

1.4.2 CURRICULUM AND COURSE DEVELOPMENT POLICY

1. Purpose

Degree programs, curricula and courses at ADA University are based on a set of core competencies and learning outcomes, which are aligned with the University's mission and strategy and with the outcome images of its students. They are designed to provide students with integrated, stimulating and challenging learning experiences and to prepare them to become high-impact graduates. The purpose of this policy is to outline procedures for the design and development of curricula and courses at ADA University.

2. Scope and Recommendations

This policy covers the design and development of curricula and courses at the undergraduate and graduate level. It applies to all degree programs and courses delivered face-to-face or in a blended or online format. It furthermore outlines specific procedures for the delivery of courses and for the initial evaluation of curricula and courses.

Procedures for the modification of curricula or individual courses are outlined in ADA University's *Degree Program Development and Modification Policy*. Modifications of curricula or individual courses resulting from the Quality Assurance Committee's regular review of ADA University's academic program are regulated by the *Quality Assurance Policy: Academic Program and Learning Outcomes*.

Procedures and quality indicators for the regular evaluation and improvement of curricula and courses are delineated in ADA University's general *Academic Quality Assurance Policy* and in the *Quality Assurance Policy: Academic Program and Learning Outcomes*.

All members of ADA University involved in the design and development of curricula and courses are expected to be thoroughly familiar with the procedures outlined in this policy.

3. Definitions

The *Curriculum* provides the framework for teaching and learning within a specific degree program. It describes the structured sequence of courses that comprise a degree program and that allows for a gradual progression of learning and for the achievement of program objectives and learning outcomes. It thus encompasses the entire subject matter that is being taught in a program (including the program's content, program objectives and intended learning outcomes), but also instructional and assessment methods as well as learning activities and materials employed to achieve these objectives and outcomes.

A *Course* is a unit of teaching and learning (1) that is dedicated to a clearly defined subject, (2) that consists of a coherent and well-structured series of individual sessions, and (3) that usually covers one semester. Courses (as individual teaching and learning units) are part of coherently structured degree programs. They can be taught face-to-face or in a blended or online format

4. Curriculum and Course Development

4.1 Responsibility for Curriculum and Course Development

- a. Responsibility for the design and development of the curriculum and of courses rests with the faculty of the Schools involved in the delivery of the respective degree program.
- b. Schools will select faculty that will serve as members of the curriculum development team. The process of selecting team members must ensure that their expertise covers all areas of the curriculum. In the case of online or blended programs and courses, the curriculum development team shall include one of ADA University's *Blackboard* Course Facilitators.
- c. It is the Program Director's responsibility to supervise the process of curriculum and course design and development and to ensure the timely delivery of appropriate results.
- d. It is strongly recommended that those engaged in the process of curriculum and course development obtain regular feedback from the external faculty consultant mentioned in part 4.1.e of ADA University's *Degree Program Development and Modification Policy*, and that they consider all feedback received thoroughly.

4.2 Curriculum Design and Development

- a. The curriculum developers will design a draft of the curriculum that provides an overview of program objectives (which are based on ADA University's *Statement of Student Outcome Images* and on its *Statement of Core Competencies and Learning Outcomes*), intended learning outcomes, key content, the structure of courses, learning activities and materials, instructional and assessment methods as well as the use of learning technology employed in the delivery of the degree program (including the delivery mode and, if applicable, specific program requirements).
- b. This draft must draw on the synoptic outline of the curriculum submitted during the process of program development (for details, see 4.3.c of the *Degree Program Development and Modification Policy*). It must also take into consideration the market survey (or equivalent document) mentioned in 4.3.e of that policy. This is meant to ensure that the curriculum serves the needs and target groups identified in this survey (or equivalent document).
- c. The draft of the curriculum will be submitted to the faculty of each of the Schools involved in the delivery of the degree program. Each School's faculty will discuss the draft and provide feedback to the group of curriculum developers.
- d. The curriculum developers will address and implement the feedback received while developing the detailed curriculum. The different components of the curriculum are interrelated, and the developers must ensure that they are fully aligned. With this in mind, curriculum developers are encouraged to develop the components of the curriculum in the following order:
 - (1) Coherent program objectives and detailed and precise learning outcomes must be defined and specified for the program (for details, see ADA University's *Core Competence and Learning Outcome Specification Policy*).
 - (2) The program's content must be selected and defined in detail. It must be ascertained that the selected content is current and relevant and that it allows students to achieve the previously stated program objectives and learning outcomes.
 - (3) Instructional methods and learning activities that support students in achieving the previously stated learning outcomes must be selected.
 - (4) Assessment methods must be selected that are aligned with the previously defined learning outcomes, program content and learning activities.
 - (5) A systematic and comprehensive structure of courses as well as an initial outline of individual courses must be developed. This includes the allocation of credits to courses (for

details, see ADA University's *Credit Regulations*). The composition of courses must cover the entire content of the program; it must be designed to allow for a smooth student progression and for an integrated learning experience of students; and it must fully reflect ADA University's *Undergraduate Degree Regulations* or *Graduate Degree Regulations*.

