



**COUNCIL ON HIGHER EDUCATION  
HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY COMMITTEE**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**AUDIT REPORT  
ON THE  
UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN**

**Report of the HEQC to the University of Cape Town**

**March 2006**

**Didacta Building, 211 Skinner Street, Pretoria, 0002, P O Box 13354, The Tramshed, 0126,  
Telephone: +27 12 392 9132, Fax +27 12 392 9120, E-mail: [singh.m@che.ac.za](mailto:singh.m@che.ac.za)  
Visit our website at <http://www.che.ac.za>**

HEQC Audit Report Number 5

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211 Skinner Street  
Didacta Building  
P.O Box 13354  
The Tramshed  
0126  
South Africa

Tel: +27 12 392 9132  
Fax: +27 12 392 9120

Website: <http://www.che.ac.za>

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## Acronyms

AARP	Alternative Admissions Research Project
ADP	Academic Development Programme
AIMS	Audit and Integration of Management Systems
AP	Audit Portfolio
APF	Academic Planning Framework
CALICO	Cape Library Consortium
CESM	Classification of Educational Subject Matter
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CHEC	Cape Higher Education Consortium
CHED	Centre for Higher Education Development
EAC	Examinations and Assessment Committee
ERP	Emerging Researcher Programme
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurer
FETC	Further Education and Training Certificate
GEPS	General Entry to Programmes in Science
GSB	Graduate School of Business
HBI	Historically Black Institutions
HEI	Higher education institution
HEMIS	Higher Education Management Information System
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HoD	Head of Department
HSS	Humanities and Social Sciences
ICTS	Information and Communication Technology Services
IPD	Institutional Planning Department
IRMA	Information Research Management Application
ISI	International Scientific Index
ISIS	Integrated Student Information System
MBA	Master of Business Administration
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAPP	New Academic Practitioners' Programme
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NPHE	National Plan for Higher Education
NRF	National Research Foundation
NSFAS	National Student Financial Assistance Scheme
PASS	Professional, Administrative, Service and Support departments
QAWG	Quality Assurance Working Group
SAASTA	South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SAT	Standardised Achievement Tests
SEC	Senate Executive Committee
SET	Science, Engineering and Technology
SLA	Service Level Agreement

TELP	Tertiary Education Linkages Project
THRIP	Technology and Human Resources for Industry Programme
UCT	University of Cape Town
URC	University Research Committee

## **Overview of the Audit**

### **Introduction**

The Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) has statutory responsibility to conduct institutional audits as indicated in the Higher Education Act of 1997. This responsibility of the HEQC is also recognised by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) in the accreditation of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) as the Education and Training Quality Assurer (ETQA) for the higher education band.

The Audit of the University of Cape Town (hereinafter referred to as UCT) was conducted by the HEQC in terms of its mandate. This document reports on the Audit of the UCT which took place between 16 and 20 May 2005<sup>1</sup>.

This report of the HEQC to UCT contains an overview of the Audit, an analysis of the quality management arrangements at UCT, and commendations and recommendations that are based on the findings of the Audit Panel, using the audit criteria set by the HEQC.

### **The Audit Process**

In February 2004, the Executive Director of the HEQC secured the consent of the Vice-Chancellor and the senior academic management team at UCT that the University would participate in an institutional audit between 16 and 20 May 2005.

UCT conducted its institutional self-evaluation in the agreed time and produced an Audit Portfolio (hereinafter AP) for review by the Audit Panel. UCT indicated that the HEQC's audit criteria guided the institutional self-evaluation. No additional institutional criteria were added by UCT as part of the Audit. UCT reported that the self-evaluation was managed by an institutional audit steering committee, and that task teams were established to address the HEQC criteria. Different constituencies at the institution were drawn into the self-evaluation process through providing information that contributed to the self-evaluation and the content of the Audit Portfolio.

On 8 March 2005, UCT submitted its Audit Portfolio, *Improving on Strength*, together with accompanying documentation, to the HEQC. UCT also provided access to a website specially constructed for the audit. The Student Representative Council submitted a

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<sup>1</sup> The report includes four appendices: Appendix A lists the objectives of HEQC audits; Appendix B provides the names of the members of the Audit Panel; Appendix C lists the documents submitted by UCT and Appendix D contains the Audit Visit schedule.

separate document for the Audit Panel's consideration. The HEQC constituted an Audit Panel consisting of senior academics and academic managers from the higher education community, all of whom had taken part in auditor preparation workshops run by the HEQC. An international auditor from the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, was included on the Panel. A meeting was convened in Pretoria on 14 April 2005 at which the Audit Panel met to consider the Audit Portfolio and to prepare for the audit visit. During this meeting, the Audit Panel identified additional documents to be requested from UCT prior to the audit visit. A senior member of the HEQC staff undertook a preparatory visit to UCT on 18 April 2005. During that meeting, the format and programme for the visit, and other details of the audit were discussed and generally agreed to by the senior management of UCT.

On arrival on 15 May, the Audit Panel was taken on a tour of the UCT campus. On 16 May, the Audit Panel conducted interviews with the Vice-Chancellor, executive management, members of the Council, the Institutional Forum, senior managers responsible for planning and budgeting, and members of student and staff representative bodies. On 17 May, the Audit Panel interviewed senior staff members involved in planning, finance, quality assurance and transformation issues. The Panel then split into two groups. The first group focused on teaching and learning and interviewed the deans, senior student affairs and support staff, and undergraduate students; the second group interviewed senior research staff and postgraduate students. On 18 May, one group of auditors continued with interviews in the area of teaching and learning quality and met with a range of staff members and other stakeholders; the second group interviewed researchers, research leaders and research administrators.

On 19 May, the Audit Panel worked in three groups: the first group continued to focus on aspects of teaching and learning and community engagement; the second group continued interviewing researchers and support staff; the third group visited the Faculty of Health Sciences and the Institute of Infectious Diseases and Molecular Medicine and met some of the senior management team, support staff and students. Interviews were completed on 20 May. A brief overview of the Panel's findings was presented by the chairperson of the Audit Panel to the Vice-Chancellor and the executive team in the last session of the audit visit.

In all, the Audit Panel interviewed more than 450 people during the audit visit, including

- Council members;
- The Vice-Chancellor and members of his executive team;
- The Deans;
- Heads of departments
- Academic and academic support staff;

- Rated and unrated researchers;
- Administrative staff;
- Undergraduate and postgraduate students;
- Representatives of staff and student organisations
- External representatives from advisory panels, professional bodies, and employers of UCT graduates;
- Civic and community representatives;
- Alumni.

Open sessions were also available for any staff or student member of the institution to meet the Audit Panel and make a submission. Seven UCT staff members made use of this opportunity to address the Panel.

This document reports on the audit process and findings based on the Audit Portfolio provided by UCT, supplementary documentation requested from the institution, and interviews and observations made during the audit visit. Every effort has been made to understand the arrangements for quality management at the institution at the time of the audit visit and to base the HEQC's conclusions on the documentation submitted, the interviews held and the observations made. A draft copy of the report was sent to UCT for correction of factual errors and for comment on gaps or omissions. The Report was finalised by the HEQC after taking the institution's comments into account where appropriate.

A synopsis of the HEQC's evaluation of the state of quality management at UCT is found in the summary of findings together with the commendations and recommendations. It is expected that UCT will use these findings to further strengthen its internal quality management systems in continuing support of the quality of its core academic activities. The commendations of the HEQC indicate areas of strength which need to be sustained and built upon. The recommendations indicate priority areas for improvement. Other areas of strength or areas in need of improvement are acknowledged or indicated in the main body of the report. Decisions about forms of implementation of the recommendations and their further prioritisation are the responsibility of the institution.

It is expected that five months after the receipt of the report, UCT will submit to the HEQC an improvement plan based on the HEQC's Audit Report. The institution will be expected to submit a mid-cycle progress report about three years after the audit.

## Summary of Audit Findings

This section summarises the main conclusions stemming from the audit.

The commendations of the HEQC signal areas of strength, excellence and/or innovation which require ongoing institutional support. The recommendations of the HEQC signal issues that may require new or strengthened attention with regard to quality provision. The HEQC notes that UCT has itself identified many of these for attention. These and a number of other issues will need to be incorporated into the overall quality assurance planning and practice at UCT, with appropriate allocation of responsibility for implementation and monitoring.

