



TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY

OF THE BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

Policy Number	TL001
Accountable Executive Managers	Principal and Registrar
Policy Owner	Registrar
Responsible Division	Faculty
Status	Approved
Approved by	BTC Board
Date of Approval	21 November 2024
Amendments	
Date of Amendment	
Next Review Date	
Key Stake Holders	Faculty & Students

Signatures of Acceptance:

Board Representative	Charles de Kiewit	Date: 21 November 2024
Principal	Darryl Soal	Date: 21 November 2024
Registrar	Mark Odendaal	Date: 22 November 2024

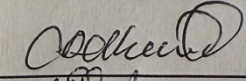
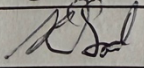
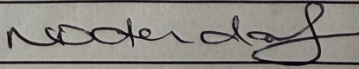


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Principal		Date: 21/11/2024
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1. PREAMBLE

- a. The Baptist Theological College of Southern Africa (BTC) was established in 1951 to prepare pastors for the ministry of the Baptist Union of Southern Africa. Whereas the training of pastors for the Baptist ministry and to qualify them in terms of the requirements of the Baptist Union requirements remains the focus of the BTC it has since widened its scope has widened to include the preparation of congregational ministers, missionaries and those in the workplace, in and beyond Southern Africa. It is now open to all who are prepared to accept its Statement of Faith.
- b. Far-reaching changes took place in 1994 in South Africa, and these have impacted significantly on the higher education scene with regard to the development of a unitary higher education system. Approaches to teaching and learning (T&L) have also changed significantly.
- c. The current overall approach to T&L at BTC has developed over the years as it has sought to introduce programmes that accord with the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF) of the Council on Higher Education (CHE). BTC is registered with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), its programmes are accredited by the CHE and are approved by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA).

2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

- a. The T&L policy seeks to support the fulfilment of our draft revised Mission Statement which indicates the ethos of the qualifications offered at BTC: To prepare believers for service with integrity by the provision of holistic theological education that is evangelical and contextually relevant through contact and distance learning in Southern Africa and beyond.
- b. This policy applies to the following qualifications:
 - i. Higher Certificate in Ministry (120 credits; NQF level 5)
 - ii. Higher Certificate in Theology (120 credits; NQF level 5)
 - iii. Bachelor of Biblical Studies (360 credits; NQF level 7)
 - iv. Bachelor of Theology (Honours) (120 credits; NQF level 8)
 - v. Master of Theology (180 credits; NQF level 9)
- c. This policy should be read in conjunction with BTC's:
 - i. Assessment and Evaluation Policy
 - ii. Staff Development Policy
 - iii. Work-Integrated Learning Policy
 - iv. Recognition of Prior Learning Policy
 - v. Post-Graduate Policy

3. CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

- a. Academic Board: The Academic Board is comprised of the Principal, Registrar, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Dean of Postgraduate Studies, Heads of Department, and up to three more co-opted members of the faculty.
- b. Course: A course is a module of study as set out in the prescribed curriculum.
- c. Faculty: The Faculty consists of all members of the academic or teaching staff.
- d. Learning: Learning is "the process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience, which guides subsequent understanding, appreciation, and action" (Mezirow 1999:1).

- e. Programme: A programme is a plan of study to achieve a qualification.
- f. Qualification: A qualification is the overall goal of a programme of study. Programmes with slight variations to them (e.g. varying choice of majors) may lead to a standard qualification. BTC's qualifications are listed in 2b of this policy.
- g. Teaching: Teaching is a broad term which refers to those activities that include instruction, guidance, support, and the facilitation of learning

4. PRINCIPLES AND ASPIRATIONS

- a. BTC's guiding philosophy is determined by its focus on preparing learners for a variety of ministries; its striving for academic excellence as a shared responsibility (of learners, faculty, and institution) marked by integrity; its contextual and evangelical nature; and its focus is on the identity of our learners.
- b. All the qualifications offered at BTC are learner-centered and informed by evangelical, biblical, and theological norms.
- c. T&L processes are founded on the belief that knowledge is constructed as an active process, socially (through collaboration) and personally. It involves research and work-integrated learning and is a lifelong activity.
- d. The overarching philosophy which undergirds T&L at BTC is social constructivism where:
 - i. The emphasis is on the collaborative nature of learning in the learner's cultural and social context and beyond;
 - ii. Learning is more than the assimilation of new knowledge by learners; it is the process by which learners are integrated into a knowledge community;
 - iii. Learners are involved in the formation of understanding within the scope of the evangelical faith.
 - iv. The essential quality in the T&L policy is academic excellence through shared responsibility for learning.

