MANCOSA

Learning and Teaching Policy

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1. Preamble

This Learning and Teaching policy outlines MANCOSA's commitment to fostering an environment conducive to effective online learning, ensuring the highest standards of academic excellence and promoting innovation in learning and teaching methodologies. It reflects a dedication to shaping a dynamic and relevant educational philosophy, prioritising holistic student success that encompasses personal development, student wellness, social responsibility and the cultivation of a global mindset.

This commitment aligns with national educational policies, including the National Development Plan 2030 (NDP) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as well as national legislation and guidelines such as the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2013) and the Policy for the Provision of Distance Education in South African Universities (DHET, 2014). The policy emphasises a student-centred, flexible and accessible learning environment, aligning curriculum design, teaching practices and assessment methodologies with industry demands and employability standards.

This Learning and Teaching Policy guides MANCOSA's unwavering commitment to pioneering transformative education. To ensure coherence and compliance, it must be read in conjunction with the following institutional policies and frameworks:

- Academic Honesty and Plagiarism Policy
- Assessment Policy
- Curriculum Transformation Policy
- Disability and Accessibility Policy
- Institutional Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Emerging Technologies Framework
- Institutional Quality Assurance Framework
- Language Policy
- Library and Information Resources Policy
- POPIA and Data Governance Policy
- Records Management Policy
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Transfer Policy
- Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) and Work Readiness Framework

2. Purpose and Vision

This policy provides a comprehensive framework to guide educational practices within MANCOSA's online distance education. It ensures alignment with the institutional mission of "Education for a better world for all" and its strategic goals and is designed to cultivate key graduate attributes in all students.

The key aims are to:

- **Foster a Student-Centric Environment:** Promote an accessible, inclusive, and supportive experience by offering flexible learning pathways, focusing on diverse student needs, and building a strong online community.
- **Ensure Academic Excellence:** Standardise effective pedagogical approaches tailored for online delivery, utilising current and relevant learning resources to create engaging educational experiences.
- **Uphold Quality and Integrity:** Implement fair assessment methods and establish mechanisms for continuous improvement through stakeholder feedback, while ensuring compliance with all quality assurance, ethical, and legal standards.
- **Integrate Technology and Innovation:** Effectively integrate technology and innovative tools to enhance the online learning process and adapt to the changing educational landscape.
- **Support Faculty and Staff:** Encourage professional development and scholarly research in online education to advance teaching competencies and practices.
- **Promote Community Engagement:** Integrate service-learning opportunities within the curriculum to connect learning with real-world community challenges.

3. Definitions in the MANCOSA Context

The following definitions clarify key institutional and regulatory terms:

- National Development Plan (NDP): South Africa's government framework to reduce poverty, inequality and unemployment by 2030.
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): United Nations global goals for sustainable development.
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA: International accessibility standards ensuring digital content is usable by all, including persons with disabilities.

4. Guiding Principles

MANCOSA's Learning and Teaching Policy is grounded in principles that ensure excellence, inclusivity and innovation:

- **Academic Excellence**: High standards in curriculum, teaching, assessment and continuous improvement.
- **Accessibility & Inclusivity**: Equitable access for diverse students, removing barriers to participation.
- **Relevance**: Curriculum aligned with student needs, the job market and societal priorities.
- **Student-Centredness**: Prioritising learner engagement, active participation and collaboration.
- **Flexibility**: Multiple modes, pacing and assessments tailored to distance learners.
- **Decolonisation & Indigenous Knowledge**: Integration of diverse epistemologies for inclusivity and balance.
- **Sustainability**: Embedding SDGs and preparing students to address global challenges.
- **Innovation**: Adoption of new pedagogies, technologies and creative practices.
- **Ethics & Integrity**: Upholding honesty, responsible academic conduct and ethical use of AI.
- **Continuous Improvement**: Data-driven evaluation, feedback and iterative enhancements.
- **Collaboration & Partnerships**: Engaging with industry, academia and technology partners to strengthen practice.