### I. INSTITUTIONAL MISSION

1. The University of Cape Town was formally established in 1918. UCT is a medium-sized contact English-medium public university with an enrolment in 2004 of about 22 300 students (AP Appendix: 64). Approximately 30 percent of UCT's students are enrolled for postgraduate degrees. The majority of enrolments at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels are in the science, engineering and technology (SET) disciplines, followed by the humanities and social sciences. UCT consists of six faculties: Commerce (including the Graduate School of Business), Engineering and the Built Environment, Health Sciences, Humanities (including the Graduate School in Humanities), Law and Science. These faculties are supported by the Centre for Higher Education Development (CHED), the University libraries, Information and Communication Technology Services, the Institutional Planning Department (IPD), and administrative and support departments. There are 60 academic departments and 65 research groups. There are 5 200 places in UCT student housing. There were about 2 510 permanent staff members employed by the institution in 2004, with about 779 of them designated as instruction and research professionals. (*UCT at a Glance*).
2. According to the Department of Education (DoE) Programmes and Qualifications Mix for UCT (2003), the institution offers the following funded qualifications across its faculties:
  - a. Nine undergraduate diplomas and certificates.
  - b. Nine general academic 1st Bachelor degrees with their respective specialisations.
  - c. 25 professional 1st Bachelor degrees with their respective specialisations.
  - d. 23 postgraduate diplomas or certificates with their respective specialisations.
  - e. Nine honours degrees with their respective specialisations.
  - f. 32 master's degrees with their respective specialisations.
  - g. Ten doctoral degrees with their respective specialisations.

3. UCT is engaged with multiple transformational challenges. These include giving effect to its mission, addressing the various dimensions of transformation in all three core functions, meeting national equity and redress requirements in relation to staff and students, and changing the institutional culture to produce a more supportive working, learning and living environment. The Mission Statement was formulated by a Working Group of the University Transformation Forum and was adopted at a University Assembly on 24 April 1996. In the Audit Portfolio, UCT indicates its recognition of the tensions inherent in the quest for a balance between values such as academic freedom and critical enquiry on the one hand and responsibility, obligations and accountability on the other. This was an issue that surfaced in many interview discussions on the policy and system requirements of the University. The Panel noted that the mission of the University was comprehensive and wide-ranging and sought to encompass the pursuit of excellence in its core functions of teaching and research, a socially responsive role in relation to its South African and African context, and an international profile. The mission clearly reflects the University's commitment and responsiveness to national priorities while seeking to be a niched global player.
4. The Panel noted that, in pursuing its mission and high level objectives, UCT has begun to define itself as a transforming institution that is providing excellent research and teaching, and that is socially responsive to the provincial and national development needs of the country. UCT also stresses the importance of an African ethos for itself as well as its ambition to be globally competitive. The meaning and implications of the expression "world-class African university" (Guide for Action, 3) were indicated by the senior leadership to be more aspirational than substantial at present. The Panel acknowledged UCT's attempt to forge a complex social and intellectual, national and international identity and the many steps that it has taken to address the requirements of that multidimensional identity, including the imperatives of transformation.
5. The Panel noted that the University had put comprehensive planning processes in place to give effect to its mission, goals and priorities, all of which it reviews regularly. UCT has sought to construct a systematic implementation framework that sets out the strategic purposes, actions steps, responsible agents, timeframes and budgetary allocations for the achievement of its mission, within a governance philosophy of devolved responsibility to faculties and operating units. The University has created a strong architecture to translate its high level goals and priorities into reality. The Panel encourages the University to continue to address the disjunctures between policy and implementation in certain key mission related priority areas.

6. The Portfolio signals that the University is moving to a performance oriented approach combined with quality reviews of all operating units against the performance indicators of the *University Dashboard*. This approach is intended to strengthen the accountability dimensions within a devolved model and plans to hold deans and directors of operating units accountable for progress against ‘cross cutting university-wide strategies’ to give effect to the University’s mission and the *Ten Point Plan*. The Panel concurs with this approach identified by the University to further develop its planning and budgeting systems for the achievement of its mission and goals.
7. The Panel encourages UCT to strengthen its system level capacity for the implementation and monitoring of university-wide missions and objectives in relation to all three core functions. A review of its key policies and processes relating to mission and objectives as signalled in the Portfolio would enable the University to translate its sophisticated self-understanding of the shortcomings of those policies and processes into a new platform that builds on some of its current strengths but is more explicit in terms of its values and principles, more apposite to its transformation objectives, and more enabling as an institution-wide accountability framework. It was clear to the Panel that the senior leadership is sensitive to the important need to negotiate and balance a number of tensions between, for example, autonomy and accountability, and transparency and efficiency, in developing this new platform. **Commendation 1: The HEQC commends UCT for using the audit self-evaluation process to produce a frank and incisive analysis of its mission and foundational policies, its strategic objectives and its implementation architecture, as well as a set of pointers for rethinking and revising them in moving towards a more integrated and consistent basis for quality in institutional policy and practice at UCT.**
8. The Panel took account of the submission of the SRC as an addition to the Portfolio and other UCT documentation provided to the HEQC in preparation for the audit. The Panel noted with appreciation the value of the proactive stance taken by the SRC in pursuit of quality and excellence, and the support provided to the SRC by the relevant university authorities in this matter. The student input on institutional governance, transformation, teaching and learning, research and community engagement, together with the interview information from students was taken into account in the different focus areas of the Audit and in the relevant sections of the HEQC’s Report. The Panel notes that the SRC agrees with the five areas of improvement identified in the Audit Portfolio as well as the intention to ‘help in these areas’. The Panel hopes that students will remain proactive in the implementation of UCT’s improvement plan and remain appropriately involved in

quality development initiatives at UCT in an ongoing way. **Commendation 2: The HEQC commends the University for involving and supporting the Student Representative Council to participate proactively in the Audit in pursuit of an approach to quality involvement that is inclusive of students as a key constituency of the University. The SRC is congratulated on its initiative in providing a student-based response on quality issues for the Audit.**

9. Transformation at UCT is one of the issues that cuts across all core functions and spheres of operation. UCT describes attention to transformation issues as a generic requirement for all members of the University community (AP: 2. From the documentation and the frank discussions between the Panel and the range of interviewees at all levels, it is clear that transformation issues are among the most passionately experienced and the most strategically challenging for UCT. The Panel noted that the ten high level objectives and the *Guides for Action* include transformation issues, for example, the *Ten Point Plan* includes, “building a diverse staff profile and creating a fulfilling work environment”, “creating a rich student experience’ and ‘committing to the Western Cape and developing collaborative initiatives”. The Audit Portfolio gives an account of the measures taken to address transformation at UCT (AP: 38-40). A review of transformation at UCT in 2002 led to a number of initiatives, including the appointment of a Transformation Manager and an Employment Equity Manager. Transformation matters were allocated to the portfolio of a Deputy Vice-Chancellor and a Transformation Management Advisory Group was set up which reports directly to the Vice-Chancellor. The Guide for Action 5: Institutional Transformation was added to the existing four *Action Guides*.
10. The University has also sought to orient its budgeting process to transformation plans and strategies. A consolidated report on transformation initiatives was prepared for the Council in July 2004 which identified the continuing equity challenges relating to staff and students, for example, the predominance of White staff in senior management positions and lower throughput rates for African students. The Panel noted that many of the above initiatives are comprehensive and far-reaching, addressing among other issues the development of a supportive institutional culture, access and representivity, curriculum reform and strategic resource allocation.
11. The Portfolio signals a strong awareness of the importance of transformation initiatives generally in relation to the mission of the University and specifically in the Teaching and Learning and Research core functions as well. There is a clear recognition in the Portfolio of the implications of transformation for quality and an identification of many transformation-related constraints and problems at the

University. Interviews with executive management and senior academics revealed a high level of awareness of the significance and urgency of transformation imperatives as well as of the concerns and frustrations expressed by staff and students in relation to the nature, pace and outcomes of transformation. It was clear to the Panel that the initiatives put in place to date by the University constitute substantial elements of an institutional platform for transformation at many levels.

12. An analysis of the demographic profile of UCT's instruction and research staff shows that particularly in the higher ranks of the academic hierarchy, there is a marked predominance of white and male academics. Black and women academics are few in number and in general they are employed in the lower echelons of the academic hierarchy. **Recommendation 1: The HEQC recommends that UCT accelerate the implementation of its Employment Equity Policy and Plan, paying specific attention to targets and timeframes, consistency in application across the University, and the development of more structured forms of support for Black and women academic and support staff.**
13. An analysis of the demographic profile of UCT's student enrolments indicates that although the number of African students enrolled at UCT has increased since 1996, included in the category 'African' are a number of SADC and African students from the continent. These latter students should be disaggregated from SA born African students in order to provide a clearer picture of enrolments from the point of view of national equity imperatives. The Panel urges the institution to develop an enrolment plan which, without jeopardising UCT's position as one of the institutions of choice for students in the region and the continent, is more explicitly focused on the recruitment and retention of South African-born African students. **Recommendation 2: The HEQC recommends that UCT continue to review trends in its undergraduate admissions and throughput rates and ensure better co-ordination of faculty planning and support mechanisms in order to accelerate improvements in the equity profiles of Black and especially South African born African students.**
14. The Panel found that a number of staff and student interviewees, despite the many steps taken at UCT by way of new or strengthened policies, plans and structures, still have concerns about the meanings, pace and effectiveness of transformation at UCT. It was not clear to the Panel how the frank analysis in the Portfolio of the shortcomings and gaps in the conception and implementation of transformation initiatives and the pointers to a more encompassing version of transformation will be taken forward and translated into further revisions of university-wide policy and practice. It was also not clear who would undertake the interventions, since the initiatives require action across several portfolios and operating units.

