



# NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY

## TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGY: 2016-2020

Approved by the NWU Senate on 25 May 2016 and by the NWU  
Council on 23 June 2016.

# Foreword to the Teaching and Learning Strategy



The North-West University Teaching and Learning Strategy is the culmination of four years of reflection, discussion and consultation.

In the process we have listened carefully to the ideas and contributions of the entire university community, and have also engaged seriously with

global trends that impact on the future of higher education, as well as priorities within our own national context.

By means of this strategy, we express our intention to prepare our students for life and work in the 21st century, as graduates who are knowledgeable professionals, innovative and critical thinkers, principled leaders, and responsible and engaged members of society, with highly developed communication skills and the ability to work effectively in teams.

We understand that the world of the 21st century presents complex challenges that defy conventional problem-solving approaches. Therefore we will use innovative teaching and learning approaches and designs that help our students progressively to assume responsibility for their own learning, and to become lifelong learners who welcome opportunities to engage with different knowledge paradigms and challenge their own assumptions.

We are committed to providing our students with an outstanding learning experience in which they participate in consistently high-quality learning activities at all our campuses and in open and distance learning. In order to do this, we will ensure that all our formal and continuing education qualifications and programmes are in step with the latest scientific developments and are fully aligned across our campuses and in various modes of delivery.

We will also offer our academic staff meaningful and relevant opportunities for professional development, and will make optimal use of teaching and learning

technology to gear our academic programmes for a diverse range of learning styles and needs. Our student profile will be commensurate with the targets set in the NWU Strategy 2015 to 2025 for various fields and levels of study.

The South African higher education system continues to be characterised by skewed participation rates along racial lines, as well as sharp differences in completion and success rates. We realise that student access and success is a responsibility that involves all role-players at the university, both within our faculties and our professional and administrative units.

Working together, we will create a winning institutional culture in which a more diverse student body achieves outstanding academic results. Key elements in achieving this goal include:

- access programmes to allow a more diverse student body to enrol for formal study at the NWU
- early warning and tracking systems to identify students who may be at risk, and to provide them with effective support
- academic development programmes that help all our students to achieve their full potential
- ensuring that all our academic programmes and co-curricular activities purposefully help our students to develop the desired attributes of NWU graduates
- an attractive functional multilingualism policy and practice.

In the area of teaching and learning, this strategy is the framework for realising our institutional strategy statement of transforming and positioning the NWU as a unitary institution of superior academic excellence, with a commitment to social justice.

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## Table of Contents

1	Introduction .....	1
2	Purpose .....	1
3	Context.....	3
3.1	Educating students for the challenges of twenty-first century society.....	6
3.2	Creating a more responsive higher education system .....	6
3.3	Leadership in multimodal education .....	7
3.4	Innovative teaching and learning designs .....	8
3.5	Designing meaningful learning experiences .....	9
4	Vision and Mission, and Strategic Goals for teaching and learning.....	10
4.1	Vision .....	10
4.2	Mission .....	10
4.3	Strategic Goals.....	10
5	Graduate Attributes.....	11
5.1	Responsible and engaged members of society.....	12
5.2	Knowledgeable, highly-educated individuals and professionals.....	12
5.3	Innovative, critical thinkers .....	12
5.4	Principled leaders .....	12
5.5	Effective communicators .....	13
5.6	Skilled collaborators and team members.....	13
6	Educational Approach .....	13
7	Guiding Principles .....	14
8	Key Strategic Drivers.....	15
8.1	Governance arrangements for teaching and learning .....	15
8.2	Academic Programme Planning.....	15
8.3	Teaching and learning innovation .....	16
8.4	Recruitment, development and retention of talented staff .....	16
8.5	Access, retention and success .....	17
8.6	Curriculum transformation and renewal .....	18
8.7	An enabling learning environment .....	19

## **1 Introduction**

A special Senate Executive Committee (SENEX) meeting was convened on 24 July 2012 to discuss a vision and plan for teaching and learning at the North-West University (NWU). Subsequent to the meeting, a task team was appointed to undertake the further development of a strategic plan for teaching and learning. In its work, the task team was informed by the direction of national higher education policy, national and international trends in higher education, and the strategies and goals that are formulated in the NWU Institutional Plan.

During the development of the strategy, the task team discussed the possibilities inherent in the adoption of blended learning, which today is followed by a growing number of universities nationally and internationally, for the creation and continuing development of a teaching and learning environment in which technology is used to provide on- and off-campus students with a learning experience that makes optimal use of face-to-face and e-learning approaches. However, the task team also considered various other elements that should define the University's teaching and learning strategy.

The document was further shaped by a strategy review process in 2014 and 2015 during which the University defined its future identity, strategic agenda and success model, and also developed proposals on appropriate organisational arrangements to ensure quality in its core activities of teaching and learning, and research, with community engagement embedded in both these core areas.

The *North-West University Strategy 2015 to 2025* was approved by Council on 19-20 November 2015, and the North-West University Teaching and Learning Strategy (TL Strategy) (in process at the time) was refined further as a direct result thereof, and approved by Council on 23 June 2016.

A comprehensive university-wide project on the Transformation of Teaching and Learning also informed the later drafts, and will continue to shape future revisions, as well as the supporting documents, including the teaching and learning plan, detailing the implementation of the strategy.

The TL Strategy frames the University's endeavours to achieve its strategic agenda of excellence in innovative quality teaching and learning to the benefit of its stakeholders and society at large.

## **2 Purpose**

The North-West University Teaching and Learning Strategy (TL strategy) provides an overarching framework to inform planning, decision making, and actions across the University regarding teaching and learning. It outlines the manner in which the NWU will define and differentiate itself in the higher education environment, in terms of its strategic intent for excellent and innovative teaching and learning, the qualities of its graduates, its educational approach, and the principles and strategic drivers that guide and support teaching and learning. In this manner, the strategy intends to develop a shared understanding of the way in which NWU will engage with the opportunities and challenges of

the South African higher education environment, the realities and opportunities presented by the changing global environment, and the goals and objectives of its own strategic agenda.

The TL Strategy takes its cue from the strategic intent of the North-West University Strategy 2015 to 2025, “to transform and position the NWU as a unitary institution of superior academic excellence, with a commitment to social justice”. In particular, the TL Strategy elaborates on the manner in which NWU understands its dream and purpose statement of being an internationally recognised university in Africa that excels in innovative learning and teaching, and the implications of its success model, competitive strategy and strategic agenda for teaching and learning, with a focus on:

- The following aspects of the internal success model:
  - The provision of high quality teaching and learning;
  - A clearly differentiating student value proposition underpinned by equity of access and an empowering and supportive learning experience;
  - The ability to attract and retain academics and support staff with an open mind-set, who are critical in their thinking and have a deep commitment to the University’s students; and
  - Best-in-class information and communications technology that inter alia enables a seamless and integrated teaching and learning capability and experience.
- The following aspects of the competitive strategy and strategic agenda:
  - Delivery of flagship teaching and learning programmes;
  - Promotion of teaching and learning innovation (including fast-tracking blended learning);
  - Support for student access, retention and access;
  - Effective use of teaching and learning technology.

By means of the TL Strategy NWU indicates how it intends to enhance its reputation amongst external stakeholders including alumni and donors, and its reputation as a university of choice amongst students, employers, other higher education institutions, professional and statutory bodies, and other partners in the scientific community, public and private sectors, non-governmental organisations and communities (NWU external success model).

In accordance with the University’s values, the TL Strategy is imbedded in an organisational culture evidenced by behaviours congruent with a transformational focus, which includes the valuing of diversity and inclusiveness, ethical conduct and care, a values-based collective identity that promotes integration, participation, and collaboration, innovation, dedication to the University’s core business, joint and individual accountability, robust engagement and academic integrity.

The TL Strategy is the focal point that guides the development and cyclical review of the network of policies, frameworks, processes, and systems that set out principles, objectives, requirements, roles, responsibilities, structures and procedures in all of the teaching-learning related areas, including:

- Qualification and programme development, management and review;
- Teaching and learning;
- Assessment and moderation;
- Academic staff development;

- Teaching excellence awards;
- Academic promotion;
- Student academic development;
- Development and quality assurance of teaching and learning materials;
- Work-integrated and service learning;
- Recognition of prior learning; and
- All facets of the design and implementation of a comprehensive quality assurance system for teaching-learning related matters, which incorporates student feedback on teaching quality.

The Strategy will be supported by a teaching and learning plan which describes goals, targets, roles, responsibilities and timeframes for its achievement with respect to each of the seven strategic drivers as described in its eighth section.