- (6) Relevant and current teaching and learning materials must be selected.
- e. The draft of the detailed curriculum will be submitted to the faculty of each of the Schools involved in the delivery of the degree program. The curriculum developers must implement all feedback received from and suggested modifications proposed by faculty.
- f. Once the curriculum is independently approved by the faculty of each of the Schools involved, small groups of faculty members from the respective Schools will be selected for the detailed design and development of all courses that are part of the degree program.

4.3 Course Design and Development

- a. The design and development of courses serves to further specify the components of the curriculum and to implement them on the level of courses.
- b. The teams of course developers will design a first draft of each course that provides the course title, an overview of intended competencies and learning outcomes, key content, learning activities and materials, instructional and assessment methods as well as potential technology employed in the delivery of each course. These drafts will be based on the initial overview and structure of courses developed in 4.2.
- c. Each draft will be submitted to the faculty of the School that will be responsible for the delivery of the course. The School's faculty will discuss the drafts and provide feedback to the teams of course developers.
- d. The teams will address and implement the feedback received while developing the detailed courses. The different components of courses are interrelated, and the developers must ensure that they are fully aligned. With this in mind, course developers are encouraged to develop the components of courses in the following order:
 - (1) Specific and measurable learning outcomes for each course must be defined. The specification of learning outcomes throughout the curriculum and its structure of courses must ensure a gradual development of student learning and experience. Particular attention must be paid to the appropriateness of learning outcomes to the level of the course. For details, see ADA University's *Core Competence and Learning Outcome Specification Policy*.
 - (2) Each course's content must be specified in detail. It must be ascertained that the content of courses allows students to achieve the previously stated learning outcomes and that course content is aligned throughout the entire curriculum and its structure of courses. Course content will furthermore must be structured logically and allow for a gradual learning progress.
 - (3) Instructional methods and learning activities that support students in achieving the previously stated learning outcomes must be selected. The selection of instructional methods and learning activities must ensure a high level of student participation. In this context, the use of learning technology must be specified (including the delivery mode and, if applicable, specific course requirements).
 - (4) A variety of assessment methods must be selected that are aligned with the previously defined learning outcomes, course content and learning activities.
 - (5) Relevant and current teaching and learning materials must be selected.
 - (6) Syllabi for all courses must be designed, using ADA University's *Syllabus Form*.

- e. The detailed drafts of all courses will be submitted to the faculty of each of the Schools involved in the delivery of the degree program. The course developers must implement all feedback received from and suggested modifications proposed by faculty.
- f. Once all courses are independently approved by the faculty of each of the Schools involved, program and course descriptions will be developed.

4.4 Curriculum and Course Finalization

- a. Detailed descriptions of the degree program, its curriculum and its individual courses will be set up by those faculty members involved in the process of curriculum and course development. These descriptions must use the *Program Description Form* and the *Course Description Form*, both of which are included in Appendix II of ADA University's *Academic Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines*.
- b. Program and course descriptions must include all the components specified and developed in 4.2 and 4.3. They must furthermore provide information such as assessment criteria, weighing and regulations, grade descriptions, requirements for the submission of assessments, rules applying to cheating and plagiarism, general guidance for the use of learning technology (*Blackboard Learn*), as well as contact information for student service units (such as ADA Library and the University's IT Service Desk).
- c. Program and course descriptions need to be approved by the faculty of the School that serves as the administrative home of the degree program and/or the respective course. Modifications suggested by faculty need to be implemented before the curriculum (including courses) may be submitted for further approval.

4.5 Online and Blended Curricula and Courses

- a. Procedures for the design and development of online and blended curricula and courses follow the same procedures as described above.
- b. During the design and development of online and blended curricula and courses, particular attention must be paid to the attainability of stated program objectives and learning outcomes via an online or blended teaching, learning and assessment format. Curriculum and course developers are strongly recommended to consult ADA University's *Online Education and Assessment Regulations* during the process of curriculum and course design and development.
- c. Specific requirements for the delivery of courses taught in the blended or online format can be found in part 5.1 below.

