



UNIVERSITY OF THE
WITWATERSRAND,
JOHANNESBURG

Plan for Learning and Teaching in 2025



Introduction

The year 2024 marked the final year of implementation of the *Wits Learning and Teaching Plan 2020-2024*¹. The plan had seven focus areas:

1. Increasing flexible and life-long learning opportunities
2. Enhancing academics as university teachers
3. Strengthening institutional capacity for curriculum development and renewal
4. Diversifying assessment methods
5. Expanding post-graduate education
6. Expanding innovative formal and informal learning spaces
7. Using data analytics to promote student success.

At the time of the development of this plan in 2019, we had no idea that COVID-19 was about to happen and that these focus areas would assist the University in propelling learning and teaching forward during this difficult time. The seven focus areas responded to the pandemic in ways we did not imagine at the time, most notably the shift to remote online learning and the more extensive use of the Learning Management System (LMS), ulwazi.

By 2022, we had fewer pandemic restrictions, but we were faced with the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a potential disrupter to learning and teaching. AI uses and ethics forced us again to look at our five-year plan and in particular, diversify our assessment methods (4) and provide tools and skills for our university teachers (2) to grapple with this uncertain terrain.

Throughout the implementation of the 2020-2024 period, learning and teaching has remained stable and supported because of the plan. However, the plan has only been successful because in addition to its forward-thinking focus areas, it has forced a change in the way we work. As stated in the Plan for Learning and Teaching in 2024²:

“Over the past few years, we have increasingly been working together in a networked way, building links across erstwhile silos; this facilitates collaboration, collective thinking and communication, as well as strengthening relationships and a sense of common purpose. This way of working gives us both strength and flexibility,

¹ [Wits Learning and Teaching Plan 2020-2024.pdf](#)

² [Wits-learning-and-teaching-plan-2024.pdf](#)

attributes that will be vital to our continuing ability to realise our vision in a world of uncertainty.”³

This networked way of working has guided our development of the *Wits 2025-2029 Learning and Teaching Strategic Plan*⁴. Early in 2024 a task team, including faculty representatives who are leaders in learning and teaching, representatives from the Research and Postgraduate Office, Student Affairs, the Centre for Learning, Teaching and Development (CLTD), systems and operations and students, was established. With the *Wits 2033 Strategic Framework*⁵ in-hand, the task team reviewed relevant University policies, procedural documents, plans and guidelines, global and regional literature on learning and teaching trends in higher education, and institutional data from Business Intelligence Services (BIS). Focus group interviews were conducted with members of faculty Teaching and Learning Committees and with students. Through this process, six new focus areas were identified that build on, extend, or reorient the existing focus areas in the light of Wits’ achievements related to learning and teaching over the past five years. The choice of focus areas was also informed by the needs and issues that have arisen, changing local circumstances and global developments that have an impact on higher education.

The six 2025-2029 Learning and Teaching focus areas are:

1. Empowering students as self-directed learners
2. Supporting and recognising university teachers
3. Enhancing the environment for teaching and student learning
4. Driving curriculum design for student engagement and lifelong learning
5. Harnessing technology to promote learning
6. Strengthening data driven student success.

This five-year plan builds on the foundation of the 2020-2024 period, ensuring continuity with the University’s goals and strategies. It prioritizes enhancing the student learning experience by focusing on their academic journey, well-being, and personal development. The plan also emphasizes leveraging emerging technologies to enrich education, promote

³ The former Senior Director for Academic Affairs Prof. Diane Grayson is acknowledged here for her contribution to the development and implementation of the Wits 2020-2024 Learning and Teaching Plan and the annual plans within the period.

⁴ [Wits-Learning-and_Teaching-Strategic-Plan-2025-2029.pdf](#)

⁵ [Wits 2033 - Wits University](#)

digital literacy, and create an interactive learning environment. Finally, it fosters lifelong learning by supporting continuous growth for students and staff, preparing the University community to adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing world.

