



**SOUTHERN AFRICAN SOCIETY FOR  
CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION**

**A CO-OPERATIVE EDUCATION POLICY**

**FOR**

**WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING  
PROGRAMMES**

**AMENDED and UPDATED  
January 2007**

Prepared By: B. E. Forbes  
Vice-President  
SASCE

# CONTENTS

	Page No.
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
2. DEFINITION AND TERMINOLOGY	
2.1 Co-operative Education (Co-op.) .....	2
2.2 Experiential Learning (EL) .....	2
2.3 Work Integrated Learning (WIL) .....	2
2.4 Service Learning (SL) .....	2
3. POLICY STATEMENT	
3.1 Principles .....	3
3.2 Goals .....	3
3.3 Beneficiaries .....	3-4
4. QUALITY MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK	
4.1 CHE 2004 (Nov 2004): Criteria for Programme Accreditation .....	4-5
4.2 CHE (June 2004): Criteria for Institutional Audits .....	5
5. PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION	
5.1 Best Practice .....	6
5.2 Programme Design Academic Criteria .....	6-7
6. MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS	
6.1 A Centralized Co-operative Education Unit .....	8
6.2 Decentralized Delivery .....	8-9
6.3 Links between Centralized and Decentralized Delivery in Faculties and Departments .....	9
7. CONCLUSION .....	9
8. BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	9

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This Co-operative Education policy has been formulated to guide the development and implementation of Work Integrated Learning (WIL), based on the commitment of the Southern African Society for Co-operative Education (SASCE) to quality enhancement and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. SASCE is also committed to career-focused qualifications and work integrated learning, which symbolizes the extension of the learning environment outside of the classroom, as added value to the total learning experience.

Work integrated learning facilitates and consolidates the learning progression between theory and practice and therefore underpins technology transfer and exchange toward applied competence and knowledge production.

This Co-operative Education Policy is formulated as a guide to the development and implementation of work integrated learning. The focus is on the outcomes of the student learning in a quality model, guided by quality input, quality of process, quality outputs and impact. This policy should assist institutions in making informed decisions on operational procedures, staffing and resource allocation in co-operation with external partners.

## 2. DEFINITION AND TERMINOLOGY

While this **Co-operative Education Policy** specifically refers to **work integrated learning** as the methodology, it must be understood in the context of linking learning to the requirements of the world-of-work. SASCE recognizes that while terminologies have evolved over time, the common overarching principle has been the **co-operation** and **partnership** between the academic institution, the student and the external stakeholder in negotiating a range of learning experiences.

In an attempt to gain definitional clarity on the relationship and link between learning and work, SASCE acknowledges and recommends an international study by the University of Leeds (1996) that explored opportunities for learning and work experience theories, as a research project. The project team from the University teased out **three aspects** that linked learning to the world of work namely; learning **for** work; learning **at** work; and learning **through** work (Seagraves, et al., 1996). SASCE believes that the following rationale clarifies the distinction between vocational-career focused, experiential learning and work integrated learning.

### Learning for Work

Learning **for work** broadly encompasses anything that has a vocational or career focus intention and originates or is delivered from schools, colleges or even learning media such as television. Co-operative Education would embrace this as an umbrella term that promotes learning for work through partnerships that prepare students for careers and vocations.

### Learning at Work

Learning **at work** relates to training and development that is work-based delivered at companies. Learning in this authentic context enhances knowledge and competencies by the very nature of the experience of the student in the workplace. This is learning by experience in the workplace, thus work based learning.

### Learning through Work

At the heart of learning **through work** is the process of engaging the student in specific work-related tasks where such learning and experiences is **part of and integrated into the curriculum**. This integration within the curriculum as a continuum is work integrated learning.

The above clarification clearly positions **Co-operative Education** holistically at the centre as philosophy of learning that promotes the concept of enhanced learning based on the co-operation between education institutions and industry, commerce and the public sector (HEQC 2004).