5. Scope

This policy articulates MANCOSA's commitment to creating appropriate, meaningful learning opportunities and experiences for a diverse student body across various programmes and courses. The scope encompasses:

- **Programme and Course Applicability**: Inclusive and applicable to all academic programmes offered by MANCOSA, spanning undergraduate and postgraduate levels.
- **Stakeholder Inclusivity**: Relevant to a broad spectrum of individuals involved in teaching or supporting student learning, including academic staff (lecturers, programme developers, markers, moderators, teaching-only faculty), administrative staff (library personnel, technologists,), third parties (adjunct faculty, contracted workers, collaborative partners) and students.
- **Institution-Wide Decision-Making**: Provides a framework for coordinated decision-making regarding learning and teaching activities across various programmes, ensuring consistency and alignment with MANCOSA's overarching mission and values.

6. Teaching and Learning Framework

MANCOSA's Teaching, Assessment, Learning, and Curriculum (TALC) Framework integrates contemporary theories and instructional design to create a transformative online educational experience. This framework is built on the following core principles:

- Quality-Assured Design: All programmes adhere to stringent institutional and regulatory quality standards. Courses are designed to be immersive and engaging, fostering critical thinking through proven educational philosophies like constructivism and connectivism.
- Flexible and Engaging Delivery: A blend of synchronous and asynchronous methods provides flexibility for diverse student needs. Innovative strategies are used to create interactive, collaborative, and real-world learning experiences in the virtual environment.
- Robust Support and Resources: Students are supported by a state-of-the-art Learning Management System (LMS) and a technology-enhanced online library. Facilitators maintain a strong online presence, offering guidance and responding to queries within 48 hours on workdays.
- Clear Structure and Compliance: The student workload is clearly defined, with each credit representing 10 notional hours. The use of Open Educational Resources (OER) is encouraged, and all materials comply with copyright law.

- Research-Embedded Teaching: At the postgraduate level, teaching is actively integrated with research to foster scholarly exploration and mentorship.

7. Curriculum Transformation and Development Impact

MANCOSA accepts its responsibility to align its curriculum to the changing landscape in higher education, ensuring it meets this prerogative. The curriculum transformation process is designed to reflect the unique needs of MANCOSA's student profile and aims to foster inclusivity, equity and excellence in education.

7.1. Graduate Attributes, WIL, Work-Readiness, Employability & SDGs

- Graduate Attributes: Communication, critical thinking, AI/data literacy, ethical awareness, community engagement, cultural intelligence, sustainability, leadership, entrepreneurship, adaptability and resilience are embedded in modules and assessed through rubrics and reflective tasks.
- Work-Integrated Learning (WIL): Embedded through simulated industry case studies and applied tasks aligned with HEQSF models (problem-based, project-based, workplace-directed).
- Work-Readiness: Focus on adaptability, collaboration and problem-solving, supported by career workshops, networking and mentorship.
- Employability: Guided by Programme Advisory Committees and industry input, with regular updates to skills such as digital literacy and analytical thinking.
- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): Integrated into teaching, projects and case studies, fostering engagement with issues like climate change, equity and responsible consumption.

7.2. New Programme Development

Programmes are developed collaboratively across departments, with early integration of graduate attributes, WIL and employability. Programme Advisory Committees (PACs) of academics, alumni, students and industry leaders ensure relevance. All new programmes are evaluated against CHE, DHET and SAQA requirements.

7.3. Articulation, RPL and Credit Transfer

Programmes support clear progression pathways. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is applied for access and credit transfer in line with SAQA and institutional policy, with transparent processes communicated at admission and orientation.

8. Assessment Guidelines

MANCOSA recognizes the transformative power of technology in shaping contemporary learning experiences and provides clear guidelines for designing, conducting and evaluating assessments in online courses, ensuring quality, academic integrity and fostering innovation.
MANCOSA's assessment practices align with the CHE, SAQA and DHET frameworks, ensuring fairness, validity, reliability, and integrity.

