UNIVERSITY OF RWANDA

GUIDELINES ON THE THIRD TRIMESTER FOR STUDENTS IN FOUR (4) AND FIVE (5) YEARS' DEGREE PROGRAMMES

Approved by Academic Senate meeting of 14th November 2017

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I. Introduction

These guidelines present the background information, the rationale and the aim of having mandatory co and extra-curricular activities for students pursuing a four (4) or five (5) year degree programme. They also recommend and describe these activities or programmes.

II. Background Information

On 6th February 2017, the University of Rwanda has in its Extraordinary Senate meeting, adopted a 3 year degree programme for all undergraduate programmes offered at former CBE, CE , CASS and for most of Mathematics and Science disciplines at CST and CAVM. CMHS, CAVM and CST will continue to offer Medicine, Pharmacy, Health Sciences, Architecture, Engineering, ICT, Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine programmes in 4 or 5 years.

In order to offer a degree programme in 3 years, UR has also decided to change the semester system into a trimester system.

Therefore, it would be abnormal for the same institution to run in parallel two different systems: a trimester system for a 3 year degree programme and a semester system for a 4 year or 5 year degree programme.

On 25th April 2017, UR Senate decided:

- ✓ To organize academic activities in three trimesters per year for all undergraduate programmes and to have one common academic calendar for all three , four and above years' programmes;
- ✓ To offer co and extra-curricular activities in the third trimester for students pursuing a four (4) or five (5) year degree programme. These co and extra-curricular activities shall be mandatory but not credit-bearing.
- ✓ That concerned students shall be requested to develop progressively a portfolio that must comprise all field works conducted and must reflect the learning experience in the chosen field.
- ✓ That at the end of year 4 or year 5, the portfolio shall be assessed by a panel of lecturers and the verdict shall be Pass or Fail. Any student who fails the portfolio shall not be allowed to graduate. He or she shall be recommended to repeat the component of the field work failed.

III. Rationale

Starting with this academic year 2017-2018, UR will implement the above Senate decisions. This arrangement is going to cause students who are in four and above years' programmes to have no classes during the third trimester.

To address this, UR sees this as a good opportunity to enhance graduate attributes and consequently students' employability through engaging them in various co and extra-curricular activities.

The co and extra-curricular activities that students will engage in will include volunteering activities, entrepreneurship schemes and employability modules/personal development scheme, vacation work and Attachments for the final years and campus based extra-curricular activities (ECAs). All activities will be concluded by some form of awards and recognitions of the best performers and committed participants.

Students will be informed of the arrangements early enough, not later than the end of the first trimester so that they do the necessary preparations. Schools, Students Welfare department as well as the Careers and Employability Services will closely collaborate to guide, monitor and evaluate productive engagement of students into these.

IV. Definitions of key terms

4.1. Attachment (or industrial attachment)

An attachment is a compulsory part of an education programme, usually implemented in the TVET sector and in higher education. Participants are students, and the successful attachment is a pre-requisite for graduation and certification. Although the learning may be structured, the main purpose of an attachment is work exposure, i.e. putting into practice what has been learnt before (Republic of Rwanda, National Workplace Learning Policy, 2015)

4.2. Co-curricular activities

Co-curricular refers to activities, programmes, and learning experiences that complement, in some way, what students are learning in school—i.e., experiences that are connected to or mirror the academic curriculum [In S. Abbott (Ed.), the glossary of education reform. Retrieved from http://edglossary.org/co-curricular]

4.3. Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship means the capacity and willingness to develop, organize and manage a business venture along with any of its risks in order to make a profit. The most obvious example of entrepreneurship is the starting of new businesses (Retrieved from http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/entrepreneurship.html).

4.4. Extra-curricular activities

Extracurricular refer to activities that may be offered or coordinated by a school, but may not be explicitly connected to academic learning [In S. Abbott (Ed.), the glossary of education reform. Retrieved from http://edglossary.org/co-curricular]

4.5. Portfolio

A student portfolio is a compilation of academic work and other forms of educational evidence assembled for the purpose of (1) evaluating coursework quality, learning progress, and academic achievement; (2) determining whether students have met learning standards or other academic requirements for courses, grade-level promotion, and graduation; (3) helping students reflect on their academic goals and progress as learners; and (4) creating a lasting archive of academic work products, accomplishments, and other documentation [In S. Abbott (Ed.), The glossary of education reform. Retrieved from http://edglossary.org/portfolio]

4.6. Volunteering

Volunteering means any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group, or organization (Wilson, John, 2010).