SASCE therefore endorses the definition for Co-operative Education, Experiential Learning, Work Integrated and Service Learning as adopted by the Council for Higher Education (CHE) as follows:

### 2.1 Co-operative Education (Co-op)

Co-operative Education therefore can be defined as a philosophy of learning that promotes the concept of enhanced learning based on co-operation between education institutions and industry, commerce and the public sector (HEQC, June 2004).

### 2.2 Experiential Learning (EL)

Experiential Learning is a component of a learning programme that focuses on the application of institutional academic learning in an authentic work-based context (also called work-based learning). It addresses specific competencies for the achievement of vertical added value learning within a qualification that will enhance employability (HEQC, June 2004).

### 2.3 Work Integrated Learning (WIL)

Some qualifications are being designed to incorporate periods of required work that *integrate* with classroom study. This is called Work Integrated Learning. Where Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is a structured part of a qualification the volume of learning allocated to WIL should be appropriate to the purpose of the qualification. It is also the responsibility of institutions, which offer programmes requiring WIL credits to place students into WIL programmes. Such programmes must be structured, properly supervised and assessed (HEQF 2006).

WIL is also directed at the attainment of professional or occupational learning outcomes. WIL is not exclusively experiential learning but includes a continuum of learning that is curriculum driven and is therefore designed and executed at the required NQF levels of the qualification. Examples would include combinations and integrated aspects of theoretical learning, problem based learning, project-based learning and experiential learning.

This Co-operative Education policy does not cover academic learning and classroom activities but focuses on the aspects that relate to the student experience in preparation for and during the work placement in industry.

### 2.4 Service Learning (SL)

Service Learning similarly is applied learning (*learning through work*), but is directed at specific community needs. It is integrated into the academic programme of the curriculum. It should be credit bearing and assessed and may or may not take place in a work environment (HEQC, June 2004). Service learning is aimed at enhancing the civic responsibility of students within the context of the curriculum. The purpose of service learning is to engender a sense of civic responsibility in students, enabling them to share the knowledge, skills and attitudes learned during their studies with civic society. It aims at developing a student's life skills and awareness of personal, social, cultural values and respect for and understanding of others thus leading to more responsible citizens. Service learning engages students in activities where both the community and students are primary beneficiaries and where the goals are to provide services to the community and to enhance student learning in a reciprocal partnership. Therefore co-operative education and service learning share the goal to enrich the students understanding of course content and discipline (HEQC / JET 2005).

## 3. POLICY STATEMENT

The purpose of this Co-operative Education policy document is to set out the definition, guidelines and framework for the strategic and operational management of Work Integrated Learning programmes, in line with HEQC statutory compliance and audit review criteria for ongoing review and improvement. It therefore aligns to the HEQC's stated conformity of:

- Fitness of purpose
- Value for money

- Fitness for purpose
- Transformation

The following principles and goals underpin and drive all work integrated learning within the Co-operative Education Model.

### 3.1 Principles

- Work integrated learning should be purposefully curriculated for in line with the vision and mission of academic institutions.
- Work integrated learning will promote learning outcomes that will contribute to skills development, in line with the principles of the NQF (National Qualification Framework) and the NSA (National Skills Authority).
- To embrace and promote social responsibility and community engagement through service learning aspect of EL and linked to work integrated learning programmes where feasible.
- To adopt a strategic institutional approach to industry-education links so as to maximize the advantages of efficiency and effectiveness within an agreed operational and strategic quality assurance framework.
- To promote co-operative collaboration in a spirit of trust, accountability and transparency.

### 3.2 Goals

- To promote Co-operative Education and work integrated learning as a strategy for applied learning.
- To engage in partnership agreements with stakeholders in commerce, industry, statutory bodies and communities, in striving to meet the education and skills development needs of a developing economy.
- To implement and co-ordinate the formal integration of academic studies with structured and supervised productive work experience within participating organizations.
- To ensure that quality service delivery is assured by a management structure which is responsive to education and labour reforms.
- To ensure cost effective resource utilization and accountability in reporting structures, without compromising the educational and training quality ideals of work integrated learning.
- To ensure that the work integrated learning component of each programme is assessed in line with outcomes based education principles.