a) Holistic Theological Education

- a. BTC models a pattern of holistic thought where 'biblical truth is the integrating core of reality' (Ott 2016:30).
- b. BTC offers integrated theological education programmes. From this perspective, knowledge, skills and values, spiritual and professional formation, and the subjects which constitute the theological encyclopedia (the widely accepted broad fields of theological education) are integrated in a meaningful way which fulfils the commitment to provide a holistic theological education.
- c. A vital descriptor of the BTC's ethos is integrity, characterised by justice, incorruptibility, truthfulness and faithfulness.
- d. Our programmes hope to form students who will be professional in the roles they assume, theologically and ministerially adept, and in possession of a developed personal and spiritual maturity and the kind of clear ministerial identity that will let them flourish in the twenty-first-century world' (Jewell 2018:22).
- e. We agree with Houston (2013:111) who highlights the need for theological education to inform, engage and develop three essential dimensions: cognition (that which one must know), volition (that which one must be able to do), and affection (one's emotions, values, and the 'who we are').

b) Adult Learning

- a. Realising that the majority of our students are older than high school leaving age, we seek to adapt our T&L activities as best as possible to be suitable for an adult learning context. Blair (1997:13) has been vital in the formation of our understanding of the needs that exist within adult learning.
- b. We seek to provide our students with a safe and supportive learning environment. Therefore:
 - i. We respect the learners' knowledge. In doing so, we give affirmation that contributes toward their psychological and emotional support, decreasing the risk of unhealthy dependency and boosting self-esteem, which motivates learning. Furthermore, we provide learners with the opportunity to integrate their previous knowledge with the new knowledge that they acquire in their BTC studies.
 - ii. We seek to intentionally build community amongst learners both inside and outside of the classroom. "Jesus provides the model: he gathered around himself a highly diverse community, women and men of different occupations, education, and class, who did not always agree, cooperate, or understand. But their loyalty to the Christ made of them a community" (Blair 1997:13).
 - iii. We provide learners with opportunities for collaboration, both among fellow students as well as between teachers and learners.
 - iv. We encourage our staff and faculty to embody the roles of mentors and models for our students through the formation of appropriate, meaningful relationships.
 - v. We organise the various aspects of our educational offering strategically to ensure that all information is well structured and clearly presented.
- c. We are committed to engaging our students' minds, both during their course of study and beyond it (Blair 1997:15-17), therefore:
 - i. We seek to keep learners interested and further develop their interest in the various fields and topics covered in their programmes.
 - ii. We use moments of cognitive dissonance (the clash of what people know or believe with new knowledge or beliefs that they encounter) as strategic learning opportunities. We acknowledge that in such instances where students are challenged in their thinking, they are most strongly urged to grow, discover, and bring about coherence of understanding.
 - iii. We provide multiple opportunities for critical reflection to deepen knowledge and understanding, develop key skills, and experience personal transformation.
 - iv. We encourage learners to have an openness to the unexpected, allowing the Spirit to be at work in their hearts and minds.
- d. We seek to ground student learning in their experience, realising that their past and present experiences have shaped their identity and understanding of the world, therefore:
 - i. We seek to connect learning with practical application outcomes that are relevant to the contemporary context, relating where possible to real-life issues.

