



Audit Report on the Durban University of Technology

Report of the HEQC to the Durban University of Technology

Executive Summary

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Acronyms

AP	Audit Portfolio
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CHED	Centre for Higher Education and Development
CQPA	Centre for Quality Promotion and Assurance
CRMD	Centre for Research Management and Development
DIT	Durban Institute of Technology
DUT	Durban University of Technology
DVC	Deputy Vice Chancellor
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Body
FRC	Faculty Research Committee
HDC	Higher Degree Committee
HEMIS	Higher Education Management and Information System
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HoD	Head of Department
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ICTD	Information and Communications Technology Department
IEC	Institutional Ethics Committee
IF	Institutional Forum
IP	Institutional Profile
IRC	Institutional Research Committee
ITS	Information Technology System
MIS	Management of Information System
MLS	ML Sultan
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Services
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAQA	South African Qualification Authority
SRC	Student Representative Council
SSD	Student Services and Development
TN	Technikon Natal
UoT	University of Technology

Executive Summary

Brief Overview of Durban University of Technology

1. Durban University of Technology (DUT) is a medium-sized contact and predominantly undergraduate institution. It has six campuses in KwaZulu Natal in South Africa, four of which are in Durban; Steve Biko, which houses university management, ML Sultan, Brickfield Road, and City. There are two Midlands Campuses; Riverside in Pietermaritzburg and Indumiso in Imbali as well as two sites of delivery at Ritson Road and Mansfield in Durban.
2. DUT came into being, first, as a result of a voluntary merger between ML Sultan Technikon (a historically disadvantaged institution with mainly Indian enrolments) and Technikon Natal (a historically advantaged institution with mainly white enrolments) on 1 April 2002 at which time it was renamed Durban Institute of Technology (DIT). 3 years later its designation was changed to that of ‘university of technology’.
3. DUT is organised into four Faculties: Arts, Commerce, Engineering, Science and the Built Environment, and Health Sciences. In 2006 DUT offered 188 qualifications, 140 at the undergraduate level and 48 at the postgraduate level. In 2005, DUT had a student enrolment of 23 000. In 2006 DUT employed 2 672 staff members; of whom 1 388 were permanent appointments and 1 284 were part-time appointments. Of the 1 682 academic staff members 595 were full-time and 1 087 part-time, which constitutes a ratio of approximately 1:2 full-time to part-time academic staff.

Institutional Mission

4. With the change of designation to a university of technology in 2005, DUT entered into a strategic planning phase which resulted in the launch of its current vision and mission. The fact that the development and approval of a new mission for DUT took place in the context of an ongoing governance and leadership crisis did not create a conducive environment for an institution-wide engagement about the implications that the change of designation had for the conceptualisation of the core functions at DUT. A consequence of this has been the lack of interrogation of a number of notions included in the institution’s vision and mission and the lack of plans to give concrete expression to these notions.
5. The Panel learned during interviews with DUT’s executive management that to become a university of technology requires change in a number of areas. This includes: (i) ensuring the curriculum is strongly oriented to SET, (ii) an increase in staff holding Masters and PhD degrees, which would allow for (iii) enrolment of postgraduate students, and (iv) an increase of research outputs (AP: 19). Regarding the first it is clear that DUT is fundamentally an undergraduate institution in which the large majority of the enrolments are at National Diploma level. While neither this nor the staff qualifications seem to be a strong enough base from which to develop a strong

postgraduate profile, the actual areas of enrolments are quite strongly focused on science, engineering and technology. This augurs well for the achievement of the academic profile for which the institution is aiming.

6. The Panel is appreciative of the institution's drive to improve academic staff qualifications as a way of meeting one of the benchmarks of being a university of technology and developing a new academic culture. However, the Panel would like to caution DUT that simply increasing the number of academic staff with Masters and Doctoral degrees does not necessarily translate into better or different ways of teaching. The identification of the defining characteristics of teaching and learning at a university of technology, and their articulation in a general conceptualisation of teaching and learning seem to the Panel to be a necessary framework within which the improved staff qualifications could make both conceptual and strategic sense.
7. While the expansion of the research function and postgraduate education are a necessary part of DUT's growth trajectory, the Panel is concerned about an undue emphasis on these areas before the institution has achieved consolidation as a sound undergraduate teaching university. The Panel cautions the institution that the emphasis on the appointment of academics with postgraduate degrees, research outputs and postgraduate enrolments might be oversimplifying the idea of 'a university' and obfuscating innovative strategic thinking about the institution. Furthermore, none of these elements will make sense outside of a coherent academic project which defines the changes that need to take place in the conceptualisation of the three core functions for DUT to become a university of technology in substance.
8. While the Panel is aware that there are no national benchmarks or conceptualisations to map out universities of technology, it is of the view that DUT has not made much progress in defining its progression from technikon to university and to a university of technology in all its complexity. The Panel suggests that DUT takes the opportunity provided by the revision of its strategic plan and the appointment of a new Vice Chancellor to reconsider carefully what kind of academic and institutional identity would better give expression to DUT first, as a university and secondly, as a university of technology.

