

A CASE STUDY OF PIPELINE STUDENTS AT A MERGER BETWEEN A UNIVERSITY AND A TECHNIKON, AND INCORPORATION OF A VISTA CAMPUS

Nthabiseng Ogude¹

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 A two-stage process

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) came into existence as a result of the incorporation of the Port Elizabeth campus of the Vista University (Vista-PE) into the University of Port Elizabeth (UPE) on 1 January 2004 and the subsequent merger between UPE and the Port Elizabeth Technikon (PET) on 1 January 2005.

Its formation was conceptualised by the Councils and Executive Managements of the three institutions as one process with two distinct stages, the incorporation and the merger. UPE and the PE Vista campus were the primary players in the first stage and PET a full participant. PET and UPE (incorporating Vista-PE) were the main players in the second stage, with the former Vista-PE Senior Managers given a significant voice and role to play as was deemed necessary. The vehicle for discussions between the three parties in both stages was inter-institutional task teams comprising representatives from all three institutions (Deans, Academic Development staff, Foundation Programmes staff, Quality Assurance Managers and other academics). These task teams reported to an Inter-institutional Executive Management structure, the Joint Merger Core Group (JMCG) co-chaired by the respective Vice-Chancellors. Each institution in turn reported to its Council. Major academic decisions reached at the JMCG were tabled for consultation at the UPE Senate in the incorporation phase discussions, and at both the UPE and PET Senates during the merger phase discussions. Ad hoc committees and task teams were formed between Vista-PE and UPE staff as necessary during the first stage. The Academic Programmes Task Team (APTT) was responsible for all academic arrangements and held a number of meetings in the latter part of 2003 and in 2004.

1.2 Brief historical background of merger partners

UPE was classified as a Historically Advantaged University (HAU), PET as a Historically Advantaged Technikon (HAT), and Vista University as a Historically Disadvantaged University (HDU). The PET and UPE main campuses border each other and are located in a former white suburb, while Vista-PE University is located approximately 20 kilometres away

¹ Professor Nthabiseng Ogude was DVC (Academic) at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, and is at present DVC (Academic) at the University of Pretoria.

in a black township. In 2004, UPE was enlarged through the incorporation, resulting in two main campuses: the Summerstrand campus (formerly UPE), and the Vista campus.

Vista University was a multi-campus university consisting of eight campuses throughout the country and a central administrative office in Pretoria. Academic faculties and departments were decentralised and spread over the eight campuses, one of which was the Vista-PE campus. Various sub-academic units were located on various campuses around the country. The reporting lines of all these sub-departments and the administrative support provided by the Pretoria Head Office were discontinued as a result of the incorporation.

The unique nature of the academic management structure of Vista University and the physical distance between the Vista-PE campus and UPE, into which it was incorporated, presented challenges around which academically defensible decisions on teaching, learning and research were taken in 2003. The design and approval of academic management structures for the incorporation took place over a period of four months between August and November 2003 – the pre-incorporation phase – while discussions on the merger took place in 2004 and were still continuing at the time of writing. The time frame within which decisions had to be taken, and the lack of examples of similar incorporations of academic institutions elsewhere, made the task onerous.

1.3 Critical decisions taken during the pre-incorporation phase

Key decisions made during the pre-merger phase related to academic management arrangements, and admission and registration procedures between the two campuses to ensure adequate and efficient delivery of all academic programmes to continuing students or pipeline students.

For the purposes of this document, pipeline students are defined as those students who registered at the Vista campus either for the first time in 2004 or who had registered prior to 2004, as well as those who had not completed their studies. These include both part-time and full-time students. All students registered in 2004 at Vista, UPE and PET are pipeline students at NMMU from 2005.

The main questions addressed at the time were:

- What model of academic integration of Vista-PE campus sub-departments into the UPE academic management structures would cause the least disruption to the teaching, learning and research activities, while avoiding a federal structure?
- Should admissions criteria and academic programmes be harmonised and consolidated from the outset or should new students be admitted on existing criteria and their respective academic programmes?

The available options were:

Option 1: The initiation of a process to achieve full integration of Vista-PE academic units into the academic structure of UPE, including the harmonisation and consolidation of admissions criteria and academic programmes in time to admit students in January 2004.

Option 2: The design of interim academic management structures that would allow for practical and flexible arrangements for integrating Vista-PE academic units into the academic structure of UPE and postponing the consolidation of academic programmes and the harmonisation of admissions criteria (with the exception of the foundation programmes) to January 2005.

Option 1 was ideal and enticing and would provide an opportunity to manage the transfer and/or articulation of students between sites. It would make programmes easier to manage, since the admissions criteria would be uniform. However, the drawback was that it implied there was enough time to harmonise and consolidate the admissions criteria and to duplicate programmes and qualifications across the various sites and streams of the merged institution. One further complicating factor would be informing the community and prospective applicants about the changed admission requirements in time for the January 2004 intake. The time frame for doing this was too short.

Option 2 – applying the merging institutions’ respective criteria and being flexible in integrating the academic sub-departments – was a pragmatic approach and offered the least disruption to teaching, learning and research activities. Nevertheless, it was not without its challenges, especially in view of the considerable disparity between the two institutions’ admissions criteria. This option was adopted and the implications were as follows:

- New students admitted to UPE and Vista-PE in 2004 were admitted on the admissions criteria of the respective institutions. They are the last cohort of students admitted under different university rules.
- The integration of university programmes was not undertaken for the incorporation.
- In 2004, students in the second and subsequent years of study at both campuses, i.e. pipeline students, continued their studies under the respective rules of the two universities.
- Vista-PE’s Foundation Programme was discontinued and replaced by the UPE Advancement Programme (UPEAP). The latter programme was offered at the Vista campus from January 2004. All new students who could not attain direct entry into either UPE or Vista campus or NMMU registered for the same foundation programme.
- Transitional academic structures ensured the maximum integration of academic units of Vista-PE into UPE faculty structures and, as a result, some disciplines of Vista-PE were relocated in a different faculty at UPE. The management of pipeline students in such programmes was carefully considered and monitored.

1.4 Implications of Option 2 for the merger phase and for NMMU

The adoption of Option 2 in the incorporation phase had a knock-on effect on the merger, with the following consequences:

- NMMU, at least for an initial period, offered separate university type and technikon type programmes with separate admissions criteria. New students admitted at Vista-

PE and UPE were admitted on one set of harmonised admissions criteria for university type programmes.

- University type programmes and the respective Programme Qualification Mix (PQM) were consolidated and duplications eliminated.
- NMMU offers two separate foundation programmes for the respective university type and technikon type programmes.
- NMMU has a new academic structure, which does not necessarily correspond to the interim incorporation structure. The tracking of Vista-PE, UPE and PET pipeline students within one faculty and the possible transfer of students between university and university programmes and university and technikon programmes pose a major challenge.

Option 2 has presented minimal disruptions to teaching, learning and research activities. Actions taken to minimise disruption include

- identifying key areas that could affect the quality of provision of academic programmes and the associated service delivery, especially for pipeline students;
- describing specific issues that could present problems in the identified area; and
- developing mechanisms for addressing identified problems.