8.1 Designing Assessments

- Assessments must align with module outcomes and NQF level descriptors.
- A variety of formats (essays, case studies, quizzes, projects, orals, portfolios, online summative assessments) are used to assess critical thinking, application and professional skills.
- Accessibility and inclusivity are ensured through universal design and reasonable accommodations.
- Formative tasks support learning through feedback; summative tasks confirm competence.

8.2 Conducting Assessments

- Assessments are administered via secure platforms (MANCOSAConnect, Student Comms App).
- Student authentication is mandatory through logins, ID checks and oral verification when required.
- Online proctoring and integrity checks are applied where appropriate.
- Students receive clear instructions, timelines and technical support.

8.3 Evaluating Assessments

- Rubrics and marking criteria are communicated in advance.
- Markers provide constructive, unbiased feedback.

- Regular training ensures fair, reliable and consistent evaluation.

8.4 Academic Integrity

- Proctoring safeguard integrity.
- Students must follow referencing conventions and ethical writing practices.
- Use of generative AI is prohibited unless explicitly authorised in the brief; where permitted, disclosure of tools, usage and sources is mandatory. Misuse constitutes misconduct under the Student Code of Conduct.

8.5 Assessment Types

- A balanced mix of formative and summative assessments is applied: presentations, WIL portfolios, group/individual assignments, online quizzes, case studies, transactional exercises and OSAs.
- Innovative technology-enabled assessments are encouraged.

8.6 Moderation and External Examining

- Internal moderation ensures fairness, reliability, and alignment to outcomes.
- Representative samples across grade bands are moderated.
- Exit-level modules undergo external moderation, with reports tabled at the Assessment Verification and Certification (AVC) Committee.

8.7 Appeals and Records

- Students may request re-marking or lodge appeals per the Academic Appeals Procedure.
- Assessment records, moderation reports, and examiner reports are retained per the applicable policies and regulatory requirements

9. Technology Integration and AI Adoption

MANCOSA is committed to integrating digital technologies into its learning environment to strengthen student-centred transformation and foster a connected academic community.

9.1 Strategic Technology Integration

- Maintain a reliable, secure and scalable technological infrastructure (LMS, connectivity, software and hardware).

- Regularly assess and upgrade systems to meet evolving academic needs.
- Pilot new technologies to evaluate usability, scalability and alignment with educational outcomes.

9.2 Emerging Technologies and AI

- Embed digital transformation and AI principles across the curriculum to prepare students for the future of work.
- Use AI to support flexible learning, streamline administration and strengthen academic integrity (e.g., plagiarism detection, assessment analytics).
- Align AI adoption with the Innovation, ensuring it advances academic excellence, curriculum innovation and sustainability.

9.3 Acceptable Use of AI

- **Staff**: May use AI in course design, accessibility, formative feedback, and analytics, with verification for accuracy, bias management and compliance with POPIA.
- **Students**: May only use AI in assessments when explicitly authorised, with disclosure of tools and usage.

All AI activity must be guided by the Institutional AI and Emerging Technologies Framework and uphold ethical, responsible practice.

10. Student Support Services

MANCOSA is committed to providing holistic support that addresses the academic, personal and professional needs of its diverse distance-learning community.

10.1 Academic Support

- Students receive guidance through academic advising, online tutoring and timely, constructive feedback on assessments.
- The **Proficiency Centre** supplements academic support with short, self-paced online modules on research, academic writing, referencing, digital literacy, responsible AI use, study planning, time management, numeracy and wellbeing.

- Students are referred to these modules based on diagnostics, early formative tasks or academic referrals, with progress tracked through completion and success rates.

10.2 Counselling Services

- Confidential counselling services are available to support emotional and psychological well-being.
- A stigma-free environment is promoted to encourage students to seek support.

10.3 Technical Assistance

- A dedicated team provides assistance with LMS access, connectivity and other technology-related issues, ensuring seamless online learning.

10.4 Community and Belonging

- MANCOSA fosters a sense of community through online forums, virtual meetups and collaborative projects, enhancing peer interaction and support.

10.5 Wellness Support

- Mental health, stress management and work-life balance resources are embedded in the LMS.
- Virtual workshops and self-care resources promote holistic student success.