Recommendation 1

The HEQC recommends that Durban University of Technology creates the necessary mechanisms and processes for different layers of the institution to engage with its conceptualisation of 'university of technology', identify a developmental trajectory in relation to the three core functions and draw an implementation plan which establishes clear milestones, time-frames, responsibilities and performance indicators for the achievement of the goal of becoming a university of technology and its implications for the definition of quality.

Transformation at DUT: Equity, Redress and Institutional Culture

9. DUT's student population in 2005 was broadly representative of the demographics of the region in which the institution is located. In terms of gender, DUT had an equal distribution of male and female students. However the majority of women students were enrolled in traditional fields of study, such as HSS and BCM rather than in the SET disciplines (AP: 28). The Panel was concerned to note the stereotypical enrolment pattern of women students at DUT and encourages the institution to develop and implement strategies to attract more female students to SET.
10. In 2005 Indian and White students had relatively higher success rates than African students across all categories, with the difference between White and African students being particularly marked in SET and HSS at the undergraduate level. At the postgraduate level the differences are more pronounced with 61 percent White student success compared to 11 percent African student success in BCM and 44 percent to 24 percent success in SET. Despite the student profile being reflective of the population of the region, the discrepancies in graduation rates demonstrate that issues of equity and redress still need to be addressed. The Panel urges the institution to put in place appropriate academic support as well as to develop strategies to improve the quality of teaching and thereby graduation rates.
11. DUT has developed a number of strategies to support its Employment Equity Plan (2003-2008). One is a 'Growing our own timber' project. African and Coloured academics studying for higher degrees are appointed on a contract basis and upon successful completion are offered full-time appointments. Earmarked funding has been made available to recruit senior black academic and management staff. This is being used to broaden DUT's advertising base and to use recruitment agencies. Whilst appreciating the institution's efforts, the Panel is concerned by the slowness of the transformation of the staff profile. The Panel would like to urge the institution to assess carefully the success and failures of the policies regulating staff recruitment and the internal and external obstacles which might be causing the slow pace of transformation among academic staff.

Recommendation 2

The HEQC recommends that Durban University of Technology devises the mechanisms to assess carefully the success and failures of the policies regulating staff recruitment and the internal and external obstacles which might be causing the slow pace of transformation among academic staff.

12. Five years into the merger DUT is still struggling to develop a new organisational culture which overcomes previous institutional allegiances. The Panel heard in a range of interviews with management, staff and students that DUT is still a fractured institution along the lines of race and technikon-of-origin. The governance and leadership crisis which has affected the institution has no doubt compounded some of these problems. The Panel concurs with the institution that DUT needs to develop mechanisms to develop a shared institutional culture which is inclusive, transparent and community-oriented (AP: 21). Furthermore, it seems to the

Panel that a process of organisation building, led by the new Vice Chancellor, needs to take place in order for staff and students to develop a sense of belonging rooted in the new identity of DUT.

Institutional Planning, Resource Allocation and Quality Management

13. In 2006 due to ongoing disagreements between Council and senior management, a ministerial task team was set up to investigate the disputed issues. This resulted in the appointment of an assessor, and then an Administrator. A new Council was constituted and inaugurated in August 2007. A new Vice Chancellor was appointed and assumed the post on 5 August, a week prior to the audit visit. After a five year period (2002-2007) of considerable instability at the executive management level all these posts have been substantively filled. The Panel is of the view that the reconstitution of Council and the appointment of the new Vice Chancellor have the potential to stabilise the institution and inaugurate a new phase in the history of the institution in which community of purpose overcomes self-interest and factionalism. However, the Panel is concerned to note that DUT's Statute makes it possible for internal members to play a decisive role in the appointment of external Council members. This is not in accordance with the spirit of the Higher Education Act of 1997 and modern governance practices.

Recommendation 3

The HEQC recommends that Durban University of Technology revise its Statute to ensure that it complies with the Higher Education Act of 1997 and with principles of good governance and that it includes all the necessary balances and procedures in order to prevent the development of future governance crises which can undermine the quality of provision at the institution.

14. The Panel is concerned at the absence of the Registrar from the governance processes and would like to remind the institution that the role of the Secretary is vital to keep the functioning of Council within the parameters of the Higher Education Act. Furthermore, given that the Registrar is the custodian of the institution's regulations and responsible for their consistent application, the Panel encourages the institution to consider a larger role for the Registrar in the organisation of Council and in governance issues. There is also a need for a Registrar at the executive level who could act as a fundamental operational and conceptual link between management and administration in areas that affect both the sound functioning of the institution and the quality assurance of academic processes. The Panel suggests that serious consideration be given to the Registrar becoming a member of the executive management team.
15. The unfolding of the governance crisis at DUT has shown the important role that the Institutional Forum (IF) can play as a catalyst for organisational cohesion and privileging institutional interests above stakeholder interests in the absence of substantive leadership and governance structures. In this regard, the Panel would like to compliment the IF for the constructive role played in the recent crisis. However, the Panel would like to stress that there is a need to rethink the role of the IF in a stable situation in order to ensure

that there is no slippage of roles and responsibilities with those of management and Council. In this regard, the Panel also urges that the role of the IF be made consistent with the Higher Education Act.