15. The Panel is aware that transformation issues at higher education institutions are highly complex and frequently contested in relation to their quantitative as well as qualitative dimensions. It is, therefore, not in a position to comment with authority on all the factors responsible for the continuing perceptions of a lack of alignment between institutional practices and UCT's commitments. However, since the University, in its Audit Portfolio, in the Student Representative Council (SRC) submission to the HEQC and in the Institutional Climate and Student Surveys, has itself surfaced a clear connection between transformation imperatives and the creation of an institutional environment that supports excellence in Teaching and Learning and Research and a high measure of social responsiveness, the Panel urges the University give renewed attention to the quality-related transformation challenges facing it.
- 16. Recommendation 3: The HEQC recommends that UCT strengthen its transformation related initiatives to give effect to the interventions identified in the Portfolio, the Institutional Climate and Student Surveys and other relevant documents in order to ensure that the effectiveness of the core functions and the quality of their operations are not weakened by identified but unresolved transformation issues. This includes additional measures to strengthen the capacity of the Transformation Office in order to ensure improved co-ordination and implementation of the new proposed institutional interventions on transformation.**

### **The Management of Quality at UCT**

17. The Panel's interaction with staff, students and stakeholders together with an analysis of the documentation provided by the University has led to the conclusion that UCT has inserted the management of quality strategically and explicitly into institutional planning, resource allocation and performance monitoring. It has provided for a substantial high level quality assurance function with a responsible Deputy Vice-Chancellor, a dedicated quality co-ordinator, and a Quality Assurance Working Group which provides an institutional link point for the quality assurance work of various committees and makes recommendations at the highest academic level to the Senate Executive Committee. The University has also invested considerable resources in this area. Many new and revised quality related policies are in place, and implementation and monitoring of these are underway in different parts of the University. It is clear that the close working relationship between planning and quality assurance is beginning to pay dividends for quality improvement. The University used the audit preparations very effectively in identifying strengths and weaknesses in its own systems and approaches, and flagging 26 areas for improvement, some of which it has already

started to address. This provides a strong indication of the institution's commitment to and actions in moving towards a strongly self-regulated approach to quality assurance, at the same time as meeting its external accountability requirements. The University is congratulated on producing a comprehensive and frank self-evaluation of its quality management systems which could serve as a model for higher education institutions seeking to enhance quality in the core function areas on the basis of strong institutional self-knowledge of quality related strengths and weaknesses. The University is encouraged to continue to move towards a fuller attainment of this approach across all its core functions and to involve more staff in academic, professional, administrative, service and support departments in implementing this approach.

18. Historically, the institution has had traditional quality related mechanisms in place, such as an external examiner system and departmental reviews, to assure the quality of teaching and learning and research. Since 2001, UCT has developed more than 15 policies and initiatives to strengthen quality within the institution. The University will have to give continuing attention to the adequate resourcing and capacity requirements of its new quality related policies and initiatives. The University should also give consideration to the nature and role of the key integrating structures and mechanisms required to achieve focus, synergy and consistency in achieving set goals and targets for quality assurance and quality enhancement. This includes attention to the role of QAWG in integrating quality issues across the three core functions and facilitating UCT's to move towards greater self-regulation and sustained enhancement in relation to quality.

## **II. INSTITUTIONAL PLANNING, RESOURCE ALLOCATION AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT**

19. The Panel was impressed by the quality of high-level leadership and institutional direction provided by the Council and Senate within a "bicameral" system of governance (AP: 20).
20. UCT strives for financial sustainability through a well structured financial management system. The *Medium Term Budget Framework* (MTBF) under the direction of the University Finance Committee provides a financial framework for the pursuit of the University's goals. Operating units enjoy a wide degree of discretion within their allocated "net budget" with built-in incentives to exceed performance goals. The link between sound financial management and quality assurance is emphasised (AP: 28-31).
21. UCT's management system is marked by a high degree of devolution. The Portfolio information and interviews conducted by the Panel point to an ongoing

- quest for balance within this devolved system. The Panel found evidence of significant attempts to create a balance within several dichotomies: between devolution and academic freedom on the one hand and a centralised direction setting on the other; between a silo effect in departments and faculties and the pursuit of common University goals; between a culture of collegial governance and a professionalised administration, etc.
22. The Panel was encouraged to learn of the progress made with the system of quarterly reviews, with an emphasis placed on institution-wide goals and performance against the high-level indicators of the *University Dashboard* (AP: 34). The interviews confirmed the effectiveness of this system with its links to the performance appraisal of deans and a system of appropriate rewards and penalties. It is the view of the Panel that this system could further strengthen devolution while addressing some of its limitations. The Panel endorses UCT's system of quarterly reviews and urges that its objectives in relation to transformation and other quality imperatives are kept in the foreground during implementation.
23. Flowing from the Mission, the Vice-Chancellor developed the *Vision 2001 and Beyond* that identified ten strategic drivers, usually referred to as the *Ten Point Plan*. These framed the *Five Guides for Action* and the *UCT Plan for 2005-2007*. The Panel noted a high degree of coherence between the mission and vision and the plans for research, financial stability of the institution, and transformation in relation to staff and student equity. On the other hand, aspects linked to teaching and learning and community engagement were less directly linked to the mission and vision.
24. At institutional level, the Panel was impressed by the focus on financial sustainability (one of the Vice-Chancellor's Ten Points) and the University's expressed intention to achieve a recurrent operating surplus of total recurrent operating income of 5 percent, to invest half of this surplus in unrestricted endowment, and to spend the other half on strategic needs in the following year (AP:29). The interviews provided strong evidence of support for this financial target across the institution. This is encouraging, in view of the identified need to enhance the experience of out-of-town students through the provision of adequate residential accommodation. **Commendation 3: The HEQC commends UCT for the initiatives taken to improve, integrate and institutionalise its planning and resource allocation systems to strengthen quality within a medium-term expenditure planning framework that has the requisite performance indicators to support quality.**
25. Historically, quality related mechanisms such as an external examiner system and departmental reviews have been integrated into the conduct of research and teaching and learning at UCT. In 2001, a quality assurance system was approved

by Senate and Council following a review by the Quality Assurance Working Group (QAWG) (*Quality Assurance at UCT, Report to Senate by the Quality Assurance Working Group, November 2001*). This system incorporates historical practices, is embedded in the academic structures, and recognises that primary accountability for quality rests with the Senate and Faculty Boards. Entities such as the CHED, the QAWG, the Institutional Planning Department, and the Department of Research Development provide expertise and assistance. Responsibility for giving effect to Senate policy on quality assurance lies with the University's Senate Executive Committee.

26. The Panel notes with appreciation the strategies for improvement that have already been put into place in several areas. Examples include a new equity enrolment plan for students, improving the quality of postgraduate education, and increased support for emerging researchers. This is a strong indication of the institution's commitment and actions to move towards a self-regulated quality assurance approach. The Panel encourages UCT to continue to move towards full implementation of this approach across its core functions, and to involve more staff members at all levels in both academic and PASS departments in implementing this approach. The facilitation and monitoring of such a full implementation may require rethinking the mandate, status, responsibilities and capacities of QAWG. **Recommendation 4: The HEQC recommends that UCT give serious consideration to re-positioning the QAWG as a Senate Committee, thus enabling it to insert its work into the formal academic oversight responsibilities of Senate.**
27. UCT's internal benchmarking practices, as described in the Audit Portfolio (AP: 186-7), are based on monitoring progress against high-level performance indicators through a set of annual reports. The most significant of these reports are the *Annual Teaching and Learning and Research Reports* to Council and Senate, the *Annual Faculties Reports*, and the *Annual Admissions Reviews*. It was also noted by the Panel that UCT employs four approaches to benchmarking, as well as the use of "exception reporting". The Panel acknowledges the potential for the effective assurance of quality inherent in the *University Dashboard*, which enables all deans and heads of PASS departments to review performance against key indicators.
28. In relation to impact studies, the Portfolio (AP:190) notes that formal reviews of different programmes are conducted from time to time by internal members of staff in collaboration with external stakeholders. It is further noted that quality management systems do not make provision for planned reviews of the impact and effectiveness of internal policies. This indication of a low level of activity with regard to impact studies was confirmed by the interviews. The Panel concurs with

UCT's own findings on impact evaluation (AP: 190) to the effect that: "This constitutes an undeveloped feedback loop in our system which needs to be addressed." The HEQC encourages the institution to build on its current benchmarking initiatives and to develop a comprehensive and integrated system of appropriate benchmarks which could be used together with the University's performance indicators to plan, monitor and continuously improve the quality of teaching and learning, research and community engagement as well as the quantity of their respective outputs.

