

## Regulations for peer-to-peer learning support

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| <i>The English version of these regulations is the operative version and the Afrikaans version is a translation thereof.</i> |   |

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Global, national and institutional context

Peer-to-peer facilitation<sup>1</sup> has historically been an essential part of teaching and learning at Stellenbosch University (SU). Recent local and global events have served to confirm both the importance of and need for this teaching and learning mechanism. On the global scale higher education is being challenged by increased participation which in turn places significant pressure on resources and staff capacity (Burgoyne, Jansen and Smit 2009). Nationally the sector is confronted by relatively poor student performance (Schreiber and Yu 2016; Scott, Yeld and Henry 2007) and unequal participation (Frade 2017), both states that require extensive intervention. And in the context of Stellenbosch University (SU) the recently released *Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework 2019-2024* create the institutional impetus for the application of interventions like peer-to-peer facilitation by focussing not only on the transformation of student success trends but also on growth and the development of graduate attributes, ultimately for the social good. The transformation of the SU student experience is in turn facilitated by the strategic vision of a learning environment that is predicated on knowledge-building, learning-centred experiences.

The global and national imperatives that lead institutions to turn to peer-to-peer facilitation can create the impression that this kind of intervention is risk management intervention. This in turn can result in teaching and learning approaches that take a deficit view of students (Smit 2012; Coleman 2016; CHE 2017). The SU perspectives (as expressed in the *Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework 2019-2024*) make it clear that positive attainment rather than risk management should be the primary motivator in the choice of teaching and learning mechanisms. The positive impact of peer-to-peer facilitation at SU was confirmed by the recent Howie (2018) report, pointing to the critical role these facilitators play in learning facilitation (2018:19).

There is also sufficient national and international evidence available that indicates the potential of peer teaching to positively impact student learning in terms of the development of necessary academic competencies (McKay 2016), improved academic achievement (Holliday 2012; Arco-Tirado, Fernández-Martín and Hervás-Torres 2019) and the development of significant graduate attributes (Stigmar 2016; Tang, Hernandez and Adams 2010).

## 1.2 Points of departure

The following are the points from which these regulations depart in pursuit of excellent peer facilitation.

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<sup>1</sup> In this document peer-to-peer facilitation is used as an all-encompassing description to include both academic mentoring and tutoring activities. The document further uses 'peer teaching' or 'peer facilitation' to refer to what is generally called 'tutoring' at SU.

- As with all other learning and teaching activities at SU, the institution should constantly strive to deliver excellent and learning-centred<sup>2</sup> peer facilitation experiences for students
- Peer-to-peer facilitators are partners (not instruments) in the delivery of learning and teaching opportunities at SU
- Peer facilitation makes an important contribution to student engagement, learning (Clarence 2016) and success (Arco-Tirado, Fernández-Martín and Hervás-Torres 2019)
- For an optimal contribution to student learning, peer facilitation should be part of a deliberate teaching-learning strategy rather than just the continuation of received practices (Faroa 2017). This always means that there should be a clear understanding of the purpose of peer teaching in a particular module
- As part of the learning-teaching strategy, peer facilitation should be scrutinized in the same regular, reflective and critical manner as other learning-teaching practices to ensure quality, efficiency and effectiveness
- To ensure maximum impact of peer teaching, peer facilitators should receive appropriate training and guidance (Clarence 2016; Layton and McKenna 2015; Underhill and MacDonald 2010)
- Peer teaching is most effective to promote student learning when employed as part of a learning/knowledge-centred approach (as opposed to a limited teacher or learner-centred approach)
- Peer-to-peer facilitation is not simply a continuation of the activities engaged in by lecturers. Giving senior students the responsibility of continuing the lecturer's teaching activity, erroneously assumes that learning is an excessively linear process of the transmission of knowledge (Topping 2005:631). Topping (2005) pointed out that there is (or should be) a qualitative difference between the learning interactions students and peer facilitators and students and professional teachers/lecturer.
- Peer-to-peer facilitators should be appropriately trained to perform their functions (Arco-Tirado, Fernández-Martín and Hervás-Torres 2019; Frade 2017).
- While peer teachers benefit from generic training, there is also an essential contribution to be made from within the particular discipline itself (Hassan 2017). The disciplinary contribution is probably best delivered through regular and planned contact between appointed peer facilitators and lecturers.
- In order to provide appropriate training, a clear understanding of the learning role of the peer facilitators is required (Clarence 2016).
- Numerous research findings (e.g. ACE/AAUP 2000; Gurin, Dey, Gurin and Hurtado 2002) suggest that experiences of diversity have significant learning advantages. Peer teaching that offer students such experiences, should be encouraged.

