TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY

Policy Name:	Teaching and Learning Policy and Strategy	Policy Number:	008
Approving Body:	Academic Board	Version:	3
Custodian:	Head of Academic Planning	Storage:	I:\Institutional\InstitDocs\Current\008_T&L
Relevant Legislation:	CHE Programme Accreditation Criteria HEQSF Level Descriptors	Related Documents:	Assessment Policy

1. **Purpose**

   The purpose of this document is to articulate Greenside Design Center's (GDC's) educational approach, inclusive of the theoretical underpinning, the practical teaching methods students can expect, and the mechanisms used to monitor and evaluate Teaching and Learning (T&L). This document functions as a resource for both academic staff and students alike.

2. **Scope**

   This policy applies to all educational activities and practices of the college aimed at facilitating learning amongst students. The policy accordingly applies to the following programmes:
   a) Bachelor of Arts Degree in Interior Design
   b) Bachelor of Arts Degree in Graphic Design
   c) Bachelor of Arts Degree in Multimedia Design
   d) Bachelor of Arts Honours Degree in Interior Design
   e) Bachelor of Arts Honours Degree in Visual Communication Design
   f) Bachelor of Arts Honours Degree in Multimedia Design
   g) Design Plus

3. **Introduction: Greenside Design Center and its context**

3.1. **GDC and its student composition.**

   GDC is a South African private higher education provider. It is a specialist institution offering arts degrees in the field of design, more specifically in interior, graphic and multimedia design. All programmes are offered on a contact-basis. The institution's students are typically young adults who have completed the National Senior Certificate (the South African School Learning Qualification) with an interest in design, visual arts, communication, and/or the built environment. Other students include those transferring from other similar institutions, and design professionals wishing to further their formal education. The composition of students over recent years, in terms of nationality, race, first language, sex, age and socio-economic status can be summarised as follows:
   a) Students from the region with the vast majority being of South African origin (typically around 90%)
   b) Students that speak a variety of SA languages, but with roughly 70% speaking English as their first language
   c) Students of both sexes, but with females comprising a two-third majority
   d) The vast majority of students are full-time students, typically supported by family, with 95% of students being under the age of 26 years.

3.2. **Theory of learning.**

   Underpinning any educational endeavour is a conceptualisation, whether implicit or explicit, of what it means to learn and how people learn. The question has been tackled by theorists and researchers for centuries, though to date there is no single definition or conception of learning that is commonly accepted. For example, in their book "Frameworks for Thinking: A handbook for T&L". Mosely, Baumfield, Elliott, Gregson, Higgins, Miller and Newton (2005) provide a summary of 42 theories and models. These are grouped under the headings of frameworks dealing with instructional design, with productive thinking, with cognitive structure and/or development, and seven 'all-embracing' frameworks. In their paper entitled "Learning Theories and Higher Education", Ashworth, Brennan, Egan, Hamilton & Samez (2004) make reference to 29 theorists, which are grouped under the headings of behaviourist, cognitive, humanist, social learning and constructivist approaches.

   With the existence of such a multitude of contributions to learning and educational theory, it would be naïve and limiting for a policy to prescribe a particular theory or definition of learning. At the same time, the policy must take some position to guide its educational practice and this position must be informed by theory and research. To this end, GDC identifies and adopts the following fundamental principles regarding learning:
   a) In line with the constructivist approach, learning is a process of making meaning where students actively construct knowledge in relation to their prior understandings and interpretations.
   b) Real learning, or deep learning, involves a qualitative change in the way a student sees and understands the world. The ultimate aim of learning is to realise the students' self-sufficiency
   c) Students have different ways of learning, i.e. they have different learning styles
   d) Learning differs depending on the content and context
   e) Affective factors, such as motivation and self-efficacy, have an impact on learning.

+27 11 646 1984
info@designcenter.co.za
www.designcenter.co.za

TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY

Page **2** of **8**

f) Teaching is about making learning possible by organising the students experience: scaffolding, mediating, guiding self-discovery, stimulating enquiry, modelling, relating the content to the students' frames of reference etc

g) In keeping with a broad constructivist understanding of learning, the college encourages a student-centred approach to education. Under this approach, the focus is on the student (and understanding their needs, abilities, perspectives etc) and they are seen to take an active role in their own learning. This is in contrast to educator-centred approaches where the focus is on the educator, what s/he knows and does, and where learning is thought to involve the transmission of knowledge to relatively passive students.