This report outlines the identified areas of concern, the specific problems and the measures taken to minimise impact on the quality of service to pipeline students. The discussion focuses predominantly on the incorporation phase and cites some of the problems that are being experienced or may be experienced in the merger phase (2005 and beyond).

2. ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS, ACCESS ISSUES AND FOUNDATION PROGRAMMES

One of the expressed hopes of merging institutions is that such a merger could help broaden access. However, where merging institutions have disparate admissions criteria, different admissions and placement tests, different types of foundation programmes and where a merging partner did not link student financial aid strictly to academic performance, challenges arise when students are either faced with more stringent admissions criteria or are denied readmission because of their poor academic record or large-scale debt. This leaves them and some of the general public with the perception that the merged institution is limiting rather than broadening access. The historical differences between Vista University and UPE as HDU and HAU, respectively, implied different standards and approaches to access, admission practices and policies.

The differences presented by the incorporation phase include

- disparate admissions criteria and the problems that flowed from the disparities;
- different types of foundation programmes and the problems that flowed from the disparities, in particular pipeline students affected by the discontinuation of the Vista Foundation Programme; and
- problems arising from the Joint Matriculation Board (JMB) requirements for the purposes of the Senate's discretionary exemptions.

2.1 Admission requirements and access issues

Vista University's admissions criteria were different from UPE's. There were disparities at two levels (i) the general undergraduate degree level and (ii) the programme specific level.

General undergraduate degree level – At Vista, applicants had to have a matriculation certificate with exemption to be admitted to most programmes except the Bachelor of Science (BSc); at UPE applicants not only had to have a matriculation certificate with exemption, they also had to have reached a specific standard of performance in the matriculation examination, such as a weighted average mark of 55 percent, to meet the direct entry requirements for a programme.

Programme specific level – At UPE, Bachelor of Commerce (BCom) applicants were required to have obtained exemption, a certain general level of performance in the matriculation examination, and a specified performance level in Grade 12 Mathematics. At Vista, BCom applicants only had to meet the requirement of matriculation certificate with exemption.

2.1.1 Implications of the disparate admissions criteria for pipeline students – The different criteria had implications for articulation between the programmes of the two universities as well as for possible negative perceptions from the public. These are described briefly below.

Students who wanted to switch between programmes – Given the disparity in admissions criteria, problems could arise when students applied to change from a programme offered by one of the merging partners to one offered by the other during the course of their studies. Pipeline students who applied to switch programmes might not have met the admissions criteria of the programme to which they wanted to switch. They might, however, feel aggrieved, being now enrolled at a single merged institution and having the right to switch programmes irrespective of the admissions criteria.

Perceptions by the public – A decision to use disparate admissions criteria for the first intake might cause applicants and their parents to be puzzled by the discrepancy, which could lead to negative perceptions being formed about the merged institution. Dealing with queries from applicants and parents about the differences in admissions criteria could be problematic and could damage the image of the merging institution.

2.1.2 Managing the challenge of disparate admissions criteria – As there was insufficient time to consolidate admissions criteria and academic programmes during the incorporation phase, UPE and Vista-PE had separate intakes using their own criteria and admissions processes, as indicated in Section 1.3 above.

The following provisos were built in to minimise the effect of the problems identified:

Consolidation of admissions criteria and curriculum for the foundation (bridging) programmes – Admissions criteria and the curriculum for the foundation (bridging) programmes were consolidated from 2004 as part of Option 2 described above. The reason for this was that students who had passed the foundation programme of the former UPE (the UPEAP) were guaranteed entry into mainstream programmes. It was thus important to consolidate this programme so as not to prolong the pipeline by a further year. Furthermore, foundation programme students were told from the start that although they were guaranteed a place in a mainstream programme if they passed, exactly which programme they would qualify for could only be determined at a later stage when the admissions criteria and programmes of the merging institutions were consolidated in 2005.

Institution of rules to regulate movement between programmes for direct entry pipeline students – In view of the disparate admissions criteria, rules were instituted to regulate the movement of students between the programmes of UPE and Vista-PE. For example, the rules specified that students registered for a particular programme under Vista-PE rules would only be allowed to switch to a programme administered under the UPE rules with the permission of the relevant dean and in specific circumstances.

Dealing with public perceptions – Frontline staff in the Admissions Office, those involved in admissions and placement testing, and deans and faculty officers, were trained in how best to respond. Besides this training, the Communications and Marketing Department provided these staff with general guidelines on how to respond to frequently asked questions. Wrong information provided to new or pipeline students could have major consequences.

Dealing with students excluded for financial reasons and poor academic performance – This took many hours of negotiation between management, the SRCs, and community leaders. One of the strategies used to cater for students who did not meet the admissions criteria (in this case for foundation programmes), or who were not allowed to re-register owing to their poor academic performance or non-payment of fees, was to approach the PE College, a Further Education and Training College, to accommodate such students. Several other options were provided to accommodate academically deserving but financially needy students.

2.1.3 Challenges with technikon pipeline students – When the merger with the technikon took place in January 2005, it was again decided to have separate intakes using the existing admissions criteria and processes pertaining to university type and technikon type programmes, as mentioned above. The admissions criteria for the two merging universities had been consolidated at this point. This meant that only two sets of criteria were in operation and not three. However, given the separate admissions processes that took place, some good applicants, who could not be accommodated in programmes to which sufficient numbers of students had already been admitted, could have been referred to the other stream of programmes in the merged institution, but insufficient knowledge of which programmes such

applicants could have been referred to meant that they were not ultimately accommodated in the merged institution.

2.1.4 Articulation possibilities between university type and technikon type programmes –

The academic programme integration of university and technikon type programmes has not started at the time of writing, although it has been identified as a major challenge for the merged institution. A process has to be developed to integrate qualifications where both university type and technikon type programmes existed at the same NQF (National Qualifications Framework) level. Questions that are being asked include:

- What conditions would govern articulation between a Bachelor of Technology (BTech) programme and a university master's degree programme?
- Should both the BTech and honours degrees continue in all disciplines and if so for how long?

In the interim, a pragmatic approach has been adopted where faculties and departments deal on an individual basis with students who wish to register at the postgraduate level in a technikon programme but have a university undergraduate degree or vice versa. Some departments had ad hoc arrangements that they used before the merger, and experience from these is now being gathered across NMMU and from other institutions and professional organisations to inform further action.

The implications of different admissions and placement tests for articulation between university type and technikon type programmes – A new challenge that arose when the PE Technikon and UPE (incorporating Vista) merged was that both merging institutions followed the practice of administering admissions and placement tests to applicants who had not met the minimum criteria for direct admission to a programme. The challenge was that the two merging institutions used fairly different testing batteries, although they were tapping fairly similar constructs. Consequently, an attempt was made to 'merge' the batteries, as it was felt that if applicants wished to be considered for both technikon type and university type programmes it was essential that only one test battery be used, to prevent an applicant having to be tested twice for programmes offered by the same institution. The result was that applicants were put through a fairly long test battery that contained the core tests of both PE Technikon and UPE. At the same time, work was started on developing a new test battery for use with subsequent intakes.