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<sup>2</sup> Recent research (Bremner 2019) has suggested that conceptualizing of an approach to teaching and learning as 'learning-centred' allows for a view that incorporates the best elements of both teacher and learner-centred approaches and promotes contextually appropriate pedagogies (2019:63).

## 2. Implementation

- These regulations are to be implemented by the entire University and applies to all staff members and students.
- These regulations apply to peer-to-peer facilitation in formal academic contexts (see definitions). Research assistantships are excluded from these regulations.
- While the important role of peer-to-peer interactions in co-curricular contexts is acknowledged, these regulations are not intended to address these engagements.
- Where no faculty-approved regulations for peer teaching exist, faculties are to develop such regulations that are aligned to the institutional regulations and have these approved at faculty boards.
- In order to support the implementation of these regulations, faculties are required to complete the template contained in Appendix B and submit it to the Committee for Learning and Teaching.
- Implementation of regulations are to be phased in (where necessary). As of the start of the 2021 academic year all regulations should be applied.

## 3. Definitions

The descriptions below indicate how specific concepts are used in these regulations. Where they contradict descriptions applied in other management documents, the definitions in this document will be amended to ensure alignment with these other documents.

### 3.1 Peer teaching/supplementary teaching

Peer facilitators<sup>3</sup> engage in peer teaching to actively support students' construction of knowledge and the acquisition of skills (Topping 2005). They are of similar social standing to the students they support and do not teach new material (Stigmar 2016). While they are of similar social standing to the students they support, they have also attained a greater level of expertise than the students whose learning they facilitate (Johansson, Holmin, Johansson and Braide 2018). Peer teaching is understood to result in a reciprocal interaction in which both the student and the facilitator can derive beneficial learning experiences (Boud 2001; Ashwin 2003; Micari, Streitwieser and Light 2006).

These regulations also refer to peer teaching as 'supplementary' teaching to distinguish it from primary and secondary teaching (see below). While this distinction can cause confusion, especially if viewed from the perspective of existing practices, it is an

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<sup>3</sup> In a review of research on peer facilitation, Stigmar (2016) found various conceptualisations of peer facilitators that are in some instances distinguished from each other's while in others are used interchangeably. The Howie (2018) also pointed to the overlap of conceptualization and practice at SU. Despite this conceptual vagueness some characteristics are commonly presented by the majority of researchers. These characteristics are included in the definition adopted in this document.

important distinction for the development of a framework to manage the potential risks resulting from the employment of peer facilitators.

Supplementary teaching is any form of learning facilitation that is not the first delivery of prescribed content or a repeat of this first delivery and offers additional or further explanations or practice of what was delivered in the first delivery. This can include small group discussions, supporting students in solving predefined problems, providing technical support to students in laboratories, individual or group consultations and giving feedback on assessments. As such these regulations include the traditionally employed categories 'demi' (practical demonstrator), 'practical assistant' and 'tutor' under the generic heading 'peer facilitator'.

In these regulations peer facilitation is to be distinguished from peer instruction (Mazur 1997) with the former referring to the formalized employment of peers (or near peers) to support/facilitate student learning while the latter refers to situations where students engage in cooperative learning to achieve the same learning outcomes.

### 3.2 Primary teaching

First delivery of prescribed content during normally scheduled contact sessions (most often lecture periods or remote sessions).

### 3.3 Secondary teaching

Secondary teaching is a repeat of the first delivery of prescribed content. This typically refers to situation where a lecture was given but has to be repeated. Instances of this are relatively scarce at SU.

### 3.4 Formative assessment

Formative assessment is a process that provides both information on student progress and the opportunity to develop the required skills/knowledges. The purpose of formative assessment is to improve student learning.

### 3.5 Summative assessment

Assessment for the purpose of making judgments about student learning. The judgment is required to make decisions about student progress, e.g. for promotion or certification. These decisions are generally made against some benchmark or standard.

## 4. Purpose of regulations

The purpose of these regulations is to enhance teaching and learning at SU by clarifying the parameters of the roles of peer facilitation.

## 5. Aims of regulations

- To enhance teaching and learning at SU
- To ensure the quality of formal peer-to-peer, module-based engagements
- To limit the exposure of peer facilitators to the risks of unfair expectations and practices
- To limit the potential risks to the institution that result from peer-to-peer engagements

## 6. Provisions

### 6.1 Designations and roles

For various reasons it is necessary that SU adopts a shared set of descriptions of all the functions performed by peer facilitators. These reasons include clarifying students' expectations across faculties, clarifying the limitations of peer facilitators' responsibilities, ensuring similar learning experiences across faculties and providing a framework for the development of training materials for peer facilitators.