With respect to scope, the TL strategy applies to teaching and learning activities in all academic qualifications and programmes from the undergraduate level to coursework and professional master's degrees. The context that the strategy elaborates, its principles and educational approach, and its delineation of desired graduate attributes, are equally applicable to research degrees. However, such degrees are also subject to the elaboration of the University's Strategy for Research, Innovation, Community Engagement, Internationalisation and E-research. Furthermore, continuing education forms an integral part of NWU's teaching and learning activities, and supports the goals, assumptions and principles of the TL Strategy, including the provision of a high quality learning experience through innovative teaching and learning designs, the effective use of technology, and the assurance of academic standards and quality. However the specific demands of continuing education entail that the University will develop a specific strategy and policy framework to govern its provision.

Finally, the contextualisation of the TL Strategy within different faculties will differ depending on the disciplines for which they are responsible, the range of their qualification and programme offerings and the delivery modes in which they are presented, and their student profiles. It is the responsibility of each faculty to develop approaches, policies and processes that implement the Strategy in an appropriate manner.

The TL Strategy is supported by a glossary of terms, as provided in the appendix. The glossary of terms is maintained by the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching-Learning, and will be used consistently with respect to strategies, frameworks policies and systems in the teaching and learning area.

### **3 Context**

NWU intends to prepare its students for life and the world of work, so that they may participate constructively in public life, and lead fulfilling professional and private lives. To achieve this goal, the University will be responsive to at least three acknowledged paradigms concerning the role of the university:

- The pedagogical paradigm is concerned with the university's responsibility to educate students, by providing them with a broad formation. Linking to the oldest idea or tradition of the university, it emphasises the lecturer's role in giving guidance to a student, and leading him or her into the world of being an intellectual. An important focal point of this

paradigm, articulated by the German idea of "*Bildung*", is that the student should reach a point where he/she can be seen as a well-rounded, broadly orientated, intellectual with the critical capacity to embark on a life-long, values-oriented path of interaction with knowledge and views about reality, and their application to various contexts.

- The cognitive paradigm points to the university's role in broadening knowledge according to the scientific method. In contrast to the former paradigm, this paradigm does not aim in the first place to form people but to acquire knowledge. The idea is to make students familiar with the background, intellectual skills and instruments to become autonomous researchers.
- The pragmatic or instrumentalist paradigm emphasises the practical role that the university should play in preparing students to become "useful" members of society. By emphasising the university's links and interaction with its social environment, this model counters the perception of the university as an ivory tower. Whereas the first two paradigms emphasise responsiveness to the internal and central aim of a university (i.e. academic knowledge) the instrumentalist paradigm sees the university as also responsive to external goals (e.g. the economy, social and cultural diversity and justice, technological development, the various professions etc.).

The influence of these paradigms varies according to the nature and level of specific qualifications and programmes, and specifically whether they have a general-formative, professional, or vocational and technical nature. Nevertheless, they should all be taken into account in the design of teaching and learning experiences that prepare students for life and the world of work in twenty-first century society. Drawing on these paradigms, the NWU understanding of responsiveness is relevant at two levels:

- External responsiveness entails that NWU delivers a range of programmes by means of its Programme and Qualifications Mix (PQM) that equip graduates to lead fulfilling and productive professional, public and personal lives. Their educational experience will prepare them to engage successfully in the world of work, in local and international contexts, with the willingness and ability to contribute to the creation of meaningful and sustainable work opportunities for self and others for their own benefit, but also for the common good. They also will be enabled to contribute constructively to public life, and to lead personal lives that are underpinned by the critical capacity, purposefulness and values orientation that guides them in all spheres of life.
- Internal responsiveness points to the design of curricula that provide students with a solid grounding and access to cutting-edge developments in their discipline of choice, but within a framework which respects their socio-cultural diversity and is sensitive to varying levels of educational preparedness. By encouraging active and self-directed learning as appropriate for different disciplinary contexts and types of knowledge, NWU curricula and pedagogical approaches enable students to develop the knowledge, skills and personal qualities that will prepare them for the current and future world of work as well as for life in twenty-first century society, providing them with effective support so that they may benefit fully from the opportunities before them, and contribute to shaping the curriculum of the future.

The TL Strategy sets an ambitious agenda, which will require the ability to attract, retain and recognise high quality academic and support staff, to provide comprehensive systems for student access, retention and success, and substantial continuing investment in physical, information and technological resources. This agenda takes full cognizance of the fact that

South Africa continues to be a sharply divided society, reflecting the realities of a dual economy with one of the highest inequality rates in the world and its systemic impact on access to quality basic education and the use of technology, and students' ability to develop the social and cultural capital, including academic literacies, and material resources to succeed in higher education. As the recent CHE report on the reform of the undergraduate curriculum notes, the effects of economic and social disadvantage adversely affect the ability of the great majority of the South African population to gain access to and succeed in higher education (CHE 2013: 54; 115-116).

The TL Strategy does not gloss over these deep challenges. Instead it acknowledges and embraces them, within an overarching commitment to create and sustain the conditions that will allow all students at NWU to succeed. Particularly in its eighth section, the Strategy identifies aspects of teaching and learning innovation, student access, retention and success, and curriculum transformation and renewal curriculum that intend to address the needs of students who suffer from the effects of the systemic disadvantages that continue to characterise South African society. This commitment to student access, retention and success, is a key condition for the realisation of the University's intention, as set out in the *North-West University Strategy 2015 to 2025*, to be ranked amongst the top six hundred universities globally, and the top five in South Africa, recognised as a leading contributor to the African knowledge society, that provides an outstanding student learning experience supported by best in class information and communications technology and competitive, edge-creating core people practices.

Accordingly, NWU's understanding of an enabling environment in the teaching and learning context spans the following:

- A capable and highly effective academic corps, acknowledged for their expertise in their fields, supported by skilled and efficient professional support services and administrative functions;
- Informed decisions on modes of delivery and appropriately designed academic programmes;
- Information rich, accessible and inclusive physical and virtual teaching, learning and social spaces, inside and outside of classrooms, that enable innovative teaching and a quality learning experience;
- A deep understanding of the range of realities with which students are confronted and which may impact on an individual's ability to benefit fully from their engagement with the NWU (which implies the necessary capabilities required to provide access and ensure success across the lifecycle of a prospective and enrolled NWU student); and
- In all of the above, effective feedback loops to ensure continuous improvement.

This rest of this section elaborates on various international and national developments that shape the NWU's understanding of the context to which its TL Strategy should be responsive. Some of these factors stem from contextual challenges and opportunities facing the South African higher education system, while others relate to the rapidly changing environment in which higher education systems operate nationally and internationally, including political, social, economic, ecological and technological developments and challenges.



### **3.1 Educating students for the challenges of twenty-first century society**

The NWU prepares its students to take full advantage of a rapidly changing world in which technology expands the borders of individuals and organisations, shapes human, social, cultural and organisational interaction on a national and global scale, and influences both the nature of work and the definition of employment. Of particular importance to the TL Strategy is preparing the youth, and especially those from marginalised communities, for sustainable engagement in meaningful and productive work. NWU is committed to educating knowledgeable, skilled and values-driven graduates who are prepared for a rapidly changing world, and able to engage with its challenges in an authentic, innovative and critical manner, and thereby to contribute constructively to the development and preservation of South African and global society in general.

Various parts of the TL Strategy, such as the definition of graduate attributes, the educational approach, and the theme of curriculum reform outline how students are prepared to participate productively and responsibly in the complex society of the twenty-first century.

The NWU educates its students to make a distinctive contribution to the sustainable development of South African society, the African continent and the wider global community. On 25 September 2015 the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, an agenda to transform our world by addressing major global challenges that threaten the long-term sustainability of global society. This wide-ranging agenda addresses seventeen goals relating to the economic, social and environmental conditions that will improve the quality of life of all people, addressing the challenges of poverty and large-scale unemployment, ensuring food security and access to water and other natural resources through enhanced environmental stewardship, promoting sustainable economic growth and consumption and production patterns, providing access to inclusive and equitable education and affordable, quality health care, and promoting peaceful and inclusive societies, with access to justice for all and the achievement of gender equality.

As stakeholder and global collaborative partner in the UN Global Compact, the NWU is committed to the promotion of the seventeen sustainable development goals of this agenda. The University will provide its students with an educational experience that equips them to contribute to the development of equitable social, economic, legal, political, educational, healthcare and environmental systems, and to participate meaningfully in intercultural and interreligious dialogue with respect for socio-cultural diversity as it finds expression in different languages, religions, worldviews, ways of life, traditions and patterns of social organisation.