16. While there is a single functioning Student Representative Council (SRC), its constitution is under the process of being amended to accommodate local SRC structures. This new structure will be implemented in 2008 (AP: 14). The Student Governance and Development Department provides support for student governance structures. During interviews with students the Panel heard misgivings about the service offered to students, particularly regarding the Orientation Programme for SRC members. The Panel is aware of the lack of discipline shown by the student leadership in times of crisis.

Recommendation 4

The HEQC recommends that Durban University of Technology develop appropriate mechanisms to help the SRC to play a constructive role in the development of the new institution. This could entail the intensification of programmes to capacitate students to participate responsibly in institutional governance and to engage actively with the quality of the student experience at DUT.

17. In terms of the organisation and functioning of management, the Panel is of the impression that the appointment of Executive Deans to reconfigured Faculties will not yield the benefits sought by the institution unless there is a consensually developed institutional project to which the Deans lend their support and in relation to which they are enabled to exercise their responsibilities. They also need to be given the necessary administrative support to be able to engage proactively in their responsibility for the realisation at Faculty level of the strategic goals of the institution.

Recommendation 5

The HEQC recommends that Durban University of Technology explore the most appropriate mechanisms to make effective the position of Executive Dean as part of the executive management team in order to harness the Deans' capacity in the development of an academic vision for DUT which finds expression in the work done in the Faculties.

18. During interviews with members of the Budgeting Operating and Finance Committees the Panel was told that the Deans control their Faculty budgets. However, Executive Deans indicated that they do not have adequate delegations of authority, effective control of the budgets and the necessary support structures and mechanisms in order to run their Faculties effectively. The Panel encourages the institution to empower the Deans so that they are able to lead and manage their Faculties.

Recommendation 6

The HEQC recommends that Durban University of Technology develop the necessary mechanisms to ensure the alignment of planning, resource allocation and management of the core functions of teaching and learning, research and community engagement taking into account the need to both monitor and improve quality of provision across the institution.

19. The Panel heard during interviews with managers that despite the goodwill of the Management Information Department's staff, Faculties and central administration derive very little intelligence from institutional data and that this, in turn, undermines a more rational approach to planning as well as the institution's capacity to monitor its own progress in achieving its strategic goals, in particular, the identification of at-risk students, tracking student progress and monitoring performance.

Recommendation 7

The HEQC recommends that Durban University of Technology develop the necessary mechanisms to ensure that the Management Information Department produces sufficient adequate data and analyses to support systematic planning at the institution and, particularly to support the teaching and learning core function.

20. DUT has a long way to go in developing an approach to planning which aligns institutional level objectives, operational responsibilities and resource allocation. The Panel understands that in times of crisis DUT's historical approach to budgeting has probably prevented the institution from adding a financial crisis to a governance crisis. However, as governance and management become more stable, it seems to the Panel that institutional planning needs to be supported by a far more strategic approach to resource allocation and management information.

Quality Management

21. As far as the Panel could establish the institution has not explored the implications of the change in the designation of the institution from technikon to UoT for the definition of quality in terms of its core and support functions. Quality is not part of the key performance areas of the DVC: Academic or the Executive Deans. From interviews with a range of staff the Panel found that quality assurance is regarded as an add-on rather than as an integral part of the activities of the institution. The impact of quality assurance at the institutional level is not evident although it is more apparent at programme level. The Panel concurs with management that if Executive Deans and heads of departments served as custodians of quality, this would go a long way in assisting the embedding of quality as an integral part of the activities of the institution.

Recommendation 8

The HEQC recommends that Durban University of Technology take the necessary steps to explore the implications that the change of identity of the institution from technikon to a UoT has for the understanding of quality across the three core functions and the development of appropriate quality assurance systems for the institution. This should include a review of the location of the responsibility for quality at faculty and institutional level as a way of integrating quality assurance into the teaching and learning activities of the institution.

22. The Centre of Quality Promotion and Assurance (CQPA) was established in 2003 and since then has undertaken a number of quality promotion and capacity development activities. Given the extent of these responsibilities

and the limited number of staff to discharge these, the Panel was pleased to learn that four quality promotion officers were appointed at the beginning of 2007 and that one quality promotion officer and an additional quality manager were still to be appointed. From a range of interviews the Panel heard that the Centre is well-respected across the institution.

Commendation 1

The HEQC commends Durban University of Technology for the good work done by the Centre for Quality Promotion and Assurance in supporting the establishment of a framework for the embedding of quality at the institution.

Benchmarking and Surveys

23. The Portfolio was silent on benchmarking. However, the Panel learned from interviews with management that benchmarking activities do take place. These are primarily to do with national targets. The Panel urges the institution to develop and implement a benchmarking system, which will also serve to assist it in charting its path to becoming a university of technology in substance. User-survey studies are carried out under the auspices of CQPA in a two-year cycle. However, the Panel heard in interviews with staff that findings of surveys are generally not acted upon. Given the institution's desire to provide 'quality, career focused education' as signalled in its mission statement, the Panel urges the institution to ensure that employer surveys are implemented across all Faculties so that the institution can measure the currency of its qualifications in the labour market and use the findings to enhance its programme offerings.

