EXPERIENTIAL AND BUSINESS- AND COMMUNITY-BASED ACTION LEARNING POLICY

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Da Vinci Institute is an accredited private higher distance education provider offering qualifications on NQF levels five to ten, which are registered on the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF). This policy forms part of the institutional Integrated Quality Management System and details the principles for ensuring that programme offerings adhere to required academic standards and empower students to contribute to the transformation of their communities, society, and the economy of the future. This approach is underpinned by the Business- and Community-based Action Learning discourse on the co-creation and distribution of relevant knowledge.

This Policy forms part of the set of general quality management policies of The Da Vinci Institute for Technology Management and outlines the principles and processes relevant to the experiential and work-based learning.

2 DEFINITIONS

Term	Definition
Action learning	Approach to learning through problem-probing which involves taking action and reflecting on the outcomes
Experiential Learning	A process through which students develop knowledge, skills and values from experiences, reflection and problem-probing. Both problem-based learning and project-based learning are types of experiential Learning. Knowledge is, therefore created through the transformation of experience through active experimentation and reflective observation
Workplace Learning	A learning opportunity to apply theory to the workplace. Programmes with a workplace component are 'applied learning', as opposed to placements. This includes applied research projects, industry projects and simulations
Learnerships	A structured learning programme that includes both theoretical and practical business- and community-based experiential learning
Learning	The transformational process of acquiring new understanding, insight, knowledge, skills, behaviours, attitudes and values through studying, experience, mentoring, coaching and being taught
Learning Programme	The sequential learning activities, associated with curriculum implementation, leading to the achievement of a particular qualification or part qualification

Term	Definition
Problem-based Learning	Problem-based learning is a type of experiential learning that involves students in a process of critical thinking to probe problems in a specific context in order to propose solutions or solve problems
Programme	A coherent set of modules, leading to a certain qualification
Project-based Learning	Project-based learning is a type of experiential learning where students are presented with a problem or question relevant to a real-world context that challenges students to develop a plan and create a product or artefact that addresses the problem
Sponsor	Custodian or organisation who is contractually responsible for financing the student's fees and is therefore entitled to information about the academic progress of the student
Work-directed theoretical learning	Work-directed theoretical learning "refers to academic or theoretical learning which is structured by focusing on what the student needs to know, to be able to function sufficiently in the workplace" (Du Plessis, 2015: 52), with the purpose of equipping the students to become more entrepreneurial and enhancing the student's employability

3   REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

This policy is benchmarked against and should be read in the context of the relevant legislation, government policies, and regulations underpinning the principles against which institutional policies, processes, and standard operating procedures are developed, implemented and maintained. These include:

A. Relevant legislation
   I.   Constitution of the Republic of South Africa: 1996 NQF Act, (No. 67 of 2008)
   II.   Distance Higher Education Programmes in a Digital Era: Good Practice Guide (CHE)
   III.   Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) Criteria for Programme Accreditation (CHE, 2004)
   IV.   Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997)
   V.   National Policy and Criteria for Designing and Implementing Assessment for NQF Qualifications and Part Qualifications and Professional Designations in South Africa (SAQA, 2017)
   VI.   Skills Development Act 97 of 1998

VII.   Work-Integrated Learning: Good Practice Guide. HE Monitor No 12. (CHE, 2011)

B. Applicable Da Vinci documents
   I.   D4 – Teaching and Learning Policy
   II.   D5 - Curriculum Design and the Development of Learning and Assessment Resources Policy
   III. D19 – Assessment and Moderation Policy

4   SCOPE

The Policy applies to experiential and business- and community-based action learning as an integral part of curricula offered by The Institute. The curricular modalities (discussed in D5 - Curriculum Design and the Development of Learning and Assessment Resources Policy) used, require formal and non-formal engagements of workplace contexts. This Policy guides such engagements.

5   PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that experiential and business- and community-based action learning result in meaningful applications of theory in real-world contexts, by employing a combination of work-directed theoretical learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning and workplace learning (discussed in D5 - Curriculum Design and the Development of Learning and Assessment Resources Policy).

6   GUIDING PRINCIPLES

6.1   Experiential and business- and community-based action learning is purposefully curriculated in line with The Institute's conceptual framework for its academic programmes
6.2   Experiential and business- and community-based action learning should support achieving learning outcomes in the context of application within a relevant environment
6.3   The success of experiential and business- and community-based action learning is dependent on achieving the learning outcomes in keeping with the purpose of a qualification.

7   PRINCIPLES

7.1   Work-directed learning

Considering The Institute's emphasis on the importance of an applied approach to learning, students are required to apply their theoretical learning to a workplace context or simulated environment.

7.2   Mentoring

Where appropriate, a line manager or mentor could be responsible for guiding the student in applying theory in real-world work contexts. Alternatively, where required, students could be supported to find a mentor who can support the learning processes and applying theoretical learning for the work context. In the case of postgraduate students, mentors will be invited to attend Oral Defences.

7.3   Authentic Assessment

Experiential and business- and community-based action learning is integrated into all modular formative and summative assessments and these are assessed by the relevant lecturer/s. In line with The Institute's Teaching and Learning approach, the application of authentic assessment principles occur within 'real-world' contexts (Sambell, 2016). The purpose of this approach is to increase student engagement and promote the assessment of meaningful, complex, real-world problems and tasks (Frey, Schmitt & Allen, 2012). Therefore, the assessment process acknowledges that assessment should integrate theory and practice, whilst assessing applied competence.