In the same way as when the two universities merged, rules were developed to regulate switching from technikon type to university type programmes and vice versa, given the disparate admissions criteria.

As distinct from the situation when the two universities merged, the foundation programmes leading to technikon type or university type programmes, as well as their admissions criteria, were not consolidated when the technikon and the university merged.

2.2 Foundation programmes

The challenges of foundation programmes include

- their duration and nature,
- students repeating foundation modules, and
- the simultaneous registration of pipeline students for mainstream and foundation modules.

2.2.1 Duration and nature of foundation programmes – The UPEAP was a one-year programme and students were not allowed to repeat the foundation year if they failed. Vista rules, on the other hand, placed no restriction on repeating modules offered within the foundation programme or even the whole foundation programme. Most UPE foundation modules were one year or at most semester modules, while Vista modules were mainly semester or term modules. Particularly problematic were the UPE (now NMMU) foundation programmes in Physics (PF) and Chemistry (CHF) that were year modules, while the corresponding Vista modules (CGS) were term modules. One other significant difference was that while UPE foundation modules were always offered in small groups by dedicated staff through a central unit (the UPEAP), the corresponding Vista modules were offered in large groups by the various academic departments. This meant that Vista foundation students in all their modules attended lectures with mainstream students, raising questions about the level of academic support that these students received.

2.2.2 Students repeating Vista foundation modules – The consolidation of the foundation programme, which resulted in the discontinuation of the Vista Foundation Programme and its replacement by the UPEAP, presented several challenges. The main problems were students failing foundation modules in the last year that the Vista foundation programmes, FCS, FCM and FCH (last intake in 2003), and the four-year BSc degree (last intake in 2004) were offered, and students hoping to complete the Foundation Programme term modules in the first term in 2004. These students were given two options:

(i) They could register for the full UPEAP if they met the entrance requirements based on placement testing, which differed from the requirements for entering the Vista Foundation Programme. This meant adapting the UPE rule of not allowing students to repeat foundation programmes, in an attempt to accommodate these students.

(ii) Those who were not accepted for the UPEAP, or who preferred to do so, were allowed to repeat the modules they had failed. This was possible in 2004 because these modules were offered in both the Vista foundation (FCS/M/H) and degree programme into which new pipeline students were admitted in 2004. Students choosing this option included those completing the Vista Foundation Programme. The consequence of taking this route was that, because the Vista Foundation Programme was not registered with the JMB, the students could not be given the assurance that completing the FCS/M/H would lead to acceptance for a degree programme in the newly merged institution, NMMU, in 2005.

2.2.3 Students registered simultaneously for mainstream and foundation (bridging) modules – Vista University offered both a three-year and a four-year BSc. The three-year one was a direct entry programme requiring higher admissions criteria, while the four-year one included a year of upgrading or bridging and was meant for students who could not meet the direct entry requirements. Unlike most bridging programmes, which are separate and require students to complete the programme before registering for mainstream courses, students in the four-year BSc programmes could register simultaneously for the BSc and the bridging/foundation programme modules. A large proportion of students who were registered for the BSc entered via the four-year programme.

2.2.4 Addressing the challenges of pipeline students in the Vista Foundation Programme and pipeline students registered simultaneously for foundation modules and BSc modules – When the Vista-PE Foundation Programme was phased out in 2004, some students had not completed some of the modules.

Separate classes were offered in 2005 for pipeline students who had started the four-year BSc programme in 2004 and failed foundation mathematics modules (MPR or MFA). The number of students repeating these modules justified separate classes offered by the Mathematics Department. The low number of repeaters in the Physics, Chemistry and Geography modules (CGS modules), however, made it difficult for these departments to provide special separate classes for this purpose. The classes for these students were combined with corresponding modules offered by the Foundation Programmes Unit for new UFP (previously UPEAP) students.

A one-on-one matching could not, however, be found between the CGS and NMMU foundation modules, and different module durations, credits and timetable slots also made it difficult to implement this decision. At the time of writing no final solution had been reached for the four-year BSc students repeating foundation programme modules. This meant that in 2005 some Vista pipeline students were in the second year of BSc, but are still doing foundation modules (the UPEAP), which was never allowed at UPE. However, since this problem did not involve a large number of students, it was thought possible to solve it on an individual basis.

2.2.5 Challenges with the integration of UPE AND PET foundation programmes – By 2005 there were separate foundation programmes for entry into technikon type and university type programmes. The biggest challenge was to combine the foundation programmes that had always been offered in a decentralised manner at PET by different faculties and departments into a cohesive central unit, as was the case at UPE. The difficulty was that while the university type foundation programme had been approved as leading to a matriculation certificate with exemption, the technikon type had not. Students in the technikon type programme needed to be made aware that passing the foundation programme made them eligible only for mainstream technikon type programmes and not for university type programmes. This difference had major implications for articulation arrangements but, at the same time, could be useful in avoiding academic drift.

A second challenge, similar to what happened with the Vista Foundation Programme modules, would be students who failed modules in the ex-PET foundation programmes. The impact of this might, however, be minimised if the modules offered were not terminated as was the case in the Vista programme. However, managing such repeating students in a new consolidated NMMU academic structure might be extremely problematic.

2.3 Difficulties relating to application for Senate discretionary matriculation exemption for pipeline students

Different institutional practices can lead to a merged institution inheriting unresolved academic problems or problems with administrative backlogs, which can have far-reaching implications for pipeline students, including the possibility of not graduating. Designing mechanisms to ensure that potential problems are addressed is crucial. The inclusion of the Campus Principal in SENEX and Executive Management was crucial to understanding the nature of the problems and practices. For example, some Vista pipeline students in second and subsequent years had not applied for matriculation (with exemption) through the JMB. This implied that these students would not have been able to graduate on completing the degree programme.

An audit was conducted to determine how many students were affected and applications were submitted to the JMB on behalf of these students.

3. DUPLICATION AND OVERLAP BETWEEN PROGRAMMES

3.1 Programme and module consolidation and alignment

Programme and module consolidation forms the basis for developing the consolidated programme and qualification mix (PQM) for the merged institution. For pipeline students, it is important to know

- whether their study programme will continue to be offered by the new institution, or
- whether it will become a pipeline programme in which no new enrolments will be allowed.

Pipeline students need to receive clarity as to the time period in which they will be expected to complete their programmes. Within this specified maximum study period, they are entitled to complete their studies in terms of the programme and module structures for which they had originally enrolled. However, some may be required to take an approved equivalent module or a new module because they have failed a module in the pipeline programme. Similarly, students who fail to complete a pipeline programme in the specified maximum time will need to articulate into a continuing programme. It may also be advantageous to arrange for the articulation of students from a pipeline programme into a continuing programme at an earlier stage – to reduce the complexity of offering parallel continuing and pipeline programmes, and also because the continuing programme provides a better educational experience.