### 3.3 Beneficiaries

#### 3.3.1 Benefits of Co-operative Education to students

- Their early understanding of the world of work
- It enhances and confirms their career choices
- It improves learning retention
- Integrates learning, skills and competencies
- Develops career work record and hands-on experience
- Develops maturity, self-confidence, independence and communication skills
- Affords a preview of potential full-time employers
- An income while learning
- Improves employability after qualification
- Often leads to fulltime employment

#### 3.3.2 Benefits to Commerce and Industry

- Early understanding of the world of work
- Opportunity to observe and track students for permanent positions
- Participation in improving the national skills base related development initiatives
- Helps to motivate permanent staff for life-long learning opportunities
- Strengthens links between industry and educational institutions
- Cost effective use of students productively while in training

- Identification of internal training needs
- Possibility of learnership agreements and staff development
- Institution laboratories made available for industry R&D projects
- Participation in the skills upliftment in South Africa
- Affords participation in curriculum design
- Students bring a fresh perspective and insight with updated methods and new technology in many instances

### 3.3.2 Benefits to Academic Institutions

- Students' early understanding of the world of work
- Companies' formal input keeps the curricula current and relevant
- Promotes mutually beneficial partnerships with industry and government
- Provides real-life experience for students rather than lecture room simulations
- Academics have access to the latest technologies by using the world of work as an extended lecture theatre
- Academic institution facilities are used more efficiently by moving students between the lecture theatre and the world of work.
- Institution laboratories can be made available for industry R&D projects
- Access to guest lecturers who are experts on topics of relevance and offering the world of work perspective

## 4. QUALITY MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The HEQC (Higher Education Quality Committee) specifies a number of institutional planning categories to address issues of quality. These include institutional arrangements for:

- Quality Assurance – the policies, systems, strategies and resources used by the institution to satisfy itself that its quality requirements and standards are being met.
- Quality Support – the policies, systems, strategies and resources used by the institution to support and sustain existing levels of quality.
- Quality Development and Enhancement – the policies, systems, strategies and resources used by the institution to develop and enhance quality.
- Quality Monitoring – the policies, systems, strategies and resources used by the institution to review, monitor and act on quality issues.

This policy provides for the alignment of Co-operative Education practices with statutory provisions as follows:

### 4.1 CHE 2004 (Nov 2004): Criteria for Programme Accreditation

**Criteria 1:** *The programme is consonant with the institution's mission, forms part of institutional planning and resource allocation, meets national requirements, the needs of students and other stakeholders, and is intellectually credible. It is designed coherently and articulates well with other relevant programmes, where possible.*

In order to meet the criteria the following is required as a minimum:

The characteristics and needs of professional and vocational education are catered for in the design of the programme, where applicable. This includes the following:

- The programme promotes the students' understanding of the specific occupation for which they are being trained.
- Students master techniques and skills required for a specific profession or occupation.
- Work-based learning and placement in a work-based environment form an integral part of the curriculum where possible.

**Criteria 15:** *The coordination of work-based learning is done effectively in all components of applicable programmes. This includes an adequate infrastructure, effective communication, recording of progress made, monitoring and mentoring.*

In order to meet the criterion, the following is required at minimum:

- Learning contracts or agreements are implemented through which the student, the higher education institution and the employer can negotiate, approve and assess the objectives and outcomes of the learning process. Various parties, i.e. the institution, students, mentors and employers, adhere to the contract or agreement on their roles and responsibilities.
- Regular and effective communication takes place between the institution, students, mentors and employers involved in work-based learning. Good working relations are maintained between the various parties involved.
- A system (both at the institution and at the place of employment) is in operation to record and monitor regularly and systematically the progress of the student's learning experience in the workplace.
- A mentoring system enables the student to recognise strengths and weaknesses in his/her work, to develop existing and new abilities, and to gain knowledge of work practices.