7.4   Administrative support

The Institute's Programme Coordinators monitor the implementation of learning activities and report monthly on the academic progress of students and where relevant, submit the reports to the sponsor. In addition, The Institute supports opportunities for students to give feedback to sponsors, by arranging, for example, workplace colloquia where completed assessments and/or reports are presented. In the case of postgraduate students, sponsors can be invited to attend Oral Defences. The Programme Coordinators make inputs to the institutional reports based on an analysis of the student's academic progress.

7.5   Learnerships

Learnerships are intended to address the gap between current education and training provision and the needs of the labour market. Learnerships seek to address the following labour market issues:
- the decline in levels of employment in South Africa

- the unequal distribution of income
- unequal access to education and training and employment opportunities
- the effects of race, gender, and geographical location on educational advancement
- the skills shortage amongst the labour force.

In light of the above, Learnerships form an integral part of The Institute's Teaching and Learning strategy, supporting The Institute's advocation and alignment to the National Development Plan (NDP).

The appropriate SETA Learnership Agreement for each learner must be signed by the employer, education provider (Da Vinci), and the learner(student). The relevant documentation must be lodged with the employer's SETA. A Learnership agreement must be entered into for a specific period. Experiential learning is gained at the learner's(student's) place of employment for the duration of the Learnership, and the theoretical learning is provided by The Institute as the accredited training provider.

Employed students who participate in a Learnership must ensure that their employer is willing to provide practical work experience, time for studies, monitoring and oversight which may include mentorship.

8   THE DA VINCI APPROACH TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

In keeping with The Institute's philosophy and strategy, the following are utilised (refer to L02: *Teaching and Learning philosophy and strategy document*):

8.1.   "Collectology": Collecting the Dots
8.2.   Mode 2 Research and Knowledge Production
8.2   Learning Styles and Experiential Learning
8.3   The TIPS™ Managerial Leadership Framework
8.4   Emerging Realities
8.5   Cooperative Engagement

Student support is also provided throughout the student journey, and L03: *The Da Vinci Student Support Framework*, is incorporated into each module where touchpoints with the Student Councillor and Learning Behaviour Specialist, Information Officer, Programme Coordinator, Information Technology Support, Informal and formal sessions with the lecturers, and, where relevant, business simulation sessions and sessions with mentors, are scheduled to support students further.

9   RESPONSIBILITIES

The main role-players' roles and responsibilities are specified in their annual Key Performance Indicators and/or informally agreed in terms of specific projects.

9.1 Executive Dean: Academic

The role of the Executive Dean: Academic involves the responsibility for the overall governance and quality assurance of all teaching and learning activities, including experiential and business- and community-based action learning processes and procedures.

9.2 Executive: Growth and Sustainability

The role of the Executive: Growth and Sustainability, is to ensure that experiential and business- and community-based action learning is clearly demonstrated in all business development activities, and to ensure that prospective clients and students are aware, that this is an integral part of all curricula offered by The Institute.

9.3 Executive Dean: Research and Institutional Partnerships

The role of the Executive Dean: Research and Institutional Partnerships is to provide strategic leadership on matters related to the management of research and industry engagement.

9.4 Executive Dean: Strategy and Stakeholder Management

The Executive Dean: Strategy and Stakeholder Management is responsible for internal and external engagements and, where applicable, supports students in community engagement initiatives.

9.5 Dean: Design

The Dean: Design is responsible for the overall governance and quality assurance of all learning design and development activities, including experiential and business- and community-based action learning, as encapsulated in the courseware including module assessments.

9.6 Faculty Deans

The role of the Faculty Deans is to provide strategic direction, promoting, coordinating and lecturing in the areas of the TIPS™ Managerial Leadership Framework. The Faculty Deans work cooperatively with all Cluster Heads and Faculty to plan and implement creative and relevant curricula, supporting a future focused on holistic educational offerings related to TIPS.

9.7 Head of Programme

The role of the Head of Programme, is the management of the implementation of experiential and business- and community-based action learning that will promote the application of theory in real or simulated work contexts, as may be required.

9.8 Programme Coordinators

The Programme Coordinators of The Institute are responsible for:

9.8.1 The monitoring of implementation of experiential and business- and community-based action learning, including providing academic progress reports to the sponsor

9.8.2 Assisting students and clients with the completion of the tripartite Learnership agreements and signing the agreements on behalf of The Institute

9.8.3 Monitoring the implementation of learning activities and preparing monthly reports on the students' progress and submit to the sponsor where relevant

9.84 Conduct 'Lessons Learnt' with groups completing their academic year and providing feedback to the appropriate team and, where necessary, the sponsor.

9.9 Faculty (Lecturers and Supervisors)

The role of Faculty is to be actively involved at modular and cluster level to develop and implement appropriate activities to align to the Teaching and Learning philosophy and strategy, including experiential and business- and community-based action learning.

10 REVIEW OF THIS POLICY

Regular review and amendment of this Policy will be done according to the approved institutional policies and regulatory requirements. This will take place in consultation with the relevant quality assurance structures at the departmental and institutional level, under the auspices of the official custodian of this policy, namely the Executive Dean: Academic.