3.2 Process of consolidation of university programmes and modules

In the incorporation of the PE Vista campus by UPE, the process of programme consolidation allowed for the following possibilities:

- The conflation of existing programmes to create one new programme – both existing programmes therefore being replaced.
- The continuation of an existing programme – either with the replacement of a similar programme from the other campus, or because there was no similar programme on the other campus.

3.2.1 Programme consolidation – To help faculties consolidate programmes, a programme consolidation template was developed. The responsible academic units were asked to complete it and to indicate the delivery sites at which their consolidated set of programmes would be offered. These sites were the UPE Summerstrand (previous UPE) campus, the UPE Vista (previous Vista-PE University) campus, and off-campus teaching and learning centres. Each faculty was also provided with a consolidated PQM document listing all the programmes currently offered at the UPE Summerstrand and Vista campuses.

In considering how to integrate programmes, faculties and their academic units were asked to take into account the existing programmes' accreditation status according to professional bodies and the HEQC, the demand for the existing programmes, the degree of overlap between the programmes, the available infrastructure and staff capacity, distinctive strengths in the design and content of existing programmes, the teaching and assessment methods, and so on. After Senate had approved the faculty recommendations, the PQM document was revised to reflect continuing, new and pipeline programmes and the delivery sites at which the programmes would be offered.

3.2.2 Module consolidation – This process, which was undertaken together with the programme consolidation, proceeded along similar lines. A module consolidation template was developed that allowed academic units to indicate where UPE Summerstrand or UPE Vista modules would

- continue unchanged because there was no corresponding module,
- replace an existing module, or
- be consolidated into a new module.

The delivery site had to be specified for all modules. Academic units were asked to consider infrastructure, information resources, staff capacity, and so on, and also to ensure that modules that were compulsory would be available at all delivery sites. Where the consolidation process led to the creation of a new module, or the offering of a module at a

new delivery site, academic units were required to indicate that suitable resources were in place to support these.

3.2.3 Consolidation of university type and technikon type programmes – At the time of writing, the further consolidation of NMMU programmes and modules was to proceed along similar lines. An initial consolidation of university and technikon programmes was to be undertaken in 2005 to address obvious overlap. Because of their different nature, it was not anticipated that there would be many cases of obvious overlap between the two sets of programmes. However, there are academic fields in which the university and technikon qualifications are very similar, such as Education, and here consolidation would be needed. Opportunities for programme renewal and developing new programmes would be investigated.

4. CREDITS AND WEIGHTS

4.1 Reconciliation of credits of students transferring between programmes

The main problem experienced with NQF credits, statistical credits and relative course weights (RCW) is reconciling the total programme credits of individual students transferring between programmes, whether transferring between programmes of the merging institutions or to new qualifications within the merged institution. This makes it difficult to be fair when determining whether a student qualifies for the completion of a programme. The student must qualify in terms of two criteria, namely

- total credits completed; and
- adherence to the curriculum content (inclusion of core modules in the programme and a sufficient mix of electives).

Because the merging institutions allocated credits differently in modules for similar qualifications, it is impossible in most instances to accurately balance the total credits of transfer students eligible for completion of a programme. If the student qualifies in terms of curriculum content but the total credits completed are either too few or too many, the student's total credit values need to be balanced.

If the student needs credits, correctional credits can be added to the student record by adding dummy modules. A module must thus be created with the correct number of credits to balance the student record. If the student has too many credits it causes problems with regard to the two percent test to which all university type programmes are subject.

If the over-registration is considerably higher than the credit values on the academic structure of the receiving institution, the net effect of the two percent test is to decrease the FTE (full-time equivalent) values of current enrolments in the programme. Depending on the cumulative effect on FTE values it might also be necessary to adjust the records of students with too many credits, to limit the resultant subsidy loss. This can also be achieved through correctional modules.

4.2 Previously obtained credits

When a student transfers between programmes, the previously obtained credits and marks must be maintained on the student's academic record. A mistake to avoid is giving exemptions to students transferring between programmes of the merged institution. The pitfall is that no subsidy is generated by exemptions. Exemptions will thus have serious implications for the HEMIS (Higher Education Management Information System) and for the university's own management information systems and must not be used to facilitate the transfer of pipeline students between programmes.

4.3 Pipeline students who put their studies in abeyance

Particular challenges are posed by pipeline students who have interrupted their studies just prior to or during the year of incorporation or merging. In the case of incorporation, the merged institution is not responsible for maintaining the history of the incorporated institution's student data. The legal successor accepts responsibility for the historical data and must take responsibility for issuing certificates and academic records. Only the histories of the students who registered in the year of incorporation are included in the merged institution's database. If a pipeline student returns in the second year of the merged institution, then that student's historical academic record must be obtained from the legal successor. In these cases the only way to balance the returning students' credits is through the use of exemptions.

5. RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING (RPL) AND PROGRAMME ARTICULATION

Given that RPL is still in its infancy in South Africa, different merging institutions have different RPL policies and mechanisms. In many cases these are not formally documented and decisions are often made on a case-by-case basis. This could mean that, where admissions criteria and processes run separately for the first intake in the merged institution, an applicant for RPL at UPE, for example, and thereafter at the PE Technikon, would have been asked to compile different portfolios of evidence and the processes followed by the two institutions would have been very different. This would serve not only to confuse but also to irritate applicants.

Given the limited time span for the pre-merger phase, there was insufficient time to reach programme articulation agreements, especially between technikon type and university type programmes. This became especially problematic when applicants for a university type programme were referred to a technikon type programme, without any guarantee that the programme they were placed in would articulate with other programmes they might wish to pursue.

5.1 Managing the challenges of RPL and articulation

Comprehensive records are kept of all RPL and programme articulation decisions, the purpose being to identify common trends in RPL decision making and in the programmes for which articulation agreements need to be developed, based on the number of requests received. This information will feed into policy making for RPL and programme articulation at the merged institution, and the longer-term plan is to form a structure that will manage both of these at NMMU.

6. POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

The problems of harmonising admissions criteria or using parallel admissions criteria also apply to postgraduate studies. Harmonisation of criteria within a short period can deny access to students who are about to complete undergraduate programmes in one of the institutions. Students were admitted on the merging institutions' respective criteria in 2004, but where there was commonality in admissions criteria departments were encouraged to consolidate these in 2004, especially for research master's and PhD students. Pipeline Coursework master's and honours students are managed in the same manner as undergraduate students within the enlarged faculty structures. Pipeline research master's and PhD students present additional challenges.

6.1 Supervision and external examination of pipeline students

Where staff used to act as external examiners or co-supervisors for each other, problems arise when their institutions merge, as has happened with Vista-PE, UPE and PET. With the incorporation and merger, the staff members suddenly belonged to one institution and, while they could continue to co-supervise, they could not act as external examiners for each other. Furthermore, co-supervisors often sign an agreement with the institutions they supervise for and in some cases receive a stipend for acting as co-supervisor. The question after the incorporation and merger is whether such a staff member could still receive the stipend. While this is not an academic quality issue, it does pose a dilemma for the incorporating and merging institutions.