h) Educators have particular preferences, strengths and experiences which inform their teaching styles and attributes

i) Good teaching is open to change. Teachers must be sensitive to evidence of the effects of their instruction, and commit to changing and improving in light of the evidence

3.3. Legislative framework.

In South Africa, the higher education landscape is informed by legislation promulgated by the Department of Higher Education (DHET), as well as the subsequent guidelines published by statutory bodies tasked with overseeing higher education. Of particular importance are:

a) The Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework, published by the DHET, which describes the various qualifications recognised in the higher education band of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

b) The Level Descriptors, published by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), which describe the kind of learning and competencies expected from each level on the NQF.

c) The Programme Accreditation Criteria, published by the Council on Higher Education (CHE), which includes criteria relevant to the principles and practice of T&L

These documents thus outline broadly that nature of different learning programmes and the sections relevant to GDC are included as Appendix A for ease of reference.

4. Broad educational aims

In accordance with its mission and vision, the educational philosophy motivating the content, structure and delivery of the programmes at GDC is essentially a holistic one. It seeks not only to equip the student for employment opportunities upon graduation, but also to progressively develop the student's intellectual, creative, technological and perceptual abilities, thereby allowing for increasing competence and independence. Emphasis is given to innovative and critical thinking skills, as well as the use and generation of research. In addition, GDC aims to cultivate a sense of social responsibility amongst students. On completion of their studies at GDC, the student is thus equipped to adjust to the ever-changing working environment, and be active players in bettering humanity with their skills.

The programmes are designed to make students aware of, and able to effectively solve, design problems within the complex interrelationship of the many aspects of design. From the Design Plus programme through to the Honours Degree programmes, GDC emphasises the synthesis of the theoretical, analytical, creative, technical and communicative elements of design. In postgraduate studies, a strong emphasis is placed on students developing their own design philosophy which takes into account the social, cultural, environmental and economic context within which design operates.

5. Overarching strategies

GDC employs the following strategies to promote optimal T&L for its programmes.

5.1. Curriculum development and review:

GDC delivers outcomes-based education. The programmes are designed to ensure coherence between the content, learning outcomes, method of teaching and assessment. Programmes are reviewed annually by GDC staff with reference to feedback from stakeholders such as moderators, verifiers, students and industry. Constant monitoring is also required through such mechanisms as monitoring of student performance, project reviews conducted by staff and students, monthly programme team discussions etc. The programmes are accredited through the peer-based accreditation processes of the Higher Education Quality Committee of the Council on Higher Education. Refer also to the Quality Assurance, Annual Reporting, and Student Performance Monitoring policies.

+27 11 646 1984
info@designcenter.co.za
www.designcenter.co.za

TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY

Page **3** of **8**

5.2.   Quality lecturers and staff development:
GDC recognises that good educators or lecturers are the most important resource required for quality education as they have the responsibility of organising and managing the learning environment. The Staff Recruitment Policy provides guidelines for recruitment of staff, and sets regulations specifically for the recruitment of Academic Staff. These ensure that the academic staff for a programme are appropriately qualified, experienced in design and teaching at the higher education level, and that there are a sufficient number of staff representing a range of different expertise and approaches within a department. The Performance Management System sets standards for the academic staff, against which academic staff are held accountable, to ensure that all staff maintain the quality of education prescribed by GDC. In support of the Performance Management System, a document outlining the Indicators of Teaching Practice (attached as Annexure B) is available to provide guidance to staff. Finally, the Staff Development Policy expresses GDC's commitment to ensuring that academic staff retain their expertise and further their knowledge and skills relevant to design education. The T&L committee supports the development processes by facilitating mechanisms to promote proficiency in T&L amongst the academic staff, such as workshops to share of best practice.

5.3.   Variety of teaching methodologies:
 Employing a variety of different teaching methodologies, that is, using a variety of different tasks with different outputs, outcomes and assessment strategies, and variety of different resources and teaching aids, has several advantages. Firstly, different methodologies are suited for different learning outcomes. For instance, lecturers may be more suitable vehicle to present an overview of theoretical orientations, whereas supervised practicals are better suited to the development of technical skills. Secondly, a variety of methodologies supports a student-centred approach where the differing needs of different students can be responded to. A variety of approaches provides a richer environment and allows more flexibility for students to approach the material in ways that aligns with their needs and learning styles. This means that poorer students are afforded opportunities for support but also that stronger students are afforded opportunities to excel. Some of the methodologies practiced at GDC include:
a)   Lectures / presentations
b)   Problem-based projects (directed and independent)
c)   Small group tutorials
d)   Small group computer labs
e)   Real-life clients and competition entry
f)   Self-directed research
g)   Independent reading
h)   Supervised studio
i)   Group work, including an annual opportunity for interlevel and interdisciplinary groupwork in the community engagement initiative
j)   Debates / discussion
k)   Experiential learning
l)   Case studies
m)   Site visits
n)   Workshops / learning from peers (social learning)