This document details the intentions for learning and teaching in 2025, but we recognise that we may have to adapt due to unforeseen circumstances.

Learning and Teaching in 2025

Areas of continuity:

Artificial Intelligence tools

Since 2023, artificial intelligence (AI) has posed significant challenges for higher education, particularly in the realms of academic integrity, and institutional readiness. With advanced AI tools like ChatGPT and other large language models becoming widely available, students now have easy access to software capable of generating essays, code, and even art, raising debates about the authenticity of student work. This accessibility complicates the task of maintaining academic integrity, as traditional plagiarism detection methods are not always effective against AI-generated content.

Furthermore, while AI holds the promise of enabling personalized learning experiences, integrating it effectively requires substantial investment in both technological infrastructure and training of both staff and students. In addition, ethical concerns arise around data privacy and bias, as AI systems often rely on vast amounts of personal data and can inadvertently perpetuate inequalities present in their training data. Consequently, we must navigate complex issues related to pedagogy, ethics, and resource allocation as they adapt to the transformative presence of AI.

In 2024, we held discussions and produced resources and guidance for staff and students on how to use AI tools to support good teaching and student learning, while avoiding potentially harmful consequences. Staff were encouraged to explore possible uses of AI tools within their own disciplines, and we started reviewing our documents related to academic misconduct.

In 2025 we must continue these efforts but also move forward to keep staff and students abreast of global and regional developments in AI. We will, therefore, enhance the digital abilities of staff and students through the development of courses, workshops and seminars on AI and academic integrity.

Blended learning

Blended learning is instruction that, “*blends technological, temporal, spatial, and pedagogical dimensions to create actualized learning*”⁶. The technological (none/ lean or rich), temporal (synchronous or asynchronous), spatial (same/near space or remote/distant) and pedagogical (instructor or student- centred) are not fixed and can be adjusted in the design of courses, programmes or by level of study.

Since 2022 Wits has adopted blended learning as the predominant mode of educational provision. We have come a long way, but there remains need for us to be intentional in how we design our courses to provide a blend of activities and assessments to meet the nature of the discipline and the needs of our diverse student population.

In 2024 we enhanced the design of courses offered in blended mode, taking into account time and space considerations and constraints. Professional learning opportunities and support were offered by the CLTD and Faculty Teaching and Learning units.

In 2025, we need to pay more attention to design of our courses and the balance of dimensions shown above. We need better coherence and intentionality with regard to the space, use of technology, timing and the method and teaching approaches. We need to consider the essential elements of blended learning as proposed by Joosten et al (2021)⁷ which include student-centred, active learning pedagogies, a focus on integration of the physical environments and to scaffold the students’ learning throughout the course. To

⁶ Joosten, T., Weber, N., Baker, M., Schletzbaum, A., & McGuire, A. (2021). *Planning for a Blended Future: A Research-Driven Guide for Educators*. [Report] Every Learner Everywhere Network. Retrieved from: <https://www.everylearnereverywhere.org/resources/>

⁷ Joosten, T., Weber, N., Baker, M., Schletzbaum, A., & McGuire, A. (2021). *Planning for a Blended Future: A Research-Driven Guide for Educators*. [Report] Every Learner Everywhere Network. Retrieved from: <https://www.everylearnereverywhere.org/resources/>

foster effective learning, it is essential to move from a “sage on the stage” approach to teaching to one where students actively participate in their own learning. Emphasizing student interaction and active engagement encourages a shift from instructor-led teaching to approaches that are more student-centred, which benefits lifelong and self-directed learning. Blended learning provides an ideal opportunity for this transition by incorporating real-life experiences, flexibility, and peer learning. Successfully integrating in-person and online learning environments requires intentional design and careful mapping of our modes of provision. By deciding which activities are best suited for online or face-to-face delivery, we can create a more cohesive learning experience. Lastly, the use of scaffolding⁸ supports student success by helping students build foundational knowledge before advancing to more complex concepts. Scaffolding, offers guidance and support, helping students build their knowledge and skills progressively as they engage in various learning activities.