### III. GENERAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING QUALITY

29. UCT's identity as a research-led institution finds expression in the area of teaching and learning in the concept of research-based teaching. The Audit Portfolio and further information gathered during the audit visit show that there is no agreed-on set of understandings about the meaning of research-based teaching at UCT.
30. The diverse understandings of research-based teaching seem to be related to a lack of debate about the concept itself and its implications at different levels of the academic governance of the institution as well as at the programme level. The lack of debate about the practical implications of the concept of research-based teaching at the programme level is reinforced by UCT's conception of academic freedom (AP: 64) which precludes the institution's central administration from becoming involved in issues of curriculum and pedagogy and, therefore, does not create the space for a more centralised management of the quality of teaching and learning in a way that advances institutional objectives. **Recommendation 5: The HEQC recommends that UCT explore a more substantial articulation between teaching and learning and research within a set of institution-wide arrangements that could give stronger expression to the conceptualisation of research-based teaching and address its implications for academic governance at different levels within the institution.**
31. The planning process at UCT has identified a series of goals and benchmarks specifically related to teaching and learning. The Vice-Chancellor's *Ten Point Plan* highlights the "creation of a rich student experience" as one of UCT's objectives (AP: 18). The *Five Guides for Action* developed by the Senior Leadership Group focus on teaching and learning across two areas: size and character, and academic profile (AP: 19). UCT has singled out a number of transformation activities directly related to teaching and learning. These include: focusing on how faculties are addressing curriculum relevance, reviewing the guidelines for academic reviews to include transformation issues more explicitly,

- setting up a Student Equity Task Team to develop an overarching student equity policy, and launching a project to improve “equity of outcomes” and throughput rates (AP: 38).
32. The system of academic governance that has the responsibility for realising these goals and implementing these activities operates within a devolved model in which HoDs have a pivotal role (AP: 65). According to the Audit Portfolio, UCT’s devolved approach to teaching and learning quality depends on faculty arrangements to ensure compliance with the Teaching and Learning Charter; the recruitment, selection and development of academic staff; the recruitment and training of temporary staff; and student selection. CHED was established in 1999. It operates in partnership with the faculties to provide specialised developmental services through its five departments. The Audit Portfolio is silent, however, about dedicated high level leadership and oversight for Teaching and the articulation of such oversight with the deans’ responsibilities in relation to teaching and learning.
  33. Although there are many examples of good practice in UCT’s policies and strategies for being a ‘learning-centred’ institution that provides access for all students, these are not sufficiently or consistently institutionalized and implemented across all faculties. The University is urged to address issues of academic governance in Teaching and Learning in an effort to find an appropriate balance between devolution and management accountability. It should also review and finalise key policies like the Academic Planning Framework, implement the Teaching and Learning Charter more consistently and develop an integrated and aligned set of systems for all aspects of the student experience.
  34. The Panel concurs with the view that ultimately individual lecturers, course convenors and HoDs are directly responsible for the quality of students’ learning experiences. However, it was not clear to the Panel how HoDs and deans are supported by the central administration in order to achieve institutional objectives and benchmarks. The Panel encourages UCT to consider ways to strengthen the role of the HoD through the provision of extra administrative capacity so that the administrative aspects of their work do not overshadow their responsibilities for the quality of teaching and learning.
  35. One feature of the devolved system is that, despite the HoD’s accountability to the deans, faculties have different arrangements to assure quality and different approaches to the support and development of quality teaching, differences which may carry possible quality compromises. These range, from little support to improve the quality of teaching and learning, to close monitoring and support for the improvement of teaching. The HEQC would like to suggest that UCT consider strengthening its arrangements for the teaching and learning function,

- taking into account the roles and capacities of the responsible DVC, the deans and HODs, and the need expressed by the institution to achieve a more effective articulation of the relevant academic management structures.
36. **Staff.** UCT has a set of formal procedures for the recruitment, selection and appointment of all categories of staff (AP: 173). These involve selection committees chaired by line managers (PASS departments) or academics of appropriate seniority (from the faculties), together with peers and appropriate representatives.
37. The Panel noted with some concern the increasing casualisation of the academic staff and the potential negative impact that it may have on the quality of academic provision. In this regard, a number of full-time and part time staff as well as students, expressed their concerns during the interviews about sustainable quality provision. The manner in which temporary teaching staff, tutors and teaching assistants are recruited and trained varies considerably across the faculties (AP: 68-69). Considering the key role played by these adjunct staff members in the undergraduate experience, the potential negative quality effects were of concern to the Panel. The Panel concurs with Area for Improvement 3 in the Portfolio that UCT must, “Develop policies, standards and processes for the selection, training and recognition of tutors, teaching assistants and other short-term teaching staff across all Faculties.” (AP: 219). **Recommendation 6: The HEQC recommends that UCT investigate more closely the impact that the casualisation of academic staff might be having on the quality of the student learning experience at the undergraduate level as well as the ways in which the employment of adjunct academic staff might be compromising high quality research-based teaching.**
38. In recognising the potential of CHED-based programmes for the orientation and development of academic staff members as educators, the Panel strongly suggests that UCT explores how this potential can be more fully realised through consistent implementation across the University. In what appears to be a recognition of the shortcomings of its approach to staff development, UCT recently established a Professional Development Working Group to facilitate the co-ordination of staff development initiatives; to develop a holistic staff development approach; to develop programmes that address the main areas of academic work in an integrated way; and to recommend an institutional academic staff development policy that promotes systematic development in all the main areas of academic work. It is intended that this body will be replaced by a formal Academic Staff Development Committee (AP:182-183). The HEQC encourages the institution to accelerate the work of the Professional Development Working Group and its progress towards achieving committee status, in order to

institutionalise consistent professional staff development approaches across the University.

39. The Panel encourages UCT to consider ways to derive maximum benefit from student evaluations consistently across the University. In order to ensure fairness to both lecturers and students and to make information gathered during student evaluations available for analysis and the development of improvement strategies across the institution, the Panel is of the opinion that the design and management of student evaluations cannot be left solely to the individual discretion of those responsible for courses and programmes. The Panel urges UCT to consider developing a policy framework to guide this activity within the context of a more integrated approach to staff development. With regard to an integrated approach to staff development the Panel noted in the Portfolio, 'Areas for Improvement' 21, that UCT needs to "Implement policies for staff development across the university" (AP:220). The Panel endorses this intention.
40. Students Admissions: An Alternative Admissions Research Project (AARP) has been developed at UCT and is established in some faculties. It provides the faculties with an instrument to identify students with potential and facilitates their placement in extended programmes. In addition, the Panel was informed during interviews that the project generates information on student potential, placement and achievement which it makes available to the faculties. The Panel also noted the document *The Alternative Admissions Research Project* (April 2005) which provided a comprehensive overview of the project as well as evidence for its success. **Commendation 4: The HEQC commends UCT for the pioneering and innovative work done in the Alternative Admissions Research Project run by CHED.**
41. During the audit visit there were also indications to the Panel of a measure of caution among academics in accepting the usefulness of determining academic potential and readiness by means other than traditional matriculation results. The Panel concluded that this unevenness of application may well be one of the consequences of institutional over-devolution of authority. **Recommendation 7: The HEQC recommends that UCT strengthen its admissions and placement strategies through a wider institutional use of AARP and ensure consistency in its implementation across all faculties.**
42. **Academic Development.** The Portfolio indicates that CHED is central to quality enhancement at UCT. The Portfolio indicated that the core of the academic development work is found in the foundation and extended curriculum programmes, which are established in all faculties except the Faculty of Law. These programmes are designed to enhance quality as well as to achieve equity of outcomes. The Panel noted the range of models of foundation work that

complement the AARP in some faculties. These demonstrate the creative possibilities of devolution. The Audit Portfolio (AP: 81) provides indicators of success in these programmes. Cohort studies (1995-1999 intakes) of students who progressed through the foundation programmes show important contributions to the realisation of the goal of access with success.