A problem arising from the multi-campus nature of Vista University is that students could have a supervisor at a Vista campus other than the PE one. In some cases, supervisors located at other campuses now belonged to a new institution and, technically, arrangements had to be made to ensure that they retained their commitment to supervising their existing students. Where feasible, a co-supervisor was appointed within the new institution and a collegial arrangement reached with the original supervisor to continue supervising the student. Other arrangements were as follows:

- An audit of all postgraduate student supervision was carried out by the Registrar's Office.
- The contract signed with co-supervisors was to be continued until the conditions of service were harmonised.

- Vista staff members who were designated as external examiners for UPE students or vice versa could no longer serve as external examiners from 2004, but became part of the internal examination team. The same process was adopted in 2005 for PET/UPE staff who are now part of NMMU.
- External examiners were appointed from other institutions in cases where a UPE staff member was appointed to supervise a Vista student and vice versa. The same arrangements applied where PET staff members were involved.

6.2 Financial support for postgraduate students

It is common practice in most higher education institutions to provide financial support to postgraduate students through Council funds in addition to support that may have been provided by external agencies, such as the National Research Foundation (NRF). The variation in the access to postgraduate bursaries for students from a relatively better resourced institution, such as UPE compared to Vista University, presented several challenges and the possibility for different opportunities for students belonging to one institution. It was crucial that an equitable approach should be reached.

For example, Vista University postgraduate students did not have bursaries provided by the institution. In the past they applied for external funding, for example from the NRF, and no additional funding was available for these students. UPE postgraduate students, on the other hand, had funding provided from a Council grant and other bursaries administered by the Research Office in addition to external funds such as those provided by the NRF. The Council funds are often limited and are never sufficient to cater for postgraduate students, who apply and are provided for on a competitive basis.

The question was whether Vista pipeline students, now incorporated into UPE, would be eligible for internally funded bursaries. Part of the agreement to follow separate admissions criteria and rules (Option 2) implied that Vista students could not claim bursaries provided under UPE rules. However, this presented various ethical problems in practice. The main argument was that if these students completed their studies successfully and within the stipulated time frame, they would earn a government subsidy for the newly merged institution just as those receiving bursaries would. This problem was solved by the UPE Council's providing additional bursary funds for Vista-PE pipeline students. These bursaries were awarded within UPE's framework of bursary categories and criteria. Applications for external funding for Vista pipeline students were routed through UPE's Research Office via the Vista campus's Financial Aid Office.

7. PROFESSIONAL BODIES

Although professional training programmes are fairly uniform in nature, as they have to comply with the requirements of professional bodies, the way the training is packaged could differ across merging institutions. The departments that were affected by registration with professional bodies in the incorporation phase are Accounting and Psychology.

7.1 Professional training in accounting and registration with SAICA

7.1.1 Recognition of programmes for accreditation – The South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA) accredited UPE’s Department of Accounting. This accreditation enabled students who passed the requisite degree courses to sit Part 1 of the SAICA Qualifying Examination. Accreditation of the UPE department was carried over to the Department of Accounting at NMMU, but only students who had followed the prescribed programmes were allowed to sit the Qualifying Examination. The former Vista University Department of Accounting did not have SAICA accreditation, so their students could not sit this examination. Before Vista was incorporated, students from that institution who wished to qualify as Chartered Accountants were required to

- register and pass certain of the then UPE undergraduate courses in Accounting, because UPE did not consider the Vista equivalent course to be of the requisite standard; and
- register for and pass the then UPE honours degree programme in Accounting.

Successful completion of the above enabled these students to sit this examination.

7.1.2 Requirements for pipeline students to register with SAICA – Since the incorporation of Vista, the pipeline courses have been regarded as having a standard equivalent to that of the former UPE ‘general’ courses in Accounting. Thus, students completing these pipeline courses who wished to qualify as Chartered Accountants were still required to

- register and pass certain of the UPE ‘professional’ undergraduate courses in Accounting; and
- register for the honours degree programme in Accounting.

In summary:

- Pipeline courses on the Vista campus were not considered to be of the same standard of UPE professional courses, but were regarded as the equivalent of the UPE general courses.
- Students with pipeline credits in Accounting courses were required to register for and pass certain professional courses to gain admission to the Accounting honours programme.
- Students who passed the honours programmes were allowed to sit the SAICA Qualifying Examination.
- The NMMU Department of Accounting was accredited by SAICA, but only students who completed the appropriate programmes were allowed to sit this examination.

- NMMU students who had obtained former PET qualifications were dealt with similarly.

The accreditation with SAICA is the only formal recognition by a professional body of the Department of Accounting as an entity.

7.2 Professional training in Psychology and registration with the Health Professions Council

The Psychology Department's major problem was the way the internship programme was managed rather than whether the programmes were of equal standing.

7.2.1 Requirement of internship in psychology – The Professional Board for Psychology of the Health Professions Council of South Africa requires qualifying psychologists to undertake a 12-month internship. Institutions vary as to whether such an internship is part of the degree programme or not. This could result in pipeline students of the merging institutions who were doing the same degree having different internship arrangements. For example, at UPE, a paid internship was part of the degree requirements for master's degrees in Clinical and Counselling Psychology, which meant that UPE actively secured sufficient paid internships for their students. However, at Vista the internship was not part of the degree requirements for their Master's in Counselling Psychology. Interns had to either seek out their own internships or undertake unpaid internships under the supervision of a Vista staff member. In practice in 2005 this amounted to two interns from the two merging institutions working side by side, doing the same work, but one being paid and the other not. The fact that the interns, who were now all part of the merged institution, were being treated differently led to much anger and unhappiness.

7.2.2 Addressing the different approaches to internships – On entering the duplicate or parallel programmes being offered at the merged institution, students were made aware of whether or not the internship was part of the degree. In retrospect, it would have been wise to ask them to sign a document indicating that this had been brought to their attention. Since the internship only began in their second year of study, by that time they had 'forgotten' that the internship would not be paid and so complained about the perceived unfairness of some interns in the merged institution having paid internships and others not. As it is unlikely that cash-strapped merging institutions can resolve this matter by offering payment to all interns, it might be wisest not to have separate intakes into such programmes even if the merging institutions have decided that there will be separate intakes in the first year of the merger.

8. DURATION OF PIPELINE PROGRAMMES, REPEATING AND RETURNING STUDENTS

A decision on how long pipeline programmes would still be offered after the merger was crucial for pipeline students and for those who had placed their studies in abeyance.

The main challenge was the different rules applicable at different institutions. For example, Vista University had a policy where the credits accumulated for modules in a particular programme were valid for a period of up to ten years, while UPE had a much shorter period. The other challenge involved part-time students.

Pipeline programmes will be continued for two years beyond the normal duration of the programme. A three-year programme could take up to five years, while a four-year programme could take up to six years. Part-time students at Vista were allowed five years to complete a three-year programme. They were granted two additional years to complete their studies. This is in line with the other decisions. Using 2004 as the first year of university pipeline students, it is projected that all pipeline students in full-time programmes will have completed their degrees by 2009, while part-time students could complete in 2011. In addition, faculties could make practical arrangements to accommodate students who fail a particular module that has been phased out, allowing them to repeat an equivalent module in a continuing programme.