In 2025, we will continue to improve on the design of courses offered in blended mode, with careful consideration given to technology, space, time and pedagogy. The CLTD and Faculty Teaching and Learning units will provide professional development opportunities and support to facilitate this enhancement.

Assessment, learning and academic integrity

In 2023 we implemented our new *Senate Standing Orders on the Assessment of Student Learning*⁹. These standing orders enable and promote the use of diverse forms of assessment that are appropriate for supporting, monitoring and measuring diverse students’ achievement of diverse learning outcomes. When the emphasis is placed on learning, students are mentally more prepared and able to do better.

AI tools in education has led many academics to return to traditional assessment methods, such as in-person, time-based, closed-book assessments, to minimize the risk of plagiarism and ensure that student work is authentic. However, these approaches can be at odds with the skills students will need in the workplace, where AI tools are increasingly integrated into daily tasks. In professional settings, employees often rely on AI for data

⁸ Professional and Continuing Education. (n.d.). *7 scaffolding learning strategies for the classroom*. University of San Diego. Retrieved 21 November 2024

⁹ [SSO - Assessment of Student Learning 2022.pdf](#)

analysis, problem-solving, and communication, highlighting a disconnect between university assessments and real-world demands. We need to minimise this disconnect.

To truly prepare students for postgraduate studies and the world of work, we need to develop assessment strategies to enhance students' digital abilities in using AI responsibly and effectively. This need is especially critical for students who may encounter digital technologies for the first time at university. By focusing on innovative assessment methods, we can support students in building the competencies that are now essential for career success and personal growth.

In 2024, concerted efforts were made to strengthen the alignment between learning outcomes and assessments and to diversify assessment, in line with the *Senate Standing Orders on the Assessment of Student Learning*, while supporting students to experience the joy of learning and to track their learning progress. We also made greater use of forms of assessment that are authentic and contextually relevant. Assessments that require students to cultivate their own voice and draw on their own lived experience were encouraged.

In 2025 we will continue these efforts as well as prioritize developing more diverse and flexible assessment methods that better reflect real-world skills and learning outcomes. Faculties must ensure that feedback is given to students regularly, timeously and with sufficient detail so that students can learn from their assessments and can improve during the course. This can enhance student success and throughput rates.

Maintaining an online presence

In 2020, all our courses were required to have a site on our LMS. This enabled learning and teaching to continue during the pandemic and also helped us face the challenges resulting from national loadshedding and student protests. The LMS enabled flexible learning during these trying times and a huge benefit of ulwazi (the LMS we have adopted) is that since 2020 we have been able use the system to enhance learning and teaching. For example, ulwazi has several assessment tools that are ideal for diagnostic and formative assessments which can be used to inform teaching activities during a course and can provide timely

feedback to students. The students can then assess their own level of understanding and become self-directed in their approach to learning. The flexibility that the LMS allows also means that staff and students can learn outside of the classroom and can set their own pace.

In 2024 course sites on the LMS were enhanced and updated in order to implement teaching in a blended mode that effectively promotes student learning and engagement. Support was offered by CLTD and Faculty Learning and Teaching Units.

In 2025 we will continue to promote student learning and engagement through our use of the LMS. We will also continue to learn about new developments in ulwazi and other education technologies and devise ways to best integrate these into teaching and student learning.

Life-long learning

Lifelong learning has become increasingly important in today's fast-evolving world, where rapid technological advancements and changing job requirements demand continuous skill development. Rather than relying solely on formal education early in life, individuals now need to pursue ongoing learning to stay competitive, adaptable, and fulfilled in both personal and professional spheres. This approach supports not only career growth and employability but also fosters personal enrichment, as people explore new interests and perspectives throughout their lives. In an era where knowledge quickly becomes outdated, lifelong learning has emerged as essential for thriving in a knowledge-driven, interconnected global landscape.

