



**Audit Report
on
Walter Sisulu University**

**Report of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC)
to the Walter Sisulu University**

Executive Summary

October 2011

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Acronyms

APEC	Academic Planning and Examinations Committee
BIRP	Bureau for Institutional Research and Planning
CE	Community Engagement
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CCIP	Centre for Community and International Partnerships
CLTD	Centre for Learning and Teaching Development
CREST	Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology
DBSA	Development Bank of South Africa
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DVC	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
ECSA	Engineering Council of South Africa
ETIU	Education Technology and Innovation Unit
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurer
FET	Further Education and Training
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEMIS	Higher Education Management Information System
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HoD	Head of Department
HR	Human Resources
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IF	Institutional Forum
IP	Institutional Profile
IOP	Institutional Operating Plan
IT	Information Technology

ITS	Integrated Tertiary Software
LLB	Bachelor of Laws
MBChB	Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery
NEHAWU	National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union
NPHE	National Plan for Higher Education
NRF	National Research Foundation
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
PAL	Peer-Assisted Learning
PBL	Problem-Based Learning
PQM	Programme and Qualification Mix
QMD	Quality Management Directorate
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SENEX	Senate Executive Committee
SER	Self -Evaluation Report
SLP	Short Learning Programmes
SRC	Students' Representative Council
UWC	University of the Western Cape
VC	Vice-Chancellor
WIL	Work-Integrated Learning
WSU	Walter Sisulu University

Overview of the Audit

Introduction

The Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the Council on Higher Education (CHE), which was constituted as the Quality Council for Higher Education in terms of the *Higher Education Amendment Act* of 2008 and the *National Qualifications Framework Act* of 2008, has statutory responsibility to conduct institutional audits of higher education institutions.

The Audit of Walter Sisulu University (WSU) was conducted by the HEQC in terms of its mandate. This document reports on the audit process and findings based on the Audit Portfolio and documentary appendices provided by WSU; supplementary documentation requested from the University; observations made during preliminary campus site visits in February 2011, and interviews and observations made during the audit visit that took place between 4 and 8 April 2011. The Audit Panel also consulted the Institutional Profile of WSU prepared by the Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate of the CHE.

This Report comprises an overview of the audit visit, the findings of the Panel in relation to the audit criteria set by the HEQC, and a list of commendations and recommendations that are based on the findings of the Audit Panel.

The Audit Process

In April 2009 the Executive Director of the HEQC secured the consent of the Vice-Chancellor, Prof Marcus Balintulo, and the senior management team at WSU that the University would participate in an institutional audit in April 2010.

WSU started to prepare for the audit early in 2008, but found it necessary to ask for a postponement of the date to April 2011. This was agreed to. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Planning, Quality Assurance and Development was responsible for liaising with the HEQC and did so through the Quality Management Directorate (QMD). During 2008, workshops were held to orientate senior members of staff to familiarise them with aspects of the audit.

By November 2008, nine working groups had been established to generate data for the 19 audit criteria of the HEQC. This was done following the recommendation of the QMD, the Vice-Chancellor's Steering Committee and the Institutional Audit Project Management Task Team. Eight working group convenors were appointed from the support services divisions and one from the academic sector. A Project Management Office was established late in 2008 to co-ordinate and prepare WSU for the audit. In July 2009 a Project Manager was appointed.

In August 2009, the Project Office, through the Vice-Chancellor's Steering Committee, advised the working group convenors to expand the membership criteria of their groups to include representatives of academic staff, campus directors, staff unions, support services, and the student representative council and so ensure that their work was consultative and inclusive. In February 2010, it was agreed that all the faculties would submit self-evaluation reports to the Project Office.

The mandate of the working groups was to develop self-evaluation reports for the criteria allocated to them. A SWOT-analysis was to be conducted, and supporting evidence made available to validate the reports submitted. The Project Manager prepared two posters, which outlined the schedule of actions and the structure of the process to be followed.

WSU completed its institutional self-evaluation and submitted a Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and supporting documents as required on 24 November 2010.

The HEQC constituted an Audit Panel consisting of senior academics and academic administrators from the higher education community. An Audit Portfolio meeting was convened in Pretoria on 16 – 17 February 2011 where the Audit Panel considered the self-evaluation report and identified areas for follow up and the additional documents to be requested from the University prior to its visit.

The HEQC sent a team from its Institutional Audits Directorate on a preparatory visit to the University on 21 February 2011. During this visit, the format and programme for the audit visit as well as other details were agreed upon with the senior management of WSU.

A sub-Panel of Auditors consisting of Professors Mubangizi, Mariba, Jordaan, Andrew, Ramogale, Dr Lalendle (Director: Institutional Audits), and Mr Matsebatlela (Audit Officer) carried out site visits from 7 – 9 March 2011 to the following campuses: Mthatha Campus (Nelson Mandela Drive and Zamukulungisa sites), Butterworth Campus (Ibika site), Buffalo City Campus (East London sites), and Queenstown Campus (Masibulele and Grey Street sites). This Panel visited all four campuses and eleven sites of delivery to examine the infrastructure that supports teaching and learning and listen to presentations by management and SRC members on student experience at WSU.

The audit visit took place from 3 – 8 April 2011. The Audit Panel conducted interviews with a wide range of WSU staff, students and other stakeholders. The interviews were completed on 7 April and oral feedback was given to the Vice-Chancellor and other members of the University on 8 April.

Open sessions were also available for any staff member, student or member of the community to meet the Audit Panel and make a submission. A group of students made use of this opportunity.

In total, the Panel interviewed 430 people during the audit visit, including:

- Council members
- The Vice-Chancellor
- Members of the executive team
- Members of Senate and other Senate committees
- Executive and deputy deans, heads of schools and departments
- Academics
- Academic support staff
- Professional and administrative staff
- Undergraduate and postgraduate students

- Civic and community representatives Alumni.

This report reflects the audit process findings based on the Self-Evaluation Report of WSU, supporting documents; the profile of WSU prepared by the Advice and Monitoring Directorate of the CHE, supplementary information requested from the institution, and interviews and observations made during the audit visit. Every effort has been made to understand the context in which WSU operates, as well as the quality arrangements at the institution at the time of the audit visit. The Panel's findings are based on the documentation submitted, the interviews held and the observations made.

It is expected that WSU will use these findings to strengthen its internal quality management systems and thereby facilitate the improvement of the quality of its core academic activities. Decisions about the manner in which this is done, and the priority accorded to the various recommendations, is the prerogative of the institution. It is expected that, five months after the publication of the audit report, WSU will submit an improvement plan based on the Audit Report to the HEQC.

The HEQC would like to thank WSU for the co-operative manner in which it participated in the audit process. The HEQC would also like to express its appreciation for the openness and confidence demonstrated by the Vice-Chancellor and management in allowing the Audit Panel to interview 430 people in 42 interview sessions and providing access to key documents. The hospitality and assistance of the WSU staff is appreciated. Prof. Buijs, Mr Naicker and their team are thanked for the preparation of the documentation and their efforts towards the organisation of the audit visit.

Executive Summary

Brief Overview of Walter Sisulu University

1. Walter Sisulu University (WSU) was established as a comprehensive university on 1 July 2005 through the merger of the Border Technikon, the Eastern Cape Technikon and the University of Transkei. It offers tuition on four campuses—Mthatha (its administrative seat), Butterworth, East London and Queenstown - with eleven delivery sites covering a radius of approximately 1000km.
2. WSU straddles the rural and peri-urban divides of the Eastern Cape, which are characterised by widespread poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and poor access to basic services. Students are drawn largely from this catchment area. In this context, WSU describes itself as “a developmental university that is scientific, technological, innovative and responsive” (SER: 4).
3. WSU has a student population of approximately 26 000 and employs approximately 1 400 academic and support staff. It has four faculties, each of which has several schools and departments. The faculties are Business, Management Sciences and Law; Education; Health Sciences; Science, Engineering and Technology. According to the Programme and Qualification Mix (PQM) approved by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) 73% of the students should be registered for undergraduate certificates and diplomas, 24% for first degrees and 3% for postgraduate degrees. WSU largely conforms to these targets.