5.4.   Emphasis on problem- and project-based learning:
As a specialist institution offering programmes in design, the institution emphasises a problem-based approach to learning, and the bulk of its programmes use design problems or design projects as the teaching methodology. Ramsden (2003) comments that problem-based learning entails a "focus on problems of the type which are typically met with in professional life…and the students are required to identify the nature of the problem, collect the information needed to tackle it and synthesise a solution" (p. 141). In the context of a design education, problem-based projects are a suitable vehicle for facilitating T&L. It is a valid methodology that mirrors or simulates the practise of design in the workplace and caters for the development of critical thinking. In addition, it also encourages 'learning by doing' and allows students to integrate their acquisition of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes across different subjects in a meaningful and holistic way. In this way it can be characterised as active and deep learning.

+27 11 646 1984
info@designcenter.co.za
www.designcenter.co.za

TEACHING AND
LEARNING
POLICY

Page **4** of **8**

5.5. **Valid, reliable and constructive feedback and assessment:**
Assessment is a fundamental and integral part of the T&L process. This is true particularly of formative assessment where the aim is to provide feedback to students in order to direct and guide their learning. The Assessment Policy outlines the procedures, both formative and summative, the rules and regulations, and the quality assurance mechanisms for assessment. For the same reasons as noted in 5.3, a variety of assessment opportunities are encouraged as part of a student-centred approach. Some of the assessment strategies at GDC include:

a) Marking schedules with detailed assessment criteria
b) Verbal feedback in class, group and individual
c) Critiques of student work, group and individual
d) Peer assessments and evaluations

5.6. **Supporting teaching with quality T&L materials and aids:**
The incorporation of quality T&L materials adds depth and richness to the learning opportunities. Examples of learning materials and teaching aids used frequently at GDC include:

a) Project briefs which outline the learning process, assessment opportunities, learning outcomes and assessment criteria
b) Presentations (powerpoint, slide etc)
c) Lecture notes
d) References, both hardcopy and electronic, such as books, articles, websites etc
e) Precedent examples
f) Video clips

It is the responsibility of the lecturer to develop and/or source T&L materials and aids. The *Indicators for Good Teaching Practice* attached as Appendix B outlines the main standards for T&L materials, and the development and use of quality T&L materials forms part of the performance standards for academic staff. The cost of producing and sourcing materials is born by the departments, and Heads of Department have the ultimate responsibility of overseeing, monitoring and reviewing the T&L materials used in their programmes.

5.7. **Supporting teaching with appropriate infrastructure:**
T&L is more effective when the broader environment is geared towards supporting and enhancing it. GDC recognises the primacy of T&L, and the policies on Budgeting and Resources and Facilities show that T&L needs are the major drivers behind all budgeting and resourcing decisions. Without repeating the contents of these documents, the following principles for ensuring an appropriate infrastructure include the following:

a) Infrastructure includes venues and furnishings, ICT provisions and systems, library contents and systems, specialist equipment, operating procedures and systems, and administrative support.
b) All aspects of the institution's infrastructure must be fit-for-purpose where purpose is defined primarily by the T&L needs of the programmes. To this end, Heads of Department have the responsibility of identifying the resources required for maintaining and enhancing the quality of their programmes. The Directors are responsible for balancing the requests across all programmes in relation to available budget.
c) All aspects of the institution's infrastructure must support the values of relevance, efficiency, usability, and value-for-money .
d) All GDC resources must be accessible to students and academic staff. Accessibility includes being physically available to all students equitably, availability of support and guidance on correct use of resource, and user-friendly systems for management and allocation of resources.

5.8. **Additional support mechanisms:**
The Student Handbook details the support mechanisms available to students. Many of these are incorporated into the normal function of departments, but also stand as separate and extra-curricular services and facilities. These include, amongst others, individual consultations with lecturers, academic support classes, , consultation with the Head of Quality Promotion, referral to a counsellor, SRC representation, and financial assistance. Student attendance and performance records are also monitored to allow early identification of weaker students and students at risk of failing their studies. The college initiates communication with students and sponsors so that any obstacles to the students learning can be identified and addressed. Refer to the Student Support policy for further detail on student monitoring.