Volunteering is the commitment of time and energy for the benefit of society and the community, the environment or individuals outside one's immediate family. It is undertaken freely and by choice, without concern for financial gain (Retrieved from http://www.volunteerfingal.ie/index.php/organisations/articles-for-organisations/165-definition-a-principles-of-volunteering.html)

V. Description of the programmes

5.1. Volunteering

a. Students who wish to develop their skills and give back to their communities will form groups or clubs and identify their areas of interest they want to volunteer in. It can be in conservation, fundraising for a great cause, working with a community to solve an identified challenge in that particular community etc.

b. Students shall be informed of this arrangement and its importance early enough so that they form groups, identify their areas of interest and do preliminary information search about the identified areas of interest, plan as well as think about their logistics.

c. By the end of the fifth week of the second trimester all students shall have registered their group or individual activity to the Office of Student Welfare and Careers and Employability Services. The two offices together with schools shall assess the proposed activities and feedback to students by the end of week eight of trimester two.

d. Because the work can be huge for the departments and schools, it is important that all colleges identify employability/skills development ambassadors and train them thoroughly so that they shall do most of the work under supervision of the departments.

e. The Office of Careers, Students Welfare and Schools shall develop different tools that will help all stakeholders in the activities to do it in orderly and systematic manner.

f. If the duration of engagement into such activities is 2 months, students shall use the first five weeks to plan and carry out their activities and use the remaining two weeks to document their achievements in portfolios and take at least one module of skills

development in line with their programme and present their work. The last week shall be for recognition.

g. Students need to be mindful that there will be no resources from the University to support their activities. They therefore need to be creative enough and come up with activities that will not strain them in terms of resources.

h. From year 2 to five (those who will not be doing compulsory attachment/industrial attachment) can engage in volunteering activities.

i. Students and staff need to understand that it is not wastage of their time or straining them but rather an opportunity for students to apply what they learnt during the last trimesters, develop their problem solving skills as they turn theories into practise.

j. Office of careers and the University management at large can also start to work with different partners to identify areas where our students can volunteer into during the third term so that it adds to the basket of choices for students.

5.2. Entrepreneurship Scheme

a. The entrepreneurship scheme is for students who aspire to be entrepreneurs in their lives. Students who wish to engage in these activities shall register in groups or individually at the Office of Careers and Employability service by the end of the first trimester. They must have a business idea.

b. During the second trimester the Offices of Careers, Students Welfare Departments and Schools shall assess the business ideas presented by students, group them and identify resource people from the business world who can help the students as their mentors or coaches.

c. During the third trimester students in this group shall be given practical training preferably by the business world people. The training shall help students to:
- Reshape their business ideas,
- Do initial screening of sound ideas.
- Discover the best way of applying their knowledge or technology
- Market research and customer development
- Legal requirements for starting business
- Know funding opportunities in country and elsewhere

d. After this training, students shall refine their ideas and develop them further, document their experience from the training, coaching and mentorship.

e. The UR Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, Careers Office and Schools shall develop tools necessary for this undertaking as well as detailed guidelines on how to manage this.

f. Under this programme, students who have innovative ideas that may not transform into business right away (especially those in STEM) are encouraged to bring up their ideas and they shall also be helped to reshape them by the relevant academic staff or researchers in their areas.

g. Depending on how brilliant the idea is, the University shall help such students to further research all develop their ideas into something tangible through its research funding or help students network with relevant partners.

h. Each college is supposed to identify key people or companies that will help them in this endeavour and establish formal working relationship with them.

i. At the end of the trimester all students shall document their achievements and skills gained in their portfolios and present them. Best performing students shall be awarded but even those that fully participated and demonstrated commitment shall be recognised.

j. Office of Careers, Student welfare and Schools shall put in place mechanisms of documenting and keeping records of the activities.

k. Best projects shall be supported in different ways until they mature.

l. In a near future, the University shall put in its funding formula the mechanisms to support colleges in relation to their outcomes in this area.