Recommendation 9

The HEQC recommends that Durban University of Technology develop a system of benchmarking with selected local and international universities of technology, which could help the institution measure its progress in becoming a university of technology. Part of this system of benchmarking should include the consistent implementation of surveys in which findings are used to enhance the quality of the core functions so that competent graduates are produced.

Teaching and Learning

24. The Panel heard during interviews with management that efforts are being made to develop a conceptualisation of teaching and learning in the light of being a university of technology which could be translated into concrete practices in the lecture room. In this regard, a document entitled 'Faculty Configuration Scenarios for the Proposed Academic Structure' was developed in the first semester of 2007 and circulated for discussion. The Panel concurs with the institution that it is important to develop such an understanding and to ensure that this has a direct relationship with the institution's strategic plan.
25. The Panel is, however, concerned about much more immediate problems in the area of teaching and learning, which precede any conceptualisation of DUT as a university of technology and which, unless addressed, could seriously jeopardise the consistency of the quality of the education provided

at DUT. The lack of an agreed teaching and learning framework with an associated plan for implementation has meant that there is a fragmented approach to quality assurance of this core function and to improvement strategies. The key quality improvement priorities, required resources, timeframes and success indicators are not clearly identified at institutional or Faculty level. The Panel is of the view that an institution-wide strategy on this core function needs to be developed and implemented.

Recommendation 10

The HEQC recommends that Durban University of Technology develop and implement a comprehensive teaching and learning framework in order to ensure consistency in both teaching and learning practices and in the approaches used to quality assure those practices across faculties. This framework should have measurable objectives, timeframes and allocated responsibilities.

26. In terms of web-based learning there are a number of technical issues that, if not attended to, will put the WebCT project at risk and thereby undermine the quality of this mode of teaching and learning at the institution. First, the Panel was concerned that the WebCT server is housed in a room in the Library on the Steve Biko campus while the Department of Educational Technology is located on the ML Sultan Campus. As a consequence support staff members do not have access to the server after hours or over the weekends. Secondly, the room in which the server is housed does not have adequate air conditioning, which puts the server at risk of overheating and potential failure. The Panel suggests that the WebCT server be moved to a location that is adequately air conditioned and accessible to EdTech after hours. Thirdly, during the interviews with EdTech staff, academic staff and students the Panel heard that the bandwidth on and between campuses is not sufficient. Fourthly, the Information and Communication Technology Steering Committee has yet to meet.

27. The Panel noted with appreciation that since its establishment in 2002 the Department of Education Technology has trained 130 practitioners in web-based learning. This department has grown from offering workshops and upgrading the educational technology skills of lecturers to offering fully-fledged SAQA aligned professional development programmes in Web-based Learning and Teaching. A series of workshops designed to introduce staff to on-line pedagogy has been offered. The Panel appreciated that the programmes not only have a pedagogical focus but that they encourage lecturers to develop as researchers. All the academic staff members that have taken part in these development programmes attest to the benefit received.

Commendation 2

The HEQC commends Durban University of Technology for the excellent work carried out by the Department of Educational Technology in web-based learning.

28. Although DUT's mission to provide career-focused education is given expression in the conceptualisation and organisation of work integrated learning (WIL), there are no institutional agreed principles underpinning the approach to WIL. The Panel heard with great concern in a range of

interviews with staff and students about an under-resourced and inefficient placement office; about students that generally have to find placements for themselves; and about the lack of appropriate mechanisms to monitor and assess experiential learning. The Panel also heard concerns from a range of staff about the variability in the scope and quality of these work student placements. Although the Panel understands that the implementation of WIL from programme to programme varies, it wants to point out that the systems and structures responsible for this essential aspect of technical education, whether at university level or not, seem to be failing at DUT.

Recommendation 11

The HEQC recommends that Durban University of Technology give urgent attention to the development and implementation of an effective system to secure, monitor and assess work integrated learning across all Faculties and campuses as this constitute one of the characteristics of the specific type of learning that takes place at a university of technology.

29. Despite these limitations both students and staff value WIL as an important component of the student experience at DUT. The Panel heard with appreciation that in some departments students were well-prepared for WIL. The Panel found pockets of innovation and excellent practice, such as the Graphic Design Department which seems to be acknowledged as the best in the country; the facilities and equipment of the Department of Video Technology, which contains the only mobile broadcasting unit in the country. The Panel also acknowledges the good work done to support student learning in the Faculty of Health Sciences through its mentoring programme.

Commendation 3

The HEQC commends Durban University of Technology for the innovation and good practice that takes place in the Departments of Graphic Design and Video Technology and encourages the institution to showcase good practice across the institution.