Institutional Mission and Identity

4. The vision of WSU is to be “a leading African comprehensive university focusing on innovative educational, research and community partnership programmes that are responsive to local, regional, national and development priorities, and cognisant of continental and international imperatives” (SER:33). The Panel thinks that the Vision and Mission of WSU are appropriate for its context. It is realistic about its situation, the students it attracts and how it might turn these challenges into positive contributions. The question before the Panel was the extent to which WSU gives effect to its Mission.
5. The Panel found that, although there was consensus on how WSU defines itself, both the notions of the University as developmental and comprehensive are under construction and there are widely divergent views on what it means to be a developmental university in particular. There were certain common elements. First, there was an acceptance that the notion of a developmental university is born out of WSU’s rural context. Secondly, there was agreement that WSU must be rooted in the poor communities it serves. Thirdly, there was general consensus that the institution’s developmental agenda required it to use its core functions of teaching, research and community engagement to improve the lot of the poor communities it serves locally and regionally. Nonetheless, the Panel felt that the lack of clarity around key concepts and strategies hampered the realisation of WSU’s mission.

6. The SER states that gaps in the mission statement are recognised and that there are plans to close the gaps “especially in the academic programmes” (43). The Panel noted, however, that there had not been much movement in new programme design. An Advanced Certificate in School Management and Leadership was introduced in 2008, a Bachelor of Education was submitted in 2010, a Bachelor of Development Studies is due to be submitted and two programmes have been developed by the School of Initial Professional Education of Teachers (SER:74). This lack of activity in the area of programme development could be interpreted as a desire to consolidate, but it could also indicate a degree of stagnation. There are other elements of WSU that militate against it realising its mission. WSU is serious about widening access to higher education, yet its capacity to provide a quality educational experience is limited when staff and physical resources cannot cope with the number of students enrolled. Though the DHET has put a cap on the enrolment of 24 000 students, over 26 000 are enrolled. Some of the over-enrolment is due to excluded students who linger in the system. Their continued presence places a burden on the institution in more ways than one and reinforces the view that rules and regulations are not enforced.

Recommendation 1

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University, by reflecting on its vision and mission, review its enrolment planning to improve its ability to deliver the required levels of services to its students and stakeholders in the three core areas of teaching and learning, research, and community engagement.

7. There is evidence that the institution is ideally located to support and enable the developmental agenda of the Province, the country and the continent through its academic programmes, applied research activity and infused community engagement. The Panel, for example, heard about innovative community engagement initiatives in Health Sciences, Journalism and Law. The Panel encourages the University to engage more with its various stakeholders on the implications of being a comprehensive University with a developmental focus. This process could be an important mechanism to bring staff and students closer together as well as to generate intellectual excitement and unity around a single identity for the new WSU and to strengthen partnerships with the local communities and other stakeholders.

Recommendation 2

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University develop a distinctive and unique niche for itself as a developmental university, benchmarked against other institutions, and taking into account the human, financial and physical resources available to it.

8. Another threat to achieving its mission is the endemic instability of WSU. Apart from protracted conflicts between staff, students and management, the Panel found that the merger had not been completed either symbolically or even practically in many cases. This has resulted in fragmentation and lack of coherence between campuses and various parts of the University. Legacy issues from the merger continue to influence and hinder the current situation. WSU intends each campus to focus on specific programme specialisations, but has not yet

implemented this Plan or even spelt out the exact configurations in all cases. The Panel believes that a model for faculty and departmental location, with timelines, is desperately required and that the model must include conscious change management. It is crucial to complete other unfinished business with regard to the merger.

Recommendation 3

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University approve a model for faculty migration, with plans and timeframes for implementation, so that members of staff work within a clear set of expectations.

9. While the University reported that there were regular review cycles of the strategic plan and of progress towards goals, it also reported that it was in the process of developing more extensive monitoring and evaluation mechanisms (SER:44). The Panel often noted good policies and plans; weaknesses were more generally found in implementing and monitoring these intentions. The Panel supports WSU's intention to strengthen monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. It will also be important to strengthen institutional management information available to measure whether the institution is making progress towards the goals it sets itself.

Recommendation 4

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University strengthen its reporting and monitoring mechanisms in all areas with special focus on student success, throughput, and graduation rates and staff qualifications, and ensure that the appropriate divisions take responsibility for the implementation of policies and plans.

Transformation, Institutional Culture and Equity

10. WSU views transformation as "introspective as well as outward looking, and has to do as much with engaging with the community as it has to do with reviewing the quality and relevance to regional and national development of teaching, learning and research at the institution" (SER:46). The SER also notes, however, that a transformation indaba held in November 2009 "failed to agree on a clear concept of what is meant by 'transformation'" (45). This was also reflected in interviews, where people gave widely divergent views.
11. The overwhelming majority of WSU students are African (99% in 2008) with a very small proportion of Coloured, Indian and White students. Most of the students are drawn from the Eastern Cape, which is itself predominantly African. Women made up 58% of the enrolments in 2008; this proportion was higher in previous years and was also the trend in the legacy institutions. International students represent a very small proportion of the whole student population. The Panel was told that WSU fees are the lowest in the country and that this was consistent with goals to widen access. Reported delays in bursary payments, however, cause enormous hardship for students who are among the poorest in the country. According to WSU, a large number of students who enrol come from a weak schooling background and require extra support to succeed in their studies. To this end, a Student Access, Retention and Success Policy (July 2006) is intended to help students in its catchment area gain entry and to succeed in

their studies. Each faculty reports progress to the Senate Learning and Teaching Development Committee. A Centre for Learning and Teaching Development (CLTD) was also established to function as a resource to faculties in this respect.

12. Over the years, the University has enrolled around 20% more students than its carrying capacity, with the result that it has not only put the physical infrastructure of the Institution under enormous strain, but has also overstretched its provision of educational resources. Overcrowding and squatting in the residences must also undermine student success. It is important that WSU institute appropriate enrolment planning mechanisms so that students admitted have a reasonable chance to succeed. Throughput rates for students at WSU are below DHET benchmarks. Undergraduate success rates at WSU are the lowest overall among comprehensive universities (70% in 2008) as are graduation rates (15% in 2008) (Institutional Profile: 28-31). The Panel heard, however, that graduation rates had improved over the last three years. WSU interviewees believe that part of this is due to the CLTD, academic development for staff, attempts by the Technology Centre to support teaching and learning as well as constructive relationships with schools and FET Colleges as feeder centres.
13. Although some of the employer representatives were complimentary about WSU graduates, others were not. They said that graduates sometimes lacked soft skills (such as communication and writing) and had feelings of entitlement that did not match their experience or skills.
14. Despite the preponderance of women students, WSU does not provide a welcoming and supportive environment that empowers female students and staff. The Panel heard in a number of interviews about the pervasiveness of sexual harassment and sexist behaviour. Of particular concern are reports that sex for marks may be more widespread than at first thought, with lecturers victimising women who refuse to provide sexual favours. This is unacceptable and the University must ensure that there is a comprehensive framework and vigorously implement it. Students also feel unsafe in their residences. The Panel urges management to denounce and act urgently to deter such pervasive behaviours and develop awareness of sexism and sexual harassment on campus.

Recommendation 5

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University urgently develop and monitor the implementation of a strategy to counter sexism and sexual harassment across all its campuses, and urgently take active steps against offenders.

15. International students and staff appear to be well accepted and integrated into the University community and accommodation is reserved for them. The University is congratulated for creating a welcoming environment, but the Panel notes that international students would appreciate more effective orientation on their arrival at the University.
16. The Panel heard reports that the University is not a welcoming place for persons with disabilities. In particular, buildings and infrastructure do not adequately accommodate persons

with disabilities, and administrative or academic staff are neither sensitised nor trained to support and assist students with disabilities respectfully. The University should consider immediate intervention to provide training and to sensitise staff and students to the needs of disabled students. Attention should also be given to actively managing the support of disabled students. Physical facilities for students with disabilities should be considered when planning maintenance of WSU infrastructure. The student database also will have to be improved so that there is an adequate record kept of these students; information is currently not available.

Recommendation 6

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University develop appropriate mechanisms to sensitise staff and students to the needs of students with disabilities, maintain a database on such students, and take explicit account of their needs in planning, maintenance and upgrade of the University's facilities. This includes acting when disabled students are inappropriately treated.