Many of the challenges that South Africa and the world is facing require multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary approaches that contribute to the development of new explanatory frameworks. In the design of academic programmes, as well as the opportunities that are created for learning outside the formal curriculum, the NWU will explore opportunities that allow its students to participate in multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary discourses and problem-solving processes.

### **3.2 Creating a more responsive higher education system**

A second force that shapes this TL Strategy is the contextual opportunities and challenges facing the South African higher education system. In terms of teaching and learning, it is

particularly important to address challenges relating to the low overall participation rate, with sharp inequalities in terms of race and social class, high attrition and low completion rates, the need for curriculum reform, and poor articulation with other components of the post-secondary system. Various planning and policy documents, including the *National Development Plan (2011)*, the *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013)*, the *Policy for the Provision of Distance Education in South African Universities in the Context of an Integrated Post-School System (2014)*; the *Policy Framework on Differentiation in the South African Post-School System (2014)* and the *draft NQF Articulation Policy (2016)*, signal government's intent to strengthen the contribution that the higher education system makes to national development. Key initiatives to achieve this goal include the following:

- An increase in the participation rate in public universities to 23% by 2030 from the rate of 19% in 2015;
- Better utilisation of the opportunities provided by open distance learning to expand the higher education system;
- Improvement of student throughput and retention rates, by enhancing the quality of undergraduate education, and strengthening the teaching competence of academic staff; and
- Development of an integrated and articulated post-secondary system, in which universities provide appropriate articulation opportunities to students from the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges and other colleges.

In answer to the above goals, the University will strive to offer high quality teaching and learning that will be reflected in student success rates, the outcomes of external peer reviews, graduate employer feedback, student satisfaction, and the employability of its graduates. Furthermore, in terms of sustainability, and cognisant of the NWU internal success model, responsiveness implies careful academic planning in terms of the most appropriate proportion of undergraduate/ postgraduate national and international students, major fields of study and academic programme niches, suitable modes of delivery for different qualifications and student profiles, and retention of a competitive edge while remaining financially viable and market driven. In order to contribute to the creation of a more responsive higher education system, the remaining sections of the TL Strategy outlines ways in which NWU will engage with the priorities of the national policy environment, its strategic plan, and other contextual realities.

### **3.3 Leadership in multimodal education**

In the light of changing worldwide trends in education, and in order to contribute to the need for increased access and greater opportunities for lifelong learning, NWU intends to become a leading South African provider of multimodal education. By multimodal education, the NWU understands the use of the most appropriate combination of modes of delivery to offer its academic qualifications and programmes, ranging from campus-based contact learning, through a hybrid mode of provision, to distance learning. The NWU will use multiple modes of delivery to provide its students with flexible opportunities for learning within a context of growing resource constraints, as well as changing patterns in student demand. The pedagogical approaches and forms of student support will take the profile and specific needs of students who are studying through each mode of delivery into account, and will be guided by the realities of spatial and, to a lesser extent, temporal separation in each mode of delivery. In South Africa, many students who study by means of distance or hybrid modes of

learning may not have access to the internet, while their ICT capabilities may differ considerably within and between different qualifications and linked programmes. In addition more mature students are likely to participate more effectively in distance education. The nature of the teaching and learning design, teaching methodologies and forms of student support therefore remain important irrespective of the delivery mode, in order to ensure a quality learning experience for NWU students.

The traditional campus-based model of higher education can only partially address the challenges of increased access to quality learning opportunities within the South African higher education system and at the NWU. The available funding from public and other sources will not be able to support the growth in university campuses at a scale that is commensurate with an expanding student population. Furthermore, students may choose to study by means of distance learning or a hybrid mode for financial, career or other reasons. Therefore, while continuing to enhance the educational experience of students on NWU campuses, the University will also build on its substantial experience in delivering qualifications and programmes via the distance mode to significantly strengthen its capabilities in the provision of high quality distance education. Under distance education, NWU understands a commitment to pursue the ideals of open distance learning as far as possible, in order to enhance accessibility to education and training, by limiting or eliminating barriers such as the time, place and pace of learning.

The University acknowledges that the demands of distance learning will differ across disciplines, and that it may not be appropriate or feasible to engage in this mode of delivery in certain disciplines, such as those in science, engineering and technology with a strong practical, laboratory-based component. Therefore, the considerations that will guide the provision of qualifications and programmes by means of distance education are the ability to support effective learning, the student profile, the existence of clear skills shortages, and the possibility of achieving economies of scale. In such cases, use of multimodal provision will provide students with opportunities for flexible learning in terms of the choice of the delivery mode by means of which they study all or part of a programme.

The NWU commits to equivalent academic standards irrespective of the mode of delivery of a qualification, and parity of esteem for qualifications and other learning opportunities offered via contact, hybrid and distance modes

### **3.4 Innovative teaching and learning designs**

Recent and ongoing developments in information and communication technology present NWU with significant opportunities to engage in a process of pedagogical innovation. Drawing on developments relating to educational technologies, smart computing, learning analytics and open educational resources, the University will systematically develop the capacity to engage in blended learning and other teaching and learning designs, including the dynamic use of instructional activities based solely on face-to-face interaction, fully online learning, and self-paced, autonomous learning, to deliver a programme or module in different modes of educational delivery.

NWU defines the concept of blended learning in the following manner:

*“Blended learning is an innovative teaching and learning design that combines face-to-face and online teaching and learning approaches. It integrates thoughtfully selected, complementary teaching and learning methodologies and technologies, based on educational merit as determined by factors such as the pedagogical context, the nature of*

*the discipline and the learning material, and the profile of the students, so that the strengths of each are blended into a unique learning experience. It is a fundamental redesign that transforms the structure of, and approach to, teaching and learning embedded in a range of delivery modalities".*

The focus of innovative teaching and learning designs will never be primarily on the use of technology, but always on the enhancement of the student learning experience and transforming pedagogical practices, improving effectiveness and ensuring efficient support for staff and students.

In its work on teaching and learning designs the University will further explore the different modalities of learning and the range of methodologies and technologies that are available to increase students' understanding and skills taking into account different disciplinary contexts, qualification levels, student profiles and modes of delivery. It is recognised that incorporating technology into a blended learning or other learning design may not be appropriate in all contexts, due to the nature of knowledge and the curriculum in specific disciplines, and/ or due to the personal circumstances of students, including access to technology and socio-economic factors.

### **3.5 Designing meaningful learning experiences**

Finally, the context in which people learn is changing constantly. Students live in an unpredictable world, where many of the careers that they will pursue do not yet exist. Furthermore, an increasing number of students may enter higher education with digital capabilities that are far beyond those of their teachers. They may have been immersed in an environment which has taught them to expect that their information needs will be met promptly through uninterrupted electronic engagement, and access to digitally enriched, fast, dynamic and enticing media. While learning in such an environment may be more personalised, relevant to immediate interests and enjoyable, it frequently consists of a collection of smaller sets of information. Having become accustomed to bite-sized information, many students do not necessarily possess the literacy and learning skills to assimilate information into a larger, integrated whole.

The challenge for educators is to engage with students at a level and within a context familiar to them and design learning experiences that make educationally sound use of the opportunities provided by the technologies and digital resources that they prefer while broadening their informational horizons. The NWU will present students with opportunities to acquire the critical, evaluative and research skills to be able to form coherent understanding in a variety of contexts, and to develop into lifelong learners who will flourish in an uncertain world.

In the achievement of this goal, the University will involve its students in more inclusive learning experiences that address their diverse learning styles, and that consist of a wider range of learning activities, in this manner providing a learning experience that, as far as possible, is more personalised. These learning experiences will include student engagement with practice by means of work-integrated learning and community engaged service learning opportunities. Such engagement will be integrated into teaching and learning designs and must at all times be sustainable, mutually beneficial, and aligned to community needs. It is the NWU's intent to use such engagement opportunities to better prepare students for the world of work, and to develop a culture of responsible and active participation in civil society, citizenship and environmental stewardship.

Academic staff will have access to professional development opportunities that will enable them to create and sustain meaningful and responsive learning experiences through the redesign of teaching and learning, irrespective of mode of delivery, in an information-rich, technology-enabled environment. Where appropriate, academic staff will receive incentives, such as grants or project funding, to engage in professional development. While such professional development activities may take various forms, NWUs' support units, which include those tasked with the responsibility for academic development and support, research support and the library services, must play a vital role in their provision. To do so, academic support units must be positioned optimally and have the necessary capacity to facilitate the provision of effective developmental opportunities to academic staff.