5.3. Attachment (industrial attachment) and vacation work

a. Under this programme, students will be encouraged to look for attachment or vacation work.

b. Those who will be in credit bearing attachment the existing guidelines shall apply. Those who will not be on credit bearing attachment/industrial attachment shall follow skills development arrangements.

c. For non-credit attachments/industrial attachment or vacation work, students need to be informed earlier like in previous programmes so that they make their minds and start to such for such opportunities.

d. Students who get opportunities shall register with the Office of Careers and Employability by filling the relevant forms. Registration shall close by the end of the ninth week of the second term so that the list is published.

e. The Office of Careers and Schools shall develop modalities to ensure that though there will be no formal supervision, students shall not lie.

f. The employability/skills development ambassadors shall play a big role to minimize risks in this arrangement

g. The employers involved in this programme shall be sensitized to ensure they are contributing to skills development of their future employees by real helping the interns to gain skills.

h. Students shall document their achievements and skills gained in this process in their portfolios and present site supervisors reports.

i. Vacation works may not be directly related to what students are studying at UR but they are equally important in developing some transferable skills and attributes. So students shall be encouraged to register any form of work that they will get during that period being to work in a shop, restaurant, watchman etc.

j. Detailed monitoring, supervision and evaluation procedures of this programme shall be developed in collaboration with Schools, Students Welfare and Guild Council.

k. Students who will fully participate in this programme shall also be recognized at the end of the trimester.

5.4. Campus based extra-curricular activities

a. Students who will fail to engage in one of the above programmes shall be encouraged to form groups and engage in one of many extra -curricular activities available at campus but in more innovative ways. These may be sports, games, debate clubs, drama, campus greening clubs, simulating what they learnt etc.

b. Students shall have to present their proposal on what and how they want to do it to careers office, guild office and schools office. They shall have to demonstrate the value addition of their proposed way of approaching that activity in relation to skills development.

c. All students in their respective groups must register with the Office of Careers or Guild Council by the end of the eighth week of the second term. Depending on numbers and groups, Colleges may arrange the necessary technical support which will help them be more open to the world of work. It can be through training them in one or two skills development modules. They can also bring them guest speakers to give them insights in their chosen areas.

d. They shall be given time to implement their plans accordingly. After which they shall be requested to identify areas within which a person of such skills can be employed, additional skills that they may require to be marketable in that area, how can they get the skills, opportunities for self –employment in that domain, what does it require etc.

e. Students shall document their achievements and skills acquired in their portfolios and present them. The most creative and best performers shall be awarded and those who fully participated and demonstrated commitment shall be recognised. Employment/skills development ambassadors and guild councils shall play key role in making this a success.

f. Schools ,Careers services and Students Welfare departments shall also play a pivotal role to make sure this arrangement engages students in a very productive way by generating innovative ideas to enrich students plans, guide and evaluate the activities with a view to enhance students skills development.

6. Expected Results for students

6.1. Through the volunteering programme, students:

➤ will develop skills and gain work experience;
➤ will get opportunity to gain confidence, to experiment something new and develop a real sense of accomplishment;
➤ will develop their awareness concerning the communities, environment, other people beliefs and living conditions;
➤ will be challenged to achieve their personal goals, to practice using their skills and will discover their hidden talents.

6.2. Under the entrepreneurship scheme, students:
- ➤ will develop their entrepreneurship mindset;
- ➤ will develop their critical thinking, problem solving, communication, risk bearing, working in a team and self-reliance with a high impact to their engagement and success. In any activity, they will work with perseverance and determination of an entrepreneurship mindset;
- ➤ will develop creativity and innovation skills in identifying great business opportunities.

6.3. From attachment, students:
- ➤ will develop or acquire new competencies (knowledge, skills and attitudes) through practical experiences;
- ➤ will improve their confidence in problem solving and critical analytical thinking by being involved in real life activities;
- ➤ will build up experience to the expectations and challenges of the work place;
- ➤ will get opportunity to meet and work with potential employers.

6.4. With engagement in campus based extra-curricular activities, students:

- ➤ will build connections with others who share similar interests, networks that are essential for the workplace;
- ➤ will get an opportunity to acquire collaboration, teamwork, leadership, time management planning, and social skills that are important for successful living;
- ➤ will develop their sense of commitment to a cause or purpose and reduce their egocentric behavior.

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