4.6 LMS Platform

- a. All courses at ADA University use *Blackboard Learn* as LMS platform. While courses offered face-to-face make use of the online mode and *Blackboard Learn* only for additional student support and to share all relevant course information and materials, courses offered in the blended or online mode additionally conduct the teaching and learning process partially (blended) or entirely (online) via *Blackboard Learn*.
- b. ADA University's *Blackboard Administrator* will create the *Blackboard Learn* course infrastructure for all courses. The course infrastructure will allow teachers to upload all the course information and materials specified in 5.1.d and provide for a smooth teaching and learning process as well as for efficient communication between teacher and course participants. A general *Blackboard Learn Course Template* can be found in Appendix II of ADA University's *Academic Quality Assurance Standards and Guidelines*.

4.7 Approval of Curriculum and Courses

- a. After the finalization of the program's curriculum and of all its courses, the curriculum and courses will be made available to all the faculty members of the School that serves as the administrative home of the degree program. In the case of a multidisciplinary program, it will be made available to all the faculty members of each of the Schools involved.
- b. Procedures for the approval of curricula (including courses) are described in chapter 4.5 of ADA University's *Degree Program Development and Modification Policy*.

5. Course Delivery and Initial Curriculum and Course Evaluation

5.1 Course Delivery

- a. The following procedures apply to all courses delivered face-to-face or in a blended or online format.
- b. After student admission to a course, ADA University's *Blackboard* Administrator will create (activate) the course on *Blackboard Learn*, register (enroll) the teacher and students and ensure that all those involved in the teaching and learning process have proper online access to the course and to all required *Blackboard Learn* tools.
- c. The *Blackboard* Administrator will provide technical support throughout the entire process of course delivery (including assessment periods). He/she will also provide survey tools for student feedback on the course.
- d. Teachers must ensure that all information relevant to a course is made available to students prior to the beginning of the course. This includes course descriptions as defined in 4.4.b, guidance on communication procedures and tools (including communication opportunities with the teacher), as well as all relevant teaching and learning materials (such as textbooks and further digital files, online links to external resources, or references to material available at ADA Library). All information must be readily available and easily accessible on *Blackboard Learn*. Teachers must ensure that all teaching materials (such as presentations, videos or worksheets) used during the delivery of the course are made available to students. Teachers are also encouraged to provide further learning materials for advanced self-study. If requested by the teacher, the *Blackboard* Administrator may pre-upload course material and information when initially creating (activating) the course.
- e. Teachers are expected to employ a variety of media and teaching methods during the delivery of the course.
- f. Teachers of courses delivered in the blended or online mode must ensure that *Blackboard Learn* is used comprehensively and creatively during the process of teaching and learning. They must also provide opportunities for both synchronous and asynchronous learning and for extensive student interaction and collaboration similar to face-to-face courses.

5.2 Initial Evaluation of Courses and Programs

- a. After the first delivery, each course as well as the entire program (curriculum) will be evaluated. The evaluation of courses and the program will be based on the quality indicators and procedures set forth in ADA University's *Quality Assurance Policy: Academic Program and Learning Outcomes*. Particular attention must be paid to program effectiveness and student success and to the feedback of students on their learning experiences.
- b. The initial evaluation aims to identify areas for improvement. Responsibility for the implementation of improvements rests with the faculty of the Schools involved in the delivery of the respective degree program. All proposed improvements must fulfil the requirements for curricula and courses delineated above.

- c. It is the Program Director's responsibility to supervise this process, to potentially involve further stakeholders of ADA University (such as its Information Technology Services), and to ensure the timely delivery of appropriate results.
- d. All improvements suggested need to be approved by the faculty of the School that serves as the administrative home of the degree program and/or the respective course. Modifications suggested by faculty need to be implemented before an improved course or curriculum may be submitted for further approval.
- e. The finalized new version of a course or curriculum will be made available to all the faculty members of the School that serves as the administrative home of the degree program. In the case of a multidisciplinary program, it will be made available to all the faculty members of each of the Schools involved.
- f. Procedures for the approval of course or curriculum modification are described in chapter 5.2 of ADA University's *Degree Program Development and Modification Policy*.
- g. After the initial delivery and evaluation of a new course and program (curriculum), they become part of the regular quality review cycle at ADA University.