17. With regards to staff, the majority of staff at all levels is African. The highest proportion of the rest of the staff complement is white, at senior management level (just under 20% in 2008). At senior levels, more men are employed than women, and this proportion increased between 2005 and 2008. Among permanent academic staff, in 2008 women formed less than 50% of those employed, and at professorial level, this had declined to less than 10% in 2008 (from less than 40% in 2005). The spread of staff along age groups is relatively even. The Panel was told that WSU often struggles to attract suitably qualified staff and that accommodation and getting adequate schooling for children of University staff is problematic for most campuses. This might be an area where consultation with staff unions and community partners could help to develop strategies to counter some of the challenges.
18. The Panel noted the draft Transformation Charter dated March 2011, with its six programmes of action and identified timelines. This is a comprehensive document, but it does not appear that the University community as a whole has engaged with the issues. Given the draft status of the document, the University may wish to re-visit the timelines for completion as they appear to be quite ambitious as well as explore how the achievement of each element of the plan will be measured for success. The approach to transformation at the University has to encompass movement from a deficit model to a developmental approach centred on fashioning a new academic identity as a comprehensive university. The Transformation Charter is positive in this respect. Secondly, transformation involves a movement from a culture of blame, confrontation, low morale, conflict and apathy among staff, students and management into a culture of respect, inclusion, responsibility, accountability, transparency and excellence.

Institutional Culture and Student Experience

19. The merger has been a difficult and painful process, with significant resistance to the merger by staff, significant under-resourcing, weak financial management, and on-going fragmentation and lack of institutional coherence across campuses. The Panel heard that poor management of the merger process has resulted in low staff morale and resentment, and this has impacted

negatively on the University's institutional culture. The Panel is heartened by the keen interest of the Council in exercising its governance role with respect to stabilising the University and ensuring the success of the merger. However, there are many outstanding matters which must be resolved urgently, including the finalisation of the organisational structure, harmonisation of processes and systems, development of plans for financial sustainability, regularisation of staff contracts and job descriptions to ensure equitable service conditions, and implementation of a performance management system for WSU. In the Panel's view, if these factors are not addressed promptly with courageous and determined leadership, the success of WSU, including educational quality and its sustainability as a higher education institution will be put at high risk.

20. While the Panel understands the predicament that unfinished merger business creates for staff, it also heard of instances of lack of a work ethic and absenteeism. The Panel heard that there are mechanisms to address this, but that they are not consistently and rigorously implemented, nor are there facilitating mechanisms such as probationary periods for new staff that could give WSU more leeway in addressing deficiencies in performance. Unless there is concerted action in this regard, the quality of learning and teaching will be adversely affected, as will the reputation of the University. On the other hand, the Panel was told by several students of their satisfaction with committed academic staff. Interviews with academic staff also revealed innovative practices and commitment and it is important that these practices and staff are supported.
21. A worrying aspect of WSU's institutional culture at present is the propensity for both staff and students to embark on protest action whenever they have issues. There has been instability in student as well as union leadership, which has exacerbated the volatile situation. Concerns were expressed by a number of staff and students that the SRC has too much power. The Panel heard complaints from both staff and students about poor communication between management and a range of stakeholders. Slow reaction to emerging tensions often exacerbated the issue.

Recommendation 7

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University develop communication strategies to improve information flow at all levels and in all areas. This should be done in consultation with students and staff in order to foster a common purpose and encourage positive participation and ownership by staff and students.

22. The Panel thinks that the integration of curricular and non-curricular dimensions is weak at this institution, with the result that students do not receive a well-rounded educational experience. This includes providing adequate sporting, recreational and catering facilities and services of similar levels on all campuses. Off-campus students, for example, need a cafeteria and students in residence need communal spaces to build social cohesion. Some positive elements were noted. Student counselling appears to work well and these counsellors also work with staff. There is a centre for HIV/AIDS with pre- and post-test counselling. Nonetheless, shortages of space and staff were also reported.

23. The Panel was concerned about the poor maintenance of infrastructure and heard worrying reports about the extent of deferred maintenance. Both staff and students complained about this, as well as about the general lack of audio visual equipment and information and communication technology (ICT) facilities. Lack of compliance with health and safety regulations in laboratories is unacceptable. The Vice-Chancellor reported that WSU had received R405 million to improve its infrastructure and facilities, but that this had not been sufficient.

Recommendation 8

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University develop an infrastructure maintenance plan, with phased implementation that concentrates on improved provision of audio-visual equipment in learning spaces; information and communication technology (ICT) facilities; give attention to overall safety of staff and students; and improves compliance with health and safety regulations in University laboratories.

24. There is a serious problem of squatting and non-compliance with health and safety issues in many of the student residences. Students with legitimate rights to a bed lease out space to other students; the Panel heard of up to 6 students sharing space meant for one. The 'landlord' might earn money in this way but it is the University that bears the cost of the extra burden on facilities and services. While squatting is against University rules, the practice is supported by students and tacitly condoned by management, through its lack of action. Squatting does not appear to be limited to students with legitimate needs for accommodation – the Panel heard of excluded students remaining in the residences as well as non-students being housed in University accommodation. Cooking in rooms is against residence rules but is widespread and unfortunately not controlled. A more serious concern relates to personal safety in residences. Students, especially female students, do not feel safe in their rooms and these fears are, unfortunately, justified. WSU must urgently improve security measures to ensure that students are accommodated in environments that are safe for their person and conducive for learning.
25. While some of these problems are caused by pressure on existing infrastructure and lack of resources, others are caused by lack of leadership and commitment from line managers and acts of vandalism and theft committed by students themselves. The Panel was told about a plan to turn around residences; it is imperative that this be reviewed and implemented as a matter of extreme urgency. The Panel heard of creative alternatives to raise funds for building residences. These should be pursued as well as short-term alternatives to the squatting situation, such as bunk beds, controlled by the University, so that the situation is managed rather than the current chaotic situation. Together with other improvements, the provision of computer terminals in residences is also required in order to promote residences as places of study and learning.

Recommendation 9

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University urgently develop a plan for making student residences a safe environment conducive to study; fast track the maintenance schedule of existing student residences; increase the availability of residences with

adequate communal and study space, and enforce policies and rules on health and safety, squatting, access control and alcohol abuse.

Institutional Planning, Resource Allocation and Quality Management

Governance, Management and Resource Allocation

26. The Panel found the Council attuned to the problems of the University and aware of the main obstacles and risks. It noted, however, that the Council had the same list of risks before it two years in a row and had failed to implement plans to mitigate those risks. As noted elsewhere, staff unions and other stakeholder groups, such as the SRC, have been complicit in destabilising the University and undermining management. The Panel urges the University to take steps to improve stakeholder relations and address the destabilising factors at the University

Recommendation 10

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University urgently take steps to improve stakeholder relations and act against those who are destabilising the University.

27. The Panel was told that a risk manager had been appointed and that Council was busy with a new risk register and profile for WSU. While the Panel agrees that the issues identified are important and that remedial actions are urgent, the Panel thinks that the time scales should be re-evaluated. WSU has many good policy initiatives, many in the problematic areas of the University, such as sexual harassment, student and residence rules, to name a few. However, lack of enforcement reinforces a general attitude of laxity towards rules and regulations. The institution would gain considerably if deadlines were perceived as achievable. The Panel believes that WSU has a functioning corporate governance system with a Council that is aware of its statutory responsibilities and that provides oversight of the management of the University. The Panel supports the Council in its intention to oversee the introduction of performance management at all levels of the institution and to require the completion of merger issues, including the harmonisation of salaries and benefits. It urges the Council, however, to set more realistic deadlines.

Recommendation 11

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University urgently approve an organogram, harmonise conditions of service, contracts and job descriptions, and implement plans to eliminate the identified risks to enable the University to realise its mission and vision.

28. The Senate at WSU has a large membership which renders the body unwieldy. The University is urged to implement the revised Senate Charter and Rules speedily to ensure that the work of the Senate is not compromised. The Core Business Committee of Council was established to enable Council to exercise its oversight mandate in terms of teaching and learning, research and community engagement in a more focused manner. The Panel was concerned that there might be a blurring of lines between Senate and Council responsibilities as a result of the unwieldy membership of the present Senate which may lead to issues not being thoroughly discussed at Senate meetings and instead passed on to Council Core Business Committee.

