



RIFT VALLEY UNIVERSITY

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW POLICY AND GUIDELINE

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Acronyms

AAVP	Academic Affairs Vice President
APD	Academic Programs Directorate
ASCRC	Academic Standard and Curriculum Review Committee RVU University
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
HO	Head Office
RVU	Rift Valley University

CHAPTER ONE

1. PREFACE OF RIFT VALLEY UNIVERSITY

1.1. Background of Rift Valley University

Rift Valley University initially conceived as College, was established in Adama City of East Shawa Zone, Oromia National Regional State in October 2000 G.C, foreseeing the core values of good governance, commitment to quality services and community development, gender sensitivity, secularism and non-partisan, creativity, responsiveness, team work spirit, and work culture parallel to the nation's development goals along with the purpose of producing competent, ethical and skilled manpower without making any distinction between people of different ethnic, religious, social, economic and political backgrounds.

After securing its legal personality, the then Rift Valley College strongly worked on the accreditation processes of its training and education programs from all regulatory bodies, and managed to get full accreditation from Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency and Regional States TVET Agencies. Taking its flourishing capacity and quality service into account, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with ETA, granted the rank of University College in August 2007 G.C. This was not an easy task and a simple success story for the institution. The two regulatory bodies had conducted rigorous evaluation of the systems of the institution, physical facilities and learning resources of its campuses and faculties to come to decision of such status change. Afterwards, Rift Valley University College rigorously worked towards becoming a full-fledged university and realized itself as Rift Valley University in August 2014 G.C.

Currently, Rift Valley University being a pioneer and the largest Private Higher Learning Institution in Ethiopia has been delivering quality education to the citizens and foreigners who have lived in the country for different purposes. Furthermore, the University has 50 Campuses, 3 TVET Colleges and College of Open and Distance Education (32 accredited branches) with diversified fields of study across the country. Over the last two decades, thousands have joined and graduated with Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), Bachelor's degree, and Master's degree that enabled them to support themselves and their families. Others have also managed to create their own jobs whereby they exhibited the merits of their training and education at Rift Valley University in fostering the already established development goals of the country.

1.2. Mission, Vision and Values of Rift Valley University

1.2.1. Mission

Rift Valley University exists to produce graduates who are competent, committed and ethical citizens; to engage in innovative and problem solving research; and to deliver sustainable community services.

1.2.2. Vision

RVU aspires to be one of the leading universities in teaching, research and community engagement in Africa by 2030.

Motto of RVU

“Hub of Excellence”

1.2.3. Values of RVU

The following are the values cherished by RVU:

1. Quality and Excellence
2. Responsiveness to customer needs
3. Good Governance
4. Professionalism and Academic Freedom
5. Team Spirit
6. Professional Integrity and Ethical Practices
7. Creativity and Innovativeness
8. Commitment to Community Services
9. Recognition of Diversity and Gender Sensitivity
10. Social Responsibility

1.3. Educational Goals of RVU

CHAPTER TWO

2. Introduction to Curriculum Development and Review Policy

Rift Valley University (RVU) is one of the most experienced and yet a fast growing higher learning Institution in Ethiopia with a vision of becoming a renowned private university of choice in East Africa. As part of its mission, RVU is committed to maintain and ensure quality, cost effective, timely and need based undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate level education and training. Therefore, RVU is committed to creating and maintaining quality programs and courses that supports its mission and goals and to uphold the academic standards required for legislative consent and acceptance by its stakeholders.

Accordingly, currently RVU has more than 23 undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate programs in regular and extension education programs. These programs have been found to be relevant to the social, economic and political development needs of the country. With respect to meeting the mission and goals of RVU, as stated above, new program proposals have been developed based on the analysis of labor market needs, current knowledge in the field of study, and professional standards (where relevant), resources to support student success and effective and efficient use of university resources.

However, the curriculum development and review process have not been guided by specific policy and guideline apart from different review processes at different levels of the university structure. Moreover, there has not been any university level standard for curriculum development process or policy document.