The rest of the TL Strategy elaborates on the manner in which the NWU will respond to the challenges of its context. Firstly, this document describes what the NWU intends to achieve with respect to its strategic intent for teaching and learning and the qualities of its graduates. Subsequently, it discusses how the NWU will achieve its aims in terms of its educational approach, the principles that inform its teaching and learning strategy, and the key drivers that will support the strategy.

#### **4 Vision and Mission, and Strategic Goals for teaching and learning**

In response to the challenges of the NWU context, this section describes the vision, mission and strategic goals that will direct the University's approach to teaching and learning.

##### **4.1 Vision**

North-West University will be a leading South African provider of multimodal education, known for its excellence in innovative teaching and learning and an outstanding student learning experience in all modes of educational delivery.

##### **4.2 Mission**

The overarching mission that guides this TL Strategy is as follows:

North-West University fosters vibrant intellectual inquiry amongst its staff and students, in order to provide meaningful teaching and learning experiences and responsive and enabling environments. While members of academic staff have the primary responsibility for providing such experiences and environments, they do so in consultation and collaboration with members of professional support staff, and students. In this manner, the NWU supports its students so that they can progressively become self-directed and lifelong learners who make distinctive contributions to society and the world of work. NWU graduates will stand out as responsible and engaged members of society, knowledgeable, highly-educated professionals, innovative and critical thinkers, principled leaders, effective communicators and skilled collaborators.

##### **4.3 Strategic Goals**

In the pursuit of its teaching and learning vision and mission, the NWU will pursue the following strategic goals:

- Good governance of teaching and learning that ensures sustainability and responsiveness of the qualification and programme offering through both systematic and principled curriculum reform and continuous improvement of new and existing offerings.
- High quality teaching and learning characterised by an approach that is responsive to students' learning needs and styles and supports transformative learning, the

professionalism of staff and the cultivation of intellectual inquiry, by means of personal reflection, vibrant and caring communities of inquiry, the scholarship of teaching and learning, and research of a disciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary nature.

- Improved access, retention and success so that as an institution the NWU responds effectively to the challenges facing South African higher education as a system characterised by low participation and high attrition rates.
- Development of highly-educated graduates who are uniquely prepared to be responsible and engaged members of society and to practise innovative and creative professional careers.
- The creation and maintenance of a well-resourced teaching and learning environment, in terms of facilities and infrastructure, on a sustainable basis.

The strategic drivers that are discussed in section eight of the Strategy provide a further elaboration of these goals, while the teaching and learning plan that will be developed to support the Strategy, will indicate how these goals will be achieved.

## **5 Graduate Attributes**

The graduate attributes describe the personal qualities, and academic, professional and practical knowledge and skills, that the NWU values. They are grounded in the University's dream to be an internationally recognised university in Africa, distinguished for social responsiveness and engaged scholarship, which fosters engaged and caring staff and students, characterised by the foundational values of ethics in all endeavours, academic integrity, freedom of intellectual inquiry, responsibility, accountability, fairness and transparency, and embracing diversity. As such, they define the characteristics that should form an integral part of the curriculum of programmes and modules in terms of the specification of learning outcomes, the selection of teaching and learning strategies and methods, and the criteria, strategies and methods for assessment. It is recognised that the graduate attributes will be developed in various ways, with distinct emphases and to a different extent, according to the nature, purpose and disciplinary context of academic programmes. Furthermore, statutory and professional bodies have specific requirements for the development of graduate attributes, and in such cases the NWU graduate attributes form a broader context for the development of the specific qualities, knowledge and skills that are prescribed by these bodies.

The University will support its students so that they are able develop its desired graduates in a progressive manner throughout their studies by means of the formal curriculum as well as their total learning experience. Furthermore, it will ensure that its policies and processes for programme development, management and review, as well as curriculum renewal, support the embedding of its graduate attributes in the curriculum, and that these attributes are clearly communicated to staff and students.

Through the development of the graduate attributes, NWU will prepare its students to lead fulfilling and productive professional, public and personal lives, in order to give them a strategic edge in the world of work and to enhance their leadership capacities in public life and the communities where they will live and work. The University aims to educate graduates who will become lifelong learners and independent thinkers, able to manage knowledge creatively and effectively, exercise sound ethical judgement, and appreciate and value diversity in all its forms, respecting the realities of diverse social and cultural contexts, natural environments, and workplaces.

To prepare NWU graduates for the demands of the twenty-first century knowledge society, the University defines desired attributes in relation to the following six domains:

### **5.1 Responsible and engaged members of society**

- Willingness to take responsibility for their judgements, decisions and actions based on a strong value system, and an awareness and understanding of moral, ethical, social, cultural and environmental issues.
- Understanding of their social, civic and environmental responsibilities within the context of their chosen careers, and commitment to social justice, democracy, human rights and the integrity of the environment, manifested in conduct that respects and upholds the rights of individuals, groups, and communities.
- The ability to take informed action that contributes to sustainable development by means of critical engagement with contemporary societal challenges within a local, national and global context.
- The capacity to live and work constructively in an inclusive society, through an awareness and appreciation of social, cultural and linguistic diversity, linked to an appropriate understanding within their fields of study of the historical contexts, intellectual traditions and societal conditions that have shaped diverse local, national and global political, economic, legal, scientific, educational, healthcare, social, cultural, environmental and religious systems.

### **5.2 Knowledgeable, highly-educated individuals and professionals**

- The capacity to discover knowledge and create coherent understanding through the retrieval, analysis, evaluation, organisation, synthesis and dissemination of information.
- Comprehensive knowledge and understanding of their chosen field of study in accordance with the level of the qualification achieved.
- The development of multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary perspectives that lead to an integrated understanding of specific issues and concepts.
- Flexibility and adaptability to apply their specialised knowledge and professional skills to theoretical and practical contexts, including the work environment and public life.
- In the case of qualifications and programmes that fall under the control of statutory, professional and regulatory bodies, graduates have to meet the requirements for initial registration.

### **5.3 Innovative, critical thinkers**

- The ability to solve complex and unfamiliar problems through the discovery and creation of new knowledge and understanding.
- The ability to place their knowledge and understanding within the context of broader societal trends and developments.
- Appreciation for the limitations of their own knowledge, and intellectual curiosity to explore new ideas and approaches that question established ways of understanding.
- The capacity to engage in informed argument and reasoning, based on a principled defence of their own values, beliefs and practices as well as the critical analysis of alternative approaches.

### **5.4 Principled leaders**

- The ability to articulate a clear vision and goals with a sound values orientation, and to motivate others to achieve them.

- Tolerance for ambiguity and the courage and confidence to act in uncertain situations.
- The capacity for self-reflection and self-discovery that supports continuing personal and professional development, based on a clear understanding of their personal strengths and weaknesses.
- Self-directed and lifelong learners, who are able to work independently, utilise resources effectively, and exercise initiative.

### **5.5 Effective communicators**

- The ability to formulate, present and communicate ideas, concepts and arguments effectively in a variety of formats (oral, written, visual and electronic) to diverse audiences and for various purposes.
- The ability to use appropriate communication technologies.
- Commitment to the development of multi-lingual skills in order to promote respect and understanding within the social, cultural and linguistic diversity of South African and global society, and to empower speakers of different languages.
- Understanding of communication conventions that are appropriate within diverse cultural contexts.

### **5.6 Skilled collaborators and team members**

- The ability to interact and collaborate effectively with others, and to work as part of a team to solve work-related and broader societal problems, in diverse social, cultural and linguistic contexts.
- Well-developed networking and negotiating skills.

## **6 Educational Approach**

The NWU commits to providing its students with an educational experience that will prepare them to face relevant twenty-first century employment, societal, economic, ecological and political challenges in an authentic manner. This will require an outcomes-oriented, student-centred educational approach focused on inquiry-based, active, participative, and meaningful learning within a supportive, responsive, and enabling learning environment, based on appropriate teaching and learning designs, that include but are not limited to blended learning, and enhanced by appropriate technologies and multi-media resources.

Teaching and learning are viewed as dynamic, interactive processes for which NWU staff and students have a shared responsibility. The University strives to equip its students with the competences to discover knowledge and create coherent understanding through the, analysis, evaluation, organisation and synthesis of information in a variety of contexts in order to prepare them to become productive members of their social, academic and professional communities.