Recommendation 12

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University strengthen the Senate in fulfilling its functions by clarifying its responsibilities; and considering changes to the Rules and Charter of the Senate including its membership.

29. The SER reported that the Institutional Forum (IF) was considered to be dysfunctional for a few years, but that the situation was reversed in the second half of 2009, following facilitation by the DHET (SER: 46). The Panel observed that the IF appears to be meeting as required, but might not be fulfilling its advisory role as effectively as it could do. The Panel urges the IF to clarify its terms of reference in this light and encourages WSU management and Council to enable the IF to fulfil its institutional role.
30. Campus-based SRCs report to a single Institutional Student Representative Council. It is difficult to describe the SRC as representative, however, when elections have not been held regularly as stipulated by regulations and when office bearers appear to advance external political party interests rather than those of enrolled students and where the SRC relates and reports more to non-student formations than to the student body. The SRC faces other legitimacy challenges. In a number of cases, student strikes had occurred without the SRC's knowledge and participation. Students interviewed (including some members of the SRC) expressed sentiments that the University management should discipline students who disrupt classes and act outside the legal framework of the University. Several members of academic and support staff told the Panel that the University management was too lenient with students and, in their opinion, the University was run by management in conjunction with students. It appears to the Panel that political or other external influences on student politics threaten the University's core business, and that intolerance, intimidation, uneven commitment and fear permeate the everyday life of the University. The Panel urges the University to consider including academic performance as one of the criteria for candidate selection to the SRC, although during interviews, SRC members rejected any use of academic merit as a criterion for leadership.

Recommendation 13

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University review the process and criteria for the selection of candidates to the Student Representative Council and ensure that representative student structures act within the SRC's constitutional prescripts by making academic performance, induction of student leaders on their leadership responsibilities, adherence to democratic principles, part of the good governance criteria for elected student leaders.

Management

31. The merger has resulted in significant changes to the academic management of the University. At faculty level, there are Executive Deans, Deputy Deans, Directors of Schools, Heads of Departments and Programme Co-ordinators. While leadership was clearly being provided in many cases, the Panel was concerned that, in other cases, there appeared to be too many levels, with lack of clarity about overlapping responsibilities and overall instability. While the SER

reported that Council had finally approved the “role, appointment criteria, key performance areas, tenure and manner of appointment” of heads of departments (22), some academic staff and at least one director of a school reported that they did not yet have letters of appointment. On paper, the responsibilities of heads of departments are extensive. What will be more important is accountability and monitoring of that accountability for these responsibilities.

32. The SER noted that “academic departments have not yet felt themselves to be fully harmonized into the new schools and faculties, and the effectiveness of the schools and academic departments therefore cannot be measured within the context of the unified university” (SER: 25). The Panel concurs with this view.
33. Each of the four campuses is managed by a campus director, assisted by campus management committees. This model has been a recent introduction and the SER notes that it is not yet possible to assess its effectiveness. The Panel heard about tensions and ‘leadership gaps’ which might be due to the distances between campuses or because academic leadership is not always as assertive as required. In planning the migration of each faculty to a campus, it might be worth the while for WSU to consider how to nurture a strong partnership between the executive deans and campus directors.
34. The Panel is concerned about the extent to which the present organisational structure, reporting lines, and the administrative backbone of the institution are sufficiently developed and robust enough. The Panel heard many examples of the slowness of administrative processes in the human resources offices and the Registrar’s office, which led to frustration and, in the case of recruiting competent staff, a loss of potential candidates. There appears to be a tendency to appoint consultants to perform tasks that should occur in-house, for example to produce job descriptions. The Panel is concerned that the incomplete administrative and academic management structures might be too complicated for students and staff as there were complaints from both groups about the many levels of management that had to be negotiated.
35. In an already unstable environment, there is a serious risk in terms of sustained senior leadership at the University. The Panel noted that the Vice-Chancellor’s term of office, including those of some of the senior leaders, will come to an end soon, and there are large numbers of people in acting positions, presumably because the organogram has not been finalised. Council will need to think beyond the appointment of a vice-chancellor, to ensure that there is a strong senior leadership team with the collective skills and competencies to lead the University.

Recommendation 14

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University strengthen its management capacity by ensuring that there is a senior management team that collectively has the requisite skills and competencies to manage the various functions of the University.

36. The Panel heard of many complaints of staff reverting to a default position of using the policies of one or other of the legacy institutions. Management is urged to prioritise the finalisation of

policies and then to communicate and explain them to all stakeholders, and ensure their consistent implementation. Performance management with key performance indicators, at all levels, is urgently required to support and monitor this.

37. The Panel is concerned about the integrity of the University's management information systems and the comprehensive use of data for planning and performance measurement purposes. The University recently appointed management information staff who will concentrate on ensuring the collection of accurate data. It is important that their efforts are monitored to see that improvements take place and that appropriate policies on record management are introduced.

Recommendation 15

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University monitor needs for management information systems to ensure that improvements are introduced to produce accurate data to allow effective decision making, HEMIS requirements are met, and appropriate plans for record management are developed.

Financial Management

38. The growing annual deficit is a major concern. The Panel is not convinced that an effective and realistic turnaround strategy has been identified which takes into account the subsidy received, the development of possible third stream income, better recovery of student debt and reduction of personnel costs in particular. The financial sustainability of the University is precarious for a range of reasons. Some are due to external factors. For example, the high level of student debt presents challenges for an institution that enrolls students from the poorest part of the country. The Panel notes, also, that WSU believes that it is disadvantaged by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) allocation formula, which covers only some students. The Panel was told further that projections for maintenance submitted in 2007 were for R2.5 billion across all three merging institutions and that only R405 million was received, and this was insufficient to address even the backlogs. These factors are all givens, however, and the Panel suggests that the chosen financial model and its implementation must be rigorous and transparent and geared to providing the short- and long-term financial stability of WSU. The University will need to make some hard and difficult choices. The Panel was told that about 75% of unrestricted income is allocated to personnel costs, which is clearly unsustainable, and further, from a model constructed by consultants, that only 35% of WSU units might be viable. Similarly, while the Panel appreciates that student fees are a politically sensitive issue, the University will need to consider what measures it needs to take to collect student fees to dispel any perceptions that WSU is a 'welfare' institution.

39. Other elements that make the financial sustainability of the University precarious are linked to internal budgeting and management. The Panel heard concerns about tendering processes and outsourcing as well as inappropriate spending choices. There is an urgent need to implement financial discipline with checks and balances, and practical controls. As significant income is derived from teaching input units, it is important to ensure that teaching should be prioritised to give effect to this core function. The Panel was heartened to hear that steps were being taken to

put the fundamentals in place. This will also require leadership and support from Council and Management as lax measures in the past have served student and other interests. The Panel was encouraged to hear about possibly more creative responses to the lack of residence accommodation through engaging with DHET and the Development Bank of South Africa.

40. There is an urgent need for a viable budgetary model that links academic and core priorities with the planning and budgetary processes, and also one that exercises control over personnel costs. The Panel finds that there has been a lack of transparency on budgetary and financial matters characterised by a lack of a culture of budgetary responsibility at faculty, departmental and administrative levels. Institutional planning information is lacking, financial and information technology systems are not adequately linked and adequate performance indicators are not available to inform planning and other decisions.

Recommendation 16

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University develop a transparent and sustainable financial model linked to strategic priorities of the University, and foregrounding the reduction of student debt and the salary component of the budget.

41. It appears that in the past, overall budget decisions were taken by the Chief Financial Officer. Recently, however, budget decisions appear to have been taken in a more transparent manner through the Executive Management Committee, with the budget also seen by the Academic Planning and Examinations Committee. Executive deans reported that they had an input. The Panel encourages WSU to reinforce these efforts. The Panel further urges the University to ensure that plans for enforcing financial discipline are implemented together with systems to monitor spending and the awarding of tenders. It is also the Panel's view that WSU should take a cautious approach when dealing with these challenges as balancing budgets should not come at the expense of the core activities in teaching, research and community engagement.