The designations below are presented in a hierarchical order. In the same way that SU's academic career progression levels suggest increasingly complex responsibilities, so too does the ordering of the categories below suggest increasingly complex responsibilities.

Below are four categories of peer facilitators to be employed at SU. The provisions set out below provide the parameters within which their responsibilities are operationalised (see Appendix A for a summary and comparison). Faculties are to develop context-specific guidelines that are aligned with the descriptions set out below.

**6.1.1 Module assistant** performs only administrative and/or module support functions. These may include but are not limited to the preparation of class lists, the allocation of students to small groups, the uploading of materials to SUNLearn or other platforms used in the particular module, the preparation of videos/podcasts/PowerPoints, audio-visual support in class and test invigilation.

Excluded from the module assistant's responsibilities are teaching and learning engagements with students, development of teaching and learning materials and assessment (summative and formative) of student learning.

**6.1.2 Learning assistant** roles can include some administrative functions as set out in the responsibilities of module assistants. However, the primary role of the learning assistant is to support student learning. This may include but is not limited to supporting students during practicals, facilitating small group discussions, guiding students in the solution of prescribed problems/exercises and student consultations.

Excluded from the learning assistant's responsibilities are primary teaching, secondary teaching, the development of student learning materials and summative assessment of student learning (this includes developing summative assessments as well as marking these assessments). Where learning assistants engage in formative assessment, the dictates of SU's Assessment policy should be adhered to, including the requirement that the learning assistant receive appropriate training.

**6.1.3 Teaching assistant** roles can include those of a learning assistant. Additional to these, teaching assistant's responsibilities include but are not limited to the development of formative exercises and solutions (but excludes the scheduling of such formative opportunities – this remains the responsibility of the lecturer/module coordinator), secondary teaching (all such instances must be approved by the coordinating lecturer of the module) and limited primary teaching (see restrictions below).

Excluded from the teaching assistant's responsibilities are the setting of summative assessments. Teaching assistants may only make a limited contribution to the marking of summative assessments. As part of the implementation of these regulations faculties are to develop clear guidelines that indicate the limitations of teaching assistants' involvement in summative assessment as well as the supervision and moderation required for them to engage in assessments. A clear distinction should be made between marking that requires only a memorandum with single possibility answers and marking that requires interpretive inputs from the teaching assistant. The teaching assistant's involvement in the latter should be limited.

Teaching assistants should receive training appropriate for their involvement in formative and summative assessment.

Primary teaching of more than 15% of a module is also excluded from the responsibilities of the teaching assistant. All instances of peer facilitators involved in primary teaching must be approved by chair of the department responsible for the particular module. In instances where an *ad hoc* appointment is required to be the primary teacher of more than 15% of a module, such an appointment must be made through the faculty's normal appointment procedures.

6.1.4 **Assessment assistant** roles can include some administrative functions as set out in the responsibilities of module assistants. The primary role of the assessment assistant is to support lecturers in assessing modules. This includes setting and marking formative assessments, providing students with assessment feedback and marking of summative assessments. As part of the implementation of these regulations faculties are to develop clear guidelines that indicate the limitations of assessment assistants' involvement in summative assessment as well as the supervision and moderation required for them to engage in assessments. While the assessment assistant provides additional capacity to ensure high quality assessment, the responsibility for student assessment remains that of the appointed academic.

Assessment assistants should receive appropriate training for their involvement in formative and summative assessment (see 6.4 below).

Excluded from the assessment assistant's responsibilities are setting summative assessments, primary, secondary and supplementary teaching.

## 6.2 Assessment

No peer-to-peer facilitator may conduct formative or summative assessment without appropriate training, supervision and moderation as required by SU's Assessment policy and approval of the relevant head of department/chair of department/director. Engagement in assessment includes setting assessments, marking assessments, giving feedback and moderating assessments. It is the responsibility of the faculty or centre that hosts the module to ensure that peer-to-peer facilitators that are involved in any form of assessment or moderation, have the required competences.

Peer facilitators may not make any assessment results available to third parties. Assessment results may only be made available to students through approved institutional/departmental/faculty processes.



### 6.3 Criteria for the recruitment and selection of peer facilitators

As general guidelines the following applies to all peer-to-peer facilitators appointed at SU:

- Peer facilitators may not be employed to support a module for which they are registered
- Peer facilitators should have the necessary language proficiency to adhere to the language specifications of the module and to provide adequate support to students. As part of SU's efforts to promote multilingualism, departments are encouraged to employ peer facilitators that are proficient in South African languages other than only English and Afrikaans

Additionally the following category-specific requirements apply:

**Module assistants** may not provide administrative assistance to modules for which they are registered. They should possess the competences required for their tasks as specified by the department/centre hosting the module.