10.6 Mentoring

- Structured mentoring connects students with academics, alumni and industry mentors to support career exploration, professional conduct and employability.

10.7 Empowerment Initiatives

- Leadership workshops, empowerment programmes and networking events strengthen resilience, adaptability and confidence for life beyond academia.

10.8 Service Levels and Escalation

- **Helpdesk queries**: first response within 4 business hours; resolution within 1–2 working days.
- **Academic queries**: acknowledged within 24 hours; resolved within 1–2 working days.
- Escalations progress from module facilitator → Academic Programme Leader → School Manager with updates provided to students.

10.9 Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT)

- The LoLT is English.
- Students requiring support receive academic literacy, writing, and study skills assistance, in line with the Language Policy.



11. Academic Staff Development

The Learning and Teaching Policy prioritizes the continuous professional development of academic staff, ensuring a robust framework that aligns with innovative teaching methodologies.

11.1. Training in Online Pedagogy and Course Design

Provisions for academic training in online pedagogy, lesson design and course creation empower facilitators/academics to deliver engaging and effective online courses, enriching the learning experience for the diverse student body.

11.2. Technology Integration and Virtual Classroom Management

MANCOSA's commitment extends to providing faculty with necessary tools for success, advocating for comprehensive training in technology use and virtual

classroom management to create dynamic and interactive online learning environments.

12. Research and Data-Supported Decision-Making

Research is central to MANCOSA's TALC framework, ensuring curriculum design, teaching, learning and assessment are informed by evidence and aligned to student needs.

12.1 Curriculum Design and Development

Programmes are shaped by industry and labour market research to identify trends, skill demands and employment needs. This ensures graduates develop relevant competencies such as digital literacy, problem-solving and interpersonal skills. Student surveys, focus groups, programme evaluations and webinar evaluations conducted after each delivery provide feedback on curriculum effectiveness and responsiveness.

12.2 Teaching and Learning

LMS analytics track engagement, participation and progress, enabling academics to adapt teaching methodologies and provide targeted support. Research guides pedagogical choices, drawing on approaches such as andragogy, constructivism and connectivism. Effectiveness is measured through performance data, engagement metrics, feedback, peer-lesson delivery observations and monthly student satisfaction and sentiment surveys, which inform interventions and improvements.

12.3 Assessment

Student performance data highlights areas of difficulty, supporting the refinement of formats, rubrics and feedback mechanisms. Benchmarking against cohorts and industry standards identifies gaps and trends. Student feedback on assessments is systematically collected and applied to ensure tasks remain fair, transparent and outcome-aligned.

12.4 Student Support and Success

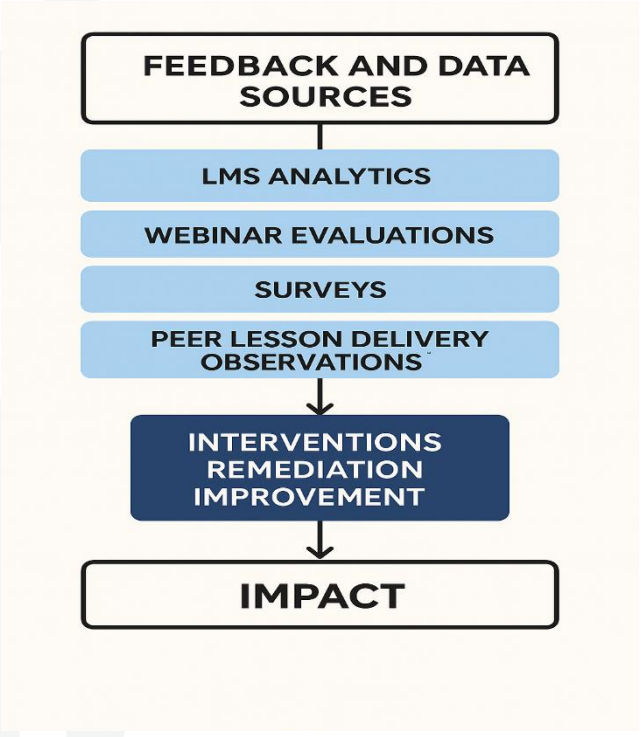
Predictive analytics identify students at risk, enabling timely interventions to support retention and success. Data on the use of support services, together with sentiment and satisfaction surveys, guides decisions on service improvements. KPIs relating to outcomes, service utilisation and satisfaction rates drive continuous enhancement.