#### 4.2 CHE (June 2004): Criteria for Institutional Audits

**Criteria 7:** *The administration of academic programmes is conducted within the framework of an effective programme management system. Responsibility and lines of accountability are clearly allocated. Management information systems are used to record and disseminate information about the programme, as well as to facilitate review and improvement.*

In the case of work-based learning:

- Learning contracts or agreements, by which the student, higher education institution and employer can negotiate, approve and assess the objectives and outcomes of the learning process. The roles and responsibilities of the various parties, i.e. the institution, students, mentors and employers, are clearly spelled out in the contract or agreement.
- Regular and efficient communication between the institution, students, mentors and employers.
- A system (both at the institution and at the place of employment) to record and monitor regularly and systematically the content and progress of the student's learning experience in the workplace and
- A mentoring system that enables the student to recognise strengths and weaknesses in his/her work, to develop existing and new abilities, and to gain knowledge of work practices.

### 5. PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

The programme delivery process should be premised solely on the learning outcomes and the added value to the growth and development of the student. The programme delivery should track the students' progress from preparation for the workplace, placement into the workplace, the monitoring and assessment of the learning at the workplace and the final evaluation and impact of the learning.

The structure and plan for the implementation of the Work Integrated Learning programme should be documented in Learner Guide manuals that carefully outline the roles and responsibilities of the students, industry and the institution in the Co-operative Education partnership.

Each programme should have an own manual and this would typically include the following table of contents.

- An introduction and definition of Co-operative Education and Work Integrated Learning
- Responsibilities of the institution, industry and students
- The structure of the experiential learning programme and its time frames
- Admission requirements and prerequisites.
- Work preparedness programme and placement procedures
- The WIL programme outcomes and records of learning

- Monitoring, visits, assessment and evaluation of the learners
- Structured feedback and performance review

## 5.1 Best Practice

The following categories and descriptions of learning are recommended as a best practice guide for the operational and learning progression of the experiential learning cycle.

### **Work Preparedness and Life Skills Learning Programme**

Students receive instruction to prepare them for the world of work. Policy and ground rules clarify roles and the obligations of the student, the institution and industry in the co-operative education partnership. Students acquire job-seeking skills such as CV writing, application procedures, interview and presentation skills. Other life skills such as time management, team building and communication are some of the learning outcomes.

### **Work Place Learning Programme Design**

Learning criteria and specific outcomes are documented to give guidance to the student and mentors and employers on the work-based learning areas for specific disciplines. Students are guided on how the WIL should be integrated and recorded. Assessment criteria and evaluation timeframes should be documented clearly in the student Learner Guide Manuals.

### **Placement Learning Process**

Academic institutions market and promote Co-operative Education to commerce, industry, the public sector and NGOs and secure appropriate placement opportunities. Institutions arrange mutually beneficial partnerships by facilitating the application, interview and placement process to ensure that students are suitably placed. Learners are encouraged to engage with staff in securing their own placements. All work placement stations secured should be inspected and approved by the Institution.

### **Communication, Visitation and Monitoring**

Co-operative Education staff monitor students as part of formative assessment to ensure that their learning experiences meet the expectations of all parties. The students, mentors, employers and academic staff communicate or meet to discuss progress. Logbook entries, presentations or any other agreed evidence portfolios or artefacts should be used to assess student progress. Visits to students at the workplace where possible are planned timeously and by appointment. Frequency of visits will depend on geographical location, cost and related factors. The outcomes of such visits must be well documented. Grievance procedures and related communication procedures must be clearly communicated in the Learner Guides.

### **Assessment and Evaluation**

Interim and continuous assessment may occur throughout the experiential learning period. Mentors, academic staff and examiners perform assessment and evaluation. Logbooks, assignment reports, projects, presentations or any other agreed evidence portfolios or artefacts may be used to assess and evaluate student learning. Marks, credits or records of competence may be used to reflect student success and learning outcomes. Structured and recorded feedback by students and employers serve as a quality assurance tool for review.

## 5.2 Programme Design Academic Criteria

The following outcomes based template is recommended as the basis to inform the design and structure of work integrated learning. The assessment and audit criteria are used to monitor compliance for internal self-evaluation and the institutional audit process aligned to the HEQC requirements. This unit standard is registered with SAQA as HET10 for the HDHET qualification.