In order to do so, NWU commits to designing curricula in such a manner that a student will have every opportunity to develop metacognitive ability to understand how scientific knowledge is formed and validated within different disciplinary and professional contexts. Within an understanding of teaching and learning as inquiry-based, is an assumption that in universities, fields of knowledge or knowledge domains are constructed over time within particular methodological frameworks and world views. Inasmuch as the purpose, characteristics and methodologies of inquiry differ within various academic disciplines and fields, the NWU recognises that the core focus of learning is the student, and the purpose of its teaching is both to induct the student into particular fields, and at the same time to



develop an appreciation of the differences between approaches to teaching and learning depending on the field of study. The varieties of, and differences between, fields of study entail that the design and delivery of academic programmes will use diverse educational approaches, that are sensitive to the diversity of students and academics themselves.

Recognising that NWU students have diverse social and educational backgrounds, learning styles and expectations, the University acknowledges its responsibility to provide students with a responsive and supportive learning experience that is sensitive to their learning needs, and which will empower them to progressively assume greater responsibility for their own learning. The learning experiences are designed to enable students to provide a reasoned account for their own beliefs, practices and attitudes. The NWU approach echoes and advocates the National Qualification Framework's demand for a progressive increase in student learning autonomy and self-accountability at different qualification levels, and from the first to the final year of study.

Members of academic staff fulfil various roles in the design and delivery of learning experiences that provide their students with optimal opportunities to develop the capabilities to discover knowledge, and create understanding. These include learning programme planner and developer, transmitter of knowledge, learning facilitator or learning mediator, learning materials developer, assessor, life-long learner and researcher and subject matter expert. In the execution of these roles, members of academic staff will work with, and be supported by, professional support staff. They will also create regular opportunities to engage with students about the design of the curriculum, teaching and assessment approaches, their learning needs and the support provided to them. Engagement about the curriculum means that as disciplinary experts members of academic staff welcome critical discussion with students about the construction and validation of knowledge, and the selection of knowledge within the curriculum. In this manner, academic staff will follow a participative approach, collaborating with members of professional support staff with expertise in curriculum theory and design, teaching and learning, educational media, instructional technologies and design, to create and implement learning experiences that support the achievement of qualification and programme outcomes and expected graduate attributes.

## **7 Guiding Principles**

The following principles underpin the formulation of the NWU TL Strategy:

- Systematic pursuit of excellence in all aspects of teaching and learning, in order to provide a consistently high quality learning experience to all NWU students.
- Setting high standards of academic performance for NWU students, matched by accessible student support of high quality.
- A commitment to cultivating inquiry-led, self-directed and adaptable learners.
- Requiring that academic staff should be inquiry-driven so that they consistently develop their competence as educators, supported by effective opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills within an appropriate reward and recognition system.
- Promotion of the scholarship of teaching and learning in order to support communities of inquiry in which members of academic staff, in consultation with and assisted by suitably qualified professional support staff, conduct ethically sound research into the curriculum,

student learning and development, teaching and assessment, and other aspects that impact on student access and success.

- Acknowledgement that while academic staff have the primary responsibility for ensuring the quality and standards of education at NWU, there should be appropriate structures and processes to solicit student input on academic quality, and to engage them in processes for quality enhancement.
- Provision of appropriate opportunities for students to relate their learning to practical contexts by means of opportunities for work-integrated and service learning.
- A commitment to collaborate and share innovation and best practice in teaching and learning nationally and globally, through collaborative networks and partnerships as well as capacity development programmes.
- Recognition of the centrality of teaching and learning to NWU's mission, necessitating the adoption of an integrated approach to ensure that strategies and goals for teaching and learning are correlated with other key institutional strategies, plans and policies in areas such as transformation, academic planning, research and innovation, human resources, student support services, information services (library and ICT), finance and facilities.

## **8 Key Strategic Drivers**

High-quality teaching and learning involves teaching and learning innovation supported by the following strategic drivers: coherent governance arrangements; effective systems for programme development, management and review; high expectations for students' academic achievement, supported by well-designed systems that support the student lifecycle; effective strategies and systems for staff recruitment, development and recognition; systematic curriculum renewal; and a conducive learning environment. This section of the TL Strategy elaborates on these strategic drivers:

### **8.1 Governance arrangements for teaching and learning**

High quality teaching and learning is embedded in an effective and appropriate framework for the governance of teaching and learning, which includes the following:

- A clear understanding and delineation of the roles and responsibilities for teaching and learning activities, as well as the appropriate allocation of accountabilities for teaching and learning that are communicated, managed and monitored effectively.
- Effective policies, processes and procedures at institutional, faculty and campus level to provide oversight for the quality and standards of teaching and learning.
- Appropriate structures for the management of teaching and learning activities, at an institutional, campus and faculty level.
- Innovative and responsive academic planning.

### **8.2 Academic Programme Planning**

The responsiveness of NWU's PQM, the integrity of academic standards and consistency of the student learning experience are dependent upon an effective system for programme planning, development, management and review, which will be characterised by effective systems for:

- Institutional and academic leadership to provide oversight to processes for programme planning, development, management and review;

- Programme planning, development and approval, which includes clearly articulated accountabilities, well-defined and efficient processes and procedures, and reliable academic programme information systems, to ensure the quality and standards of qualifications and programmes and the accuracy of all published information relating to academic programmes;
- Programme coordination, to ensure systematic planning and monitoring of programme and module provision in accordance with the qualification standards to which they are related. This includes study guides and materials, teaching, learning and assessment approaches and methods, moderation, student support and programme administrative services.
- Programme review, to ensure that the quality and standards of academic programmes are reviewed within appropriate timeframes, that adequate improvement plans are compiled, and that their implementation is monitored. A particular concern of the review process is that curricula should be relevant, current and effective in supporting students to meet the programme and module learning outcomes.
- Feedback from students, graduates and employers, to regularly obtain inputs on the quality and standards of academic programmes.

### **8.3 Teaching and learning innovation**

Teaching and learning innovation encourages active, self-directed learning through the considered adoption of appropriate approaches to teaching, learning and assessment, the careful selection of teaching and learning resources and technologies, as well as their effective implementation, as evidenced by the range, nature and scope of the learning activities in which students engage. North-West University will provide its students with a responsive and personalised learning experience, based upon:

- An optimal mix of teaching, learning and assessment methods and activities, which will involve blended learning within disciplines and programmes where such an approach is appropriate.
- Opportunities for staff to enhance their capacity to design relevant learning material that provides an interactive learning experience, and directs students to a range of accessible resources that supports their individual learning needs.
- Training and support for staff and students to make effective use of teaching and learning technology.
- Encouraging members of academic staff to reflect on their teaching and learning approaches and practices in a regular manner. Such reflection may take various forms, including individual reflection, involvement in projects on the scholarship of teaching and learning, and participation in dynamic communities of inquiry, in which members of academic staff play a leading role in engaging with professional support staff and students to review and enhance the quality of the learning experience provided to students.

### **8.4 Recruitment, development and retention of talented staff**

High-quality teaching and learning is dependent upon the professionalism of staff. The internal success model as part of the *North-West University Strategy 2015 to 2025*, indicates that the University will attract, support and develop academic staff “with an open mind-set, critical in thinking, respectful of the right to freedom of expression, commitment to and respect for the full scope of diversity, scholarship, commitment to students, active citizenry,

good work-ethic, high-performance individuals (wholeness, results-centred, appropriate conduct, enthusiastic, team-oriented, relationship competent, personal leader, self-developing, effective follower, creative, change mind-set)” (Internal Success Model, element 8). The internal success model defines similar qualities for support staff (Internal Success Model 9).

The NWU will use the following strategies to contribute to the development of these qualities in its academic and professional support staff:

- Recruitment and selection strategies, as well as conditions of service and an institutional culture, that attract a talented and diverse staff complement, to ensure that students receive an outstanding student learning experience in which they are exposed to a diversity of expertise, ideas, styles and approaches.
- Induction programmes that help staff to understand their roles and responsibilities in the area of teaching and learning, and to develop their capacity in designing and sustaining meaningful learning experiences.
- Accessible and relevant opportunities for capacity development that:
  - Provide academic and professional support staff members with a sound educational underpinning,
  - Allow them progressively to deepen their knowledge and competence in specific aspects of teaching and learning, and
  - Help them to design and provide learning experiences that develop students’ capacity to engage with disciplinary content as well as broader societal challenges
- Effective developmental and performance management systems within academic schools and faculties, and relevant professional support units, which allow staff to define and monitor the achievement of their personal development goals, and to identify their capacity development needs.
- Appropriate reward and recognition systems for teaching excellence, and scholarship in teaching and learning.
- Creation of an atmosphere of intellectual excitement, through the promotion of scholarly work on teaching and learning in order to capture and foster reflective practice and innovation that shapes programme design and delivery and the learning environment.