+27 11 646 1984
info@designcenter.co.za
www.designcenter.co.za

TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY

Page **5** of **8**

5.9. **Encouraging students to take ownership of their learning:**
GDC believes that learning is more effective and significant when students reflect on and take responsibility for their learning. Particularly as a higher education provider, students expected to take ownership for their learning. Please refer to point 6.2. below on responsibilities of students.

5.10. **Postgraduate supervision:**
The relationship between student and lecturer changes in postgraduate studies as students take increasing control of their learning and development. Supervision for the research paper of the Honours programmes is governed by a supervision contract. This ensures that staff and students are aware of their respective responsibilities and the procedures or protocols for postgraduate study.

6. **Roles and responsibilities for good academic practice**

6.1. **Academic staff**
Complementing the varied methodologies noted above, GDC lecturers assume a variety of roles. These vary in the degree to which lecturers take on the authoritative position of instructor, versus taking on a facilitative role encouraging students to arrive at their own resolutions and conclusions. Common roles adopted by lecturers include:
a) Instructing, where the lecturer adopts an authoritative role and advises students
b) Modelling, where the lecturer models or simulates the desired behaviour or activity
c) Mediating, where the lecturer bridges the gap between the content to be learnt and student's current understanding
d) Coaching, where the lecturer assists learning through enquiry and reflection, offering encouragement and insights during the learning process
e) Facilitating, where the lecturer enables each student to clarify their learning issues, work towards some resolution, and to reflect on their learning. The lecturer guides the student but does not act as the primary source of knowledge

The responsibilities of lecturing staff are essentially to realise the policies and procedures of GDC relevant to T&L, in particular the T&L Strategy and Assessment Policy. A summary of the key responsibilities include:
a) Assuming full responsibility for the programmes/classes for which they are contracted to provide educational services.
b) Complying with the Indicators of Good Teaching Practice (attached as Appendix B)
c) Keeping themselves informed and qualified in design and education
d) Familiarising themselves with college facilities, services, rules and policies
e) Demonstrating a commitment to students' learning and development

6.2. **Students.**
Students enter into GDC for a variety of reasons, such as to gain a specific qualification, to pursue their interest in the design field in order to become employable and to broaden their education. Good academic practice demands personal integrity and respect for scholarship and vocation. For example, students are responsible for submitting work that represents their <u>own</u> efforts to meet the stated outcome requirements. Student learning will be more effective and enjoyable if basic principles of good academic practice are followed. To this end, the following are expected of all GDC students:
a) Attendance at all scheduled classes. As contact-based programmes, students must attend all scheduled academic activities in order to benefit fully from the educational provision as well as peer learning. In cases of absenteeism, the onus rests on the student to ensure that they bring themselves up to date with what they missed. The Assessment Policy includes regulations regarding Due Performance.
b) Self-motivation and commitment to learning. In general, there is an emphasis at GDC on developing independent learning skills, understanding ideas, and interacting critically with material and raising questions about it. GDC requires a level of self-motivation from students. The onus is on students to complete the requirements of each subject. This demands reasonably high levels of personal discipline, self-motivation and organisation. The ultimate purpose of assessment is to develop in the student the ability for the student to become a self-critical and reflective learner. This will prepare the student for the world of work and the process of life-long learning.
c) Participation and interaction in class: Students are encouraged to participate in those classes that are set aside for discussion. Listening to and considering other views and framing and expressing opinions about a topic assists in developing critical and analytical skills. It leads to students' ability to develop the skill of self-assessment.
d) Awareness of requirements: It is the responsibility of students to ensure they are fully informed of all aspects of the assessment process. Students need to be very clear about what is required in each subject and/or project. These

+27 11 646 1984
info@designcenter.co.za
www.designcenter.co.za

TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY

Page **6** of **8**

requirements are provided in outlines that are given to students at the beginning of each year. Different subjects have quite different requirements. These might include preparation for classes, participation in tutorials, consultations or on-line discussions, completing an independent learning task or working with other students on a collaborative project.

e) Seeking further advice /support when necessary. It is incumbent upon students to ensure that they use all support systems available should they require assistance. Students should refer to the Student Support policy handbook for further information.

f) Submission of all work on deadline. Students must submit all projects on deadline. Students should consult with their lecturers for clarity as late submissions will not be accepted.

g) General academic integrity: Academic integrity involves a good measure of trust between students, and between students and academic staff. Cheating, whether in the form of plagiarism, submitting false requests for special consideration, or any other form, is a breach of this trust. Cheating also diminishes the aims and value of students' studies. Students should also be aware that cheating diminishes the good reputation of GDC. The continuing value of a GDC award in the opinions of potential employers, other institutions and the community at large, depends on GDC maintaining its reputation as a design college that has utterly reliable credentials.