**Table: Design and Structure of Work Integrated Learning for the Workplace**

Ref.	Specific Outcome	Assessment and Audit Criteria / Evidence
SO1	Specify the outcomes for a learning programme and identify the outcomes best acquired at a workplace. Design and structure work integrated learning to achieve outcomes. <i>(You will know this when</i> →	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The learning outcomes for the Whole Qualification has been identified and documented in line with SAQA requirements.</li> <li>2. The outcomes best acquired in the workplace have been identified and listed separately along with the assessment.</li> <li>3. Discipline specific tasks have been identified and listed applicable to each learning outcome in the workplace with a view to mastering the outcome mentioned.</li> <li>4. The critical cross-field outcomes and assessment criteria have been identified in relation to the discipline contextual outcomes.</li> </ol>
SO2	Collaborate with workplace mentors on the condition of work, logistics and control mechanisms pertaining to <b>experiential learning</b> , and negotiate values and ethics relevant to work integrated learning. <i>(You will know this when</i> →	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work integrated learning in the context of Co-operative Education have been adequately documented and communicated to mentors in industry.</li> <li>2. Administrative and logistical arrangement have been agreed between industry and the institution and correctly documented (time, prerequisite, registration, etc.).</li> <li>3. The roles and obligations of the students, institution and industry have been clearly outlined to ensure responsibility and accountability.</li> <li>4. Moral issues, values, dress code, related policies in place have been documented and communicated to mentors.</li> <li>5. Industry given the opportunity to provide feedback on cohort of learners and the programme, to ensure ongoing review and improvement.</li> </ol>
SO3	Communicate and negotiate details of the work integrated learning with learners (Work preparedness and Placement). <i>(You will know this when</i> →	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The definition and purpose of work integrated learning is correctly communicated to the learner. This would include the benefits to students, industry and the institution.</li> <li>2. The programme and learning outcomes of the Work Preparedness Skills Programme have been tabled and is understood and agreed with learners on time schedules, participation and assessment.</li> <li>3. The learning outcomes of the placement process have been identified and the role of the student in taking responsibility to achieving the outcomes has been documented and communicated.</li> <li>4. The placement process and logistical arrangements associated with document submission, interview schedules, regular communication and meeting agreed deadlines have been negotiated and agreed to ensure compliance.</li> <li>5. Administrative and process documentation have been designed to ensure a smooth flow of evidence in achieving the outcomes.</li> </ol>
SO4	Integrate <b>Experiential Learning</b> with teaching and learning inside the classroom and monitor the integration on a continuous basis. <i>(You will know this when</i> →	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The workplace learning outcomes and its integration with the academic outcomes are clearly demonstrated along with the weighted credits and assessment criteria.</li> <li>2. Methods of recording and reflection on vocational experiences are agreed along with logistical arrangements for formative and summative assessment.</li> <li>3. Projects, assignments, reports and oral presentation briefs along with submission details, are explained and documented to clearly show the integration of the work experience and the academic learning outcomes.</li> <li>4. Instruments and tools are designed to measure and assess the critical cross-field outcomes within the discipline context.</li> <li>5. Monitoring and visitation processes and agendas are in place to ensure opportunities for formative and summative assessment.</li> <li>6. Opportunities are created to ensure documented feedback on their learning experiences as part of a quality review and continuous improvement.</li> </ol>

## 6. MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

SASCE wishes to endorse work integrated learning as a teaching and learning methodology that promotes and delivers career-orientated qualifications. In order to promote and support institutional accountability and alignment to a quality management system, SASCE recommends an **integrated approach** to the management of WIL. This would mean a **centralized unit** with specific key performance areas as well as **decentralized implementation** into faculties.

The management of work integrated learning should be structured as a strategic academic intervention that gives organizational and logistical support at the level of programme delivery to faculties. At the same time the co-ordination and institutional accountability is facilitated and managed as an interface with external stakeholders by the central Co-operative Education unit.

