PROPOSAL FOR A PAPERLESS APPROACH TO COURSE MATERIALS AND ASSIGNMENTS[1]

As of 2017 all course materials, including materials used in class must be made available online to students through Vula and no material will be printed. In addition, assignments must be posted, downloaded and marked on Vula.

The imperative for this is threefold:

- The ability to use online databases to search for and identify legal sources have become a critical skill in practice and reliance on printed course readers will eventually affect the market readiness of our students.

- In an era where environmental resources are under severe threat we have the duty to adopt more sustainable methods of doing business. Printing of materials carries a large environmental footprint:

  o A ton (1000 kg) of paper consists of about 400 reams, - It takes 12-24 trees to manufacture one ton of paper.

  o Unsustainable forestry practices – especially as it relates to water use.

  o Use of water in the production of paper.

  o The high use of chemicals in both the production of paper and the production of ink – often released into water resources.

  o Energy use in the production and transport of paper.

  o Energy use of photocopiers.

  o Unsafe disposal of both paper and toner

- The cost: in 2015 the faculty spent R481 258, 00 on photocopying and printing of course materials. This figure does not take into account printing of postgraduate materials that are not done by Raymond's office. This makes up a substantial amount of the R1.8 million that the faculty is required to cut from its budget. With respect to assignments: students should not bear the printing costs involved in printing assignments.

It is proposed:

1. That course materials be phased out and that by 2017 no course materials are printed.

2. That study guides should allow students to search for and source course materials available on university databases. That course material not readily available, be sourced and provided on Vula.

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[1] Proposal prepared by Loretta Feris, Debbie Collier, Anton Fagan and Kelly Phelps.

3. That a maximum of 200 pages per course be allowed and that lecturers who would like to print materials beyond such a cap motivate for such increased use to the Dean.

4. That lecturers who need to print assignments in order to mark and provide feedback, submit a request to the dean to print assignments.

5. That the move to electronic platforms should be done in a way that does not threaten Raymond's job security. E.g. he could assist lecturers to download and upload materials for Vula.

6. There remains a need to cater for students without readily available access to laptops and/or the internet or whose disabilities prevent a paperless option. In this respect the following is proposed:

    a. ICTS has a laptop project that provides laptops to students who demonstrate financial need.[2] In addition, last year the faculty provided nine laptops for ECP students at a cost of R57 148.[3] Students who are not eligible for financial aid and therefore ineligible for ICTS funded laptops, may approach the dean for a request for a laptop. Such a request must be fully motivated on the basis of financial need.

    b. Students may place a request to the Dean for printing credits. Such a request must be fully motivated on the basis of medical conditions, disability or other exceptional circumstances. Students with a disability must support their request with a letter from the disability unit. Medical conditions and other exceptional circumstances must be supported by a letter from a physician or other forms of appropriate documentation.

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[2] In 2016 a total number of 40 laptops were made available to the law faculty. Of these 29 were taken up by students (in RDL1008H and RDL1009H). 11 laptops were returned to ICTS.
[3] Funded from the Law 150 budget.