43. It is the view of the Panel that in terms of its innovative projects, its staffing expertise, its research-based approach, its national credibility in the higher education sector, and its programme success, CHED is an enormous institutional resource with potential to impact on the quality of teaching at UCT and nationally, if its role and function could be reframed so as to ensure its full utilisation across the University. **Recommendation 8: The HEQC recommends that UCT strengthen its existing systems to track and monitor students' academic progress. This should include a review of the collaboration between faculties and CHED to identify problems in teaching and learning and design appropriate interventions so as to ensure that CHED's work is fully utilised in support of quality objectives for staff and students across the University.**
44. **Academic Support Services.** The sixth of the Vice-Chancellor's *Ten-Point Plan*: "Creating a rich student experience" recognises the 50-50 Black/White student ratio and the further international dimension of diversity represented by students from 70 countries. In order to meet the challenge of creating a rich student experience, the Portfolio indicated that UCT offers an extensive range of services in support of teaching and learning. Besides the support provided through its library and ICT systems, other services reviewed in the Audit Portfolio (AP: 153-154) are Bursaries and Financial Aid, Student Health and Counselling, Student Housing and Career Development. The interviews conducted by the Panel confirmed the general commitment of UCT to provide financial aid to undergraduate students as a significant means of promoting student equity. Students who participated in the institutional climate survey reported that they had experienced UCT's financial aid as generous and it was one of the reasons why they applied to the University.
45. **Library.** During the visit to the main library, the Panel had the opportunity to explore the extent of library provision to support research and teaching and learning. The Panel found substantial evidence in the Portfolio and in the interviews with staff and students, as well as the visit to the main library, to conclude that the provision of library services at UCT constitutes good practice, notably the Knowledge Commons and the contribution of UCT to CALICO in the Western Cape, and that careful attention is given to benchmarking and monitoring of the library stock and services. **Commendation 5: The HEQC commends**

**UCT for the quality and efficiency of its library services, including the introduction of the Knowledge Commons.**

46. **Information and Communication Technologies.** UCT sees itself as an “early adopter” of information technologies. It has 7,500 workstations connected to its hardware infrastructure. The institution acknowledges that the infrastructure is aging and there is a mixture of centralised and decentralised services (AP: 165). The initial decentralisation has led to unevenness in IT provision across the University; a digital divide where some faculties are better provided for in this area than others (AP: 167).
47. **Certification.** The Panel was able to satisfy itself that the certification system as described in the documents and during the interviews safeguards the integrity of UCT certificates. The Panel considered that the project to improve the student certification system and the thoroughness implicit in the plans to effect improvements, such as the development of a comprehensive procedures manual, the offering of training courses, and the implementation of an authorisations/permissions structure to govern the use of the system has the potential to foster greater confidence in the university’s certification systems.
48. **Short course and partnerships.** The Panel formed the view that a good foundation is being built at UCT to assure university-wide consistency in the quality of short courses and encourages UCT to refine and fully implement its new policy to cover short courses offered by its faculties as well as through its partnership arrangements.
49. **Programme management, development and review.** The Panel concurs with the institution that in the area of teaching and learning, there are a number of disjunctures between UCT’s intentions as stated in its mission and actual practice at faculty and department level. One of the reasons for this may have to do with lack of debate on a consensual definition of UCT’s educational offerings, how these affect the institution’s recruitment niche, and how such a consensual definition should be implemented and monitored. Broad debate about these issues, as part of the review of the *APF*, could enable the institution to involve academic staff and students in the redesign of one specific aspect of UCT’s academic governance in such a way that asserts academic freedom at the same time that it strengthens accountability. In addressing the areas for improvement, the Panel was also of the opinion that improvements to the existing programme management practices could encourage multi-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary teaching and research, as well as support the realisation of the potential of the UCT signature themes. The Panel also considered that a greater consistency of implementation of programme management across all faculties is possible without imposing a uniformity of practice that would negate the advantages of an

institutionally devolved academic system. The HEQC encourages UCT to make effective its commitment to revise and finalise the Academic Planning Framework with a view to providing a clear policy foundation for the improvement and consistency of programme management practices, and which allows for an appropriate balance between self-directed initiative and accountability.

50. The Panel recognised the soundness of the approach taken to address these challenges. The approach includes extensive consultation with staff, external professionals and academics from other institutions, and informed decision-making and execution which could serve as a model for other programmes at the University. The implementation of the Academic Planning Framework in relation to programme development varies across faculties and depends to a large extent on the characteristics of the science domain within which the programme is located. The Panel found no evidence that the furthering of UCT's mission is part of the criteria used to evaluate new programmes, or of any criterion specifically focused on assessing the extent to which a programme is informed by new research or introduces pedagogical innovations. Given the institution's recognition that "UCT's strategic objectives are not well known to Faculty and do not appear to feature explicitly in the curriculum design and planning of academic programmes" (AP: 146) it seems important that the institution finds ways of integrating faculty objectives with institutional strategic goals. **Recommendation 9: The HEQC recommends that UCT explore ways in which programme development at faculty level takes into account the institution's strategic objectives, including its view of the current and planned academic shape of the institution in terms of science domains as well as professional and academic programme offerings.**
51. According to the Audit Portfolio, two systems of review of academic programmes co-exist at UCT. One is unstructured, informal and continuous and is based on student evaluations, external examiners and moderators reports, annual faculty reports to Senate, co-ordination with the requirements of professional bodies and on graduate surveys. The other system is formal, structured and periodic. These formal reviews are constructed around a self-evaluation which is interrogated by an appointed review panel that includes internal and external members as well as a CHED assessor member. The reviews take place in five-year cycles (AP: 147-148). Among the weaknesses and challenges identified through the first phase of the implementation of the review process, the institution highlighted six issues that emerged at different interviews and which the Panel identified through its analysis of the documentation submitted by the institution: absence of functioning programme committees or lack of clarity about the roles of the head of department and programme convenors; inadequate staff development opportunities; need to

improve equity targets; inadequate faculty engagement with student evaluations; inadequate reflection on local and African needs in the programme offerings and problems of coherence in programmes that draw staff from across faculties. In its own self-evaluation, UCT considers it unlikely that the programme review system could correct problems in the areas of programme management arising from over-devolution. The Panel concurs with the institution's judgement, particularly in relation to the insufficiency of academic reviews to generate a concerted approach to issues such as academic staff development. **Recommendation 10: The HEQC recommends that UCT give priority to the consistent implementation of the formal programme review system across all faculties, and address the consistency of the link between research and teaching and learning within the evaluation parameters.**

- 52. Assessment.** At the end of 2004, UCT adopted a policy stipulating a set of criteria against which specific assessment practices can be validated. These criteria address alignment, reliability, security, transparency, fairness, legitimacy, feasibility and administrative efficiency in assessment practice (AP: 95). The consistent application of these criteria across the University will have significant quality implications but it is still too early to assess its impact. The Panel concurs with the institution's understanding of assessment in relation to transformation and the importance attached to assessment systems which are fair, reliable and transparent in pursuit of broader access. The audit visit provided evidence of sound traditional assessment practices. It emerged during the interviews that although traditional assessment practices and procedures seem to be sound, the new assessment policy raises a number of challenges for the institution. The Panel noted that the new UCT policy on assessment embodies current good practice on assessment. The Panel was of the opinion that the gap between policy and practice may be the result of a lack of rigorous engagement by academics with the principles embodied in the policy and the possible tendency to hold on to traditional practices. Given the claim that "responsibility for the validity of assessment rests principally with course convenors" (AP: 94), the Panel considered it imperative that UCT actively promotes assessor training, rather than leaving it up to individual initiative. The Panel urges UCT to consider a more focused and structured approach to assessor training. **Recommendation 11: The HEQC recommends that UCT consider instituting structured assessor training for all levels of the research and academic staff as a way of responding to national policy in this area and of improving a fundamental aspect of the teaching and learning process.**
- 53.** The institution's Audit Portfolio identifies a number of shortcomings in UCT's internal moderation practices which include the absence of a policy to regulate

internal moderation. The Panel shares the concerns raised in the Portfolio and is of the opinion that many of these issues could be addressed by the new Assessment Policy. This would shift the institution towards assessment that has higher levels of objectivity. Requiring assessors to make judgments on the basis of pre-determined criteria can remove some of the ‘subjectivity’ in external scrutiny, which appears to be a concern of the Examinations and Assessment Committee. UCT considers its external examination (moderation) system as one of its primary mechanisms for validating assessment (AP: 98). Senate Policy requires that at least 50 percent of academic work that is submitted for marking in each course must be submitted for external moderation. All external moderators are required to submit a confidential report to the dean on the “standards of teaching and administration of the department” and this is forwarded to the relevant deputy vice-chancellor (AP: 98). The Panel noted that the review of the external moderation system was conducted during 2003 and the new assessment policy was adopted at the end of 2004. Although UCT might have a system of external moderation which functions well in relation to traditional assessment practices, the Panel was of the view that attention still needed to be given to how the external moderation functions in terms of the principles underpinning the new assessment policy in order to ensure validity, reliability, and fairness in terms of the new policy.

54. Overall, the Panel was left with the impression that RPL is currently a low priority at UCT, with some indication that it is considered to be irrelevant at undergraduate level. This is difficult to reconcile with phrases in the UCT Mission Statement (adopted in 1996) which refer to wanting to be as “flexible in access, active in redress, and rigorous in success” and seeking to promote “promote equal opportunity and the full development of human potential”. While recognising the initial steps being taken to promote RPL within the University, the Panel has some concern that this may remain a matter of low priority. **Recommendation 12: The HEQC recommends that UCT investigate and utilise the opportunities offered by RPL strategies to give content to the relevant commitments in its Mission Statement, thereby enhancing access for a wider pool of students.**

#### **IV. MANAGEMENT OF RESEARCH QUALITY**

55. The notion of being research-led is clearly fundamental for the University. However, the Research Strategy, nor any other document made available to the Audit Panel, define the concept and analyse fully its implications for the overall conception of the institution. The Research Strategy does outline how, in a research-led institution, research relates to other core functions as well as to

elements of the institution's mission. In relation to teaching and learning, a research-led university promotes research-oriented scholarship and teaching, which the Audit Portfolio refers to as "research-based teaching and learning" (AP: 43). In terms of social engagement, research contributes to social, political and cultural development at different levels and translates research into society (*Research Handbook*: 5). The institution has yet to engage with the different senses and modes in and by which research transforms the content, focus and epistemological basis of teaching and learning and community engagement at a 'research-led' university. In other words, how its research-led character informs UCT's core functions and makes this university possibly different from any other research-intensive higher education institution. **Recommendation 13: The HEQC recommends that UCT give attention to clarifying the notion of 'research-led' through wider debate across the institution so that academics and students can contribute to its implementation across all core functions in a way that gives coherent and substantial institutional content to the notion.** If UCT is able to give greater content to what it means to be a research-led institution (which appears to be central for its current vision and strong self-understanding) (AP: 19), the University may be in a position to produce an innovative model for institutional organisation which would be an important contribution to debates about the identity of a differentiated higher education system in South Africa and to the debate about quality in such a differentiated higher education system. This may enable UCT to position itself differently and distinctively from other research active universities in South Africa as well as internationally.