9. AMENDING/RECONCILING DIVERGENT RULES

9.1 Consolidation of general rules for qualifications

Although many of the UPE and Vista campus rules were similar, there were some major differences, and at Vista some practices had developed that were in conflict with the documented rules. The system and structure of the Vista rules and the headings under which certain groups of rules were listed were also quite different from UPE's. It was crucial to produce a consistent set of rules for the consolidated university type programmes from 2005. Technikon type programmes continued on their own set of rules.

9.2 A consultative process of change

A small task team was formed, consisting of representatives of the registrars of the university and the Vista campus, the university deans, the former Vista deans and the two SRCs. This team met several times over a relatively short period of time and eventually produced a consolidated set of general rules. The agreed approach was to take the UPE rules as a starting point. Where these differed from the Vista rules, the merits and demerits of both were discussed and agreement reached on the best solution. The result was invariably a newly formulated rule, in most cases closely resembling the UPE one but in a few cases the Vista one. It must be added that the new set of rules was edited and 'fine-tuned' at the same time, and that this exercise centred mainly on the rules for undergraduate qualifications. It was found that there was greater similarity between the two institutions' rules for postgraduate qualifications and consequently the existing UPE rules were, with some minor alterations, accepted as the new rules. A section on transitional rules for undergraduate qualifications was

included, providing *inter alia* for the phasing out of pipeline programmes and requiring students, once registered at a specific campus, to participate in academic activities on that campus only.

The rules which posed the greatest challenge for the task team were those dealing with reassessment and special examinations, where it was agreed that the Vista rules and practices should not be endorsed. These are discussed in Section 9.2.3 below.

9.2.1 Rules governing assessment of students – Having pipeline students in one institution being subject to different assessment rules and procedures can be problematic and lead to accusations of unfairness and glaring examples of variable quality practices. Although Vista rules applied to pipeline students, there were certain practices and rules which presented glaring disparities and had to be harmonised from 2005.

9.2.2 General rules and varying terminology – The general rules dealing with assessing student work were very similar: in essence they confirmed how such assessments should take place and when and where they would be subject to the approval of Senate. However, each set of rules also contained specific provisions regulating the awarding of what were referred to as ‘special’, ‘supplementary’ or ‘promotional’ examinations or ‘re-examinations’, an analysis of which revealed major differences in the requirements for each, as well as apparent confusion about how to define the different kinds of examination. The practice on the Vista campus was apparently that every student was entitled to sit for the second examination in a module (administered in July and January for first and second semester modules respectively). This created numerous academic and administrative problems that had to be resolved.

9.2.3 A compromise solution for reassessments and special examinations – The first step was to distinguish clearly between just two categories of summative assessments in addition to the regular first summative assessment in each module. These two additional assessments are termed ‘reassessments’ and ‘special examinations’.

- A reassessment is an examination for which a student qualifies after having completed and failed the first or original assessment in a particular module. No application is required. A student will only be admitted to a reassessment if he/she has obtained a final mark of at least 40 percent in the original assessment (this minimum mark was the result of a compromise with the Vista SRC, as the mark was 45 percent at UPE). In respect of a final year student who, after the first examinations in his/her module(s), only needs one semester module to complete his/her qualification, the 40 percent requirement does not apply.
- A student who did not sit for the first final assessment in a module does not, by definition, qualify for a reassessment, but may apply for a special examination. Such application will only be approved if the student produces acceptable evidence of the illness or other special circumstances which prevented him/her from completing the original assessment.

These rules were finalised during the course of 2004 and were applicable for all pipeline students from 2005. At the time of writing it was still not clear how pipeline students who were accustomed to a different set of rules would receive these changes. These changes were incorporated in the new university calendar to ensure that pipeline students on the Vista campus would be clearly informed of the new dispensation that would apply from the beginning of 2005.

10. MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND IT (INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY) SYSTEMS

10.1 Management information systems

The consolidation of the merging institutions' programmes has produced three groups of programmes:

- two sets of pipeline programmes for the pipeline students from each of the former institutions (these are programmes that will be phased out within set time frames); and
- a set of consolidated, continuing and new qualifications for the merged institution.

The first major exercise for merging institutions is to go through the consolidation process and develop a new Programme Qualification Mix Document for the merged institution.

Many of the existing programmes and even consolidated programmes will now be offered at the sites of both institutions. This will necessitate registering the additional types of course on offer, normally indicating the site where the programme, and the subjects comprising the programme, will be offered. In many instances, the merging institutions' fee structures will differ for historical reasons. If the difference is large, migrating all fee structures to a new equal set of fees might not be feasible within one or even a number of years, especially where the institutions' resources differ in range and quality. The argument would be that if students pay the same fees they are entitled to the same quality of services and level of resources. Since the merged institutions would need time to bring these on par at the various sites, students enrolled at different sites might pay different fees during the interim period. The registration of additional types of courses on offer for qualifications and subjects will enable the institutions to link differential fees to the same qualifications and subjects.

Although NQF credits and stats credits (relative course weights) are two totally separate concepts, many institutions are using a method of direct translation of NQF credits to stats credits. Caution must be exercised where institutions have programmes that contain more than 120 NQF credits for one year of formal study. This could lead to an incorrect translation to stats credits. If an institution, for example, has a programme that contains 180 NQF credits for one year formal time, the NQF credits will have to be divided by 180 to translate them to one stats credit. This will inflate the institution's FTEs, which will lead to inaccurate HEMIS submissions.

In instances where one of the institutions is incorporated, the history and issuing of certificates will become the responsibility of the legal successor. The merged institution will,

however, require the history of the students who had previously studied at the institution that was incorporated, to maintain their credits, to balance their credits when they complete their programmes and to issue academic records. This is only possible if the history of these students is merged into the merged institution's database. The result of this is that the historical data will be changed incorrectly: it will reflect the data as if the students from the incorporated institution have been part of the former 'main' institution for the years that they have been studying and will change the audited headcount and FTE information of the 'main' institution. It is thus critical to ensure that at least the audited tables are saved separately before merging the database to ensure that correct audited records are available.

Until the databases of the former institutions are merged, it is advisable to extract data for the former institutions separately. It is very expensive to establish interim merged data warehouses for single extractions. A more affordable option is to consolidate the separately extracted information through translation tables.

10.2 IT systems

10.2.1 Challenges – During 2003 when the incorporation of Vista-PE campus into UPE was to become a reality on 1 January 2004, and the Vista-PE pipeline students had to transfer to UPE, the following IT challenges became apparent:

- The IT systems of the two student systems had to be merged. Although both Vista and UPE were using ITS for student administration systems, UPE was on version 10 and Vista on version 11, which are not directly compatible for data merging purposes.
- UPE was using the Oracle Financials (OFIN) system at the time for student debtors, which introduces another complexity of interfacing Vista students with student debtors on OFIN.
- There were serious time constraints caused by the Vista Head Office's long and slow decision-making processes for providing data. Data were only received for testing purposes in late October 2003.
- Vista would cease to exist as an entity by 31 January 2003, and thus their central IT services section would disappear, which meant that there would be no fall-back position to operate systems in parallel, as is the case in merging institutions.
- For the Vista pipeline students, the disruption had to be minimal. This meant that in January 2004 they would be able to register as usual for their specific Vista academic programmes.