Quality Management and Planning

42. WSU has developed several quality-related measures over the past three years. The policy for Quality Management and Assurance (2009) commits the University to internal programme reviews in 5-year cycles; there is also a 5-year cycle of self-assessments by academic departments (SER: 76-77). Support and administrative departments are developing their own template in a parallel process. There is a Students Quality Literacy Programme whereby students are made aware of their rights in quality promotion and assurance. Institution-wide quality issues are overseen by the Quality Management Directorate and addressed through quarterly Senior Management Forum meetings, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor. The plans for each year are developed in September for the following year (SER: 60-61). Implementation is monitored through reports from faculties to the Quality Assurance Committee and then Senate.
43. Responsibility for designing and monitoring teaching and learning quality functions falls to the CLTD and the Directorate for Quality Assurance. Responsibility for linking planning, strategic choices and resource allocation has been allocated to the Director of the Bureau for Institutional

Research and Planning. To give effect to this, the Chief Financial Officer liaises with this office through the Vice-Chancellor's office. The SER notes, however, that the goal of aligning planning and budgeting has not been realised and that the University has engaged a consultant to help with developing an appropriate method (SER: 61). The Panel agrees with this assessment.

44. While some interviewees indicated a comprehensive and sophisticated understanding of quality, the Panel noted that it was not widely shared. At the time the SER was written, the LLB had been the only programme review completed. WSU must ensure that there is a collective understanding of quality and its management across all sections of the University. The Panel suggests that the University review the effectiveness and efficiency of the Quality Management Directorate to provide the necessary leadership, expertise, capabilities and skills to give effect to the quality agenda of the University.

Recommendation 17

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University embed a collective understanding of quality and its monitoring across the institution; review systems to link academic and financial planning and quality management in a transparent manner; and review administrative support to manage these processes and systems.

Benchmarking and Surveys

45. The Panel is concerned about the weakness in benchmarking, together with lack of capacity in management information since reliable management information is crucial for monitoring performance. WSU acknowledges this as an area of weakness and says that the Bureau for Institutional Research and Planning has been allocated posts to pursue this function.
46. The Panel encourages the University to take greater note of practices at other universities and areas where benchmarking would provide useful comparisons and good practice. This includes the development of a benchmarking framework that links to the strategic plan. This should then also be supported by collection of relevant data so that WSU can monitor its performance against similar institutions and measure its capacity to deliver on its goals.

Recommendation 18

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University conduct surveys, benchmarking activities and impact studies on a regular basis and ensure that the outcomes of these exercises are disseminated and used for the purposes of enhancing quality in its core functions.

General Arrangements for Assuring Quality in Teaching and Learning

Conceptualisation of Teaching and Learning

47. WSU believes that the "chief strength of the institution's teaching and learning function lies in the amplitude of the policy framework" (SER: 153). There is, indeed, a vast array of policies at every level, including curriculum development; workload; academic staff development; student access, retention and throughput to name only a few. There is even a policy on policy development. The Panel, however, is not convinced about the impact of these policies on

teaching and learning, nor whether WSU has the resources to realise the goals or the systems in place to monitor the implementation of such policies.

48. WSU supports teaching and learning by the centres and units it has established. These include the Centre for Learning and Teaching Development (CLTD) and the Centre for Community and International Partnerships (CCIP). The Panel heard about many examples of innovative teaching and learning, and assessment practices. In particular, the Faculty of Health Sciences hosts some of the University's academic flagship programmes; one of its recognisable features is its use of PBL as a teaching and learning methodology, as well as its novel 'infusion' model of community engagement. The Panel heard positive reports from interviews with a range of stakeholders and staff about the quality of graduates as well as teaching and learning, and assessment practices.

Commendation 1

The HEQC commends Walter Sisulu University for its innovations in health sciences in respect to its introduction of problem-based learning methods and the alignment of such programmes to community needs through a strong service learning component.

49. Notwithstanding the commendation above, the Panel urges the University to exercise great caution about its intention to roll-out a modified version of PBL across the University, as the model is generally resource intensive, requires particular staff pedagogical skill sets as well as particular student attributes and abilities.
50. WSU has other challenges. Service learning has been difficult to implement because of lack of resources to support this resource-intensive practice (SER: 99). Similar problems are experienced with work-integrated learning. It is the Panel's view that work integrated learning and service learning are critical to WSU's teaching and learning strategy, and a comprehensive university. In this context, therefore, the Panel believes that it is essential for WSU to prioritise resourcing for these areas, and if necessary to engage the Province in providing support where possible.
51. One of the goals of a comprehensive university that WSU wants to cultivate is horizontal articulation, although the Panel was told this was largely aspirational. There was insufficient evidence of successful structural articulation between WSU's career-orientated and academic offerings, except in the Faculty of Education. The Panel recognises that the lack of a clear policy on the part of national government has hindered this process, but believes that WSU could be more proactive in planning articulation routes; lack of evidence in this matter compromises the University's fitness for purpose.
52. It was reported to the Panel that the quality of programmes across faculties remains uneven. Some programmes have been in danger of de-accreditation by professional bodies due to, among others, under-resourcing of laboratories, libraries and learning resources. The Panel thinks it is important to develop a common understanding of an appropriate pedagogy for a developmental University with WSU's particular student intake. This includes having a clear and shared understanding of a teaching and learning philosophy and an approach that takes into

account the infrastructural limitations, staff teaching loads, and current staffing qualification levels and skills. This focus will also require WSU to make choices about the necessary academic and pastoral support systems to assist its students to succeed.

53. In most programmes the dominant form of teaching appears to be chalk and talk, which is insufficient if not used in conjunction with appropriate audio-visual materials. There is currently little opportunity for students to use online learning materials, e-journals or online skills development or formative materials. This is partly due to limited computer and broadband access, but also because these materials have hardly begun to be developed or offered at WSU. There is potential here to overcome some of the difficulties of limited space and physical facilities as well as geographic dispersion. The Panel recognises the positive efforts by CLTD to integrate educational technology into teaching and learning activities, and more specifically the pilot in the Faculty of Science, Engineering and Technology. The challenge, however, remains not only to roll this initiative out on an equitable basis in all four faculties, but also to move beyond mere adoption of Blackboard as web-based Learning Management System (LMS) to ensure that the use of educational technology is embedded into academic programmes to improve their overall quality. It is encouraging to note that the ICT department is aware of challenges and is addressing them in its short- and long-term planning in tandem with infrastructure facilities. Its success will depend on the availability of financial resources as well as being able to attract and retain qualified staff in specialised areas.
54. In the Panel's view, the University is confronted by five main challenges in the area of teaching and learning. The first is an extensive conceptual engagement with the notion of what is meant by a developmental and comprehensive university and its implications for programme and curriculum design in the light of the rural and urban character of the University. The second challenge, in the context of the infrastructural, staffing and other support challenges, is the development of carefully conceptualised pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning that take account of the number and types of enrolled students. The third is to address the impact that the quality of resources in a multi-campus environment has on the quality of teaching and learning. These include poorly maintained and equipped lecture rooms and laboratories, ill-equipped libraries, lack of educational technology equipment in teaching spaces, an inadequate ICT platform, and inadequate computer access for students and staff. Fourthly, despite the evident dedication and commitment of a number of academic staff, under-resourcing and high student to staff ratios in a context of student under-preparedness have an adverse impact on the quality of teaching and learning and on the quality of graduates in a number of programmes. As a matter of urgency, the University must finalise and rationalise the many acting positions. It must ensure that there is an adequate number of full-time core academic staff across all discipline areas. It must also continue with its efforts to improve the qualifications of academic staff. And lastly, the culture of staff and student strikes also affects the quality of teaching and learning. Although the Panel was told by some that time lost due to strikes is made up over vacations and weekends, the Panel doubts whether lost time is ever fully replaced.

Recommendation 19

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University develop an appropriate institution-wide strategy on teaching and learning, and assessment, to ensure the success of students, and which is consistent with the University's aspirations to be a developmental university that has specific teaching and learning goals, and which are linked to academic and pastoral support systems.

55. The University is urged to focus its time and resources on the students who wish to learn. Senior academics acknowledge that 'lingering' students or students who should be excluded dilute the University's teaching resources and are often part of that group which resists the University's academic ethos and project, and disrupts the teaching and learning activities. The Panel urges the Registrar's office to enforce exclusions and encourages Senate to monitor implementation.