**Learning assistants** must be at least one year senior to the students they are supporting (although divisions/departments/centres may require even greater seniority). They should have successfully completed the module in which they are providing support to the level specified by the department hosting the module or have sufficient expertise in a cognate discipline as required by the hosting department.

**Teaching assistants** must at least be one year senior to the students they are supporting (although divisions/departments/centres may require even greater seniority). They should have successfully completed the module in which they are providing support to the level specified by the department/centre hosting the module or have sufficient expertise in a cognate discipline as required by the hosting department. If they are to engage in primary teaching, they must at least be registered for a postgraduate qualification in the discipline (or cognate discipline) they are going to teach.

**Assessment assistants** must at least be one year senior to the students whose learning they are assessing (although divisions/departments/centres may require even greater seniority). They must have the necessary disciplinary knowledge to mark the assigned questions. Faculties are to set clear criteria to indicate the disciplinary competence of assessment assistants.

### 6.4 Training

All Learning Assistants, Teaching Assistants and Assessment Assistants are to receive approved training before commencing their duties.

Faculties should develop minimum training criteria for the above categories and Departmental chairs are to ensure that only those that meet these criteria are employed in the above roles.

Where Learning, Teaching or Assessment Assistants are involved in assessment, their preparation has to include appropriate assessment training.

Beyond formal training, lecturers should have regular, scheduled interaction with Learning, Teaching and Assessment Assistants to ensure continuous training.

## 6.5 Appointment and remuneration

The following applies in the appointment and remuneration of peer facilitators:

- Regardless of faculty, the principle “same work, same pay” should apply. Peer facilitators should thus be remunerated for the work they do, not the level of their qualifications. In order to pursue this, these regulations require that all peer-to-peer facilitators be appointed, in writing, in one of the categories expressed in 6.1.
- No peer facilitator is to provide more than 32 (notional) hours service per month per module (service includes preparation for learning facilitation as well as learning facilitation activities).
- No peer facilitator is to be employed for service in more than two modules simultaneously.
- The purpose of the above limitations (32 hours service per month and a maximum of two concurrent assistantships) is to ensure that employment as assistants do not negatively impact the primary academic responsibilities of registered students. Where assistants are employed that are not registered students or M and PhD students that have completed their academic responsibilities and are awaiting graduation, these limits may be expanded. Any such changes have changes to limits must be approved by departmental chairs/directors. The final agreement between the department and the assistants still has to be captured in writing and specify the hours expected.
- Regardless of the nature of appointment, all peer facilitators should have a formal written and signed agreement with the department indicating at least the category of appointment (as per this document), hours of work per month, period of employment, clear explanation of responsibilities and requirements of appointment (e.g. training, regular meetings with responsible lecturer etc.)
- Regardless of nature of appointment, all peer facilitators should be remunerated at the end of each month in which they worked

The following **minimum** rates (2020) apply per category of appointment:

| Roles                                   | Hourly rate | Post level equivalent                      |
|---|-------------|--|
| Module assistant                        | R80.31      | 90% of base remuneration of post level 13  |
| Learning assistant                      | R96.46      | 90% of base remuneration of post level 12  |
| Teaching assistant/Assessment assistant | R107.17     | 100% of base remuneration of post level 12 |

These rates are based on the base remuneration PASS post levels. They are to be adapted on an annual basis as remuneration of the equivalent post level is amended.

## 6.6 Student feedback and evaluation

Where learning assistants and teaching assistants engage in facilitation of student learning through primary teaching, secondary teaching formal student feedback should be collected on their inputs at the same time as formal feedback is collected for the module. Where they engage in supplementary teaching/peer-to-peer facilitation the collection of informal feedback for formative purposes is encouraged.

## 6.7 Peer facilitator limitations

- No peer facilitator may use materials developed for the modules in which they are appointed as assistants in remunerated, private tutoring sessions. Private tutoring includes any form of (non-departmental) remunerated interaction that is not explicitly stated in the agreement between a department and the peer facilitator.
- All materials peer facilitators are given access to in order to perform their duties remain the property of SU and may not be used or reproduced for purposes beyond those they are employed for by SU.
- All assessments materials peer facilitators are given access to (such as memoranda) remain and confidential and should be treated as such until explicitly indicated otherwise by the responsible lecturer.
- Peer facilitators should not have access to individual student information or provide any student information to third parties.