The only feasible way to solve these problems in the limited time available was to create a complete instance of the Vista ITS version 11 database and applications at UPE within which the Vista-PE 2004 pipeline intake could be accommodated and managed. An interface was created between the Vista ITS version 11 and OFIN to deal with the Vista pipeline student debtor transactions.

Final datasets of the Vista information were received by UPE by the middle of December 2003, and these were used to set a production environment for the Vista pipeline students. While the datasets received in December contained the November 2003 examination results, the January 2004 supplementary examination results had to be captured manually (resulting in duplicated effort) in both the central Vista legacy system and the database instance at UPE, since this information was required in both systems and there were no software tools available to transfer data for pipeline students selectively between the two systems.

At this stage, UPE had also decided to terminate the use of OFIN and migrate the UPE financial management system to ITS as the information system of choice for the pending UPE and PET merged institution. To achieve this, UPE had to upgrade the ITS student systems from version 10 to their latest version 13 and the Vista pipeline student data were integrated with the UPE database as part of this project. This was completed by October 2004.

10.2.2 Handling the academic history of pipeline students – A question raised and debated during the integration of Vista pipeline students was how to deal with their academic history. A direct transfer of Vista academic historic details would ‘contaminate’ UPE history in that it would introduce registration details for years prior to 2004 of students who were never ‘true’ UPE students; and UPE had never received subsidy for these students in those years. An alternative approach was to treat them as ‘transfer’ students by recording only those historic subject details of modules that had been successfully completed, as credits towards the qualification for which the student had enrolled. While this would technically have been the more correct way to avoid contaminating the data, information about repeated subjects would be lost, which would also be undesirable. In the end, it was agreed that a pipeline student’s history would be integrated with his/her UPE student history, but with a special kind of pipeline course to distinguish these records from UPE historical records. This, however, resulted in losing from the UPE database some modules for which pipeline students had historically been enrolled at Vista.

10.2.3 The PET and UPE merger situation – Although the PET and UPE merged into NMMU on 1 January 2005, at the time of writing the information systems were still operated as two segregated database systems and the ex-PET and ex-UPE (including former Vista-PE) pipeline students were being managed accordingly. By implication, the new intake for technikon type and university type programmes in 2005 was also aligned with the segregated systems and for all practical purposes these students could also be considered ‘pipeline’ until new academic programmes were designed and implemented for NMMU as a comprehensive institution.

At the time of writing a project was under way to merge and integrate the ex-PET and ex-UPE student and other ITS systems by January 2006. To achieve this, the ex-PET system had first to be upgraded from version 11 to version 13 (by the end of June 2005) before the data integration could take place.

From an IT perspective, while integrating and merging the data is labour intensive and time consuming, it is technically reasonably straightforward. The real challenges lie in agreeing on and aligning the business rules and processes of the pre-merged institutions. These are

business issues, not IT issues, and must be resolved by the institution's business managers. However, they will affect IT in instances where business processes or rules associated with pipeline students (e.g. conditions for granting re-examination) will have to be retained while appropriate. This will add complexity to the debate of agreeing on business rules and processes, and may necessitate the retention of local software (not ITS standard system) to service those types of specific business needs.

11. QUALITY ASSURANCE ISSUES

Quality assurance issues cover a wide spectrum of matters that affect the quality and standards of the academic programmes in which pipeline students are enrolled. Matters such as admissions, RPL, student academic support and infrastructure and resources are all dealt with in other sections of this report, and will not be repeated here. In this section the quality of the learning experience that is offered to pipeline students is discussed in terms of academic structure, programme management, teaching and learning, and administrative and support services.

11.1 Academic structure

In the academic structure of the merged institution, the design of a coherent programme model affects both new and pipeline students. One of the strengths of a comprehensive institution such as NMMU is that it offers students the opportunity for vertical and horizontal articulation between qualifications with a more vocational and a more academic focus. However, the opportunities for articulation pose significant challenges. First, the lack of a final Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) means that the parameters for developing programme models remain unclear. The Department of Education's 2004 document on *Creating Comprehensive Universities in South Africa* sketches various possible programme models for comprehensives. While the proposed HEQF can accommodate most of the programme models, such as the 'inverted Y model' and the 'shared stem model', an option such as the 'extended track model' is not feasible. Students who wish to pursue degree studies after the completion of an advanced certificate or diploma must articulate into an existing degree programme.

A second challenge is arranging articulation between qualifications in the so-called 'university' and 'technikon' tracks. Clarity needs to be established about the equivalence between qualifications, such as three-year National diplomas and bachelor's degrees, and the BTech and four-year professional degrees or honours degrees. Currently, it seems that the challenge of articulation is addressed on a somewhat ad hoc basis. There is an urgent need for a consistent sectoral approach that makes appropriate use of NQF level descriptors in the context of various disciplines. At the time of writing NMMU was participating, along with various other higher education institutions, in an articulation project relating to Engineering qualifications, which may provide a basis for addressing articulation matters in various academic disciplines.

A third challenge of articulation is dealing with the equivalence between modules in pipeline and continuing programmes. Students who are enrolled in pipeline programmes may be required to take modules from a continuing programme. This may be because it makes sense

to consolidate the presentation of a module, so that students from both a pipeline and a continuing programme will attend the same module. In other cases, students may be required to attend a module from a continuing programme because they have failed the equivalent module in the pipeline programme. Pipeline students need to receive clear information on the equivalence between pipeline and continuing modules. At NMMU, arrangements were made to provide information brochures to pipeline students detailing the equivalence between modules in pipeline and continuing programmes.

11.2 Programme management

The arrangements for managing pipeline programmes should be clearly delineated to pipeline students. In incorporating the previous Vista University campus into Port Elizabeth, NMMU made effective use of a system of programme coordinators during 2004–2005. These coordinators are responsible for all academic matters relating to their programmes on the institution's Vista campus and must provide pipeline students with the necessary academic advice on matters, such as the duration of pipeline programmes, requirements for continuing their study, the equivalence between modules, and so on. For the fully merged institution, it was anticipated that the system of assigning programme coordinators for pipeline programmes would be continued and would apply to all the institution's campuses.

11.3 Teaching and learning issues

Understandably, pipeline students are concerned that the merger should not disrupt the coherence of their academic programmes, and that they should receive a consistent standard of teaching and academic support. At NMMU, it was decided that the coordination of pipeline programmes should be fully integrated into the academic management of specific disciplines and fields. Staff members from specific departments or schools would therefore review the academic aspects of pipeline programmes in conjunction with those of continuing programmes. Such review processes should include monitoring student performance and discussing student feedback on modules and programmes. For the quality assurance of pipeline programmes, it is important to collect student feedback about lecturers, modules and programmes. In this manner, mechanisms can be put in place to ensure that pipeline students receive a quality learning experience.

