



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

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**AUDIT REPORT
ON
CITYVARSITY**

A Report of the HEQC Board to CityVarsity

May 2005

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

HEQC Audit Report Number 3

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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>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The audit visit to CityVarsity Film and Television and Multimedia School (hereafter 'CityVarsity') was conducted by the HEQC from the 5th to the 8th October 2004. During the course of the visit the Audit Panel interviewed 72 people, either as a full panel or in subgroups of the panel. The interviewees included:

- the Principal and Vice-Principal,
- two representatives of Damelin Education Group, (the CEO and the Academic Director),
- academic staff (heads of department and lecturers),
- support staff,
- students (South-African as well as foreign students),
- three members of CityVarsity's Advisory Boards,
- three representatives of the media industry and other constituencies, namely, the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF) and the Cape Film Commission and the MAPPP SETA,
- the members of the Academic Board,
- employers of graduates and
- alumni.

In May 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. The HEQC publishes the executive summary of this report, which provides a brief overview of CityVarsity and the main findings from the audit, including a list of the commendations and recommendations.

Overview of the Institution

CityVarsity was founded in Cape Town in 1996. At the time of the audit-visit (October 2004) it had a student population of 535 students (head count) and a staff complement of 42 permanently employed employees (of whom 24 are academic staff members) and 34 non-permanent employees. All the campus buildings and facilities are in the central business district of Cape Town.

In 2000, CityVarsity became a division of Allenby Campus Group, a division of the Educor Group. In June 2003 the Allenby Campus Group was subsumed into the Damelin Education Group, a division of Educor (Pty) Ltd, and CityVarsity became an independent unit within the broader Damelin Education Group. Within this context CityVarsity remains a relatively self-contained institution and it continues to plan and implement most operational and academic decisions at institutional level. However, it has to align its strategy with that of the Damelin Education Group and its financial planning and decisions are made within the context of Damelin's goals, strategies and procedures.

CityVarsity is registered with the DoE as a private higher education provider. Further, at the time of the audit visit (5 – 8 October 2004), the institution was accredited by the HEQC to offer the following programmes:

1. Diploma in Multimedia Design and Production,
2. Advanced Diploma in Multimedia Design and Production,
3. Certificate in Journalism,
4. Diploma in Film and Television Production Techniques,
5. Advanced Diploma in Film and Television Production Techniques,
6. Diploma in Sound Engineering,
7. Advanced Diploma in Sound Engineering,
8. Certificate in Motion Picture Make-up,
9. Diploma in Motion Picture Production Design,
10. Diploma in Professional Acting for Camera,
11. Advanced Diploma in Professional Acting for Camera,
12. Diploma in Professional Photography,
13. Diploma in Animation.

One further programme, the Advanced Diploma in Animation, had been submitted for accreditation at the time of the Audit, and has subsequently been fully accredited.

Summary of Findings

As a consequence of its review of CityVarsity's audit portfolio and other documentation, and the information gathered during the audit visit, the Panel concluded that CityVarsity has many internal quality management systems in place and that others are under development. The Panel noted that recent steps had been undertaken by the institution to formalise and further institutionalise its quality assurance systems. It also noted CityVarsity's intention to strengthen its senior management capacity in ways that would support the quality assurance functions. The continuing effectiveness of these arrangements will necessitate close monitoring by CityVarsity. In this regard, the Panel noted CityVarsity's intention to install Educor's *Integrated Campus Administration System* (ICAS) software in 2005, and anticipates that extensive use will be made of this system to enhance quality on an ongoing basis.

The Panel noted the niche character of CityVarsity, focusing as it does on the fields of film, television and multimedia, and acknowledged the role that staff from the institution play in developing the industry. For its age and size, CityVarsity has a relatively strong academic staff complement with extensive experience and on-going links with the industry. The strength of the staff, and their commitment to the industry and to the institution, was reflected in the positive evaluations from students.