Hence, this curriculum document and review policy and guideline is presented to govern and guide the curriculum development, review and modification process at RVU. It outlines the principles, requirements and processes for program and course development at RVU.

This curriculum development and review policy and guideline applies to all academic programs and courses at RVU and to all campuses and the faculty members of the University involved in the curriculum development, review and modification process.

This curriculum development and review policy and guideline is informed by and should be read in conjunction with RVU's Senate legislation and RVU's education quality assurance policy.

This policy and guideline document has five sections: Definition of Terms, Curriculum Development Policy Statement, Curriculum Development and Approval Process, Procedures to Modify Curriculum, and Guideline to Prepare Curriculum Document.

2.1 Definition of Terms

Curriculum: A curriculum is a structured document that delineates the philosophy, goals, objectives, learning experiences, instructional resources and assessments that comprise a specific educational program. Additionally, it represents an articulation of what students should know and be able to do and supports teachers in knowing how to achieve these goals.

New program: A program which is the first in its kind in the country.

Program: is a defined course of study leading to a certification that includes bachelors and masters, as well as both undergraduate and graduate certificates.

2.2 Curriculum Development and Review Policy Statement of RVU

- The development and review of curricula in the University should take into account the mission and vision of the University, the educational philosophy of the University, national educational policies and the social, political and economic environment within which graduates will work.
- The curriculum should provide a base for a broad and all round education which integrates academic excellence, equity, tolerance, community engagement and empowerment, team spirit and entrepreneurial education. The curricula should help the learner develop a passion for truth, personal freedom, democratic values, moral integrity and service.
- The University encourages active adoption of innovative approaches of curricula design that are aimed at equipping learners with the necessary skills to access and manage knowledge rather than just assimilate knowledge.
- The University's programs shall be informed by good practices and by developments elsewhere in national and international higher education institutions, and by the needs of the community
- Curriculum design and development should be informed by thorough needs assessment. Analysis of the national and regional social, economic, political and educational environment is a key feature of curriculum development.
- Reviewing processes should be part of a curriculum development process in order to accommodate new ideas and knowledge. Such changes should be informed by innovations in learning and teaching technologies as well as advancements in a particular subject or discipline.
- Regular review of curricula should be standard practice in every campuses and departments. Given the rapid pace of change in higher education, periodic reviews of curricula should be carried out using feedback from student achievement and progression, student evaluation, peer reviews and external examiners.
- Academic staff(s) should review of the course and its implementation by focusing on how much the course objectives are met, the opportunities and challenges in teaching the course and how the course can be improved in the future to the respective departments and submit their review when they submit the grade report.
- All final year students or representative sample shall have the opportunity to provide feedback on their respective curricula as input for periodic comprehensive curriculum review.
- Each department shall be responsible to organize and make ready the review of the courses by academic staff(s) and final year students' feedback every year for comprehensive curriculum review.
- Comprehensive reviews of the curricula should be undertaken every three, four, five and six years for two, three, four and five year programs respectively. The reviews should

cover the program's stated aims and learning outcomes, the teaching and learning processes, assessment strategies, core subject skills, professional and graduate profiles, learning and teaching resources. The review should also take into account developments in higher education as well as changes in the employment market.