### **8.5 Access, retention and success**

In order to address the realities of the South African higher education system, as delineated in section three of the Strategy, the NWU will recruit a student body, which is heterogeneous in terms of age, gender, social class, disability status, ethnic profile, nationality, educational background, and mode of study, consisting of high achievers as well as those with high potential to succeed. It will use a coordinated strategy for access, retention and success, which recognises the impact of educational disadvantage on students’ academic and social acculturation, to ensure that all students can benefit from the opportunities provided by its academic programmes. The following strategies will be used to support access, retention and success in all forms of educational delivery:

- Well researched marketing and recruitment strategies and materials that provide students with accurate and useful information on study options, financial aid, adjustment to university life, and career choices.
- Programmes and projects that broaden access to those learners with the potential to benefit from NWU programmes and which are designed to assist in improving entry level

students' knowledge, understanding and skills in various fields of study such as mathematics, science and languages. These initiatives include foundation (extended) and preparatory programmes and collaborative projects, some in partnership with schools.

- Effective orientation programmes, at an institutional and faculty level, that familiarise students with the demands of their learning programmes, the academic environment at the university, and the range of available support services.
- Interventions that assist students to successfully manage their transition to university study by means of: i) effective systems for testing their levels of academic and language literacy; ii) the provision of guidance on placement within study programmes; and iii) programmes and facilities for the development of academic literacy, including competencies in reading, writing and information technology.
- Timely and helpful feedback on assessment tasks that clarifies what good performance is, and allows students to assess their progress in mastering the learning outcomes of programmes and modules.
- Reward and incentive systems, such as dean's merit lists and top achiever awards (which include financial incentives), that recognise the performance of high performing students, and serve as a motivation to excel academically.
- The effective use of systems, including learning analytics, to profile students and track their learning achievements in order to: i) identify at-risk students in a timely manner; ii) monitor student persistence on a regular basis; and iii) develop an evidence base for programme planning and student support strategies.
- Provision of effective support to students during their study programmes, including tutorials, mentoring and supplemental instruction programmes.
- Provision of an integrated, flexible and accessible student support network (academic and non-academic) of high quality to enable students to achieve to their full potential by addressing their diverse learning needs.
- Dynamic careers services that help students to enhance their employability skills through engagement with employers and alumni, access to relevant careers information, and support in the job application process.
- Use of various modes of delivery and innovative teaching and learning designs so that students are provided with flexible opportunities for learning by means of on-and off-campus education, as well as a hybrid mode of delivery.

## **8.6 Curriculum transformation and renewal**

North-West University will engage in a systematic process of curriculum transformation and renewal in order to equip its graduates to address the challenges of twenty-first century society. To ensure that learning programmes are coherently designed, intellectually credible and relevant the following strategies are pursued:

- NWU's programme and qualification mix is designed to provide for an appropriate balance between professional and general-formative programmes to meet national development needs.
- Students receive an in-depth orientation to their fields of study, as well as a broader understanding of contemporary societal challenges.
- Curricula provide an orientation to various paradigms of thought and explanatory systems including, where appropriate, indigenous knowledge systems, so that NWU

students and graduates are introduced to different intellectual traditions, and are able to substantiate their worldview and the principles that inform their conduct.

- The design of programmes support the learning styles and needs of a diverse student body, by involving students in a range of individual and collaborative learning and assessment activities, so that they can engage as learners who progressively assume responsibility for their own learning.
- In keeping with NWU's graduate attributes, curricula are designed to help students develop the knowledge, attitudes and skills that will enable them to lead purposeful lives in the service of the science collegiate, their profession and civil society.
- Programmes are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are relevant and up to date with the latest scientific developments – this is underpinned by appropriate disciplinary benchmarks, as well as feedback from students, employers, alumni, and professional and statutory bodies (as appropriate).

### **8.7 An enabling learning environment**

The NWU will create an enabling learning environment for its staff and students on all campuses and in all delivery modes through:

- The establishment of a vibrant and inclusive social context that supports a diversity of ideas and critical exchange.
- Creation of an information rich learning environment, which may include faculty-based resource centres, in which members of academic staff support students to engage with appropriate information and learning resources to solve problems creatively. This environment includes the provision of high-quality learning materials to support interactive learning processes in which students develop their capacity for self-directed learning.
- Systematic renewal of the libraries to provide effective spaces, facilities and resources to support individual and collaborative learning and research, and a culture of reading amongst students, and to support the diverse needs of students at all levels of study.
- Adequate and accessible ICT facilities for staff and students, including the provision of teaching and learning media in all teaching venues, in order to ensure that students are able to engage in technology-enabled learning in an effective manner.
- Innovative development and deployment of ICT infrastructure, systems and applications to support teaching and learning activities in all modes of delivery, and in all teaching and learning spaces. This includes the dynamic development of the learning management system, platforms for the development of electronic study guides and the learning resources repository, as well as capabilities with respect to learning analytics and electronic assessment, to support all teaching and learning activities and to provide effective opportunities for engagement between members of academic staff and students.
- Participation in the open educational resources movement, through the use and development of open educational resources and open source systems to enhance access for staff and students to an extensive range of high quality and affordable learning resources, in paper-based and digital format.
- The development, planning and maintenance of physical and virtual teaching, learning and social spaces, inside and outside classrooms to support teaching and learning activities. This includes the provision of well-equipped learning support centres to support students who study by means of open distance learning.

- Effective administrative and logistical coordination of support and services provided to students who study by means of the distance mode of delivery.

## Appendix: Glossary of Terms

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### ACRONYMS

Acronyms	
ADS	Academic Development and Support services
CESM	Classification of Educational Subject Matter
CHE	Council on Higher Education
DHET	South African National Department of Higher Education and Training
DVC	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
EPE	External Programme Evaluation
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HEQSF	Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework, a subset of the South African National Qualifications Framework
ICAS	NWU Institutional Committee for Academic Standards, a standing committee of Senate
ICT	Information Communications Technology
IPE	Internal Programme Evaluation
MIS	Management Information System
NQF	National Qualifications Framework (South Africa)
NWU	North-West University
PQM	Programme and Qualification Mix
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority.



## DEFINITIONS

<b>Terminology</b>	
Academic planning	<p>Planning to ensure a dynamic and sustained academic programme offering. This spans the institutional planning, interaction with the DHET on both the PQM and the three year enrolment planning and monitoring, as well as academic qualification and programme planning and development and the monitoring thereof (see also <i>Academic qualification and programme planning and development</i>).</p>
Academic programme	<p>A planned and structured set of modules, comprising teaching, learning and assessment opportunities, leading to the achievement of the desired learning outcomes, culminating in the mastery of programme outcomes and demonstration of required graduate attributes.</p> <p>A programme consists of majors or specialisations linked to a qualification and other modules as prescribed in the qualification standard.</p> <p>One or more programmes may lead to the same qualification. Multiple programmes that link to the same qualification should be aligned with its purpose, outcomes and assessment criteria, and have the same credit structure as the qualification standard. In many, but not all, cases, such programmes will have a common core that denotes the nature of the qualification, though there may be different combinations of majors or disciplinary focal areas to denote each of the different programmes.</p> <p>Naming of academic programmes must conform to the HEQSF prescribed naming conventions (see also <i>Naming conventions</i>).</p>
Academic qualification	<p>The HEQSF defines a qualification as the formal recognition and certification of learning achievement awarded by an accredited institution.</p> <p>It is a degree/diploma or certificate programme that has been officially recognised and registered at a particular level on the HEQSF and offered as part of the NWU PQM.</p>

	<p>Naming of academic qualifications must conform to the HEQSF prescribed naming conventions (see <i>Naming conventions</i>).</p>
<p>Academic qualification and programme management</p>	<p>Activities executed by managers and academics in faculties and support structures to prepare for and participate in all aspects of teaching and learning, including delivery of all core aspects of the (a) academic qualifications and programmes lifecycle, and (b) the student lifecycle. This implies ensuring student access and success through the design and all aspects of delivery of programmes , including (but is not limited to) –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• selection and admission of students to the programme</li> <li>• development of study materials (including provision for online learning)</li> <li>• providing and ensuring provision of student support through interaction at the group and individual levels</li> <li>• planning of assessment to ensure appropriate assessment against the approved outcomes and assessment criteria</li> <li>• taking part in the actual assessment, ensuring adherence to moderation requirements</li> <li>• providing feedback to students on formative and summative assessment</li> </ul>
<p>Academic qualification and programme planning and development</p>	<p>Activities executed by managers and academics in faculties and support structures to contribute to:</p> <p>1) The development of new academic qualifications and programmes to be considered by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– the Institutional Committee for Academic Standard for institutional approval, as well as</li> <li>– the DHET for approval,</li> <li>– the HEQC for accreditation and</li> <li>– SAQA for registration</li> </ul> <p>to become part of the University’s approved PQM.</p> <p>2) Changes to existing programmes and modules to be</p>

