



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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**AUDIT REPORT
ON THE
CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY,
FREE STATE**

**Report of the HEQC to the Central University of
Technology, Free State**

June 2005

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The audit visit to the Central University of Technology, Free State, (hereafter referred to as CUT) was conducted by the HEQC between 18 and 21 October 2004. In all, the Audit Panel interviewed more than 330 people during the audit visit, either as a full panel or in subgroups of the panel. The interviewees included:

- Council members;
- The Vice-Chancellor and members of his executive team;
- Academic and academic support staff;
- Administrative staff;
- Full-time and part-time undergraduate and postgraduate students from both the main campus and the Welkom campus;
- External representatives from advisory panels;
- Civic and community representatives;
- Alumni.

Prior to the audit visit, senior staff of the HEQC visited the various campuses of CUT (Welkom, Kroonstad and Kimberley) in June and July 2004, and during the audit visit in October 2004, a subgroup of the panel conducted a one-day visit to the Welkom campus, which included interviews with academic staff and students.

In June 2005, the HEQC Board approved and released the full report of this audit to the head of the institution. The audit report reflects conclusions reached about the quality management arrangements evident at the institution at the time of the audit visit. The HEQC publishes the executive summary of this report, which provides a brief overview of CUT and the main findings from the audit, including a list of the commendations and recommendations for easy reference.

Overview of Institution

The Central University of Technology, Free State (CUT) was established in 1981 as the Technikon Free State. It is a public higher education institution. The initial enrolment of 285 students in its founding year grew to 11,285 students in 2004, with the emphasis changing from secretarial, art and design programmes to science, engineering and technology programmes. 87% of the student body consists of members of previously disadvantaged groups. A recent academic restructuring intended to enhance effectiveness, efficiency and quality education led to the establishment of three faculties: Engineering, Information and Communication Technology; Health and Environmental Sciences; and Management Sciences. In line with the restructuring of the South African higher education system, the Technikon Free State was re-designated as the Central University of Technology, Free State, at the beginning of 2004. As a further step in the national re-alignment, the Welkom Campus of Vista University was incorporated into CUT on 2 January 2004. In addition to its activities on the Welkom Campus, CUT offers selected programmes at regional learning centres in Kimberley and Kroonstad. However, the Kroonstad site is in the process of being phased out.

There were about 720 staff employed by the institution in 2003, with about 170 full-time academics and about 550 academic support staff.

Summary of Findings

The Panel's interaction with staff at different levels, as well as engagement with the documentation provided on institutional policies and practices, led the Panel to conclude that quality assurance is high on CUT's planning agenda, with many internal quality management systems in place or under development. CUT has a Unit for Quality Improvement comprising a manager and an assistant. There are distinct quality related initiatives in place, for example, those taken by the Student Services Division to enhance the quality of student learning, the activities to improve teaching, and the quality related activities that have led to the growth of research and an increased pool of active researchers at the institution. However, the wide range and large number of new quality assurance and planning policies need to be streamlined and co-ordinated to make them serve strategic priorities more effectively.

Given the nature of the institution and its stated objectives and commitments, the Panel flagged three general areas in need of development attention.

1. The institution should give renewed attention to its institutional planning and reporting structures in order to achieve better integration, consolidation and focus in the implementation and monitoring of CUT's strategic and operational priorities. Further, CUT should reconsider the structural location, function and resourcing of the senior management capacity responsible for quality management so as to optimise its role and effectiveness.
2. The institution should re-assess its approach to various issues related to the quality of teaching and learning, including its approach to programme review, the rigour and consistency of its assessment practices, the equivalence of quality provision at campuses located outside Bloemfontein, and the monitoring of short courses.
3. The institution should review the current balance between its full-time and part-time staffing complement, and between its academic and administrative complement, in order to ensure the sustained quality of educational provision and the growth of the institution's research capacity. In addition, the institution should further develop its approaches to strengthen the equity profile of its academic staff, and to widen the participation by black and women staff in productive research.

In the full report, the HEQC makes recommendations in a number of areas to signal to CUT those issues that may require attention with regard to quality provision. The HEQC notes that CUT has itself identified some of these for attention, but these and a number of other issues identified in the report will need to be incorporated into the

overall quality assurance planning and practice at CUT. A summary of the commendations and recommendations follows.

Commendations

1. The HEQC commends CUT for the initiatives of its Student Services Division that promote access and that enhance the quality of student learning.
2. The HEQC commends CUT for the progress that it has made in growing the core function of research and the pool of active researchers within a framework that seeks to ensure quality outputs as well as relevance to the developmental needs of the local and national economy.

Recommendations

1. The HEQC recommends that CUT develop and implement further measures to improve the staff equity profile of the institution, and to ensure that these are consistently monitored.
2. The HEQC recommends that CUT review its institutional planning and reporting structures and mechanisms to achieve higher levels of integration, consolidation and focus, with a view to more effective and efficient implementation and monitoring of its strategic objectives.
3. The HEQC recommends that CUT review the structural location and reporting lines of the senior management responsible for quality, to ensure that there are effective links between planning, resource allocation, quality improvement and monitoring.
4. The HEQC recommends that CUT develop a more systematic tracking and benchmarking system at the institutional level as an integral part of its quality management and institutional planning arrangements. This system should include follow-up action where necessary.
5. The HEQC recommends that CUT give urgent attention to all aspects of educational delivery at the decentralised campuses, so as to ensure the equivalence of quality provision across all campuses.
6. The HEQC recommends that CUT further develop the vertical integration of the quality management system for teaching and learning by means of clarifying the roles and responsibilities of managers at various levels in the institution; clarifying the links between the Quality Assurance Unit and the faculty quality assurance committees, and ensuring that all staff members are aware of how the system functions.
7. The HEQC recommends that CUT review the viability and quality of its activities currently designated as “distance education” against the HEQC’s quality assurance guidelines for distance education.
8. The HEQC recommends that CUT reconsider its approach to programme review to ensure that such processes are an integral and effective part of the institution’s quality assurance system.
9. The HEQC recommends that CUT review its staffing strategies in order to provide an adequate full-time academic staffing complement that supports good quality academic provision.

10. The HEQC recommends that CUT give urgent attention to the specific corrective measures mentioned in this report with regard to certification as well as to the implementation of its improvement plan, so as to ensure the integrity and security of its student records and certificates.
11. The HEQC recommends that CUT assign a high priority to the intended review of its assessment policies, procedures and practices and to the implementation of its improvement plans, including the administration of assessment and moderation practices. Particular attention should be given to the appropriate rigour of assessment and the training of assessors and moderators as the institution redefines itself as a university of technology.
12. The HEQC recommends that CUT take stock of its short course offerings with a view to developing and implementing the policies and procedures necessary to assure their quality.
13. The HEQC recommends that CUT give serious attention to all aspects of community engagement, with an initial focus on its place in the overall institutional strategy and its integration with the other two core functions. This should be reflected in an appropriate policy framework and organisational apparatus, the allocation of adequate resources and the regular monitoring of implementation in this area of work.