In order to better support lifelong learning, in 2024 Wits consolidated the administration of the many short courses it offers under a single entity, the Wits Plus (Pty) Ltd, a wholly Wits-owned commercial company. This consolidation makes it easier for potential students to find short courses of interest to them and increase income to the University through streamlined administrative processes and better financial controls. The Wits Plus Pty (Ltd) is working closely with the Quality Assurance and Planning Office (QAPO) to ensure that the short courses offered are of the same academic quality as the rest of our offerings. We are

also working together to develop new courses that are relevant, interesting and respond to the demands of industry partners.

In 2024, a micro-credential working group was established. The working group are tasked with selecting and guiding the development of pilot projects through the Wits Plus Pty (Ltd) and with the assistance of QAPO. There are five pilot projects, from the Schools of Economics and Finance (SEF), Governance (WSG) and Business Administration (WBS) in the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management (CLM) and two from the School of Literature, Language and Media (SLLM) in the Faculty of Humanities. The planned offerings focus on the areas of Health Economics, Digital and Anticipatory Governance, Publishing, and Financial Journalism, respectively. These are being developed for piloting in 2025.

In 2025, short courses will run through the Wits Plus Pty (Ltd). Courses will be developed and marketed as micro-credentials.

Enhancing curriculum through programme reviews

While Wits University has a robust quality assurance system in place for the creation of new programmes, there is no standard procedure for consistently and regularly reviewing evaluating the existing programmes. Although some programmes undergo external reviews by professional bodies, many do not, which could potentially impact their quality and relevance. Changes made to individual courses over time may alter a programme's intended purpose, learning outcomes, and overall cohesion. This issue was highlighted during Wits' institutional audit by the Council of Higher Education (CHE) in 2022, which recommended establishing a review process for all programmes.

In 2024, QAPO established a task team to undergo a thorough review of our policies, procedures and practices regarding school and external body reviews. The task team, consisting of representatives from Faculties (including Heads of Schools), QAPO and student representatives, have developed a draft framework for Senate APDC approval.

In 2025, QAPO will pilot the programme review framework with a selected number of programmes. Assessment and revision of the pilot will also be done.

New areas:

Fully online programmes

Fully online university programmes offer numerous benefits to students, particularly in terms of flexibility, accessibility, and inclusivity. Online programmes allow students to learn from anywhere, which is especially advantageous for those balancing work, family commitments, or other responsibilities. This flexibility makes higher education accessible to a broader demographic, including students who may not live near our university campus, those with mobility issues, or individuals who need to study at their own pace due to health, work or personal reasons. Additionally, fully online programmes often provide a variety of digital resources and interactive tools that can support diverse learning styles, fostering a more personalized educational experience. For many students, online learning also cultivates digital literacy and self-directed learning skills—essential in today’s tech-driven work environment. By offering fully online programmes, we not only extend our reach to a global audience, but we also equip students with critical skills for succeeding in increasingly digital and remote workspaces.

Our current partnership with Higher Education Partners Africa (HEPA) to develop and implement fully online programs will come to an end in 2026. We are already preparing for this by developing our own strategies, tools and plans to build online programmes from within the University. We have increased our in-house capacity in learning design, including repurposing the team that used to do MOOCs to now support online programme design. The CLTD are working on two fully online programmes that will be offered mid-2025. We need to build capacity to better understand the needs of our online students, the specifics in curriculum design and the extent to which fully online programmes will contribute to skills development in the country in order for this to be a truly beneficial mode of teaching provision.

In 2025, we will build capacity and understanding to support university teachers and students to learn in flexible and meaningful ways.

Teaching Portfolios

Teaching portfolios have become a valuable tool for university academics, offering a structured way to document and reflect upon their teaching practices, philosophy, and

accomplishments. These portfolios serve as a comprehensive record that showcases teaching strategies, student, peer and external feedback, course materials, and continuous professional development efforts. By collecting this evidence, academics can more effectively demonstrate their commitment to teaching excellence, not only for promotion purposes but also for their own self-improvement. The process of compiling a teaching portfolio encourages university teachers to critically assess their teaching, identify areas for growth, and align their instructional practices with the University's goals and student needs.

