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Debates ongoing at UCT over the Curriculum Change discussion document

Following the conclusion of the work of the Curriculum Change Working Group (CCWG), the Teaching and Learning Committee at the University of Cape Town (UCT) is continuing to receive comments and feedback in respect of the Curriculum Change Framework document. The framework is a discussion document, not a policy, and will not be enforced.

In August 2016, the CCWG was initiated to address transformation and decolonisation of the curriculum. Over a period of 18 months, the group facilitated dialogue across the university aimed at developing strategies to achieve meaningful curriculum reform. The outcome of this process led to the Curriculum Change Framework document, which was released in June 2018 and which highlights key pathways to see the university accomplish this goal.

The purpose of the document is to stimulate discussion within departments and among students, course convenors, those on education committees, and anyone interested in interrogating the transformation of the curriculum.

UCT emphasises that the document is a discussion document and not a policy document. In an inclusive and transparent process, members of the UCT community have been invited to send comments on the framework to the Teaching and Learning Committee.

The UCT executive hopes that the document serves as an invitation for academic units at UCT to reflect on their own understanding of curriculum change, as well as on past, current and future practices of curriculum review, innovation and broader change within the academy. This document should not be viewed as a bureaucratic tool for narrow and cosmetic curriculum review. It is rather the result of deep scholarly interrogation of curriculum change that necessitates an honest appraisal of past and current practices in ways that confront injustice, and open up possibilities for resonance with students and their communities.

The executive is very aware that there are different and diverse opinions over the document, which is precisely why a call for comments was made when it was released.

The range and diversity of opinions and views will enrich the document. The executive believes the more opposing and diverse opinions and views that emerge from these discussions, the more enriched any ultimate decisions will be.

These ongoing discussions, and the fact that there are opposing or diverse views, is characteristic of a university space. A university is about contestation of ideas and debates.

The Teaching and Learning Committee will receive and consider all comments, with a view to integrating different aspects into a curricular review. The aim is to table such a document before Senate in the second semester, having first been presented and fully discussed in the faculties.

UCT is committed to academic freedom and freedom of expression, and regards these rights as fundamental to its institutional culture. The executive notes an incorrect view that the framework document could have a bearing on academic appointments. All appointments at UCT are made in accordance with the relevant policies.

The CCWG was established in January 2016. It concluded its work on the framework document at the end of 2017. The group worked on a timeframe of 18 months from April 2016 to October 2017, and then engaged in a writing and critical review process.

ENDS

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