	<p>considered by the Institutional Committee for Academic Standards for internal approval.</p> <p>This key phase in the programme lifecycle includes the approval of core aspects of the programme design, including programme and module outcomes and assessment practices and criteria.</p> <p>Academic qualification and programme planning feeds into the more comprehensive academic planning process of the NWU.</p>
Academic qualification and programme review	<p>Monitoring and review activities executed by managers and academics in faculties and support structures to regularly review and improve the quality of academic qualifications and programmes at the University through its quality management activities which include internal and external reviews and evaluations, and regular consideration of the outcomes of internal and external feedback as well as of the assessment of programme and student success by the lecturer.</p>
Administrative and logistical coordination for distance education	<p>Administrative and logistical responsibility for qualifications and programme offered by means of the distance mode of delivery. This includes contact sessions, ongoing learner support, distribution of study materials, assignments and examinations, assistance at invigilation, and enrolment of students.</p>
Assessment	<p>Preparation for and management of interaction during evaluation of students' learning achievement by means of formative and summative evaluation to ensure that the programme or module outcomes are achieved. This includes the provision of timely and appropriate feedback to students.</p> <p>This core academic process provides an important touchpoint for feedback and interaction between student and lecturer.</p>
Blended learning	<p>Innovative <i>teaching and learning design</i> that combines the best of face-to-face and online teaching and learning approaches. It integrates thoughtfully selected complementary teaching and learning methodologies and technologies, based on educational merit as determined by factors such as the pedagogical context,</p>

	<p>the nature of the discipline and the learning material, and the profile of the students, so that the strengths of each are blended into a unique learning experience. It is a fundamental redesign that transforms the structure of, and approach to, teaching and learning embedded in a range of delivery modalities (based on the definition of Garrison, D.R., &amp; Vaughan, N.D. (2007); Blended learning in higher education: Framework, principles, and guidelines. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.</p>
Community of inquiry	<p>“A community of inquiry is a cohesive and interactive community of learners whose purpose is to critically analyze, construct and confirm worthwhile knowledge. The three key elements for a viable community of inquiry are social presence, teaching presence and cognitive presence. A community of inquiry appropriately integrates these elements and provides a means to guide the design of deep and meaningful learning experiences.”</p> <p>Garrison, D.R., &amp; Vaughan, N.D. (2007); Blended learning in higher education: Framework, principles, and guidelines. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass; p 9.</p>
Contact mode of delivery	<p>The presentation of the composite modules of a qualification or programme at an NWU site of delivery. This involves attendance of lectures, tutorials, seminars, practicals, supervision, or other forms of required work on an NWU campus, in order to promote personal interaction between students and NWU academic staff. The student thus attends contact opportunities on one of the three campuses of the NWU.</p>
Contact sessions	<p>Scheduled interaction between academic staff, including lecturers, tutors and demonstrators, and class groups in a physical teaching venue (lecture rooms, laboratories, clinical settings etc.), including opportunities created by NWU to provide additional support to students enrolled for the distance mode of delivery. Such support takes the form of learning support sessions at learning support centres country wide.</p>
Continuing education	<p>Any intervention through teaching and learning that is</p>

	<p>not listed on the NWU PQM as a formal academic programme or qualification, that is offered for free or for a fee or other form of compensation, or for which a NWU certificate or other form of recognition bearing the emblem of the NWU is issued. The term includes short courses, short learning programmes, workshops meeting the requirements of the definition, continuing professional development offerings, master classes and university certificate courses and any other existing or future type of non-formal education. Continuing education is explicitly classified as core business of the NWU.</p> <p>The Institutional Committee for Academic Standards provides approves the design of such offerings and a Dean is accountable for ensuring that there is appropriate academic oversight for each instance of the offering.</p> <p>Continuing education offerings do not lead to formal qualifications and naming conventions reserved for formal academic qualifications and formal academic programmes may not be used for continuing education offerings.</p> <p>Participants in continuing education are not enrolled students and are not referred to as students. Similarly, certificates are not awarded at a graduation ceremony.</p>
Credit	<p>Numerical value assigned to the notional hours of learning constituting a qualification registered on the HEQSF, where 1 credit equals 10 notional study hours, and where 120 credits are approximately equivalent to 1 year of full-time study. A credit value is always expressed as “X credits at NQF/HEQSF level Y”, and both the credit and level must be mentioned at all times (a reference to levels without credits may be misleading, and may be viewed as fraudulent).</p>
Curriculum	<p>“Curriculum refers to both the process and substance of an educational program. It comprises the purpose, design, conduct and evaluation of educational experiences...The organization of curricula is defined by educational philosophy, the structure and content of the knowledge imparted, and the institutional context and climate. Effective curricula have coherence and</p>

	<p>explicit definitions of aims and standards of attainment. They accomplish their aims through sequence and structure of the learning experiences to facilitate student learning and development.”</p> <p>(Gaff, J.G., Ratcliff L., &amp; Associates. 1997. Handbook of the Undergraduate Curriculum. A Comprehensive Guide to Purposes, Structures, Practices, and Change. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, pp. 12-13).</p> <p>Drawing on this definition, the concept of curriculum is defined as the planned, delivered and assessed teaching and learning experiences that students are exposed to, with a view to achieving the desired outcomes of the qualification and its linked programmes, as well as the programme’s composite modules, in terms of required knowledge, competencies and attributes.</p>
Distance education	<p>Distance education refers to a set of teaching and learning strategies (or educational methods) used to overcome spatial and/or temporal separation between educators and students. This collection of methods provides students with the opportunity to study towards a qualification without attending classes frequently or for long periods. It aims to create a quality teaching and learning environment using an appropriate combination of technologies, media, tutorial support, peer group discussion, and practical sessions (DHET Policy for the Provision of Distance Education in South African Universities in the Context of an Integrated Post-School System, May 2014, adapted).</p> <p>In the NWU context distance education is characterised by learner-centred education which may include various forms of support to off-campus students. Such support may include contact sessions where a tutor facilitates and guides the learning process during learning support sessions, as well as interaction through the written word and other appropriate media (e.g. e-learning), a dedicated support platform in the form of the learning management system, online writing and reading support, and a call centre.</p> <p>(See also <i>Distance mode of delivery</i>.)</p>

Distance mode of delivery	<p>The presentation of the composite modules of a qualification or programme to students who do not study at an NWU site of delivery. The interaction with NWU academic staff or NWU appointed facilitators/tutors and the presentation of the composite modules of a qualification or programme are undertaken remotely through the use of teaching technology, various forms of correspondence, or the internet.</p> <p>The student may have the option of attending facilitation opportunities at NWU learning support centres. (see also <i>Distance education</i>)</p> <p>Explicit DHET and HEQC approval of the distance mode of delivery is required for a programme to be offered thus.</p>
Flexi learning	<p>A time-tabling arrangement that makes special provision for students to participate in contact sessions either on- or off-campus (thus contact or distance mode), but in accordance with an agreed upon timetable other than the one applicable to full-time enrolled students.</p>
Graduate attributes	<p>The personal qualities, and academic, professional and practical knowledge and skills, that the NWU values, and supports its students to develop in a progressive manner throughout their studies by means of the formal curriculum as well as their total learning experience.</p> <p>Graduate attributes are defined in the NWU Teaching and Learning Strategy, and tailored further per programme design, taking into account the specific requirements of statutory and professional bodies, to be aligned with the exit level outcomes of a particular offering.</p>
Institutional Committee for Academic Standards	<p>A standing committee of Institutional Senate with the specific mandate to oversee the quality of the NWU academic qualifications and programme offering and the related management processes.</p>
Learning support centre	<p>A centre for delivering academic, administrative and logistical support to the NWU in respect of its distance learning students, including provision of contact</p>