- Curricula for new program proposals and major modifications to existing curricula must be approved by the University Senate, following review by the ASCRC.
- Through established curriculum review and approval processes at the program, department, campuses and university levels, faculty are responsible for the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum.
- Learning outcomes shall be explicitly stated for each course or programme and these should be the pivot around which the whole programme is developed.
- The overarching philosophy informing curriculum design and development is that of a student-centered approach based on processes of interaction and recognition of existing knowledge, aimed at developing in students' core values and critical thinking abilities, so that they are able to contribute meaningfully and creatively to the development of the society. Continuous assessment shall also be integrated with learning and get due attention in designing and implementing of curriculum.
- Academic units (campuses and departments) have the primary role in the curriculum development and review process and are responsible for the development and maintenance of curriculum.
- While the primary responsibility for course and curriculum development and review rests with the academic units, the collegial process in the University ensures open discussion of curriculum issues following the procedures stated in section 2.3 and 2.4 of this policy and guideline document.
- Curriculum must comply with University's legislation relating to module structures, credits, and academic levels, and to the educational strategies for supporting students' learning outcomes and personal development.
- In developing and reviewing curriculum, campuses and departments should consult widely with current students, alumni, and potential employers, academics from other institutions as well as professionals in both private and public sectors.
- Deans of campuses will be required to report via the APD on a regular basis in respect of their development and review of curricula.
- APD shall be responsible for registration of all approved curricula of all programs at RVU.
- Apart from specifying the core modules/course in the programme, undergraduate curricula should include the University's common and compulsory courses based on national and institutional guidelines.
- In case of curricula that use European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) one ECTS refers to 27 hours and a student is expected to work 50 hours per week in the context of RVU.

2.3 Curriculum Development and Approval Process

- A program concept originates at the department level, usually generated by an individual faculty member or group of faculty, who are considered the program curriculum developer(s).
- The program concept, which must be developed into a brief written preliminary proposal that describes the program and provides a rationale for it, is submitted to the department for approval.
- If a positive response is received at the department level, the program concept shall be presented to the campuses for approval.
- If a positive response is received at the campuses level, the program concept shall be presented to the APD.
 - The purpose of the presentation of program concept by the campuses for the APD is to develop an understanding of the program being proposed, critique the proposal, determine whether it fits within the scope of the University's mission, goals, and strategic plan, define any unique characteristics, identify any similar programs at other higher education institutions in the University as well as the country and so on.
 - The APDs' responsibilities include reviewing the preliminary proposal and making a recommendation to the AAVP on whether a full program proposal should be approved for curriculum development.
- Following the approval of the program proposal concept by the AAVP, the respective RVU HO and campuses will work on drafting the program curriculum.
- Needs assessment shall precede any curriculum development process. Through needs assessment the curriculum developer(s) must clearly show the existing gaps that necessitates the opening of the program. It must also be informed by national/regional/local policies and development plans and programs, human resource needs in different public and private sector, views of stakeholders and professional associations, practitioners and so on.
- The program developers shall prepare a complete draft curriculum and supportive documents (such as reports of needs assessment, human, material, financial, infrastructure demands for the program etc.) and submit the same to their respective departments.
- The department of the program developer(s) or its designated committee shall review the completed proposed program and its curriculum and make a recommendation on its approval to the campuses. Proposed program and its curriculum for interdisciplinary programs must be reviewed by all departments and campuses involved.
- The campus dean submits the proposed program and its curriculum to the appropriate education quality assurance and audit team, for review and recommendation on approval/disapproval to the RVU head office.
- Based on the recommendation of the education quality assurance and audit team, the campus academic commission shall review and approve/disapprove the proposed program and its curriculum.
- If the proposed program and its curriculum is adopted from another higher education institution, up on the approval of the academic commission of the concerned

colleges/institutes/schools, internal curriculum validation workshop shall be conducted. The ASCRC shall involve in the internal validation workshop which should be open to all University community and relevant stakeholders from the surrounding community.