Given the nature of the institution, and its stated objectives and commitments related to its distinctive niche character, the Panel flagged the following general areas needing development attention:

1. The Panel noted that one of the major challenges facing the institution is the need to strengthen the equity profile of both the staff complement and the student body, given the role that diversity could play in expanding and enriching the quality of an institution's activities. In view of some of the systemic constraints on achieving this dimension of transformation in the short term, CityVarsity will need to develop creative approaches to enrolling black students and recruiting black staff.
2. The Panel noted that the technical strength and skills-focus of CityVarsity's programmes are not always balanced by an appropriate emphasis on the theoretical dimensions of these fields of study. While the Panel acknowledged that the development of theory and research in some of these fields lags behind practices in the industry, CityVarsity is nevertheless encouraged to ensure that an appropriate balance between theory and practice is achieved across all of its programmes.
3. Being an institution focused on the creative arts, CityVarsity's technical resources tend to be in use around the clock. However, the Panel learned that access to CityVarsity's resource centre, and the range of its holdings, does not always match the needs of the students and staff of the institution. CityVarsity is encouraged to develop its resource centre in ways that cater more comprehensively for the learning needs of its students and the research and creative work of its academic staff.

The HEQC makes recommendations in a number of areas to signal to CityVarsity those issues that may require attention with regard to quality provision. The HEQC notes that CityVarsity has itself identified some of these for attention, but these and a number of other issues identified in the full report will need to be incorporated into the overall quality assurance planning and practice at CityVarsity. A summary of the commendations and recommendations follows.

Commendations

1. The HEQC commends CityVarsity for the many ways in which its commitment to national priorities related to the development of the film, television and new media industry have been given effect through its educational programmes, the participation of its staff in industry fora (e.g. the NFVF) and its investment in industry development initiatives
2. The HEQC commends CityVarsity for the relatively well-developed intellectual capacity that has been built up in the institution, including the strong technical expertise arising from the continuing close engagement of academic staff with industry.
3. The HEQC commends CityVarsity for making a range of technical facilities available to the students to cater for the distinctive skills requirements of the specialist programmes offered at the institution.

Recommendations

1. The HEQC recommends that CityVarsity take steps to promote equitable access of learners to the fields of film, television and multimedia, taking into consideration the more comprehensive financial support that disadvantaged learners need.
2. The HEQC recommends that CityVarsity ensures an appropriate balance between technical and theoretical content across all its programmes, in order to facilitate the development of all relevant competencies required in the industry.
3. The HEQC recommends that City Varsity review its current strategies aimed at enhancing the diversity profile of its student body and staff complement, and strengthen these where appropriate
4. The HEQC recommends that CityVarsity appoint a senior academic manager as a member of the institutional management team, to focus on the academic functions of the institution.
5. The HEQC recommends that CityVarsity strengthens the role of the Academic Board in leading and overseeing CityVarsity's academic activities
6. The HEQC recommends that CityVarsity continue to develop and strengthen approaches to quality assurance appropriate for the specific needs of an institution of this nature

7. The HEQC recommends that CityVarsity use the information from its MIS to enhance quality and facilitate quality-related planning on an ongoing basis
8. The HEQC recommends that CityVarsity develop a student enrolment plan, including explicit criteria for selection into programmes, which will focus on the assessment of both the creative and academic potential of applicants, and which provides support for applicants with the goal of enhancing the institution's student diversity profile
9. The HEQC recommends that CityVarsity clarify and formalise the roles and responsibilities of its external advisory boards to optimise external feedback into its academic programmes.
10. The HEQC recommends that CityVarsity further develop its policy and approaches on experiential and work-based learning to ensure equitable and worthwhile opportunities within and across programmes
11. The HEQC recommends that CityVarsity undertake a systematic review of the approaches to teaching and learning in each of its programmes to ensure that an appropriate balance is maintained between contact tuition and self-study, that students have equitable access to counselling and support facilities, and that the needs of disadvantaged students are systematically addressed.
12. The HEQC recommends that CityVarsity strengthen the resource centre through a systematic programme to develop the holdings, staffing, access and services in ways that more appropriately support its educational and research activities.
13. The HEQC recommends that CityVarsity develop further its assessment policies, including its policy on RPL, and that the institution takes measures to ensure the consistent application of these policies across its programmes and departments.