11.4 Administrative and support services

A Campus Principal at the NMMU Vista campus is responsible for overseeing the effective provision of broad administrative and support services. This person liaises with the relevant line managers to monitor and ensure the effectiveness of services provided by the library, computing centre, student counselling, student academic development and so forth. The Campus Principal is represented on Executive Management, SENEX, APQCs (Academic Planning and Quality Committees) and Senate to ensure that pipeline students' concerns about service delivery and the quality of their educational programme receive sufficient attention. At the time of writing NMMU was considering the management models that would be used for multi-campus management from 2006 onwards. One of the key concerns is that

the management model should make effective provision for ensuring that pipeline students receive a quality learning experience.

12. INTERIM-INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS, MULTI-CAMPUS ARRANGEMENTS, RESEARCH AND ACADEMIC MANAGEMENT INFRASTRUCTURE

Adequate arrangements for managing academic support units – as indicated in Section 11, above – is crucial for pipeline students. The library has been of particular importance to integrate and widen access, especially to Vista campus students. The multi-campus nature of NMMU has given rise to unique challenges, because of the varying availability of resources at the different institutions prior to the merger.

12.1 Multi-campus arrangements

The Vista library was incorporated as a branch library of the UPE library under the UPE Head Librarian. Its records were transferred from the Vista central database to the System for Easy Analysis of Lots of Sequences (SEALS) database for institutions that fell under the Eastern Cape Higher Education Association (ECHEA), including UPE. UPE (incorporating Vista) spent R1m in 2004 to upgrade the Vista library and buy additional books. The NMMU library has merged all three main libraries and all students are allowed to use the facilities at other campuses. There are, however, some restrictions on the use of the Vista campus library by students from other campuses, because of limited capacity.

One problem that could be caused by lack of resources and poor maintenance of facilities is the lack of IT infrastructure and poorly maintained laboratories. Funds were spent to upgrade the IT infrastructure and laboratories at the Vista campus.

The main challenge for a multi-campus university is deciding on the site allocation of programmes; that is, which programmes will be offered on which campus. A major project is currently being undertaken to develop criteria for the allocation.

12.2 Academic management and governance structures

To manage ongoing programmes effectively, an appropriate academic management structure has to be developed. Academic management structures were therefore designed to allow for the formation of appropriate interim faculty management structures for the incorporation phase. These arrangements made provision for

- an institutional academic governance structure to ensure the quality of academic activities at Vista campus by the UPE Senate;
- the integration of Vista academic units into the UPE faculty management structure under one Dean;

- the creation of the positions of Pipeline Programme Coordinator and Administrative Assistant at the Vista campus; and
- a definition of the roles and responsibilities of the Pipeline Coordinators and reporting lines.

12.2.1 Senate and sub-committees of Senate – During the incorporation, the UPE statute applied during the merger phase and the composition of the UPE Senate was expanded to include Vista full professors, Pipeline Programme Coordinators and five student representatives representing the five faculties at the Vista campus. Further persons could be appointed to ensure a more inclusive Senate (see Section 19 of the UPE statute).

The Vista campus Principal and two Pipeline Programme Coordinators became members of the Executive Committee of Senate and the APQC. The agenda of SENEX and the APQC included a standing item on Vista academic issues. The Campus Principal and the Pipeline Programme Coordinators provided regular reports and alerted the Committee to any problems that had to be resolved. A new Senate and sub-committees for NMMU were constituted in 2005.

12.2.2 Faculty structures – In 2004, Vista academic units that reported to the former decentralised departments and faculties of the former Vista University were streamlined to report to UPE faculties. There was a one-to-one match of the five Vista faculties (Arts, Science, Business and Economic Sciences, Education and Law) to the six UPE faculties. The one faculty that is not at Vista but at UPE is the Faculty of Health Sciences.

Although there was this perfect match, there were two major exceptions, which had implications for pipeline students. First, Public Administration was located in the Faculty of Arts at UPE and in the Faculty of Management at Vista. It was agreed that Public Administration at Vista should report to the Dean of Arts at UPE and the Pipeline Programme Coordinator during the incorporation phase. Second, Psychology was located in the Faculty of Arts at Vista and in Health Sciences at UPE. The two academic programmes were compared and it was agreed that Psychology should report to the Dean of Health Sciences at UPE.

It was agreed that these would be interim management structures for 2004 rather than formal structures for the merged institution. At the time of writing academic structures in the merger still had to be finalised.

12.2.3 Faculty boards and faculty management committees – The same rules as at UPE applied to Vista staff during the merger; that is, all lecturers in the faculty become members of the Faculty Board. Heads of Department became members of the Executive Committee of the faculty. The five student representatives to Senate represented students on the respective Faculty Boards. The faculty could also co-opt other persons it deemed necessary for the smooth operation of pipeline programmes. The faculty sub-structures had not been finalised at NMMU at the time of writing.

12.2.4 Research management structures – The UPE Research Committee was enlarged in 2004 to include one member from each of the faculties on the Vista campus; these were also Faculty Research Representatives. Overall responsibility for managing research in 2004 continued to rest with UPE's Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and the Director (Research). A new position of DVC (Research Technology and Innovation) was established at NMMU, and an institutional research management structure was being developed.

12.3 Administration of pipeline programmes at Vista

Job descriptions of the Pipeline Programme Coordinators (equivalent to HoDs), and the Administrative Assistants were agreed on. Former HoDs were formally appointed as Pipeline Programme Coordinators. Their role is to

- provide the Dean with back-up support and organisational capacity at Vista Campus and report regularly on academic activities;
- supervise the provision of Vista pipeline programmes, including admission requirements, delivery (lectures, practicals and other teaching activities), quality, assessment, and granting of credits;
- oversee the administration of students in the pipeline programmes;
- oversee the administration of activities and infrastructure related to the provision of academic programmes at UPE (Vista campus), such as the data on the ITS system;
- manage and perform any residual academic work, which could include supplementary examinations, approval of the results before graduation, arrangements for master's and doctoral students, etc.;
- coordinate the running of the designated programme(s), respond to queries and ensure the delivery and quality of programmes;
- interpret the rules of the pipeline programme(s) and make decisions about how to apply them;
- supervise the Administrative Assistant and take ultimate responsibility for the duties and accuracy of the work; and
- manage the staff in the unit, including work allocation, performance, safety, leave, discipline, and facilitate appointments and promotions where appropriate.

The above were specific duties but, in general, the Pipeline Programme Coordinator has overall delegated responsibility for managing all aspects of the specific pipeline programme(s) in a particular faculty. The Administrative Assistant gives administrative support, including general inquiries, preparation of the calendar and information materials for

the pipeline programme(s), admission and registration, syllabuses and degrees rules, and ensures that the relevant modules are on the lecture and examination timetables. The Administrative Assistant liaises with faculty officers at UPE Campus and provides support when there is extra pressure of work, for example at registration periods. The above arrangements applied for the incorporation phase and continued into the merger.