- If the program is new, following approval of the proposed program and its curriculum by the camps academic commission, the proposal shall be ready for external review.
- The external review shall primarily involve a minimum of two external senior academicians, in the field of the proposed program, and, if applicable, other professionals from governmental and/or non-governmental organizations, professional associations and so on who are considered as external reviewers.
- The written review and recommendations of the external reviewers shall be submitted and be ready for the curriculum validation workshop.
- The proposed program and its curriculum shall be validated in validation workshop. The validation workshop should involve relevant AU members, the external curriculum reviewers, people from relevant international, national, regional and local governmental and non-governmental organizations, professional associations, potential employers of graduates, surrounding community representatives, and so on.
- The validation workshop shall be used to validate the proposed program and its curriculum primarily based on the review and recommendation of the external reviewers. It will also be used as a platform to incorporate the concerns and interests of the major stakeholders.
- The proposed program and its curriculum together with the report and minutes of both internal and external validation workshop shall be documented by the concerned campuses and shall be submitted to the AAVP with subsequent modifications and considerations.
- The camps academic commission will assure that the resource requirements identified in the program proposal are justified and outline a plan to address them.
- The proposed program and its curriculum must describe the campus's commitment to the program, explain how it will fit into the University's strategic plan, and describe funding plans including reallocation or other resource actions.
- The AAVP passes the proposed program and its curriculum to the ASCRC for review and recommendation.
- The following information is intended as a guideline to the ASCRC to review proposed program and its curriculum. In fulfillment of their responsibilities, the ASCRC should be satisfied that the proposal meets the following criteria:
 - The program goals reflect the current and emerging national/regional /local needs.
 - Curriculum elements are in line with the requirements of the University legislation and other policies of the University
 - The program is a coherent, integrated learning experience that builds on prerequisite knowledge.
 - Individual courses support the achievement of the program aims and goals.
 - The teaching and learning methods support the program aims and goals.
 - The range of assessment methods used correlate with program aims, goals, and course learning outcomes.

- The teaching and learning strategies foster, lifelong learning, critical thinking, problem solving ability, entrepreneurial and employability skills.
 - There is a balance of theory and practice.
 - The proposed methods of delivery of the program are appropriate.
 - The admission criteria to the program are appropriate.
 - Material resources as well as infrastructure (e.g., library, computer, and lab equipment etc.) are in place to facilitate student learning.
 - Faculty expertise and number are appropriate.
- The ASCRC review may include meetings with the program developer(s), department heads, and campus dean, as needed, to discuss the proposal and any concerns that may arise.
 - The ASCRC submits a recommendation on the proposed program and its curriculum to the University Senate for decision.
 - The University Senate deliberates on the committee's recommendation and make any additional remark, if necessary, and passes final decisions.
 - If the University Senate decides to accept the proposed program and its curriculum the AAVP refers the University Senate's recommendation on the proposed program and its curriculum to the APD and respective campus for implementation of the newly proposed program and its curriculum for follow up.
 - The campuses are responsible for the practical implementation of the approved program, including the promotion of the program to the public as well as to the Students' Information Management System and so on.

2.4 Procedures to Modify Curriculum

1. Academic departments have primary responsibility for determining the modification of courses and curricula. However, proposals to modify existing courses may potentially affect the rationale for the original program or more generally raise academic concerns, including possible concerns regarding degree requirements and the program course requirements. The following process is intended to facilitate appropriate levels of approval between departments and the university wide modification of courses, programs, and curricula.
2. Modifications of curriculum are classified as "Major" or "Minor"
 - a. **Major modifications include:**
 - ✓ Significant change to the educational objectives or learning outcomes of the program;
 - ✓ Change to the degree nomenclature of the academic program;
 - ✓ Change to a program's total number of credit hours or the relative distribution of credit hours between compulsory and elective courses;
 - ✓ Addition or elimination of a course(s);
 - ✓ Modifications of existing courses that require more than a 50% change in the description and content (such courses up on approval will be implemented by adding the modified course as a new course and by deactivating the old course).
 - ✓ Change in credits of modules/courses

- ✓ Change to course codes, titles, or prerequisites;
- ✓ Change in format of instruction or delivery, such as distance and/or e-learning delivery;
- ✓ Change or addition of program offering location;
- ✓ Change in admission requirements; and

b. Minor modifications include:

- ✓ Addition or elimination of a course selection option without altering the relative distribution of elective credit hours;
- ✓ Change in semester breakdown of modules/courses
- ✓ Modification of a course description and contents which require not more than 50% change