This policy cannot be prescriptive on resource allocation and logistical arrangements as there is a need to allow for context sensitivities and flexibility. This should be negotiated between faculty, the central unit, senior management and industry partners. The final arrangement on how and where resources are defined and located must be decided by all stakeholders. The only criteria should be, how best the work integrated learning outcomes can be delivered and supported, in a way that will ensure quality and institutional accountability. The following listed KPA's is included as a guide to stakeholders:

### 6.1 A Centralized Co-operative Education Unit

A central unit could have the following key performance areas (KPA's):

- Profiling work integrated learning and co-operative education partnerships with industry as a strategic thrust of the Institution.
- Facilitates and supports curriculum development for work integrated learning as an institutional imperative aligned to the NQF and SAQA requirements.
- Promote linkages with national and international bodies on Co-operative Education and research related initiatives.
- Execute focused strategic planning and interventions across faculties in the Institution to ensure quality assurance.
- Marketing, promotion and networking as an interface with commerce and industry on behalf of the Institution.
- Structure operational networking and communication between departments and across faculties on a continuous basis to improve synergies and enhance prospects for placements across programme disciplines.
- Manage and monitor material and human resources applicable to work integrated learning.
- Render administrative support for the student experience across programme disciplines – improves system efficiencies and eliminates duplication when dealing with Industry and student needs.
- Support to decentralized delivery of work integrated learning in the faculties.

### 6.2 Decentralized Delivery in Faculty

Could include the following KPA's:

- Programme design integration between academic and work-based learning outcomes
- Work preparedness skills programme design, delivery and assessment
- Ground rules and stakeholder obligations
- The placement process
- Visitation and monitoring of learner progress in the workplace
- Formative assessment of the learning outcomes
- Advisory Committee liaison

- Summative evaluations, impact and review of service delivery of all the categories in the work integrated learning academic cycle
- Localized administration and database management

### 6.3 Links between Centralized Unit and Decentralized Delivery in Faculties and Departments

This policy recognizes that historical preferences exist as to the quality and nature of the operational link in an integrated model. This policy recommends line responsibility of work integrated learning in faculty, as well as specific reporting to the central Co-operative Education Unit where outputs are coordinated and where institutional accountability for work integrated learning should reside.

## 7. CONCLUSION

This policy is based on the 21 years of Co-operative Education experience and contribution by the Southern African Society for Co-operative Education (SASCE), established in 1984, as a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting co-operative education and the partnership between academic institutions, the business world and community organizations. SASCE promotes the integration of academic studies with quality work based experiential learning, also known as work integrated learning. The key success of co-operative education is that students are able to graduate and have the competitive advantage of entering the world of work with the benefit of accredited work experience related to their respective disciplines.

SASCE acknowledges that changes in the higher and further education landscape and National Skills Development, has highlighted the need for the application of new knowledge in the development of professional knowledge workers with globally equivalent skills who are socially responsible in contributing to the national development and social transformation (White Paper 3, 1997). This policy is intended to assist all stakeholders in setting up and implementing quality service delivery of work integrated learning programmes as a Co-operative Education methodology.

## 8. BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Brennan, J. Little B. 1996. A review of Work Based Learning in Higher Education. London: Jessica Kingsley
2. Seagraves L., Osborne M, Neal P, Dockrell R., Hartshorn C., Boyd A. 1996. Learning in Smaller Companies (LISC). Final Report. University of Stirling: Education Policy Development
3. University of Leeds. 1996. Work Based Learning Project Final Report
4. Ministry of Education. 2006. The Higher Education Qualification Framework (HEQF). Pretoria
5. Centre for Higher Education (CHE). 2004. Criteria for Programme Accreditation. Pretoria
6. Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). Criteria for Institutional Audits. Pretoria
7. SAQA. Unit Standard HET10. Post Graduate Certificate in Higher Education. Design and structure Experiential Learning at the Work Place
8. Southern African Society for Co-operative Education (SASCE). 2000. Best Practise in Co-operative Education. Durban
9. HEQC-CHE. 2006. Service Learning in the Curriculum. A Resource for Higher Education Institutions. JET Education Services .Pretoria