30. The Panel suggests that the institution conduct thorough institutional research to analyse the different contributing elements to low throughput rates at DUT; to develop adequate academic support for students who come from a disadvantaged educational background; and to develop academic staff members' range of pedagogical tools so that pass rates are improved. The Panel would like to stress that the institution needs to develop a more systematic way of dealing with student performance so that there is a clearer sense of how the institution is progressing in its goal of improving student throughput. More generally, the quality of teaching and learning at DUT suffers from the lack of university-wide policy and coordination. The Panel urges the institution to pay attention to these matters, which have the potential not only of seriously compromising DUT's reputation, but also of frustrating the sacrifices and hopes of many families.
31. Although the Panel understands and appreciates the importance of first-hand industry experience that part-time academic staff can provide, it was also concerned about some of the risks posed by the employment of large numbers of part-time staff in terms of the quality of teaching and learning.

The Panel heard during interviews with academics and students across departments and campuses of strong concerns about the inaccessibility of part-time staff to students and that this impacts negatively on the quality of teaching and learning. While many heads of departments as well as part-time staff have put in place various mechanisms to manage part-time staff and student expectations, it was generally acknowledged that this was a less than optimal situation. The Panel urges the institution to increase the number of full-time academic staff and develop further ways of managing part-time staff which ensures the quality of the teaching and learning experience by DUT students. This would go a long way in ensuring that there is an enabling teaching and learning environment for students across all campuses.

32. The Panel heard from several employers and members of convocation of satisfaction at the quality of the graduates of this institution. The programmes are generally aligned with industry needs. Although some employers indicated that the institution needs to give more attention to the development of 'soft skills' so that the students are work-ready. The Panel is of the impression that the quality of graduates is the product of the work of dedicated and committed academic staff who, despite the lack of systems, consistent policy frameworks or in the presence of undermining policies, manage to create an enabling environment in their classrooms. However, the Panel cautions the institution not to confuse individual commitment with the rigorous application of academic rules, and quality systems within the context of a coherent academic project.
33. In terms of the learning environment there is marked disparity between the Midlands campuses and the Durban campuses. The Panel heard that the distance between the Durban and Midlands campuses, poor administrative services, infrastructure and serious safety issues combined to undermine the quality of the learning experience of students in the Midlands. The Panel heard during interviews with Student Services and Development (SSD) staff that the lack of clear roles and responsibilities of the security companies employed by DUT with respect to protecting students compounds the matter. The Panel was pleased to learn that SSD staff members are involved in developing the tender specifications for a new security company. The Panel urges the institution to take the necessary actions, including allocation of resources to improve security on the different campuses and to improve the quality of students' extra curricular experience in general.

Recommendation 12

The HEQC recommends that Durban University of Technology develop a plan to ensure that students across all campuses have as far as possible equitable access to resources, facilities and support and make it a priority to ensure that all of its students have a safe learning environment.

34. **Academic Support Services.** While the institution does not have an integrated approach to academic support services, SSD comprises of a wide portfolio of services to support students out of the classroom (AP: 65). During interviews with staff from SSD, the Panel learned that this area is understaffed, has inadequate infrastructure and serious challenges in

maintaining the current facilities. The Office of the Executive Director does not have an adequate budget to support its wide portfolio of services. This has led to compromised service provision which also contributes to a poor uptake of service by students. The fact that SSD cannot afford a comprehensive marketing programme but depends on individual efforts also compromises its effectiveness. The Panel urges the institution to give attention to the budget allocation to SSD.

35. The Panel heard during interviews with staff and students and observed during site visits of the poor conditions of residences with the Indumiso Campus facilities being in a particularly sorry state. The Midlands situation is highly concerning as analysis of documents provided on-site - the Maintenance Report of Midlands Residences - reveal a historical trail of reports detailing implementation plans that were never addressed. These plans go as far back as 2002 when DIT took over Indumiso College. Although executive management acknowledges that financial resources need to be invested in the Midlands residences, little has been done to address the situation since the merger. The lack of operational and administrative support from the Durban housing unit to the Midlands unit compromises equitable service delivery. For example, while there is a residence maintenance unit at Durban, Midlands campuses are expected to cope with only one individual. The Panel was particularly concerned by the lack of institutional funding for residence operations. Furthermore, the Panel was of the view that the current model used to operate residences is not sustainable and should be reviewed as soon as possible.

Recommendation 13

The HEQC recommends that Durban University of Technology review the management function with regard to the maintenance of all its residences in order to ensure that students have an enabling and safe learning environment.

36. The HIV/AIDS Centre is under-resourced and under-staffed which limits its ability to ensure that it provides an equivalent service across all campuses. Nevertheless, during interviews with students the Panel heard positive comments about the work and dedication of the staff members. The Centre works in conjunction with the Counselling and Health Centre to provide a support group for students (AP: 67). Staff members are working with academics to integrate HIV/AIDS into the curriculum.

Commendation 4

The HEQC commends Durban University of Technology for the Tutoring Project in residences as well as the work done by the HIV/Aids Centre.

37. **Academic Development.** The Centre for Higher Education and Development (CHED) plays a limited role in providing academic support for students. It is confined to playing a coordinating role for the various foundation programmes across departments and Faculties, such as the programme offered by Faculty of Engineering, Science and the Built Environment (AP: 58). The Panel is of the view that the academic development work of CHED should be proactive and explicitly reflect the priorities arising from the teaching and learning framework and plan. In the

absence of a plan and identified priorities, the Panel did not find it surprising that some staff question the relevance of CHED. If there is a clear policy framework for teaching and learning backed by strong academic leadership by Deans and heads of departments, and support units, such as CQPA and CHED, the quality and consistency of teaching and learning at DUT would be much improved.