3. Proposals for major and minor modifications require different levels of approval.
4. Major modifications require the approval of the University Senate and minor modifications are subject to approval by the AAVP based on the recommendation of ASCRC.
5. If the modification is to a program offered jointly by two or more campuses, it requires approval by the academic commissions of all campuses involved in the provision of the program.
6. Proposals to modify the curriculum or its components should be submitted directly to the campus by the concerned department. The proposal specifically show the desired change, its rationale with justification, implication on the overall curriculum and requirements on infrastructure and human and material resources.
7. The campus should pass the proposal to its education quality audit and assurance committee for review and recommendation.
8. The campus academic commission, based on the recommendation of its education quality assurance and audit committee, may approve/disapprove the modifications, in case of approval it recommends the modification for the AAVP.
9. The AAVP shall refer the proposal to ASCRC for recommendation.
10. ASCRC shall review the requested proposal according to this policy, the nature of the original curriculum and the rationale presented to modification and so on and passes the recommendation.
11. The ASCRC shall pass the recommendation to the University Senate or AAVP for major and minor modifications respectively.
12. The University Senate or the AAVP shall make the final decision for the requested major and minor modifications respectively.
13. AAVP will notify the concerned campuses the final decision.
14. The colleges/institutes/schools is/are responsible for the practical implementation of the modified program, including the introduction of new requirements within the Students' Information Management System and so on.

2.5 Preparing a curriculum document

A curriculum document for a program should include the following essential components and must be presented in the order listed below.

2.5.1 Cover page

This should include: Name of the University, Name of College/Institute/School, Department, Type of Program (undergraduate/graduate/Postgraduate Diploma etc.) Name of the Program, Year.

2.5.2 Table of contents

2.5.3 Background

This section can be used as introductory section of the curriculum. It is expected to provide general information about the nature of the program, how it has evolved and developed. It can also be used to provide a concise description of the underlying philosophy of the program. The philosophy of the program should be consistent with the mission and educational philosophy of the University. In general this section is expected to provide a context for the curriculum.

2.5.4 Rationale

In this section, the curriculum should clearly and specifically explain the justification of the relevance of the program. The rationale should be based on the results of the needs assessment, the perceived job opportunities of the graduates of the program, the importance of the program for national and local economic, social and political development; as well as on feedback obtained from wide consultation with current students, alumni, academics, practitioners, professional bodies and potential employers. This section shall also clearly show how the program is in line with the vision and mission of the University and the country at large.

2.5.5 General learning outcomes

This section lists expected learning outcomes for program, i.e., what students are expected to know and to be able to do upon completion of the program. Be as specific as possible.

Describe special skills of graduates specific to the program.

2.5.6 Professional Profile

In this section the profile of the profession of the graduates will be described. It is to indicate what kind of professionals graduates would be after graduating and stay in the profession. It can be constructed from the job description analysis results, and professional analysis while developing the curriculum.

2.5.7 Graduate Profile

The overall competences of graduates of the program shall be listed in this section. Competencies are statements of the characteristics that graduating students should demonstrate which indicate they are prepared to perform and function independently in professional practice. Competencies should include more than just facts. They represent the integration and application of learned facts, skills and affective qualities needed to serve the community and profession.

Competencies developed for a program are not taught as a whole, i.e. in a single course, but rather their components are presented throughout the curriculum.

2. 5.8 Entry Requirement

Here the entry requirement to the program should be clearly and specifically stated. The entry requirement should be in line with the University legislation Article 51-54.

Moreover the entry requirements has to be useful to identify only those who have the academic readiness to participate in the program.

2. 5.9 Duration of program

This section shall clearly indicate how many semesters/year(s) the program may take to finish the program. If the program has different modalities of delivery for continuous education program the duration of the program should be mentioned for each modality specifically. **In case of distance and summer programs, the number of summer and distance semesters should also be clearly indicated.**

2. 5.10 Graduation requirement

The overall graduation requirement shall be in line with the University legislation. However, specific special requirements shall be briefly stated in this section of the curriculum.