	<p>sessions and access to appropriate technology in support of teaching-learning as needed for distance delivery of a specific programme. Students who study by means of a hybrid mode of delivery may also make use of learning support centres.</p>
Level descriptors	<p>The level descriptors, as defined by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) state the generic learning achievements required of a student at each of the NQF/HEQSF levels of a qualification, irrespective of the qualification type or specialisation. The SAQA level descriptors guidelines are used in the development of qualification, programme and module outcomes at the NQF/HEQSF level concerned (see SAQA: Level Descriptors for the National Qualifications Framework. November 2012).</p>
Learning Analytics	<p>“The interpretation of a wide range of data produced by and gathered on behalf of students in order to assess academic progress, predict future performance, and spot potential issues.”</p> <p>Van Barneveld, A., Arnold, K. E., Campbell, J. P., 2012. Analytics in Higher Education: Establishing a common language. Educause, ELI paper 1, Jan. 2012.</p>
Learning Outcomes	<p>Statements of what a learner is expected to know, understand, and/or be able to demonstrate after completion of a process of learning within an academic programme or module.</p>
Module	<p>Fundamental component of an academic qualification or programme, comprising a number of credits representing the notional hours constituting the various teaching and learning activities included in the module.</p>
Multimodal education	<p>Drawing on the DHET’s published policy on distance education, NWU defines multimodal education as the mediation of academic programmes and modules either by a contact-or distance mode of delivery, or by a hybrid mode of delivery, in which use is made of a mix of the contact and distance delivery modes (such as the block-release mode). Often equivalent forms of the same programme may be offered through a combination of delivery modes (DHET Policy for the Provision of Distance Education in South African</p>



	Universities in the Context of an Integrated Post-School System, May 2014).
Naming conventions (academic qualifications and academic programmes)	<p>The rules for the naming of a qualification are prescribed per qualification type by the HEQSF.</p> <p>A qualification title consists of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the qualification type (e.g. diploma, bachelor’s degree, master’s degree etc.)</li> <li>• plus either a broad field of study (designator) and/or a more specific specialisation within that field of study (qualifier), based on the specific HEQSF qualification design rules for the qualification type.</li> </ul> <p>Note that a qualification can either be generic in nature with only a designator to indicate focus (e.g. Bachelor of Commerce, Bachelor of Science), or more specific in focus with both a designator and a qualifier (e.g. Bachelor of Commerce in Chartered Accountancy, Bachelor of Science in Information Technology). In order to use a qualifier, at least 50% of the minimum total credits of the qualification, and at least 50% of the minimum credits at the exit level must be in the field of specialisation denoted by the qualifier.</p> <p>A NWU qualification may have one or more academic programmes linked to it. Such a further specialisation or narrower description does not form part of the qualification title, and may only be added to the programme title using “with” (not “of” which is reserved for the designator, or “in” which is reserved for the qualifier).</p>
New academic qualification or programme	<p>An academic qualification or programme –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- that is in the planning phase to be offered for the first time; or</li> <li>- has originated through changing the curriculum of an existing qualification or programme to such an extent that the purpose and/or and outcomes are substantially different to the original by virtue of 50% or more of the credit value, curriculum composition and content; or</li> <li>- is an existing qualification or programme of which a</li> </ul>

	<p>field of study has changed so that a new CESM is required; or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- is an existing qualification or programme for which a new mode of delivery (contact/distance) is applied for; or</li> <li>- is an existing qualification or programme which the NWU wishes to offer on another site of delivery (campus) than the qualification or programme as approved; or</li> <li>- is a previously existing qualification or programme that was not offered for a period of three years in a particular mode of delivery or on a specific site of delivery and for which permission for the particular mode and/or site has therefore been withdrawn and removed from the PQM of the NWU.</li> </ul> <p>A new programme may only be published in the calendar after successful completion of the necessary external processes.</p>
Open distance learning	<p>Open distance learning refers to a delivery mode focusing on enhanced accessibility to education and training, limiting or eliminating barriers such as time, place and pace of learning. NWU promotes open distance learning by allowing students to enrol at any time, though they are subject to specific admission requirements as determined by the Institutional Admissions Committee, fixed dates for the commencement of academic programmes, a minimum and maximum duration for the completion of the programme, and specific assessment opportunities.</p>
Open Educational Resources (OER)	<p>“Open Educational Resources (OER) are teaching, learning and research materials in any medium that reside in the public domain and have been released under an open licence that permits access, use, repurposing, reuse and redistribution by others with no or limited restrictions” (2012 World Open Educational Resources (OER) Congress. UNESCO, PARIS, June 20-22, 2012).</p> <p>OER include curriculum, maps, course material, textbooks, streaming videos, multimedia applications, podcasts, and any other materials that have been</p>

	<p>designed for use in teaching and learning that are freely available to educators and students, without an accompanying need to pay royalties or licence fees. OER is not synonymous with online learning or e-learning. Openly licensed content can be produced in any medium, text, video, audio, or computer-based multimedia (DHET Policy for the Provision of Distance Education in South African Universities in the Context of an Integrated Post-School System, May 2014, adapted).</p>
Qualification standard	<p>A formal statement that indicates how the purpose and rationale of the qualification, and the NQF level at which it is awarded, are represented in the required qualification outcomes, curriculum composition, assessment contexts and graduate attributes that are typical for the award of the qualification.</p>
Scholarship of teaching and learning	<p>The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) involves post-secondary practitioners conducting inquiry into teaching and learning processes in higher education contexts. It consists of more than scholarly approaches to teaching and learning, requiring that academic staff frame and systematically investigate questions related to student learning, and make their work available for review and public dissemination through presentations, performance, or publications' (Mckinney, K. 2006: 39; Hutchings, P. &amp; Shulman, L. 1999: 13; Pool, G. &amp; Simmons, N. 2013). The overall intention of SoTL is thus to improve student learning and enhance educational quality through evidence-based and methodologically sound research.</p>
Self-directed learning	<p>Self-directedness can be defined in terms of the amount of responsibility the student accepts for his or her own learning (Fisher, King &amp; Teague, 2001). Self-directed learning is described by Knowles (1975) as a process by which individuals take the initiative, with or without the assistance of others in diagnosing their own learning needs, formulating their own learning goals, identifying own resources for their learning, choosing and implementing their own learning strategies and evaluating their learning. (Source: Faculty of Education Sciences, Potchefstroom Campus, North-West University: Guidelines for lecturers for embedding Diversity, Transformative curriculum</p>

	making and Blended Learning into a Self-directed Learning environment. November 2014)
Site of delivery	<p>Physical location where a qualification or a programme is offered.</p> <p>The three existing NWU campuses are the only approved NWU sites of delivery.</p> <p>While a learning support centre provides administrative and logistical support to students, it is not a site of delivery and should not be regarded as such.</p>
Student support	<p>A broad array of educational strategies, including tutoring, supplemental instruction, mentoring, academic advising, and academic literacy development, provided to individual students or groups of students in order to support academic acculturation, retention and success.</p> <p>For students who study by means of the distance mode, student support may additionally include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of all study material by NWU in electronic (including provision of compact disks) or hard-copy format as agreed per programme.</li> <li>• Contact sessions facilitated by NWU facilitators on a regular and a countrywide basis, as well as at vacation schools to students enrolled for the distance mode.</li> <li>• A call centre to assist with academic and administrative matters.</li> <li>• Study letters.</li> <li>• Occasional letters answering questions frequently asked by students.</li> <li>• Examination guidelines.</li> <li>• Regular training of facilitators at learning support centres, including online or other technology enhanced training.</li> <li>• Media centres.</li> <li>• Ongoing assistance to students.</li> <li>• Computer facilitation for e-learning.</li> </ul>

Study guide	A document prepared for a specific mode of delivery by the academic staff of NWU or by a subject expert approved and contracted for the purpose by regular academic staff of NWU.
Transformative learning	<p>Drawing on the work of Mezirow, Taylor, and others, transformative learning may be understood as the process by means of which learners change the manner in which they interpret the world, by making sense of their experiences, and revising their interpretations of experiences. The process of sense-making involves the critical capacity to question the epistemic assumptions that inform their existing frames of reference or “meaning schemes” (mind-sets or worldviews), becoming aware of the sources, nature and consequences of established beliefs and actions. This may lead to the refinement or elaboration of a frame of reference, or the acquisition of new frames of reference. Through processes of critical reflection and participatory discourse, learners develop frames of reference or meaning schemes that are more inclusive, discriminating, open and susceptible to change, and submit these frames of reference to a discursive assessment of their justification and/ or an empirical assessment of their truth claims. In this manner, learners develop frames of reference or meaning schemes that can serve as the basis for taking reflective action on the basis of validated beliefs.</p> <p>(Mezirow, J. 2009. Transformative learning theory, in Mezirow, J, Taylor, E W &amp; Associates . Transformative Learning in Practice. Insights from Community, Workplace and Higher Education. San-Fransisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.</p>
Tutor/facilitator	A member of the academic staff of NWU, or a person with the required qualifications and competencies and appointed by NWU through the relevant faculty board in line with Senate approved rules, who is responsible for all aspects of the learning support of a group of students assigned to him or her, reporting into the academic line management for the discipline concerned.