56. One feature of UCT's conception of its research-led identity is the "selectively comprehensive" nature of the research enterprise. This is expressed in the development of signature themes which focus research at UCT and link it to national strategies for research and development. Signature themes are intended "to recognize existing areas of excellence, and to identify areas where there is the potential for development, allowing for transformational objectives to be met and aligned with regional and national priorities" (AP:45). The URC has approved a set of general criteria for the identification of these themes. The Panel was of the view that signature themes and centres of excellence give content and meaning to the strategy of research being selectively comprehensive. Moreover, in the specific case of the Institute for Infectious Diseases and Molecular Medicine, it gives content to research that has a continental and regional focus and helps to realise one aspect of UCT's view of social engagement.
57. The Framework for Research Support and Development, which was adopted in 2004, gives expression to the notion of research as a vehicle for transformation in

two senses. On the one hand, the Framework focuses on the implementation of policies and programmes aimed at changing the equity profile of UCT's researchers. On the other hand, the Framework provides the policies and structures necessary to change the relationship between knowledge production, innovation and the utilisation of research by society. The Framework for Research Support and Development (*Research Handbook*: 140) has three focus points. First, it focuses on researchers and their needs at different stages of their careers. The second aspect of the Framework focuses on the provision of specialised support for research projects which have a strategic importance for the University. The third focus of the Research Framework supports innovation and knowledge transfer that can benefit society. UCT's recruitment of postdoctoral researchers and its Emerging Researcher Programme (ERP) are indicated in the Audit Portfolio as examples of initiatives guided by this Framework. The Emerging Researcher Programme (ERP) has, as its main objective, the growth of the next generation of researchers and the improvement of the equity profile of active researchers. The ERP is underpinned by close mentoring and monitoring of the achievement of performance targets in the form of performance indicators. The Panel acknowledges the efficient use by the institution of performance indicators and reporting structures to monitor the progress of the ERP. The evidence provided in the interviews conducted by the Panel strongly confirmed the value of the ERP. The Audit Panel sees the involvement of high quality retired UCT researchers in mentoring younger colleagues as a creative and innovative strategy to help develop and establish new researchers. **Commendation 6: The HEQC commends the excellent work being done at UCT in the area of research development, as exemplified by the recruitment of postdoctoral fellows and the Emerging Researcher Programme.**

58. The University Equipment Committee prioritises equipment needs within Faculties and makes decisions on the prioritised items based on the available budget" (AP: 52). The annual expenditure per faculty is monitored through reports to the University Research Committee, Senate and Council. The Portfolio (AP: 52-53, 60, 220) and information from interviews conducted during the site visit clearly indicated that UCT recognises the key challenge of maintaining an adequate investment level in research infrastructure, which encompasses research equipment and the library. The Panel acknowledges UCT's commitment to maintaining and enhancing its research infrastructure and equipment in support of research quality at the University. **Commendation 7: The HEQC commends UCT for supporting research in areas of national importance through the provision of outstanding infrastructure and facilities such as is found in the Institute for Infectious Diseases and Molecular Medicine, and the Department of Chemical Engineering in the Faculty of Engineering and the**

**Built Environment.** In order to ensure the sustainability of the research enterprise from a financial perspective, as well as not to encroach on the budget allocated for the other core functions, the institution is paying close attention to the current non-recovery of research costs. The Panel encourages UCT in its efforts to address its concern with appropriate cost-recovery on research activities, as it affects not only infrastructure but staff time and overhead costs.

59. The research and innovation portfolio at UCT is the responsibility of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research who reports to the Vice-Chancellor and to Senate through the University Research Committee. The portfolio is organised into three research support units: Research Office, UCT Innovation, and the Postgraduate Funding Office. Two Senate committees deal with research, namely, the University Research Committee and the University Equipment Committee. Each faculty has a research committee and research support facilities reporting to the respective dean (AP: 48). The Panel gained the impression that the Research Office and the University Research Committee add real value to this core function. Their work has a clear creative and transformational thrust, with the priority focus being on development and support, and not only on administration.
- Commendation 8: The HEQC commends the University on the creative and transformational work undertaken by the Research Office and the University Research Committee in support of excellence and equity in the research function at UCT.**

60. Quality assurance of research at UCT is founded on consistent application of traditional peer review mechanisms. The Portfolio (AP: 4 4) lists examples of these mechanisms. Observations made by the Panel confirmed the general effectiveness of these mechanisms in assuring the quality of academic research at UCT. The institution uses a system of peer review to assess the quality of research. Given that it has the highest number of NRF rated scientists in the country, the Panel was reasonably confident about the effectiveness of the University's internal peer review systems. A relatively new system that has been developed and implemented since 2004 is the five yearly internal reviews of academic units and their research function. The Panel was particularly impressed with the Animal Ethics Committee for its continual review and updating of the animal ethics guidelines. Planned improvements focus on animal research, with a training course for staff and students who are doing research that involves animals.
- Commendation 9: The HEQC commends the University on the work of the Animal Ethics Committee in continually updating and reviewing the guides for animal ethical clearance and the proactive steps taken to train researchers involved with animal experimentation.**

61. Every faculty has developed its approach to and policy for ethical clearance in relation to each domain of science. These policies are documented in the *Research Handbook*. Members of the University Ethics Committee indicated, however, that the implementation of the policies across the faculties was uneven, with the Faculties of Health Sciences and Science having the most rigorous implementation of policies. The Panel acknowledged these faculties for their rigorous implementation of policies linked to ethics. Some researchers interviewed by the Panel, however, reported that they were not aware of university-wide guidelines or codes of ethics available to the faculty-based committees. **Recommendation 14: The HEQC recommends that the University's Ethics Committee monitor the implementation of ethical clearance policies at faculty level to ensure consistent implementation across all faculties and that it continually update and review its policies and practices for research involving human subjects.**
62. In 2004, through various award processes the URC allocated R18.9 million to research activities at the institution (AP: 51). Special attention in the UCT research budget is given to strategies geared to improve research outcomes, that is, identifying centres of excellence and signature themes (AP:35). In this case, the Panel acknowledged the clear link between strategic planning and resource allocation within the University. The budget allocation was also linked to improving the quality of research at UCT. Research managers and researchers interviewed by the Panel expressed general satisfaction with UCT's procedures and mechanisms for accessing external research funding, although some expressed their reservations about the responsiveness of the NRF in relation to critical areas such as AIDS research. Appreciation was expressed by interviewees about the role played by the Research Office in facilitating access to funding, although some interviewees voiced misgivings about the adequacy of its staffing allocation.
63. UCT experienced a drop in total research outputs from 2,848.8 to 2,496.8 between 2001 and 2003. The 2003 outputs were distributed across faculties as follows: Law: 8 percent; Commerce: 11 percent; Engineering: 12 percent; Health Sciences: 18 percent; Humanities: 24 percent; and Science: 28 percent. The Research Report to Senate and Council for 2003 indicates seventeen invention disclosures and two South African patents granted (AP: 84). Commercialisation, protection of intellectual property and patenting within the research core function is relatively new. The Panel recognised the potential of this area to produce more application of research results, and possibly to generate some income. The Panel encourages the University to continue to develop and strengthen this area of work. Other forms of social beneficiation from research are focused on the actual utilisation of

research by communities or on the dissemination and popularisation of research within a framework of the public understanding of science. The institution indicates that it also transfers knowledge to society by working with the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA).