Recommendation 20

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University firmly implement its academic exclusions policy.

The Organisation of Teaching and Learning

56. Strategic direction is provided by two deputy vice-chancellors – the DVC: Academic Affairs and Research and the DVC: Planning, Quality Assurance and Development. Thereafter, each faculty has responsibility for teaching and learning activities. Governance resides in Senate with a standing committee – the Institutional Quality Assurance Committee – that is responsible for directing quality assurance. Each faculty has its own quality assurance committee. The Quality Management Directorate supports these functions. Programme offerings from the legacy institutions were consolidated into one PQM, approved by the DHET on 1 December 2009.
57. The Centre for Learning and Teaching Development (CLTD) was established to promote excellence in teaching and learning by providing integrated and specialised professional expertise and services for all faculties. CLTD has several units, including the Career Development Unit (which also oversees Peer-Assisted Learning), the Extended Studies Academy, Education Technology and Development Unit, and the Further Education and Teaching Unit. The Centre for Community and International Partnerships (CCIP) incorporates two units with responsibilities for teaching and learning - the Units for Service Learning and Work-Integrated Learning, which is responsible for promoting and extending academic learning into the workplace through experiential learning (SER:97-98). Student placements and employer and marketing administration are centralised in the unit; monitoring, visits and assessment are carried out by the academic departments. Visits to industry are carried out both by members of the unit and academic staff. The Panel noted appreciation for the work done by CLTD and CCIP.
58. The Panel heard from academic staff, however, that there were problems with administrative support for their work both within departments and in the central administration; students experienced problems pertaining to slow processes in their registration at the beginning of the

academic year and release of examination results. It is important that WSU puts in place adequate administrative support for the academic project.

Management of Quality in Academic Support Services Academic and Staff Development

59. In 2008 WSU received R38.5 million from DHET for teaching development. Several units were established in CLTD to address goals to increase graduation and success rates and staff qualifications. The Extended Studies Unit works with schools to assist students with career choices; during registration it offers placement testing and thereafter identifies students for extended curricula. Extended curricula allow students up to a year extra for certain qualifications as well as additional subjects, such as Academic Literacy, Life Skills and Computer Literacy to help them in their studies. A further intervention for at-risk of failing students is Peer-Assisted Learning (PAL) where student peers work with monitoring specialists and lecturers on individual intervention plans. Support for this function is housed within the Career Development Unit, part of the CLTD. The CLTD also houses the Education Technology and Innovation Unit (ETIU) which champions e-learning. It offers workshops to staff as well as assistance to students in how to participate in e-learning.
60. Since November 2007, all members of the academic staff have been required to have at least a master's qualification. Between 2005 and 2008, the percentage of academic staff with master's degrees increased from 19% to 27% and those with doctoral degrees from 7% to 14%. This compares reasonably well with other comprehensive universities at master's level, but at the doctoral level WSU has the lowest percentage of all comprehensive universities. During the audit visit, the Panel was told that these percentages had increased substantially since 2008 – to 50% for master's and 20% for doctoral degrees. The Panel was also told, however, that many of the qualifications of academic staff had not been verified. As the reputation and credibility of academic awards of the University must be protected, the Panel urges management to ensure that all staff qualifications are verified as a matter of urgency.

Recommendation 21

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University verify all staff qualifications as a matter of urgency.

61. The Continuous Professional Development Unit in CLTD is responsible for helping academic staff upgrade their qualifications. This includes payment of tuition and other related fees, as well as leave replacement funds for their departments from the CLTD. The CLTD also conducts mandatory professional development workshops on various topics and can provide more individual support on request. These have been well received. There are now also quarterly induction programmes. The first day covers human resource matters, thereafter three modules are offered – teaching and learning, programme design, and assessment. Although these are compulsory, attendance seems to be patchy. The SER noted that many academic staff who underwent capacity development found that they had little chance to implement what they had learned in their faculties and departments (156) and this confirms the view of the Panel that the

general culture of the University makes it difficult to consolidate improvements. The CLTD is well-thought of by staff and students. WSU hopes that the various interventions will succeed in improving student success and helping staff improve research output. In the long term, this will support the stability of the University, including through the increased subsidy this will bring.

Commendation 2

The HEQC commends Walter Sisulu University on the work done by the Centre for Learning and Teaching Development in supporting both staff and students; in improving student success; in helping staff improve their teaching, programme design and assessment skills; and providing resources to build institutional capacity to deliver on its mission.

62. The Panel is concerned, however, about the long-term financial sustainability of the CLTD and its programmes as presently it is funded from dedicated external funds. The University is encouraged to ensure that it becomes a line item in the annual budget and to review its staff complement to enable this to occur.

Library Services

63. WSU has ten library sites. While the merger allowed resources to be combined and shared, the SER reported that the facilities available are uneven. On its campus visits, the Panel was concerned about the lack of space and resources in the libraries (a concern also expressed by the ECSA at its accreditation visit). Students and staff complained about inadequate reading space, computer access and book collections. Although managing the merged library system is a challenge, the library appears to have good plans in place to improve the quality of its provision. Its first goal is to provide an appropriate collection. It received an injection of funds in 2008 for this purpose and shares a database (Millennium) with the other four academic libraries in the Eastern Cape. Its second goal is to provide innovative services and programmes and to this end it has introduced a series of programmes and projects, including the roll out of suitable IT equipment. It has many activities linking itself to local, regional and national partners.
64. Induction sessions are provided for groups of students from January to March and this is followed up by faculty information officers. Orientation is also provided for new staff. The library, however, identified weaknesses in its relationship with academic staff and faculties (SER: 81, 87) and it is important that steps are taken to strengthen this relationship. The SER indicated the absence of common standard operating procedures (SER: 86), which presents a quality risk. An institutional repository for theses and dissertations has been approved; but without faculty buy-in, its success could be short-lived (SER: 82).
65. The Panel was concerned about the extent of refurbishing and extensions required and the identified shortage of professional staff. While plans for improvements were there, it is uncertain whether the library will receive the resources to implement them. For example, the Panel heard that the library budget was cut from R17 million in 2010 to R9 million in 2011 and that this was only sufficient to maintain subscriptions, with no funds to purchase new books.

Recommendation 22

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University urgently address the resource needs of its libraries – which will require realistic and phased funding arrangements – to augment its book and journal resources, provide internet access, increase the number of professional staff and improve the physical facilities.

Information and Communications Technology

66. The ICT department is experiencing significant challenges, not only in terms of network, hardware and software issues, but also in terms of staffing (SER:48). WSU believes that its main problems derive from the merger, although there has been some progress towards integrating ICT (SER: 18-19). A recent version of Integrated Tertiary Software (ITS) has replaced earlier systems, though the Panel heard that harmonisation of data and data cleansing still has to be completed. The lack of harmonisation of some key ICT systems places a huge burden on running a single institution. In addition, there are on-going problems with theft and vandalism (SER: 48). Although service and morale of the ICT Division has reportedly improved, there are still serious helpdesk and support issues.
67. Overcrowded and under-resourced computer laboratories were recurring complaints from students and staff. The Panel observed that a significant number of laboratory computers are out of order and in a state of disrepair. The Panel was told that the student to computer ratio was currently 12:1 and that the goal was to reduce this to 5:1, but saw no plans of how this was going to be achieved. The division apparently had no budget at the time of the audit because of a general restriction on spending. The Panel also heard that the IT network between campuses has been extended and stabilised, but that this remains a work-in-progress. The University is encouraged to increase its use of video-conference technology to overcome the distances and reduce travel time (and cost) between campuses as well as to consider increasing access to computer services by students, especially postgraduate students.
68. While there is a Strategic Plan to improve ICT at WSU (SER: 48), the Panel is not convinced that it will be effective without significant resources in both equipment and staff and a concerted effort to train users in using the systems available.

Recommendation 23

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University ensure the adequacy of computers for both students and staff; and address the maintenance and implementation of existing software to manage administrative and educational processes.

Recommendation 24

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University upgrade its network capacity between campuses; review the resourcing of the ICT and staff skills so that improvements can be made in ICT provision at WSU; and ensure that the ICT Division gives urgent attention to the harmonisation of systems and data cleansing.