Recommendation 14

The HEQC recommends that Durban University of Technology clarify the role and functional mandate of CHED, which would include the expansion of academic development and support to students by CHED beyond an administrative and coordination role.

38. **Library.** DUT provides a single co-ordinated library service for its 6 campuses (AP: 62). The Panel found during interviews with Library staff that they are well-trained and enthusiastic about their role in the institution. There is a well-planned and implemented plan for staff development in the Library. Although the Library staff might seem adequate for the size of the University, the distribution of staff across the six campuses does not seem to address equally the needs of the different campuses. The Panel also learned of the low number of seating places and the inadequate number of computer workstations across the institution but particularly in the Midlands campuses. The Panel is concerned that the student learning experience may be compromised by the inequitable provision of library services across the campuses and encourages the institution to give urgent attention to this matter.
39. The Library is essentially an undergraduate library. DUT acknowledges that the collection in relation to FTE students is below international norms and that this will be addressed in the Library's new strategic planning cycle (AP: 63). Without a well-stocked central library and at the current level of funding, the institution will not be able to make the transition to a university. The Panel is of the view that the institution will need to make a substantial investment in the library in order to support postgraduate programmes and research. Furthermore, the Panel found that the method according to which textbooks are ordered at Faculty and departmental level is inconsistent across the institution and leads to a lack of a proper library basis. The Panel encourages the institution to review its text book prescribing policy.

Recommendation 15 A

The HEQC recommends that Durban University of Technology review the funding of Library resources as well as the policy on the prescription of text books and ensure that the integration of services and physical re-distribution of stock to the different campuses is finalised so that the information needs of students are met as the institution evolves to become a university of technology in substance.

40. **Information and Communication Technology (ICT).** The Panel learned during interviews with staff that DUT lacks a comprehensive ICT provision plan. The Panel was concerned that there is little or no alignment between ICT provision and the academic project. The terms of reference of the Institutional ICT Steering Committee are not clear and it has never met.

This has major implications for the institution, in particular with regard to web-based learning, as it means DUT is not leveraging the substantial investments made in IT. The Panel urges the institution to ensure that the ICT Steering Committee becomes operational as soon as possible in order to ensure that ICT service provision supports teaching and learning.

41. Despite benchmarking itself against international HEIs, the ICT unit does not seem to have a clear institutional strategic mandate to ensure that technology is used to support the university's core business. While the Panel is of the view that the IT Division functions well, that services rendered centrally are effective and that the infrastructure and the mainframe systems are fairly robust, it was concerned that student laboratories rest under the Faculties and departments and not the IT Division. This creates problems with service delivery from a student viewpoint. The Panel suggests that the institution investigate whether the open laboratories should rest under the IT Division and the specialist laboratories under the departments, i.e., whether a hybrid model should be developed.

Recommendation 15 B

The HEQC recommends that Durban University of Technology develop a comprehensive IT provisioning strategy and plan, which takes into consideration a hybrid model of ICT provision and ensure that the ICT steering committee is operationalised.

42. **Certification.** The Panel is of the view that there are effective mechanisms in place to ensure the integrity of the certification process. The Panel was pleased to note that CQPA performs an auditing function in this regard. However, the Panel heard in interviews with staff that at times there are considerable delays in the transportation of scripts between campuses. This poses a security risk. A further related risk is the fact that tests are saved on the hard drives of the computers used by academics. This has a potential of compromising the integrity of assessment as students may hack into these. The Panel urges the institution to address these assessment risk areas as a matter of urgency.

Recommendation 16

The HEQC recommends that Durban University of Technology review its procedures in the administration of examinations by (i) ensuring the timeous delivery of scripts to the campuses and (ii) cease the practice of storing examinations on the hard drives of academic staff.

43. **Short Courses.** There is a policy and procedures for the development and delivery of short courses. The Panel found from documentation and heard from interviews with staff that the policy and procedures are implemented across all Faculties. However, the Panel heard that the programmes offered on the different campuses are of uneven quality. This is related among other things to the uneven provision of resources and infrastructure across the different campuses. As this is likely to negatively impact on the quality of short course provision, the Panel encourages the institution to give attention to this matter.

44. **Programme Design and Approval.** The Panel was pleased to note that there is a policy to ensure that new programmes reflect DUT's aim to

become a university of technology in substance and that the programmes are aligned with national goals and regional human resource needs. However, from the Portfolio and during interviews with staff the Panel heard that there is an uneven understanding of the policy for programme development and that staff find it 'confusing'. The Panel suggests that the institution pays attention to the sources of confusion for staff and monitors the implementation of the policy and its impact on improving the overall process of programme design and approval.