7. Benchmarks and targets

The National Plan for Higher education (Department of Education, 2001) specifies the following institutional efficiency benchmarks:

a) A three-year undergraduate programme: 25% graduation rate
b) A postgraduate programme up to honours: 60% graduation rate

GDC accepts these benchmarks as its targets and aims to achieve these without compromising on the standards of the programmes.

8. Short to mid-term priorities and strategies

A T&L committee exists at GDC to monitor and further the T&L responsibilities of the college. The committee meets at least four times a year and advises the college management on best practice for T&L. Each year, the committee completes an annual report which includes an evaluation of T&L over the past year as well as plans to improve and enhance T&L. These plans, which are assigned to various authorities and allocated timeframes, constitute the short to mid-term strategies for the T&L Strategy document. These plans are then tracked over several years, reviewed by the senior management on an annual basis, and monitored during the meetings of the T&L committee.

9. Quality Assurance Mechanisms

Various structures and systems are involved in maintaining and promoting the quality of education at GDC, and these are discussed in detail in the Quality Management Policy and other related documents. In summary, the following structures and systems are in place to support and enhance specifically T&L:

9.1. Structures and Authorities

a) The Academic Board functions as the authority on all academic matters relevant to the institution as a whole and provides guidance to matters pertinent to particular programmes (refer to Organogram).

b) Heads of Department are tasked with:
   i) Providing intellectual leadership of programmes
   ii) Assuming ultimate responsibility for curriculum review and development
   iii) Monitoring and ensuring continuous improvement of programme delivery
   iv) Managing the academic staff within their department, ensuring that their staff comply with the standards of the institution

c) The Head of Academic Planning is tasked with
   v) Evaluating fitness for purpose of programme curricular in relation to programme purpose and institution's mission
   vi) Overseeing programme design, accreditation and review;
   vii) Monitoring and developing T&L practices and competencies amongst staff;
   viii) Alignment between resources and T&L provisions;
   ix) Ensuring that standard operations and institutional planning support the integrity of T&L;
   x) General coordination and management across academic disciplines;

+27 11 646 1984
info@designcenter.co.za
www.designcenter.co.za

TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY

Page 7 of 8

d) The T&L committee is tasked with promoting T&L, inclusive of policy development and staff development, and advises the Academic Board on T&L concerns (refer to committee Terms of Reference)

e) Lecturing staff are responsible for developing, delivering and assessing their respective courses. They are also responsible for monitoring and managing their students' progress (refer to Organogram)

f) The roles and responsibilities college's support and administrative services are geared towards supporting the core function of T&L (refer to Organogram and Human Resource Policy)

9.2. Monitoring and feedback systems

g) The Performance Management System monitors and evaluates the performance of both academic and administrative staff (refer to Performance Management System)

a) Monthly programme team meetings allow for programmes to discuss programme and T&L issues regularly (refer to Agenda: Programme Team Meetings)

b) Quarterly review of student performance records, monitoring of submissions and attendance (refer to Student Monitoring Policy)

c) Annual analysis of student performance records disaggregated by demographic variables (refer to Departmental Annual Reports)

d) Institutional-wide student survey (refer to Departmental Annual Reports)

e) Project-specific student surveys (refer to Departmental Annual Reports)

f) Project-specific lecturer feedback (refer to Departmental Annual Reports)

g) Internal annual reporting (refer to Departmental Annual Reports and Internal Annual Reporting Policy)

h) End of year moderation and verification (refer to Assessment Policy and Departmental Annual Reports)

10. Version History

Version Control	Date Effective	Approved By:	Nature of Amendments
1	February 2012	Academic Board	Not applicable
1.1	October 2012	Head of Academic Planning	Minor amendments to Indicators of Good Teaching Practice subsequent to workshop with Academic staff
2	1 June 2015	Executive Committee	Consistency with version 5 of the GDC Organogram
3	January 2016	Head of Quality Promotion	Renumbering and rebranding

+27 11 646 1984
info@designcenter.co.za
www.designcenter.co.za

TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY

Page **8** of **8**