Moreover, teaching portfolios play an essential role in promoting a culture of teaching excellence within Wits. By regularly updating their portfolios, university teachers stay attuned to evolving educational techniques and diverse learning styles, which ultimately enhances the overall quality of education provided to students. In an academic landscape where research achievements are often prioritized, teaching portfolios help affirm the importance of pedagogical skill and dedication, reinforcing that impactful teaching is a key component of the University's mission.

In 2025, we aim to enhance the parity of esteem between teaching and research by supporting teaching portfolio enhancement. The CLTD and Faculty Teaching and Learning Units will offer workshops on how to best show the relationship between teaching and learning regarding teaching practice as well as the development of teaching over time. In addition, we will engage in conversations with Faculty Staffing and Promotion committees to ensure that (1) the weight and purpose of teaching portfolios in relation to other criteria are understood (please see Appendix 1 from the *Policy on The Promotion of Academic Staff*¹⁰ of the University and (2) that teaching representatives, Assistant Deans or representatives, are included in the probation and promotion processes.

Venues and spaces

Maintaining and developing our venues and spaces is crucial for supporting effective teaching and enriching student learning experiences. Well-equipped and functioning classrooms, laboratories, and collaborative study areas (formal and informal) create

¹⁰ [Policy - Academic Promotions 2023.pdf](#)

environments that foster engagement, focus, and accessibility, enabling students to fully participate in and benefit from academic activities. As teaching methods and student needs evolve, we must regularly update these spaces to accommodate diverse learning styles and the integration of new technologies. Additionally, thoughtfully designed and maintained spaces signal the university's commitment to providing a supportive, inclusive environment, which can positively impact student well-being and success.

In 2025 we will establish a venues committee in collaboration with student affairs and systems and operations to assess existing teaching and informal learning venues and advise on ways to improve the spaces to increase student engagement and learning and ensure teaching can be done effectively.

Evaluations of students' learning experience

In 2023, responsibility for student evaluations shifted from the CLTD to QAPO. This strategic move was made to align student evaluation processes with the quality assurance processes of the University. Additionally, we transitioned from paper-based to online student evaluations, offering a more secure, manageable, and adaptable system that accommodates complex course and programme structures. This shift goes beyond digitization, the University has also broadened the purpose of student evaluations, using them not just to assess lecturers but to holistically evaluate student learning experiences.; we have also updated mandatory core questions in consultation with both staff and students, and developed a framework for staff opting into student learning experience feedback.

In 2025, we will continue to work with students and staff to review and revise the optional questions on the feedback tool and develop ways to ensure that students receive the requests for evaluation on multiple platforms (ulwazi pop-ups, QR codes, email notifications, etc). We also need to increase the response rates by students. For this staff and the QAPO team need to work together on better advocacy and promotion of the evaluation services, answering the question from students: *what's in it for me?* Staff and QAPO also need to ensure that the feedback loop is closed, and students are informed of how their feedback has been used to improve the student learning experience for others. To

this end, QAPO and Faculties will host its first annual Student Feedback Lekgotla in 2025 while schools will be encouraged to devise their own specific feedback mechanisms for staff and students.

Annual Monitoring Reports

The new annual monitoring reports will play a vital role in maintaining and enhancing the quality of our educational provision and student success. These reports will provide a structured and systematic way to review our progress and alignment with the *2025-2029 Learning and Teaching Strategic Plan* and identify areas for improvement. Through self-reflection in a timely manner, we can enable schools and departments to make informed decisions about curriculum adjustments, resource allocation, and teaching practices. Additionally, through annual monitoring of our teaching and student learning we offer a means for accountability and transparency, ensuring that the University meets internal and external quality assurance standards. Through regular review, annual monitoring reports help foster a culture of continuous improvement, ultimately supporting the institution's commitment to providing a high-quality educational experience for all students.