Management of Certification

69. The Panel was satisfied with the security for the submission of examination question papers and examination books, for couriering these to external moderators, and for printing and distributing papers. However, WSU may consider improvements in the management of external examination processes. A possible weakness is the electronic filing of questions on computers of academic and administrative staff, but this is usually before an examination paper is final. The Panel was satisfied with security measures for ordering blank certificates, their printing and issuance.

Management of the Quality of Short Courses

70. While the number of short courses offered by WSU is small, with most of them from the Education Department, the University has tightened processes and procedures in registration and approval. WSU has a Short Learning Programmes (SLP) Policy (2008) and SLPs are administered and coordinated by the CCIP as a means of addressing one of the WSU aims to contribute to regional skills development. Proposals go through the relevant faculty board, to a Senate Short Learning Programmes Committee, established in 2010. Further monitoring of SLPs takes place via the CLTD, which provides curriculum and materials development specialists, and the Quality Management Directorate, which oversees quality issues related to the SLP.

71. While the SER reported that there had been problems in compiling a register of short courses due to tardiness of academic staff in submitting details (79), the Panel heard that this register has now been compiled. There was no evidence of a University certificate or proof of attendance on completion of a short course and this requires attention. Some opportunities to offer short courses appeared to have been lost which is regrettable, both because of potential lost income and because of the lost opportunity to strengthen community engagements. The Panel recognises that it will be a challenge to extend the range of short courses offered because of staff workload, but WSU is encouraged to professionalise this area further.

Programme Development and Review

72. This area currently appears to be driven mostly by professional bodies' accreditation processes, although there are policies and procedures in place for rigorous internal review and an Academic Staff and Curriculum Development Unit to provide support for innovative programme development. The University has an Internal Programme Review Processes and Procedures Policy, approved by Senate in 2010 and this has been used to review the LLB programme. Interviews with staff did not indicate a general awareness of this policy, however. Other reviews were undertaken by the HEQC as part of their national reviews focussed on specific subject areas; the Engineering Council of South Africa granted full and, in some cases, conditional accreditation to all the Engineering programmes offered by WSU in 2010; the Health Professions Council of South Africa accredited the MBChB in 2006, the Clinical Associate Programme in 2009 and Specialist Registrar training programmes in Clinical Medicine in 2010; the nursing programme was partially accredited by the Nursing Council of South Africa in 2006.

73. Opportunities for student feedback are supposed to be available across the institution, but these were not always in place. Although there were examples of taking evaluations and feedback

seriously, in many other cases, the insights acquired did not seem to be used. The SER says that “WSU seems to have a culture of not taking curriculum issues seriously” (157) and the Panel concurs. It is important that the policies and procedures become better known and utilised. The Panel encourages the University to link programme and department reviews to a review of strategic priorities, so that this can be linked to quality as well as to financial issues.

Recommendation 25

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University initiate comprehensive programme review processes that focus on teaching and learning issues, which make policies, procedures and schedules for programme reviews known and links the results of programme and departmental reviews to strategic priorities.

Recommendation 26

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University ensure that there is capacity and resources at a faculty, school and departmental level in curriculum design and programme development; incorporate the insights from the evaluations as part of improvement plans to improve programme quality; and ensure that student feedback is collected and used to inform programme improvement.

Management of Assessment

74. WSU has developed a single Examinations Policy and Examinations Procedure Manual (2008) whereby all question papers and examination scripts require moderation. There is also an Assessment and Moderation of Student Learning Policy. Faculties are allowed to develop their own assessment and moderation procedures, provided they are aligned with institutional policy (SER: 105). The same principles are used to monitor the assessment of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

75. Names of internal and external moderators are submitted to Senate for approval. CLTD organises workshops for assessors and moderators, but not everyone completes these (SER: 157). The SER notes weaknesses in allowing faculties to decide the period of appointment of a moderator as well as procedures for the moderation of continuous assessment. The Panel was told that other weaknesses identified in the SER (65), such as delays in the submission of examination questions and moderation of scripts had been resolved. Moderators confirmed the skills and standards of students who progressed through their studies and were complimentary about the quality of student work, particularly in the School of Medicine, where students are able to integrate applied understanding that confirmed the values and successes of PBL. Moderators thought that departments should use the advice of external moderators more extensively for curriculum development and other issues and indicated concerns regarding feedback. Their suggestions were sporadically taken into consideration and there was little evidence of this on the scripts. Assessment practices within departments are rather inconsistent and serious cause for attention.

Recommendation 27

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University establish appropriate and well-resourced mechanisms to ensure consistency of implementation across faculties and campuses concerning assessment policies and procedures, especially in the appointment of external examiners and moderators.

76. The assessment of Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) is based on input from students (projects and assignments, student records and own evaluation), mentor evaluation and finally the responsible academic staff member who takes all the evidence into account and awards a final grade. This process is supported by the WIL Unit which co-ordinates the placements, visits, monitoring and assessment of students (SER: 66-67). While some employers said that there was good communication between them and the University, others said that they had less contact with academic staff at WSU than with staff of other universities that placed students with them.
77. WSU has procedures to deal with plagiarism for student assignments as well as for research. Each student assignment must be accompanied by a declaration that it is the student's own work. The University uses the originality checking software, *Turnitin*, to test the originality of academic papers. The CLTD conducts workshops for staff and research supervisors and the Library has a programme to teach students to use reference systems properly. The Panel was told that plagiarism had decreased as a result of these measures. It will be important that Senate monitor its consistent use across the University as a learning tool, to record instances of known plagiarism and impose appropriate penalties.
78. There are variations the management of examinations, which could be tightened up and some reports of disappearing examination scripts. The University needs to investigate complaints from students about marks on the online system sometimes differing from those on official transcripts, and about inappropriate and disrespectful treatment from the administrative staff concerned when students queried these discrepancies. The reports about sex for marks also cast some doubt on the validity of assessment practices.

Recommendation 28

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University establish mechanisms to ensure the consistent management of examination processes across the University, and that the process and capture of assessment results eliminates any discrepancies between the online-system academic results and the official academic transcript.

Management of Research Quality and Postgraduate Education

79. The approved PQM allows WSU restricted doctoral programmes and puts a cap on the number of postgraduate enrolments. In this context, WSU does not aspire to be a research university, but recognises that a research culture is necessary for any university. Despite recognised pockets of excellence at WSU, research productivity remains very low for a comprehensive university with a medical school. A study conducted by the Centre for Research on Evaluation, Science and Technology (CREST based at the University of Stellenbosch) reveals that in 2008 WSU ranked 22nd out of 23 universities and produced 0.2% of the national output. Publication of academic articles did not increase significantly over the period 1990 to 2009, involving about 20 to 26

academics. A single department in the Faculty of Health Sciences produced 25% of all articles between 2006 and 2009 and the Faculty of Health Sciences produced 44% of all article equivalents during that period. It was evident that many elements that contribute to research development are weak or missing at WSU. These include a large cohort of staff with appropriate postgraduate qualifications, time to devote to improving qualifications and conducting research, a significant number of postgraduate students and an enabling research infrastructure. WSU claims that there is a resurgence of a research culture based on the quantity of postgraduate research activities, the creation of posts of research champions and the increase of research outputs (SER:108). WSU is also proud of the appointment in January 2010 of a South African Research Chair in Indigenous Knowledge Systems, based at the Centre for Rural Development. The third annual WSU Research Conference that took place at the Health Resource Centre in Mthatha in August 2010 was another highlight. This conference was also praised by community representatives in interviews.

80. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic Affairs and Research is responsible for this portfolio, with two directorates - the Directorate of Research Development (reporting to the Senate Research Committee) and the Directorate of Postgraduate Studies (reporting to the Senate Higher Degrees Committee) reporting to him. There is a Research Resource Centre which provides analytical and statistical software to aid researchers (SER: 108). Despite numerous research policies, they do not appear to be generally well-known and are not always implemented. The Panel encourages the University to develop a strategy for disseminating and implementing the research policy framework and suggests that research output is made one of the key indicators for academic staff in performance management.
81. The Panel acknowledges the University's initiative to appoint 'research champions' in focused areas. These highly qualified and experienced individuals have added value to postgraduate supervision, including the mentoring of junior academics and researchers and leading research workshops and seminars. As a result, an increased number and better research proposals are being submitted and students are becoming more amenable to the use of technology in research. However, some discontent was expressed by researchers and 'research champions' and included concerns about poor resources and facilities, an environment that is not conducive to research activity, lack of administrative support, under-prepared students, and lack of recognition and acknowledgement. The University is encouraged to review the process and project of recruiting 'research champions' to ensure that expectations are clear and realistic.
82. The DHET limits postgraduate enrolments to 3% of the total enrolment (set at 24 000), making a possible maximum of 720 postgraduate enrolments. WSU regards this as a "huge restriction" as is the lack of dedicated residential accommodation for postgraduate students (SER: 121). In 2010, the number of enrolled postgraduate students was 1015, of which 351 were for honours degrees, 340 for masters degrees and 36 for doctoral degrees; the other enrolments were for postgraduate diplomas or certificates, postgraduate bachelor degrees and post-diploma diplomas (SER:7). The total number of graduates in 2010 was 242 (SER: 121). The Panel believes that WSU has a realistic assessment of its research niche areas. The Panel also acknowledges the

positive interventions that have been made. The Directorate of Postgraduate Studies (with a generous team of 10 staff members) was established in 2008 to provide academic support and guidance for all postgraduate students (including staff). Since then a Code of Good Practice as well as a Higher Degrees Policy have been compiled and approved. The Senate Higher Degrees Committee oversees postgraduate education and maintains quality oversight. There are incentives for staff and students to complete higher degrees and even a fees advance in order to assist students to register (SER: 120). Research incentives appear to be some of the more generous in the country. The Panel congratulates WSU on these initiatives, but it remains to be seen whether these interventions are sufficient to address the fundamental systemic issues.

83. With respect to postgraduate education, the Panel makes the following observations:

- The relationships between and responsibilities of the Postgraduate Directorate, the Research Directorate and faculties need to be clarified. The slow turnaround time for the approval of proposals is a cause of frustration.
- There seems to be an over-elaborate set of committees and procedures that minimally benefit researchers. The bureaucracy appears to be compounded by the centralisation of power and decision-making in the Directorate of Postgraduate Studies.
- The workloads of postgraduate supervisors who are also lecturers, HoDs, supervisors, committee chairs/members, etc., require review.
- The lack of a critical mass of academic staff with doctoral degrees means that supervision of postgraduate students is done by a very small group of staff.
- There is a lack of an implemented standard set of supervision guidelines.
- The general lack of physical infrastructure, laboratories, library and computer resources and the lack of dedicated housing for postgraduate students makes research activity difficult.

84. The Panel heard that the management of research funds, destined for postgraduate students and researchers, is problematic as grant money exists on paper and cannot be accessed promptly when required for its purpose. The University will need to give attention to its research policies and their implementation, the role of the Directorates of Research Development and Postgraduate Studies, and the management of research contracts and research finances.

Recommendation 29

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University review the management of research contracts and related financial arrangements, including the roles played by the Directorates of Research Development and Postgraduate Studies and confirm the adequacy of their support for researchers and postgraduate students.

6. Management of the Quality of Community Engagement

85. WSU has chosen an “infusion” model of community engagement and has several policies regulating engagement activities which are coordinated by the Centre for Community and International Partnerships (CCIP). The Vice-Chancellor’s annual Community Interface facilitates engagement with community groups (SER: 46). CCIP houses the units for Work-Integrated Learning and Service Learning, both of which are seen to be part of community engagement.

WSU would like to make Work-Integrated Learning a compulsory component of all academic programmes, but is constrained by lack of financial and human resources (SER:136). Engagement in service learning is another of the ways in which WSU promotes community engagement. There are several examples of this such as the Street Law Service Learning Module for third-year LLB students and the artist-driven African Rondavel Cooperative (SER: 56, 136-139). WSU also participates in international networks such as the Talloires Network.

86. Each of the faculties has examples of community engagement. Several centres have been established, including Rural Development, HIV and AIDS, Rail Studies, Local Government and the Institute for Advanced Tooling and the Enterprise Development Centre. The Media Hub (housing the Department of Journalism) has been responsible for establishing a number of community newspapers and sells stories to media throughout the country. The Faculty of Health Sciences plays a leading role in community engagement and has been designated as a collaborating centre in problem-based and community-based education by the World Health Organisation. It provides expertise and training to other universities and students (SER: 55-56). A workshop was held in 2009 to explore ways of cascading best practice in Health Sciences to other WSU faculties (SER: 55). WSU hopes that its plans for a Faculty of Agriculture and Rural Development Studies and possible establishment of a Science and Technology Park in the East London Industrial Development Zone will be realised to further strengthen community engagement.

Commendation 3

The HEQC commends Walter Sisulu University for making community engagement, work-integrated, and service learning central to its teaching and learning strategies in many of its programmes.

Commendation 4

The HEQC commends Walter Sisulu University for its responsiveness to communities through programmes, service, and partnerships in the areas of Health Sciences, Rural Development and in Media Studies.

87. Notwithstanding pockets of excellence, the Panel has not found sufficient evidence that there is a known and shared conceptual understanding of community engagement, or that there are robust arrangements to manage its quality. Many academic staff see it as an extra burden that is not rewarded (SER: 138). While there was some evidence of strategic and systematic linkages to the research agenda in some of the rural development projects, the Panel found no evidence of a conscious and conceptually informed approach. The funding arrangements situated within the CCIP may not be the best enabling model to ensure meaningful community engagement in the academic programmes. Despite these concerns, however, the Panel spoke to many members of staff who were committed to the values and practice of community engagement even though this competed with other demands on their time.
88. The Panel acknowledges initiatives with regard to work-integrated learning, and service learning in the health sciences and law faculties, as well as other areas of the University. The Panel is impressed with the work of the Centre for Rural Development and its potential valuable link to

the indigenous knowledge system. The recognition given through the establishment of a Research Chair on Indigenous Knowledge Systems (that has funding of R10 million over 15 years) is significant as an indirect encouragement for staff to engage in research at WSU.

Recommendation 30

The HEQC recommends that Walter Sisulu University extend the work of the Centre for Rural Development to include all faculties.

Conclusion

89. Five years after the formal legal establishment of WSU, the institution is disturbingly still in a transitional state. Resistance, suspicion and misunderstanding co-exist with a cautious sense of hope and possibility about the future of the new institution. The Panel is concerned that decisive institutional leadership is urgently needed. WSU has not been able to galvanise staff, students and external stakeholders to take ownership of its mission and vision. Nor has WSU been able to generate a shared commitment that translates into action to make the University a vibrant centre of knowledge and practice that contributes to the socio-economic development of the Eastern Cape.
90. Intolerance, intimidation, uneven commitment and fear permeate the everyday life of the University. While the right to protest and strike is fundamental to our democracy, it appears that political or other external influences on student politics threaten the core business of the University, that is, teaching, research and community engagement. While there is evidence of action on some of the issues of concern, the Panel urges Council and executive management to ensure that these issues are firmly and urgently addressed. This process includes:
- engaging with the highest levels of leadership of political parties and unions as well as with local community representatives on how to deal with the challenges facing WSU;
 - ensuring proper student representative elections and the training of student leadership;
 - urgently improving campus and residences security;
 - confronting overcrowding and squatting in residences;
 - decisive and speedy action in the case of sexual misconduct or corrupt activity by staff;
 - effective implementation of staff and student disciplinary procedures;
 - effective implementation of student academic exclusion mechanisms; and
 - concerted focus on improving the quality of student life.
91. Overall, many students have a real hunger to learn that drives them to deal with multiple difficulties in the University, but also to voice their dissatisfaction and protest when their expectations are not met. Similarly, the Panel met many committed members of staff who are tired of protest and instability and want to focus on their academic responsibilities. These attributes must be harnessed.
92. Walter Sisulu University is well placed to offer a unique and vital role in the South African higher education system. In the Panel's view, there remains a window of opportunity to make this institution into a recognisable university deserving of its combined proud struggle past. There are a number of serious threats which have the potential collectively to make the University

unviable if left unaddressed, which would shatter the hopes of current and future students and staff.