and student.
7. The payment of tutors will be done by a pay-by-claim system, which is monitored by the responsible lecturer and approved by the Centre for Academic Development.
8. Rewards for attendance must be clearly spelled out. For example the Maths department uses the attendance of the Maths centre to allow students another opportunity to qualify for writing the exam.
9. On-going quality assurance, which includes evaluation and feedback, is essential to maintain a high-quality tutoring program. The Centre for Academic Development will develop a feedback system and quality assurance will be done in collaboration with the Quality Promotion Unit.
10. Tutors will receive certificates after having fulfilled all the tutor development training requirements for the year at an end of year ceremony
11. The implementation, monitoring and reporting of the Policy will be co-ordinated by the department: Preferred Student Experience.
12. The Learner Support senate sub-committee will be the platform for discussions regarding this policy.
13. Implications: Provision should be made in the budget for the expansion and development of the tutorial programme. Should the TDG funding formula and guidelines change, VUT should take full responsibility for the financial needs of the programme. To ensure the implementation of the programme 2 more facilitators is needed as well as an administrative person to oversee the budget monitoring and appointment of tutors. More space should be made available, including formal and informal learning spaces. To ensure integration in the curriculum, tutoring should be included in the curriculum design process, activities should be reflected in a tutorial letter of the learner guides and is should appear on the time table

6.4 Tutors' responsibilities

1. Attendance of students at scheduled tutorials is compulsory; attendance registers should be kept and will inform the claim process. If, for any reason, tutors are unable to conduct a tutorial, they are required to give prior notification.
2. The preparation of the tutorial material is done by the tutor with clear guidance and instruction from the responsible lecturer. This information should accompany the tutor claim forms as well as the attendance registers.
3. It is highly recommended that tutors attend lectures. Tutors must be informed of typical problems in classes; they can help with discipline in large classes, and get to know students (and vice versa) better.
4. Tutors are not responsible for marking any other assessments.
5. Tutors may set and mark informal assessment for tutorials with clear guidance from the lecturers

6.5 Students' responsibilities

1. Should maintain regular contact with the tutor throughout the duration of the tutorial programme.
2. Must attend all scheduled tutorial sessions with tutors or inform the tutors in advance if they are unable to do so and help make alternative arrangements
3. Should inform tutors of any circumstances which might affect their studies
4. Should prepare for the tutorials and be willing to act upon tutor advice including referrals to other support structures within the university

7. OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

7.1 Appointment of tutors

Positions should be advertised on the notice boards of departments. Students apply by submitting shortened CV's to the lecturer responsible for the module. Candidates get invited to attend face-to-face interviews to discuss their study careers, communication and interpersonal skills and availability for the position.

7.2 Characteristics of a Tutor

Overall, the ideal Tutor is someone who.....

- Has at least a M + 4 qualification and/or industry experience
- A peer assistant is enrolled for a B Tech
- Treats fellow students fairly without bias

- Exhibits good communication skills
- Relates teaching and laboratory/practical work to own knowledge and practice
- Develops and demonstrates effective laboratory/practical skills and techniques
- Is supportive and reassuring towards students
- Is helpful but also constructively critical
- Is approachable and human.
- Remembers that s/he was once a first year student.

7.3 Planning for a tutorial

7.3.1 Basic weekly planning for a tutorial session includes:

- Advance meetings with the course lecturer and all tutors, peer assistants and mentors involved in the tutorials, lab work and or learning communities
- Informing the tutor what the learning outcomes for the students are and where they fit with the rest of their theoretical work

7.3.2 The lecturer should help the tutor to:

- Perform and become familiar with the content/exercises/experiment in advance and identify possible areas of student difficulty. Checking the equipment!
- Shaping the tutor's teaching/instruction around his/her knowledge of the experiment e.g. getting to know exactly which questions to ask and when, "what would happen if" etc.
- Provide content for the tutor to read up on the theory upon which the tutorial is built.
- Plan how to structure the session. As with all of the above, this will become much easier after a few sessions but the conscientious approach to planning must remain the same.
- Prepare a formative assessment event to be conducted at the end of a tutorial session. Planning will bring its own rewards: remember the old saying: "Fail to prepare, prepare to fail!"

To have students conduct tutorials has advantages, but it also creates challenges. It requires careful planning on the part of the lecturer. Inexperienced tutors require more guidance on how to manage tutorials, design assessment tasks and mark scripts. The Department of Learner Support conducts training for tutors, but in the end the lecturer remains the content expert.

In planning a tutorial session, lecturers should consider **problem based** learning activities. A good tutorial session will have the advantage of involving students in the active process of constructing their own understanding.

The primary task of a tutor is to help students to integrate and use information, and secondly to help students interact effectively in groups. Groups should comprise 10 – 15 students and they should meet with the tutor at least 2 hours a week.

7.3.3 Will this mean more work?

Initially to meet with tutors, to prepare tutorial exercises and to generate formative assessment questions and exercises, may seem like more work, but in the long run it will reduce the workload of staff. The work package also makes provision for the monitoring of the tutors. A tutor can be responsible for marking formative assessments and contact time with students will be reduced.

7.3.4 Some useful ideas:

Lecturers can assist the tutor to prepare multiple choice questions where the answers are based on exercises/results obtained during the tutorial. This will serve the following purpose:

- Support continuous assessment
- Force students to attend tutorials
- Indicate what was learned during the tutorial/identify problem areas

It is advised that lecturers attend a tutorial session of their tutor to evaluate the process. Lecturers could also contact the Department of Learner Support to perform a tutor evaluation. Remember we are here to assist you.

7.3.5 Tutorial report and contract

To ensure quality tutorials we provide lecturers with a template of tutorial planning (next page). This will ensure that they do proper planning and consider the teaching method, the outcomes they hope to reach, the assessment strategy and the resources used. This can be an effective tool for lecturers to assist tutors in planning the tutor sessions. CAD will also require feedback to be used for the TDG feedback. In addition tutors will submit monthly reports that will be accompanied with the attendance registers of the tutorial sessions

7.4 Weekly facilitation plan

Module:

Date:

Specific Topic:

Instructional goal

(Outcome that students should be able to demonstrate upon completion of the entire unit)

Performance objectives

(Use an action verb in a description of a measurable outcome of this tutorial)

Rationale

(Brief justification --- why the tutor feels students need to learn this topic and how it fits into the course structure)

Tutorial content

(What is to be taught/explained/demonstrated/or repeated from previous session)

Instructional procedures

- Focusing event (something to get the students' attention)
- Teaching procedures (methods you will use)
- Student participation (how you will get the students to participate)
- Formative assessment (progress checks throughout or at the end of the tutorial)
- Closure (how you will end the lesson)

Formative assessment

(How you will measure outcomes to determine if the material has been learned)

Materials and aids

(What you will need in order to teach this lesson)

Duration of session:

Tutor

Lecturer

1.1. Lecturer/Tutor Contract

Name of Tutor: _____

Student Number: _____

Tutorial module: _____

Time spend per module per week: _____

Tutorial Duration: _____ per Semester

Duties of the Tutor as per this agreement (indicate the percentage of time spend on whichever function)

- Tutoring _____
- Preparation _____
- Marking _____ (not more than 20% and only for assessments done during tutorials)
- Practicals _____
- Other(specify)

Signed at VUT (Vanderbijlpark) on this day _____ of _____ 20 _____

On behalf of VUT:

Lecturer: _____

Tutor: _____

HoD: _____