2. 5.11 Degree Nomenclature

The curriculum document shall correctly indicate the name of the degree as it appears in the diploma of the graduates of the program in English and Amharic.

2. 5.12 Mode of Delivery

These could include on-campus face to face approach, distance, e-learning, or resource based learning, blended learning, etc.

2. 5.13 Teaching-Learning Approach

This section provides with general overview of the instructional philosophy as well as highlights of the major teaching learning methods to be used in the program. It also provides with information about the required infrastructure and materials.

2. 5.14 Assessment and evaluation mechanisms

Assessment philosophy and approach are expected to be clearly indicated here. Moreover, if the program needs special arrangements and requirements of assessment has to be indicated in this section precisely and shall be in line with **Article 79-87** of the University legislation.

2. 5.15 Quality Assurance Mechanisms

Curricula shall include specific quality assurance techniques, procedures and measures for the program. The quality assurance mechanisms should include specific measures in the planning as well as implementation of the curriculum.

2. 5.16 List of Modules/courses with their codes

This section shall present the full list of modules and/or courses required by the program with their respective code. The following points should be followed to give codes for the courses.

In the course coding the alphabets (of four digits) should indicate the course offering program:

- All major Economics courses are coded where a code starts with “Econ 3072” and followed by four digits.
- All common courses are coded with “Math” and followed by four digits. Example: Mathematics for social sciences” Math 1101”
- All compulsory courses and project are coded with “AcFn 1111” followed by four digits. Example: Accounting and Finance

The four digits denote the following:

- The first digit (at the thousands place) indicates the year in which the course is given.
- The 2nd and 3rd number should indicate module number, (for modular curricula) or they can indicate the category of the course in the semester
- The last digit (at the unit place) indicates the semester in which the course is offered. This means, if it is odd, the course is offered during the first semester whereas if it is even (but not 0), it is offered during the second semester and 0 extends over both the semesters.

2. 5.17 Semester Breakdown of List of modules/courses

Here the list of modules/courses for each semester shall be mapped. This must be done according to the University legislation about the maximum and minimum loads of courses as well as following the logical sequencing of courses/modules.

2. 5.18 Course guidebook

Course guidebook shall include the following and must be complete:

- a) University, Campuses and Department
- b) Program
- c) Course title
- d) Course code
- e) Module name and number in which the course exists
- f) ECTS/Credits
- g) Study hours per week (contact hours, home study hours, practical and lab hours should be separately indicated) for modularized curriculum

- h) Target group
- i) Year/semester
- j) Prerequisite and/or co-requisite (if any)
- k) Course description:

This section should be a brief (between 80-120 words) description of the focus and scope of the course, implicitly indicating its contribution to the graduate profile. It is also expected to highlight what students would get from the course. It should be a short synopsis of the content and the objective of the course.

Remark, **DO NOT LIST** the content of the course under this section.

l) Course objectives

Course Objectives are statements of knowledge, skills, abilities, practices or profiles that students are expected to develop in order to meet the goals set out by the course, phrased as “At the end of the course, the successful student should be able to...” and written in language that is clear, specific and understandable to all stakeholders. Stipulated learning objectives and anticipated outcomes should be realistic within the course duration, as well as for the subject matter and the specific student body, and objective criteria for student evaluation should be specified.

m) Course Contents

Describe in detail the material to be covered, through which the learning objectives/outcomes are to be met.

n) Teaching-Learning Method

Specify methods of instruction or learning activities used in a typical week (possible descriptors include lecture, reflection, demonstration, field visit, laboratory, seminar, group discussion, role-playing, workshop, independent study of specified topics etc.).

o) Assessment mechanisms

List kinds of evaluation/ assessment typical to the course and congruent with its objectives/outcomes

p) Course policies

The specific requirements of the course such as attendance, project work, group/individual assignments, which indeed shall be in line with the University’s legislation, should be described precisely.

q) References (necessary, available, others)