- 64.** In terms of UCT's research collaboration, the Panel found evidence indicating a very active set of networks that connect UCT researchers with colleagues and organisations in South Africa and internationally. The Panel recognised the importance of research collaboration in relation to increasing the networking of UCT researchers, leveraging more funding and infrastructure for the institution. However, the Panel found that the institution does not have an integrated strategy on research partnerships which identifies potential research partners beyond individual academics' initiatives and networks. An integrated strategy on research partnerships could go well beyond a THRIP approach to collaboration, and include different scientific, commercial, industrial and civil society or community based entities and organisations, with which to establish projects. Such an approach could support and make more concrete UCT's broad understanding of the relationship between research and social responsiveness.
- 65.** The Panel recognised UCT's significant contribution to research in South Africa. In 2003 UCT had 214 NRF rated researchers, an increase from 197 in 2002. Of these, 16 researchers were "A" rated, the highest number for any university in the country. **Commendation 10: The HEQC commends the institution for providing an enabling research environment that supports excellent researchers across the different science domains and congratulates the University on the award of two NRF Centres of Excellence.**
- 66. Postgraduate education.** UCT emphasises the importance of postgraduate education in terms of its mission, the *Guides for Action* and its defined purpose as a "teaching and research university" that is "research-led". It sees postgraduate education as closely aligned with research, and recognises the continuity between undergraduate and postgraduate education in that its *Academic Planning Framework* provides the overall policy framework for both. The recent creation of signature themes provides closer links between active high performing researchers and postgraduate students, and represents a good example of a stronger link between research performance and the supervision of postgraduate students. The Panel recognised that such strategies will ensure the progression of students from undergraduate to postgraduate levels and also improve the quality of postgraduate education. The Panel encourages the institution to continue to develop such strategies and to deepen their implementation across the institution. UCT has set a ratio of undergraduate to postgraduate students of 70:30 as a target to be reached by 2010 (AP: 107). The Panel recognises the close relationship between research

production and the level of postgraduate provision offered by an institution and agrees with the institution's target.

67. Policies governing postgraduate funding are supported by the Postgraduate Funding Office. Internal funding for postgraduate studies totalled R25.9m in 2003, while external funding amounted to R11.7m (AP: 106-107). The latter came from the National Research Foundation and the Medical Research Council. Postgraduate students also receive direct and indirect support through research grants, contract research and teaching opportunities. During interviews with the Panel, the students expressed some satisfaction with the level of funding, but reported that they had experienced difficulties in accessing this funding, particularly from external funding agencies like the NRF. The Panel acknowledges the institution's proactive approach to securing funds and bursaries for students.
68. The Postgraduate Centre, managed by the Postgraduate Funding Office, as well as similar facilities at faculty level, was seen as a definite improvement in promoting peer interaction among postgraduate students. The postgraduate students found the Centre staff helpful and were pleased with the quality of support received from it. The Panel recognises that the Postgraduate Funding Office is operating efficiently with supportive staff. The creation of the Postgraduate School, like the Graduate School in the Humanities Faculty is an effective strategy to create a discrete postgraduate student identity, providing effective intellectual support and optimising resource synergies for postgraduate education. The Panel acknowledged the effectiveness of this strategy and encourages the institution to develop other postgraduate schools, where appropriate.
69. The Writing Centre in CHED assists postgraduate students with developing their writing skills. Students have found such support to be crucial in complementing good guidance from their supervisors. They felt that this support greatly enhanced their success in producing dissertations. The Panel recognised that the model used by the Writing Centre is labour intensive and is dependent on the political goodwill of faculties. The use of such services varies from faculty to faculty and is largely dependent on the willingness of the supervisor to encourage the student to use the service. The Panel compliments the University for supporting the development of the writing abilities of postgraduate students, particularly because of the potential positive impact that this type of support can have on the success of disadvantaged students. The Panel encourages the University to institutionalise this programme across all faculties through the allocation of adequate resources and to give systematic encouragement to faculties and supervisors to work closely with the Writing Centre. **Commendation 11: The HEQC commends the institution for providing good infrastructure and support through the**

**libraries, IT services, the Postgraduate Office, the Postgraduate Centre, the Graduate Schools and the Writing Centre in CHED, all of which effectively underpin the development of quality in postgraduate education.**

70. The Portfolio (AP: 204) draws attention to the incomplete implementation of the improvements to postgraduate supervision across the University. Interviews reveals that much work still needs to be done on policies and regulations that specify the role and responsibilities of supervisors, the processes for monitoring postgraduate research, and effective structures and processes for the handling of complaints and appeals from postgraduate students. The Panel was concerned, as a result of many comments from interviewees, about the frustration related to workload and lack of incentives experienced by supervisors and students. Supervisors of postgraduate students who were interviewed by the Panel drew attention to their frustrations in relation to the successful completion of theses and the subsequent publication of thesis material by the students. They reported that pressure to ensure a timely throughput and the lack of formal quantification of supervisory load in relation to overall teaching load is exacerbated by the extra effort required when supervisors take on under-prepared students. Supervisors reported that they often experienced postgraduate supervision as an add-on that is not governed by a workload model, but left to the discretion of the HoD. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor responsible for Research noted that no more doctoral students will be recruited until she is satisfied that there is sufficient supervision capacity. **Recommendation 15: The HEQC recommends that UCT investigate workload and incentive issues in postgraduate supervision with a view to identifying and effecting improvements to raise supervision capacity to levels consonant with the institution's concern for quality in postgraduate education.**
71. In the opinion of the Panel, the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) currently being introduced university-wide is a welcome development in the formalisation of the student-supervisor relationship, especially in terms of the expectations of both parties. It is planned that the MoU system will be monitored by the Board of Graduate Studies. Effectively, however, the HoDs will still retain the primary responsibility. The efficacy of the MoU as a tool for ensuring supervision quality remains to be tested. The Panel noted with appreciation the introduction of a Supervisory Training Programme. The Panel found some instances of the pairing of a novice supervisor with an experienced supervisor in the role of co-supervisor. The Panel recognised the usefulness of using co-supervisors as a strategy for training new supervisors.
72. The interviews conducted by the Panel provided an insight into the effectiveness of examiners' reports as a form of supervision evaluation. An additional feedback

mechanism exists in the Faculty of Humanities where postgraduate students are invited to submit a report after graduating on the quality of supervision and assessment. Close investigation of samples of doctoral examiners reports shows that international examiners of high standing are used and that their reports are rigorously handled. Generally, the practices of the Doctoral Degrees Board which oversees the appointment of examiners and the ratification of results are rigorous. **Commendation 12: The HEQC commends UCT for the rigour of its doctoral examination system.**

73. The Portfolio describes UCT's biggest challenge in the area of postgraduate education as "improving throughput, and graduation rates, and achieving equity" (AP: 204). Standard admission requirements and policies for admission to postgraduate studies are in place. The application of these policies show signs of addressing past inequities. An analysis of enrolments patterns could tell the institution more about its equity profile at the postgraduate level. The institution is encouraged to develop monitoring mechanisms to track cohorts in relation to dropouts, throughputs and graduation rates. This approach could also be useful in evaluating progress and benchmarking across different departments and faculties within the institution and with similar South African research intensive institutions.

## V. MANAGEMENT OF THE QUALITY OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

74. UCT has chosen to define its third core function in terms of the discourse of social responsiveness. UCT suggests that this term covers all scholarly activities whose outcomes contribute to local, regional and national socio-economic objectives in the context of its Mission and *Guides for Action*. The Panel noted that the University approaches this category of work through an understanding of community engagement as being 'wider' than service learning or community 'outreach'. In this view, social responsiveness covers research, curriculum reform, choice of pedagogy and student profiles in programmes.
75. The Portfolio reports on a first University-wide audit of teaching, research and other activities that have a direct role and impact on the community. The Social Responsiveness Audit was carried out in 2004. The report on the findings of this audit also proposed a draft conceptual framework for monitoring and evaluating social responsiveness at UCT, as a foundation for quality in community engagement.
76. The Portfolio highlights the role of SHAWCO since its establishment in 1943 as a student-led volunteer programme of community work. The Portfolio also flags the existence of service learning arrangements in faculties like Commerce and the

- Graduate School of Business and the Health Sciences, and partnerships with local and national government in the Science Faculty. The Panel acknowledged that these and other initiatives are important and creative examples of good practice in linking transformation concerns, welfare provision and community development, and intellectual renewal (curriculum reform).
77. The Panel was concerned that the view that most of what UCT does is Community Engagement may obscure the real innovations in Community Engagement at UCT as well as the possibility of extending to more university activities the approach that underpins those innovations. Such a view may also constrain the appropriate targeted resourcing and monitoring of Community Engagement in those departments and faculties that have initiatives in this area.
78. The Panel observed that some of the community engagement initiatives reported on in the Audit Portfolio is still very much work in progress, and that a great deal still has to be done to institutionalise a formal approach to this core function. Interviews showed that there are multiple interpretations of social responsiveness, some contradictory and inconsistently implemented by individual academics and students, and often largely dependent on the good intentions, commitment and initiative of these individuals.
79. It appeared to the Panel that there were at least three different discourses and associated practices at the University about Community Engagement. One such discourse is about Social Responsiveness where the whole of UCT is seen as engaged with and contributing to community development. There is also a discourse of service learning which exists in some departments and faculties and which is currently being evaluated at UCT. A third discourse is that of voluntary community outreach as manifested in the SHAWCO model. The Student Transformation Charter also flags the importance of what it calls ‘Community Development’ and proposes that “the curriculum, courses and research must have a community development aspect in all faculties”, that community development work is accredited as a “compulsory part of the degree curriculum”, that students be given relevant skills training for community development and that student and management governance structures should provide strong support for all sustainable community development initiatives. All three discourses and associated practices signal important dimensions of community engagement at the University and should find a place within a university-wide framework for this area of work, while ensuring that quality issues are not compromised.
- Recommendation 16: The HEQC recommends that UCT review its current approach to community engagement (and social responsiveness) in the light of some prevailing conceptual ambiguities and quality related gaps, and work towards the development of an integrated institutional policy**