- ii. We treat our students as 'knowers' in fields in which they have had previous experience, seeing in them the potential to be complex thinkers and not underestimating their opportunity to succeed in theological studies.
 - iii. We strive to meet the identified learning needs of our students, including the search for a deepening of complex thinking as they acquire new knowledge and critically grapple with it, growing their self-esteem and confidence as they build competency and skills, as they journey to discover how best they can fulfil their callings.
- e. We seek to empower our students to be self-directed learners whereby they learn how to learn, have appropriate control over the learning process, and develop the maturity to unlearn inaccurate knowledge and dysfunctional habits (Blair 1997:19).
- f. We seek to provide our students with a theological education that speaks to mind, heart and soul. To this end, we encourage our students to use their imagination and think critically for themselves, live out their knowledge and allow it to contribute toward their spiritual formation, and build a Christ-worshipping unified community amongst both teachers and learners.
- i. Lifelong Learning
- g. T&L is a dynamic lifelong process. This is true in all professions and vocations where the integration of new knowledge and experience is vital for the contextualisation and relevance of teaching programmes. It is based on inquisitive and enquiring critical thinking.
- h. Realising that there will always be more to learn for those in ministry, both theologically and practically, we seek to encourage our students and faculty alike to be lifelong learners with a commitment to their continued development and growth.
- i. Wherever appropriate, BTC seeks to provide its students, alumni, faculty and staff with opportunities which keep them engaged in learning and encourage them to all be lifelong learners.

5. TEACHING AND LEARNING

a) Programme Structure

- i) Courses are the foundational structure through which T&L occurs in all BTC programmes up to NQF level 8.
- ii) The curriculum of each programme consists of a combination of compulsory and elective courses.
- iii) All courses have a credit value of either 6, 12 or 24 credits.
- iv) The programmes are organised under the departmental subject areas:
 - (1) Biblical Studies
 - (2) Systematic Theology
 - (3) Biblical Languages
 - (4) Practical Theology (pastoral studies, youth studies, counselling, and missiology)
 - (5) Church History, Baptist Studies and African Christianity

- (6) Research
- (7) Practical Ministry

b) Course Delivery

- i) Since its inception, BTC has traditionally employed the contact mode of T&L. Distance education has been offered since 2001. BTC's distance education offering has been increased substantially in recent years to meet the growing demand for this mode of T&L.
- ii) Maintaining both contact and distance learning options has been a key area of importance for the institution, and this has proved to be most beneficial during times of crisis where contact learning is not possible, either for the student personally or for the institution more broadly.
- iii) Learners are issued with a Course Directive for each course. The Course Directive serves as the core document which contains information pertaining to the:
 - (1) Course description
 - (2) Course objectives and learning outcomes
 - (3) Course credit value and allocation
 - (4) Assessments and evaluations
 - (5) Course requirements
 - (6) Prescribed and recommended readings and other resources
 - (7) Outline of the course content
 - (8) Course lecturer details
 - (9) Available academic and administrative support
- iv) Supporting course notes or reading materials are made available where applicable. Course notes cover the core content of the course; no specific course notes are provided for research or practically orientated courses.
- v) All students are issued with the following Essential Guides:
 - (1) *Assignment Writing Guide*
 - (2) *College Technology Guide*

c) Learning Management System

- i) BTC seeks to employ the use of a blended (multi-faceted) Learning Management System (LMS).
- ii) Schoology is the LMS used by BTC for Contact and Distance study.
- iii) The current LMS integrates face-to-face teaching (both actual and virtual) as well as peer-to-peer learning opportunities which results in a centralised digital learning solution. It allows for online teaching and the delivery of learning materials in various ways. T&L activities on this platform include assignment instructions and submission, relevant resources, case studies, discussion *fora*, and online tests. Opportunities are also available for lecturers and learners to collaborate, including peer learning. This takes account of the different learning styles of learners and aims at 'deep' (critical thinking) rather than 'surface' (acquisition of knowledge) learning in accordance with Bloom's taxonomy for teaching, learning and assessment. This is metacognition: awareness and understanding of one's own thought processes, i.e. thinking about thinking. Much of this seeks to reflect what

would take place in the classroom where contact learning takes place.

- iv) Schoology facilitates learning through the availability of appropriate rubrics (pre-established criteria) and memoranda (assessment criteria for assignments/examinations) and the provision of feedback by way of comments and marks, which is a vital part of the learning process_

d) Language

- a. BTC's language of instruction and communication is English. As such, all courses are delivered in English and students must complete the requirements of courses in English.
- b. Qualifications, programmes or courses may be offered in another language as approved by BTC's Management. In such instances, it is imperative that approval only be given upon the verification that suitable Quality Assurance mechanisms are available to maintain the integrity of the course.

6. ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

- a. Assessment and the giving of feedback is an integral component of the T&L process. It is a crucial mechanism for evaluating the performance of teachers and learners.
- b. Assessment and evaluation are employed to identify, gather, and interpret information and evidence that would enable reasonably objective judgments to be made regarding the extent to which a student has achieved the learning outcomes of a course.
- c. The effectiveness of T&L interactions is regularly monitored, and the outcomes of these processes are used for improvement (CHE 2010:18-19). Assessment and evaluation are vital aspects of institutional Quality Assurance mechanisms.
- d. Assessment and evaluation of T&L are continuous and iterative. This is done through constructive feedback.
- e. Assessment and evaluation are based on the criteria of validity, reliability, effectiveness and efficiency.
- f. Assessment and evaluation involve both internal and external processes. These processes occur at various levels as appropriate to the activity, including self-assessment (for both teachers and learners), peer-assessment (for both teachers and learners), teacher-learner assessment, learner-teacher assessment, internal institutional assessment, and external institutional assessment.
- g. The *Assessment and Evaluation Policy* should be consulted for further detail.

7. ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

a) Student Development

- i. Students are provided with foundational knowledge and skills in the prescribed curriculum.
- ii. Courses in different academic years are incrementally more challenging to stimulate students to develop and grow. This developmental progression is aligned with the *Graduate Attribute Matrix*.
- iii. Provision of opportunities for work-integrated learning is made, whereby students can develop essential skills and practical competencies to ensure they are adequately prepared for the expectations of the future workplace.
- iv. Articulation opportunities are provided, with students being able to progress through NQF levels 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 in the various programmes offered by BTC.
- v. Students who attain an NQF level 9 qualification from BTC are also encouraged to consider further studies at other institutions.
- vi. Students may articulate to similar programmes offered by BTC; however, credit limitations may apply.
- vii. Students may be given the opportunity to participate in additional developmental activities offered by BTC, including weekly chapel services, occasional conferences with both local and international experts, and the acquisition of relevant resources.
- viii. Students are supported in their academic progress through contact with both their lecturers as well as skilled administrative support staff.

b) Staff Development

- i. We recognise that staff development in theological education should encompass academic, vocational and personal-spiritual development.
- ii. Academic: We are mindful that theological faculty members should be scholars. Thus, their professional development should seek to aid them in their development as scholars and practitioners, their growth in their chosen subject fields within theological studies (particularly in respect to matters of contextualisation and globalisation) as well as development in a spiritual relationship with research (reading through the lenses of both truth and relevance) (Cheesman 2018:48-50).
- iii. Vocational: Many people teaching in theological education would be qualified to do so by virtue of their theological qualifications. However, some may never have received any formal training regarding education, teaching and learning, assessments, curriculum design, educational

technology, issues within higher education, or student engagement. We acknowledge this as a critical continuous developmental need.

- iv. Personal-Spiritual: Teaching and learning activities are most effective when the curriculum is embodied and communicated wholeheartedly by faculty and staff (Guthrie, 2018:149); therefore, we encourage them to be committed to consistent growth in Christlikeness, accountable through membership of a local church, and involved in Christian ministry.
- v. BTC recognises and supports formal, informal, and non-formal professional developmental activities. These could be done either individually or collectively.
- vi. Our institutional professional development strategy seeks to encourage lifelong learning, digital fluency, the development of future-ready curricula, professionalism and vocational excellence, and personal and spiritual growth.
- vii. Details of the implementation and evaluation of the professional development strategy can be found in the *Staff Development Policy*.

8. IMPLEMENTATION

- a. It is the intent that this policy is implemented across all academic programmes offered by BTC.
- b. BTC's faculty are the primary role players in the implementation of this policy, as they are most closely involved with the vast majority of T&L activities.
- c. The Academic Board is responsible for the oversight of the implementation of this policy, supported by Management.

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