45. The Panel heard of the support that Faculties can receive from CHED through, for example, facilitating curriculum development workshops with programme teams, and offering assistance with the development of learning outcomes and assessment criteria (AP: 52). However, the Panel also heard of the lack of correspondence between CHED's large human resources, its relative invisibility and its uneven effectiveness. The Panel is under the impression that this might be due to the fact that most of the support offered by CHED in terms of re-curriculation and improvement of teaching and learning takes place on a voluntary basis. The Panel suggests that the work of CHED be formally integrated into the work of the institution with respect to the core functions.

Recommendation 17

The HEQC recommends that Durban University of Technology ensure that academic staff have sufficient opportunities to develop capacity in the area of programme design and development which is consistent with the specific requirements of a university of technology.

46. **Programme Review.** The Panel concurs with the institution that there is little rigour and reflection in the process of *departmental bi-annual* reviews (AP: 78). A large part of a review is expected to be based on information on performance, student success and graduation rates. The appropriate information is not always readily available at DUT, which raises concerns about the quality of the *bi-annual* programme review process conducted by the academic departments. Furthermore, the Panel heard that the outcomes of reviews are not necessarily implemented across the programmes. The Panel urges the institution to ensure that the findings of reviews are used to enhance the quality of learning programmes.
47. **Staff Development.** CHED is charged with providing ongoing learning programmes and opportunities for teaching staff to improve and professionalise their teaching and learning. During interviews with Executive Deans and heads of departments, the Panel learned that academics generally do not participate in staff development initiatives. However, during interviews with staff the Panel heard that high workloads make it difficult for them to attend these workshops. The Panel found that there is a large discrepancy between the workload policy targets and the actual workloads of staff. Furthermore, knowledge of staff development opportunities is uneven across the campuses. The Panel encourages the DUT to ensure that such opportunities are widely known across the institution and to ensure that all staff members have the opportunity to participate in these programmes. This will mean that actual workloads need to be brought in line with the workload policy targets.

48. In interviews with part-time staff across the campuses the Panel heard of teaching loads of more than 30 hours per week and uncertainty in employments contracts, which inhibit participation in staff development opportunities. Given the high proportion of part-time academics employed by the institution the Panel urges DUT to give attention to this matter in order to assure the quality of teaching and learning.
49. **Assessment.** The Panel noted from the Portfolio (AP: 74) and heard during interviews with academics that there is an uneven understanding across departments and Faculties of the different tools that can be used for assessment. These different interpretations were confirmed in interviews with academic staff. There is consensus that this policy needs to be urgently reviewed as it shows a gap between policy and implementation. The Panel urges the institution to prioritise this matter as the academic enterprise is compromised through the current practice. Equivalence of assessment across campuses is also a challenge with concerns being expressed by some academics about the assessment and moderation of programmes that are jointly offered at Durban and Midlands campuses. The Panel urges DUT to ensure that assessment practices are implemented consistently across all campuses to ensure the integrity of its assessment system and the quality of its graduates.
50. Despite these weaknesses there are some examples of innovative assessment practices. These include the Faculty of Health Sciences which makes extensive use of simulated assessment exercises, reflective journals and structured report templates for work integrated learning. The Panel congratulates the Faculty on the introduction of innovative practices on assessment. However, the Panel would like also to reiterate its view that without the context of a broader policy framework for teaching and learning, the full benefits of good assessment practices are unlikely to be realized in student learning outcomes.
51. The Panel has a number of comments to make on the roles of external moderators that the institution might like to consider. First, these should include the responsibility to interrogate the programme outline, with the purpose of ensuring that the examination questions assess the programme outcomes. Secondly, external moderators should provide substantive comments on the adequacy and quality of materials. Thirdly, the institution should redesign the existing standardised moderator's report form to ensure that it elicits qualitative comments from moderators. Lastly, in cases where a programme is offered across different campuses, the Panel suggests that examiners carry out question-based marking, in order to ensure fairness, and enhance the reliability and validity of the assessment.

Recommendation 18

The HEQC recommends that Durban University of Technology reconsider its assessment policy and its implementation across all campuses, particularly with regard to continuous assessment and the moderation system.

52. The Panel noted with appreciation that the institution has invested in the appointment of an RPL co-ordinator who is housed at CHED. The Centre facilitates the development of RPL assessors and moderators. Candidates are given assistance in developing the RPL Portfolio and are supported and tracked when admitted to the institution to enhance the opportunities of succeeding. The Engineering and Emergency Medical Care Rescue Departments provide examples of how well the monitoring system works.

Commendation 5

The HEQC commends Durban University of Technology for devising a system to track candidates, and for mentoring RPL students.

Research

53. The draft strategic plan identifies research as a priority, but within the context of learning, rather than within the context of knowledge creation. This link is also emphasised by the Research Policy. In the light of this, the Panel expected to find that research is directly linked to teaching and learning. However from interviews with academics the Panel gained the impression that linkages between research and teaching are incidental, rather than the consequence of conscious endeavours. The Panel would like to encourage the institution to examine the notion of a research-based university of technology in the DUT context and unpack all the conceptual and practical implications that this might have for the relationship between the three core functions and the definition of quality in each of them.

Recommendation 19

The HEQC recommends that Durban University of Technology hold an institution-wide debate on the nature of research at a university of technology before developing its own conceptualisation of research which is situated in the academic project at the institution.