In 2025, we will develop templates for annual monitoring reports and by the end of the year, we will have collected our first reports on the progress, challenges and places in need of immediate improvement against the *2025-2029 Learning and Teaching Strategic Plan*.

Conclusion

Together, we are shaping a future at Wits University where learning knows no bounds. This plan reflects our commitment to learning, innovation, collaboration, and the success of students and staff. By embracing change, harnessing technology, and fostering lifelong learning, among others, we will create an environment where students and staff thrive, ideas flourish, and success is inevitable. Let us move forward with purpose, passion, and a shared vision for excellence.

Appendix 1: Extract from Academic Promotions Policy

CHECKLIST OF INFORMATION REQUIRED FOR ACADEMIC PROMOTIONS

		Yes	No
1.	Covering letter/motivation addressing the promotion criteria to the rank applied for		
2.	<p>An abbreviated Teaching Portfolio of not more than 10 pages, plus links to websites or appendices, where appropriate, of not more than 20 pages, comprising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) A list of the applicant's teaching responsibilities b) A statement on their approach to teaching c) An overview of what the applicant considers noteworthy about their teaching, such as innovative teaching approaches, curriculum, learning materials or assessment methods. Sample materials or links to websites may be included. d) A list of teaching-related activities and achievements beyond their formal teaching responsibilities, where relevant, such as conference presentations, publications, invitations to be a speaker at a teaching event, membership of teaching-related committees, serving as a teaching-related referee or adjudicator, and awards. e) Evidence of the effectiveness of the applicant as a university teacher, which refers to the whole range of teaching-related activities, including structured learning interactions with students, curriculum development, production of learning materials (including but not limited to interactive course guides and course sites on the institutional Learning Management System) and the formulation of assessment tasks. Both undergraduate and postgraduate teaching should be included. Such evidence must include evaluations of teaching as described in the Policy on Evaluations of Teaching and Courses. Other evidence may also be included, such as informal feedback from students and colleagues, comments from external examiners or peer reviewers, or recognition from other relevant bodies or individuals. 		

	<p>f) Evidence of supervising and graduating postgraduate students at Masters and Doctoral levels (for Associate and Full Professor Promotions)</p> <p>g) Evidence of participation in professional learning activities related to teaching.</p> <p>h) Reflection on growth over time as a university teacher.</p> <p>NOTE: A sample of the complete portfolio must be readily available so that members of the relevant committee may examine it upon request.</p>		
3.	<p>Curriculum vitae giving information under the following Headings as appropriate:</p> <p>a) Personal details (name, current position, department, etc.)</p> <p>b) Academic qualifications</p> <p>c) Professional qualifications</p> <p>d) Membership of professional bodies/associations</p> <p>e) Academic distinctions/fellowships/awards and evidence of professional standing, which could take the form of a submitted portfolio.</p> <p>f) Academic & professional experience</p> <p>g) Supervision of higher degrees</p> <p>h) Service to the University/profession/discipline/community</p> <p>i) A statement of departmental and other duties.</p> <p>j) A statement of activities in service to the University, the profession and/or discipline, or through the profession/discipline to the community.</p> <p>k) A record of the applicant's research output listed under the following headings:</p> <p>l) Publications in ISI- or IBSS-listed journals</p> <p>m) Publications in other peer-reviewed journals</p> <p>n) Publications in other journals</p> <p>o) Books and/or chapters in books</p> <p>p) Complete publications in conference proceedings</p> <p>NOTE: The following essential information must be included in this section where appropriate:</p> <p>i. Name/s of co-author/s</p> <p>ii. Title of article/book/journal</p> <p>iii. Editor/s</p> <p>iv. Date of publication</p> <p>v. Name of publisher</p> <p>vi. Volume number</p> <p>vii. Page/chapter number/s</p> <p>q) Plenary/invited/keynote addresses/other</p>		