12.5 Institutional Research and Strategic Alignment

Institutional research ensures curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment are aligned with strategic goals of Academic Excellence, Student-Centric Transformation and Sustainability. Data from audits, reviews, webinar evaluations and quality assurance processes inform enhancements. Global best practices in distance education are monitored to ensure relevance and competitiveness.

12.6 Data Governance and POPIA

Learning analytics are purpose-limited to improving teaching quality and student success. Identifiable data is accessible only to authorised staff. Students are informed of the categories of data collected and its purpose. All processing complies with POPIA and the institutional Data Governance Policy. For reporting and assurance, data is anonymized or aggregated, with retention governed by the Records Management Policy.



13. Accessibility and Inclusivity

MANCOSA is committed to fostering an inclusive, equitable and accessible learning environment, in line with its Disability Policy and the principles of human rights, social justice and universal access.

13.1 Commitment to Inclusion

- Students and staff with disabilities are supported to participate fully in all aspects of MANCOSA's academic and institutional life.
- The institution applies **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** to accommodate diverse needs and progressively realises accessibility across physical, digital and epistemological spaces.

13.2 Reasonable Accommodation

- Reasonable accommodations may include alternative formats of learning materials, accessible digital platforms, flexible assessment methods, assistive technologies and workplace adjustments.
- A structured process governs disclosure, assessment and implementation of accommodations, coordinated by the Admissions and Selections Directorate.
- Accommodations are periodically reviewed to ensure effectiveness and are provided within available resources, provided they do not impose unjustifiable hardship on the institution.

13.3 Accessibility

- MANCOSA ensures accessibility of information, communication and digital resources by adhering to accessibility standards and compatibility with assistive technologies.
- Physical accessibility is considered for regional centres, venues and events, with universal design informing infrastructural planning.

13.4 Support Services

- A central contact point within the Admissions and Selections Directorate coordinates disability support.
- Services include counselling, assistive technology training, and guidance on accessible learning strategies.

- Collaboration with external practitioners is available for students requiring mental health concessions.

13.5 Disclosure and Confidentiality

- Disclosure of disability is voluntary but encouraged to enable support.
- All information is treated as confidential and shared only on a need-to-know basis for implementing accommodations, in compliance with POPIA.

13.6 Complaints and Redress

- Students and staff may lodge complaints of discrimination or inadequate accommodation through the Registrar's Office.
- Fair, transparent procedures are followed, with options for informal resolution and formal investigation.

13.7 Monitoring and Accountability

- Disability inclusion is monitored through data on enrolments, progression, support usage and success outcomes.
- Regular audits and policy reviews ensure alignment with best practice and stakeholder feedback.
- All staff share responsibility for promoting disability awareness and inclusive practice.

14. Ethics and Values

MANCOSA's Learning and Teaching Policy embodies a dedication to ethical considerations and academic integrity, rooted in a vision of fairness, transparency and responsibility.

- MANCOSA places paramount importance on embedding ethical considerations in online education practices, emphasizing principles of fairness, transparency and responsibility in every facet of the online learning experience.
- The policy underscores the significance of upholding academic integrity in online environments, committed to maintaining the highest standards of

academic honesty and ensuring students engage in a learning environment that values and preserves the integrity of their educational journey.

15. Community Engagement

MANCOSA views Community Engagement (CE) as a core academic function integrated with teaching, learning and research, consistent with the **Council on Higher Education (CHE) Manual for Institutional Audits (2021)**. CE advances MANCOSA's vision of *education for a better world for all* by fostering reciprocal partnerships that contribute to societal transformation and student development.