# 7. Responsibilities with regard to the implementation of the regulations

## 7.1 Deans/Vice-deans (Teaching)

- Ensure that faculties develop contextualized guidelines for peer facilitation. These should be aligned to these institutional guidelines and include descriptions of the responsibilities of the different categories of peer facilitators, criteria for the appointment of peer facilitators, the minimum training criteria for peer facilitators and the remuneration levels for different categories of peer facilitators.

## 7.2 Departmental chairs

- Ensure that all appointed peer facilitators are appropriately trained before commencing their duties.
- Approve all instances of Teaching Assistants engaging in primary teaching and ensure that proportion remains below 15% threshold.

## 7.3 Module coordinator/coordinating lecturer

- Approve all instances of peer facilitators engaging in the supplementary teaching.

- Supervise and moderate peer facilitators' engagement in formative and summative assessment.
- Develop strategies for the use of peer facilitation (where peer facilitation is used) in pursuit of student learning in their module/s.
- Schedule regular interaction with peer facilitators (where appropriate) to provide the required disciplinary input necessary for successful support of student learning. This is an important part of the ongoing training/learning of peer facilitators.

#### 7.4 Committee for Learning and Teaching

- Monitor the interpretation, contextualization and implementation of the regulations.
- Ensure that these regulations are reviewed five years after implementation (in 2025).

### 8. Conflict settlement

- These regulations are subject to the dictates of SU's other management documents. Where contradictions or conflicts are apparent, these regulations should be amended to align with other SU's management documents. All such amendments should be approved by the Committee for Learning and Teaching.
- Deans/heads of centres may submit duly motivated requests to deviate from the policy to the Committee for Learning and Teaching for consideration.

### 9. Foundational and supporting documents

The following documents also have a bearing on peer facilitation. In many instances they set the benchmark for peer facilitation practices.

- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Assessment policy and practices at Stellenbosch University
- Regulation for Internal and External Moderation and the Processing of Results

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### Summary of peer-to-peer facilitator roles per appointment category

|                       | <b>Module assistant</b>   | <b>Learning assistant</b>   | <b>Teaching assistant</b>  | <b>Assessment assistant</b>  |
|-----------------------|---|---|--|--|
| Module administration | Administration of module including maintaining class lists, setting up tutorial/practical groups, posting administrative information to SUNLearn, posting learning materials (provided by lecturer) to SUNLearn | Same as Module assistant although learning facilitation rather than administration should be the primary function of Student assistants | Same as Module assistant although learning facilitation rather than administration should be the primary function of Teaching assistants       | Same as Module assistant although assessments rather than administration should be the primary function of Assessment assistants |
| Primary teaching      | No teaching responsibilities  | No teaching responsibilities  | May engage in primary teaching but only after approval by head of department responsible for module or centre and not exceeding 15% of module. | No teaching responsibilities   |
| Secondary teaching    | No teaching responsibilities  | No teaching responsibilities  | May engage in secondary teaching but only with formal approval of  | No teaching responsibilities   |

|                        |                                |  |   |   |
|------------------------|--------------------------------|--|---|---|
|                        |                                |  | lecturer responsible for module   |   |
| Supplementary teaching | No teaching responsibilities   | Supporting students during practicals, facilitating small group discussions, guiding students in the solution of prescribed problems/exercises and student consultations.  | Same as Student assistant   | No teaching responsibilities  |
| Formative assessment   | No assessment responsibilities | Learning assistants may conduct formative assessments but these need to be prepared by the lecturer responsible for the module. Feedback to students may only be given after discussing it with the lecturer or if provided by the lecturer. | Same as Learning assistant. Additionally Teaching assistants may develop formative exercises and solutions but only administer these once discussed with the lecturer responsible for the module. | Same as Learning assistant. Additionally Assessment assistants may develop formative exercises and solutions but only administer these once discussed with the lecturer responsible for the module. |
| Summative assessment   | No assessment responsibilities | No assessment responsibilities   | May support lecturer in limited marking of summative assessment but only after appropriate assessment training has been completed.  | May support lecturers in marking summative assessments but only after appropriate assessment training has been completed. Marking   |

|                       |   |   |  |   |
|-----------------------|---|---|--|---|
|                       |   |   | Faculties need to specify the limits of participation in marking.  | of assessments should be done under supervision and with the necessary moderation done by the responsible lecturer. |
| Materials development | No materials development responsibilities | All materials used by Student assistants should be developed by the lecturer responsible for the module | Teaching assistants may contribute to the development of learning materials but before distribution materials have to be approved by the responsible lecturer. | No learning materials development responsibilities.   |