**framework that allows for the inclusion of social responsiveness through scholarship, service learning and community outreach. Such a framework could provide a more coherent set of parameters for implementation, resourcing and budgeting, and quality monitoring of community engagement as a basis for UCT to give effect to the ‘active developmental role’ that it seeks in its mission.**

- 80.** The Panel acknowledges UCT’s established tradition of civic concern and welfare provision to communities around Cape Town, as manifested in the SHAWCO initiatives, and the manner in which the Faculty of Health Sciences integrates its teaching and research with service to the community. The University rightly sees SHAWCO as a reservoir of expertise on which to draw and for SHAWCO to facilitate stronger links between UCT and Western Cape communities. The Panel is of the opinion that the replication of models of community engagement, such as the existing relationship between SHAWCO and the Faculty of Health Sciences, should be encouraged and supported at UCT. **Commendation 13: The HEQC commends SHAWCO as a student-run initiative of the University which promotes social responsibility among students at UCT and provides a ready vehicle for the University to establish stronger links with Western Cape communities.**

The University of Cape Town is one of South Africa’s premier research institutions. It has innovative and effective systems to stimulate and support research, dedicated high level steering and oversight of the research core function, clear research-related quality indicators and monitoring mechanisms, appropriate rewards and incentives for research, etc. Teaching and Learning at the University does not enjoy similar high level institutional steering, resourcing and developmental support and monitoring as is evident in the research function at UCT. The many examples of good practice in relation to teaching and learning need to be located within a more integrated University-wide framework that is appropriately resourced and monitored in order to give full effect to UCT’s mission “to be an outstanding teaching and research university, educating for life and addressing the challenges facing our society”.

On the whole, the University appears to be a well resourced, strongly planned and efficiently run higher education institution. The institution is justified in attracting students and staff to come to it because of its reputation for excellence in many areas of teaching and learning and research. UCT is a valuable and valued part of the South African higher education system, both for its research and graduate output as well as for

its contribution to the intellectual life of the country. A speedier and targeted resolution of its transformation challenges and a consolidation of its systems for quality improvement, especially in relation to Teaching and Learning, can only enhance its already significant contribution to the achievement of the goals of the higher education system in South Africa as well as to its contribution to national and international scholarship.

## **List of Commendations and Recommendations**

A list of commendations and recommendations follows. These are not presented in priority order. They are clustered below to provide a quick overview for the reader. The body of the report also draws attention to other issues for attention and consideration by UCT.

### **Commendations**

1. The HEQC commends UCT for using the audit self-evaluation process to produce a frank and incisive analysis of its mission and foundational policies, its strategic objectives and its implementation architecture, as well as a set of pointers for rethinking and revising them in moving towards a more integrated and consistent basis for quality in institutional policy and practice at UCT.
2. The HEQC commends the University for involving and supporting the Student Representative Council to participate proactively in the Audit in pursuit of an approach to quality involvement that is inclusive of students as a key constituency of the University. The SRC is congratulated on its initiative in providing a student-based response on quality issues for the Audit.
3. The HEQC commends UCT for the initiatives taken to improve, integrate and institutionalise its planning and resource allocation systems to strengthen quality within a medium-term expenditure planning framework that has the requisite performance indicators to support quality.
4. The HEQC commends UCT for the pioneering and innovative work done in the Alternative Admissions Research Project run by CHED.
5. The HEQC commends UCT for the quality and efficiency of its library services, including the introduction of the Knowledge Commons.
6. The HEQC commends the excellent work being done at UCT in the area of research development, as exemplified by the recruitment of postdoctoral fellows and the Emerging Researcher Programme.
7. The HEQC commends UCT for supporting research in areas of national importance through the provision of outstanding infrastructure and facilities such as is found in the Institute for Infectious Diseases and Molecular Medicine, and the Department of Chemical Engineering in the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment.
8. The HEQC commends the University on the creative and transformational work undertaken by the Research Office and the University Research Committee in support of excellence and equity in the research function at UCT.

9. The HEQC commends the University on the work of the Animal Ethics Committee in continually updating and reviewing the guides for animal ethical clearance and the proactive steps taken to train researchers involved with animal experimentation.
10. The HEQC commends the institution for providing an enabling research environment that supports excellent researchers across the different science domains and congratulates the University on the award of two NRF Centres of Excellence.
11. The HEQC commends the institution for providing good infrastructure and support through the libraries, IT services, the Postgraduate Office, the Postgraduate Centre, the Graduate Schools and the Writing Centre in CHED, all of which effectively underpin the development of quality in postgraduate education.
12. The HEQC commends UCT for the rigour of its doctoral examination system.
13. The HEQC commends SHAWCO as a student-run initiative of the University which promotes social responsibility among students at UCT and provides a ready vehicle for the University to establish stronger links with Western Cape communities.

## **Recommendations**

1. The HEQC recommends that UCT accelerate the implementation of its Employment Equity Policy and Plan, paying specific attention to targets and timeframes, consistency in application across the University, and the development of more structured forms of support for Black and women academic and support staff.
2. The HEQC recommends that UCT continue to review trends in its undergraduate admissions and throughput rates and ensure better co-ordination of faculty planning and support mechanisms in order to accelerate improvements in the equity profiles of Black and especially South African born African students.
3. The HEQC recommends that UCT strengthen its transformation related initiatives to give effect to the interventions identified in the Portfolio, the Institutional Climate and Student Surveys and other relevant documents in order to ensure that the effectiveness of the core functions and the quality of their operations are not weakened by identified but unresolved transformation issues. This includes additional measures to strengthen the capacity of the Transformation Office in

- order to ensure improved co-ordination and implementation of the new proposed institutional interventions on transformation.
4. The HEQC recommends that UCT give serious consideration to re-positioning the QAWG as a Senate Committee, thus enabling it to insert its work into the formal academic oversight responsibilities of Senate.
  5. The HEQC recommends that UCT explore a more substantial articulation between teaching and learning and research within a set of institution-wide arrangements that could give stronger expression to the conceptualisation of research-based teaching and address its implications for academic governance at different levels within the institution.
  6. The HEQC recommends that UCT investigate more closely the impact that the casualisation of academic staff might be having on the quality of the student learning experience at the undergraduate level as well as the ways in which the employment of adjunct academic staff might be compromising high quality research-based teaching.
  7. The HEQC recommends that UCT strengthen its admissions and placement strategies through a wider institutional use of AARP and ensure consistency in its implementation across all faculties.
  8. The HEQC recommends that UCT strengthen its existing systems to track and monitor students' academic progress. This should include a review of the collaboration between faculties and CHED to identify problems in teaching and learning and design appropriate interventions so as to ensure that CHED's work is fully utilised in support of quality objectives for staff and students across the University.
  9. The HEQC recommends that UCT explore ways in which programme development at faculty level takes into account the institution's strategic objectives, including its view of the current and planned academic shape of the institution in terms of science domains as well as professional and academic programme offerings.
  10. The HEQC recommends that UCT give priority to the consistent implementation of the formal programme review system across all faculties, and address the consistency of the link between research and teaching and learning within the evaluation parameters.
  11. The HEQC recommends that UCT consider instituting structured assessor training for all levels of the research and academic staff as a way of responding to national policy in this area and of improving a fundamental aspect of the teaching and learning process.

12. The HEQC recommends that UCT investigate and utilise the opportunities offered by RPL strategies to give content to the relevant commitments in its Mission Statement, thereby enhancing access for a wider pool of students.
13. The HEQC recommends that UCT give attention to clarifying the notion of 'research-led' through wider debate across the institution so that academics and students can contribute to its implementation across all core functions in a way that gives coherent and substantial institutional content to the notion.
14. The HEQC recommends that the University's Ethics Committee monitor the implementation of ethical clearance policies at faculty level to ensure consistent implementation across all faculties and that it continually update and review its policies and practices for research involving human subjects.
15. The HEQC recommends that UCT investigate workload and incentive issues in postgraduate supervision with a view to identifying and effecting improvements to raise supervision capacity to levels consonant with the institution's concern for quality in postgraduate education.
16. The HEQC recommends that UCT review its current approach to community engagement (and social responsiveness) in the light of some prevailing conceptual ambiguities and quality related gaps, and work towards the development of an integrated institutional policy framework that allows for the inclusion of social responsiveness through scholarship, service learning and community outreach. Such a framework could provide a more coherent set of parameters for implementation, resourcing and budgeting, and quality monitoring of community engagement as a basis for UCT to give effect to the 'active developmental role' that it seeks in its mission.