15.1 Purpose and Strategic Alignment

- CE enhances the relevance of curriculum and research by addressing real-world challenges in collaboration with communities, employers and stakeholders.
- Initiatives align with MANCOSA's strategic goals of Academic Excellence, Student-Centric Transformation and Sustainability, as well as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Both philanthropic outreach and integrated scholarly engagement are valued, recognising CE as part of MANCOSA's role as a Social Purpose Business.

15.2 Guiding Principles

- **Reciprocity**: Communities and the institution benefit equally from shared initiatives.
- **Sustainability**: Engagement projects prioritise long-term social impact and resilience.
- **Interdisciplinarity**: Solutions are informed by diverse disciplinary perspectives to address complex community challenges.
- **Ethics and Inclusivity**: All engagements are conducted ethically, respecting rights, diversity and confidentiality (aligned with POPIA).

15.3 Implementation

- CE is embedded in curriculum design, teaching and assessment, linking to graduate attributes and enhancing employability through authentic community-based learning.
- Partnerships with community organisations, government, business and NGOs are formalised through agreements to ensure accountability and shared outcomes.
- Engagement levels range from transactional (short-term) to transformational (deep, reciprocal partnerships), with the latter encouraged as best practice.

15.4 Governance and Oversight

- The Community Engagement Committee oversees strategy, project approval, partnerships and impact measurement. Membership includes senior academics, functional directorates, student ambassadors and project coordinators.
- CE activities are monitored through institutional registers, reports and KPIs linked to workload allocations where applicable.

15.5 Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

- CE initiatives are recorded and evaluated using structured templates that track project outcomes, SDGs impacted, budgets and level of engagement (T1–T3).
- Regular reports assess effectiveness, highlight case studies and capture the voices of affected communities.
- Feedback informs continuous improvement and academic training for CE.

15.6 Impact

Through CE, MANCOSA:

- Strengthens student learning by linking theory to practice.
- Contributes to societal development and transformation.
- Builds sustainable networks that reinforce its local and global impact.

16. Monitoring, Reporting and Policy Reviews

MANCOSA is committed to rigorous evaluation of online learning initiatives to ensure effectiveness, accountability and ongoing enhancement.

16.1 Ongoing Monitoring

- **Quality Assurance**: Online learning is monitored through the Quality Advancement Plan by the M&E Department, ensuring alignment with institutional standards and evolving educational needs.
- **Learning Analytics**: Engagement, progress and outcomes are tracked to enable timely interventions and adaptive support.
- **Programme Reviews**: Regular internal reviews evaluate curriculum content, instructional design, technology platforms and student support.
- **Student Feedback**: Dedicated channels collect feedback systematically to strengthen the student learning experience.
- **External Accreditation**: Programmes undergo external reviews and accreditation for accountability and compliance with national and international benchmarks.

16.2 Feedback and Improvement

- **Inclusive Feedback Collection**: Input is gathered from students, staff, alumni, employers and industry partners to ensure a broad perspective.
- **Data Analysis**: Feedback and analytics are synthesised to identify trends, strengths and areas for improvement.
- **Targeted Interventions**: Evidence from feedback informs iterative improvements to curriculum, pedagogy, technology and support.
- **Transparency**: Aggregated outcomes of feedback and reviews are shared through established communication channels.
- **Impact Evaluation**: Continuous monitoring assesses the effectiveness of improvements and guides further refinements based on evidence.

16.3. Roles and Responsibilities

The Academic Exco Committee provides overall academic oversight and approves the policy. The Learning and Teaching Committee monitors implementation and evaluates effectiveness. School Managers oversee programme compliance and resource allocation, while Academic Programme Leaders and Programme Coordinators ensure module-level quality, including assessment standards.

moderation and student engagement. The Monitoring and Evaluation Department audits practice and tracks improvements. The Library and IT/LMS teams maintain resource availability, system reliability and accessibility compliance. The Learning and Teaching Department together with Student Support Services implement accommodations and provide targeted student support.

17. Policy Review and Revision

The Learning and Teaching Policy will be subjected to regular review cycles (e.g., annually for minor reviews and every two years for major reviews