54. The Panel would like to make a number of comments about the committees which DUT uses to manage the research function. First, given that the Institutional Research Committee (IRC) consists of a minority of active researchers, this may limit the understanding of the committee about current research realities and challenges. It may also have negative consequences for the perceived legitimacy of the committee. Secondly, while the management of research ethics is the primary responsibility of the Institutional Ethics Committee (IEC), the Panel is of the view that the IRC should exercise an oversight function in this regard. The IEC is a recently conceptualized structure and is currently not fully operational. The Panel urges the institution to give immediate attention to the implementation of this committee as not to do so is an academic and possibly financial risk, including a substantial reputational risk.

55. Thirdly, while Faculty Research Committees (FRCs) are functioning, these seem to have a limited focus. The Panel noted that there are no comprehensive institutional guidelines for managing higher degrees, which resulted in FRCs creating their own procedures and norms. While the FRCs have a strong focus on quality assuring research for masters and doctoral qualifications, they are not actively initiating and managing processes to promote and grow research within their respective Faculties. From

interviews with committee members the Panel found that to a large extent FRCs operate as conduits for funding requests, rather than as decision-makers. The Panel encourages the institution to monitor the effectiveness of the current organisation of the management of research in order to ensure that it supports research development and promotion responsibility across all Faculties while meeting institution level goals in this area.

56. There are twelve NRF-rated researchers at the university, four of whom are women. The NRF funds research niche areas in the Faculty of Engineering, Science and the Built Environment in: Water and Waste Water Technology; Plant Biomass and Dynamical Systems Research.

Commendation 6

The HEQC commends Durban University of Technology on the twelve NRF rated researchers in its academic staff.

57. While the Portfolio (AP: 94) makes reference to research niche areas and the Research Handbook (p.63) provides a framework for constituting research groupings, there is no clear evidence of a consistent strategy of concentrating resources within a limited number of predetermined strategic areas. Given the current low base of research at DUT, the Panel suggests that the institution have a limited number of clearly defined research focus areas. This would not only facilitate the optimal utilization of resources but would also create synergies that would be otherwise difficult to harness.

Recommendation 20

The HEQC recommends that Durban University of Technology define its criteria for developing research focus areas and develop a strategy to concentrate resources, which encourages the development of research outputs, including publications, in the SET disciplines, in order to support the institution's objective of becoming a university of technology.

58. **Postgraduate Education.** During interviews with academics the Panel heard that there are varying practices for the management and quality assurance of higher degrees within and across Faculties. There is a clear need for the Higher Degrees Committee to play a role in ensuring that quality mechanisms are consistently and fairly applied across the Faculties in masters and doctoral studies. There is a Higher Degrees Guide in draft form. The Panel urges that this be finalised and implemented as soon as possible.

Recommendation 21

The HEQC recommends that Durban University of Technology finalise its rules and regulations regarding the administration of postgraduate dissertations and theses as a matter of urgency.

Community Engagement

59. DUT does not have a coherent conceptualisation of community engagement or a policy that informs the quality assurance of these activities. The Panel noted with appreciation the inclusion of community engagement in the promotions policy. The Panel encourages the institution to finalise its Draft Policy on Community Engagement and to ensure that a member of the

senior executive be given this responsibility as part of their portfolio. The Panel identified a number of interesting community engagement initiatives and projects, and would like to urge the institution to develop this core function providing the appropriate resources, conceptual framework, co-ordinating structure, and enabling policies so that individual efforts can be made part of an institution level drive in this direction.

Conclusion

60. DUT is an institution which, despite having undergone a voluntary merger, has been unable to construct a new single institution unified around a coherent academic project. Lack of academic leadership and governance crises have seriously undermined the institution's ability to concentrate on academic matters and have put the quality of provision at a serious risk. Despite this, individual effort and commitment on the part of academic and support staff have kept programmes going. While the Panel thinks that this needs to be recognised and celebrated, the Panel is also of the view that staff goodwill cannot be relied on as the exclusive source of academic reputation for the institution. Academic processes and rules, as well as strategic vision should provide the framework within which teaching and learning, research and community engagement take place at an institution that aspires to become a university of technology.
61. The appointment of a new Council and a new Vice Chancellor present a moment of possibility for DUT. The future of the institution depends to a large extent on the ability of the new Vice Chancellor to review the composition of the senior executive team and to galvanise the institution behind a unifying and coherent academic project which is consistent with the current capabilities, strengths, resources and the future potential of the institution as a university of technology. If this takes place, DUT could make a valuable contribution to the goals of South African higher education and particularly to the socio-economic development of its immediate region by providing access with success to previously disadvantaged students; by giving effect to a differentiated mission (that of a UoT); by forging training partnerships with the world of work; and by contributing to social development through its community related initiatives.
62. DUT has a good opportunity to build on the passion, energy and commitment of staff and students and the support from external stakeholders in order to respond to the challenges of providing good quality education in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal. This, however, will only be possible if staff members at all levels consistently put the interests of the institution at the forefront in decision-making processes.